

Chapter 9

COUNTING THE COST

Preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the nations of the world is at once both overwhelmingly fulfilling and extremely unpopular.

Through my more-than fifty years of ministry, I have had the privilege of preaching the Gospel, face-to-face, to as many people as any man in history. Every day, I stand in awe of the tremendous grace God has shown on my life. I would be overwhelmed by His providence if I had only been allowed to stand by as someone else was preaching to all those people – Just to witness the power of God in such a real way day after day, night after night, is more momentous than any other experience I could imagine anyone having in their entire lifetime.

Many times, as I read the newspaper, I am reminded of the lives of the rich and famous, and obviously envious newspaper reporters and television talking heads gushing over the lifestyles of the people who have been made famous by a world starving for entertainment to block out the nagging in their souls from not having a relationship with the living Christ.

I can take the example of Bill Gates, CEO of Microsoft Corporation, who at this writing is the wealthiest man in the world. At one point in 1999, Gates' wealth was estimated at more than 100 BILLION dollars. That means Bill Gates could give fifteen dollars to every man, woman and child alive on the face of the planet and still have more money left over than most people will earn in a lifetime.

But I would not take the wealth of Bill Gates in exchange for the tremendous triumphs God has allowed me to witness through the years: the salvations, the healings, the deliverances...the army of more than one million Nationals raised up around the world.

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Through all the challenges and tragedies I've faced in my life, I have never failed to see God change that challenge or tragedy into a testimony of His ever-gentle power and grace in operation in the lives of men. God's hand is always at work, and though tragedies occur, He is ever standing ready to change those tragedies into both learning experiences and triumphs in the spirit.

I am brought to mind of the words penned by another Jew who lived almost two-thousand years before me. This Jew was beaten, stoned, dragged, spit upon, jailed, derided, lied about and mocked, but instead of lashing out at the people who were persecuting him, this Jew exhibited the character the Lord had so carefully instilled in him when he wrote these words:

"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities." (II Corinthians 11:24-30)

Through more difficult circumstances than we can imagine, Paul forever glorified God in his infirmities and trials.

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Peter and John also exemplified the attitude God desires to engender in us when they were beaten for preaching the Gospel:

“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” (Acts 5:41, 42)

Throughout the decades of my ministry, countless people have asked me over and over again a very similar question: “Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?”

After so many years in the ministry, I only have one answer to that question: The things that seem to be the bad situations we endure through the grace of God work tremendous maturing in us, and allow us to witness firsthand the miraculous delivering power of the living God.

From the time of my very first overseas crusade in Athens, Greece, I found out what it was to face opposition to the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When I arrived in that country, the people who were there were dejected, resigned to the fact that the government was a higher power that they simply could not move at all.

But in my young life filled with the deliverances and miracles of God, I had learned one lesson if nothing else: What seems to be the immovable object is always proven to be moveable when it meets the truly irresistible force, the hand of the living God.

In the natural, the first reaction of many people to a situation like we faced in Greece is to immediately go through the proper channels, barking your way up the tree of bureaucracy until you finally find someone who will listen and then continue barking until you find someone who can change things. But God has never operated that way, and

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though I was just a young man, I knew that about God; I knew that He had His own way of solving problems.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places...” (Ephesians 6:12).

Though I did not fully understand the concept of spiritual warfare at that time, I understood that I served a God who could change things, a God who was able to break down any door and open any heart.

So while the natural inclination was to seek the remedies of this world, God led me to hole myself up in the little hotel room I rented and pour my heart out to Him day and night until He moved.

“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily...” (Luke 18:7-8)

The battle was won, not in the courtrooms of Greek judges who would interpret arcane laws and render whatever judgments they desired, but in the court of the supreme Judge, who answered the cries of His servant.

It was a lesson that would stick with me for the rest of my life. When our natural inclination is to rely upon the men and women we believe can help us, God’s admonition to us is to rely upon Him:

“Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord...Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is” (Jeremiah 17:5, 7)

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When the Lord is our hope, no man, no army, no government, no natural law, no natural wisdom can defeat us – we are His army fighting a battle He has called us to...we WILL prevail!

Though Greece was a challenge and certainly a hurdle, I wouldn't find out what a real run-in with the forces of man's armies could be, until my crusades in Brazil and Argentina in 1966.

I was in a crusade in Fort Aleza, Brazil, pouring out everything in my body into the crusade for ten days. In those days the meetings would go long and we would have day meetings and night meetings and afternoon meetings. Our custom was to go from one meeting to the next to the next until we ran out of money, and then we would come home.

We were scheduled to minister in Mar Del Plata, Argentina – my first meetings in Argentina – after the meetings in Fortaleza, but after ten days of meetings in Fortaleza, I was completely exhausted, so I prayed to God and said, "Lord, I've got two or three days before the Mar Del Plata meeting – I really need some place to rest."

A strange thing happened while I was praying. The Lord showed me a vision of a hotel near the water (Mar Del Plata is on the sea). This hotel had a balcony and a room off the balcony, so I called my Crusade Director Clair Hutchins and sent him to Mar Del Plata, and told him of the place the Lord was preparing for me to rest for two days, and told Clair I would join him after he got to Mar Del Plata.

Clair went to Mar Del Plata and found the very picturesque little French hotel on the side of a hill and asked if they had the room I had described, and the people at the hotel said they did.

The room was just as I described in the vision. Clair booked the room, and as soon as I was done in Fortaleza, the

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Lord gave me two beautiful days of sitting on that balcony, praying, communing and writing.

The first night of the meeting in Mar Del Plata, the police had been notified to close the meeting down. We were on an open field. The man they sent to arrest me was standing on the grounds. The meeting had been going on two or three days, with incredible intensity building throughout the city. Many of the strong religious people in the city were persecuting the meetings because the vast majority of their people were coming to the services.

About the third night, the meetings were really going strong. A policeman had brought his blind daughter, who he had standing by his side. Suddenly, the little girl looked up at her father and said, "Daddy, I can see."

The policeman broke into tears when he saw the incredible miracle God had wrought in his little daughter.

At the same time, all sorts of miracles were going throughout the meeting, with canes and crutches flying as people who no longer needed them discarded them.

The policeman, who had been sent to arrest me, was afraid to touch me because of the miraculous power God had demonstrated through the healing of his daughter.

