

## God and the Art of Motorcycle Wrecks

Franklin Church of Christ  
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### Introduction:

On Thursday, May 29, my family and I were sitting in a theater at Disney World in Florida. We were having a great time watching a comedy show based on the *Monsters, Inc.* movie. I was even highlighted in it as “that guy” (those who have been there know what that means). On the way out, we couldn’t find Marita. However, once we got out of the theater she found me and pulled me aside, leaving the kids with their Granny. She had just received a call from my cousin. My youngest brother had been in a severe motorcycle accident. They were trying to save his life and if they accomplished that were going to try to save his left leg. Suddenly nothing else mattered. We had to get to Chattanooga. By the time I arrived at Chattanooga, they had saved his leg and he was still alive. They listed him as critical but stable. By Saturday night, they had let him out of the ICU and into a private room. Though it will take a long time, the doctors now expect him to make a full recovery. Praise God. Over the past week, this experience has caused me to think about a lot of things. I want to share some of the greatest lessons I have learned this week.

### Discussion:

- I. We are weak, but He is strong.
  - A. One of the truly hard things about the rush to get to Chattanooga from Disney was the recognition that even when we finally arrived, I wouldn’t be able to do anything. I am not able to turn back time and prevent the wreck. I am not able to wave my hand and knit muscles, bones, organs, vessels back together. The fact is I needed to recognize how powerless I was in this situation. That recognition drove me to my knees.
  - B. Brethren, one of the reasons I think God allows situations like this is to force that realization upon us. We are weak, but He is strong. **II Corinthians 12:7-10** describes a circumstance God allowed for Paul in order to learn this very lesson. When we are bent on proving how strong we are, we make a mess of our lives. Consider Paul’s example in **Romans 7:14-24**. I believe that is a description of Paul’s life when he was trying to be in control and overcome his sins all on his own. What a failure he was. When I am trying to be in control of my life, when I am trying to demonstrate how powerful I am, when I am trying to rely on my strength, then I fail...every time, without exception.
  - C. Consider the example of Moses. When he merely supposed everyone would recognize his own power to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage, he was defeated and fled into the wilderness in fear only to live a life that was anathema to his upbringing (cf. **Acts 7:25-29**). However, when he believed he could not possibly be of help in the deliverance of his people, then God’s strength abounded through him (cf. **Exodus 3:11**).
  - D. If I could only learn this lesson at a gut level where it would govern my life. If only we could all learn this lesson. We are in a war we can’t win on our own. Our enemy is too powerful (**Ephesians 6:11-12**). We serve a God, however, who is all-powerful. Through Him we can win. When we quit trying to control our own lives and simply surrender to His will, crucifying ourselves with Christ (cf. **Galatians 2:20**), then we can make it. As **Ephesians 3:20** says, God is able to do far more abundantly beyond all we ask or think by the power working within us. Not by our power, but by His power in us. Brethren, we can move mountains when we let God work in us by surrendering to His will. This is how Jesus lived according to **John 14:10**. It is how we should live. We are powerless, why keep trying to run our own lives?
- II. God really does help, therefore we must acknowledge Him.
  - A. I recognize God does not grant every request. I also recognize someone could easily look at a loved one who was in a motorcycle accident and people prayed and prayed and prayed and the person still died and say God doesn’t help. However, I cannot help but know on last Thursday I was told Chris probably wasn’t going to make it. I was told if he did, they were probably going to have to remove his left leg. By Saturday night he was in his own room and the doctors started saying he would have a full recovery. I can’t help but remember **James 1:17**. Every good gift comes from God. For His good reasons God doesn’t always grant our requests. But I have learned from this that God really does help us.

