

WALDRON NEWSLETTER

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TRAGEDY STRIKES

S. V. Paulraj, who lives in a small town about seventy-five miles from Dindigul, obeyed the gospel eleven years ago. Two years later he entered the three-year Bible Institute at Dindigul and even while he was in school he began to evangelize the area in and around his small town, Pandamangalam. The work grew from one congregation in 1992 until there are fifteen today. Five years ago he asked if we could help him begin a school of preaching in the area. We did and it has been very successful. He serves as the principal or director.

Brother Paulraj's wife's name is Rajathi (Raa-jaa-ti). She is Paulraj's second wife as his first wife died before he became a Christian. When I first meet them they had only one child, a son, Ramesh, by his first wife, but by God's grace when the boy was eighteen a little girl was born to them. They were delighted, but two years ago the son was struck with paralysis in his right hand and arm. Paulraj believed this problem might have come about due to the fact that Ramesh had been struck in the back of the head some years previously by a cricket ball, which is very similar to a baseball. However, the young man seemed to be making progress and was doing well in his college studies then yesterday (April 9) without warning he died. He was twenty-two. As you can well imagine Paulraj and Rajathi were absolutely devastated.

Years ago someone wrote of the evils of war saying that in war parents bury their sons and it was supposed to be the other way around. Since bodies are not embalmed here burials take place on the same day or the very next day, so today at 4:00 p. m. our brother and sister had the tragedy of burying their only son. We thank God that Ramesh was a faithful and active young Christian. He would at times fill the pulpit in place of his father. Although I was tied up teaching Revelation to the young men and women from the Bible Institutes at Coimbatore we did send many of our teachers and staff from these two schools and from the other schools of preaching to comfort them. I also sent them a gift of money from you our supporters to help with their unusual expenses. Previously I had sent funds to help them pay for the treatment of the boy's paralysis. Please pray for this dear couple and his work that it might continue and grow.

ANOTHER TRAGEDY

This story, is not just of a tragedy, but a tragedy that was a horror. It was a bus accident, which took place between two cities in Tamil Nadu, Erode and Salem. These cities are about 40 miles apart and although the latter is somewhat larger, both have a population of about one million. One of our Bible Schools meets in Erode. In the early evening of April 4th a bus left Erode and by 7:30 it was just 15 miles west of Salem. At that point the driver tried to pass a truck, which was stopped and partially blocking the road. As he went around the other vehicle his bus struck a truck coming in the opposite direction, head on. The gas tank of that truck exploded and thirty-one men, women and children were cremated. There were a number of reports in the local papers with graphic pictures of the charred bodies. About half of the sixty odd passengers on the bus did escape.

As you think about this awful accident ask your self the following question. Suppose I had been at the Erode bus station when the bus was loading and I had known the accident was going to happen, would I have cried out for the passengers not to board and for those on it to get off? Now you might say, Jim you know that is not possible; no one can know that such a thing will take place. Yes, that is true, but you and I do know that there are multiplied millions on the devil's train or bus headed into eternity with the expectation of eternal destruction. So a question more to the point is, what are we doing to warn people about the bus or train that Satan is driving?

During the year of 2000 India took a census and found that they had more people than they thought, 1.2 billion. Tamil Nadu, the most southern state in the nation where we have ten schools of preaching has 62,000,000. Please pray for the zeal and faithfulness of these men and for them to reach millions of souls with the gospel.

FOLLOWUP FROM MARCH

When I closed the Newsletter last month I said that I was to leave Nepal on the 12th, which I did. After spending one day in Delhi I flew to Calcutta with the intentions of going to Northeast India to meet Wung Kui Zimik. I flew into Imphal but due to warring factions in the region the government has restrictions on foreigners traveling in that region. I was able to meet brother Zimik briefly, but was required to return to Calcutta. After returning to that city I sent him (via postal money order) Rs 4,000\ (\$87) for support for April plus Rs 1000\ (\$21.75) for travel expenses. By e-mail I told him to go among his own people and do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:1-5) and to remember to let no one despise his youth (1 Tim 4:12). He had been working in Nepal as an English teacher, but in February resigned to return home to preach Jesus and Him crucified. You will recall Zimik is the young man (30) who back in January challenged the California Baptist preacher to debate the purpose of baptism, but the clergyman declined.

From Calcutta I came southward to Dindigul. Arriving on the afternoon of the 17th I was able to preach for two congregations on the next day. During the following week I spent much time on the grounds at Siluvathur where we are completing the dining hall, the kitchen and the guest quarters where American preachers will stay when they come to teach in the school. At the present time we must stay in a hotel in Dindigul, which is eight miles to the west. The cost of the hotel is reasonable, as I paid only \$9.35 per night for an air-conditioned room, but it takes an hour morning and night to make the trip by bus. That includes walking to the bus station and waiting for the bus. On Wednesday I ate in the restaurant down stairs in the hotel and was sick for two days with vomiting. This was unusual, as I have been sick that way as far as I can remember only three times over the 35 years since we first came to Asia in 1967. I am very careful about eating hot cooked food and drinking bottled water, but this time I got some kind of bug from the food. By Friday I was well and J. W. Samson, the director of the school of preaching and I spent the morning searching for tiles and fixtures for the guest quarters.

On Saturday the 24th I met with the directors (principals) for the schools of preaching and the Bible Institute for the blind. Not counting the school for the blind we have 342 brothers enrolled in these schools in ten cities and towns scattered across the state. The new school year begins in June and God willing we will have a large increase in the enrollment. You will be interested to know that counting the van work in February 2000 the students at Dindigul and the single men's school baptized more than 990 last year. This does not count those baptized by graduates or the brothers now attending the one year schools.

On the 26th I began teaching a two-week course on the book of Revelation to the thirty-eight brothers who are to graduate after three years on May 5. The class met five hours per day and the course covered ten days. J. W. Samson served as my translator from English into the local language Tamil. On Saturday (March 31st) he and I let some of the other teachers give a test to the students and we took a four-hour bus trip to Coimbatore to meet Don and Cathy Iverson of Banner Elk, NC, who will be here teaching for six weeks. After visiting with them and the Christians at Angie Greene (home of the Bible Institute for women) until 4:45 Samson and I started on another trip to Pudukottai, which is the town where the school for the blind meets. This trip was in a van and two buses and lasted nine hours. We arrived at 1:45 a. m. and slept in the school building.

The next morning (April 1st) I preached for two combined congregations. Afterwards we awarded Bible diplomas for the eight blind students that have completed four years learning the Bible and Braille. Brother K. Shunmugam is principal of this school and does an outstanding job, not only training the blind but also doing the work of an evangelist. This school meets on six tenths of an acre of ground we bought about six years ago. The main building houses classrooms, two large rooms as separate sleeping areas for male and female students and quarters for Shunmugam and his family of four. Some couples that are blind live in small one room concrete block "cabins" on the grounds. The big building is also made of handmade concrete blocks and is covered with a thatched roof, which we need to replace before the monsoon rains come in July and August. In order to do this we will have to cast pillars at the sides and on the corners of the building and pour a concrete roof. We had a drawing made and the cost will be Rs 470,000\ (\$10,217.39). Please help as you can.

On that Sunday afternoon Samson, Shunmugam and I took another bus trip to a city called Thrichy where the airport church meets. We went there with the express purpose of seeing the building, which we bought in February for this congregation. There are 26 members and about 80 percent are blind. We paid Rs 512, 000\ (\$11, 130) for it and when I saw it and the grounds with it I was as pleased as punch as the seeing goes. It is very suitable for the purpose. Thanks to those who helped with this purchase.

In Christian love, Jim E. Waldron

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