



--- FEATURES
produced by Baptist Press

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July 30, 1976

76-124

God Gave "Birth Blessings,"
Says Handicapped Student

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (BP)--Jerry Powell has stumps for legs, partial arms and only four fingers.

A victim of severe birth defects, the California Baptist College (CBC) junior insists he wasn't "just born this way." Rather, God has given him "birth blessings" not defects, says the 26-year-old religion major from Vallejo, Calif.

"There's no reason to feel sorry for me," Powell advises. "If the barrier of fear, pity and misunderstanding is broken, then everything works out fine. I've found that showing people I can do whatever I want breaks this barrier."

Powell says he became a Christian about four years ago and had already made many adjustments prior to receiving Christ into his life. Still, Christ has made a difference, the CBC student says. "As I got into God's word, fellowshiped with other brothers and sisters in Christ, and got involved in anything and everything I could do for the church, I started to grow as a person and Christian.

"God has blessed me with such a strong, stubborn will, that if I come across something I can't do at that time, I say I'm going to do it," Powell admits.

That has been the Monroe, La., native's philosophy, he says, since childhood. He was the fourth of six children--five "normal." And his parents, Ellis and Nelma Powell, never allowed Jerry to be treated differently. He climbed trees, and still enjoys hiking and other sports. As a child he was a neighborhood bully--"to prove myself," he reflects.

Nelma Powell won a five-year, hard-fought battle to get her son into regular classes with non-handicapped children. He attended a school for the handicapped through fourth grade but was finally allowed into a normal school on a trial basis and has attended regular classes ever since. Powell was graduated from Napa (Calif.) College with an associate of arts degree before entering CBC.

At CBC he has joined a convalescent ministry in which he sings, preaches and witnesses. He creates colorful chapel posters that portray the day's program at CBC, as he enjoys painting and sculpturing. He once considered art as a profession. Powell has also served as a summer missionary, working in camps and Vacation Bible School, keeping a pace that would tire many non-handicapped persons, friends note.

He has a wheelchair, which he uses only when he has to and "often as a ladder." If everyone was four feet tall, "I'd just throw the wheelchair away," he quips. He feels the same about artificial legs. "They're a hindrance." Putting them on is like "trying to prove I'm like everyone else," he says.

He scoots around on the stumps of his arms and legs and is able to drive specially equipped vehicles, like his van.

"I believe everyone has a purpose in life and that we can all be used in some way. Possibly through work with handicapped people, I can help prove this to them," Powell says.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers

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BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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July 30, 1976

76-124

**Baptist Missionaries Stay
As U. S. Evacuates Beirut**

BEIRUT (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries stationed here were not among the 300 Americans and other foreigners evacuated from Lebanon by the U. S. Navy in late July.

The James K. Raglands, Emma Cooke and Mabel Summers elected to stay in the city to continue Baptist work. The four missionaries remained unharmed, according to reports.

Finlay H. Graham, Southern Baptist missionary to Beirut currently on leave in Jordan, telephoned the Raglands July 29 and relayed the information to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board headquarters in Richmond, Va.

The Beirut Baptist School, which is staffed by missionaries and national teachers, graduated 30 students during the week of the evacuation.

The only major damage to Baptist property reported in the heavy fighting in the city has been to the Arab Baptist Seminary and to the home of a missionary family who was not in the country at the time.

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Gunman Exchanges
Bullets for Bible

Baptist Press
7/30/76

By Ken Hammond

FORT WORTH (BP)--A would-be bandit broke into tears and traded his bullets for a Bible when confronted with a victim who was not afraid to die.

John Heird, 31, who works part-time as night auditor at the Fort Worth Days Inn, effected the startling transformation by quoting Biblical scriptures to the man who was holding a cocked pistol to his head.

A first year diploma in theology student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary here, Heird said he simply closed his eyes and started praying aloud for the man.

"It shocked him so much, he just lowered the gun and said, 'What am I going to do, what am I going to do?' It's an amazing story. It exemplifies we can practice what we preach at the seminary."

The young man walked into the motel about 1:45 a.m. on a Wednesday, pulled a gun and demanded all the money, Heird said.

"He told me to lock the door and pull down all the shades. I did that," Heird said. "I opened the register for him and showed him there wasn't any money. He asked me to open the safe. I told him I couldn't.

"He put the gun to my head and said 'I'm going to kill you.'"

But the gunman noticed something was wrong. Heird did not act frightened.

