

from a

Hopeless End

to an

Endless Hope



PERSONAL AND TRUE TESTIMONY OF  
MYRON "MIKE" PERL

Born into an orthodox Jewish family in 1916 in Hurley, Wisconsin, I found childhood days usually unpleasant because my father drank and gambled heavily. Havoc in our home broke my heart before I was six. Shortly after my sixth birthday I was deposited with a childless uncle and aunt who sent me to Hebrew School. Upon hearing of the miracles that God of Israel performed in behalf of Israel as recorded in Tenach (the Jewish Bible), my little heart took on new hope. “Here’s something to live for—something to die for,” were my thoughts. “I’ll become a rabbi and help my people—and help to make this world the kind of place in which we would want to live!”

By the time that I was Bar Mitzvah (confirmation at 13 years of age according to Jewish tradition) I was a little zealot striving to keep the 613 commands of Torah (the Law) to the letter – plus the many traditions!

Shortly after my Bar Mitzvah my uncle died. I asked my rabbi, “Where did my uncle go?” He replied, “Your uncle was a good man. We hope that he is now in Gan Eden (Garden of Eden).” Then I inquired, “Rabbi, can’t we know if he is there?” Tenderly he answered, “No, we can not know such things. Keep on being a good boy – study hard – and we hope that some day you will be a big rabbi.” By this time, I yearned to know my origin, purpose in life, and final destination. It was my opinion that without the certainty of one’s purpose in life and one’s final destination that one could not live properly.

An obsession of suicide began to plague me. Seeking to escape my pains and searching for pleasure, I succumbed to the invitation of wayward teenagers and the wiles of unscrupulous men and women who operated illegally more than 75 saloons in Hurley – then a town of only 3000! Before I was 14, I knew what it was to be dead drunk! Before 15, I knew what it was to have a man pull a gun on me in a poker game! In contrast, I was an honor student!

Before I became 16, my father died unexpectedly. We had a different rabbi and since I strongly desired to know the meaning of death and life, I asked him, “Where did my father go?” Becoming angry with my question, he retorted, “Don’t stick your nose into God’s business!”

I began to question my belief. Could there be a God? If so, wouldn’t He let us know what death and life are all about? I don’t think there is a God! All religions are failures for hadn’t I practiced devoutly one of the best—if not the best—and it didn’t work!

Now what is the answer? Education became my hope. In 1935, I enrolled at the University of Wisconsin. There I was influenced by my professors and fellow students to become an atheist. No God – no judgment – no afterlife –live as you please, and it pleased me to live more riotously than ever! Atheism failed to tell me why I am in this world and where I am going.

In 1938, I concluded that education was not the answer because it failed to give me either a satisfactory explanation of life or a purpose for living. Dropping out of the university, I went to work full time, for now I had decided that the answer was in money. At 23 I was buyer-manager of the Men’s Wear Department of Baron’s, second largest store in a city of 60,000, and I was being groomed for the store presidency; however, I learned that money couldn’t buy peace of mind, purpose in life or provide the meaning of life.

In August of 1939, I left my job and went home intending to kill myself. Instead, I went to Rockford, Illinois, hoping that life would straighten out for me there. On my first day on the job in a ladies’ shoe store a Gentile salesman, Claude Sprague, began speaking to me of believing in Christ. He stated that Christ was and is the promised Jewish Messiah – that He

could straighten out my life for me – that He could answer all of my questions. Claude would quote the following recorded in the third chapter of the Book of John in the New Testament: “There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, ‘Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher come from God for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.’ Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus saith unto Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into him mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, you must be born again’.” Claude urged me to invite Jesus into my heart that I might experience being “born again,” but I was not about to do that which would offend my family – and would not work anyway because I believed that there was no God!

Opportunity came to transfer to Aurora, Illinois. I seized it to get away from Claude. Also, since life hadn’t straightened out for me in Rockford, I hoped that it would in Aurora. I was in Aurora only a few days when I walked Claude! He was transferred, too! He beseeched me to believe that Christ died for the sins of all mankind, was buried, rose and lives to give me salvation and a wonderful new life. Opportunity came to transfer to Joliet, Illinois. I seized it to get away from Claude and still to seek my answer. I was in Joliet but a few days when I walked Claude! Repeatedly he would appeal to me to ask my own Messiah to show me the truth, but I wouldn’t. I continued to be miserable, depressed and disgruntled with life.

