

## From Bondage to Freedom in Christ

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*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”* (Eph 1:3). I never even considered salvation in Christ because I did not even know about it. Suicide, not salvation, was my way out. It was the Lord’s desire that I be saved before I was born! What a blessing! Ephesians 1:4 says that each believer was chosen before the foundation of the world, *“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love”*. That applies to myself. It was all of God; I couldn’t have cared less. Through the hell of what I will explain in my story, He was watching and waiting until His time when He was ready He pulled me out.

For the first sixty years of my life it never even occurred to me to acknowledge the sovereignty of God in the affairs of men. How could I possibly not have known this, nor even desired to know? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ..." (Jeremiah 17:9) I was caught up in a life of bondage to law, sin and death. I had turned over to man the charge of my life; eventually, self-will ruled as I rebelled against man’s systems. In February of 1988, when I turned sixty years old, the Lord began to free me from the powerful religious system that I grew up with and lived by for all those years. His work in me continues to this day: "It is God who works in me both to will and to do His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13) And "He that has begun a good work in me will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:6)

### **Family Background**

I was the third of eight children and the oldest girl. My mother was married at age 29, she had 11 pregnancies, two were miscarriages, one a stillborn and the last child was born when she was 46.

There are only vague recollections of early childhood. In those days problems were not discussed openly, especially before children. Sometime between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> child, my mother disappeared for three weeks. Later, I discovered that she had been found wandering aimlessly on

the road, picked up and hospitalized. Upon her return home, a nurse appeared in the house. I was about 8 or 9 years old and from then on I became a surrogate mother of sorts to the other children in the family.

A conscious feeling I had for most of my life was that of being in the way, a burden, unwanted, not belonging. Only when I came to know God as my Father was this feeling replaced with transforming truth. However, this would take many years.

The long and futile self-effort trip began: I needed to be good, better, best, to never offend so mother wouldn't get angry and punish me for being in the way or for being bad. I cleaned house and cared for younger children with no one to look to for help or love. Self-centeredness, fear and anxiety took root. Lying became a habit to avoid punishment.

My father left early on the Long Island Railroad for his job as clerk in New York City and returned tired, ready for bed by 7 or 8PM. On weekends, he slept, avoiding family responsibility. Mother was the domineering head of the household.

My two older brothers left home at age 13 to study for the priesthood, leaving me the oldest at home. I inherited their paper route and in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades I delivered the Brooklyn Eagle newspaper for \$1.25 per week to pay the monthly Montgomery Ward Catalog bill. If there was a 5<sup>th</sup> week in the month, I was rich – I had \$1.25 for myself. I also picked string beans on the adjacent farm for 25 cents a bushel and strawberries for 2 cents a pint. This also went for household expenses.

My oldest brother, Francis, now age 76 remains a Catholic priest – he has dedicated his life to the Virgin Mary. His preaching consists of attempting to bring people to Jesus through devotion to Mary. He oversaw the construction of 2 major shrines to Mary: one in Connecticut AND one in Eastport, Long Island and added to a third Marian Shrine in Ephesus, Turkey. My second brother, John, left his studies for the priesthood and returned home, a shame on himself and the family. He died an alcoholic.

At age 13 it was my turn, to give my life to God and His service. I needed to be a "good girl" and bring glory to my parents. At that time, parents who had children in the religious life, especially the priesthood, were considered specially blessed by God, even guaranteed heaven.

## **Convent Background**

When I departed for boarding school at age 13 and lived with the nuns, my feelings of family of being disconnected and not belonging were greatly increased. On the natural level I existed and even did well in my new environment away from home. Today, as I look back, I look at it as a foster home where I was housed, schooled and learned to relate on some basic level with other human beings. There was little communication with my family. Whenever I went home, I felt more like a visitor, than a family member. In my freshman year, my mother occasionally visited, picked me up, and drove me to visit my brother who was studying for the priesthood in the neighboring village. My father never came. Many years later one of the nuns asked me if I had a father. After repeating this to my mother, she said, "Next month they'll know that you have a father!" And so, he appeared the following month. During these four years we were permitted to go home on major holidays and for the summer.

