

“IT’S NOT ABOUT FAILURE”

By Charlene Wilder

ACTS ministries of Abingdon, VA

I believe it will be good to tell my story; doing so will give me the opportunity to remember that I must remain grateful to God, to my husband, my pastor & his wife, and loving family & friends. Telling my story reminds me that I could go back to where I was if I ever forget the wonderful blessings that have been given to me or that the Holy Ghost is the one who guides me and keeps me on this path. The path of victory!

I was thirty-two years old, filled with the baptism of the Holy Ghost and was being pushed around by a compulsion to drink that was completely beyond my control. I became victim to a mental obsession so subtly powerful that my human willpower could not break it. I am a very strong woman, but this was out of my control. I could not stop drinking. I would hang on to sobriety for short intervals, but there would always come this tide of an over-powering necessity to drink. And as I was engulfed in it, I felt such a sense of panic that I really believed that I would die if I did not get that drink inside me. Needless to say this was not pleasurable drinking. This was drinking out of sheer desperation; alone, locked behind my own door that I had closed to separate me from the outside of which I no longer felt apart.

Self confidence was no good, in fact it was total liability. I had battled this demon of alcohol for ten years. I had heart-sickness, guilt, shame and fear, bordering on panic and no complete escape except in oblivion. I was so miserable, I wanted to die. Certainly now anyone would have agreed that only a miracle could save me, but how does one get a prescription for a miracle? This is how I got mine.

About one year prior to this, I began attending Abingdon United Pentecostal Church, where I found a dedicated loving couple, Pastor Robert & Cookie McCann, who continued to labor and struggle with me. They tried to help me with everything they had at their disposal. I could not understand why they even bothered with me as long as they did, especially when I wanted to give up on myself; I had grown so terribly weary in this battle.

Because we did not have an ACTS ministry operating in our area yet, they finally talked me into entering a specialty hospital for detoxification and to try the Alcoholics Anonymous program. I had read stories in the A.A. book of men and women who entered the treatment facilities, started the A.A. program, gave their lives to God and had somehow stopped drinking. I thought that if these people could do it maybe I could too.

I entered the hospital out of complete hopelessness and feeling like a total failure. During my stay in the hospital, I learned that I had a progressive, incurable disease called alcoholism, and that statistically only 1 out of 10 ever fully recover, and most rotated in and out their doors at least 3 times. When I made the decision to enter the hospital, I truly believed it was my last hope. I was willing to do whatever they said; nothing I tried had worked. I explained to the doctor that I did not like their statistics, that I wasn't there for a vacation, and that I would recover!

Taking a look back over my life, at age seventeen, God gave me a beautiful, blue-eyed baby boy named Anthony; making me now not just responsible for myself but another life that had not asked to be born. Even though God had brought me into this wonderful truth after marrying my husband Garry, and 5 months after Anthony was born, I had a troubled, abusive childhood and began drinking at the tender age of eleven. I quickly found that alcohol would dull my pain, so between the ages of

eleven and seventeen I learned to use alcohol to cope with day to day life. I did feel a great sense of responsibility for this new life and did not want any harm to come to him, so I did not drink during my pregnancy. And although I truly wanted a better life for my son, after he was born the compulsion was back and I began drinking again.

Deep down I knew that a walk with God would make the difference, so I began praying for guidance to a God I didn't know. I married Garry, the father of my son, and soon found myself at an apostolic altar. There I received the gift of Holy Ghost and was baptized in Jesus Name. Right then and without any effort on my part, God removed any desire I had for alcohol. I had an honest heart and truly wanted a changed life. For the next four years I was like a sponge, soaking up every bit of knowledge I could through fasting and prayer. During this time, God gave us two more beautiful, blue-eyed babies, a boy named Adam, and a girl named Alicia. It was at the birth of my daughter that I began this journey.

When my daughter Alicia was born, she was allergic to all of the baby formulas on the market, and I was unable to nurse. The doctor suggested that I drink a beer because the yeast in the beer would stimulate milk production; however, I had very strong convictions about drinking or returning to drinking, and just could not do that. I went to a WIC appointment later that day and the attendant there suggested the same idea. I began to think of it as a medicine and that I would only be drinking it to help my baby. So after giving it much thought, I decided to give it a try. All it took was that one drink, and almost immediately I began to crave the alcohol again.

For months I resisted the overwhelming desire I had to drink, and I would ask for prayer but I was too ashamed to tell anyone what I had done and what I needed deliverance for; it was too much for me to handle alone. And then I failed.

I could not understand why a Holy Ghost filled woman could not overcome, but I continued to bring my children to church, which is where my heart was, hoping that someday God would deliver me again. I am delivered today!

I owe my miracle to a longsuffering pastor and his wife, who wouldn't let me give up. Where, by their wisdom, I was brought into the Alcoholics Anonymous program, to which has given me opportunities to reach people that I may never have, and through the infilling of the Holy Ghost, a deeper, spiritual walk with God. I am currently working on my ACTS Certification and I look forward to the opportunity when God will use me to reach others through the ACTS ministry in our church.

I point to where he can use us to fulfill his purpose. Today I can use my experience to bring others hope. Today I know this is not a story, this is a testimony! Today I know, **IT'S NOT ABOUT FAILURE IT'S ABOUT VICTORY!**