

Preface

I am not so egocentric as to think that everyone, or even anyone, would want to read about my life. I am not writing because I want readers. I am writing these memories for the generations to come. The hand of God has been active all through my life and I want my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren to know what God has done in my life so they will be encouraged to seek Him for His blessing and presence in their lives.

In my preaching I have often referred to events in my life to illustrate spiritual truths. People have responded to my stories saying, "You ought to write these stories down." As I age I am aware that with time passing I tend to forget things that have happened, or even to discard them on the trash heap of insignificant daily events.



I suppose it is not possible to relate all the significant stories and events of my life but I want to share those remembrances before they fade away. My dad had Alzheimer's during the last five years of his life. I pray that will not repeat itself in me, but having that disease in the family reminds me that now is the time to leave these recollections in writing so they might benefit someone who might encounter them.

One Scripture that comes to mind helps me know that writing my story is not in vain. It is Psalm 71:15-18

*15 My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds,
of your saving acts all day long—
though I know not how to relate them all.
16 I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, Sovereign Lord;
I will proclaim your righteous deeds, yours alone.
17 Since my youth, God, you have taught me,
and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.
18 Even when I am old and gray,
do not forsake me, my God,
till I declare your power to the next generation,
your mighty acts to all who are to come.*

Two factors have inspired me to write these memoirs: 1) I have been blessed and inspired over the years by Richard Harvey's *70 Years of Miracles*, in which he tells some of the stories of God's work in his life and 2) In 2014 while my mother was in a nursing home I realized that when she was gone it would be too

late to praise her for what she had done to equip me for life. I took the opportunity to write a short tribute to my mother's influence in my life titled *I Remember Mama*. That short Mother's Day tribute was circulated in the nursing home and brought many to tears as they read the life history of my mother and her impact on my life. Now I want to expand that story to include the events and situations in my life that might be a help to others.

Rick Warren began his book *The Purpose Driven Life* with these words, "It's not about you!" As I sit down to write my memoirs, (for that is what these stories are, my memories) I am very aware that it is not about me. It is about the Lord and His work in my life. I take no credit for the great things He has done over the last seventy-five years. It is all God's doing, not mine.

I want to borrow some thoughts from Richard Harvey's great book, *70 Years of Miracles*, concerning memories.

"Some may ask, 'Haven't you colored it some?' I would answer that every true picture has its color and every person seeing or experiencing a scene in his life will describe it as he sees or remembers it. The coloring and tinting of it will be according to his own background, but still it can be all true. That is why the Gospels of the New Testament are all different, but not contradictory."

The stories I am about to write are my stories, the way I saw it, felt it, and remembered it. Others may have viewed it from different circumstances and would tell them a bit differently, but we are still all eyewitnesses of God's glory.

I am writing this book for my children, who might have taken part in some of these stories and who may have long forgotten them. I am writing these stories for my grandchildren who often have said, "Pop-pop, tell us a story." When I would begin telling them some make believe story they would hastily add, "No, Pop-pop, tell stories about your life." I am also writing these stories for my great and great-great grandchildren who just might run across this book a hundred years from now in some dusty old attic. They too must hear of the work of the Lord.

I am writing these stories for the hundreds, yes, thousands, of Americans and Brazilians who have heard me use these real life stories in sermons and who said, "You ought to write these down in a book."

So, here goes. This is my story. This is the story of my God and Savior Jesus Christ and what He has done in my life. His fingerprints are all over me, and I

assure you there's more. I am sure I have failed to remember all the work that He has graciously done in my lifetime.

I want to assure my children and my children's children that Jesus is *"the same yesterday, today and forever."* What He has done for me, He will do for you when you call on His name. *"It is no secret what God can do. What He's done for others, He'll do for you."*

It is not an easy thing to write one's history for others to read. I'm no hero. I don't even consider myself to be special or in some way successful. I'm just me. As I write these stories it is not an attempt to appear to be something I am not. I will share my blemishes as well as my blessings, but in all that I write may Jesus Christ be glorified and praised. Just as the saints before the throne of God in Revelation 4:10-11 took their crowns and threw them at the feet of Jesus, so I take off any crown on my head and throw it down at the feet of Jesus and declare with all saints, *"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."*

*To God Be the Glory
Great Things He Has Done!*