



In Terminal Diagnosis

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too” (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

I attended a seminar a while back on physician-assisted suicide. There was much discussion about the reasons why people would want to take their own life when presented with a terminal diagnosis. A common belief is that people don't want to suffer. Yet, when looking at the facts, it becomes clear that many people do not want to be a burden to their family or to lose their autonomy.

Physical and emotional suffering certainly are a concern for anyone dealing with a terminal diagnosis. Much has to do with the unknown. But we have a God of mercy and comfort who comforts us when affliction arises. There is a certainty when we turn to Him, as He assures us in Scripture: **“I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”** Might there still be suffering? Yes, as Scripture never says there won't be. Can suffering be endured? Yes, with the help of God. He knows you and your personal situation, and you can say to Him with certainty, “Be with me and help me through this, Just As ... I Am.”

At that same seminar, there was an older gentleman who spoke up, saying it is his prayer that he will be able to witness his faith to his family at the end of his life as he leans on the Lord for his comfort. May the Lord grant him that favor.

In another situation, a dear friend For Life was Dr. Maggie Karner, a former Director of Life and Ministry for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. She received her terminal cancer diagnosis and spent the next two years of her life sharing her faith and being that witness of trusting the Lord to get her through whatever life with a terminal disease would bring. It wasn't easy, but the joy she was able to share brought comfort to herself and to others as she trusted the Lord would never fail her, and He didn't. She said the worst thing that could happen to her was to lose her faith. One of the most profound statements she made came during her final days, when she encouraged her daughters to learn servanthood in helping to care for her. She took losing her autonomy as a means to help her family grow in their faith.



No one should minimize the personal anguish one suffers when receiving a terminal diagnosis or caring for the terminally ill. There are so many uncertainties. What we do know for certain is that our loving Lord will be there by our side, holding our hand and lifting us up until He decides it's time. The comfort He will give us is beyond words, yet it is exactly what we need. So, lean on the God of mercy and comfort to bring you peace.

Pray: Dear Lord, hear my cry for mercy and comfort. Be with me in this life struggle. Keep my faith strong, give me courage, and help me to be a blessing to others, Just As ... I Am. Amen.