

3.

attempts as the fire kept re-igniting. When finally he'd stopped the flames, he turned back for the pilot but it was too late. The pilot had been burnt to death.

I lay on the ground, severely injured. The skin on my arm and hand was falling off onto the ground like that of a fried chicken. There was also a serious cut on my face. I asked how badly I was burned and the comment was that, with all the smoke, they could not tell. Actually they were convinced that I would never make it off the field. When the medics cut off what remained of my clothing, they saw that I had sustained very serious third degree burns over a third of my body.

Although I was young, extremely healthy and very athletic, the prognosis was bad: I had no chance of survival, especially as the extensive burns that I had received often lead to severe complications - and they did.

In the days and weeks that followed, my entire body became infected, and I dropped in weight from 167 pounds of solid muscle to 90 pounds. My body became thin and wasted, and open sores developed that exposed my very bones. The back of my heels rotted away and my hand was so badly infected they expected to amputate it.

I was in tremendous pain. There were excruciating external ulcers and an internal ulcer from the over-secretion of gastric juices that burned a hole in my stomach. This caused a lot of internal bleeding. A third of my esophagus was destroyed and it scarred together so that I could not even drink water. My blood was infested with micro-organisms and there were days when I had fluid loss of as much as ten pints - almost the entire volume of the human body. I also had a head injury and a contusion of my brain.

My body was fighting as hard as it could against death, but it was a losing battle. Each one of my complications was enough to kill a person. I was blind in my right eye. As time went on my body became rigid, and the nerves in both my legs died. My muscles became flaccid, and my feet curled up like withered claws over the end of the bed.

The doctors had done all they could - given me medicine, cleansed my sores and treated me in every way they knew how. They even called in an expert from a University Hospital in Cleveland. Several years later I read the summary of his medical examination.

Part of the time I was unconscious, and there was no visible response. There were other times when I was as alert as I am now. Often, I was somewhere between these two states. Most of all I remember being very sick and could actually feel my life draining out of me like someone throwing switches in a switch box.

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4.

As I lay dying, my temperature reached a high of 106 degrees. I was so uncomfortable that if someone laid even his or her hand on the bed, I would cringe with suffering. My whole body was racked with agony, every cell stressed out. Yet as I lay there I could sense that my body was still fighting to survive.

During this time I had a life changing experience. In an instant the physical world vanished and my inner man came out of my physical body. I was no longer in the hospital room - I had entered into the realm of the spirit.

Immediately I became aware of two things: that the spiritual world is the real world, and the absence of the sensory perception of time.

It was awesome! I found myself travelling somewhere and had no control over this. Suddenly, there appeared to be a doorway closing. A great darkness began to surround me, and I saw this was actually a point of separation. Coming through the closing space was a beam of the purest whitest light I had ever seen. The doorway began closing faster and faster. The meaning of this separation became illuminated to me. I knew that if this door would close completely, I would be cut off for all eternity from this light.

I experienced a deep hopelessness and horror. Separation is hopelessness! External separation is a torment beyond belief. I want you to know there is a place established somewhere that is eternal separation. I was permitted to not only see, but to experience the feeling of what it would be like to be in this eternal separation. And I began to cry out to God.

I have been asked. "Were you a Christian when this happened?" The night they brought me into the emergency room, although I do not remember, I asked my mother to send for a priest I had known in the past. He came quickly to my side, anointed me with oil and prayed for me.

A repentance process began at this time. As I was lying there, very injured, and nearly dead, I cried out, "God. I am sorry! Please give me another chance!" Many times I went through the swinging doors into surgery, not knowing if I would wake up, and this knowledge started something inside me. I did not know how to pray, but I begged God for forgiveness.

As I stood on the very edge of eternity with this door closing and the darkness beginning to envelope me, I knew that in one second I could be separated for eternity from the Source of all life! And I began to scream out the same things as I had prayed when I was awake, "God, I want to live! I'm sorry! Please give me another chance!" The grace and the mercy of God are beyond our comprehension! Instantly I was caught up into Heaven. What a contrast! Eternal love and comfort compared to eternal hopelessness.

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