## **Two Nuns As Mothers To Me**

My second, third and fourth years were spent a hundred miles further out on Long Island, too far for my mother to drive. Life at home was concerned with my siblings who were all attending school. I was away in a safe place. The feeling of abandonment took deep root. I belonged only to the nuns and girls with whom I lived. The first nun I was attached to taught me in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. She took me under her wing and sponsored me into the juniorate (the first years of convent life). Sophomore year when she left the convent without a word to me, the sense of abandonment deepened. In 1943, "good nuns" didn't leave, it was a disgrace, "hushed-up" and treated like it never happened.

A second nun, Sister Anna Marie, the music teacher, became my idol. She had a great influence in my personal and religious development. Since I was specially gifted in music, she trained me to be a soloist and main character in the operettas that we produced yearly for our families and friends. I was one of two soloists in the community Glee Club of 100 voices that performed for the public to raise funds for the order. I became somewhat of a celebrity years later in 1960 when I was teaching in Puerto Rico and produced a long-playing recording that generated close to \$90,000 for the community less expenses.

Sister Anna Marie also taught me to pray. She was a convert to Catholicism and developed a great devotion to and dependency on Mary. We prayed to Mary to bring success in all our endeavors. Sister Anna Marie also encouraged a relationship between the chaplain of the school and myself. God protected me from harm and pain in this situation.

## **I Enter The Novitiate**

We were "separated from the world" by distance, housing and clothing, which consisted of a navy blue uniform, a beret, black stockings, and laced-up shoes. At age 17, I graduated from high school with six other girls. After summer vacation we entered the novitiate. There was no other option presented to me by the nuns, my family or even myself. Most girls continued on at this time. Life even became exciting: we needed to prepare a trousseau. People gave parties for us and we received gifts of black stockings, long petticoats, long-sleeved underwear, a trunk and other necessities. Our uniforms changed to an ankle-length black outfit with cape and veil. We wore a beret when cleaning around the building or working in the kitchen. For a short time we were pretty special in the eyes of family, friends and neighbors.

Our lives were modeled after the laws, rules and regulations and constitutions of the Order of St. Dominic and after the lives of Catholic Church saints. We would become holy and live a life pleasing to God by observing these rules. We were to keep close guard over our looks, thoughts and words, and try never to offend God or man. Since I already had a serious regard for self-effort and accomplishment, I was a perfect candidate for this life, at least in the beginning. We took great pride in observing monastic rules that were a by-product of 13<sup>th</sup> century thinking and the philosophy of St. Augustine. We wore a copy of the daily wardrobe of the women of that century. It was heavy, multi-layered, hot and binding. As the years passed, it became one of many tremendous burdens.

At age 19 in my first assignment, I "fell in love" with one of the young, handsome priests and adored him from a distance. I hoped that he would celebrate the daily mass or give the devotions at the weekly novena. Twenty years later my fantasies were fulfilled when I had a sexual relationship with him between my two marriages and divorces.

## **Self-discipline To Be Holy**

Every day a chapter or two of the rules of St. Augustine and of the constitution were read at breakfast. At other meals the lives of the saints and other works were read. There was silence at meals except on high feast days, and generally all day every day except for a time after lunch and dinner. Never were spiritual matters discussed – these were personal to each one.

During the years of training in the novitiate, our primary goal was to learn effective classroom management and the curriculum necessary to be a teacher. This took 5 years and was called Normal School. 99% of the candidates would staff the Catholic schools. Later, the state required that the nuns have at least a Bachelor's Degree. So in 1950 those who held a regents diploma from high school were sent on to college where life experiences became fascinating. These experiences expanded when I was sent to the Catholic University in Washington, D.C. to study for a Masters in Speech and Drama. Despite the field of study, we were not permitted to go to the theater or the movies – of course these rules were not observed.

For two years of the novitiate the Mistress of Novices taught us the rules and constitutions in depth at 5 o'clock class each weekday. The basis of her Greek philosophy was: "Man, know thyself, all wisdom centers there." There was never a mention of the Bible, nor was Bible study part of our training. Four years before this training, when we entered the juniorate, a Bible was one of the necessary items on the list and my uncle gifted me with a beautiful gold-edged one. I carried that Bible from place to place for 47 years until I finally sold it at a garage sale for \$5.00. I had never read it, nor was it ever required reading. Self-effort was considered the key. Through self-discipline and self-control we would be holy!