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"He said 'Aren't you afraid of dying'?" Heird related. "I quoted a scripture for him from the 27th Psalms. That flabbergasted him."

Heird said he explained that his religious convictions accepted death, and then the man ordered him into the restroom.

"He threw me up against the wall three times," Heird said. "I got several big bumps on my head and a cut on my arm. He put the gun to my head again. He cocked the hammer back this time. I closed my eyes and prayed for him."

Heird said after the man lowered the gun they went back into the office, sat down and Heird read several scriptures from his Bible. "It quieted him down immensely," he said.

The would-be robber then walked Heird back to the restroom, tied his hands to the door using the auditor's tie and told him to stay there five minutes.

Heird said when he got loose and returned to the office, the man was gone.

"The Bible was gone too, but he had left the cartridges from his pistol," Heird said. "I was just elated he took the Bible. I hope it will do him some good.

"Once when I was reading the scriptures to him, I saw him cry a little bit."

Heird admitted at one point he told the man that although he was not afraid of dying he would regret being taken from his wife and seven-year-old daughter.

"I don't guess he'd ever had anybody talk to him like that," Heird said. "I'm just glad he took the Bible, nothing else."

Heird, a native of Pine Bluff, Ark., said when he finishes his studies at the seminary, he expects to do pastoral work in a church and then become a chaplain in a penal institution.

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Ken Hammond is police reporter for the Fort Worth Star Telegram.

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Preaching Must Prevail
Anglican Tell Baptists

Baptist Press
7/30/76

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"The unmaking of a minister is the downgrading of preaching," an Anglican clergyman told students at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary here.

"A seminary should attach the weight to the homiletics (preaching) program that homiletics deserve," said A. Lenard Griffith, assistant minister of St. Paul's Church, Toronto, Canada, during the seminary's annual Pastor's Conference.

"Catholics, who have rarely taught homiletics are gradually adding the course to their seminary curriculums because they see the need for it in their churches," said Griffith, who served at the City Temple Church, London, before coming to Canada.

"There is not a single full-time professor of homiletics in the city of Toronto and as a consequence, you never ask a Canadian professor to fill your pulpit . . . unless, of course, you want to empty the church," he added.

"The greatest disappointment I have ever had was the falling away from preaching in the United Kingdom Church. That is why I am an Anglican today. The future of churches in Canada for many people is a group of people getting together, in a home, without a leader or preacher, and interpreting the Bible, There will not be worship," Griffith continued.

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"You Baptists and Methodists and Presbyterians have maintained the centrality of worship. It is the constituent event in the congregational life of the church. When the church stops worshipping, the church will die," he said.

"A seminary should attach the importance to the homiletic program it deserves. You as a seminarian are taking all of these courses to gain information so that you will be able to preach better sermons.

"To young pastors I want to say that I hope, early in your ministry, you will find that your only ambition is to advance the Gospel so that you can be spared the schizophrenia of the servant of God when His will clashes against the desire of the human man within you.

"I hope that you will always seek to be used by Him and be satisfied only with His approval," continued Griffith. "We want to feel secure, but if you can ever get beyond this seeking after security, so that all you care about is the advancement of the Gospel . . . you just might achieve something. I'll tell you what it is . . . someday you will be able to lay your hands on someone's head and heal them."

Griffith, responding to the question on the world view of America said, "The world is envious of you (Americans). They would like to have what you have. People do not see the United States as a Christian nation," he observed. "A London editor wrote that 'Americans all go to church . . . but that doesn't mean a thing'".

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Liberian Ambassador Visits
Baptist World Headquarters

Baptist Press
7/30/76

WASHINGTON (BP)--The new ambassador from the Republic of Liberia to the United States and Canada, Francis A. Dennis, is a Baptist who says he hopes "to build greater cooperation between our countries. The interchange of peoples is very important. If we can understand each other better, this contributes to peace."

Dennis, whose most recent assignment was in Moscow, 1972-76, as Liberian ambassador to the USSR, made his comments during a reception and luncheon in his honor at the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) offices here.

The Baptist deacon, who hand delivered a letter to the BWA from William O. Tolbert, Liberian president and former BWA president, formerly served with the Liberian embassy in Washington, 1959-62, including a year as charge des affaires of Liberia's permanent mission to the United Nations.

Liberian government leaders traditionally have been active church members, Dennis told the BWA staff. He noted that the historic Providence Baptist Church of Monrovia was organized at sea by the founding pioneers of his nation.

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