- B. **Matthew 7:11** says God really does want to give us good gifts. **1 Peter 5:7** says God really does care about us. We are weak, but He is strong and He really does respond when we ask Him. Therefore, we need to follow the instruction of **Proverbs 3:6**. In all our ways, we must acknowledge Him.
- C. The point of that passage is that we must see God's work and grace in everything. In this situation with Christopher, we see it more readily. When things are "amazing" and "incredible" we easily acknowledge the hand of God. But what about when things are normal? Isn't it interesting that when Christopher gets in a near fatal wreck and survives many of us talk about the hand of God being with him. But what about the fact that we all got in cars and drove to this assembly and none of us wrecked? Do we acknowledge God's hand in that? What about all those people who drove motorcycles on that Thursday and didn't get in a wreck? Do we acknowledge God's hand in that? What about the meals that we ate, the clothes that we wore, the homes in which we lived, the jobs at which we worked, the walking we were able to do, the sounds we were able to hear, the sights we were able to see, the goals we were able to accomplish, do we acknowledge God in those things?
- D. The story is told of two old friends who met up on the street one day. The first said to the second, "What is wrong my friend, you look miserable." The second said, "Three weeks ago, my uncle died." "Oh that must have been dreadful," the first said. "You don't understand," said the second, "he left me a \$100,000." "There's a silver lining in every cloud," said the first. "You don't understand, two weeks ago, my grandfather died." "Oh that is awful." "You don't understand, he left me \$500,000." The first replied, "God blesses us even in difficult times." "No, you don't understand, last week my father died." With tears in his eyes the first man said, "I'm so sorry, I know that has been dreadful." "No, you don't understand, he left me a million dollars." "I don't get it," said the first man. "I recognize these deaths must be hard on you but the blessings have been great for you. Why do you look so miserable?" The second man replied, "This week...nothing." That is our problem too often. When we receive something regularly even for a short period of time, we begin to take it for granted. For those who have received one several years in a row, how would you feel if you didn't get your end of the year bonus? In most cases, it isn't owed to you and the company would be perfectly within its rights not to give it to you. How would you respond? That is kind of like our relationship with God. He doesn't owe us safety and health. What would we do if He took it away?
- E. The fact is, God is responding to us and we need to acknowledge Him in all our ways.

### III. Live one day at a time.

- A. There is not a day that goes by that I don't think, "Today might be the day I get a call about my brother, Brad, being killed in Afghanistan." However, I never once thought I would receive a call about my other brother being killed in Chattanooga because of a motorcycle accident. **Ecclesiastes 9:11-12** is absolutely true. We never know when death will take us. We have today and that is it.
- B. Granted, I know we hear that so often and yet have lived through that kind of warning again and again and again and therefore it rolls off us. **James 4:13-17** drives this point home. We boast in all the things we will do tomorrow or next year. But we are a vapor. We don't know what tomorrow may bring. Tomorrow we may be in the hospital fighting for our lives. Or we might be like Chelsea, an acquaintance of my sister-in-law, who back in April told some friends she and her boyfriend were going for a spin on his motorcycle. "We'll be back in ten minutes," she said. Within that 10 minutes they had wrecked and died. They didn't even have 11 minutes. If you are boasting in tomorrow saying you will repent and come to Jesus later, please think about this. James said if you know the right thing, do it. Do it today because you can't force your way into tomorrow.
- C. But there is a comforting side to this. I don't know about you, but sometimes I get depressed about this life. Sometimes I think I just can't make it in God's service for the rest of my life. When I start thinking about having to overcome lust, pride, materialism, gossip, outbursts of anger and everything else with which I struggle for years to come, I begin to feel like it is just impossible. Why bother trying? Sometimes I defeat my own spiritual journey by thinking about how I'm going to make it 10 years, 10 months, 10 weeks or even 10 days. But the fact is, I only

have today. If I can take it 24 hours at a time and not get bogged down in how I'm going to make it tomorrow, I can make it by the grace of God. I think this was partially Jesus' point in **Matthew 6:34**. When I get bogged down worrying about tomorrow, I'm not living in the present. If I let those worries bog me down, it usually puts me off course today. I do not have to be pure ten years from now. I don't have to be pure next week. I don't even have to be pure tomorrow. I just need to be pure today. By God's grace, I can do that. I might not even make it to tomorrow, why ruin my today by worrying about it?

- D. Don't get me wrong; I know there is a sense in which we plan for our futures. I'm not saying have no goals. I'm just pointing out if I try to live a year at a time, a month at a time or a week at a time, I will be overwhelmed. Instead, let's just make the right choices today. If I face every day that way and God, by His grace, let's me see another ten years, then I will reap the benefits of living each day by His will. If He only gives me one more day, I will not have allowed my worries about tomorrow turn me from Him today and I will be ready to meet Him. Let's learn this lesson and just take it one day at a time. That's all we have.

