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CYCLONE SLAMS EASTERN COAST OF TAMIL NADU January 2, 2012

Tamil Nadu, South India was greatly damaged by the massive Tsunami on December 26, 2004. Between 12 and 15 thousand died and tens of thousands were left homeless and/or without work. With the help of saints in many places thousands were helped with beans, rice and other necessities. As a result more than 3,000 were baptized and some 65 congregations planted; currently there are 3 schools of preaching in the area set up by Don Iverson. The actual labor was and is done by native Tamil brethren who had been trained in the schools of preaching, which by the grace of God were begun by the two or us. These could not have come into existence but by enormous cooperation of churches of Christ across America, Australia, Canada, Malaysia and much work by Indian Christians.

The assistance provided in that emergency illustrates how such is an effective tool to get the attention of the sufferers. Benevolence to those traumatized by the elements along with preaching the gospel caused them to sit up and take notice. In saying this I am well aware that many have turned to a social gospel; that is, doing benevolence and making little if any effort to feed people's souls while feeding their bodies. Benevolence alone is like a band-aid on a cancer. The Savior with His great power to heal did much benevolence, but He coupled it with gospel preaching, even as it is written,

“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matthew 9:35).

Concerning the crisis, mentioned in the title, brought on by the cyclone, our brother Don Iverson was so concerned that he made an unscheduled trip to Tamil Nadu to observe the matter. Here are excerpts from his report,

“Thursday (12th) will mark ten days since the cyclone (hurricane) hit the southeastern coast of India in the state of Tamil Nadu. I arrived on the 10th to survey the damage and to assist our Tamil brothers in helping the victims of the storm. My first place to visit was a town named Cuddalore where nine churches were planted subsequent to the Tsunami; there are a total of 274 members. The devastation was far beyond anything I had imagined. More than 6,000 homes were destroyed and more than 90% of all trees have been twisted and blown down, along with many steel electrical poles.

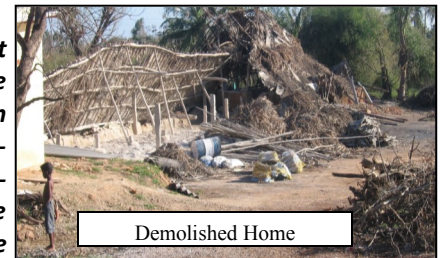
“Among the saints ninety-five houses were severely damaged. This was due to the fact that most people are very poor and live in grass (thatched) huts. Some have suffered the complete loss of everything. Thank God, that most lost only their roofs. At first we used the truck from the Dindigul SOP, but realized we needed a much larger truck to bring in material from outside the storm damaged area. We also hired twenty men who specialize in this type of construction. They can replace three to four roofs a day. The average cost per house is \$113. The first houses repaired were those of widowed sisters and the more destitute.

“Besides the loss of homes there has been a tremendous interruption of food for the people. Thus we have set up temporary places to provide an evening meal in six villages where the church meets. In these six places the meals are prepared in the evenings and anyone who desires may come. About 75% of those who attend are non-believers. All who come sit to hear an hour-long gospel message, prior to the meal. Approximately 525 are being fed each night in the six places. They are very thankful to the Lord's people for providing such good food, even once a day.

“Forty-one souls have been baptized since the project started. They are seeing the work of our brethren and giving glory to God (Matt. 5:16). While continuing the evening meetings other efforts are being put into practice in order to have daily classes for the new Christians to keep them faithful to our Lord. Thirty evangelists including student preachers and graduates are being used in this work; each receives \$3 a day for his labors.” (Don Iverson, 01/13/12).



Peter & Murgesan in route to the coast with a load of thatch from Dindigul.



Demolished Home

Such trauma to the poor opens doors. India has 1.2 billion and is the world's biggest democracy. The doors are open; but who knows when the doors will be closed. Below is a report, not for the glory of those immediately involved, but to illustrate what can be accomplished by so few. Please let me express at this point, besides these four fulltime workers there are five or six who come on an annual basis to help for a month or more.

The picture to the right shows four of us who work fulltime as a team in India with a major emphasis on training native Christians, "who may be able to teach others also" (2Tim. 2:2). They are Don Iverson, Garry Jones, Scott Richards and me. These three have or will all turn 58 this year. At the beginning of 2012, thanks to God and by His grace, there are, as carefully as we can count, 538 men enrolled in 94 preacher training schools in six states. Of these, twelve are fulltime schools with 218 enrolled. The other 320 are enrolled in Bible



DON JIM SCOTT GARRY-

schools that meet in villages or city suburbs in the evenings three or four times a week or on Saturdays to accommodate brothers who work full-time. Two special schools meet one full week out of the month.



Victims of devastation being fed spiritually as well as physically.



As you may ascertain the schools are set up to train brothers when they have free time. The 106 native brethren who work with these schools have not only been selected because they are graduates of one of the regular preacher training schools, but for their soundness in the faith. These schools have from two to twelve students and are designed to provide leadership in the local churches and to train men to be elders, deacons and evangelists. There is great emphasis on the work of winning souls and, strengthening the saints.

Besides training men for leadership in the kingdom there are nineteen women who are graduates of the women's Bible school who are involved in training 78 sisters in Christ to teach ladies and children and to be good homemakers and wives. Six of these ladies teach in the Angie Greene School for women at Coimbatore and the other thirteen are training sisters in various villages. Mercy, Peter Wilson's wife, is heavily involved in training the women in the villages.



Mustard Seed Villagers

Along side this work there is a Bible School and Home for the blind and deaf. Don Iverson works with two homes for orphans in South India with something like 141 enrolled and Garry Jones conducts a similar home in the far northeast known as *The Mustard Seed Village*, with 35 enrolled. Scott Richards serves fulltime in the only English medium school among the ninety-four schools, which at the present is located in the city of Guwahati, Assam.

Of the 538 students named above my obligation is to 310 of them at an average cost of \$55 per month.

This does not include the cost of training 44 women or those in the school for the blind and deaf. Like a father with a very large family I must be continually going to provide for them. After two months in India I arrived home on 12/13/11 and began traveling immediately to visit churches that so graciously send (See Romans 10:14-15) for this work. In fact, I was in California on the 18th of December and since then have been several places in between. Another project going on, is teaching the book of Revelation at Crossville two evenings a week (Mondays and Thursdays). This will continue until I return to India in mid-March to take part in the Spring graduations and to help get another Bible training school going. Let me express the thanksgiving and joy in my heart for those of you who have helped us in this work for 10, 20, 30, 40 years and more. And I thank our heavenly Father for His abundant care of this work and I pray His eternal blessings on each and every one.

In Christian love,

Jim S. Waldron