

## Fighting the Ultra Rare Erdheim-Chester Disease

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Not too long ago I was talking to Pastor about coming up with a way in which we could help the Arvada Colorado church body come closer together. The thought came to me that we could start sharing our testimony of how we come to follow Christ. What I would like to do is share with you a faith journey that has taken me from Northern New England all the way across America and brought me here to Arvada, Colorado.

To do this right I need to give you a little background on myself.

My life, like so many others, started with two people who came together hoping to create a better future for themselves. My parents, Robert and Martha Gallick, met in the city of Pittsburgh in 1942. My father was a welder for as long as I knew him, working for Edgar Thomson U.S. Steel Corp. My mother was a devoted house wife to her husband, and mother to six children. It's hard for me to speak about my father's background because he never would share with us kids about his growing years. I only know of some things of his background through my mother; how he grew up in a Polish family that was extremely poor. His involvement in World War II came along. This plus the ugly past of growing up under stress, broke my father's emotions and left him scarred with battle fatigue and depression. For these reasons my father was only able to work his job as a welder, then he came home and self-medicated with alcohol. This is why I feel as if I never really got to know my father in a personal way. But even though my father was a broken individual, he was physically strong. My father grew up in an old small three bedroom house with no heat upstairs in the city of Pittsburgh. The house was on a corner lot surrounded on three sides by row houses. On the fourth side, opposite to the side porch, there was a big empty lot across the alley. It was empty because the building there was torn down and never rebuilt. This gave their little house a bit of an open view. My paternal grandfather was a short very strong 78-year-old Polish man who worked many years as a rod bender in the mill. This heavy hard work, bending large red hot metal rods with hand tongs into jigs, gave him his great upper body strength. He worked hard and sadly liked to drink just as hard.



I remember as a small child, of perhaps four years, sitting on the old gray porch opposite the empty lot and alley. A trash truck came around the corner turning into the alley and stopped by the side yard to pick up the trash. My Grandfather had placed one large, very heavy fifty-five-gallon metal barrel of rubbish and dirt and set it by the curb. I sat there and watched three grown men get out of the truck and try to lift that barrel of rubbish and dirt into the truck, with a man on either side of the trash can and one directly behind it. Trying several times, they could not even lift it but two feet off the ground. Exhausted, they had to give up and they were about to place it back onto the curb. But my grandfather saw this through the kitchen window, and with some frustration watching these guys struggling so hard, he stepped out onto the porch, set his beer

down next to me, went off the porch and out through the side gate to give them a hand. He wanted to show them how to do this even though he was 78 years old. He did this in a very gruff sort of a way, pushing them aside speaking something to them in Polish under his breath. He lifted this barrel up to his head like it was made out of paper. Shook it back and forth hard and slammed it down on the ground. He then turned to these men again and said something in Polish mocking them and came back through the gate carrying the empty barrel with just his fingertips. He walked by me without saying a word. He then grabbed his beer and went back into the house. As he closed the door behind him, I turned my attention back to the three men still standing there in the alleyway looking at the empty drum with shock on their faces, questioning each other as to how he was able to lift that barrel by himself. That event made an impression on me. Wow! Grandpa was strong!

I think I absorbed his character and stoicism by hearing about him and seeing him in action. My mother was also strong because of how she was raised. She came from a Slovenian community where she grew up during the Great Depression. The depression was very hard on her family and her father could find no work. Her mother found work and residence at a boarding home. But my mother and her father, were forced to find shelter in Shanty Town because the whole family was split up when they lost their home in the Depression. This was where displaced people would stay when they fell on hard times. There in Shanty Town my mother remembers her father saying they would eat dandelions and rabbits to live. This was a very typical experience for my mother as she lived in a Slovenian ghetto. Both of my parents had such a hard start in life due to the depression and the War. It made them both very tough and they were both strong. My father and mother did eventually meet on Butler Street, four miles north of the Strip District in Lawrenceville, Pennsylvania. They were soon married one year later on March 3, 1943. (I was born 15 year later). And like so many young Americans, they fell again on hard times. World War II came and created additional conflicts for their new life together. My Father survived the war, but he came home a very different man. Battle fatigue and his emotional issues made life very hard for all of us. The hard times just never seemed to let go and continued until all us kids were grown. My dad's illness and my Mom's emotions from her past and a marriage with six kids created an atmosphere of bickering and chaos in the house at times. There was little peace in the neighborhood where we lived, because Pittsburgh is a drinking town with a football problem. I grew tired of trying to relate to a family that did not know how to relate to each other. I also grew tired of a community that could relate only when consuming beer, or alcohol or when a ball game was on the radio. I needed to find a place that was clean, nice and without lots of unwanted city noise. For these reasons and others I felt the need to get away. I was ready to get out and I felt that the Lord was speaking to me. I believed that He was trying to get me to trust Him to make a move.