The next day, a police wagon drove up to the hotel and policemen got out and came up and asked for me, so I came down from the room and the policemen looked at me sorrowfully.

"We're sorry," one of the policemen said. "We don't want to do this, but we're under orders, we have to arrest you."

They took me to the station, and I was there all day from the early morning at least ten hours being interrogated by the chief of police. Finally, the policeman whose daughter was healed testified, and the police chief said, "We're going to let you go, there's no reason to arrest you – none of the charges against you can be upheld, you are only speaking God's Word."

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So about 7 p.m., they let me go, and I went right to the meeting – we never missed a meeting – and God moved mightily. The blind saw, the deaf heard, the crippled walked and thousands were brought to Christ.

That was the beginning of all the troubles we faced in Argentina. The next place we went was Rosario, Argentina, where a good friend of a friend of mine, Nels Kastberg, was laboring in the Gospel as a missionary for the Assemblies of God of Sweden.

My dear friend, who was the leading Assemblies of God missionary in Porto Alegre, Brazil, had told Nels, “Please, please invite Morris Cerullo to your city – God’s power will break your city wide open.”

As we prepared for the salvation, miracle, healing crusade in Rosario, we could tell the going would not be easy in Rosario, which at the time had only thirty-five or so Pentecostal believers in a city of more than two million people. We had no workers, ushers or counselors.

My associate minister, Argemiro Figuiro, had gone ahead of me to prepare the crusade, to rent the football stadium, which would hold eighty-thousand people, to place the advertising in local newspapers and to set up all the hundreds of details that had to be arranged for my overseas crusades.

When Argemiro went about to place the advertisements in the newspapers, radio and television, he began to encounter strong resistance. Everywhere Argemiro went, the story was the same: “No, we will not run that ad for you.”

Rosario, like much of South America, was predominantly Roman Catholic, and these media outlets had never published any Protestant literature, and they weren’t about to start with this minister from America.

Argemiro and I discussed the matter at great length and we prayed earnestly about the situation when we had a

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breakthrough revelation – we believed God was telling us that Argemiro should go to the Catholic bishop of Rosario.

Argemiro approached the Catholic bishop with our problem, believing that God would provide the breakthrough we needed. After long hours of talking and much negotiation, the bishop agreed to help us with our problem and sent his personal secretary with Argemiro to the media outlets to recommend that they accept our paid advertising.

Those advertisements would turn out to be part of the initial victory of the Rosario adventure...they testified that God's servant would be coming to Rosario to teach that Jesus Christ is alive – that He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

These advertisements may not seem like much in our day and age of ever-more shocking television and print ads, but in November of 1966, ads that promised to show that Christ was alive were very provocative, and they piqued the interest of hundreds of thousands of people in Rosario.

Everything seemed to go smoothly until I arrived in Rosario. The police had been very cooperative, but that Saturday, Rev. Kastberg received a notice that the meeting we were planning on holding in the football stadium had been banned and was not to be conducted under any circumstances.

In the notice, the police stated that they would not be able to contain such a huge crowd as was certain to assemble for the meeting, therefore they could not allow it to proceed.

At this point, I didn't know of the troubles. My ministry team, which included Argemiro, The Rev. Alex Ness and Clair Hutchins, snapped into action and went to the local authorities to discuss why our crusade permit had been invalidated.

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But the negotiations were to no avail. The chief of police had gone into seclusion for the weekend and could not be reached. He had left strict directions that no circumstances would be acceptable for changing his orders that the meeting be stopped.

My ministry team, Alex Ness and Clair Hutchins, were already gone, preparing the meeting. When they arrived at the stadium, there were tens of thousands of people waiting for the stadium doors to open three hours ahead of the meeting.

The entire place was blockaded with sawhorses and guarded with machine guns, halftracks with mounted machine guns on their jeeps – stationed all around the stadium. You couldn't get within three or four blocks of the stadium.

Alex went to the stadium's front doors and found padlocks on them. The chief of police and his guard were at the stadium gates.

In my hotel room, I was in prayer and I heard a knock on the door. When I opened the door, my overseas Crusade Director, Clair Hutchins was standing outside my hotel room. He described for me the mayhem that was happening at the football stadium.

"Brother Cerullo," Clair said to me, "we've tried everything, and there's no way they're going to let us hold this meeting."

I looked at Clair and said, "follow me."

Clair never said a word, he simply fell in behind me.

We went to the barricade and walked right through them. At the barricades, a guard looked at us forebodingly and raised his gun and pointed it at us, spoke to the us.

"You cannot go any further," he said in Spanish, I found out later.

"I don't understand Spanish; I only speak English," I said as I continued to pass through the barricade.

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As I continued to walk forward, it was like the Pied Piper. People all over the crowd recognized me and began calling out my name, and one by one at first, they began to follow me over the barricade, then more, and finally, it was a sea of thousands of people passing over the barricades.

All around me, people with tremendous needs were gathered together. They had been drawn by advertisements that promised, "The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk."

And everywhere I looked all around me, I could see throngs of people who were depending upon those promises being true. On the left was a man with crutches, his leg gnarled and withered, his eyes big with expectation of something supernatural. On the right, a woman was holding the arm of a relative, her eyes whited out by blindness that had certainly afflicted her for a very long time. In front of me, men were communicating with each other using only their hands, signifying to me that they were deaf or mute or both.

My heart began to be moved with compassion for the crowds. So many needs were represented. So many faces filled with sorrow, pain and hunger for knowledge of God. So many lost souls were gathered at the gates of a football stadium, expecting a minister from America to show them that Jesus Christ was still alive.

As I and the massive crowd behind me arrived at the front of the stadium's gates, the police formed a human chain to keep us back. The police were now looking directly into the faces of the people who had gathered. They saw the needs, the desire and the expectation in the eyes of the people, and many of the police began to weep openly. I also was moved to tears by the tremendous expectancy of the people and the sheer mass of needs that were represented in this throng of ten-thousand people who had gathered around me.

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Many of the police murmured to each other of their dissatisfaction with the fact that they had to keep these people from being ministered to.

Some high-ranking officers of the police force were nearby and they were sympathetic to our cause, but their hands were tied; they could not reverse the orders of the chief of police. I was forbidden to speak at all.

