

# **70 YEARS WITH JESUS**

**By: Pastor J. Paul Reno**

**Blessed Hope Publishing**

17829 Woodcrest Rd.

Hagerstown, MD 21740

301-739-8585

I celebrated my 70<sup>th</sup> spiritual birthday in October 2020. I have never been sorry one day, nor one moment that I have been saved. There have been struggles and heartbreaks, but never have I been sorry. It has been a wonderful, wonderful seventy years. I want this to be a testimony of what God did to bring glory to Himself and the greatness of God, not of Paul Reno.

Let's begin by looking at Psalm 145:1-10, *"I will extol Thee, my God, O King; and I will bless Thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless Thee; and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honor of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of Thy terrible acts: and I will declare Thy greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works. All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord; and Thy saints shall bless Thee."*

Verse four places an obligation on us. "One

*generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts."* I want to speak particularly to the many of you who are younger Christians than I and have not had seventy years with Jesus.

I was born again on a Sunday night in October of 1950 when I was 6 1/2 years old. I do not remember the exact date, but I remember the details of it. At that time, I was not trying to remember dates—I was more interested in having Jesus!

I was born the first time on February 6, 1944 during a great snowstorm. When my parents brought me home to Wattsburg from the hospital in Erie, PA the snow had piled up to the second-story window ledges of the house! My family had dug a tunnel from the back door to the barn to take care of the cow. That is what we called a BIG snowstorm! It is a wonder they were able to bring me home from the hospital!

My parents had had some spiritual background. As far as I know my mother's father died a lost drunkard. He had been a rich man but lost several fortunes because of drunkenness. My mother's mother was a believer and so my mother had some Bible training. My father had come from a different heritage. On my father's

side the people had come to this country in 1700, probably as indentured servants to escape being killed by the Roman Catholics in France during the time of wiping out of the Bible-believers. There is verbal history going back to perhaps 1000 A.D. or before, involving the Waldensians and Albigensians. On my father's mother's side there was a line that went back to some Jewish blood and was traced all the way back to the tribe of Judah, and then back to Adam. Background can be a help to a person. If you do not have a Christian background, you can begin to establish it now!

My parents were like Hannah in I Samuel chapter one, who, when she had a son, gave him back to the Lord. So my parents offered me back to the Lord and dedicated me for the ministry or the mission field if God should so choose. They did that without consulting me when I was just a babe in arms. But the Lord considers such things and works in ways to accomplish what He desires.

Proverbs 22:6 says, *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”* This verse was taught to us early, because it was a principle in our home. From the earliest days there was careful training to form and produce someone that God might be able to use for His glory sometime in the future.

I lived in western Pennsylvania for about a year and half of my life. My father had been principal of a school there when we moved to Long Island, NY where he worked at a place called Stoney Brooke. It was a Christian school for boys that had been founded by the Gaebeleins. The purpose of the school was to give superlative education to missionary children and others, with a thorough Bible foundation to prepare them to function in areas of service and leadership in years ahead. At least half of their graduates every year would go to Ivy League schools such as Harvard, Yale, Brown, and Princeton. My father went to this school to teach Bible and work in the Math and Science departments which were his specialties as far as education. He also worked with the Gaebeleins to help maintain a solid fundamental school.

While we were there the training by my parents continued. There was much Bible preaching and many conferences held there. Some of the finest Bible teachers of that day came and taught in those conferences. Stoney Brooke is the place that "How Great Thou Art" was first sung in the United States. I had a chance to hear people like Dr. Harry Ironside and Dr. Frank Gaebelein who ran the school. I was exposed as a little child to teaching and

preaching of the Word of God by the hour. My folks hoped that some of it would register in my head and reach into my heart. I can remember chapel services with the young men of the school singing "Holy, Holy, Holy." Of course, the Gaebeleins had a high emphasis on God's holiness and His majesty as a result of their Presbyterian background. From my earliest days, I can remember there being a heavy emphasis on family devotions in our home.