To give you a little work history of myself.

In 1977, when I was 19 years, old I worked for a refuse company that hauled trash for the surrounding suburbs in Pittsburgh. What made this an exciting job was that I needed to drive a large truck which I had never done before, hauling trash around. I never saw the inside of a large truck before I started working for this company. The other thing which made this exciting was I

would be paid \$6.50 per hour to work there. This was a lot of money back then in the late seventies. To get this job two things had to happen. The first thing was I needed a commercial driver's license. So just a few weeks before this job came to light I needed to get my driver's license renewed. There was something new going on in the Department of Motor Vehicles which totally confused their workers. The department redefined how they would issue drivers' licenses. I was standing in line for my license and the man behind the desk asked me what type of a license I wanted. Naturally, I said that I wanted only the best. "Alright," he said, and then asked, "do you drive trucks or will you be driving them in the future?" "Of course I like to drive trucks," I said, and because of that statement this man asked me what class license I would like to have. I told him that I did not know what he meant by that question. He then stated "You know, class A, B or C." So I asked him, "Well what's the best?" "Class A," he said, and then he handed me a Class A commercial drivers license legalizing me to drive a tractor-trailer for the cost of only a regular license. This should have never happened because I never saw the inside of a large commercial truck before and never drove one. I'd only seen them drive down the highway blowing black plumes of smoke and making noise. I believe this was the Lord opening a door for me so that I could have some way in which to come to know Him. God used this one man's confusion about licensing so I could learn how to take someones trash and then make it special to me. My older brother told me about this refuse job and where to go to talk to the manager. I arrived at the refuse company office on Friday afternoon. It was just a small trailer. I looked the yard over and saw some trucks parked out back and thought to myself, "I can do that!" I went into the office and said to the manager that I was looking for work and asked if he needed a truck driver. He said, "Yes we do," then asked, "Do you happen to have the new commercial driver's license?" "Yes sir, I just got one!" The manager then asked me if I could drive a certain truck, pointing out the window to the large MB 160 series Mack tandem axle leech packer out back. "Sure," I said. "That doesn't look that hard to drive." He said, "great can you start early Monday morning?" "Yes," I said. Then we shook hands and I went to my car. As I was driving out from their property a thought came to me. My nickname from high school must be absolutely true. My friend use to call me "Nutsey" because I was not afraid of trying something crazy that I'd never tried before. Remember now, I had never been in a big truck before and Monday morning I would be driving one for the first the time not to practice on but to perform an actual job function. Monday morning came and I showed up for work and grabbed the keys off of the key rack. I walked out back to where the truck was parked and walked around the truck pretending that I knew what I was doing: checking everything out and looking at stuff under the chassis, wondering all the time what it was. I climbed into the cab of the truck and sat down in the driver's seat and said, "Oh, boy! Now what?" I started reading everything I could see in the truck and thought, "If I'm lucky, maybe I'll get it to move." Well, in about ten minutes, I had read everything that I could see above and below the dash. I found the brakes, released them and placed the 18 speed Maxidyne transmission in the low gear and started to drive this 43,000 lb truck out and off of their property. I drove this truck for the first eight miles like an old man; never going anywhere near the speed limit, trying to convince myself that I could really do this. While I was doing this, I was also trying to find narrow back roads to a subdivision that I'd never seen before and knew nothing about. But it was okay because God was part of this whole experience. I think He wanted me to learn something from this job and this was the place where He chose to teach me about myself and about Himself. Hauling refuse was hard, nasty and dirty work, but it made me strong! I found starting at 3 A.M. was necessary to beat the traffic and heat of the day and to get the work done by 7, 8 or 9 P.M. The longest day I can remember was working from three in the morning to 11 P.M. We would work like this with three men in the truck, six and sometimes seven days a week, depending upon how much trash there was to move. There was always more trash. I found value in things people used only once and would throw away, or they used only for a short while, and then it would become obsolete and they would discard it for something better. But the item would still work fine and looked okay to use again. What happened is that God put it on my heart to