#### IV. What a family we have, let's lean on them.

- A. I remember back when we dealt with the situation with Shea that I saw this lesson. I guess I need the repeated reminder because it amazes me every time. I am in awe of the number of people all over the U.S. who have gotten messages to me via e-mail and the internet regarding their prayers for Christopher. I have heard of entire congregations that held special prayers for him in their assemblies. There are thousands of Christians praying for him. I even received one message that came all the way from Dublin, Ireland about prayers. Amazing.
- B. This is the family God has given us just as Jesus promised in **Mark 10:29-30**. In Christ, even if we are abandoned by our physical families, we gain a hundredfold brothers, sisters, mothers and children. We are a family and our family is huge. I have heard it attributed to Dee Bowman that when people learn about connections through the body of Christ and say, "It's a small world," he responds, "No, it's a big family."
- C. But let us not stop at just recognizing our big family. God didn't give us this family so we could just be thankful for such a large family. He gave us this family to help us. Yet we are so hesitant to rely on each other. When we need help, we keep it in because we are afraid our brethren will get tired of us. We are afraid they will look down on us as being weak. That is especially the case if we need spiritual help. This is exactly what **James 5:14-16** is all about. We need to turn to one another for strength and help. **Galatians 6:1** says it is our job to bear one another's burdens. Don't isolate within yourself. That is Satan's trap for you to turn you from God and the help His people will provide. When you need help, especially if you are facing some temptation, call someone and get help. Don't ever say again, "I just don't like asking for help." That is what we are here for. Notice **1 Peter 1:22**. We have been saved in order to have sincere love for the brethren. That means we are going to be there for you. Let us know how we can love and serve you. Don't isolate. Rely on your family.

#### V. We are the lucky ones, not Chris.

- A. I know this lesson is going to be strange. However, I couldn't help but think about this. One thing I have heard from people when I talked about the long, slow, painful recovery Christopher is going to face has been, "Well, that's better than the alternative." I've also repeatedly heard, "He's lucky to be alive." I even said that a couple of times. But then I thought about it. Christopher is a Christian. He has been forgiven by the grace and blood of Jesus. If he had died, he would be resting in paradise with God in Abraham's side (cf. **Luke 16:22**). When that van ran over him, had it killed him instantly, he would have been carried by angels to paradise. Is having to live more years in this sin soaked world, tempted at every turn really better than the alternative for him? Was he really lucky to have to stay here?
- B. To be honest, I can't bring myself to say that he was the lucky one. I will admit I am the lucky one. My family are the lucky ones. We would have been grief stricken. We would have had to go through yet another death and the emotional trauma that brings about. There is nothing wrong with that. There is nothing wrong with being thankful we didn't go through that. Paul saw that God was being merciful to him when He let Epaphroditus recover from his near fatal sickness in

**Philippians 2:25-28.** Paul knew he was lucky. He knew the church at Philippi was lucky. But keep in mind Paul's own words about his own possible death in **Philippians 1:23-24.** Death was the better alternative for him, but life would be the better alternative for others.

- C. Certainly, having survived, Chris is lucky that he is not paralyzed. He is lucky he didn't lose his leg. He is lucky he will recover fully. But as Christians, we must learn a proper attitude toward death. We are not to seek it out. Rather, we should be happy to continue living as long as God lets us in order to serve Him and others. However, when death comes to our door or to another Christian's door, it is not a thing to be feared. **Revelation 14:13** nails it down for us. Those who die in the Lord are not unlucky; they are blessed. They are finally in their rest and their deeds follow them.
- D. Of course, **Revelation 14:13** explains something. Every day we are given life is a day of work. There is one sense in which Christopher is lucky to be alive. God has given him the gift of more days to be a part of God's work. He has more days to be of service. Each one of us must recognize this great gift each day as well. Every day God allows us to live is a day in which we are able to be part of His amazing plan. Let us use each day as an opportunity to glorify and serve Him. Then let us embrace the day that opportunity ends without fear or complaint, ready to be with the Lord and rest.

### **Conclusion:**

There is something I have started doing this week through all of this that I hope I have the discipline to continue. I have taken a little notebook and started taking some time every day to list the lessons I have learned. These experiences don't do us any good unless we evaluate them. These are some lessons I have learned from this and I would be happy to hear the lessons you have learned through this experience and others. I hope we can all learn these lessons and take them with us as we serve God. I hope this was helpful to you.