

VICTORY IN WHAT SEEMS LIKE DEFEAT

by Dwayne Mims

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June of 1998 was the beginning of my battle to walk and regain control of my body. A month earlier my body tried to warn me that I was in danger. On a sunny day in May, I was jogging in the park trying to get a little exercise when my left side went tingly and numb. I sat down for a few minutes and the feeling went away. I hadn't fallen or lost my balance, so I thought everything was okay. So I got in my truck and drove home. It never happened again and I never told my doctor about it. Little did I know that a month later at age 33, I would fall victim to a stroke that would leave me paralyzed on my left side, unable to walk or move. Shortly afterwards, I was admitted to the hospital. Days went by and I was still unable to move. I was discouraged and afraid because I couldn't even go to the bathroom on my own.

When I was stabilized, my doctor came in and said, "You're going to the SNF ward (skilled nursing facility) next door." Hearing the word, nursing, I freaked thinking that they were trying to send me to a nursing home. Loudly I exclaimed, "I'm not going to any nursing home." My doctor tried to pacify and calm me down some, by telling me how nice it was with nicer rooms, therapy and eventually recovery. I would have a bigger room and get a chance to eat in their lunch room with friends instead of being in bed all the time. I said to myself, "Give it a chance; do your best in therapy. This might work out." I decided to have an open mind.

Months went by before I was out of my wheelchair. I'll never forget the first time my mom saw me walk. I was in the therapy room and they had me walk back down to my room. Not knowing that my mom had arrived for a visit, when I walked in the room, her face lit up like I had just won the Olympics. The joy we both felt was too great to fit in the room. What a victory this was for us.

Eventually I was released. I was not doing well enough to go home by myself, so off to mom's house I went excitedly. Therapy didn't end there. Now it was time for home therapy, mostly bed exercises at first. We moved next to stairs and walking outside. Eventually I went home to my place. I'm living on my own now cutting grass and shoveling snow. I thank Jesus every day for not leaving me alone and for this victory. I walk with a limp now and feel that I'm improving every day. It's not over until you hang your head down and quit. You control your future. Keep trying. I know you can make it.