I was taught the need for absolute obedience or there would be punishment. I remember one time when I was not quite kindergarten age, I went to watch Dad coach a baseball team. I do not recall exactly what happened, but I must have caused a problem. Dad took me aside, sat me on a log in the woods, and told me to stay there until he came back for me. I knew he did not want to be disturbed any more during the practice so I sat still on that log. I was within hearing of the game so when I heard them finish practicing and my dad did not come for me, I realized I had been forgotten. It was not long until I heard the bell for supper, but I stayed on that log. I knew the way back home, but I had been taught that you obey or you suffer. Finally, as it was starting to become dark, my dad came

running to get me. He checked to make sure I was alright, and quickly apologized. It was worth sitting that long to see that happen. My absence at supper had caused no little excitement when it was discovered, but I had been taught to obey and not take matters into my own hands. Such training was good for me.

I have memories of a group of young men—the Tract Club—from the school meeting in the living room with Dad. They learned how to pass out tracts in a way that would cause people to read them. Dad often took them to saturate areas with gospel tracts wrapped in cellophane paper to hand out. I was taken to Salvation Army open air meetings in Brooklyn, Jamaica, and the Bronx at night. We went down to the red-light districts and preached the gospel to the needy souls there. Many times, people would take a tract from me as a child in the 1940's that they would not take from an adult. This was all part of my being raised.

One of the things that sticks in my mind was my kindergarten teacher who was a Roman Catholic and needed to be saved. She did not understand about the gospel, but I tried to tell her what little I could at my young age. It did not seem to make much of an impression because I

was from the school where there were no Catholics. At that time there was a big wall of separation between Protestants and Catholics.

It was about 1949 that my father accepted a call to a church where he had been filling the pulpit from time to time on the south side of the island in the city of Patchogue. It was there in October of 1950 that I was born again. God began to deal with me through the preaching, teaching, and Sunday School lessons that I heard. I became aware that having a father and mother who were saved, growing up with family devotions, memorizing Scripture, and being trained right was not a substitute for being born again. John 3:3 says, *"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* Then again in verse seven of the same chapter it says, *"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."* For quite some time I wished to be saved, but the Lord did not save me. As far as I can tell, this went on for a year. Finally, when I was six years old I was saved. If someone had dealt with me thoroughly, I might have understood sooner what I understand now. You see, I wanted to go to heaven and still enjoy my own life here. I wanted to be saved, but I did not



want to surrender. I wanted a Savior, but not a Lord. I believed, but did not want to repent. The Lord kept plowing until one Sunday night after the service when I was in bed, I was weeping, praying, searching, and crying out to God. Finally, my dad came by and spoke to me, quoting a few verses, and they clicked. I saw what the issue was. It was all or nothing. This may seem like something that is only for adults, but it was true for me at age six. It was then that God saved me, and I knew it! There have been times that I have examined my salvation, but I have never doubted it.

Those that believe a cheaper salvation that does not require being born again, but just a decision are in and out, up and down. God placed a witness within that six-year-old boy weeping over his sins in the upper bunk of a parsonage bedroom. There was no emotion of a service or pressure from people. I think there are many people who get saved when they finally get alone with God. They do not need to be badgered with questions and pushed. Many times, there is no one talking with the person, only God speaking to their heart. It is not between you and an individual, but rather between you and God. I learned that when I was six years old, and have never forgotten it.

I remember when I was twelve, being shocked the first time I heard preaching that you **did not** have to have Jesus as the Lord of your life. I knew in my life I had to surrender everything to Him. After reading my Bible more, I realized the Lord deals with everyone that way. He does not have a Plan A and a Plan B from which you take your pick. God impressed this on me as a boy.

I began to memorize and obey some of the Word of God. I realized my life was not just a life, but one that should follow a pattern of the Word of God. Psalm 119:9-11 says, *"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word. With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy commandments. Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee."* The necessity of memorization and obedience to the Word of God is so important if a person is going to be used by God.

