

To the assembly of Christians gathering at the Gospel Hall in Newtownbreda

We come now to the end of one more year in which we have known the grace of our Lord Jesus in our lives. As we enter the New Year, with its promise and expectations . . . maybe this will be the year He returns for His own! In view of that we continue our effort to abound in the work of the Lord knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.

This year I visited three times to Nepal (Kathmandu & Dharan) and India (states of Bengal, Jharkhand & Kerala). Two times to the Philippines (for Gospel work) and there were visits to local assemblies in Malaysia. Here are some highlights of my visit:

One has to be mentally prepared to travel to remote places in India, especially in winter. There will be train delays and cancellation. However, in the September visit, there was massive inundation in the North-east of India. As a result, trains were cancelled. This time I did not have my dear partner in the Gospel work, Mr. Raghu, as he was recovering from his knee replacement surgery and will be resting and having rehabilitation exercises for six months.

A brother in the Lord, from Jharkand, Mr. Samir Jha met me at home of Mr. Raghu, and we travelled by bus. Public bus travel in the North-east is certainly not for the faint hearted! During the journey, the bus was diverted several times by the police. I was told that there was rampant looting by the villagers as they were unable to get food and drinking water from the local authorities. After 16 hours, we reached safely at our destination, Teen Pahar, the home of Mr. Samir Jha where I stay during the Bible ministry. We thank God for His providential care & sustenance on both of us during our travels to and from Jharkhand.

We travel in the mornings to a place called Tal Jari - an hour's drive - where the meetings are held. Since my first visit, some years back, the Bible ministry and Gospel preaching were held in a shed previously used for keeping cattle. However, the shed after several years of usage, was found to be unsafe, and thus the need for a new place of gathering. I was encouraged by the sacrificial giving by the poorest of the poor. I was reminded of the saints in Macedonia (in 2Cor 8:2-3), their deep poverty abounded unto their riches of their liberality...beyond their power, and they were willing of themselves." In the goodness of God, He provided what was needed to complete the Hall. God willing, the Meeting Hall is scheduled to be completed by this year, and I look forward to having meetings in the new Hall, during my January 2018 visit.

In the September visit, we had special Bible lessons at the home of a brother. About 25 mostly women, attended the Bible classes. While half were illiterate, nevertheless, they showed keen interest and had lively discussions on the Scriptures concerning the Gospel and salvation. Please pray for the Gospel work in Jharkhand will bear fruit of salvation to His glory and testimony in that locale.

The local assembly in Salbari (state of Bengal, India) meets regularly in a class-room of a Primary School. This small company continues faithfully in their testimony of the Lord. The assembly organized meetings for Bible teaching in the mornings and evenings. On some days, the brethren and I visit the plantation assemblies (Belgachi and Amjamani) for Gospel preaching. Most of the time, the Gospel is preached on the front yard of homes. We thank God for the believers in the

two assemblies while being poor, and uneducated, they have great zeal to bring friends, neighbours and relatives to the Gospel meetings.

In the recent visit to Dharan, East Nepal, the assembly continues to grow numerically as the Lord added more into the local church through personal witnessing and other Gospel work. Apart from the usual Bible ministries and Gospel preaching, this time we visited the homes of two young believers recently added into assembly fellowship.

The assembly hired one of the "Sumo" (Utility Vehicle) to take us up to the mountain ranges to Hile. The journey was long because the road leading up was narrow and winding. This was the home of Mr. Suresh Gurong. His family and the village he comes from are Buddhists. It was after several years of Suresh personal life testimony, that his mother allowed our visit to her home. I understand it was the assembly's first visit. A short Gospel message was preached concerning the Lord Jesus the Creator, the Saviour who rose from the dead.

The next day we visited another home in Letang, which is about two-hour drive across the plains, but we had to go through the forests. Thankfully, the road through the forest was good. We arrived at the home of Miss. Nisa Rai. The family members of Nisa and the people of the village are given-in to a local cult group, called the Heavenly Path. We sensed that this family was open to the Gospel. We pray that there might be salvation blessings in the two homes visited.