save the good items from the wealthier neighborhoods and take them over to the poorer neighborhoods and give the items away. We did this for some time and my truck had developed a following, mostly by kids. We did get in trouble for this eventually because retail businesses found that their sales were dropping. They started installing grinder dumpsters out back of the businesses thus ended my first ministry. We found a lot of neat stuff in the trash. I remember opening up a box one day and was blown away by what I saw. There just inside the box was about \$700 dollar, just lying there. I knew that it was there by mistake and, as hard as it was, I walked the cash back up to the house and knocked on the door. The woman of the house opened the door with jaw dropping; shocked as I stood there with all the cash in hand and returned the cash to her. But that wasn't the best item I ever found while collecting trash. Every now and then I would see a little Bible lying on top inside of the box of trash. For some reason I would throw the box into the hopper of the truck, grab the handle on the packer to operate the blade that would scrape and pack the refuse into the body of the truck. Then for some unknown reason I would stop the blade just shy of hitting the good book. I would then reach down and pick up the Bible and just hold it for a few seconds and begin to think about the book and ask myself, "Why is this book being thrown away?" I thought this was supposed to be an important book. So why would someone just want to throw it away? For some reason, I could not bring myself to throw the Bible away. I would keep it and then toss it up onto the dashboard of the truck and just let it sit there awhile until I could figure out what to do with it. When the other men would climb back into the truck for their break they would pick it up and laugh and ask, "What is this doing here?" Then I would have to explain myself to them that for some unknown reason I could not allow myself to crush that little Bible. After all I would tell them, "We may have to live in trash, work in trash, eat trash, but we don't have to be trash!" So I told them at lunch break I would read them something. They laughed, "Yeah right," and told me that I would be working alone the rest of the day if I did. But here's the funny thing that happened. One afternoon one of the men picked up that little Bible that I saved and started to read it aloud in the truck while we drove to the next community. What he read generated a question in our minds and not one of us in the truck had the answer. So I said to them, "Well I guess we'll just have to keep that little book here on the dashboard of our truck until we find the answer." As time passed, we would take turns picking up that little Bible for just a minute or two trying to find the answer to the question. Well this is where it started to get complicated because the more we read, the more questions we would have. The other funny thing that happened was when the guys saw another Bible lying in the trash. They would jokingly save it and point it out to me saying, "Maybe you should save this one too!" They said, "It might have better answers." This is where I think my faith journey really began. This is why I believe trash became treasure. For the two years that I worked there I managed to collect and save some real nice little treasures that I still keep to this day. I will not give them up because they are a part of my life. The words in them have become the most important part of me. Just as the Psalmist said in Chapter 119:11, "Thy words have hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." The desire to change from what I was and to move was generated because of these little books I found while collecting trash. It was these little books and the words within that helped me want to see if Jesus was true, and able to lead me forward in life. It was at this time that I had a very bad experience with my first wife; she was unfaithful to me. Because I was unhappy with where I was living, and because of what my first wife did, I became very angry at Jesus and I challenged Him to prove Himself to me and dared Him to refuse me. I don't know exactly what I would have done if He refused me but you can bet it might not have been good. I'm so glad that I have a friend in Jesus who is full of love and grace. I'm so glad that He understood my hurt and took that statement as a prayer and not just a talk-to-the hand comment. With excitement and uncertainty of what was ahead, I took a chance and decided to let God do His thing with me. When playing a spiritual game with God, He going to back you into a spiritual corner so that you can come to know Him. Within only a day He proved Himself to me and right then I knew I was in check mate.

