

Transcript of testimony by Alan Fish given to Knights Meadow on 14th February 2021

It was March the 23rd. I remember it so well. I became poorly, unable to function, losing memory, head aching, stiff neck, eye sockets bruised. These all combined to make me weaker each day, missing being told what I should do by a wife whom I'd lost to lymphoma just 12 months before. Our daughter took over where her mother left off, and ordered me to get to her house, just over 50 miles away in South Wales, where an annexe was made available for me to stay. Just to pack took half a day, as I was in a daze and couldn't remember what we used to take. I wearily climbed into the car and chugged at no more than 50 miles an hour, quite unable really to be making the trek safely on my own. After 11 more days of feeling thoroughly wretched and with delirium invading my day, the GP responded to Karen's plea, and had me tested. I was admitted into hospital in Abergavenny.

Now, this is interesting. The examining doctor explained to me that should it have been necessary to put me on a ventilator, my wishes for resuscitation were to be taken into consideration. I said, I didn't want to receive a DNR, that is, if a patient is losing sensibility, he's not to be revived. Feeling that there were many years to live, that wasn't my wish. The doctor passed on to my daughter that although I'd expressed a wish to be resuscitated, I was too poorly to expect that favour. A terrified young woman then phoned her sister to say their father was this poorly, and was likely to be joining their mother earlier than they thought.

In the days that followed, I was administered with oxygen and antibiotics for pneumonia. The pain of coughing was too much, and I hardly slept, even though I was isolated in the single room, yet not bad enough to require intensive care. Eventually, no longer needing the clinical services of the hospital, and testing negative for COVID-19, I was discharged. Oh, but I felt so ill, still coughing and easily short of breath. Karen fed me good balanced food. She's a diabetic specialist in dietetics, and hammered home my need to eat and drink. Ever had that massive jug of water and been told that you had to get through it before bedtime? This time, my church friends back in Clevedon held a prayer vigil one evening. My family and friends prayed. Also Roger here and his dear wife were praying for me. So were other congregations in Kenilworth. You see, I couldn't pray. Every been that poorly, that you can't muster the spiritual energy to present yourself at the throne of grace and pray? My inside was wrung out and empty. I have never known weakness like it. God has been in my life for over 70 years, but I needed Jesus for comfort now, and for healing now, and for the strength to hope in some future. I couldn't find that resource.

Now something else. My wife, she's not there at home, waiting for me to recover and rejoin her. If I go home, and where is that anyway? I couldn't even recall what home looked like. Do I have to cook and clean the house, wash and iron, bake cakes, sort the garden, do the shopping? Ah, without feeling over-sorry for myself, all that was too much, and I wept for days at that sure fact, my dear one just would not be at home, ever again. The desperate loneliness and helplessness that took over my inside induced such a strong wish to die! I recall the sky looking grey. It was bright blue! And the trees, looking black, they were summer green! And I sank into a sleep that was accompanied by the vision of Jesus Christ, standing there beside me, when I begged him, "Please do not go away, and wait for me till I've had my little sleep." He did, and I did. And we were to meet again in a new way, which we've done every day since.

When Jesus asked Peter, "Lovest thou me more than these?"¹ Jesus got nearly the answer he wanted to hear. And when challenged about our love for Him, does He get the same answer from us? nearly the right one? I loved Gail, and she was taken. I love my family, all 12 of them, in fact I love several folk, very much, and I love my things around me. The trouble is, "Lovest thou me more than these?"

Karen, Pete and my grandson Austin struggled with this wilful patient to offer family care and kindness for such a long time. It was three months after arriving in Abergavenny that I was deemed able to motor back to Clevedon and try living independently.

There's been a spring clean at home! In my place of daily quiet I have shovelled a load of affections for people and for things, all to the side. The place they've all vacated is the throne of my heart. And it's there that I've begun to regard as the place where Jesus reigns. Being poorly gave me plenty of time to think what I live for, what state of heart I long for. Who occupies the throne of my life? Oh yes, there are any number of usurpers, all clamouring for a place of greater advantage, deep down there in my heart. In the words of a Kyrie I heard recently, "For the idols we put on Your throne, for the loves we choose above Your own, forgive us, we pray." That forgiveness is total. Of course He forgives us. And now I frequent that trysting place with great eagerness, and I discover a smile coming over my face, as I find the semblance of my Saviour, right there with me, with no competition. The joy is ecstatic!

The seclusion of the elderly living alone is bad enough without pandemic lockdowns and COVID isolation from loved ones. I am there also, every day. Yet I have a Saviour, in the person of Jesus, whom I can rejoice with, sing to, and recall His words to His Father, "I have made you known to them, in order that the love You have for Me, may be in them."² The fever has left me. The lost memory has been found. I have no headaches. I can even run upstairs and don't get breathless. The pneumonia has dispelled. And I'm strong enough to take others to a hospital in my car for their appointments. I'm not a physical or mental casualty from a dreadful illness. Severe head injuries as a child, having collided with buses and a tram are all healed. Question. Why has God preserved me? And I don't honestly know. But I do pray, I should be on hand for Him to pick up and use me each day He spares me.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with the help of <https://otter.ai>]

1 John 21:15

2 John 17:26