Snow laced the windshield of the Toyota; sleet "ping-ed" its melancholic-sad and frigid medley against the small car's metal sides and roof. Mrs. Forrester, her knuckles white with their grip upon the steering wheel and her face equally colorless, sat rigidly erect, her eyes fastened on the winding ribbon of road which was becoming increasingly slick and slippery and more and more difficult to see.
"Shall I drive, Mom?"

Samuel Forrester, eighteen, spoke for the first time since they had pushed their way through the heavy doors of City Hospital and started homeward.

"I can drive, too," Holly said. Her voice sounded unusually small and strange, even to herself. She dabbed the tissue to her eyes again. She felt like she was smothering. Oh, why couldn't this be only a nightmare instead of reality!

Mrs. Forrester, her eyes still fastened unwaveringly upon the road, said softly, "Thanks, Samuel. And you, too, Holly. But I'll be able to manage. With God's help." Her sentence finished with a catch to her voice. Silence filled the Toyota's interior again. Silence, and sadness.

Wind pushed and shoved the car from the outside. Its velocity was rising. The small car shook and trembled with each gust and the snow became a white blur around them. There wasn't as much pinging against the car, however. Thankfully! This meant that the sleet was letting up somewhat, Mrs. Forrester knew. Her lips moved in a silent prayer of thankfulness to God for this. She sighed then. Her heart felt heavy. So very heavy.

"You're tired, Mother," Samuel said kindly in his well modulated like-his-father voice. "Please let me drive the rest of the way home. This has been a hard day for you."

"No harder for me than it has been for you and Holly, Samuel."

"I'm not sure about that," came the boy's soft reply. "He's your husband. There's quite a difference, I'm sure, between being a wife and being children."

"That's true, son. But you and Holly hurt too. Where love is strong and genuine and true, like it has been in our family, everybody hurts when something happens to one they love. I hurt in my special capacity of wife and sweetheart; each of you hurt in the capacity or relationship of children. And it is painful also."
Holly sat forward on the seat. "Where is God now?" she asked between an outburst of sobs. "O Mom, why did He allow this to happen? Doesn't He care? Doesn't He know how much we are hurting? O Mom . . . ." Her voice trailed on a muffled moan.

Mrs. Forrester, her eyes fastened upon the road and its fastly disappearing lines and markers, said calmly, "Don't doubt the ways of God. Never! His ways are perfect; they are past finding out. Let us humble ourselves afresh before Him and submit to whatever the outcome may be. He cares. Of course He does."

"Then why did He allow this to happen to Daddy?" Holly asked quickly, again. "Oh Mother, I hurt inside. Hurt!" The last word ended on a fresh note of sobbing.

"Mother hurts too, Holly. So do I. But it's sheer folly to question God. Worse than folly; it's evil!" Samuel declared. "And unless you pull yourself together and start relying upon the many promises of God, you'll find yourself on the ash heap of doubt and despair and deep in the slough of despondency and faithlessness."

"But my daddy!" Holly cried. "You heard the doctor's diagnosis!"

"I heard his diagnosis, yes; and his prognosis, too. So did Mother. But that still doesn't give us any reason whatever to question God's doings. If anything, it should give us a greater reliance and dependence upon Him," Samuel said softly.

"Oh, but Samuel, five months at the longest! Perhaps only two or three! Our father! So young; so strong! And . . . and so much like Jesus! Why him?"

"Holly, you must stop questioning," Mrs. Forrester said softly but meaningfully. "God is sovereign. He sees and knows the things which you nor I can see and know. Now, this minute, ask God to forgive you for questioning His doings, and then thank Him for His All-wise ways and His wisdom. The devil uses devious methods and means to pull us back to his side. We must be careful that we don't listen to his voice nor heed his suggestions. God didn't promise us immunity from sickness and disease. . . ."
"But cancer, Mother!" Holly cried. "It's hopeless, with Daddy. The doctors admitted there's nothing they can do." Tears were streaming down Holly's face in shining ribbons of silver.

"Are we any better than the others who are afflicted by it, Holly?" Mrs. Forrester asked. "Does God have favorites, honey?"

"N . . . No," came the barely-audible reply.

"Then let us be thankful, and enjoy every remaining moment with your father which we have left. We can store memories away in our heart and in our mind which will never be forgotten nor erased. And who knows the mind of God! His healing power is just as active and effective today as it was in Bible times. But, should it not be His will to heal, then we must be totally and completely resigned to God's other plans."

Pulling the car slightly off the road, Mrs. Forrester said, "We're going to pray now. I feel the need of it . . . for all of us." In a steady voice she began to pour her heart out to God, asking Him for strength and grace to face each moment of the next months ahead.