While we were in Patchogue, I continued to be exposed to many godly men. Not only did we return to the conferences at Stoney Brooke, but Dad also, as a pastor, had many godly pastors, missionaries, Bible preachers, and teachers come to minister to the people in the church. Many of the men who came to minister in the church may

be familiar names. Jack Wyrzten (he was "Uncle Jack" to me), Dr. Robert Ketchem, Dr. Don Moffat, Dr. Carl McIntyre, and others were often house guests and almost like family. I can recall a time Dr. Spiros Zodhiates spilled gravy on his sports coat at lunch with us. As he had only one set of clothes with him, we had to find someone his size in the church to borrow clothes from so that Dr. Zodhiates would not have to preach with gravy stains on his clothing. Things have changed quite a bit for him since that time.

There were certain issues on which my father refused to compromise. Many times, it cost him greatly, though he did receive blessings because of it. My dad was the chairman of the Metropolitan Fellowship of Baptist Ministers for the greater New York City area. Dr. Carl McIntyre was with the Bible Presbyterians, and Jack Wyrzten had Word of Life. My father and these two men wanted to join together to invite one of the best known and used evangelists of the day to New York City to hold an evangelistic crusade. He had just come from great crusades in California and was holding one in Boston. When they went to Boston to speak with him, they found that while in that city he had been influenced to change his convictions. My father

and his friends came home disappointed after finding that the evangelist would not come to New York unless those who denied the virgin birth, blood atonement, and bodily resurrection would be allowed on the platform to cooperate. He wanted *all* the churches involved when he came to New York City. He would not come under the banner of Bible-believers. He later came to New York under the banner of the others. It seemed he wanted all the churches but the Bible-believers. That was the beginning of the slide of Billy Graham.

My father suffered for his stand when he was accused that he did not care enough for souls. What kind of concern for souls would it have been for him to send Catholics back to the priests, Jews back to the synagogues, and liberals back to their churches to be trained as coverts? As a boy, I heard the many slurs and slanders thrown at my dad for taking this stand. I learned that it is right to do right and wrong to do wrong. The end does not justify the means. I had the privilege of seeing this refusal to compromise exhibited during those days.

I recall my first time going visiting after I was saved. A little Catholic girl lived up the block from us who I knew was not saved so I got on my

tricycle and pedaled to her house to speak with her. I told her that instead of burning candles and rubbing beads she needed Jesus and invited her to Sunday School to hear about Him. To my delight, she showed up to Sunday School on her tricycle not long thereafter. Part of the way through the lesson her parents, having found where she was by where she had parked her tricycle, arrived and took her away, and she never came back. If I had thought of it, I would have parked her tricycle in the back where they could not have found it! But I was young, and there were many things I did not know. I did learn through this experience that if you will witness and invite sometimes you will see some results.

In 1953, after four years at Patchogue Dad, being of the opinion that a pastor should never be in a church for more than four years, moved on. He felt that as he wore down and the people began to take him for granted, it was best for another pastor to take his place. (Obviously, I do not agree with everything my dad did since I have been in my present church *much* longer than four years!) At that time, the Baptist Bible Institute of Cleveland bought a Presbyterian college that was bankrupt and turned it into a Baptist college in Cedarville, Ohio. We moved to that town and my

dad helped in setting up the administration in the Math and Science departments. He also started the Baptist church in town so that the staff and students could attend. We lived in that area from 1953 to 1965.

During this time God spared my life a number of times. Once I nearly drowned, but God had someone nearby to rescue me. Another time I was in a car accident while on the way to a track meet. The student drivers of the cars began passing each other on a very crooked road trying to be the first to the track meet. The driver of the car I was in passed out and when the tire blew, we had a deadly wreck. According to David Jeremiah who was in the car we had just passed, I was thrown out and held motionless in the air against a fence until the car flipped and landed on its top which was flattened almost to the floor of the front seat, then I dropped down between the car and the fence. It happened so quickly that I do not remember it, and I surely was not watching! I do not know what God did, but I know he protected me. Another time He preserved my life when a car almost hit me as I was riding my bike.