When I left Pittsburgh I left with only forty dollars in my wallet and a few contents in the trunk of my 1971 Chevy Caprice. I needed to take a long drive to get my thoughts straight. I eventually found myself at the beginning of Pennsylvania Turnpike trying to make a decision about which way to go. East-or-West? I think God could have used either direction to do his work in me. But for some reason that I do not understand, I was nudged East. I kept driving East until my fuel tank was on empty and there was little daylight remaining. I stopped driving when I reached the bottom of the Delaware Memorial Bridge in Wilmington, Delaware. I parked at a little diner to get a small bite to eat. I mean small because I only had forty dollars on me, a very thirsty car, and nothing for tomorrow. I was determined to see if God would help me find a place to stay for the night and a job by morning. I asked a waitress in the diner were I could stay the night for little money. When I told her how little money that I had she laughed out loud and said, "Nowhere." Another woman there remembered an elderly woman named Lillian Roman, who, years ago helped people out every now and then. She suggested that I should go to Lillian. I asked for directions and then went straight to Mr's Roman's house. As I was standing on her front steps I thought to myself, "This is crazy." But I had come too far to stop now. I knocked on the door and a minute later I heard short footsteps, then the sound of deadbolts unlocking all the way down the door. "Who is it?" she asked, speaking through a crack in the door. I told her my name and explained to her my mission. There was total silence for a few seconds and I thought maybe I would be seeing a gun barrel soon sticking out the opening in the door. To my surprise she unlocked the last remaining lock on the door and let me in. She showed me her son's bedroom and offered me a hot meal to eat. In the morning, I got up early and went out to find a job. I found a job within two hours, working as a driving instructor teaching others how to drive trailer trucks. Lillian and I talked later that evening and she told me, "God must truly be real because I don't know why I let you in. I only know that something came over me that I could not resist." She went on to tell me that she had not let anyone into her house in a very long time since her husband died. There is a lot that I wish that I could tell you about the relationship that was formed between us, but I can tell you this; God redeemed both of us over the following months that I stayed there with her.

Looking back now over the years, I'm so glad that I made the decision to leave Pittsburgh. That decision changed my life forever because it showed me that He is able and faithful. He was able to show Himself to me through the love of others, and in some very special and unique way. Over the years, because of work like trash hauling, I learned to work hard and to work through some tough times. These different experiences, while growing up as a young man, taught me how to be self-reliant and strong.

Until one day all of that changed.

One of the things happening to people over the course of their lives is that they find themselves in a bit of trouble. Sometimes the trouble comes as problems with transportation, school, occupation, or relationships. I have experienced all of these items and the biggest and hardest problem would be for me right now is medical. In the past other medical problems included surgery and recovery that took me out of work for a short time. But all of those times and experiences were pale in comparison to what I have experienced over the last year with my recently discovered illness. With prayer, hard work and some mental discipline, I was able to bounce back from the previous problems. If it was a broken car I would fix it, junk it or find a new one. If I needed additional schooling for work then I would find the course, take it, get certified, get the new job and celebrate. If I found myself in a lost relationship I would painfully turn the page with prayer and move on. All of these things can be very hard sometimes when you don't see them coming and especially when you're not prepared for them.

In 1999 I was married to my loving wife with her two children from a previous marriage. It was 2007 when I had to give up a really good job making good money working in the southern part of New Hampshire. I worked for a mid-size engineering firm as a civil and wastewater designer. There I worked on small subdivisions, high schools, municipal infrastructures and a very large power plant. This dream job of mine started to fade away like a mirage with the Great Recession. I went from working 10 or 12-hour days down to a very boring eight hour day shuffling papers around the office just trying to find something to do. I was going crazy with nothing to do. Assuming that I would be laid off, I decided to follow the path of development straight north to the top of New Hampshire, "God's Country," a place where I had always wanted to live; Perfect! Away from the city noise. The work there was equally as challenging and compensated about the same. It was very hard giving up the nice three-bedroom home on a four-acre lot to move north onto a tenth-acre postage stamp. But the church there was excellent and the neighborhood was nice so it was okay I thought. But after only two years, that recession found us hiding and canceled my work there just like before. I tried to find work as soon as I was laid off, but no avail. I looked in every direction for one and a half years as far as two hundred miles away and could find nothing. I tried to reinvent myself which is hard to do when your are over fifty. But it was no use. I still was considered over-qualified or just too old. After a year and a half of unemployment benefits, the benefits ran out. With nothing on the table, I was forced to step backwards and take up trailer driving as a new profession. This wasn't a bad job to have? It was the worst job to have! After nearly killing myself on the highways of New England and missing my family dearly for nearly five years, This driving job ended like the rest. And to use a Department of Transportation term, I was put out of service; not by me and not by the fault of the economy, but this time I believe it was by God, because he answered my prayer.