Rev. Ness made his way through the crowd, and I asked him what the verdict was in the negotiations about letting us hold the meeting.

Rev. Ness just shook his head and let me know that the situation had not changed.

I got up on top of a Jeep and, using a megaphone, I announced that I would move the meeting.

We had put up a huge tent seating two-thousand people, which was to be our daytime convert class. The tent was on our grounds, and the police couldn't do anything about us holding a meeting there.

I told the people that the meeting would move to the tent.

By the time the meeting in the tent started, you couldn't get within half a block of the place, it was so jammed with people singing and rejoicing. We had a powerful service that night, with incredible healings and salvations.

Right after that, the police stopped me and told me I couldn't preach any more, placing me under house arrest and forbidding me to preach, but that tent became the rallying place. Morning, afternoon and night, for more than a year, you couldn't get anywhere near that tent for the crush of people who came there to be ministered to. That tent became a soul-saving healing station. People were getting saved and healed every day by the hundreds – all through the local National ministers.

Afterward, Rev. Kastberg had to buy a theatre that could hold two-thousand people; and from nothing, in one year,

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he was pastoring a church of more than twenty-five hundred people.

From there, they started dozens of churches all over Rosario.

The next year, I came back to Rosario to hold another crusade. (But I first had to go to trial over the first arrest.)

I went into court and faced all my adversaries – most of whom were doctors – who were there, accusing me of practicing medicine without a license because of all the great healings God had wrought.

The magistrate asked me if I had an attorney present, and I answered that I did. The magistrate then asked where my attorney was.

“Right here,” I said.

Of course, the man looked at me as if I had lost my marbles.

But he decided to have the trial anyway, and the trial began, with my accusers laying out the charges against me.

When time came for me to make a defense, the judge said to me, “Do you or your attorney have anything to say?”

“Yes, we do, your honor,” I replied.

I started from the Book of Genesis and told him how God created man and how man fell and how sin, sickness and death came into the world as a result of man’s disobedience.

I then told him how God did not leave man under the curse, but how He made a plan for man to be redeemed and how Christ paid the price for sin, sickness and death and now we have eternal life through Him.

The judge paused, slammed the gavel down and spoke:

“This man is not practicing medicine without a license,” the judge said, looking sternly at my accusers. “This man is a minister of the Gospel. Go preach.”

We went right from there and started our second crusade in the same stadium. We were there for five days; the place was packed with forty-to-fifty-thousand people every night.

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There were incredible salvations and awesome healings, with the blind seeing and the deaf hearing and the lame walking.

I had never felt such expectancy from a group of people, such a receptiveness. Thousands and thousands of people crammed the stadium, and thousands upon thousands answered the call for salvation.

Argentina was not the only country that offered hurdles for me to overcome and turn into chapters of the book of Acts through the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

In 1981, God had called us to go on a Central American Journey of Love, visiting every country in Central America, South America, Bogota, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina – holding mass crusades every night. In the daytime, we held training services for believers.

As we came into Nicaragua, when we landed, our plane was surrounded with Jeeps and machine guns in the hands of Nicaraguan police, who took us off the plane and into a waiting area. My ministry team stayed outside as the police took me into an office where they started to interrogate me for hours, barraging me with question after question.

In the room, they questioned me over and over again, with the same type of questions: “How long have you worked for the CIA? Why are you here to spy? Why did your government send you here? What’s your opinion of the revolution? What’s your opinion of General Ortega? (Gen. Ortega then was the president of Nicaragua).”

For three hours, they barraged me with question after question. Everyone in the room besides me seemed to be chain-smoking cigarettes, blowing the smoke in my face. Behind the interrogator and his interpreter were Communist posters and pictures of Communist leaders.

As they were interrogating me, the crusade team was seated in the airport terminal at gunpoint. If they tried to get

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up from their seats, they were quickly pushed back down by armed guards.

While the interrogation was going on, a few men took the keys to our airplane and began going through it.

As they went through our plane and got the names and addresses of all the Nationals we had registered in morning believers' services through Central America and South America – tens of thousands of names and addresses had fallen into the hands of Communists. They also had taken my Bible, which I had used for years in meetings throughout the nations of the world. They confiscated everything.

When the Communists finished interrogating me, they demanded that we leave Nicaragua immediately – that we all get on the plane and leave right then, without refueling.

We did not know if we would have enough fuel to get to a safe place.

When I got to the plane, my team told me what was missing. I refused to get on the plane.

"I'm not getting on this plane," I said, to the soldiers, "until you return those names and you return my Bible."

The soldiers began pushing and shoving me toward the plane, but I was pushing and shoving right back.

"I'm not getting on this plane," I said.

Hector, our Spanish-speaking pilot spoke to Lowell Warner, our technical director, and said, "You better tell Rev. Cerullo to get on this plane because that guy just said, 'If he doesn't get on the plane, shoot him and leave him there.'"

Lowell grabbed me and pushed me toward the plane, forcing me up into the airplane, and we took off immediately. Right away, Hector noticed that something was wrong; the radar wasn't working, indicating that something might be on the radar dome.

Lowell reached down into the radar dome and found nothing, but the radar still wasn't working so Lowell, who

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normally is very reserved, hit the radar screen with his hand and said, "In the Name of Jesus!" and the radar blipped on! But we weren't out of danger yet.

The plane was desperately low on fuel. We had to declare an international fuel emergency, and a military airport at Tegucigalpa, Honduras, received our distress call and turned on their runway lights. The airport was cradled in mountains, so it wasn't supposed to be used at night, but we were desperate.

As Hector made the approach to the runway, the lights on the runway went out. He couldn't understand why they would turn the lights out, but he began to lower our landing gear anyway to prepare for a landing – we had no fuel to continue anywhere else.

When the landing gear came down, the landing lights automatically turned on, and the first thing everyone heard was Lowell, shouting, "Those are trees!"

Hector immediately pulled back on the plane's controls, and we veered up over the mountain, which we had somehow managed to nearly fly into. Another fifteen seconds, and we would have plowed into the side of the mountain.

When we landed, Honduran military officers met our plane. Not only had we landed at an unauthorized military airport after the airport hours, we were coming in from Nicaragua, which aggravated suspicions in Honduras.