World War II broke out! Here’s my golden opportunity! I will volunteer, ask for combat and get killed. Then all of my troubles will be over, I hope. I volunteered, asking for combat. Two and one-half years passed and I was still in the United States – frozen in a technical position! In order to get into combat and be killed, I volunteered for the Infantry Paratroops, and qualified. Late in the war, mid-Atlantic, our ship was rammed by another in our own convoy. I was in the lowest part of the ship, below the water-line. Although death stared me in the face, I didn’t call to God for I was a practicing atheist! Sixty-eight men drowned around me. When those of us who were spared reached France we learned that we had missed the jump over the Rhine River in which many of our buddies had been killed! Mail from the Sprague family informed me that they and many others were praying for me. The war ended and there wasn’t a scratch on me!

Back to Rockford to be near one of my dearest friends, a fellow-Jew who died of cancer at 26. Too, the Sprague family was there and I wanted to be with people who loved me; but I didn’t want to be preached to, so I went to Chicago – still hoping that life for me would straighten out!

While working as a clothing salesman, my body broke out in boils. After a thorough examination at Wesley Memorial Hospital, a doctor informed me he could find nothing organically wrong! He continued, “I believe you need peace of mind.” I replied, “Doctor, I believe you are right. Where do I find it?” He answered, “If I had the answer to that question, all of my troubles would be over!”

Still seeking peace of mind and desiring to free myself from the Sprague’s speaking to me of Christ, I left for California. About six months after my arrival in Los Angeles, I received

a letter postmarked Colton (60 miles east). It read, "Yes, Mike, we're in California, too! See you the first chance we get. Claude, Clara and six children." During the next three years, intermittently, they came to see me, each time exhorting me to ask Jesus into my heart.

In 1946, I had decided that agnosticism would be a more convenient way to believe. Maybe there is a God; maybe there isn't; one cannot know. This belief nearly drove me mad! Maybe there is a Heaven, and I'll miss it-- or a hell and I'll go to it! Trying to be neutral, I discovered that such a "religion" didn't work either!

In 1950, I went to a top-flight psychiatrist. Insulin shock treatment was part of the therapy given but still no peace of mind, purpose in life or explanation of it were to be found. On February 7, 1951 – in spite of living in California, a promising future, health, car, a large wardrobe, money in the bank, and friends – I was determined to commit suicide! Claude came to see me! When he learned of my intentions, he pleaded with me to turn to Jesus. I refused, so he said, "Mike, promise me that if you are still alive at the end of the day, you'll get on your knees and ask the God in Whom you claimed to believe at one time to show you the truth about Christ – about these things that I've been speaking to you for 12 years – and if you will, I'll say goodbye for I'll be willing to abide by the results." Receiving my promise, Claude left.

In the privacy of my apartment that night for four hours I tried to end my life. About 11:30 p.m. I decided that I couldn't do it. What about my promise? My family had taught me to keep my word. I knelt, looked up and said, "God, if You are a God, and if You are up there – I don't know where You are – and if Christ is my Messiah, and if He can straighten out my life for me, let Him do it! I'm whipped, beaten, defeated and helpless – and if You are a God and are up there, You know what I intend to do about it – so You do something about it now – that's all there is to it!"

I arose from my knees thinking, "What a ridiculous thing to do: to speak into thin air and to expect an answer that will straighten out your life when for 30 years you've been unable to do it." I flung myself on my bed crying out, "Let me die! Just let me die!"

Two mornings later I quit my job because I would no longer work for a man who could not be pleased with my best efforts. "Now I'll kill myself for how many false starts can a person bear?" The telephone in my apartment rang. Claude's wife told me that he had lined up a good job for me in San Bernardino, and I could be interviewed that afternoon. Reasoning that I could kill myself at some other time and that this could mean that at long last my ship had come in, I thanked Clara and promised to leave Los Angeles shortly. In the interview I was asked to return on the 12<sup>th</sup> for a definite answer. I promised to do so.

The Spragues demanded that I stay with them even though there were four adults and seven children sharing their two-bedroom home! Early next morning I was the guest of Claude at the breakfast of the Christian Business Men's Committee which met in the Café Madrid of the Harris' store. When guests were introduced Claude remarked, "This is my friend about whom some of you have heard. I don't want to say anything that might embarrass him. He has had enough trouble in life. Mike, would you like to say something?" I replied, "Men, it is true that I am at the end of my road. I used to believe in prayer at one time, but I do not anymore, but since you men do, please pray for me."