I wanted out of this truck and I think God also wanted me out of the truck too. In doing that and so serving His purposes, He allowed an illness to come back to me which I had in 2002. I was very ill with something three doctors could not figure out. When I was at my weakest point a woman in our church who was our (keyboard player) came to our home with the intent to pray for me. I remember being very weak and it was hard even to look up at her as she was standing in front of me. She asked me straight out, "are you dying?" I told her, "Yes I think so!" She asked me then how much time I might have. I said, "I do not know-maybe a few hours, sometime this very night perhaps, or if God will allow, maybe sometime tomorrow." She said, "I would like to pray for you." She then asked me if I was ready to receive God's healing in my body. I immediately said, "Yes and this healing will give me a testimony of his saving grace. So go ahead and pray." And she grabbed me by my bald head and prayed for healing to come to me through Jesus Christ. I don't know how this healing stuff exactly works because it took 24 hours to get stronger. But here we are 14 years later and somehow this illness which was suddenly gone. Has suddenly come back to me. I think God has something to do with the remission and the returning of this illness now, 14 years later.

As a former professional driver, I would call these times of life "blind spots." When these blind spots come and stop you in your track, it takes a lot to start over. I think we all share in situations like this in some way, but I also know that not all of us share in how we approach getting through these blind spots of life. All of these setbacks require starting over. As for me, I don't like starting over. I'm getting really tired of it. I think we all share in the idea that we may have a problem someday and think, or hope that it will occur when we are older and retired. In that way it will not interfere too much with our lives. And I can tell you it becomes more difficult for you to start over from life disturbances when you don't have someone helping you through the tough times. Sadly for me, these life disturbances occurred throughout my life early on and repeatedly for reasons I did not truly understand. Sometimes they were my fault and sometimes the fault of others. But recently, I found myself with another setback and this one dwarfed all the

others. I had a sudden onset of symptoms that not only took away my health, it took away my job, my personal possessions and then my home. It took away my church, friends and the beautiful State of New Hampshire in which we lived. Not only did my illness take me away from the things I loved and cherished so much, but it also took me away from my mind. I suddenly became trapped like a caged animal in a matter of a few weeks. The cage existed in my inability to find escape and relief from everything my body was experiencing. Again, I had to swallow hard and come to terms with the idea that I was forced to start all over. Just like all the other start-overs, I started again with a simple prayer. Lord help!

Yet this start-over was much different than all of the others. With the other setbacks, I at least had a little something to start with. But this time it was all different because it felt like everything was wiped clean away. And to make matters worse, I had no physical, emotional or mental health to work with to start the process of rebuilding my life and our lives over again.

Wow! well being over fifty with no health; now that's a big blind spot!

I made a quick list of what this blind spot felt like to me.

1. I was not happy about the discovery of tumors that changed my life forever.
2. I wasn't happy with all of the doctor office visits. Some of those visits required an eight-hour drive time not counting the doctor's time.
3. I wasn't happy with the eight MRI scans of my head, neck and spine which are still on-going.
4. I wasn't happy about the lumbar puncture that happened twice to me in one hour because the nurse missed the first time going into my lower back. The first one struck something wrong. The second went into my sciatic nerve.
5. I wasn't happy about the screaming, unending headaches and head pain that I had for months because the process of getting treated took so very long.
6. I wasn't happy about not being able to sleep well for over nine months because the medicine was not working well for my head pain.
7. I wasn't happy about losing my ability to drive even a short distance.
8. I was not happy about sitting in our car and watching my wife drive us across the country for days because the motion of driving affected my head.
9. I was not happy about having to watch my family "invade" another home because I lost mine.
10. I wasn't happy when we discovered we were talking for weeks to the wrong doctor.
11. I was not happy knowing I would need to undergo a cranial operation to find pain relief.
12. I was not happy about being told I would need to have neck surgery for a spinal tumor.
13. I wasn't happy learning I needed to go to Oncology for chemotherapy or radiation treatment, which was the only other option for my other spinal tumors.
14. I wasn't happy that I was denied disability and I was told I should find other suitable work in spite of my condition.
15. I wasn't happy about calling doctor offices and hearing, "Thank you for calling and please listen carefully to the following options. All operators are currently busy. If this is an emergency, please hang up and call 911." Or, "If calling about abuse, call the number #." Or, "Please hold for next available operator." Or, "Thank you for calling. You are so very important to us. But we are sorry there is no one here to help you. If we should get back, we will return your call in the order that it was received."
16. I wasn't happy that some doctors would never call us back.
17. I wasn't happy when they would call us back, and acted like they never heard of you before.
18. I wasn't happy when they lost our MRI records accidentally or threw them away.
19. I wasn't happy raising my voice to my wife, my best friend, when I was in the midst of pain.
20. I wasn't happy learning I have a very rare illness with a bad prognosis that doctors know

