

“I FEEL GREAT! I JUST FEEL GREAT!”

These were the last words of the legendary Pistol Pete Maravich before he dropped dead from a heart attack. Maravich had flown to California to tape an interview with Dr. James Dobson for his radio program. Taking some time off to relax, they were shooting hoops at the gym of the First Church of the Nazarene in Pasadena, California. When asked how he felt Maravich replied: “I feel great! I just feel great!” Less than a minute later he dropped dead. It was January 5, 1988. Maravich was only 40 years old.

The “Good News” is that Pistol Pete had become a Christian. Pete’s mother was an alcoholic who committed suicide. In spite of his stellar athletic career Pete himself was also an alcoholic. After injuries forced his retirement in 1980 he became a recluse. Searching for meaning in life he considered Yoga, Hinduism, UFOs, vegetarianism, macrobiotics, and other bizarre religions and life styles. Like a man searching for goodly pearls he finally found the Pearl of Great Price in 1982 and gave his heart to Jesus Christ. He spent the last years of his life serving Jesus and said: “I want to be remembered as a Christian, a person that serves Him (Jesus) to the utmost, not as a basketball player”.

By his own admission, basketball had at one time been his god. Many of the records he set in basketball have never been equalled. In college, for example, he scored 3,667 points not including the 741 points he scored as a freshman. He averaged an amazing 44.2 points per game before the 3 point shots were a reality. By today’s rules he would have averaged 57 points per game. The introduction of the shot clock that speeded up the game would also have made his average per game even higher. The fact that he was also a three time All-American and named “player of the year” pale into insignificance by comparison to the honors he will receive as a follower of Jesus.

The apostle Paul also had many earthly achievements of which he could boast. Instead of boasting about them, however, he considered them all as rubbish by comparison to Christ (Phil. 3:3-11). Paul also once described himself as the worst of sinners (1 Tim. 1:16). Praise God, his former life is all but forgotten because of his commitment to Christ. Paul is now famous as an Apostle of Christ who wrote more books of the Bible than any other inspired man. Let us therefore honor the wishes of Pistol Pete and allow his commitment to Christ to take precedence over all of his earthly achievements.

There is a lesson here for everyone. Not only does our conversion to Christ eliminate our sins in the eyes of God, but it also rewrites history in the eyes of men. Matthew the publican, for example, is not remembered as a crooked tax collector, but as an inspired apostle who wrote the first book of our New Testament Scriptures. The thief on the cross is not remembered for his former life of crime, but for the promise of Jesus that he would be with Him in paradise. John Newton is not remembered as a degenerate slave trader but as a convert to Christ who wrote the hymn “Amazing Grace”. How will you be remembered?

Because Jesus emptied Himself of Deity and came to earth as an infant, He had to grow “in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Lk. 2:52). Because of this He didn’t even know the day or hour when He will come again in all His glory (Matt. 24:36). Consequently, He told His disciples 2,000 years ago to watch for His return and to constantly be ready (Matt. 24:42-44). This means that there are two very important dates that we do not know. First, we do not know the day or the hour when we will die. Second we do not know the day or the hour when Jesus will come again. Both of these important dates can come at a time when we least expect them.

Pistol Pete Maravich “felt great” only a few seconds before he died. How do you feel? In the days of Noah they were going about their daily routines until the flood came and took them all away. What are you doing today? Whether we “go” or He “comes” let us constantly watch and be ready!