



Ron Halvorsen Sr.

May 15, 2015

Ron Halvorsen Sr., a New York gang member who gave his heart to Jesus at age 17 and became a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist who led thousands of people to baptism, died on Friday after a lengthy illness. He was 76.

“I’m in transit to dad and mom. Just before they closed the door to the plane in Dayton, I received news that my dad has passed away,” his son, Ron Halvorsen Jr., wrote on Facebook around 8 p.m. ET Friday. Halvorsen Jr., president of the Adventist Church’s Ohio Conference, asked that his family, especially his mother, Carrol, and sister, Diane, be remembered in prayer.

Ron Halvorsen Sr. was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a cancer that starts in the bone marrow’s plasma cells and affects the whole body, in November 2014.

He had successfully fought off three previous bouts with cancer and believed that he would land on his feet again, making plans to travel to Norway and engage in other evangelistic activities, said Ruthie Jacobson, who prayed with Halvorsen just hours before he died.

“He was still working for the Lord,” she said, adding that he had recently told her that he still had a lot of work to do.

Condolences poured in from around the world, with friends describing Halvorsen as humble, approachable, and gracious. “Elder Halvorsen was one of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s great evangelists, and he preached the straight truth of the Bible,” said Ted N.C. Wilson, leader of the Adventist Church. “It hit home to those who listened attentively.” “A giant has fallen. A true giant,” said John Bradshaw, director and speaker for It Is Written, where Halvorsen worked for more than a decade as an evangelist and prayer coordinator after he retired.

“Ron believed in preaching the power of the gospel,” Bradshaw said. “It had changed him, and he knew it could change others. And as God worked through Ron, it did so many times.”

Evangelist Mark Finley said Halvorsen left an enduring legacy as a Christ-centered, fearless biblical preacher who loved people and had a passion for evangelism that was undimmed through the years.

“He was consumed with the overwhelming desire to see men and women, boys and girls won for Christ,” said Finley, who called Halvorsen a dear friend whose life was intertwined with the Finley family for decades. “He was one of a kind but would to God we had 1,000 preachers like him whose whole life was consumed with winning the lost.”

He Prayed to the End said Jacobson, prayer ministry leader for the North American Division who worked with Halvorsen for the past two decades, praised him for the way he merged evangelism and prayer. “He would not do evangelism without a lot of prayer,” she said.

He prayed to the end, she said. Jacobson prayed with Halvorsen often in the months after she attended a special anointing for him in November.

Halvorsen called her last Sabbath morning and said, “Please pray. I cannot breath.”

After Jacobson prayed, he said, “Wonderful, I can breath. God is so good.”

He called her again for prayer on Friday morning, but his voice was weak.

“He had been going downhill all week,” Jacobson said. She prayed and promised to visit him in the hospital where he was staying in a suburb of Orlando, Florida. She arrived five minutes after he died.

Over 10,000 Baptisms

Halvorsen was born in a tough neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, and joined a gang as a teenager in the 1950s. But his life changed drastically when a teenage friend, Jim Londis, helped lead him to Jesus when he was 17.

Halvorsen and Londis remained lifelong friends. Londis, a former pastor of Sligo Church and former president of Atlantic Union College, is now retired and living near Collegedale, Tennessee. He was traveling abroad on Friday and could not be reached immediately.

After accepting Jesus, Halvorsen went on to serve as a pastor in churches in Connecticut, Tennessee, and Takoma Park, Maryland, as well as at Southwestern Adventist University in Texas.

But he will no doubt be best remembered as a powerful evangelist with a remarkable personal testimony and an active prayer life. He never forgot how God changed his life as a young gang member on the streets of Brooklyn.

“When we go out fishing for Jesus, we often want to catch beautiful, tropical exotic fish to put into our church aquariums,” he said. “But often God sends us dirty, stinky, common fish that need a lot of cleaning up and helping.” He acknowledged to friends that he lost count of how many people he had baptized. His best estimate put the figure at more than 10,000.

A Thrilling Story

A favorite story that Halvorsen told about evangelism and baptisms occurred after he passed the 6,000 mark, according to Bradshaw. As the story went, he approached a church leader and said, “Elder, I understand that series you held in New York City some years ago was a great success!”

The church leader looked not only puzzled, but embarrassed. “No, I think you’re mistaken,” he replied. “That meeting didn’t turn out nearly as well as we had hoped.” Halvorsen smiled. “Well, I think the number I’m hearing is that there were at least 6,000 baptisms in that meeting,” he said.

The pastor looked truly confused. Halvorsen had to have his facts terribly mixed up.

