

Hallelujah Anyhow

Although I was raised a Southern Baptist, I was full of spiritual questions after my mother's death and the end of my 18-year marriage. On one occasion, while visiting an Assemblies of God church I observed the congregation praising the Lord in a way I had never seen. As they lifted their hands in worship, I joined in.

Each week I returned, knowing that God was drawing me closer to Him. At first I raised only one hand in worship. Then the Lord asked me, "What's wrong with your other hand?" In total abandonment, I raised both arms. God's Spirit worked in me, and freedom was released through my surrender.

Before, I learned about the prophets only in the Old Testament. My newfound freedom brought people into my life who would say to me, "The Lord told me this..." or "The Lord told me that..." Eventually, I learned to listen to God's voice and move accordingly.

One Sunday a minister delivered a personal prophecy to me, telling me things no one could have known without divine revelation. Consequently, my interpretation of his prophecy about a recently ended relationship hurt me. Contrary to the Spirit's leading, I eased the pain following this breakup by constantly telling myself that my ex-boyfriend and I would someday reconcile.

One day at work I learned that he had married the previous weekend. I was devastated, and I immediately went home and threw my collection of prophecy tapes across my living room. That night, after putting my 6-year-old son to bed, I went back to the living room. In renewed anger, I threw my Bible to the floor.

Suddenly, a Christ-like vision appeared to my right. At the same time, a black-hooded figure to my left exclaimed, "I told

you we could do it; I told you we could make her lose her faith."

Looking from one visitor to the other to my Bible, I soberly recalled that all my life God represented good and Satan evil. Though angry at God, I whispered that I would not let Satan win. Immediately, the two visitors vanished.

Dumbfounded, I slid onto the floor and attempted to sing my favorite praise songs. I choked on each word, and then I numbly retreated to my bed.

Weeks of praising God in the midst of my pain followed. In time, my healing and my understanding of a sovereign God who was looking after my best interest was renewed.

Looking back on that night, I realize that I learned the meaning of a "sacrifice of praise." I had to die to my feelings and praise God anyway. Amid my pain and confusion, I remembered that God is good and His mercies endure forever.