

TAIWAN TIMES

May 11, 2010

Dear Friends,

As I begin this long-delayed letter, I am sitting at the Narita International Airport in Tokyo, Japan. After almost two years in Taiwan, we are on our way to the United States for a short break. When we come back at the end of June, it will be to begin our second decade of service. It does not seem it has already been that many years, but as the saying goes, "Time flies when you are having fun," and I certainly have fun while serving the Lord in Taiwan.

These last seven weeks have not been a lot of fun, however. On Thursday, March 25, while on the way to visit our Chinese teacher as she was recovering from surgery, we had a bad accident on our scooter. We were on a road out in the country that ran along a river. There were big trucks coming up out of the river onto the road, I suppose hauling rocks to be crushed for cement. I went around one of the trucks on my motorcycle, and as I was about to pass another truck, we came to wet mud on the road. You can probably guess what happened. We went down pretty hard. I stuck my leg out to try to hold the motorcycle up, but we flipped anyway and slid along the road. Missy hit her head and does not remember five to ten minutes because of a concussion. I knew my leg was broken, but it was not where I thought it was. Since we were between two trucks, I feel like we are only alive because of God's protection. As we lay there in the mud, some men on scooters came along, stopped, pulled us off the road, and called 119. (This is another example of things being backwards here.)

After laying along the road for what I guess to be twenty minutes, the police came and started their investigation. Somewhere in there they took my shoe off my foot, and I never saw it again. The police made arrangements for my motorcycle to be taken to the nearest police station. About five minutes later, the ambulance came and interrupted the police, and so began one of the most miserable rides I have ever had. It was my first, and hopefully last, ride in an ambulance. The road was rough, and when we got out on the main road, the driver flew. They did not have my leg supported very well, and I had a painful ride. Missy and I were both covered with mud. Finally about an hour after the wreck, we got to the hospital and another adventure began.

Missy by this time had snapped out of her daze, and they only checked her eyes in the emergency room.

She had several bad scrapes on her skin, especially one on her hand that probably should have had stitches. My legs both had wounds on them, and they took an X-ray of the left one. In my knee they found a fracture in the tibia, but because the leg was so swollen from the motorcycle landing on it lower down, they could only put a half cast on the back part of the leg and wrap the leg. Then the police came and finished their investigation. One of the things I had to do was blow into something so they could make sure I was not driving drunk. After several hours in the emergency room, church members came and took us home. Getting me out of the emergency room, into the car, and then upstairs into our apartment without crutches was another adventure I would like to forget.

That following Sunday was Palm Sunday, and since we were having Communion, I decided to go to church and preach. By this time I had crutches, but they were three inches too short for me. My leg was still swelled up, so it was not a good service for me. I had to sit in a big office chair to preach. Some of the older people were really upset by what had happened to me. One lady could not even talk to me for about two weeks. I kept a positive attitude and told them how blessed I was that the accident was not worse. I think I did more comforting during those weeks than the ones who came to visit me. Easter Sunday was probably the worst time for me. I had sunrise service, and could not get to sleep the night before. Since it was so much work to move me, I stayed at the church between the services. After that I had two weeks when I could not sleep until early morning, and then did not get up until afternoon. That was fine except for Sundays, and I had some miserable weeks. The Lord seemed to bless my part of the services, but it was a little difficult to concentrate.

The Monday after the accident we went to the emergency room of the Veteran's Hospital near our home. I was hoping to get a cast, but the leg was still too swelled. They cleaned my wounds some, put some fake skin on to help with healing, put another half cast on, and told me to come back and see a doctor on Thursday. Thursday came and still the swelling was not down, so I had to get still another half cast put on. Finally 14 days after the accident, I got a complete cast on my leg, and four weeks off from going to the hospital. (See what you Americans have to look forward to with Obamacare!)

After missing two Bible studies, I was able to continue with my teaching ministry as normal. What I could not do was go calling. Many people came to see me, sooner than I wanted after the accident. When I was feeling better, the visits stopped for the most part. One man who came to see me used to come to church some. He had broken his leg at the ankle in the same way I did. This guy was like

Job's three friends and told me everything that could go wrong. His fractured leg had ended up separating, and he had to have surgery and get a plate put in. He did help my wife get some good medicine for her hand. The week following his visit, his friend came and told me that after he saw how nicely Missy took care of me, he was divorcing his wife. The marriage has been in trouble for at least a year. But during his time of recuperation, his wife had not helped him at all. So I get the blame for a divorce. I say that jokingly. Actually I think he was under strong conviction before, and he is not willing to serve the Lord until his father dies. His wife had made a start as a Christian, but while I was on furlough the last time she seems to have regressed spiritually. Sometime in my first year of ministry after coming back, they dropped out of church. I am afraid they are reaping the consequences of some bad decisions. If you think of them, pray for Irene and Alex. I did not have a chance to talk to them before I came home, but I would like for a chance to try to help.

During this time of recuperation, Missy and I started talking about our ministry. I told her I felt like these two years had been difficult and we had not seen much in the way of fruit. It has been a time of sifting for the church, and of learning some hard lessons personally. Missy reminded me that we have baptized two these two years, and both of them are doing well. The one lady especially is growing in grace and has insights into God's Word that many of my more mature Christians have not yet grasped. The children's ministry has doubled in size. Just recently one of our ladies that is a social worker came to the coworkers and wanted to use the church on Friday mornings for a community activity. This means we can have an impact on the community and hopefully at least some of the ones coming for this will become interested in Jesus. Another good point is that we have several more men in the church than two years ago. I think my main ministry has been with some of my men, seeing them mature in the faith. At the Kaohsiung Church, I was privileged to baptize new Christians almost every year, usually two or three a year. At Tsoying, our ministry has not seen so easily measured results. And yet when I consider this, the answer that comes to me is that this church is different, and I will have a different kind of ministry.

