

Church Triumphant

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November/December 2004

“OFFER TO GOD THANKSGIVING”

Psalm 50:14

As the year 2004 draws to a close, we have so very much to be thankful for. We offer praise and thanksgiving to God for His hand of protection and blessing upon this nation. By His grace, we had a presidential election free from terrorist attacks such as occurred in Spain, Indonesia, and Russia. The election was a clear victory for President Bush in which Sen. John Kerry was gracious to concede the following day rather than the endless bitter squabbling of four years ago. Regardless of how we voted, we need to support our newly elected government with our prayers. Continue to pray for righteous men and women to be appointed to positions of authority within the executive and judicial branches as well as godly staff and advisors in every area of government.

Breakthrough Among the Youth

There is also much to praise God for over in the Philippines. The Holy Spirit continues to move in power in response to prayer, particularly among the young people. In the Philippines, the school year runs from June to March so they recently had their semester break. The church in Tagum City decided to take advantage of the time away from school to hold a three day youth conference at the church.

The last day of the regional conference, Pastor Erning Balong was scheduled to speak in the evening service. Pastor Balong, a member of our Board, pioneered the church in Kapitalong that was planted there following the gathering of chieftains last May. At 2 PM, Pastor Erning sent a text message to our Director Pastor Allan Asang saying he did not know if he would be able to attend. He was at the hospital with his two year old son who was critically ill with a blood disorder. Pastor Allan shared the need with the young people and they prayed. The presence of God filled that hospital room and Erning's son was instantly healed.

Pastor Erning was there at the youth conference that evening to preach the final message. As he ministered, the presence of God filled that sanctuary and those young people returned home with a fresh anointing and touch of God on their lives as they experienced the power of God moving through their prayers.

Revival Spreads

That was the beginning of a fresh move of God among the young people, not just in the mountain villages, but in the city as well. There is such a hunger for God among the young people at Tagum University that Pastor Esped Masangay has resigned his position as pastor in Uraya, a suburb of Tagum City, to devote himself to full time ministry among the college students and in the local jail where God is opening the hearts of the prisoners to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of an upsurge of drug related gang activity in this past year, many of the prisoners are also young people.

Please join us in thanksgiving to God for this unexpected open door. Hundreds of college students are gathering together to hear the Word of God. The university administration is so pleased with the change that has come over the students that they have asked Pastor Esped to speak to the entire student body at a mass rally once a month. God is moving in power in the lives of these young people.

You can have a part in this unplanned, unexpected outreach. Because Pastor Esped is giving himself full time to this effort, he no longer has any income to support himself and his family. You can lift this burden by supporting his outreach with \$100 a month so he can focus on ministering to these young people on the university campus and in jail who are opening their hearts to the Lord.

Reaching Out to the Villages

Praise God, the ministry to the mountain tribal people is also continuing. The students currently enrolled in the Bible school in Tagum City will be graduating in March but already they are dividing their time between the classroom and ministry in the field as new churches are being built in areas never reached by the Gospel before.

We are training the young people in the Word of God but also in such practical skills as how to set up FAITH gardens (Food Always In The Home). This way they can teach families in the villages where they will be ministering how to grow their own food supply. With their own gardens, these families will no longer have to search in the forest for food to eat each day.

Counter Attack

While we give thanks to God for all that He is doing and all that He will continue to do in the future, we are also well aware that we have an enemy who will do anything he can to stop the Gospel from going forward. We had hopes of building fifteen more churches by the end of this year. But the enemy counter attacked and now our chief carpenter, Bayani Asang, is hospitalized with a liver ailment. At first the doctors said he was dying and there was nothing they could do. Now they are talking about possible surgery. We know this is an attack aimed at stopping the construction of more churches in newly reached areas. So we are asking for your prayers for Bayani that God would totally heal him, strengthen him, and enable him to continue building churches for the glory of God.

We would also appreciate any help you can give us with his medical bills. Doctors, hospitals, and medicine have already cost more than \$700 and the proposed surgery will cost an additional \$500 at least.

Victories on the Home Front

We give thanks to God for what He is doing in the Philippines and we also thank Him for His goodness close to home. During this past year, we have spent most of our time on the road, driving from church to church all across America sharing what God is doing in the Philippines and ministering to the Body of Christ in America. Traveling thousands of miles from southern California to New Hampshire and from Florida to Washington state and most points in between can take a heavy toll on vehicles. We are grateful that Howard is a skilled mechanic but have been praying for more reliable “wheels”. Praise God! In late October, He blessed us with a “like new” 1997 Ford Windstar with only 56,000 miles on the odometer. It has been a great blessing.

Howard's new book "Seven Things God Wants You to Know" was published in August and we have already sold out the first printing and started on the second. We have been blessed by the response we have received from those who have read it. We praise God for the chance to so bless others with the insights into what is on God's heart toward His children.

The Greatest Victory of All

Yes, we have so much to be thankful for, but the greatest victory of all is the gift that God gave to a lost and dying world when the Word became flesh and was born in a stable some 2,000 years ago. Love became a man that we might be reconciled to our Creator. As you prepare to celebrate this Christmas season, be sure to set aside time to worship the One whose miraculous birth, sinless life, substitutionary death, and glorious resurrection purchased eternal life for all who will believe. As we remember His coming as a helpless baby, may we never forget that He is coming again soon as a conquering King. As we look to the New Year, may we prepare our hearts with the realization that this could be the year when faith will become sight and, at last, we will see Him face to face.

A Love Gift for Jesus

As an expression of your thanksgiving to God for all He has done in your life this year, may we suggest a possible gift for Jesus, the soon coming King. For \$250, you can build a church in a village that is hearing the Gospel for the first time. For a gift of \$50 a month for 6 months or \$300, you can train a pastor who can teach these new converts the Word of God and establish them in their new found faith, turning them into disciples. For \$100 a month, you can provide for Pastor Esped Masangay and his family so he can devote his time to ministry among the young people on the university campus as well as the city jail. \$100 a month will also send a literacy teacher to a remote area where there are no schools to teach the people how to read and write.

Speaking of gifts, have you considered giving a copy of Howard's book "Seven Things God Wants You to Know" to someone you love? Howard has a unique ability to take foundational truths from the Word of God and explain them in terms that make them easy to understand. The books are available for a gift of \$10 per book for the ministry plus \$2.50 to cover postage and handling. This book answers questions like these. "Does God really love me even when I mess up?" "Why do I have to be born again even if I am living a good life?" "What is faith really all about?" "Why is it so important that I forgive?" Jesus is coming back soon. The signs are everywhere. This book will help you to be ready to meet Him when He comes. What greater gift can you give to those you love?

A Final Word

As we look back in thanksgiving and praise and look forward with awe and anticipation, we pray that you and your family will come to experience the wonderful love, joy, and peace that can only come from the reality of Christ dwelling in your hearts and gracing your homes with His presence, provision, and protection this Christmas and throughout the coming year. God bless you abundantly.

Howard & Barbara Gard and the Church Triumphant family