- very little about; making me now an Erdheim Chester Disease patient.
21. I was not happy thinking about how sad my two daughters would be when I might not be there for them; how I might not be there for my younger daughter and to walk her down the aisle when she would be married.
  22. I wasn't happy knowing my son would need to rely on someone else to teach him how to shave and to drive.
  23. I was not happy knowing that I may not see my other grandchildren or teach them to fish.
  24. I was not happy thinking about my family and how I would leave them alone someday to fend for themselves because this illness is unrelenting and aggressive.

I just wasn't very happy! And how could I be and how could you be if this were you?

In my mind I already saw all of this coming and there was nothing that I could do to stop it. Within one month from the onset of my illness, I knew what lie ahead for me and my family. With no work in the North County, I knew that I could not keep my house. Without health, I knew that I could not keep my work. Without both of those things, I thought I would not keep my mind. And I was right. There were some days I just could not keep it together.

In just four months I lost my health, career, home, my church family, followed by my strength. Wow! Not strong anymore. Big blind spot!

I've been a man for over forty years, and in all of those years I've been practicing being a strong man. Now all of the sudden I find myself like some others, with just a one word description, broken, and this is hard. I love our Lord Jesus yet letting go of everything like this, and letting God do His thing with me in this way is just a tiny bit harder for some reason. I can not even tell myself why. Maybe it's because I'm just older, sick, or both.

Starting over with an illness like this is much like jumping out of an airplane without a parachute. The landing just can't be good especially when you know you're falling at terminal velocity.

But this time it is different because of what I said before. Remember I said a short two word prayer. Lord, Help!

In this case I did have a parachute! I had the Lord Jesus holding me and my family firmly in His hands!

I will admit that at first glance the landing that I thought might be coming had me somewhat uneasy. I felt like my family and I were doing a special forces (High Altitude Low Opening) Halo Jump from 30 thousand feet, but without a parachute. I have never seen another family go through something like this. I'm not sure that I even read about something like this in the newspaper. And you certainly wouldn't believe that it could ever happen to you.

Terry, my wife of nearly eighteen years, and I went on a walk one afternoon here in Arvada just before my first surgery. I don't remember exactly what was said in our conversation, but somehow the subject of my feeling like a man came into question. I can only remember sitting on that park bench holding my cane in one hand and staring at my feet because I could not walk any further. I expressed to my wife, Terry, how inadequate I have been feeling because I could no longer provide for my family. Her loving response to me hurt because she accused me of being a proud man. I quickly denied such a thing and tried to find some way of defending my "humble" position. Yet right then my past came flooding back to my mind of my grandfather who influenced me with his enormous strength. I thought of my Mom and Dad in how they influenced



me with their strength of character. I then thought of all the large, strong men that I worked with and competed against in friendly work competitions, working many of them into the ground. I thought of the times when I was a kid and had to have my teeth drilled, or had stitches put in my hand without Novocain. It did not bother me too much because I was taught to be strong. I thought of all the times I had to endure pain and ignored it because I was a man and men are supposed to be strong. I sat there on that bench wrestling in my mind as Terry spoke. She spoke about Daniel when he was a captive in Babylon and even though being made a eunuch, he still had the ability to stand in a place of power as a man of authority. She reminded me that my identity was not in how much or little work I could perform going forward after surgery. But that my real identity was in God and in how I would serve Him in the future; what a mighty fortress is our God! I knew that she was right and I knew that I was rightly convicted of being a proud man. But it was still hard because I was holding a cane.