Before the accident happened, it seemed like we were spending a lot of time ministering in hospitals. One unsaved lady in our church also had a motorcycle accident. Even though she had a helmet on, her head hit the road in such a way that her skull fractured and her brain was bleeding. For a while it did not look as if she would live, however, the first week of May, she had surgery to put her skull back together, and she is completely normal except her sense of smell is weak. Several of us have remarked

that seeing her is looking at a living miracle. Her husband told her that it was because pastor came and prayed that she recovered. Neither of them are Christians, and yet God was gracious. I felt like my visit with her the day before Mother's Day was the most open she has been toward me. Even though she does not remember several weeks of her life, she recognizes the power of God. Help us pray for Abby. When this happened, we were most concerned about her relationship with God. God has given her a second chance, and I really want her to yield to God.

Another lady in our church named Teresa also went through a difficult time with her mother. Her back got so bad that she could not get up. The doctor recommended a surgery that was a little risky. Teresa has really carried a spiritual burden for her parents. For some reason God prompted me to go and pray with her mother before the surgery. It was the first time that Teresa's father stayed nearby when someone was praying; he even held hands with the others who were praying. During the surgery, we had a terrible earthquake. If the needle had been in her backbone when that happened, it could have been very bad. But the results were fantastic, and this woman has come to recognize the power of God. She has not believed yet, but she does know there is a God that hears and answers prayer.

Our Chinese teacher also had to have back surgery during this time. So we were running to two different hospitals visiting three different people. We were actually on the way to visit this lady at her home when our accident happened. Hospital ministry is not my favorite, and yet God has answered prayer, and in two of these cases I feel I have seen two miracles.

One weekend during this time after the worship service schedule had already been printed in the bulletin, Teresa and another church member called, telling me that they both wanted to testify that coming Sunday. I had already done my sermon, and it was Communion Sunday. At first I felt a little frustrated, then my wife said that perhaps God had something different for us. So after Communion, we had testimonies. The one man only took a couple of minutes, but Teresa shared a lot of details about what God had done for her mother. It got a little long, but it was encouraging. After she was done, she had the people pray together for the lady that had the motorcycle accident. It was not long after that prayer that Abby started to get better. I think that is the only time in all my years in Taiwan where I have seen what was planned set aside and God do something different. It was a good service.

Just a little while after our accident, a young lady I baptized in the Kaohsiung Church found out she had

a brain tumor. I heard it was the size of the palm of our hand, so she had to have surgery very quickly. My wife was able to go see her before the surgery, and she seemed to be at peace. The surgery went well, but a couple of days later she had a stroke, and lost the use of the right side of her body. Just a few days before we left Taiwan, I went to see her. It upset Missy to see her, but I thought she was doing well for what she had been through. I prayed with her, and believe God is going to heal. She has a long road of therapy ahead of her.

Looking back it seems like these last months since Chinese New Year have held suffering for us. Another thing that happened was the frightening 6.4 earthquake the first week of March. I referred to this earlier about Teresa's mother's surgery. I was still in bed when it hit, and it woke me up. It seemed it lasted a long time, but was only about 45 seconds. Things in the apartment fell, and two of our jelly candles broke. That afternoon I took a nap, and again an aftershock woke me up. That was not a very good day off. Supposedly that was the worst earthquake to hit Kaohsiung in 100 years. I think the one we had in 2006 was bigger, but that one was out in the Taiwan Strait. This one was centered in our county, so maybe that is the difference. The High Speed Rail and the Taiwan Railroad both had to suspend service. Thankfully there was not a lot of damage, although some people were injured.

In reflecting on the difficult times, I realize I am still very blessed. In my own life, breaking my left leg was probably the best bone for me that I could have broken. If it had been an arm, I could not have written. If it had been my head, I would not have been able to continue with my work. Although I have had to slow down, many old friends came to visit me. I was able to take advantage of opportunities that I otherwise would have turned down. One of these opportunities was to write an article for a magazine dealing with Christianity's contributions to human rights. Another opportunity was to help a young man in the Taiwanese navy who is preparing to take an English test so he can come and study in America. One man in my church that has been struggling spiritually and had been missing a lot of church came to visit me the week after the accident. When he saw my good attitude and that I was not upset about what happened, it really surprised him. I think my accident helped him realize that bad things do happen to Christians. He has been in church every Sunday since then, so God has used the accident to open doors for me and to teach lessons to those I pastor.

With me not being able to go visiting, the attendance on Sunday morning has suffered some. However, we have had some excellent services. Even with having to sit in a chair to preach some of the weeks,

the Lord really helped me. For eight weeks I dealt with the subject of Christian ethics. Right in the middle was Easter, so I spent two weeks dealing with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Easter worship was a little different this year. The children and the church choir both sang, so I did not have as much time to preach. I have noticed before that I preach better during difficult times in my life. Strange, but there seems to be more anointing on the messages.

Below is a link to our pictures for the last two months. Most of them are of the earthquake and the accident. I hope the accident pictures don't gross you out too much!

<http://picasaweb.google.com/Melissa71169/EarthquakeAccident#>

In Christ's service,

Byron and Melissa Manners