Another lesson I learned while living in Cedarville is very real to me still. I learned that

what Hebrews 12:6 states is true when it says, *“For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.”* If you read further into this passage, you will find that a person who never receives chastening from the Father is not a son of God.

Stoney Brooke and Gaebeleins had a special place with my dad. They begged him a number of times to return and help on the faculty and in other areas. They even offered full scholarships to his sons if he would return. (This school was like an Ivy League prep school run by Bible-believing fundamentalists. Academically it was one of the top institutions in the New York City area.) They offered me an athletic scholarship when I entered eighth grade, which would have given me access to that type of education and training, but my father was never led to return there.

I had allowed sports to occupy too large a place in my life. It was in the seventh grade that I became ill, and a missionary doctor diagnosed me with what our rural doctor could not. I had polio. They hurried both me and my father, who was also ill, to the hospital. I overheard what they did not want to tell me—it was possible I would never walk again. That would very well destroy any ideas of sports that I had. I was

learning something about the chastening of God. In 1955, during the last of the great polio plagues in America, if you were diagnosed with polio you wondered if you would be in an iron lung for the rest of your life. God was gracious to me, and after agonizing through the treatment, I was able to walk again. It was months later that I was able to jump and get both feet off the ground at the same time. If I had kept at it, I might eventually have been able to compete in some levels of sports, but never on the levels I had once been capable of. In the eighth grade when I began to have trouble in and became blind in one eye, sports were out of the question. I learned that Jesus will be Lord of our life. I had that pressed home in my life. The Lord dealt with me at the age of eleven, and I praise Him for His mighty acts.

I began to recover, and was able to get on with high school. Some people say that your high school years are the best of your life, but for me they were the worst days of my life. Because of a few stands I took based on the Bible, I cannot remember one friend from middle or high school. There were many religious students in my school, but they did not believe in separation or obedience to the Bible. They just wanted to get along and enjoy life. I learned, during that time the need for personal devotions and Bible study.



I was not called to the ministry at the time, nor was I seeking a call, but I learned that God can use a person.

I first taught Sunday School when I was eleven years old. What church used me? None. It happened on Sunday morning in a four-bed ward at the children's hospital. I announced to the other three fellows in the ward that it was Sunday morning and time for Sunday School. They wanted to raise a fuss, but since all of us were polio or paralyzed victims and could not get out of bed, I told them I would wait until they were done to begin. Each time they were disruptive I started over again. I taught them a couple of choruses, a memory verse, and a Bible lesson. They could not leave, and I was going to teach one way or the other. No one came around to care for our souls, so I taught Sunday School laying on my back in a hospital room. I did not think anything special of it—I just thought wherever a Christian was they ought to be able to have some kind of worship on the Lord's Day. It was just normal and natural to me.

I preached my first sermon when I was twelve years old. What church used me? None. We had a sermon in our home. The Haist family were at

our house and, although he had much experience in preaching, my father felt he should not preach that night. Now, Dr. Paul Haist was quite a scholar. He was fluent in French, German, Spanish, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Sanskrit. Being a little absent-minded, he once turned in his grades written in Sanskrit! He had been the pastor of a Presbyterian church when he became concerned about problems on the manuscript of the New Testament. He studied it and found he had been sold a bill of goods and had been given the wrong Greek text. When he began studying the correct Greek text compared with the other, he realized he had been taught incorrectly about the gospel and was saved as a result of his studies. Here I was as a twelve-year-old preaching to a man who had discovered what the true gospel was while studying in the original Greek! I preached from five verses out of James. I outlined the verses, told them everything I knew, and summarized it in less than ten minutes! God uses people in His own way.