But as soon as we had deplaned, we noticed the spirit in Honduras was completely different. The soldiers treated us with the utmost respect. We held our meetings in Honduras as scheduled with more than forty-thousand present, and while we were there, I was frantically on the phone to the U.S. Consulates and our people in authority in Nicaragua to get our list of people back. I was trying to call directly to General Ortega, and through some miracle, I did get through directly to the general. I told him what had happened, because I had

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heard he had some Christian leanings. He told me on the phone not to worry, the whole incident had been a mistake, and he would see that everything taken from me would be sent back to me.

When I got to San Diego after finishing the tour, my Bible and every name and address had been returned.

God used that situation to strengthen our School of Ministry graduates in both Nicaragua and Honduras, and a tremendous wave of God's power still is working in those countries today.

In Bele Horizonte, Brazil, I was scheduled to preach a crusade, and this time, my son, David, had come along to help with some of the arrangements.

While we were in the hotel, a cadre of secret police approached David in the lobby. They knew instantly who he was. The policemen approached David and began demanding his passport and the passports of every person on our ministry team. They also demanded that David tell them where I was.

David bravely refused to give the men any information.

"I'm an American citizen," David told the secret police. "Show me some authorization for what you're demanding. What authority do you have to ask for my passport?"

The men flashed their badges at my son.

"Badges aren't good enough," David said. His face was now less than a foot away from the chief secret police officer's. "I need some paperwork from some authority saying that you can demand our passports."

"I don't have the authorization," the man told David. "But I will get it. You tell your father that if he holds his meeting tonight, he will be arrested and I will put you all in jail. I will be back."

Immediately after he was sure the secret police had left the hotel, David instructed the hotel staff that they were not

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to divulge any information to the secret police, and then he came quickly to my room.

“Dad,” David said, a worried look on his face. “I just had a run-in with the secret police. They said if you hold the meeting tonight, they’ll arrest you on the spot, haul you to jail and have us deported.”

I looked at David and said, “Okay.”

David’s mouth dropped open. He was flabbergasted.

“Okay what?” he said. “What do you want us to do?”

“Nothing,” I replied. “We’re going to do what we came to do.”

I understood that we could not fight this natural battle. If the men did indeed come back with authorization, there was nothing in the natural we could do to stop them. If they hauled us off to jail, they could only do to us what God allowed. We were completely in the hands of our Father, and I was not worried. I had faced this many times.

“Dad,” David said, concern in his voice and a worried look on his face. “Why don’t you pick a National tonight and let him minister. You do it all the time in your Schools of Ministry where you raise Nationals up to train them to minister, and I can’t think of a better time to let a National preach than now.”

I looked at my son. I am so proud of him; he is the best son a father could ask for. His concern was for me, for my welfare, because he knew the secret police would be back and he didn’t want me to be arrested.

“David,” I answered, “I’m not going to do that. If I don’t go and do what God sent me to do tonight, and if I’m not willing to face whatever might come, how can I expect these Nationals to have any more backbone, or any more faith, or any more courage than what I’m prepared to demonstrate myself? I have to go and do what we came to do. If they

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arrest me, they'll just have to arrest me. If they want to kill me, I'm consecrated to death."

David's eyes welled up with tears as he agreed, and we began making preparations for that night's meeting.

When we left the hotel and got into the cars on the way to the meetings, David got in the car with me. We prayed on the way there, but we weren't prepared for what we saw when we got to the meetings.

When we arrived, it looked like someone was preparing for a major war.

Hundreds of soldiers were gathered outside the arena, with half-tracks and machine gun nests, complete with sand bags and high-powered automatic weapons.

They literally looked like they expected us to be an armed insurrection force instead of less than a dozen people on a mission to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Every entrance and exit was covered, with weapons everywhere.

And as we approached the gate, the driver turned to me and asked, "Brother Cerullo, what do we do?"

"Drive on," I said. The driver's eyes widened, but he drove forward, and we made it all the way through the gates, soldiers eyeing us as we passed.

That night, the meeting was tremendous. Thousands of people gave their lives to Jesus Christ, and multitudes were healed of all kinds of illnesses and deformities. After the altar call and the closing prayer, I left the platform and soldiers were waiting there to arrest me. But they did not touch me.

The devil's plan had been to intimidate us through the fear of being arrested or deported, but God would not allow the devil victory! We made it through without a scratch, and thousands of people are now part of the Kingdom of God because God's strength was exhibited in us.

In addition, God's providence provided a tremendous lesson for the Nationals who were assembled; Nationals who

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would doubtlessly face persecution in the future for their Christian faith. God showed them through my trials that they could stand up for Christ without fear.

In free countries, we tend to forget the tremendous sacrifices made in countries that have more oppressive governments than ours. In some countries, it is an outright crime to profess Christ, and through our trials and tribulations, God has taken the opportunity to demonstrate to the Nationals who face such oppression that they need not fear imprisonment or death.

Later that year, we once again found ourselves in peril of life and limb, but this time an ocean away in Poland.

I had been invited to minister in Poland by the newly-elected president of the Evangelical Union of Poland. He and I had spent time communicating, and eventually had settled on a date in the summer of 1982 for me and my ministry team to arrive and conduct our meetings.

But in November of 1981, God spoke to me while I was in deep prayer one day.

“Son,” God said to me, “the time is now. I am sending you without delay; go, plant the seed of a new anointing through prayer, intercession and ministry in the souls of Poland.”

I began to feel the urgency of God in my spirit, an urgency unlike anything I had ever felt before. The overwhelming feeling all the time, day and night, was “You must go NOW.”

I can’t describe the feeling fully. The only word I can give to it is unction. An unction of the Holy Spirit was prodding me 24 hours a day to go to Poland. I knew that if I waited until the date we had scheduled, it would be too late to accomplish what God wanted to accomplish.

Immediately, I called my executive assistant, at that time Pat Hulsey, and told her to clear my schedule of all other ministry dates. I also asked her to get in contact with Archie

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Dennis, who has now been my crusade singer for more than twenty-five years, and to contact Dr. Alex Ness, who has accompanied me on more overseas crusades through the years than I can count. I sent Argemiro Figuero to Poland to prepare the meetings.

Now, rearranging my schedule is no small feat. Because of the demands of the ministry, my schedule is regulated by the hour, not by the day. Pat put in a monumental effort to clear the hundreds of items on my schedule and secure visas for me, Archie and Alex to go to Poland and minister.