Chairman Harold Maybee said, "I believe this calls for prayer right here and now. Bill Switzer, please lead us in prayer." Rising, Bill testified, "Mike, right where you stand now, I stood at the age of 21 – at the end of my road. Somebody told me about Jesus. I invited Him

into my heart, and the past 42 years have been the grandest I've ever known." Then he prayed, "Lord, light a fire under Mike's heart and don't let him be satisfied with anything until he comes to You."

About 2:15 a.m., I awakened out of sound sleep. Feeling unduly warm, I thought I had become ill. I felt my forehead; I could detect no fever. I thought, "Wait a minute! That man prayed..." I put my hand over my heart, and there's where I was warm! I felt my thigh – normal; my heart – warm! I looked up and said, "If something's happening, just let it happen!" Then a battle began: "How can you, a Jew, believe in Jesus Christ? You wanted and studied to be a rabbi at one time. Can you face your family and your Jewish friends and tell them that you believe in Jesus Christ? Get out of bed and end your life!" Yet, there seemed to be something or Somebody saying to me, "This is what you are looking for...this will give you peace...this will answer all of your questions..." At 4:25 a.m., I fell asleep. When I awakened, the sun was rising. Going outside I found things looked different. Looking up I said again, "If something is happening, just let it happen – just let it happen!"

Later that Sunday morning we went to church. The warm welcome and loving interest of various ones in the congregation made me feel good. I didn't understand the minister's message, but did understand his invitation at the close when he said entreatingly, "If Jesus isn't in your heart, open it and let Him come in!" Silently, I decided, "Not I!"

That evening one of the Sprague daughters invited me to Young People's meeting. I declined stating that I was too old. When asked my age, I answered, "I'll be 35." "When?" she asked. I answered, "In May." She said, "Thirty-five is the deadline and this is February – c'mon." My heart was touched by the young people and their wholesomeness – by their pleading prayers for me! When this meeting ended, I was told that the evening service would begin in a few minutes.

I withdrew from everybody and went behind the church. Once again I looked up, and this time with all of my heart I prayed, "If this is real, if it is true, if it is lasting, if it's for a Jew, let me have it – no matter what it costs and no matter what it doesn't cost!" As I stood there, I was born again! -- born from above – born of God – born of the Spirit! Christ, my Messiah, came into my heart! God the Father came into my heart! God the Holy Spirit came into my heart! Into my heart came the Faith to believe that the One, True and Living God is a Unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and that every word of the Old Testament (Tenach) and the New Testament is the Truth of God! In came the peace of mind I had been seeking! In came purpose – to make Christ known as Messiah, Savior and Lord to Jew and Gentile! In came love, joy, power, and explanation of death and life! Out went "the hopeless end" and in came "endless hope"! -- a hope that means an absolute expectation of going to Heaven where Life will be Perfect in perpetuity! In came the certainty of forgiveness of my sins and the possession of eternal life!

Since February 11, 1951 when Jesus became my Messiah, Savior and Lord, He has given me over to refrain from drinking, and during these 50 years there has not been any desire to drink. Also, He has delivered me from lying, gambling and carousing. Too, He removed the obsession of suicide which has plagued me from childhood days. In its place there has been a desire to live! In fact, since becoming a complete Jew through Christ, life for me has been glorious! He has blessed me with a beautiful marriage that began in 1955. My wife, Ruth is a Jewtile—that is, she's partly a Jew and partly Gentile. We also have been blessed with a son

and daughter-in-law, a daughter and son-in-law, a single daughter, 2 grandsons and 2 granddaughters.

On the other hand, since nobody's life is without heartache and heartbreak, I desire to state that when they have occurred in mine, the Lord Jesus, the Jewish Messiah has always given me power to bear them. In Him, I have found all that I have ever wanted!

Dear Reader – be you Jewish or Gentile – if you have not been born again – if you are without the certainty that there is a Heaven and that you are en route to it – if you are without the certainty that there is an eternal hell and that you will never go to it – do realize that Jesus went to the cross to die for your sins, and that He was buried but rose on the third day: then He ascended into Heaven where He is now - alive! Both Old and New Testament declare: “Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved.” Please call upon the Lord right now that He might give you His greatest gift – the gift of Eternal Life!



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