

Tony: I was trundling along the road of life nicely. I had a great wife, two wonderful sons and five loveable grandchildren. I'd worked hard at my business and was ready to enjoy the fruits of my hard work. Negotiations were in progress to sell it, pay off the mortgage, get a nice part time job and prepare for a gentle transition into retirement.

Then came the visit to the doctor, which led in turn to medical tests, a visit to the consultant and the diagnosis: bowel cancer!

Since my late teens, when I became a Christian, my faith in Jesus was at the heart of my life. My conversion had not been a dramatic 'lights on' revelation. My upbringing had not been religious at all - Christ and faith never entered my head. A friend at work had invited me to a church youth club. I really enjoyed the welcome I received - and there were girls too, one whom I married!

Over a two year period I encountered Christian teaching for the first time. Some of it seemed odd to me. However there came the quiet but strong realisation that when Jesus died on the cross and rose again from the dead it was not just for other people: he died for me, so I could be forgiven. I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit. I realised God was real and it all made sense.

Now, in the consultant's room, my faith was put to the test. A great rock had been thrown into my road – how would I respond?

I'm the kind of person that crosses a bridge when I come to it but now my mind did begin to speculate. I knew surgery and healing were possible but so was the worst case scenario: that it was terminal.

What about my family? What about my business? Now my faith kicked in. I knew a bigger brain than mine was on the job. I just needed to follow orders and trust him – God's got it all organised. In

a tangible way I became conscious of his hand on everything – whatever the outcome. I faced the ‘what if it’s terminal?’ question and still trusted him.

I’m writing this four weeks after my bowel operation. Thanks to a skilled surgeon and God’s goodness it was a success. The prognosis is good. Other blessings have come about. I’m self employed, but a forgotten insurance policy has covered my time off work. My illness has given a welcome boost to the process of the sale of my business.

My lifelong confidence on God has been reinforced. Whatever happens there is always hope - whether there’s good or bad or just the ordinary mundane. I do not have to worry about the future.

I had learned this years before when I was made redundant. I was adamant I would never run my own business – but that’s what happened and it has been truly a gift from God.

So as I look back over many years and also over the last few weeks I can see God’s hand of favour on my life. My faith has grown through it all and I am truly a blessed man.