December 8, 1981, Archie, Alex and I boarded a plane and took off for Poland in a serious, prayerful mood. When we arrived in Warsaw, we stepped off the plane to face the most bitter cold I had ever felt in my life. The chill was so intense that the heaviest coat did nothing to stop it. Even the mildest breeze cut through a heavy coat as if all I was wearing was a T-shirt.

Outside, the sky was dark and dismal. Black clouds hung overhead, and everything was only half-lit, like dusk time.

The Christian brother who met us at the airport invited us to his little home, where he had called a prayer meeting with his friends.

When we got to his home, we were saddened by the situation they faced. Food was so closely rationed that even though the family wanted to feed us, we realized that if they did, the family would have nothing to eat for the rest of the month, so we declined.

We launched immediately into a prayer meeting with this precious Polish brother and his family, and I could immediately feel the Spirit of God move, even in this gathering of less than a dozen people. It was at that moment that I knew God had tremendous things in store for the Polish people.

The anointing is like an electric circuit of sorts. The electricity is always there, always present, but it only

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starts flowing when something is plugged in, demanding the electricity.

I could feel these people in Poland wanted to be completely plugged into the anointing that God wanted to impart to them – it was like someone just had thrown the switch wide open, and the anointing was rushing in like a flood. I had been in many meetings in my life, but never before the meetings in Poland had I felt such a tremendous receptivity to the anointing as these precious people had.

Our first service in Poland was in a huge Catholic cathedral in the old capital of Krakow. I can't find the words to adequately describe the hunger these people had for anything of God. It was like seeing a cathedral full of men who had just crossed the Sahara desert, and I was holding a large pitcher of water – the thirst for God was that evident in their eyes.

We preached in a Pentecostal church in Warsaw, and everywhere we went, people literally sat on top of one another to get closer to the anointing and to hear the Word of God. The people in Poland were like children; they worshiped the Lord unreservedly. It brings to mind a story I heard that Christians in oppressed countries are praying that American Christians get a taste of persecution so that the sleeping giant American Church will wake up. If American Christians could get a look at the faces of these Polish people as they worshiped in unrestrained freedom – the only freedom they had in their lives – they would begin to look at their freedom to worship God in a different light.

Everywhere I went in Poland, I preached the simple plan of salvation; how sin came into the world, God's plan of redemption and how Christ came to fulfill that plan.

When I asked the congregations for people who wanted to receive the miracle of salvation and have their sins forgiven, more than ninety percent of the people responded

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and gave their lives to Jesus Christ. Jesus says that angels in heaven rejoice over just one soul who comes to Him; angels must have been throwing a block party those nights in Poland as so many people who lived under Communist oppression found freedom in Jesus.

As we traveled in Poland, the faces of the people told the same story everywhere. As people described their living conditions, they inevitably would break down and cry. Their plight was heart-wrenching, as every aspect of their lives was controlled by the Communist bureaucracy. They could neither eat or drink anything but what they were told. They could not go anywhere they were unauthorized to go. They could not work where they wanted or live where they wanted. Everything was decided for them. In the last service we held in Krakow, a large group of young people fell down on their faces on the floor and wept before God during the sinner's prayer – many of them tasting real freedom for the first time in their short lives.

December 13, the government of Poland declared martial law. Everything was shut down. Telephones were cut off. The media were shut down. Gasoline was forbidden for anyone to buy.

A curfew was imposed, and everyone was essentially under house arrest.

Very soon after the announcement that martial law had been declared, a message was broadcast across the government-controlled radio and television stations: "All public meetings are canceled!"

But I knew God hadn't called me to Poland only to find out we couldn't hold any more meetings. Alex, Archie and I began to earnestly pray that God would open the doors that had just been slammed in our faces.

No sooner had we prayed than another announcement came across the television that said, "We really mean that

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all public meetings except religious church meetings are canceled.”

Because of the providence of the living God, we did not have one meeting stopped or interrupted or impeded in any way! The anointing flowed mightily each night, and the spiritually-starving people of Communist-dominated Poland were energized and born again by the tremendous power of God.

The word in Warsaw was that martial law would not last long, and that we should wait it out and leave after the crackdown was lifted.

But God began to deal with my spirit that we should leave Poland now that our work was done and the seed was planted; we should not wait for martial law to be lifted.

By this time, World Evangelism staff in San Diego were very concerned about us; the lines of communication had been shut off, and they had no way of knowing where we were or even if we were still alive. It was decided that the staff would work for fifty minutes of every hour, and that they would pray ten minutes of each hour until they heard from us; so in an eight-hour day, not including lunchtime prayer, our staff was praying an hour and twenty minutes each day until they heard about our welfare.

Travel was restricted, and everywhere we went tanks and military vehicles blocked the main roads. There seemed to be no conventional way out of Poland. Communication was shut off. Gas was forbidden. Planes were grounded and the airport was closed. In the wee hours of one morning, one of our staff members went down to the hotel lobby and received a tip that possibly one train going to Communist East Germany was still running.

But that didn't sound too promising. We didn't have visas to enter East Germany, and East Germany was at that time controlled by Communists. The Berlin Wall was up.

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People spent their entire lives trying to figure out how to get from East Germany into free West Germany. Some went to great lengths, like one man who so desperately wanted to get his fiancée out of East Germany that he carved out a hole in the seat of his car and hid her there like she was just part of the seat so he could smuggle her out. It certainly would be no easy task to get to West Germany, even if by some miracle they let us into East Germany without the proper paperwork.

But as daunting as the task seemed, we knew that God had told us to go, and this seemed to be the only way.

Very early in the morning, at two a.m., we left the hotel, carrying our bags in the freezing wind and snow for several miles until we got to a bus stop and stood in the biting wind. We walked, ducking the militia and the tanks in the street until we got to the train station.

We had no time to buy tickets to the train, and we had no visas or entry permits to go to East Germany, but trusting the Lord, we jumped on the train, believing that He would let us get out of Poland. War and revolution seemed inevitable.

We knew that it was entirely possible that we would be thrown off the train or jailed for trying to get out of the country during war time.

After the train had been moving for several hours, the conductor came by and asked us for our tickets. We explained to him that we didn't have tickets, but we would be glad to buy some.