During high school I had a desire to start a youth rally to reach young people with Bible preaching and good singing. I met with several young people to pray about starting such a rally, but as they were praying without planning to

work, nothing came of it at that time.

It was during my first year of college that I discussed the idea of a youth rally with my Christian employer. Two men from the church, my employer and I prayed together about it and started a youth rally that ran for a number of years in that area. I was seventeen years old and considered a full partner because we could each pray and each do what God would have us do.

Shortly after that time, someone approached me and asked if I would run a radio program if they paid for it. I was to use only teenagers to reach teens through the radio. I did it, never considering that it was anything unusual. God had opened doors and I was walking through them. Though I was not called to the ministry at this time, God was preparing and using me. I was doing what Christians following Jesus ought to do—take opportunities as they come and operate in a Biblical fashion.

Several years later, a man from a Christian radio station came and spoke in my college chapel with a message on the call of God. I felt during that message that God might call me to the ministry, and that did not overly excite me. I had seen first-hand what it cost my dad. God stirred in my heart, but I was not going to run ahead. From time to time people would ask me if

I was headed into the ministry, and I told them I was preparing to be a school teacher. My major was in Physical Education. It was a miracle in itself for a polio victim blind in one eye to be a Phys. Ed. major. It was an amazement and maybe even an amusement to my teachers and advisor that I wanted to pursue that major. But God enabled me to go through the program and regimen of training. It was good preparation to be able to carry loads and push on.

About 1963, a girl I had known for a number of years took pity on me and started paying attention to me—at least that is how I tell it. We started dating in August of 1963 and were married in June of 1965. I did not tell when we were engaged, but we both felt that we ought to finish our four-year degrees before we married. (I do not suggest long engagements. They are dangerous but can be survived.) I had been praying since at least eighth grade that God would choose a wife for me. I had seen many people who had picked the wrong person and knew I could do the same thing. I knew God never made a mistake and did not want to risk taking a chance by picking myself. I started early, and I am sure my parents started earlier praying for my wife. I prayed as I walked my newspaper

route, and I could take you now to the part of town where I prayed about a wife. After all, at 5:00a.m. there was no one else to talk to other than the Lord!

At the time I was graduating from Cedarville I realized the degree of compromise that was going on in the G.A.R.B. movement that my dad had helped to found with Dr. Ketchem. I had grown up in it but knew I had to leave it. In 1965 when I left, the college recorded it in my permanent record folder so that there would be no turning back. The Lord led me with some light in several areas that I had not had teaching—concerning the Brethren church and its convictions. Once that was a settled issue, within a year He called me into the ministry. He could have called me earlier, but He waited until I had settled the other matter because He knew what direction He wanted me to go.

The call to the ministry is a very clear-cut thing. Consider I Timothy 1:12, *“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.”* I was introduced to Pastor Henry Barnhart by my wife Carolyn who had known him for years. The first time I met him he asked me, “Are you saved?” I thought it was a strange

question to ask a first time visitor, but I answered that I was. He continued by saying, "Wonderful! When?" He was not going to let me wiggle out of it so I gave him a short testimony of my salvation since there was a line of people behind me. His response was, "Wonderful! Come back if you can." After we had been attending the church a while, he told me he needed to talk with me. He asked me if I had ever prayed about going into the ministry. When I answered that I had indeed prayed about it, he asked what the Lord had said. I was glad to tell him that the Lord had said nothing. Pastor Barnhart then asked me, "Will you seriously pray one more time about it? I have been praying, and I believe the Lord wanted me to ask you." I agreed to do it, and to my amazement, this time the Lord said, "Yes!" Like Moses, I began to explain to God why I could not go into the ministry. And like Moses, God gave me answers and reminded me of what happened to Moses. I stopped arguing before He gave me an Aaron.

