

## *Despair Turned to Hope*

*Fred Leung*

I was just off from work after seeing the last patient. Carrying the heavy briefcase, I walked slowly towards the car park. A cold draught trapped with tiny raindrops blew against my face, so I pulled up the suit collars – it dawned suddenly to me that it was also a cold rainy night that I first met him. It had just been one year since then – that was an intimate time with God, a touching love story and a moment that witnessed the almightiness of God...

Sitting in front of me was Mr Wong, who was just 50 years old. He had a young wife and a lovely daughter. On that day he was in a black suit, robust and strong, and said to me with a look of confidence in his eyes. 'I guess it's time to have my annual body check,' casually he made clear his intention of seeing me. I flipped through his medical records and quickly fired at him with the words, 'You haven't had any body check for two years! It's all work and enjoyment to you. Do you care a bit about your life?' Pretentiously I gave him a vicious look, coupled with a sternness in my tone, trying to scare this uncompromising patient.

Actually Mr Wong had long been a hepatitis B carrier; he should, in theory, had a body check once every six months to prevent the possibility of liver cancer or cirrhosis. He replied, in a couldn't-care-less manner, 'If every patient has to see you doctors so often, aren't you all filthily rich?' I nearly flared up because of his frivolous response. Well, I could do nothing but to examine him. All turned out well, but still he had to take a blood test and come back to get the results after three days. The blood test report arrived at my desk three days later, the AFP was 450. My heart sank as I saw the figure, the possibility of lung cancer flashed through my mind. I couldn't quite decide how to break such bad news to the happy young family.

'I have no good news to tell you...' I explained to him in detail the blood test results, paused a little while and observed his response. Then softly I continued, 'I won't rule out the possibility of liver cancer.' That came all out of the blue and ripped the smile from the ever-so optimistic Mr Wong. The MRI and biopsy that followed confirmed that he had liver cancer, terminal stage.

Despite the torture from surgery and chemotherapy, Mr Wong still kept his positive, optimistic personality. He insisted on going to work as usual and asked others not to treat him as a patient. When he came across friends who did not know the truth and who asked him why he had become thinner, he would reply jokingly, 'Slimming is in fashion!' He seemed to have no trace of sorrow.

After about 4 weeks time he came to my clinic for a check up. His cheeks were more angular, the worse thing was he had serious oedema in his abdomen. To a liver cancer patient, that was a sign for an acute condition: the liver functions had come to a life-threatening stage. Knowing that he was in an advanced stage of cancer, I felt more burdened to share the gospel with him. During the consultation, I knew that he had stopped all kinds of treatment just to stay at home to rest, simply because chemotherapy had no ideal results. In being so weak, he had not worked for quite some time. The radiance that was once found on his face had given way to a blank, sad look. We were wordless as we faced one another in the clinic, I could not find any words to comfort someone who was going to die. It suddenly came to my mind that CanCare Centre would be holding a cancer-related open seminar on emotional support and

palliative care, the target group was terminally ill cancer patients like Mr Wong. As I knew Dr Chan would cover views on life and death, I invited Mr Wong to attend, with the hope that it might be of some help to him.

Mr Wong seemed to have got some in-depth revelations after attending the open seminar and appeared to be more relaxed. God also arranged a loving couple, Cecily and Steve, from CanCare Centre to support him. Steve was once a cancer patient, there was still an egg-size irremovable tumour inside his brain. Having heard the sincere sharing by Steve on how he overcame fear by relying on the faith from God, Mr Wong was very much encouraged. The witness of the couple opened the eyes of the Wong's family in seeing the love of Jesus and touched their hearts. After more than two weeks' visits and the incessant prayers of brothers and sisters, Mr Wong finally found the truth, admitted he was a sinner and decided to accept Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Master of his life. He became a Christian and inherited eternal bliss.