## **Years Of Dead Men's Bones**

Once a week we went to confession to a priest to receive absolution for our sins and then confessed our minor faults in public to the community. As my minor faults became major, I learned to lie excessively. Two years prior to leaving the convent, the habit of dishonesty that had been developing, was a major factor toward a near mental breakdown.

In 1947 I was assigned to a convent and large school with a faculty of some 30 nuns, where it was my duty to teach 70 third graders. The superior was paid \$100 per month per teacher, which was used to provide clothing and daily necessities like food, soap, etc. If carfare or stamps were needed, we had to address mother superior on bended knee. To leave the convent at any time, except for the classroom, we followed the same procedure. Receiving your request was at the discretion of the superior.

We had no money of our own, all things were held in common. With the vow of poverty we also took vows of chastity and obedience. Obedience was vowed to the Bishop of the diocese and to the local superior. Under the burden of the law, I began to die mentally, emotionally, and even physically; my life deteriorated year after year. It was a matter of survival. Relying on self-effort to live a life given to the service of others, it took the love of the almighty and awesome God to enable me to see myself as the personification of the Pharisees in the gospels. I looked good externally, but was full of dead men's bones. "As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one." (Romans 3:10-12) The Lord would give me a broken spirit and a contrite heart, putting me in

the very place I needed to be, to recognize my need for a Savior. In time, I would even recognize His loving presence in my life.

### **The Women In Charge And Adapting To Convent Life**

As I grew older, I learned to avoid unpleasant interactions with my superior by squirreling away gift money from relatives or friends before it could become community property. I even did a little stealing on the side. In 20 years of teaching, I was transferred 7 times, and survived 10 superiors: 2 were mentally ill, 1 was senile, 3 were very kind persons, and 3 were just plain mean women. One, with whom I had a personality conflict, had me sent to Puerto Rico. Little did she know that these three years would be the very best of my convent life. I loved everything but the heat; it was hot all the time and there was no such thing in the convent as air conditioning. During this very busy assignment, one of the senior boys taught me to drive. I frequently traveled from one end of Puerto Rico to the other, since I was in charge of the forensic league. I gained a sense of freedom, which I desperately pursued.

After 3 years, I was transferred back to the states. I was still in the convent, but my eyes were on the world where I thought I could have a good time. I was living two lives. For example, while studying in Washington, D.C. one summer, I asked a classmate whom was a Franciscan Brother to take me disco dancing in Georgetown. He very happily obliged. I went to a local store, bought appropriate clothes and we danced the night away. Another summer in New York, I borrowed a red dress and other accessories and joined a priest friend for a night out on the town in Manhattan. There was no way of knowing if this behavior or attitude was prevalent among the nuns because we didn't share our feelings or manner of handling situations.

### **I Leave The Convent**

In 1967 three of us were to leave and the following year 100 left. This was happening all over the country and continued for the next 2 or 3 years. I came to believe that God was doing a work in monastic communities.

My erratic behavior started me on the road to a nervous breakdown. A priest friend, whose sister two years before had had a complete breakdown, suggested that I see a priest therapist who was trained in Freudian techniques. For the first time I was revealing to another human being, all the lies, deceptions, secrets, hatreds, anger and rebellions that were slowly killing me. We never dealt with sin, only feelings. In therapy, sin was an unacceptable concept. What kept me going was the kindness that this man showed me which I had never known before – he kept me from committing suicide. God was using him to keep me alive. Little did I know that 23 years later I would come to know the one and only Person who could set me free from my horrible bondage: the Lord, Jesus Christ. . "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6) On and off these next 23 years, I muddled through 9 years of traditional psychotherapy.

People have often asked me, "Did you never pray?" CERTAINLY! Five times a day, every day, I prayed. We repeated the same prayers day after day as a group at the appointed times – the Bible calls this vain repetition. In chapel the same Latin words from the same books

were repeated daily. We also joined with the priest at mass every day offering the body and blood of Jesus Christ over and over again and again for the sins of man. We didn't know that Hebrews 7 through 10 explicitly taught that Jesus made this offering once for all when He shed His blood on the cross. A prayer to the Holy Spirit included in the Mass on the feast of Pentecost helped me to see Him as the Consoler. I remember desperately calling on Him to be my consoler. This was the first time I had been led to say a personal prayer to a personal God either for myself or for others, even during the worst years. I know now that the Holy Spirit was drawing me even then.

