

Beloved Latin American Evangelist Preaches On Despite Cancer Battle

The 82-year-old American missionary known as 'Hermano Pablo' has been ministering for more than 60 years

Considered by many Latin America's most-loved evangelist, 82-year-old Paul Finkenbinder has been in ministry for nearly 61 years, but the man better known to the Spanish-speaking world as Hermano Pablo isn't ready to call it quits.

"I believe a minister for God is a minister for life," the ordained Assemblies of God minister told Charisma. "I don't ever see myself retiring. I will probably be forced to slow down, and that's OK. But I will be a minister of the gospel till the day that I leave this earth."

Slowing down for Finkenbinder, who is battling prostate cancer, means less time preaching in crusades and speaking in conferences and seminars outside the United States. Last year, he ministered overseas for 75 days, down from two years ago when he preached outside the country for about 100 days.

Finkenbinder, however, plans to continue his widely acclaimed *Un Mensaje a la Conciencia*, or *A Message to the Conscience*, a four-minute daily program broadcast on Latino radio, television and newspapers.

On the air since 1964, the program—which features a short story, but with a very clear moral and spiritual application—airs more than 19,000 times weekly, reaching millions of people in 30 countries. *Un Mensaje* is also on the

Internet at .

Amazingly, the program's main listeners are non-Christians, including heads of state and business and military leaders, hundreds of whom have accepted Christ.

"I have gotten far away from God," a listener from Chile wrote Hermano Pablo Ministries (HPM), which is based in Costa Mesa, Calif. "... Your program has made me think of what my life is like now. I want to tell you all that in this moment, I feel that the Lord has spoken to me."

Demetrio, 23, who lives in Panama but is originally from Greece, told HPM that he learned Spanish by reading Un Mensaje, which is published in some 80 newspapers. "All of my life I have watched your program on television, heard it on the radio, and read it in the newspaper," he wrote." The program has greatly blessed me."

Besides turning Hermano Pablo into a household name throughout the Spanish-speaking world, the program has made an impact with a prominent secular organization.

The International Center for Education in Latin America recently referred to Un Mensaje as the second-most effective program in all of Latin America. Un Mensaje has also been honored by the National Religious Broadcasters as the "Hispanic Program of the Year."

Finkenbinder believes the show has been widely popular for several reasons. "The program's main objective is to reach the nonevangelical," Finkenbinder said. "Never has there ever been any mention of a church, denomination or religious order, and

never has there ever been any ... [request for] ... money,” Finkenbinder added. “The fact that the program is only four minutes long is perhaps also a factor of appeal to non-Christians.”

Born in Puerto Rico to missionary parents, Finkenbinder felt called by God to be a minister in 1938, when he was 17. When he was 20, he married his wife, Linda, who is also in her 80s.

In 1943, the couple and their son, Paul Jr., began serving as missionaries in El Salvador. Twelve years later, Finkenbinder says God gave him the vision for mass evangelism through radio. Since that time, he has utilized every media tool to evangelize Latin America, influencing many leading Hispanic ministers.

“He is one of my heroes,” said Argentinean evangelist Alberto Mottesi, whose influence in Latin America is often compared with Billy Graham’s. Last fall, the school of evangelists at Mottesi’s ministry in California was dedicated in Finkenbinder’s honor.

Daniel de León, pastor of 6,000-member Templo Calvario Assembly of God in Santa Ana, Calif., the largest Hispanic church in the United States, added: “[He is] the greatest missionary of modern times. It’s pretty remarkable that he’s still ministering in his 80s with the same passion and enthusiasm of years ago.”

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