Jesus Christ My Physician

Testimony of Joseph P. Wannenmacher



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(1895–1989)

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Publication year: 1960

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Jesus Christ My Physician

“And Jesus went about…teaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.” Matthew 9:35

How thankful I am to God, for Jesus Christ, the Great Physician, who is still the same today. Through His inexpressible Mercy, He forgave my sins, granted me peace of soul and healed me of an incurable disease – “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses and with His stripes we are healed.” Matthew 8:17; Isaiah 53:5

I was born in Hungary. My parents were devout Catholics. When I was three years old my mother died of tuberculosis of the lungs. Four of the children in our family inherited this sickness from my mother. I was one of them.

My second sister died when she was 14 years old. At the time of her death her body had turned to a festering mass. Her left arm was so swollen and full of matter that it was about three times its normal size.

God gave us a wonderful stepmother who spared nothing that we might be helped. At the age of 5, I suffered an eruption of my right hand, and after much physical torture, an operation was performed. My condition improved somewhat, but at the age of 9, my foot became swollen and the pain was unbearable. My hometown in Hungary was a famous health resort with many of the finest physicians, and I was treated by some of them. But in spite of all their medical science, surgical helps, baths, etc., my condition grew steadily worse, and we knew that I, too, was suffering from the dreaded bone consumption.

In my childish fear, knowing the fate of my sister, I asked my mother if I too would have to die. My hopeless question made her run out to the courtyard, throw her hands up toward heaven and implore God to “spare the life of her little boy.” God who is “touched with the feelings of our infirmities” heard her earnest plea, and I improved.

MY CHOICE OF PROFESSION

My father was an orchestra leader. From the age of 3, I loved to pick up musical instruments and was encouraged to play them. The study of music was not difficult for me, since I grew up in a musical atmosphere. I played in my father’s orchestra when I was 10. But because of the easy-going, loose life of most musicians in our country, my father was opposed to my choosing music as a vocation. Therefore, I chose to become a mechanic and was apprenticed to a great master of mechanics. Under his tutorship, I became a journeyman at the age of 14. How proud I was of this! I begged my parents to take me to America so that they would not have to work anymore, for I would support them.

IN AMERICA

In 1909, when I was 14, we immigrated to the United States. I found good work as a mechanic and tool maker, and before too long I became foreman in the same shop. But during this time, my foot became swollen again, and I was forced to undergo two more operations. The physicians finally recommended that my foot be amputated.

You cannot imagine the hopelessness of my condition; nevertheless, with the little faith I had, I determined to die trusting God rather than be a cripple for the rest of my life. About this time, my brother, aged 19, died of tuberculosis of the lungs. Before his death, he often asked why we children, who were so innocent, had to suffer. Oh, that he could have heard that Jesus is the Great Physician before it was too late! Even then, God saw the consecration of my heart, and from that moment on I took no more medication of any kind. I was determined to trust God.

Because of my terribly weakened foot, it became impossible for me to continue working as a mechanic. I therefore turned to music, playing in various restaurants, theatres and concert halls to make a livelihood.

While still working in the shop a man had told me about Christian Science, saying that if a practitioner would treat me, I would be healed. Innocently I turned to science for help. I paid many hundreds of dollars for treatments and lessons supposedly to teach me how to pray. I even joined the Third Church of Christ Scientist. But instead of becoming better, my condition became worse.

THE REMEDY: The Holy Bible

In my desperation, as I clung to God, someone brought a Bible to our home, and for the first time I held the Book of Life in my hands. No one will ever know what the Bible meant to me during this trying time in my life. Every night, when I came home from playing in the theatres, I would read and be inspired by the truth of the Word. In my youth, I attended church religiously, going to Mass every morning, serving as an altar boy, making many pilgrimages and doing penance. I thought I could make myself pleasing to God and earn His favor, but I still had not heard the joyful message of the Bible. My father played the organ, and my godfather was the priest in our town, yet not until the age of 18 did I hear that God is love. I had always thought He was the punisher of man and had singled me out as His favorite victim.