After the first year and a half of therapy, I was able to verbalize my desires to leave the convent. I continued another half year on heavy medication and finally left. The superior that I had then was very kind to me and so was the Prioress of the order. However, I would be jobless and homeless with only THE \$100 the order would supply. Possibly because I looked so sick, my mother allowed me to live at home. I continued as a Catholic for the next 21 years.

### **Post-Convent Living**

I needed to find a job but I never wanted to step into the classroom again. For the last 7 years I had been teaching in an all girl's high school six periods a day, 60 girls per class plus at least one extra-curricular activity. My priest friend had connections with one of the local superintendents of a public school and encouraged me to go for an interview. He also was a personal friend of the psychiatrist who had treated his sick sister after she left the convent. The doctor gradually weaned me from the medication. Soon I was hired with salary to teach 23 seven year olds. My principal was the second kindest male person who came into my life. For the next 18 years I actually enjoyed teaching.

After the first two of these years, I married who I thought was "The man of my dreams". I divorced after five years, remarried two years later, and then divorced again after ten years.

One month before retiring from teaching, I discovered a lump in my left breast. In July I went to the surgeon and in August I had a lumpectomy and radiation. I was also seeing a psychiatrist because I had decided to leave my second husband. He encouraged me to wait a year before making any drastic changes – at this point I was considering suicide again and began taking sleeping pills to cope with life. I knew that if I could sleep at night, I would possibly get through the day.

A year later I left my husband. We had two homes, one in New York and one in Port St. Lucie where I went to live alone. I had many lady friends in the vicinity and we did the 5 o'clock cocktail thing. Alcohol became an additional coping skill. I was still very nervous.

### **AA And The Hell Of Incarceration**

In November of 1986 I met the son of one of these ladies who happened to be in the AA program. He suggested that I quit drinking and go to meetings with him. This was another self-help program with an added twist – there was a god involved. At one of these meetings, I met a lady who suggested that I needed to go to a rehab house. I didn't know at the time that her brother owned it. Sure enough, I was diagnosed as an alcoholic and a drug addict who needed to be in an in-house program. This was a 4-week program with 2 additional weeks for an addict for a total cost of \$15,000. Between my husband's and my insurance, this cost was eventually covered. This was the closest thing I could imagine to the eternal lake of fire.

59 years old, I was incarcerated with 14 youngsters who told of their lives of addiction to drugs and alcohol, of abuse and insanity, the likes of which I had never encountered. I made enemies because they thought I was a liar when my only complaints were of my gambler-husband with whom I could not cope. After a while only one or two of the kinder kids would talk to me, the rest avoided me like the plague. It was an absolute horror. But I learned my lessons well. In class we were taught that: 1) we all had character defects (no mention of sin); yet this was enough for the time being. There was a list of defects and the first was fear, the opposite of which was faith. If you looked hard enough, you would come to realize that to overcome fear, you had to walk by faith. 2) Our lives were unmanageable, we could not manage them, but there was a god who very successfully could. It sounded like a really good idea to turn my life over to someone more powerful than me; it was the beginning of my realization that I didn't need to be god myself! It took a full 4 weeks of class to learn those two lessons. 3) There was a tremendous difference between organized religion and real spirituality. That too made sense. Organized religion had kept me enslaved to self, sin and human systems and never presented the only Way to be reconciled to God, which is true freedom.

### **Amazing Grace In Christ Jesus**

That was January of 1987; my wilderness wandering was coming to an end. I was beginning to see myself as a sinner who could do nothing to save myself, in need of redemption by one much greater than myself. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life for God sent not His son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved". (John 3:16-17) There was new hope in my life as the Consoler Who is the Holy Spirit was drawing me to Jesus Christ.

Just before leaving rehab, I was introduced to a lady named Ann, who gave me a present, a Bible. When I left, she was a temporary friend to me and brought me to the local Methodist church for Sunday Bible class and on Wednesday nights, to the prayer group at the Catholic Church in Jensen Beach, and to Aglow, a gathering of Christian ladies in Stuart. It was at monthly Aglow meetings that I heard about the need for salvation in Jesus Christ. I knew I was a helpless sinner and that Jesus Christ had paid the price of redemption by dying on the cross and being raised from the dead, but I did not know that I had to personally believe on Him, until a speaker in February of 1988 was used by God to bring me to the place of "Amazing Grace". I accepted the gift of salvation and understood the words of Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." Grace, how sweet the sound, I once was lost, but now am found! I knew for sure that Jesus Christ had set me free at last!