Pastor Barnhart had not asked me about the pastorate—only the ministry. I asked him what that might involve. He told me, "It might involve working with young people some. You've been involved with camp work and youth rallies before. Maybe God will want you to be in front to

minister to young people or work in visitation." He took me to the church, and the next thing I knew they had licensed me! When I arrived at church the next Sunday the bulletin said I was the assistant pastor! When they ordered another set of bulletins, they said I was the associate pastor! Since Pastor Barnhart was nearing retirement age I could know what was coming. The church was split three ways. Since Henry Barnhart was the founding pastor, they were going to fight it out when he retired. I was the next in line, had just left the fighting Baptists, and was not interested in getting involved in that sort of thing.

During this time an old preacher had died down in the mountains of southern Ohio. Within the next couple of weeks, the church asked if I would come and fill the pulpit from time to time. I preached on and off in that church in Sinking Spring for about two years. When they asked if I would consider coming as pastor, I told them God had not called me to be a pastor and I was not ready to be one. I was twenty-two or twenty-three years old and without experience. That church had broken the former pastor's heart and I was not looking forward to being the next one. When that church in Sinking Spring called someone else to be the pastor, I felt relieved!

It was while I was sitting on the porch where we were visiting my dad in Wheaton, Illinois, that the Lord clearly told me that I was going to Sinking Spring to be pastor. I reminded the Lord that they had already called someone who would be moving in just a few weeks. The Lord said, "You are going to Sinking Spring to pastor." I thought to myself that I would face the issue when the other fellow left.

Shortly after I returned home, the man who was to take the church changed his mind at the last minute and backed out. He had found out what it was really like down there! The church asked me again whether I would consider the call. I began to understand what the Lord had been telling me while I was in Wheaton.

I ministered in that church for four years. While I was there, I battled with pneumonia and nearly died. At the time, I really thought in some ways it would be nice to die rather than to go on. I thought I had seen, by then, about as much as a person can see in a ministry anyway, but I did not want to leave my family. I learned many valuable lessons in prayer and the leading of God. At one point we came to the verge of revival in the church, but there were some people who did not want revival and a pure church. They only wanted their comfort zone.



In a business meeting one Monday night it became clear to me that my ministry there was over. On Tuesday I received a call from Brother Mason Cooper from Martinsburg, West Virginia, asking what he had asked for several years—would I consider going somewhere else? This time I told him, “Last night God said I can go.” By Friday evening I received a call from a church in Hagerstown, Maryland, asking if I would come to candidate. I went, and by the slimmest of margins on the human vote was asked to be their pastor! God was in it, and I came to Hagerstown in 1972.

During the years in that church, I saw God's moving, but again that denomination was compromising just as the Baptist group I had left. It finally began to affect my prayer life and my relationship with the Lord to be yoked to this group. I had to separate from them in order to have right fellowship with the Lord. Although there had been problems that had to be dealt with in the past, there were no problems in the church at the time. I resigned one Sunday morning based on what was going on nationally. I did not think it was right to lead a church out of the denomination that the founding fathers of the church wanted to stay in because of

emotional ties.

At that time, I wanted to return to New York or Ohio to start a church, but God had other plans. A group of people got together at a couple, the Beatty's house and had a prayer meeting. After praying about it, they asked if I would stay and help found a new church. I accepted, and we have been in that work for forty-three years. We have been going on rejoicing in the Lord.

Back in 1975 I had taken a stand regarding receiving a salary. The reason I did not want a regular salary was that I did not want to be tied to it. I also wanted to understand what it was like to live by faith so I could help missionaries live by faith. While I was willing to accept allowances at the insistence of the church, as far as my income, that was made on a designated basis. There was great concern in the business meeting that I might starve. After twenty-nine years, they have nothing to worry about. I was further from starving than I had been in my life! I have proven that you can pray in what is needed. I had been able to do it without anyone putting pressure on to pull money out of people. I can understand what missionaries go through. Could I raise a family of children without a salary or regular income? Could I meet the bills? Was it possible in

this day? I rejoice to say for twenty-nine years God was faithful and cared for us in various ways. I rejoice at His more-than-ample provision.