The conductor frowned.

"That's against railroad policy," he told us.

We negotiated some more, and finally, the conductor's countenance changed. He looked at us, sighed and agreed to sell us the tickets.

When we got into East Germany, we were praying to God that the same favor He had engendered in the train

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conductor would follow us through this oppressive Communist country.

East Germany was a surveillance state. Everyone was watched, nearly every movement was recorded. Neighbors were paid to inform on neighbors, husbands on wives. Suspicion was the name of the game for the East German government; they were suspicious of everyone – no exceptions.

As we approached the first checkpoint, we were intensely aware of this suspicion. The uniformed guards scrutinized every detail of our party, looking at the luggage, looking at our clothes and our hair. As we got to the checkpoint, the guards demanded our paperwork, but all we had were our U.S. passports. We handed them our passports.

The guard looked at our passports, and then looked at me.

“Where are you going?” he asked.

“We’re going back home to the United States.”

He looked at me, then at Archie, then at Alex. The guard handed our passports back to us and waved us through – with no visas, no permits, no train tickets.

We could hardly believe the tremendous work of God. Angels went before us and opened the way for us, because it was unheard of for the guards to allow someone with no paperwork to pass through a Communist checkpoint. In fact, the proper procedure for them would have been to put us in jail for trying to pass through their country without the proper paperwork.

If they had thrown us in jail, no one would have known where we were. We simply could have rotted in their jail, and no one would know how to get in contact with us.

Instead, the way opened before us like the Red Sea opened before Moses.

As we approached the Berlin Wall, which was still standing at that time, the Communist military soldiers assisted us, telling us exactly how to get through the wall and

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to West Germany – these were the same soldiers whose job it was to keep their own people from crossing this wall, and yet they were helping us as if they were tour guides instead of Communist guards.

We went down one set of stairs, through a tunnel, past a checkpoint and up another set of stairs, and we were completely out of Communist Eastern Europe – with absolutely no trouble!

Many times through the years, it has been said that our ministry is a ministry on time, but rarely has it been demonstrated so vividly as God's call to us to minister in Poland six months before we had intended to. We were the last evangelical ministers allowed into the country before martial law was declared, and some of the first people to leave the country after. (And some of the first to return when the doors opened.)

When we arrived home in San Diego, God gave us another chance to turn our hurdle into a ministry opportunity as a bevy of media met us at the airport and interviewed me for a long time, asking the details of our adventure, wanting to know what we were doing in Poland and how we escaped.

God used that opportunity to allow me to minister the Gospel to those reporters, who broadcast the interview on their television stations as a witness, to a huge audience of people!

Another tremendous testimony of God's providence in overcoming hurdles was when we went to Tanzania while the Red Chinese were the governing force there.

The Church in Tanzania was very small and under heavy persecution. We came in to do a crusade and got a very large field in the heart of town that would hold between one-hundred thousand and two-hundred thousand people.

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As I was praying in my hotel room and waiting to go to the crusade, the ministry team came by to pick me up to go to the meeting.

Unbeknownst to me, Clair Hutchins and Dr. Ness had been wrangling with police all afternoon, because the police had forbidden us to conduct the meeting under any circumstances.

Dr. Ness and Clair had plenty of time to tell me our lives were in danger, but they were very faithful on following instructions I had given them, one of which was to never tell me anything negative before a meeting; let me find out by the Holy Spirit or after the meetings are over.

So I had no idea that they had been struggling over holding the meetings.

As soon as I got out of the car that was taking me to the crusade, I was surrounded by policemen with rifles, and the whole place was surrounded by trucks, jeeps and hundreds of policemen. There were more than fifty-thousand people on the grounds this first night.

I stood up to straight attention and saluted the police who had gathered around.

The miraculous thing was that when I saluted them, they backed off. I didn't know why, but I later found out that they thought I must have been some sort of dignitary, not the guy they were looking for. They saluted me right back!

I walked right up to the platform and God moved incredibly through the service, as many blind saw, deaf heard and cripples walked. After the service, the policemen knew without a doubt who I was, and they were gathered around to arrest me, but they were afraid for their lives because of miracles God had wrought.

The next day, they came and shut down the platform and the crusade.

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We continued the School of Ministry meetings in a large indoor building. The platform in the outdoors area, however, was still up, and hundreds of sick came daily to the platform, even though we weren't holding any meetings there. They would touch the planks of the platform where my posters were up, and God's power would instantly heal them. All around the platform, a pile of crutches, canes, wheelchairs and other discarded signs of sickness began to build up as multitudes were healed simply as they touched the planks of the platform where my posters were.

I returned to Tanzania a few years ago to teach a School of Ministry with twenty-two thousand Nationals from every part of East Africa.

When I arrived, the president of Tanzania, a staunch Muslim, invited me to come meet him in his office. Immediately, God did something between us – we embraced, and God immediately formed a bond of friendship between us. We talked and talked for a long time, and finally I asked to pray for him. I told him about the School of Ministry.

"As president of this nation," I said, "you should be there."

Immediately, his aides – all of whom were Muslim – began to come up with excuses why the president could not go to the School of Ministry. But the president looked at them and said, "I'm going."

When the president came to the School of Ministry, he stepped onto the platform and gave a poignant speech: "I want to thank Father Morris (that's what he called me) for coming to Tanzania. I have been your president for years, but this man has done for Tanzania what I could never do. He's brought us together."

A few months later, he felt the need to resign. The next election, a Christian was elected president over a Muslim country.

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God used me in the early 1980s to really penetrate and open Mexico for an explosion of the Gospel.

We began planning a Journey of Power to cover the capital city of every major state in Mexico. I was at home preparing to go, about three or four weeks before the meetings, as my practice is, and on my knees, God said, "Morris, what would you do if I took Theresa home?"

I was startled. I had not been praying for my family at the time, I had been praying for a breakthrough in Mexico.

My heart began to beat faster. Was God trying to tell me He was going to take Theresa from me?

As I thought about God's question, I knew there was only one answer I could give Him.

I said, "God if you want to take her home, I will release her to you."

I did not want to take Theresa to Mexico with me this time because I felt in my spirit that the journey would be too hard for her. I was scheduled to be in every state in a big, mass crusade and daytime National Teaching Seminar.