### **The Battle Is The Lord's**

As truth was gradually revealed to me through a study of God's Word, I realized that I was a new creation in Christ. Old things had passed away; all things were new in my life. If this were true and the Bible said it was, then I no longer needed to be an alcoholic or to continue to call myself anything other than a child of God. By not professing this, I would deny God's truth and the reality of His work in me. In AL-ANON it wasn't acceptable to talk about Jesus. However, at my very last meeting, He gave me the courage to talk about Him. I lost many

friends; even Ann called me a hypocrite and a Pharisee, thinking myself better than anyone else because I would not deny Christ before men. I became keenly aware of the power of God in my life – that He was there to support me. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth..." (Romans 1:16) Fearing God rather than man, I could leave the battle to Him – the Bible tells us the battle is the Lord's. (1 Samuel 17:47)

## **I Leave Rome And Grow In Grace**

I learned very quickly, too, that God's power could heal, even physical ailments. For six long years, I suffered the constant intense pain of sciatica. I believed that if I asked, God would hear me. So one night at a prayer meeting, I sought Him to deliver me from this pain. The next morning I awoke with not a trace of pain, and to this day I rejoice in this magnificent freedom. In His sovereignty, God uses every situation for good in the lives of those who believe in Him. It is His will alone that determines what is best for us. According to His will, on this occasion, I was healed and He used this to greatly increase my faith. To God be the glory!

I also knew that when He spoke to the woman at the well, He spoke to me also, that if I drank of His water I would never thirst and that I would have an interior fountain springing up into everlasting life. (John 4:14)

Because I understood that Christ had completed the work of salvation, which He was sent by the Father to accomplish, I came out of the Catholic Church where the mass continually repeated His finished work and where tradition and works were added to His perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice. "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Mark 7:7) "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness." (Romans 4: 4-5) The only requirement for salvation is to believe in Jesus Christ and what He did to accomplish our redemption. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved". (Acts 16:31) As believers, we have everything we need in Jesus Christ: "according as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue;" (2 Peter 1:3)

The first 3 Scriptures I memorized when I was saved helped me to grow personally and restore the years the locusts had eaten. His grace was at work as I learned to continue to live by faith.

1. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7)
2. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)
3. "Thou, whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. Fear thou not; for I am with thee. Be not dismayed; for I am thy God. I will uphold thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isaiah 41:9-10)

## **Highlights from My Life as a Believer**



Through daily prayer and Bible study I am being transformed by the renewing of my mind. Recognizing that my thoughts are not God's thoughts, as Isaiah 55:8 teaches, I am becoming keenly aware of the necessity of thinking in an entirely different way. When I give in to fear, I know that I am into self-effort again and not living by faith. A Scripture that has become key in living the Christian life is Romans 12:2 "be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

When I was saved in February of 1988, I was thoroughly worldly-minded. One of the teachers in the public school where I taught in 1985 asked me if I would have an abortion if I got pregnant at age 42. I said yes! At that time I also thought it was a good idea to co-habit with a man before marrying him which I was doing at that time. In 1989 in Israel, God gave me a crash course on His way of living morally. For 6 days I attended 2 conferences a day with a Bible study group that had invited me to tour Israel for the Feast of Tabernacles. Much of the teaching covered the topic: "Be Ye Holy In All Manner Of Life", Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15B-16) I was soundly convicted of my corrupted mentality and my sinful ways. God had shown me how He desires His chosen ones to live.

While going through my second divorce after leaving the rehab house in January of 1987, I needed two things, which I immediately put in the hands of the powerful God I had found. First, I needed an order of protection from my husband extended for one year. I had already received a temporary order for three months by lying about his abusing me. I asked God to give me an extension without the need for me to lie to the judge in court. I had no idea how God could possibly accomplish this, but I was told He could, if it was His will. Well, to His glory, the judge never asked me one question. I didn't need to say yes or no. My husband was asked all the questions and within two minutes time, the judge, granted me a year's order of protection with my husband's approval. I went home, joyful and giving glory to our mighty God.

