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Samford student's conviction never wavered after disabling car accident

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By [Sondra Washington](#)

April 19, 2001

Jesus stated in Matthew 17:20, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ... nothing shall be impossible unto you."

Many would say the ultimate challenge of our faith is personal hardship, but not in the case of Alyson Roth. After losing her ability to walk in a car accident on the way home from a three-month summer missions trip in Yosemite National Park, her faith has grown tremendously and kept her strong.

"It happened 90 miles south of Las Vegas. My friend lost control of the car and we swerved three times, flipped about five times and every time the car flipped it hit on my side," said Alyson, a 21-year-old Samford University senior in music education. "I was wearing my seat belt but my seat was reclined because I was sleeping."

Alyson's friend, Jennifer Stapleton, also a senior in music education at Samford, was uninjured. She had flown to Yosemite National Park to visit Alyson and ride back home with her. While Stapleton suffered only minor cuts and bruises, Alyson said her friend continues to experience a great deal of guilt and sorrow because of the accident. "I can't imagine what she must be going through," Alyson said.

"I was thrown out the back windshield about 20 feet from the car. I had a head injury, broke my right collarbone, bruised my ribs, and broke my back which caused the spinal cord injury," she explained. "That left me paralyzed from about the belly button down and I can't move my legs."

Despite the difficulty of adjusting to life in a wheelchair, Alyson has remained a strong witness for Christ even when facing her most challenging moments. While in the trauma center immediately following the accident, she introduced herself to every health care nurse and doctor and asked them if they were Christians.

"It was important to me to know and to be able to witness to them that way and to say I know Jesus is going to get me through this," she said. "While I was in Shepherd (Shepherd Spine Center in Atlanta), I definitely saw a lot of people without Jesus in their life. Everyone would always ask why was I smiling so much and it's because I know that Jesus is with me."

During the fall semester Alyson did not attend Samford, concentrating instead on physical recovery at Shepherd. As a result, Alyson has seen a great deal of success in learning how to manage her body.

"I've come a long way in physical recovery," she said. "There are a few signs that I might have some muscle return but it's shallow right now."

Upon returning to school for Spring semester 2001, Alyson faced yet another challenge — Samford's extremely hilly campus. "It's tough. My arms are having a workout but Samford is helping me and making things accessible, giving me a golf cart to help get me around campus," she said. "The teachers, professors and my friends have been incredible with supporting me and helping me through this. I have seven classes left and I want to graduate from here so I'm going to finish."

Alyson expects to graduate from Samford in May 2002.

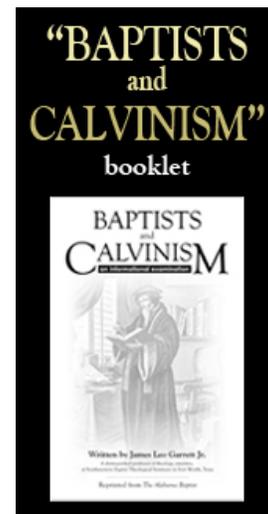
After a short while, Alyson has learned quite a few lessons in Christian maturity. "I don't see

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myself as handicapped,” she said.” I just can’t walk. For people to judge me because I’m in a chair has taught me not to judge other people for what they look like on the outside. I think the inner spirit and your personality make the majority of who you are.”

In a situation where many would drown themselves in self-pity, Alyson has decided to use her situation to touch those who don’t know Christ. She has spoken at numerous functions and is still witnessing to people she meets.

“I know that God saved my arms, my head and my body for some reason,” she said. “Not being able to walk has definitely put a slowdown on my ability to continue with what I had wanted to do, but I realize I can still reach people in a chair and maybe even have more of an impact.

“I tell people I would rather be sitting in my chair knowing Him than standing on my feet without Him.”

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