

In the Hollow of His Hand

The story of Cyril & Peggy Ogden

Why do terrible things happen to good people? I'd been asked that question many times during my ministry, but I never dreamed I would live out the answer for all to see. Who would have thought that, after 40 years of faithful, full-time ministry, I would find myself waking from a coma, paralysed and unable to move anything except my arms, neck and my head?

Our journey

My wife, Peggy, and I found Jesus as our Saviour in a dusty little Rhodesian town in the early Fifties. We were young and enthusiastic about life, and when we discovered that Jesus is alive, and His Holy Spirit is every bit as present and active today as He was in Bible days, we were thrilled. The Creator of this

universe is prepared to fill us with His own Spirit – living in 'earthen vessels' – these worthless 'jars of clay'. *"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show this all-surpassing power is from God, and not from us."* 2 Cor 4:7

God uses feeble and fallible human beings to do great things. For it is "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit" says the Lord Almighty. Zechariah 4:6

Soon after our salvation, Oral Roberts held a crusade nearby and we were riveted to see the deaf hear, the blind see, the lame walk, tumours and cancers disappear and – yes, even a demon cast out before our very eyes.

We were so excited about meeting a living, loving, speaking, healing, miracle-work-

ing God that we couldn't stop speaking about Him. A small revival broke out and we soon found ourselves in full-time ministry in a nearby town. Raw, inexperienced, unqualified, untested and untried, we depended

upon the Holy Spirit to teach us. *"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit" says the Lord Almighty.* Zech 4:6. After a shaky start, plagued by depression and doubt, the Lord proved Himself more than able to do extraordinary things through two very ordinary people.

We saw healings, people transformed by the wonderful love of Jesus, and, very reluctantly, I found myself thrown into the deep-end in deliverance ministry. In those days, the Fifties and early Sixties, people regarded Holy Spirit phenomena with huge suspicion. Prior to our salvation, we knew nothing about the power of the Holy Spirit, and nothing about the kingdom of darkness.

Depending on His Holy Spirit

We had no books on the subject and so we learned how to cast out demons by trial and error, searching the Word and studying the life of Jesus to follow His example. After a while, we understood the absolute authority of the Name of Jesus,



and the power in the Blood He shed on Calvary, and we found that demonic forces couldn't stand against those who came in the Name of Jesus.

A new ministry

To go into the ministry, we left our comfortable lives, and loving but sceptical family, and faced many challenges. God put us through our paces but never once did we actually go hungry or get into debt.

Unlike the Apostle Paul, we were never beaten, stoned or shipwrecked; we never spent a night in jail or the open sea, or experienced danger from bandits. We have experienced persecution and poverty; we never starved but we have eaten bean-leaf soup because the beans were not yet mature, and there was nothing else to eat!

But then, we've had the privilege of learning for ourselves the truth that the Lord will supply all our needs, according to His riches in glory (Phil 4:19).

A sudden change

We had the joy of seeing a handful of people grow into a small church, then multiply into a number of churches; young men and women accepting the call of God in their own lives and moving into ministry all over the world. Peggy and I never thought of leaving our small town. After a busy and active life, when I was nearly 72 and needed a heart operation in 1997, of course we prayed for my healing.

When it didn't happen we sought medical help and advice. I was grateful to be able to have double by-pass heart surgery in Johannesburg that year. Traumatic as that surgery was, I came through it well and there was no hint of the life-changing disaster that would strike in just a few weeks.

Almost dead...

Unbeknown to anyone, a clot formed during the operation. It travelled slowly through my veins until one fateful night it stuck in my spinal column and I experienced such severe pain that we all thought I was having a heart attack. I lost consciousness and was rushed in an ambulance to Bulawayo. Our doctor accompanied me, and he and the paramedic thought I was dying somewhere near the Shangani River bridge. They resuscitated me, but I remained in a coma for hours...

A devastating diagnosis

Rising from the depths of unconsciousness felt like I was a heavy anchor being hauled to the surface of the ocean. I was a dead weight. I couldn't move at all. Not a twitch. At first the doctors had no idea what had happened. When the awful facts became stark reality, it was still impossible to believe. I had had a spinal stroke. I would never walk again, never be able to sit myself up, turn over in bed or even shift my body into a more comfortable position.