My entire life was just the opposite of love: I was very impatient and high-strung. This evil nature controlled me, and I did not know what to do about it. As I continued to read the Bible, it spoke to me of love, hope, and comfort—the things I lacked most. Finally, I realized that it was God's will that I should not be condemned, for He wanted to help humanity. However, in spite of this, I remained in the same condition. Things went from bad to worse—my father died, and my stepmother and I were left alone.

A terrible fear gripped me whenever I would pass a funeral parlor. I was afraid to die. But our Savior never comes too late with His help, for at this time, as I lay praying one night, the Lord Jesus appeared to me. His hand was outstretched and He said, “Fear not.” This meant so much to me that my fear of death left. Later I had another vision at which time I saw Jesus carrying the cross up the hill of Golgotha. Blazing words appeared over my Lord which read as follows: “Whosoever believeth in me shall not perish but have everlasting life.” And I was like a perishing apple. I immediately received strength and courage to believe God and to seek Him more earnestly than before. I decided to live according to the teachings of the Bible and prayed much that God would help me to be pleasing to Him. Physically I was so weak that even my violin bow seemed heavy in my hand. As I continued to pray I would cry to God, “Oh God, help me, God help me. God can’t you help me?” The teachings of the Bible gave me courage during my horrible condition and shewed me which way to turn in the path of life.

THE HOUR OF MY DELIVERANCE

“He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.” Psalm 107:20

One morning in the spring of 1917, a good friend of ours, Mrs. M., told my stepmother of a church which preached that Jesus Christ was the living Saviour and the healer of men today—in this present day and age. This church based its claim on the following quotations from the Bible: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Hebrews 13:8; “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him.” Acts 10:38; and “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16. That same day, I went to that church, where a two-hour service was being held in the afternoon. The service was about God healing the body. I sat on an old bench in the back and watched as the people stayed on their knees, praying and crying to God. I had never seen people pray in that fashion before. I said to myself, “If I had gotten down on my knees and prayed like that, perhaps I would have been healed long ago.”

When the preacher got up to speak, he watched me very closely. I had a roll of music under my arm, and perhaps he thought I was a spy carrying something from City Hall—for it was during the First World War, and the German churches were censored in their preaching. So this dear preacher was very careful in what he said.

In his sermon, the minister said, “Jesus Christ suffered on the cross for you. He took all of your sins and sicknesses upon Himself. By His sufferings on the cross, and the shedding of His precious blood, He paid the full price for your salvation, so that you could go free and be saved and healed.” God never intended for His children to be sick. Then he also quoted, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” Galatians 3:13. We are redeemed through Jesus Christ. This I had never

known or understood before. The curse of the law included all bodily sicknesses and diseases. Deuteronomy 28:15-62. I thought, “If anybody ever was cursed, I am.” I was suffering beneath the curse, and this man was saying that if I would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and trust Him, He would deliver me from the curse. Friends, I had never known before why Christ died. I used to go around the stations of the cross with the old Catholic women every Saturday afternoon. I could sing, so I would go around those stations in the church with the women, and we would bury Christ, and that was the end. I went to twenty-four saints every day to pray, so as to make myself acceptable in God’s sight, but it didn’t seem to help me. Now this preacher was telling me plainly that I could be delivered simply by trusting in Christ. It seemed too good to be true.

This sermon was God-inspired and just for me, for I had been taught up to that time that man—including myself—could please God by suffering much. This message, then, was something entirely new to me. After I heard it, my faith in God became so alive that I was able to believe that God would really help me at that very moment. A happiness glowed within me and warmed my innermost being. For years, I had not known what it was like to have a good, warm body. My blood was unclean. I was miserable and sick.

After this message, the minister asked, “Is there anyone here today who would like to dedicate his life to Jesus Christ?” I lifted my hand. The minister then continued, “If there is anyone here who is sick and wishes to be prayed for, come to the front.”