So I went alone, and in the very first stop on the Journey of Power, my advance people were in jail.

Every place I went during this Journey of Power, we faced tremendous opposition. They took away our stadiums in every place – we had to fight every time to get stadium a back, but we succeeded in every place.

On the third day of the Journey of Power, I got a call from the hospital in San Diego. My son, David, was on the line, telling me his Mom was in the hospital. The doctors were saying they didn't think she would make it. She was seriously ill, and her condition was worsening.

"Dad, you better come home immediately, we don't think Mom's going to make it," David said.

Immediately, I knew what I had to answer, although it would be the most painful words I had ever spoken,

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especially to my son. God had asked me what I would do if He decided to take Theresa home, and now I was being asked to live up to what I had told Him I would do. I could not tell David or anyone of this personal, sacred experience.

"I can't come home," I told David. Of course, he didn't understand. He got violently upset and I understood everything he said.

"What do you mean you can't come home?" he said. "Its our mother; she's dying."

But all I could remember was that I had promised God I would release her to Him.

Theresa was in a coma. She couldn't hear or see or speak, but she later told me she knew within herself what everyone was feeling. She could feel the pain, resentment and bitterness of the people who didn't understand my reticence to come home. In her unconscious state of coma, Theresa prayed and said, "I don't mind if You take me home, God, but please don't take me home while everyone is feeling this way about Morris."

My entire family was very angry with me, because I hadn't come back to the United States, but I had to put into God's hands what I told Him I would.

I continued to get reports that they didn't expect her to make it.

When I was in prayer at the last place on our Journey of Power, God finally said, "Son, it's all right; now you can go home."

That's all I needed to hear.

I flew up to Mexico City and took the first flight home. I arrived back about midnight and went right to the hospital.

I didn't know it, but the doctors had told our family that if Theresa's condition didn't change, she would die that night.

When I got to my precious wife's room, I just reached over the bed, picked her up and put her in my arms, hugged

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her, breathed on her and laid her down gently and sat beside her bed all night and held her hand.

God wouldn't let me pray – I simply knew everything was going to be all right, because God had said, "Now you can go home."

In the morning, the doctor walked in and examined Theresa.

"I don't understand it," he said. "you've had a complete, one-hundred percent turnaround."

He called me into the hallway and reiterated his complete surprise.

"I would not have believed she would live throughout the night," he said. "But now we can't find a trace of illness. I want to run a few more tests."

A few hours later, Theresa was sitting up talking to everyone. The doctor told us we could take her home.

Theresa was perfectly healed. I took her home the very next day.

But by far the most difficult and painful hurdle with which I have ever been presented in my life was also a hurdle for my precious wife, Theresa, and the rest of our family. At first, we could not see how any good could come of it, but in the end, we realized that God is faithful, and even when we can't see His plan, He can turn the very worst situation into a lesson that can reap salvation and hope in the hearts of multitudes.

God blessed us with three tremendous children; my son, David; daughter, Susan and our younger son, Mark Stephen.

My toughest hurdle was the tragedy that befell our son, Mark.

When I told God I would serve Him and minister His Gospel, I knew that would mean sacrificing my life completely; giving up everything I had claim to, and allowing Him to take over.

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I felt like Paul, who declared: *“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God...”* (Romans 1:1)

The literal Greek for that verse says, “Paul, a SLAVE of Jesus Christ...”

A slave does not own any property; it all belongs to the Master.

A slave does not do his own will; he does the will of the Master.

A slave’s life is not his own; it is his Master’s.

And a slave does not own his family – as soon as the children are born, they belong to the Master.

I knew that as the slave of Christ, I would have to give up everything to serve Him. I would have to dedicate my family to Him and trust Him in every aspect of my life and theirs.

Through the years, it was difficult. I can count the wedding anniversaries, birthdays and holiday celebrations I’ve spent with Theresa on my hand. Every other wedding anniversary, I have been out in the mission fields of the world, fulfilling the call God has placed on my life. Theresa has been very supportive; she knows the ministry of the Gospel takes precedence over everything in our lives – we are slaves to the Master.

Every time I had to leave my children for the mission fields when they were younger, my eyes would fill with tears as I looked back at their little faces, tears streaming down their cheeks, arms outstretched, begging Daddy to come back and stay with them instead of getting on the airplane or the bus or in the car.

Theresa tells me that when the boys, David and Mark, were younger, they were like any young boys, rambunctious and loud. When they got quiet, Theresa knew it was time to find out what they were up to because with boys, quiet means trouble.

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But many times, as Theresa would look through the house to find out what mischief the boys were up to, she would look all over and not find them anywhere, until she heard sobs emanating from my closet.

She would open the doors, and little David and Mark would be clutching my clothes, smelling them and bawling for their Daddy.

I spent as much time as I could at home, and I treasure every second I ever spent with my family – next to Jesus Christ, they're simply the most important thing in my life.

Though we didn't know it at the time, when Mark was in the fourth or fifth grade, some of his peers at school had introduced him to drugs. (Parents who are reading this, take this to heart: if you think your child is too young to be tempted with drugs, think again! The devil's plan is to get your children as early as possible!)

Theresa and I knew something was wrong with Mark, but we did not know what the specifics were. As we prayed over Mark's life, we just knew there was trouble.

Eventually Mark's teachers began approaching Theresa, saying they were concerned about a downturn in Mark's grades. Mark was a brilliant child. We had him tested and his IQ level was in the genius range.

Schoolwork was a breeze for him and he made excellent grades. At school, he would take tests, and every time the tests were returned they would have "100%" written at the top, sometimes with smiley face stickers from the teachers, who were just as proud of Mark as any parent could be.

But Mark's grades didn't just start to decline. Where our son had once scored 100s effortlessly, he was now scoring zeroes. It didn't make sense that a boy so brilliant could fall so far so fast. As we tried to talk to Mark about his grades, he was evasive and we could not get him to divulge what was wrong.

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Theresa and I launched into a tremendous bout of prayer. We prayed every day and every night.

One day, Theresa was on her knees in Mark's room, praying by his bedside, asking the Lord to reveal what was going on in Mark's life.

God moved upon Theresa to look on the top shelf of Mark's closet. Up on the shelf, Mark had a metal canister where he kept tennis balls. Theresa got up from her knees and emptied the tennis balls out of the canister, and out came a vial of pills.