As she started the car and eased it carefully back onto the slick road, Holly's hand found one of her mother's. "I'm sorry for what I said, Mother," the sixteen-year-old girl said. "I asked the Lord to forgive me, and I know He has. I want you and Samuel to forgive me also. God doesn't make mistakes. He'll help us through this, I know. I felt His assurance in my heart while I was praying."

"We're all in a state of shock," Mrs. Forrester replied. "But the Holy Spirit within us is a great shock absorber. He tempers and calms every strong wind and tempest that blows upon us. It is ours to give everything over to Him. And to keep it in His hands. Every bit of it, and all the time."

Holly squeezed her mother's hand gently. "Thanks, Mother. By God's help, I'll do it."

The days and weeks that followed were both tiring and trying, testing the depth and breadth of faith for the Forresters. But always, and through it all, faith in God triumphed. Holly and Samuel, feeling the emptiness and the vacancy in the house because of the illness and the long hospital stay of their
father, fled more and more to their prayer closet, as did their mother, and, daily, there was a marked inward growth: a deepening of their faith in God, Whose ways are perfect and perfectly good and upright.

It was less than two months later that the beloved husband and father was laid to rest, his spirit having departed in a wave of glory and a shout of victory.

"I want to die like that," Holly said one evening as the family sat around the supper table. "And I believe, by the way God has helped me through all this, that I'll be able to cross over the same way, when my time comes."

"John Wesley used to say that the old time Holiness people died well," Mrs. Forrester replied. "And the same thing could be said of my husband. Holiness works; it is real, when one has his personal Pentecost. And this, then, makes dying a victorious thing."

"This is off the subject," Samuel said, "but the Handys wanted to know what our plans were for Thanksgiving, God willing. It's only two weeks away," he reminded his mother and sister.

Mrs. Forrester lifted her eyes to meet those of her son. "What would you like to do?" she asked the two teen-agers.

In what was almost unison, Holly and Samuel said, "I'd like to stay here and have Thanksgiving."

"I was hoping you'd say that," Mrs. Forrester answered. "Perhaps the Handys could come here and share the blessings of our day with us, God willing. That was love that prompted them to ask. They have little of this world's goods. And with your Grandmother Forrester coming and my one sister and her husband, the Lord willing, I feel it would be nice to remain here. We'll invite old Brother and Sister Handy and. . . ."

"And not let her bring a thing!" Holly exclaimed, breaking into her mother's unfinished sentence. "Unless it would be her Almond Cake," she added quickly, remembering how delightfully-delicious Mrs. Handy's cake always was. And too, how much Mrs. Handy loved to give and to do.
"We'll buy her the almonds," Samuel suggested. "Their little monthly check stretches only so far. And wasn't that kind and thoughtful of them to want us over there for Thanksgiving? Daddy would be so happy to know that our friends and neighbors are concerned about us and are praying for us."

"No matter how toilsome and hard life's pathway may be, nor how severely tested and tried, there's always something for which to be thankful. There's always time for thanksgiving," Mrs. Forrester said meaningfully. "Take this case with your father: the doctors, and two of the nurses, told me that God was good and graciously-kind in taking our loved one Home so speedily. Doctor Kelly said that, generally, the patients who have this kind of cancer, suffer fiercely and severely. Yet your father . . . my husband . . . was spared most of this. My heart has had its continual Thanksgiving because of this. And, though I am sad and miss my beloved one more than words will ever be able to describe or tell, I am thankful, oh, so thankful, that he is Home now. Home, and free from all sin and pain and suffering."

"You have such a beautiful and wonderful attitude and spirit, Mother!" Holly exclaimed, misty-eyed. "And there will always be something for which to thank God."

"I think Mother is trying to get a point across to us," Samuel declared with shining eyes. "Like what?" Holly asked.

"That thankfulness is a condition of the heart. When one's heart is right with God, there will be-always -- something for which one can be thankful. And this, no matter how dark and depressing one's circumstance or situation may be. 'The Light,' God's light, 'shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.' Now I know that I am using that scripture out of its context; but I am convinced also that, no matter how dark one's night of sorrow and heartaches and trouble, God's Light will be there to shine through that darkness and gloom. And His Light will, automatically and spontaneously, bring with it a spirit of thanksgiving and praise."

"And there will always be time for thanksgiving," Holly said, more to herself than to anybody else. "Thank You, dear Jesus. Thank You for doing all things well."

Perhaps there would be one empty place around the Thanksgiving table this year and there would be one voice, most dear and precious,
silenced in death, yet Holly knew that, from here on out, her voice would be heard in joyful and triumphant praise to God.