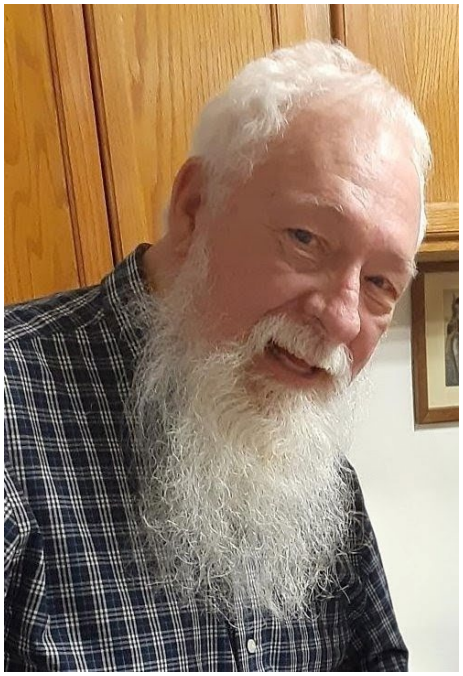
Precious in the sight of the LORD *Is* the death of His saints.



Psalm 116:15 NKJV

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Writing this article is a particular challenge and yet a blessing: my husband, Bob, of 53 years passed away this past week, one day after his 75th birthday. As many of you know, he has had multiple life threatening health issues over many years; yet has recovered from so many! The past six months multiple strokes have intensified… and though he was up and walking again in September, and then again early in December, the combined weight of all of it came to the point that he had been hospitalized or in rehab for a month. He just wanted to come home and "no more needles." The joyful side is that he was aware of Messiah being near and was unafraid. So he reached the number of his days and was ready to move on to the next part of our lives. Yeshua said that "you will not see Me again until you say:

Baruch ha'ba b'shem YHWH! " Blessed be the Name of the Lord! (Matthew 23:39)

The amount of support and help from those around us has been amazing, and sacrificial for others at times as well. So many times I have attempted to prepare myself, not expecting him to survive, yet there he was again, making gains in November that three doctors told us they never expected him to achieve. So our Abba's plan was clearly not the same as the perceptions of men.

Our family has long thought that since Bob recovered from so many life-threatening events, there must be a specific purpose that his life is being protected to reach. So I am reflecting on what that plan might have been…and what are the meanings of this for others who are enduring similar challenges in life.

People ask how I am doing and I can only reply; ok and not ok, grieving and relieved. He has been in health care facilities so often in recent months that I have had plenty of experience with his absence from home yet also assured that he was being cared for. I have had to

“take over” for him and cares before, especially after he came home from the terrible car accident in October 1981. Our friends in the Jaycees and Jaycettes in Mayville helped with the many outpatient therapy trips for nearly a year back in those days. Just one year before that, our eldest daughter was born 2 months premature in October and was in Madison General hospital an hour away. That year His accident was again in October and he was in Milwaukee Regional Medical Complex, an hour away where I was also attending grad school. I learned that we can never know what the future holds so we need to focus on each day…and find ways to be encouraged. One of the things I did then was plant tulips to have something to look forward to…and I thought I would just observe September twice the following year and skip October. Don’t take the future for granted but yet also walk forward into it. (Before the ground froze, I had planted Rembrandt tulips again.)

Again when he fell down 15 steps and broke his neck 10 years ago I had to take over supervising his care. He came to our SAM ministry apartment/office then, too, because there wasn’t adequate home health care at home. In those days he didn’t have so many medications! This current series of events involved daily coordination with all of his health care providers because he required a delicate balance for several health matters. My experience as a hospital social worker kept coming to the fore as needed, but really I have never been a nurse! As a volunteer EMT, Bob had enjoyed his work so much that he wanted me to become an EMT too…I said, no YOU do the “blood and guts” part of getting people into the hospital (especially from car accidents) and I will work on getting them home! Hmm, guess we were an unusual team back then.

All of this disability was a frustration for Bob. His love language has always been service to others, even if he couldn’t always articulate that and I think even when his temper would get the best of him. He appreciated all those who helped but often would at least sit by them as they worked to somehow participate. I wonder if he recalled all the times he blew out the snow for retired neighbors or fixed something for them as he watched others now returning the care for him. We saw community in action and rather than being those who helped others, we both had to adjust to more often being the “help-ee.” Reminded me of this:

Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.” John 21:18 NKJV

As a child, his desire had been to become a priest: thus his attendance at Sacred Heart Seminary in Oneida for high school. He later observed that it probably wasn't the most appropriate motivation to attain this status but it didn't deter his faith. On our wedding night, he led us in prayer for God's will to come through our marriage. He didn't often lead in prayer but the heart's intent still found some kind of expression. Three years ago I had thought he wouldn't survive very long but he was here for our 50th anniversary. Too sick to plan a celebration more than a dinner at a restaurant but here! He later admitted he hadn't thought he'd make it either. So now he was here for our 53rd anniversary but had a seizure that day so I spent the night with him in his ICU room. When he felt despair this past fall, he still knew he had to lean into our Father's determination for the length of his life.

I can gratefully say that we fulfilled the covenant of our marriage, even through some times when it was "touch and go" for one or the other; but never for both at the same time. (I recall Shirley Dobson being asked if she had ever considered divorce and her reply: Divorce? No, never. Murder?……)

All praise to our Father and His Ruach working in and through us or it could never have been so. We had a strong bond of shared faith and values which held even when other matters interfered. In the past, his frustration had at times focused on me, thinking that I was somehow forcing the medical limitations on him. Anyone who knew Bob knows that he would never just sit back and take it but always fought for his independence! It was a relief when he came to the place some time ago that he seemed to really fully understand and act on knowing that I was always "for" him, no matter if he liked what was needed or not. And bigger than that, he had come to the place where he knew that our Elohim was FOR him; looking forward to seeing our Redeemer.

And I have been thinking I need to get up and check on him in the next room every few hours until I realized something. He IS in the next room now, that eternity that we share with all who have gone before and those who are yet coming. And he IS in the perfect love and care of Yeshua Messiah while he is there so I have nothing to be concerned about.

(Bob used this verse as his email password so I know it was in his heart and mind.)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16