Never again would I be independ-



Cyril and Peggy with fellow Zimbabwean Pastors. The Ogden's continue to minister in their latter years

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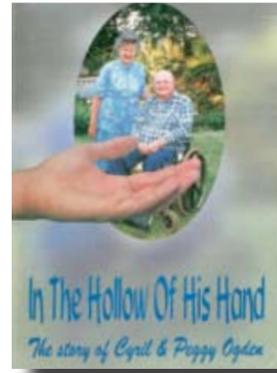
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■ TESTIMONY

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ent. I'm a private and undemonstrative person by nature. Now I would never be left to myself, to enjoy my own space, to sleep a night without someone having to wake up and turn me three times...I would never feel the touch of the grass under my bare feet, or even be able to cough properly.

A sense of helplessness and hopelessness overwhelmed me. My wife and family valiantly adjusted to the new burden I would be to them all. Peggy's busy life now revolved around taking care of me, night and day, and gradually she set support systems in place, with the help of many wonderful people. I began a process of self-examination and repentance.

Was there anything I had done to remove the blessing of the Lord? Was I guilty in any area, needing the discipline of my loving Father? Many people prayed for me, corporately and individually, and I wasn't healed.

Only two or three years to live

The doctors gave me two or three years to live. It seemed an eternity; I wanted to die now. Why, I would already be with the Lord in Heaven, with many loved ones including my mother and sisters! Death has no sting for me, but life was going to be a long process of indignity and humiliation. To be bathed and dressed, to be physically manhandled in and out of cars, to be pushed into public places in a wheelchair - it all seemed too awful to contemplate.

The Word says "they overcame (the enemy) by the Blood of the Lamb and the Word of their testimony" Rev 12:11 and this is how my emotional recovery began. People had always said I should write down the many marvellous things that the Lord had done over the years, and my daughter decided this would be an ideal time to do it. Every week I spent an afternoon with Peggy and

doctor, who resuscitated me over 12 years ago, has faithfully prayed for me and tended me without ever charging me a cent. Others have helped us financially or in practical ways - too many to mention their names, but all representing the love of Jesus to us. I drive a hand-controlled car and I've continued in ministry - preaching regularly, marrying, burying, teaching, praying for the sick...and continuing to witness miraculous healings, always with Peggy at my side.

God uses jars of clay for His glory

This 'jar of clay' may be well past its 'use by' date - cracked, chipped and worth-

"Fix your eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of your faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the Cross, scorning its shame". Hebrews 12:2

Vivian, reminiscing about what the Lord had done. Vivian went away and wrote it down, then Peggy and I read and checked it before starting the next chapter.

His Grace is sufficient

As we remembered the many amazing things the Lord had done, I found myself talking to my visitors - not about my health and hopelessness, but about the wonderful work of God. They went away uplifted and encouraged, and my faith grew. So, you say, "What happened next? When were you healed? Are you walking now, with or without a stick?" No. I'm still as I was, a prisoner in my body and dependent on my wonderful wife and two helpers. So where is God in all of this? Where is the glory? All I can say is that the Lord has been faithful. He's provided everything we need over the years, and although we've been devastated by the Zimbabwean economy as have so many others, we don't lack for anything on a daily basis. Our wonderful

less, grumpy sometimes and fed up with everything on occasion, but the 'treasure' remains untarnished and untouched. The Holy Spirit is able to use even the weakest, most frail individual, as long as he or she is available and willing.

So, why do terrible things happen to good people? I have some answers, but the real answer lies in what Jesus said, "in this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33 Take heart, my friend! Accept that you will experience trials and tragedies. It will happen. But take heart, my friend. He will never leave you or forsake you. He will be your refuge and your strength, a very present help in time of trouble. His strength will be made perfect in your weakness. I can testify to His Grace in my 84 years on this earth. Amen! ■

CYRIL AND PEGGY OGDEN live in Gweru, Zimbabwe, where they still minister in local churches and to groups and individuals in their community. To order this book, 'In The Hollow of His Hand' email: kirsty@sunrise.co.za or call: 072 403 0350



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