

Dear Friends,

*For you, O Lord, are my hope,
my trust, O LORD, from my youth. Upon you
I have leaned from before my birth; you are he
who took me from my mother's womb. My
praise is continually of you.*

~~Psalm 71:5, 6

When my Mom Pavlina died, among her personal belongings we found a hand-written will that opened with these words of praise from Psalm 71. It has been four months since

Mom died, and we are still adjusting to being without her. I look out in the garden and see the few vegetable plants that we will try to nurture through the season as best we can, but it is nothing compared to the abundant and well-tended garden of vegetables and flowers that Mom always produced.



I think that it is probably impossible to prepare for the passing of a loved one, even when it is expected. My Mom had always prayed that she would go home to be with the Lord peacefully, in her sleep. And so the fact that Mom died as the result of a horrible accident and then lingered a few days before the Lord took her home at first made us angry – not at the fact that Mom died but at the way she died. Many of our friends sent emails with encouraging words of comfort, and in the end we realized that the Lord had answered our prayer. Even though the accident was sudden and tragic, in fact, from the very instant it happened, my Mom felt no pain. The doctors say she was in brain death immediately and yet the Lord gave us several days to prepare for her to go home to be with Him.

In fact, finding Mom's will and sharing sweet memories brought us so much comfort in those days of grief. I was thinking, "How can I say thank you to everyone who prayed for us and sent words of love and encouragement?" I think the best way is to share some of my Mom's testimony with you. Even in her death, she left us all a testimony of faith and praise to the Lord.



were from the apartment blocks where Mom cleaned.

Mom was always thinking of how she could be a witness for Christ. Mom worked as a cleaning lady in several apartment buildings. She cleaned entrances and stair wells in at least eight different buildings in the housing quarters of Ovcha Kupel and Krasno Selo in Sofia. Even after her stroke in November 2007, Mom insisted that she keep working. The doctors and all of the family told her this was not a good idea, but she said she had to keep working because of the people the Lord let her witness to through her work. We couldn't argue with her reasoning, and so she continued to work and it was on her way to the bus stop as she was going to work early in the morning that a speeding car could not stop in time and struck Mom in the road. At the funeral, we expected maybe 70 or 80 people, but more than 120 people came and some of them

It was after the stroke that Mom began to prepare for her own funeral. We found her will and other things she wanted us to know about for her funeral – favorite hymns and Bible verses. She said for us to "say goodbye quietly

and calmly. I've tried to live such a life." And she did live such a life, but it had a powerful impact on many people. For many years Mom had been leading a group of 21 ladies in Bible study – different ladies through the years, and she met with them the week before the accident. One of the ladies gave testimony at Mom's funeral, saying "I was some of her last fruit." In the materials Mom had gathered together for her funeral, there was a birthday card from this lady to my Mom. It reads, "You sowed the seed of my faith in God. The seed has borne fruit. Praise be to our heavenly Father."



When you look at the few belongings my Mom had in her bedroom in our home, you see that she really didn't have anything of earthly value. She acknowledged this in her will saying, at the very beginning, "Silver and gold I do not have, just my faith in God, and this I leave to my children and grandchildren." Mom recognized her faith as a gift from God, a gift that had been hers from her mother's womb. And she did pass that faith along to her two sons, Boris and Emanuel, and to our children as well. At Mom's funeral, I read these other verses from Psalm 71. Certainly Mom had them in mind when she was writing her will:

But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge. With the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone. O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.

~~ Psalm 71:14-18

We have wonderful memories of sharing holidays, birthdays, graduations, ordination, and many other special occasions with Mom. (Inserted among the text are some family photos.) We will have a certain sadness now when these special celebrations come around since we will be missing Mom so much, but we rejoice that she is celebrating personally in the presence of her precious Savior Jesus.



As you remember Pavlina, please pray for the man who was driving the car. We had a chance to express to him our forgiveness, and he even came to church one Sunday. But the investigation and court proceedings are ongoing and so it is difficult to know how to minister to him. Also, our son Angel was the first one to see the accident and our son Marin (studying in Paris) have struggled some with anger. Pray for them to see the big picture of God's sovereignty and grace.

Thank you again for your love and prayers during these difficult days. I hope that you have been encouraged by my Mom's testimony and that Lord will use it to spur you on in your witness for Him.

In His love, Emanuel