

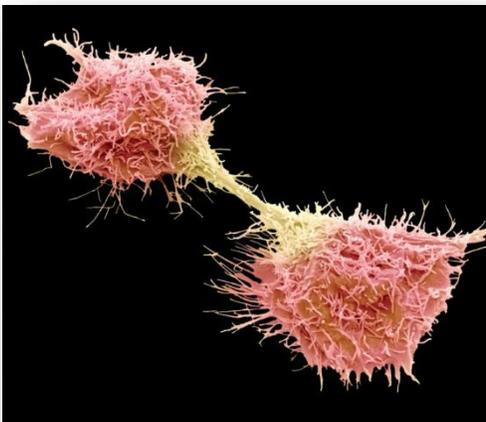
Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

March 12, 2019

Forty years ago, I was an oncology chaplain at Baylor Medical Center in Dallas, and Jill was an oncology nurse at St. Joseph Hospital in Ft. Worth. Cancer treatment has advanced mightily since those days, for which I am deeply grateful (my current oncologist wasn't even born yet!).

I still remember one of the things the oncologists taught me in 1979, though. They told me that cancer cells—which are cells that have lost their ability to regulate their multiplication—cause three main problems: (1) as they grow without regulation, they take up physical space that is needed for other organs and functions; (2) as they grow, they consume nutrients that are needed for other organs and functions; and (3) as they grow, they produce toxins that have negative effects on many organs and functions of the body.

I've had the privilege of walking with many folk on their journeys of diagnosis, surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy, and I am humbled to be joining many of you who are well-acquainted indeed with this journey. Thus far, I have been extremely blessed to have physicians who are all followers of Jesus. I have been blessed that my colon surgery was so relatively painless and problem-free. And I am blessed this week that on day two of chemotherapy, I haven't been nauseous at all. Thank you, Lord!!!



As I understand it, chemotherapy works by preventing cancer cells from dividing. The more quickly cells are dividing, the more likely it is that the “poison” will kill them. Because cancer cells are a life-and-death matter, we are willing to undergo stressful and unpleasant efforts to root them out.

This reminds me of an important spiritual principle. It seems to me that chemotherapy and radiation can serve as metaphors for rooting out sin in our lives. Perhaps one of the reasons we tolerate a bunch of junk in our lives is that we don't want to experience the pain of serious spiritual warfare.

But sin in our lives works a lot like cancer.

Sin takes up space (time) that is needed for better things. Sin consumes nutrients (money, relationships) that are needed for healthy growth. And sin produces toxins of many, many sorts. As someone said, “Sin will take you where you don't want to go; keep you longer than you want to stay; and cost you a lot more than you want to pay.”

That's why Paul wrote that we should “*put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature*” (Colossians 3:5). “*Put to death*” is not a passive undertaking. It is active warfare, much like cancer therapy.

Paul also wrote, “*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up*” (Galatians 6:9). Press on toward the Goal!