The local assembly in Dharan has been meeting in a small and basic rented apartment that has no piped water. The assembly testimony in Dharan dates back many years. The Lord burdened the hearts of Mr. Raghu, and late Mr. Shresta with visits from late Mr. William Penfold (UK) to help in the work. Subsequently, the work continued with Mr. Raghu and Mr. Vikram. The assembly has been praying to buy property and to build a Gospel Hall. They continue to pray for the Lord's provision while they themselves participate in giving for a new Gospel Hall.

We flew to Kathmandu from Birathnagar (a town an hour and a half drive from Dharan). The capital is a hard ground for Gospel work. Like the rest of the places in Nepal, most people live in total darkness given into their idolatrous religion. As a consequence, they face irreparable personal ruin. I meet several who come from damaged families. For the Gospel work, we gather at the very small apartment of Mr. Pushpa and his sister Mdm Baktha Maya. Friends and contacts come into this apartment to hear the Gospel. For the believers, the Bible is taught.

There is a family that has been coming regularly for the past three months. They showed interest in the Word. Please pray for the assurance of salvation in "YK" and his wife with their two teenage children. Whilst most visitors who come are unclear or confused about the Gospel according to the Bible, we look to God for clear conviction of personal sin and faith in the Lord Jesus. Please pray with us for the few believers in Kathmandu that they may be steadfast in their faith and testimony of the Lord Jesus, and salvation blessings to friends who have heard the Gospel.

Twice this year I visited the family of Mr. & Mrs. Eugenio Saritha in Manila (Philippines). They have four children (three daughters and one son, Bernard) of whom two (older) daughters are working in Canada. My last visit coincided with three national holidays to commemorate All Saints Day and All Souls Day - a Roman Catholic tradition which involves prayers, visit to the tombs and feasting, which finally end up with drunkenness and excess. The people from the village are generally friendly and polite. Hence, it is difficult to ascertain their interest in spiritual matters. I had prayed for genuine interest among some in the Lord's salvation. In the goodness of God, He answered by prayer.

On the last night of my visit, just before the Gospel meeting, Julie, (Bernard's wife) asked me if it is possible that her husband, could have some time with me for private Bible discussion. Initially, I was unsure of this request. In my past visits, Bernard would give the Gospel meetings a miss. I remember one occasion, while preaching the Gospel, Bernard was in the kitchen cooking meal to be served after the meeting. That was the closest he came to hear the Gospel. So I asked Julie if this meeting she proposed was requested by Bernard or the desire of hers or Cheryl's (Bernard's sister). Julie replied that it was her husband who initiated the request.

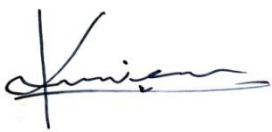
I was happy and encouraged to sense the hand of God, not only in answering my prayer, but moving hearts concerning ones' sins and genuine interest in the Saviour. That evening I went to Bernard and Julie's house with Cheryl (my interpreter). I opened the Bible and spoke from Isaiah 53 concerning the Lord Jesus. Bernard was listening intently. I noticed his eagerness which I have not observed before. We look to God for His word to convince Bernard of his need of forgiveness of sins and salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus.

To my knowledge, there are three (mother, daughter and daughter-in law) in the family who professed faith in the Lord Jesus. The reality in that village saddens me with most families given in to bad vices. This results in gross mismanagement of children and personal funds. It is in this arena that the invitation of our blessed Saviour calls them to "Come unto Me."

We thank God for another year for the opportunities given to make known His Son, the Saviour of sinners. It is indeed heartening to see saints working together collectively in faithful assembly testimony amidst distractions from within and without. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Your prayer partnership continues to encourage us.

Human history has been unfolding with a divine purpose and the result of all things will one day meet the Lord Jesus. This calms us from any fear or stress about the future. God is in control. Make the time God gives you now and from henceforth, one in which you will be contented and courageous to do His will. There is nothing else worth living for.

Blessings in our Lord Jesus



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Kurien (with Reni)  
19<sup>th</sup> December 2017

*Being confident that this very thing that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil 1:6)*