

Shouldn't The Servants of the Lord Be Blessed?

It is 12:58 a.m. and I am still awake. My body is on such high doses of steroids, it makes sleep quite impossible. Just over a week ago, I came back to the United States to be diagnosed with Transverse Myelitis, a disease attacking my spinal cord and leaving me with severe nerve damage. Just a week before that, I was happily serving the Lord in Ethiopia as a missionary wife and mother. God was greatly blessing our ministry with fruit and opportunity--particularly since we have only been there for ten months and are still learning the language. I woke up one Thursday morning with tingling in my toes. By the end of the day, that "tingling" had progressed to my waist and would later spread to my chest, face, and arms. We had a missionary doctor friend who was able to alert us to the severity of my symptoms and within 24 hours, we were back on a plane to the United States for emergency treatment.

Transverse Myelitis is pretty rare. Every year, 1400 cases are diagnosed in the United States. So why would I get this kind of disease? I'm trying to serve the Lord in Africa--the quintessential "no-one-wants-to-go" location.

It is easy to get the idea that if we are in the Lord's work (be that "full-time" or otherwise), He should reward us with blessing. If we are serving the Lord, He should keep bad things from happening to us; He should protect us and give us the comforts we desire in life. We act as though this is the least He should do.

But, oh beloved, the dear Lord Jesus did not die on the cross so that I could sit in comfortable America and have good health. Take a look at these precious words in I Corinthians 6, "*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (I Corinthians 6:19-20). When I think about my lovely Lord and what was done to His body on the cross, I think of the great price that was paid for my own body. He purchased it with His own blood. The torture He went through on Calvary was so that my body, plagued with Transverse Myelitis as it now is, will not spend one second in the fires of hell! Not only that, but I have the promise of a new, absolutely perfect, glorified body waiting for me in heaven. He did that for me! The body that I reside in for such a very short time here on earth, was purchased by my lovely Lord to spare me the agonies of hell. When I think about this, I think, "Lord, I am so unworthy of that kind of devotion and love. You can do whatever you want with my body. Paralyze it. Weaken it. Afflict it. Scar it. Only glorify Yourself in it."

He does not owe me anything, you see? He does not owe me good health, wealth or the comforts of life. In fact, I am indebted to Him in a way I could never repay!

To answer my original question, however, shouldn't the servant of the Lord be blessed--let me tell you the answer is 100 times yes. God blesses His servants more than they could ever imagine and it almost does not make any sense to try and describe those blessings because they are not the

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blessings you may first think about. Sometimes we may look at someone here on earth who was great wealth or abilities and we say, "Oh, God has blessed them." And He has. Every good gift comes from above. Maybe we see someone who got to go on a nice vacation or had some other wonderful opportunity and we easily spot that as a blessing. But these are such fleeting, temporary blessings. They are not at all His finest. His greatest blessing is Himself! In Genesis 15:1, God tells Abraham, a man He calls His friend, "*Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*" Those of us who give our lives to serve our Maker get **Him** as our blessing! He comforts us and cheers us in ways that we could never explain, in ways our fellow man never fully can. He puts sweet reassurances into our souls. He speaks to us. Not with new revelation, of course, but with revelations so wonderful that sometimes we feel like they were just for us. He gives us moments in our lives where we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God Almighty is moving and working in our life and we get to be a part of what He is doing in the world. Once you have tasted that kind of blessing from the Lord, let me assure you--you would NEVER want to trade it for some temporal blessing like a comfort of this life or even good health.

I am not saying that God's servants are perfect people. We feel sorry for ourselves and get our eyes off the Lord just like anyone else. We do not live on those mountain tops of blessing all the time. In fact, when I was first given the news that we would have to leave Ethiopia for emergency medical treatment, I burst into tears and cried out, "Lord, I'm on your team!" Do you know what my wicked heart was crying? "Lord, shouldn't I be blessed? I am serving You!" What I didn't know was that He was going to bless me--but not with something temporary like perfect health (Though He has blessed me with health in the fact that I can still walk and breath on my own--not everyone with my disease can). He was going to give me such sweet reassurances during this time and help me see Him in ways I never have in my Christian life before. He was going to bless me with Himself. And I will be carrying those sweet reassurances with me every day until the day I meet Him face to face in heaven.