I have always had a burden for missions and we founded this church primarily on the issue of missions. I have made more than fifty missions trips out of the country and seen souls saved, people taught, and churches started. We have sent out a number of people over these years of ministry.

The Lord has allowed us to provide an educational program for the children of the church. He helped us build our building without ever borrowing a nickel or running up any debt. We have been able to work with people on translating the Scriptures and getting the accuracy of the translations improved. We have been able to minister in New York and Ohio where I had hoped to go into evangelism to start churches. The Lord has allowed me to do a bit of writing along the way and starting summer teams and send out weekend teams to minister. We are working on a through-the-Bible study. The Lord has opened many doors of opportunity to preach outside the local church. When I look at all these things, I marvel at what he did with a little boy He saved seventy years ago.

In February of 1996 God allowed me to be laid low with blood clots. It appeared that I would not live, but for the prayers of God's people. He raised me up and has allowed me to go on. When it was all I could do to get around the house and make it out to church for a service once in a while, a passage in II Corinthians became very real to me. II Corinthians 12:7,8 says, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." This passage speaks of Paul, of course, but it spoke to me. I asked the Lord more than three times to heal me, but although I struggled against it for three days, this is what He told me, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." For someone who had dreamed of sports, been involved in track, been a Phys. Ed. major, and counted an 80+ hour work week normal; living in weakness was not a pleasant thought. It would mean I may not ever recover the vital strength to run and push like I had before. I wondered, if there was no strength, was there a ministry? Then the Lord said, "...for

**MY strength is made perfect in weakness.” I saw that God was decreasing my strength so that His could increase. I would just have to adjust to His schedule.**

**I had tried starting a Bible Institute, but I was not able to press it through. For the most part the M.I.T. program has had to be adjusted and laid aside. I have not had the energy to maintain the running of a day school. I have not been able to handle the oversight of summer teams like I wished. I had hoped to see the church grow and start branch works, but instead it split and we are smaller. I hoped to see works in New York and Ohio, but did not have the strength to run there during the week and back here for the weekends. I had hoped to start a translation society in America that would translate Bibles for thousands of languages that have no accurate translation. I cannot do all these things, but God is able to raise up someone who can, in His strength.**

**Yet through all my limitations, the church is healthy and making progress. That is more important than how I feel or what my energy level is. He saved me over seventy years ago, not that I would have energy, but that He would have someone He could use to whatever degree He desired, for however long He chooses. I have**

been thankful to be His channel—whether it was riding a tricycle up the street to talk to a little girl about her soul, teaching Sunday School in a hospital ward, running a radio program, or trying to establish churches. I have seen amazing times of God's protection when I faced potential death ministering in hard places. I have seen God open amazing opportunities. God watches out for His people in amazing ways!

I can testify that, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Phil. 4:13) I may be in weakness, but His strength is great and when we look to Him we can rejoice. I do not know how many more years I have to minister or what the Lord will want of me in the future. I do not have to know. I just know that for seventy years, through battles, struggles, and heartaches, I have enjoyed victory in the Lord Jesus Christ. He causes us always to have the victory. “We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” (Romans 8:37) If our bodies are weak it gives a chance for Him to show how strong He is. There have been times that I could not make it to the platform or through the message but for the grace of God. “My strength is made perfect in weakness.” His strength is not made perfect in our strength, but in our weakness. God burned

that verse into my heart during those three days on a couch in my living room. I am not angry or upset, but rather, I am here to glorify the One whose strength is made perfect in weakness. It is a wonderful way to live when you have a Savior like that. You love and serve Him and watch how He still works.

I recommend Jesus to each of you. He is not a harsh taskmaster. One day I am going to see Him and have an incorruptible, immortal body. I will be able to sing and shout His praises throughout eternity. In the meantime, I am able to see His strength made perfect. What a wonderful privilege! I do not know what is in the future, but I know Who holds it, and I rejoice in that!