

February 22, 2015

A Vapor...

Pat Cowden

On February 8th, my life changed. I am not trying to make more of the situation than it deserves, I am just being honest. In the middle of having a wonderful conversation with my brother-in-Christ, Brad Thomas, something happened to me and we still do not know for sure what it was. It could be a combination of things which led to what they are calling a Transient Neurological Event, commonly called a TIA, or mini-stroke.

I know that lots of people have had TIA's and major strokes. I know that lots of people have other serious health conditions. I know that people have lost loved one from a variety of diseases and circumstances. What I did not know was how it felt to be in the middle of such an event. I want to begin by saying I am truly sorry for traumatizing our congregation. It could not have been easy watching what happened to me that morning. Many of you have expressed to me that you did not know whether I was going to live or not. You were not alone in that thought, because I was not sure myself.

How has my life changed?

I suppose I have always realized that all people are going to die (Hebrews 9:27). I have not however considered it to be a "real" possibility for anytime soon. You see, I was counting on things being pretty much the way they were until I was old and then I would die. I "know" now that it might not be that way for me. It could literally be at any moment.

So, how has that affected me? When I first realized something was happening, the first thing I thought of was Maria and the kids, which is why I called out her name. You see, at that moment, I thought I was going to die and I wanted to see and speak to Maria. I wanted her to know it would be o.k. I wanted Sarah not to be scared and I wanted her to know I loved all of them. Instead of me comforting her, she reassured me.

How did she do that?

When I looked over at her I noticed her doing something that I love her dearly for, she was praying... fervently... eyes closed... holding my hand. I remember through the fog thinking "I am not surprised." Why? Because she is a woman of deep faith and truly believes in the power of prayer. She was doing exactly what I wanted her to do for me and I pray that that is what I would be doing for her if things were reversed.

Another thing I remember that has affected me was that I realized that a lot of folks were trying to help in every way they could. Brian and Brad were doing their best to make sure things did not go from bad to worse before the paramedics got there and I thank them for that. There may have been others, I am not trying to exclude those who were involved. I heard several people calling and speaking to the 911 operator and were thankful for their quick thinking and concern.

And I also remember a voice from the fog, I think it was Don Lee, it might have been someone else, say something like, "The rest of us need to meet up front for prayer." I cannot overstate how much hearing that meant to me. My family drawing the focus of God and themselves on me. Displaying their love and concern and laying it at the feet of the Father's throne of mercy and grace. All I can humbly say is, "Thank you."

I am still a little weak but feeling better every day. I just came back from a doctor's appointment and do not have to go back unless I have an "event" until May 4th. We have had numerous visits, calls, texts, cards, food, etc. and we are thankful for all of them. It would be easy to just act like nothing ever happened. But, I think that would be wrong. At the very least we need to show God we believe Romans 8:28. That we truly do believe He can take something seemingly bad and make something good come out of it. What change do I really want to see from this?

- I hope and pray that I will love others as much as you loved me that day.
- I hope and pray that I will be as concerned about the lives and souls of others as you were about mine that day.
- I hope and pray that I will pray as fervently for others as you did for me that day.
- I hope and pray that I will be more faithful.
- I hope and pray that I will be honest when examining my own life.
- I hope and pray that I will remain penitent and be ready at any moment to meet the Lord.
- I hope and pray that I will be more empathetic to those suffering with debilitating health issues.
- I hope and pray that I will be prepared to share my faith with anyone and everyone I meet so that they do not have to face death and eternity without hope.
- I hope and pray that I will use the time the Lord has blessed me with, however long that may be, to honor and glorify Him.
- I hope and pray that I will quit making excuses for my own shortcomings.
- I hope and pray that I am not alone in wanting to learn and grow from this.

I love you and want to go to heaven with all of you.