

## Column

F. Bland Tucker was not born in Georgia (he came from a very distinguished Virginia family), nevertheless his is a name every Georgian should know. In addition to serving as rector of Georgia's mother church, Christ Church Savannah, from 1945 to 1967 and rector emeritus from the time of his retirement until his death in 1984, he was a prolific hymn writer.

The 1960s was a time of racial tension in the South. His was voice of moderation. While a number of white churches were turning away blacks, whom they assumed had political motives for wishing to attend, Mr. Tucker quipped: "I would not presume to speculate as to why my own parishioners come to church, much less someone I do not know." Thus, the doors of Christ Church remained opened to all during this turbulent period.

But the story I wish to share with you concerns not so much Mr. Tucker himself but his God. It is the story of how the Great Physician turned what could have been a death sentence into a life sentence.

Mr. Tucker wrote up the story in a little booklet entitled “More than Conquerors” . . . that title coming from Romans 8 where Paul says: **“in all these things [the challenges of life] we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”**

The story goes like this . . . Mr. Tucker’s physician in Savannah discovered what appeared to be a cancerous tumor on one of his lungs and sent him to Atlanta for further tests. These tests confirmed the doctor’s suspicion. Mr. Tucker did indeed have lung cancer. Radical surgery was required and scheduled. The prognosis was not good.

He spent the night before the surgery in prayer. What followed, in his own words, was “a burst of heavenly sunshine.” Not only did he have a deep peace as the morning dawned, but when x-rays were taken prior to the surgery, they revealed no tumor.

Sorrow was turned to joy, not only for him but for members of his congregation back home. And so,

he returned to Savannah without surgery for many more years of fruitful ministry.

Without a doubt Mr. Tucker was a remarkable man. His ministry touched the lives of many in Savannah. But beyond and above his own achievements was the God of all mercy and all hope. And that is the way it is with all of us. Anything we achieve, all that we are, is gift.

Mr. Tucker's story reminds us of God's power. The Almighty brings light into our darkness, hope to our despair, sunrise after sunset. Whatever the outcome to any given circumstance, we too can be "more than conquerors."

*O ALMIGHTY God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; Grant unto thy people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Collect, Fourth Sunday after Easter, Book of Common Prayer).*

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