

GOD WILL DO IT AGAIN

The pain turned out to be my friend.

It began about the first of the year. Lower back. Then down into my hip and thigh. Finally below the knee. My doctor, suspicious that the cancer might return, ordered X-rays, a bone scan, then a CAT scan of my abdomen. All were clear. Yet the pain persisted.

I tried a chiropractor. It got worse. He put me in a back brace. It didn't help. Finally, on Good Friday, my doctor ordered a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan. He was looking for a pinched nerve or a herniated disc in my spine. Instead he found a small tumor fastened around two vertebrae in my lower spine. Another cancer had invaded my body. The attack was on again.

Without the pain, we would not have discovered the problem. But now what?

I had suspected that Satan would counterattack.

After Satan was defeated in his major confrontation against Jesus on the Mount of Temptation, he left Him until an "opportune time" (Luke 4:13, NIV). If the attacks continued against Jesus, why should I be exempt?

Despite the fact that I felt armed and ready to fight Satan's attacks, I was still shaken. I wanted to get on with life and balked at the thought of having to turn aside for another battle.

In a church staff meeting, one of our pastors read from Psalm 95: "Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me, *though they had seen what I did*" (vv. 8-9, italics added).

My mind recalled the time when, hiking through the Sinai desert, our small group of campers came to the oasis of Marah. More than 3,000 years before, the children of Israel had stopped here. Just three days previously, they had faced an impossible situation. Standing on the other side of the sea, with the armies of Egypt in hot pursuit, they were trapped. Nowhere to turn. Moses, standing on the shore, held out his staff. The sea parted, and they walked through on dry ground. Then the sea closed on their enemies, and they were home free.

Until they reached Marah, three days later.

Parched, out of water, they saw the oasis and raced across the sand. But the water was bitter, laced with minerals. They couldn't drink it. They

panicked and turned on Moses.

In desperation, Moses asked God what to do. He told him to throw a certain bush into the water, which caused the water to turn sweet. The people drank and were saved.

But the question remains: Didn't God know the waters of Marah were bitter? The story, in Exodus 15, says God was testing them (the Hebrew word is *massah*). They failed the test by their quarreling (*meribah*).

The minerals in the bitter water were calcium and magnesium—a powerful laxative. The water would not have killed them; it would have cleaned them out. God wanted to change their lifestyle by not only getting them out of Egypt—but getting Egypt out of them.

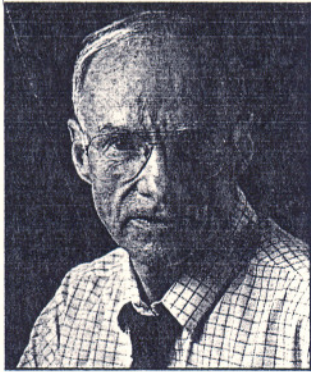
They were so overcome by the circumstances that they failed to remember what God had done just three days before. They forgot the big miracle at the sea because they had a second encounter with difficulty—the bitter water at the oasis.

In Psalm 95:10, God said he would not let them enter the promised land because they were "a people whose hearts go astray," men and women who did not know His ways.

God's way is to allow certain obstacles into our lives so we will change, grow and become like Jesus. Once we make that decision, He quickly removes the obstacles and lets us move on to Elim, a place of rest and abundant provision.

I made a decision that morning in the staff meeting, a decision that relates to this latest attack. Where I stood last summer—on the finished work of Christ—is where I stand now. If that means drinking a bitter cup so that I will be cleansed and strengthened for the journey—then I will do it with joy. I'm not sure, at this writing, what that means. But I am sure of God. His ways are good, not evil.

To all of you who have lost faith in God to do impossible things, to you who have experienced a miracle but are fearful God won't do it again, I remind you: God never changes. What He has done, He will continue to do. Your healing is in the atonement. Accept it, and walk it out. He will not let His obedient children die in the wilderness. ■



BY
JAMIE
BUCKINGHAM

.....
Jamie Buckingham has written a book about his healing titled *Summer of Miracles (Creation House)*, which will be released later this year.