We talked again later at home and she asked me a question; She asked, "Is there male and female in heaven?" "No," I said, "we will be like the angels except for me, I will have a jet pack." Then she asked me, "What is the chief end of man? To Glorify God." Then she said to me something I never thought about because I was so trapped inside of all that was happening to me. She asked me to think about how she needed to try to find usefulness again as a woman and a mother who lost her home; A woman whose children are much older now and act like they don't need her so much anymore. She like me, needed to find a new identity to become whole again. She reminded me then our identity is not in how we perform, but in God and Him alone. We both are in a very hard place in life right now and we're starting over together. Because we are committed to each other and a church, we know our heavenly Father will make us strong.

Wow, what a great wife I have in Terry! She reminded me to read scripture.

1st Peter: 6-7 states "in this you greatly rejoice though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials. That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is treated by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

I believe Jesus allowed everything that had happened to me because He wanted me to discover what I was and who He really is. Because of this I was forced to realize exactly how small I truly am, and just how truly big our Lord Jesus really is. We are still inbound and have not made a landing just yet. And landing on good, solid ground is the very place where I want to land. And this life disturbance is like nothing I've ever seen before. It looks like there is a real church here on this earth because His people really showed how much they care.

The safe landing that He is providing for me and my family has gave us back many things.

1. He gave us finances to help us live. Through the good graces of many kind, compassionate and charitable people.
2. He provided extended health care benefit through my employer that we could not afford.
3. He helped us with transportation when we needed it.
4. He provided child and dog care while we spent hours at the hospital.
5. He gave us a home with my daughter, her husband and their two children.
6. He gave me time in order to find just the right doctors and to provide the proper diagnosis.
7. He brought me to one of the finest hospitals and provided the best surgeons for my surgery.
8. He gave Terry a special someone to come along side of her when she needed that friend.
9. He provided schooling with the finances for the kids to attend a Christian school.
10. He reminded us that we have not lost our church family and friends but that we just

- have more of them here in our new church.
11. He covered me and our family with prayer from four different locations across America.
  12. I know there are more blessings to come because I have God's grace.
  13. He also gave me insight into just what kind of a man I was on the inside.

Lastly and most importantly He gave me the opportunity to repent, and then He increased my faith in Him.

All of those little books I saved in the past have carried me a long way in life because the words in those books are not just black ink on some white paper. They are revealing the truth that Jesus Christ is our Lord.

Jesus said, "I am the truth and the life and no man comes to the Father but by me."  
Jesus has proved to me so many times over and over that He works.  
Jesus works through His people in and through His church.

If I did not know Jesus Christ, our family like many other families would have been completely destroyed and broken up into pieces by now because of some disaster like this. Jesus prayed for the unity of the body and I think that prayer has been answered in this situation. The Church body has come together to help us and this is a testimony of Jesus here on this earth. I now have the testimony I asked for way back in 2002 when I first became sick, and this is the testimony that I'm giving you today. Satan tried to steal, kill and destroy my life and testimony. This disease should have canceled my life long ago, but it didn't.

Satan lost big time because God was there then and He's here right now! One of my older brothers and I were talking about all of this and he commented to me that every birth certificate comes with an expiration date. It's in the fine print down on the bottom of the page but you just can't see it. Then, it says to see the other side for details as to where you will be going if you don't know Jesus. But, I received a new birth certificate when I was baptized July 30, 1995 and this one has no expiration date.

Some day you too will be faced with the reality that you're going to check out soon. When that day comes, you will need someone to help you get through that tough time. Why not allow the One who can help you the best help YOU, by letting Him into your temple so that you can someday enter into His temple.

My favorite verse of scripture is Romans 8:1  
"There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

We all know that names have meanings. Well, I was really surprised as to what my name meant when I looked it up one day. It means "strong spear man," and in another place, "a mighty warrior!"

So because I'm a warrior, I will fight this unrelenting illness. And because I'm still fighting, I guess that makes me a man. I will have victory in this illness even if I lose the physical battle.

I will have victory because I will be where I always wanted to be. That's in God's Country!



Jesus said, "in my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. And if I go ahead to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." A new heaven someday will be right here again on this earth. (Hey, maybe I'll get my old house back.) We all can be whole again because of what Jesus did on the cross and because of the promises He makes in His words. As you were reading my story, I hope you found courage in the things that I said. We all have but just one life to live. If you're going to live it, make it worth something, please!

Will you allow the Lord Jesus to be a part of your life?

The world may think that Jesus is trash.  
But to me He is my greatest treasure.  
He called me friend,  
His name is Jesus.

Take care and God Bless!

By Gerry Gallick

