

HANDICAPPED IN BODY, BUT JOYFUL IN SPIRIT



By JOY STANTON of
Australia

LET ME TELL you why I am happy in spite of a great physical handicap. The name given to me when I was born was "Joy" because although my parents had three sons, they greatly desired a daughter.

Like most babies I was lovely, but the joy of my parents was soon cut short, through my illness. I spent quite some time in hospital during my first years. Doctors did not know how to treat my condition, and gave up hope. After some time it was realised that I would be an invalid. I was suffering from a condition commonly known as spastic (cerebral palsy).

When I should have learned to speak. I could not form words. Then when I should have walked, I could not balance. Only if someone held my arms, could I stand up at all.

For many years my parents sought medical help. They tried all types of doctors, including homoeopaths, herbalists and chiropractors. Some helped me quite a lot, but they could not cure my condition.

When I was six years old, my parents discovered a charity group which became known as The Spastic Centre. The Spastic Centre was for children like me; it provided medical treatment, physiotherapy, and also schooling. It would have been impossible for many like me to have an education apart from this Centre.

I LEARNED TO SPELL

Even morning special buses collected us, took us to the Centre, and returned us to our homes in the afternoon. As I could not speak normally, I gradually worked out a set of signs that my family could understand. For "yes," I would smile, and for "no" I would frown. Gradually at my school, I learned the letters of the alphabet. Using a set of blocks with the letters painted on them, I learned to spell and to arrange words. Later, we thought of the idea of painting the alphabet on a small table. Then with one foot I would point to the letters and spell words.

TYPING WITH MY TOE

Later still, I learned to type on an electric typewriter, using my toe, because I cannot use my hands at all. In fact I do everything with my feet. I can weave baskets, use a machine, and work in various ways with my feet. Now I have a table with the alphabet painted on it which is the same as a typewriter keys, and I can quickly spell out sentences, by pointing to the letters.

FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS

So you see that I am very much handicapped, and I might have had reason to be bitter about God. But instead of being bitter, I have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, for He has come into my life.

When I was young. I knew a little about the Lord Jesus, but as I could not speak. I could not ask any questions, and many things puzzled me. My mother regularly taught me the stories of the Bible. Then when I was 17, my brother explained many things about God and the Lord Jesus to me. Then I knew I needed the Saviour. Although I could not speak with my tongue, from my heart I asked the Lord Jesus to be my Saviour. And He came into my life there and then.

Since then I have learned much about my Saviour as my mother and I read the Bible together. Now I am 36 years.

I live during the week at the special Spastic Centre Hostel for adults, where we also have our Industries. Since I was 21, I have been working there. Many of us working at the industries are handicapped in various ways, but we each one do different jobs, according to our ability. Much of our work is for the PMG Department.

At the hostel there are several other handicapped people who also believe in the Lord Jesus as I do, and we have a fellowship time together. At weekends I come home to my mother's house, and I am able to go to church on Sundays. I have had very poor health for many years,

and I had six operations in three years (1965-68). But I have received much strength from God. He has helped me, and given courage and faith to me, and also to my mother during these difficult years of trial. Now I am well, but still handicapped.

For a long time I wanted to be baptised but because of ill-health it was not possible. But then on Nov. 15, 1968, the opportunity came for me to be baptised. My brother carried me into the water, and together with an elder, baptised me. When I went under the water I heard the Lord Jesus speak to me saying, "I am in your life," and my heart was filled with great joy.

On other occasions the Lord Jesus has spoken to me. One time He said to go very quickly and visit my girl friend in hospital. I told my parents and they took me to see her the same day. She was very ill, but was very happy to see me. The next day she died.

HIS GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

I know the Lord Jesus could heal my body if He wanted to, but He has seen fit to allow me to be physically handicapped. His promise to me is this verse from the Bible:

"My grace is sufficient for thee: for *my* strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me?"
(2 Corinthians 12:9)

I know also that one day I will be with the Lord in heaven and at that time I will have a new and perfect body, which will mean far more to me than a healthy, body here on earth ever could.

* * *

POSTSCRIPT: Joy left this world at the age of 37 years. Her family says **she did not die** - rather **she was taken home**. Joy experienced the promise of the Lord Jesus:

"He (or she) who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die." (John 11:25-26)

After nearly 38 years of trials and suffering, one morning, while waiting for breakfast, Joy suddenly laughed, dropped her head, and was gone. Someone may have joked, causing her to laugh.

Or it may have been that her last breath was one of sheer spontaneous joy as she saw her Saviour waiting to receive her.

*No more pain or earthly sickness,
Twisted limbs will be restored:
No more growing old or dying,
We'll have bodies like the Lord!"
Free from sin and self forever,
Knowing then a perfect love,
All because He died to save us,
Make us fit for heav'n above !*

- W. Peterson

THE PHOTO ABOVE WAS ON JOY'S 21st
BIRTHDAY
(Joy is Don Stanton's beloved sister)