Halvorsen continued: “You see, elder, there was a woman at that meeting who was baptized along with her son. Her son was my friend and brought me to the Lord. I was baptized, and so far I’ve baptized more than 6,000 people in my ministry. So it seems to me you’ve had over 6,000 baptisms for that series you held.” “Oh, thank you for telling me that,” the church leader said, tears welling up in his eyes. They both shed tears as they thought about the amazing ways that God works.

‘Relentlessly Lifting Up Jesus’

Among the people whom Halvorsen baptized were Finley’s mother and sister.

“He was our local pastor in Norwich, Connecticut, when I was a college student,” Finley said. “I looked forward to coming home to hear his powerful Christ-centered sermons.”

Years later, Finley and Halvorsen held evangelism series together.

“One of my fondest ministry memories is holding an evangelistic meeting with Ron in San Diego, California, alternating preaching and baptizing hundreds of seeking people,” Finley said.

Halvorsen worked as an evangelist for the Carolina Conference, Faith For Today, and the General Conference in New York. He also taught homiletics at various colleges and was ministerial director of the Mid-America Union. Before retiring, he worked as church growth director for the Southern Union. He wrote two books, “From Gangs to God” and “Prayer Warriors.”

In retirement, he conducted prayer seminars for the North American Division and worked at It Is Written. Bradshaw said the last evangelistic series that Halvorsen held was for It Is Written in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 2013. “It was vintage Ron, relentlessly lifting up Jesus,” Bradshaw said. “If there was one thing Ron loved to emphasize, it was God’s love and grace, God’s willingness and ability to save the worst of sinners. What an amazing thing to be remembered for.”

He said Halvorsen’s legacy would be the countless lives that he had influenced with the gospel.

“The first person I told of Ron’s death told me how her sister — who been away from God for 35 years — returned to faith in Jesus after hearing Ron lift up Jesus,” Bradshaw said. “And that has happened countless times. ... All he wanted to do was tell people about the love of God; that they had hope in Jesus.”

Comments



“ An external video has been added.



Reflecting on Memories - May 17, 2015 at 09:29 AM



“ I'll never forget "Uncle Ron". Ron wasn't my uncle, but that's the way we referred to adult men that were family friends back in the day. He worked with my dad multiple times putting on evangelistic series in New York, New Jersey and Michigan. As a kid I would listen to the LP of his conversion story over and over. I would read over his sermon transcripts and he is the only minister that I ever memorized sermons of. I still remember the opening line of one of his sermons from the 70's..."There's a growing tendency in society towards agnosticism and atheism..." I always looked forward to his visits to our home and will never forget him taking some of my moms homemade pickles back to the hotel with him for a midnight snack after one of the evening meetings. It wasn't that he took some pickles back with him that was so memorable, but that he wrapped them in a napkin and put them in the inside pocket of his suit jacket... that was the memorable part! I can still hear his big voice with that New York accent in my mind and I remember how he paid special attention to me as a little kid whenever he would see us. I'm no longer a little kid but now I long for the day when I can hear that voice again and we can eat homemade pickles together under the Tree of Life.

Dan Grentz - January 05, 2019 at 09:00 AM



“ Ron Halverson was a true help to me. I first heard his teachings on CDs my father sent me. Nothing is harder than living in such a God forsaking world but there are those of us who remember the real way and will never forget the people who share that Journey. I'm sorry to know that he passed last year but I am thankful that his ministry will continue on.

Abigail Kendall - April 26, 2016 at 10:01 PM



“ In a little while we shall see him again let him rest He has fought a good fight and have kept the faith now a crown of righteousness is laid up for him rest my dear brother we will see you in the morning

wycham lewis - June 19, 2015 at 08:38 PM



“ We met Ron and Carol when Elder Detamore held meetings in Chattanooga , Tennessee in 1969. Ron was pastor of Cleveland, Tennessee Seventh-day Adventist Church. Our ministers led us in different conferences. Every time we saw each other in any meetings he and Carol always remembered who we were . He came to Jacksonville, Florida one summer with the ministerial students from Southern Seventh-day Adventist University and held evangelistic meetings, and my husband was pastor of Southpoint SDA church - we were proud to be part of the team in those meetings, Last time we saw Carol and Ron was in Abilene, Texas and had them over to the house for Sabbath lunch. Our son, who was struggling with pastors and members who did not live their lives for Jesus said this - "You know that pastor Halverson loves the Lord and that is why he loves people and cares for their salvation." Thank you Carol for being by his side in this wonderful calling that comes from God to the faithful and you and Ron were and are faithful warriors. Earl and I will miss him, but soon and very soon we will see THE KING.: Earl & Mary Robertson

Mary Robertson - May 25, 2015 at 03:26 PM



“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



Reflecting on Memories - May 17, 2015 at 09:16 AM