

The Bodacity of Kidney Failure

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid recently told a newspaperman at one of his (Brother Harry's) townhall meetings that, "I hope your business fails." This, of course, evoked a flood of memories tied to President Obama's policies and Rush Limbaugh's broadcasts, culminating in the hope by some comedian I never heard of before or since that Rush's kidneys fail.

I just got out of the hospital, my kidneys having failed for the second time. I was there for a week, which is an improvement over the first time, when I was down for ten days. This time, I still had some red blood cells left, enough to keep my oxygen at an acceptable level, whereas last time I was running so short that the physician who sent me to the emergency room almost reverently remarked that he had never seen a red cell count that low in a living human being.

The good doctors didn't tell my family I was dying -- I wasn't -- this time as they did last time, but everyone came to see me anyway, as did a multitude of the brethren from my church, with whom I have often ridden to this hospital as part of our motorcycle ministry.

The big difference between this trip and the first one, however, was that this time I could barely breathe. My chest (or so they explained it) had filled up with fluids that my kidneys were supposed to remove, leaving little room for air. This was uncomfortable, and it left me so severely short of breath that simply walking across a room left me exhausted and gasping.

Lest you accuse me of sniveling, let me hasten to point out that in all of this, I did not suffer. Being short of breath was uncomfortable, but not painful, and the doctors had control of it by the next morning anyway. Going low on red cells left me tired, but not unpleasantly, and it didn't hurt. My blood pressure's high, but I don't perceive that. My heart seems to be doing OK.

Withal I was not afraid. I didn't think I was dying, but I wasn't worried about it. I'm 68 years old. I've had a great life. God holds me in the palm of His hand. The worst that can happen to me, at least as a result of my failing kidneys, is that I'll get tired, go to sleep and wake up in His presence.

Heck, I'm not even on dialysis, at least not until tomorrow (9/3/09) when I report to my regular nephrologist. If she prescribes it, though, I'm at peace with that too: My pastor in one of his sermons changed my mind about dying and dialysis when he preached that if one is alive on this earth, it's because someone here needs him. I guess this means that if I'm taking that treatment, someone probably needs me on it as well, so I'll no longer claim a right to check out early.

The only thing that might take me out at this point, barring another kidney failure, which I think I can forestall, would be to go onto dialysis until it destroyed my kidneys (as it ineluctably will) then be taken off of it because his excellency the healthcare czar deems that I've reached the end of my useful life as all government assets inevitably do. In that case, I'll go peacefully: For me it's just a matter of getting tired and falling asleep.

Now getting back to Harry Reid: Harry, my brother, with all Christian compassion, seeking only your highest good, I sincerely hope your kidneys fail. I do pray that's the only thing that happens

to you -- I wouldn't wish diabetes or cancer on anyone -- but if your kidneys just crash and everything else holds up, then the worst thing that can happen is that you'll go to sleep and wake up in the arms of God. Not at all a bad way to do it.

You might also wish to consider that you -- like me -- long ago passed the point at which your value to your government and your family became fully depreciated. A kidney failure like mine would spare your nation the cost of painkillers, and you might even be able to enter on your eternal rest from home, reducing the burden on our already overworked hospice system. What nobler end can anyone hope for than to die peacefully and cheaply for his society?

Oh, and could you please pass this on to Speaker Pelosi and President Obama for me? Thank you so much!

God bless you!

Charlie Coombs

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