

Twenty Years On

It was the 7th of March 1992, and I'd been to a men's breakfast at Elim church in Southport. After breakfast, most people had agreed to stay behind and help with some jobs that needed doing. I stayed for a while but couldn't stay for the whole morning. Apparently, I needed to drive into Liverpool, to do something or get something from my office there. At the time, I was working as a newly qualified Legal Executive, based in a firm of solicitors on James Street, opposite the law courts in Derby Square.

It was about 11.15am when I set off, but I can't actually remember leaving, or anything about that journey. All I know is that five minutes before reaching my destination, whilst still on the dock road just outside the city centre, the car span violently out of control. It turned 180° so that it was facing completely the opposite direction, then slid sideways across the road, before crashing into the corner of the wall surrounding Bank Hall fire station. 90° of solid brickwork came straight through the side of the car, exactly at the point where I was sitting in the drivers seat. In the days before side impact bars and secondary safety features like airbags, there was nothing to cushion me from taking the full force of the impact. The side of the car caved in, leaving me unconscious, trapped inside the wreckage, and bleeding profusely.

So there I was on the dock road, less than five minutes from the city centre, just before twelve noon on Saturday lunchtime. You can imagine how busy that road gets with shoppers going into town, parents taking kids to places, people visiting the carpet or furniture outlets on the industrial estate, various car dealerships and showrooms ... to say nothing of football traffic. Despite all this, at the time of the crash, right at that moment, there wasn't another person to be seen anywhere ... no cars, trucks, motorbikes, taxis, buses, cyclists, pedestrians ... nothing.

The fire crew from Bank Hall could have been out at that point; busily attending to a fire or some other kind of emergency, but they weren't. Nobody actually witnessed the crash, but from inside the fire station they certainly heard it, and a few seconds later they came rushing out to see what had happened. They were horrified by the scene that was unfolding before them. Rushing straight back inside to fetch oxygen from their breathing equipment, heavy cutting gear and emergency first aid, they began trying to free me from the wreckage, whilst someone radioed for an ambulance. I'd stopped breathing but still had a pulse ... that was pretty much all anybody knew. I found out afterwards, that if both lungs collapse there's only a three minute window to get them inflated again ... anything longer than that is usually fatal. Thank God the firemen were immediately on hand, and knew exactly what to do.

The paramedics arrived soon afterwards, and I was lifted out of the car. Nobody was sure how I'd managed to survive even to that point, but there was no guarantee that I'd make it to the hospital. They worked quickly to get me into the ambulance as fast as they could. The police had also been contacted by that stage, and as the ambulance sped away, a patrol car was already en route to my parents' home in Formby. There, a policeman would soon knock on the door and tell my father the sort of news that no parent ever wants to hear: "Your son has been involved in a serious car accident. His condition is critical, his injuries are extensive, and it may be fatal. You should go to Walton hospital immediately."

Rushing down the hall towards the front door, my mother sensed a prompting she knew could only be from God, to pick up the phone and make a frantic call to someone from their church. "Graham's had a serious car accident," she told them, "his condition is critical and it may be fatal. We're on the way to Walton hospital now. Tell people to pray." As the minutes passed, she knew that more and more people would be receiving the message, and indeed the whole church was quickly mobilised into prayer.

Every traffic light seemed to be on red. My mother can remember praying some of them to green. She cried, she prayed, she feared, she hoped, then she cried and prayed some more. After a journey that seemed to take forever, they arrived and rushed into the hospital, wanting to know only one thing ... was I still alive? A nurse told them that doctors were still with me,

but that they'd come back with news as soon as they could. I was sent for a brain scan, which thankfully revealed no damage, and was then taken straight to the Intensive Care Unit.

There, my parents were allowed to see me, and doctors began to explain the severity of the situation and the injuries I'd sustained. I'd broken every rib in my body, fractured my pelvis, and severed part of my right ear. I'd suffered a severe blow to the head, had massive internal bleeding, and I'd punctured both lungs. My left lung had air in the wrong compartment, and my right lung was filled with blood. I was wrapped in foil because my body temperature had dropped dangerously low, and I was being given the first of many pints of blood to replace the ones that I'd lost. I was stable, my vital signs were okay, but I was on a ventilator. If I survived the trauma from my injuries, the doctors expected me to be on a ventilator and in the Intensive Care Unit for three weeks, but nobody was willing to comment on my chances. All they'd say were things like "he's young, strong and a non-smoker" or "he's stable".

My parents were taken to a relatives room; four walls that they became very familiar with over the next few days. At about 9.00pm that evening, the doctors brought them some fantastic news ... they'd been able to take me off the ventilator. I still required oxygen, and would undoubtedly need the ventilator again, but at that moment, I'd begun breathing on my own. Three weeks on a ventilator? Nothing is impossible for God. I never went back on it.

An hour later at about 10.00pm, the doctors decided that I was stable enough for an Ear, Nose and Throat surgeon to attempt micro-stitching my ear. In casualty, they'd roughly put it back together, but this lady was going to do it again very carefully, to reduce any potential scarring. It was going to take about an hour they were told, but actually took more than one and a half hours ... one and a half hours of intricate stitching on something as small as an ear ... wow! Praise God for the patience and skill of that woman!

Well, from there onwards ... the rest, as they say, is history:

By Monday night, just two and a half days after the accident, I was moved out of the Intensive Care Unit and onto a general ward. Not the three weeks on a ventilator, still in Intensive Care, that the doctors first predicted. Nobody could believe it.

By Friday night, just six days after the accident, the final tube was removed from my right lung and I was stitched back up. The only scars I have today are marks on both sides of my chest, where drains were put in to remove the fluid from my lungs, and a very feint line on my right ear, where it was stitched back together again.

By the following week, still less than a fortnight after the accident, my fractured pelvis and ribs had all returned to exactly the right positions. It was clear from the x-rays that they'd been broken, but everything had started to fuse back together without the need for any further treatment; no strapping up, no plaster casts, no bandaging, traction or bed rest. I left hospital with little more than a couple of sticking plasters, and simply returned home. It was, and still is, the most remarkable recovery I have ever made from anything.

I'm sharing this story, because I want you to know that I believe God is still in the business of doing impossible things, and I believe in the power of prayer. I am absolutely certain that his faithfulness to me, and to all who prayed on my behalf, is the only reason I'm still alive today.

The story, is obviously mine. The glory, is undoubtedly God's.

Graham Powell

A copy of the video relating to this story is available at http://youtu.be/LT14sOR_q4w