Then I needed to sell my New York house by June of 1988 in order to buy a condo in Florida. I knew that God would also accomplish this if this were His desire for me. While living in a rented condo in Florida, I received a call from a real estate person who had shown my house one time in April. The wife insisted that she wanted only this house and they were ready to pay cash for it. I flew up in May, signed the contract and paid for my condo in June. Later, I learned from a former neighbor that the couple who purchased my house was connected with the Mafia. I was really embarrassed and wondered why God would use "dirty money" in my behalf? Then He showed me these Scriptures: "I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel." Isaiah 45:3 and Isaiah 45:5 "I am the Lord and there is no other; there is no God besides me."

### **Good Works The Lord Prepared For Me**

For two years, 1989 to 1990, I was able to participate in Aglow's prison ministry to the spouses of inmates at the local maximum-security prison. During this same time, I visited a prisoner once a month. In the Lord's strength and enabling, I was never afraid of the system, which included electronic gates, barbed wire, and guards with rifles and body search to enter the prison as a visitor.

On Monday afternoons, I direct a Bible study in my home with 5 or 6 women attending. Through my local church I have been able to help two young ladies to begin to think Scripturally

about fear and self-effort. It is the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit in me or any believer that not only accomplishes what we ask according to His will, but also "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20) All around me in the pagan environment that surrounds us, God has given me an awareness of so many lost souls. Too often they have developed an enslaving dependence on self or on government to provide for them and do for them, not knowing that God will supply all their need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19.)

The summers of 1996 and 1997, while attending summer school for senior citizens in Wisconsin, God gave me great favor with Jewish people I came to know and love. Attendees at that time were 99.5% Jewish. There have been on-going relationships with seven of them, which included opportunities to share God's love for them and on occasion His Word. One friend, Murray, on his deathbed in January of 1998 accepted Jesus as his Messiah. When his wife called me to tell me he was dying, I asked Murray's permission to come and talk to him about God. Using the Scriptures to share the message of salvation, Murray was moved by the Holy Spirit to recognize Jesus Christ as His Savior. As I plan to visit another person from our group, I pray that this miracle of grace will be repeated.

Most recently on my trip to Turkey during the summer of 1999, the Lord provided opportunities to plant seeds of truth about the real meaning of church. Our Muslim tour guide was shocked to learn that the huge Roman and Byzantine "churches" all over Turkey, were not the churches of Jesus Christ as he had explained to tourists for 20 years. Sharing with him was an opportunity to speak the truth in love rather than allow the perpetuation of lies that deny God's Word. Our group also learned that Muslims consider Mary a great woman and honor her as the mother of the "great prophet", Jesus. This denial of Who Christ is, I saw as a link that Catholics and Muslims hold in common in the ecumenical movement that is sweeping the religious world. At the shrine to Mary that my priest brother enhanced in Turkey, I asked the tour group to pray for his salvation.

### **In Closing**

As a sinner saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, I am free to serve Him completely, to live out the purpose for which I was born. Everything in my life can be used for good. As promised in Joel 2:25, God continues to restore to me the years the locust has eaten and I eat in plenty and I am satisfied. My song is complete, a living praise to the name of my God who has dealt wondrously with me!

From 1994 to 1997 when I had a hunger for Christian fellowship, I traveled to different parts of the country for Bible Conferences. Knowing my need to understand His plan for family, God put me together with Christians I met at these Conferences and during my trips to Israel and Turkey. They have become extended family in a way I never knew possible from my past. I have been able to visit with them and experience the Christian way of life in action. He then led me to a local church that provides teaching, encouragement and fellowship on a regular basis, supplying more than I could hope or ask for.

There is no conclusion; the life He offers is abundant and without end. While I have time on this earth, it is my joy to serve Him and I can look forward to the future with the assurance of His Word. "These things I have written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13)

The renewal of my mind is a life-long process as I make myself available to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, Who indwells me as a believer. The Father's purpose for

every believer is to be conformed to His Son and He has given me the Spirit, Who is my Teacher and consoler.

With my Father in heaven, my desire for each person who will read my story is that they will be saved. (2 Peter 3:9) And being saved, that they will daily "grow in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever." (2 Peter 3:18)