She immediately knew what it was God was trying to tell us about Mark. He was involved in drugs.

It was at first nearly impossible to believe. We were ministering overseas in some of the greatest crusades the world had ever seen. Thousands upon thousands of people all over the world were giving their lives to Jesus on a regular basis, and many more were giving up drugs as the Holy Spirit moved upon them, but our own son had fallen into the devil's trap while God was using us to free so many others from it.

On top of that, Mark was so young. It was hard to believe a child so young could have already fallen into the trap of drugs.

I was away ministering, so Theresa confronted the boy, then flushed Mark's pills down the toilet.

As most boys do who are caught with something they know is wrong, Mark made up a story. He told Mama that he was keeping the pills for a friend, because he didn't want the friend to get caught with them and get into trouble. But Theresa knew better. God had been showing her something was wrong, and now He had shown her what it was.

Theresa ministered to Mark and when I came home, I ministered to him as well. We asked Mark why he had started to take the drugs, when he knew they were wrong.

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His answer was simple, and a clear outline of the devil's plan to entrap children – “The other kids are doing it. It feels good.”

We had raised our son in a Christian, praying, Bible-reading home; a home in which two other children were raised and did not get mixed up in drugs and alcohol. This should serve as a stark warning to Christian parents everywhere – sometimes, even despite the best parenting efforts, you can't control what your children will do. Your best efforts cannot control their lives for them; they will make their own decisions in life, and sometimes they make tragically wrong decisions.

Every day, we had devotional prayer, Bible reading – every day. Our children were reared faithfully in an Assembly of God church pastored by Emil Balliet, with whom we were very close. He shepherded my family and he and I traveled overseas together. He was missions director of the Assemblies of God in Springfield, Missouri.

Though we continually worked with Mark and prayed intensely, he got deeper into drugs for a season. From time to time, Mark would respond, and he would give up the drugs for a while and try to turn his life around; but as the years passed, he got deeper and deeper into the serious drugs, and they got hold of him and took him into bondage.

But Mark was not to be defeated so easily. He knew he was in trouble, and our son came to us and asked for help. Many times, God would deliver Mark, and for a long time, he would be free of the bondage of drugs. Mark checked himself into the Betty Ford clinic for a month, and another time, he went to a Christian recovery center. Many times, after Mark would again fall into trouble, I would pray to God, “Lord, You use me so mightily overseas and in meetings here where You heal so many and You save so many, why is my own son having so much trouble?”

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Mark fought valiantly. He would cry and tell us, tears running down his face, "I don't want to do this. You don't understand. I don't want to do it."

We would pray, and Mark would have victory for a season, but inevitably, the drugs would creep back into his life again. It was like a cancer that gnawed away at him – at times in recession and at times coming on full bore.

Mark fought and we fought along with him, tooth and nail. We asked our friends and fellow ministers to pray along with us. Mark had so many people praying for him, but it always seemed that the drugs would come back and drag him back into the miry clay.

In 1993, Mark seemed to have had a breakthrough. He felt as if he had finally won a victory over the drugs. He had enrolled in the Institute of Ministerial Studies at my ministry, and was working toward being ordained to preach the Gospel and share his testimony of God's deliverance after a lifelong struggle with drugs. He was excitedly working full-time in our ministry in the television department. He attended all the crusades with me and he was studying for ministry.

That year, we took the entire family with us to Mission To London, and we had a tremendous time, both in ministry and as a family.

We came home from London and went to Chicago for a ministerial seminar there, where Mark went with us for the seminar. After the seminar, Theresa and I were scheduled to return to London for a meeting, so we left and went to London.

Theresa and I were in bed at 2 a.m. in the morning after the meeting in London. The phone rang beside my head so, groggily, I reached out and picked it up. It was my daughter, Susan, and she was sobbing heavily.

"Dad," Susan sobbed into the phone. "Mark's heart gave out. He's passed away."

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Mark who? I wondered. It didn't register with me that Susan could be talking about my son Mark – he was so young, thirty-six, and he had just managed to turn his life around for what seemed to be for good. When it finally hit home that my youngest son had died in the prime of his life, I could feel tears well up within my body. I wanted to cry and cry, but I could not allow myself because I had to tell Theresa, and I knew this would be the most difficult pain she had ever felt. I wanted to be strong for her, to comfort her and help her through this tragedy.

When I told my precious wife what had happened to her son, she cried like I had never seen her cry before. I was heartbroken. I felt helpless. Nothing I could say at that moment would make this pain any easier for her. Nothing I could do would make her feel any better. She and I had lost our son, and nothing would ever change that. It was like a physical piece of my body had been ripped from my chest and had just left an empty, hollow thousand-pound weight there.

I don't think I had ever been as sad in my entire life, but I tried to remain strong for Theresa. I knew if she saw my pain, she would break down even more. So when I was in the shower, with the water up as loud as it would go, I wept before the Lord, trying not to let the sounds of my heartache be heard by Theresa in the other room.

Even today, as I remember the pain of losing my son, I cannot imagine the incredible sacrifice of God, willingly sending His only Son to die for the sins of people, most of whom would never appreciate it and would curse Him for it.

The loss of Mark permeated Theresa's and my entire bodies, we felt actual, physical pain, as our bodies didn't want to believe any more than our minds did that Mark was actually gone.

But even this, the worst of tragedies any parent can face, God was able to use to reach out to people who need His

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help. A few years later, Theresa felt led of God to minister at a ladies' conference at our annual World Conference we hold every year.

At the ladies' conference, my precious wife tearfully shared the story of Mark, and there wasn't a dry eye in the place – every woman in the building could relate to how much it must have hurt to lose our son. But at the end of the message, Theresa gave the ladies hope – hope that no matter how long you pray for your children (we prayed for years), no matter how hard you fight the devil, and no matter how dismal the situation seems, you can never give up hope.

Mark's tragedy also vividly illustrated a point God has led me to make for more than four decades, exactly as He shared with me in Lima, Ohio – this is not the work of a man, but of the Holy Spirit. Yes, God is in control. Here I learned to share a fundamental lesson with God's people: Satan is not in control of the circumstances of your life. **GOD IS IN CONTROL!**