

LOOKING AHEAD

The last Friday of June I sat in the office of a strange doctor and listened as he gave me news that has radically changed everything in my life.

I had been feeling punk for almost a month. No energy. My wife insisted on a physical examination. The day before the appointment I was playing racquetball. Suddenly I had a total energy loss. I could barely breathe. I staggered off the court, embarrassed, alarmed. I started running a fever. The next day the doctor listened, punched, squeezed, drew blood and told me to come back in a week.

The following appointment was filled with fore-shadows. Something was wrong in my blood count. He ordered an immediate CAT scan—a big X-ray of my abdomen.

On Friday morning Jackie and I braved our way through the unfamiliar corridors of the hospital to the radiology department. I felt good, confident, as the narrow table glided back and forth through the huge donut-shaped machine that took many pictures of my abdomen.

Late that afternoon the doctor called back. I was home alone. Could I meet him at his office? I was there in 20 minutes, sitting on a little chair as he told me, matter-of-factly, that I had renal cell carcinoma—cancer of the kidney. It had

spread, he said, to my lymph glands and seemed inoperable. "Prognosis is poor," he said matter-of-factly.

I drove home under threatening skies. One moment I had been living as though I had another 40 years. Now I had no promise beyond today.

The house was empty when I arrived. On the breakfast table was an earlier message from *Charisma*: "We're shifting your September column to October. Write something for our anniversary issue. Talk about the future."

Satan laughed. "You have no future. You are filled with sin. You go in your own strength and rely on your own understanding. You judge God's people. You don't pray. You don't love your wife. You're too busy for your children. You're proud. Now it is time to pay the price. You will die."

Jackie came in and I took her into the den.

Her face was a mask of anguish. Then something happened as she rose up in great faith—and in anger against the evil one.

"But he's right," I said. "I have been on a path of self-destruction. I have gone in my own

strength. I've lived as if God would not hold me accountable—"

She broke in, "Then we shall repent together until we are assured that all corruption is gone. Not to buy your healing, for Jesus did that at Calvary, but so we can enjoy His presence with clean hands and a pure heart." Her eyes sparkled. "God has just told me this is not unto death. We may walk through the fire, but we shall emerge on the other side."

Nothing has been the same since. Our lives have become lives of prayer. We turned the TV set off that afternoon, and it has not been back on. Television is not wrong. We simply have no interest. His presence has been all our hearts have yearned for.

A "spirit of intercession" has fallen on the two of us. Laying in bed at night, waking in the morning, walking through the house, riding in the car—we are constantly praying out loud for others. We pray by name for those interceding for us.

I am walking where hurting humanity walks—and I have wept more for them than for myself.

While this has been the most frightening experience of our lives, it has been the most glorious. My church has turned to God. My grown sons and daughters are realizing God is their source, not their daddy. And what has happened between God and me; between God, Jackie and me; and between God and our children is a far greater miracle than my healing will be.

I've been through intense medical testing. The doctors at the M.D. Clinic in Houston have suggested possibilities.

Oral Roberts' late-night, tear-stained phone call helped. "Doctors hate disease more than most Christians," he said. "Cooperate."

But it was my 92-year-old mother who put it in perspective. "Son, don't give God orders. He loves you and will do only good things to you."

She's right! But the Bible says God is a God of mercy and healing. Either the Bible is true, or we should shut down all churches, curse God and die.

Jackie and I have decided to stake our lives on His Word, believing in faith: "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." (Ps. 118:17 NKJV) ■

Jamie Buckingham is the senior pastor of the Tabernacle in Melbourne, Florida.



**BY
JAMIE
BUCKINGHAM**

Editor's Note: Jamie wrote this column three weeks before successfully undergoing major surgery of his kidney and lymph nodes on July 31. His doctor says he needs no further treatment.