I immediately accepted his invitation, went to the front with others, and wanted to introduce myself and explain my condition to him. He looked down at me, with my long hair, fine clothes, diamond pin, gold watch and all, and wondered if I was a spy. However, he said roughly, “Kneel down there.” I am glad I had learned obedience. I knelt, and the moment my knees touched the floor, the Spirit of God came on me in power and glory. It was like mighty, dynamic healing streams surging through my entire body. For the last four years, my cold, tired body had not known what it was like to be warm. The power of God just struck me and shook me for a full half hour. As His Spirit operated through my bones, through my muscles, through my being, I became hotter. The more God’s power surged through me, the more I perspired. The Lord simply operated on that poor diseased body of mine. Soon I was singing with others around me: “There is power, power wonder working power in the precious blood of the Lamb.”

Then a remarkable thing happened. Everything became quiet, and as I knelt there at the altar rail in silent prayer, it seemed that heaven had come down. I was translated into the kingdom of God, sitting in heavenly places with Christ, right there at the railing. As I waited in God’s presence, I saw two beautiful hands, white hands, and they touched my body. I knew it was the Lord. His hands went down my body from head to toe, and every spirit of infirmity had to go. I got up, and I was a new man. A miracle had been wrought in my heart as well. God gave me a new heart and a new spirit. Oh, how wonderful it was! When my good stepmother saw me entering the house, she saw something in my eyes that told her I was healed, and she began to weep for joy.

I had received redemption which is in Christ Jesus for my spirit, soul and body. All sickness, with all traces of its symptoms, vanished completely that day! Two weeks later I heard a sermon about the infilling of the Holy Spirit. As I earnestly sought God I received an overflowing downpour of the precious Holy Spirit.

To the glory of God, I can say that since that time, 42 years ago, I have been well in body and privileged to be active in the service of the Lord as a messenger of the glorious Gospel. My wife and I served as pastors in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for 39 years. As hungry hearts have turned to God, I have seen over and over again, the wonderful mighty works of God which the Bible speaks of.

You, too, can experience the miraculous works of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe on Him and receive His salvation, which saves to the uttermost. Jesus Christ is the Savior, and He will save, heal, and fill you with His Holy Spirit too.

Note:
From the archives of the Assembly of God

“A few days later (following his salvation and healing), Wannenmacher was baptized in the Holy Spirit. He soon launched into gospel ministry and shared his testimony wherever he went. He played his violin and sang gospel songs during the lunch hour at the Harley Davidson plant, where he sometimes worked. He testified about his healing in hospitals, street corners, and other places. Everywhere he went, he prayed with people, and many accepted Christ and were healed. Wannenmacher’s family jokingly referred to his violin as the ‘healing violin,’ because numerous people experienced healing as he played songs such as ‘The Holy City.’
In 1921 he married Helen Innes and started Full Gospel Church in Milwaukee. He went on to found six additional daughter churches in the area. He also served as the first superintendent of the Hungarian Branch of the Assemblies of God, which was organized in 1944 for Hungarian immigrants to America. After pastoring Full Gospel Church (renamed Calvary Assembly of God in 1944) for 39 years, he retired in 1960.”

About the Author

Joseph P. Wannenmacher (1895–1989) was born in Hungary and immigrated to the United States with his family in 1909. Raised in a musical household, he played in his father's orchestra as a child and trained as a mechanic before moving to America. He worked as a mechanic and tool maker, later earning his livelihood through music when illness made shop work difficult.

His testimony recounts years of illness and a turning point in the spring of 1917, when he attended a church service and experienced what he described as spiritual renewal and healing. He subsequently entered gospel ministry, sharing his testimony and playing his violin in churches and community settings, including during lunch breaks at the Harley Davidson plant.

In 1921, he married Helen Innes and founded Full Gospel Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The church was renamed Calvary Assembly of God in 1944. He also founded six daughter churches in the area and became the first superintendent of the Hungarian Branch of the Assemblies of God, organised in 1944. After 39 years of pastoral ministry at the Milwaukee church, he retired in 1960.

This biography is based on the testimony and accompanying archival note reproduced in this volume.

A Life Remembered

Born in Hungary in 1895, Joseph P. Wannenmacher came to America in 1909. Trained as a mechanic and raised in a musical household, he found in the violin a lifelong companion.

In this personal testimony, he recounts childhood illness, immigration, and the experiences that shaped his life and ministry in Milwaukee.

This volume preserves his own account, together with an archival note and a brief author biography.

Joseph P. Wannenmacher • 1895–1989