Mr Wong's health deteriorated day by day, there was serious oedema from the abdomen to the lower limbs, his face showed a yellow complexion, the cancer had shrunken his face and his chest to a clutter of bones and he had difficulty in talking and breathing. You would feel worried and sad in seeing him like this, yet his positive personality never flinched. He knew he had not much time left and took the courage to make a request in my home visit. Catching his breath and in a nearly inaudible voice, he said, 'Thank you so much for your special care in the past several weeks. Though we've not known each other long, we're like old pals. It's a pity that we've met so late, I'm afraid there isn't much time left. I have three unfulfilled wishes, if you can help me to accomplish them, then I'll leave in happiness and without regret.' Though it seemed a bit sudden to have someone who was near his death to make his final request to me, there was no reason to reject! I immediately drew close to him; lay my hand on the back of his hand. He also grasped my hand tightly at once, even hurting me a little bit. Then he slowly placed my hand on his bony cheek. At this very moment we were gazing at one another, speechless; but from the look of gratitude in his eyes I knew he had so much to pour his heart out to me. The feeling of to love and to be loved was so intense that I felt emotionally shaken, unable to forget that very moment for quite some time.

'Your hands are so warm!' Finally he smiled faintly and began to say something. I couldn't care less about the embarrassment and responded, 'My hands are here to bring warmth to you!' The heaviness eased up. 'To free my wife from the burden, I hope you can arrange my burial ground and my funeral. Please also help me to prepare a will to secure the livelihood of my wife and my daughter. Finally please arrange for my baptism.' Upon hearing that, Mrs Wong who had been standing behind us started to weep. She had not psychologically prepared for the fact that her husband would leave the world soon. I accomplished these requests in no time. Mr Wong looked especially well on the day of his baptism, he also ate a big piece of cake. He kept on sharing his views on life and his witness in committing to Christ, urging his wife to do the same by accepting Christ. However Mrs Wong was a keen Taoist and brushed aside his good will right away.

Though Mr Wong's baptism was conducted in the intensive care unit in the hospital and less than ten attended, he described it as the most loving and sweetest present he had ever received. After I had fulfilled his requests, he was very much relieved and worry-free. His conditions acutely deteriorated the day following his baptism, he returned to the Lord that night. Several

hours before he left this world, he kept on telling his wife, ‘Don’t grieve for me for Lord Jesus has prepared the best for me, I have truly got the hope for eternal life – such a present is also ready for you and our daughter.’ As he repeated the same thing over and over again, Mrs Wong at first thought he was in a state of delirium; but after careful observation, she found him very normal in his mind.

Mr Wong showed not even a trace of fear before he passed away. There was much joy in his heart because he clearly knew where he was going to. His faith in God, being so firm and genuine, surprised and touched and encouraged Mrs Wong as well as those who had taken care of him. In his funeral, we showed a video on what happened the day before he passed away so that he could witness, by himself, to the eighty-strong congregation his faith in God and His wonderful deeds. No painful wailing was there in the funeral, instead there were praises and thanks to God. May all glory be to God and may the seeds of the Gospel be sown in everyone’s heart.

Three weeks after the funeral, I caught sight of two familiar faces in the Sunday worship. It suddenly occurred to me that they were Mrs Wong and her daughter. With a smile, Mrs Wong said to me, ‘Mr Wong’s waiting to meet us in heaven, how can we not prepare for this?’ We really have to give thanks to God. His mightiness far outweighs what we can imagine or comprehend. He uses such lowly servants as we to care for cancer patients who need love and acceptance. Let us reach out our hands of love to learn to love and accept them, without counting any gains – just as how Christ loves and accepts us.

This experience led me to a deep understanding of God’s almightiness. He saved a dying patient and his family by leading them to the kingdom of eternal life; turning despair to hope, sorrow to joy. Death is no longer a horrible end but the beginning of new life. May God encourage us, through this experience, to move fearlessly forward and to be more used by the Lord.

I had just manoeuvred my car into the front yard of our home. The drizzle had stopped at my unawares, but my eyes were moist. Hastily I wiped away the tears and opened the door. My wife and the children couldn’t wait to swarm at me. I heard my wife say, ‘It’s been a busy day, come and have some hot soup!’