

GLOBAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR BURMA

MARCH 9, 2014



DEAR FRIENDS,

Thank you for your love and prayers for the people of Burma. At the national level, we see oppression that continues, but we thank God for the positive changes we also see. At the personal level too, we see that God works powerfully through prayer. 2013 also marked 20 years of marriage and service in Burma for Karen and me. In June 1993, Karen and I were married and responded to an invitation from the Wa tribe of Burma, traveling there shortly after our wedding. Twenty years later, here we are with three children, many Rangers from different ethnic groups and a wonderful HQ team – and we are still able to serve in Burma. This is by God's grace, your help and your prayers. Here are two examples of how your prayers help us here.

In the summer of 2013, we conducted a mission to a new area; immediately, there was an attempt to stop us. We prayed and felt we should go on. We sent out a prayer request and, immediately, felt the power and encouragement of your prayers. We walked through many abandoned villages, visited five IDP sites and did GLC and medical programs for over 4,000 people. One night towards the end of the mission, I woke up with high fever and chills that lasted most of the night. Karen and I prayed and I said, "Jesus, all I have is you, all I can do is appeal to your mercy." The symptoms felt like malaria. The next morning Chris, a journalist friend, prayed for me and I steadily got better.

As we began the return trip, there was a constant attempt to catch us. We prayed and kept going. At the very end it looked like there was no way to get through.

The night before we were to exit, we received a message from a friend: "God opened the Red Sea for His faithful. You are His faithful, God will open the way for you." I felt immediate reassurance. The next day it seemed impossible not to get caught, but we made it – and through no skill of our own, but with the help of our teams, your prayers and God. We are very grateful.

Before this, during the graduation of our Shan FBR teams in early May, our daughter Suu suddenly became sick. It was in the middle of the graduation program and she came up to me with a pale face before it was time for her to perform a song. She whispered, "Daddy, I'm sick and feel like I am about to throw up and pass out." I put my hands on her and prayed for healing in Jesus' name.

When it came time for the kids to sing, Suu came up with Sahale and Pete and sang beautifully. Afterwards I asked Suu how she was. She said, "I am fine Dad, I'm healed." I thanked God. The next day we received a message from Suu's former teacher, who said that the day before (at the very time Suu was sick), she had felt a strong urge to pray for Suu. She prayed fervently for half an hour. She asked us if anything was wrong with Suu. We told her of Suu's sickness and sudden healing at the time that she prayed.

THANK YOU

I thank God that He answers prayer. It is a mystery how sometimes we see the answer, and other times we do not. But I believe we can only do His work in this special way with your help, love, advice, encouragement and prayer. I would like to close with the words of British General Wingate, in Burma in World War II. "Finally, knowing the vanity of man's efforts and the confusion of his purpose, let us pray that God may accept our service and direct our endeavors, so that when we shall have done all, we may see the fruit of our labors and be satisfied."

That is my prayer for us and you all, that in spite of our weaknesses and failures, God will lead us to overcome and do His will, His way. By God's grace we will see the fruits of our labor and be satisfied. God wants to relieve us of sinful burdens and propel us forward to do His will for His glory, the good of others and our joy. Thank you for your prayers that help change Burma and all of us to be what we were created to be.

God bless you,



Dave Eubank
Christians Concerned for Burma/Free Burma Rangers

GLOBAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR BURMA 2014

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"When under pressure
we might ask the question,
"WHAT WILL BECOME OF ME?"
the real question is
"WHAT SHOULD I DO?"

When we ask that question,
we find the answer in love.

We go compelled by that love in heart,
mind, and soul:
We love the people of Burma
and we want to help them.

THIS IS OUR HEART.
We believe that oppression
is morally wrong.
THIS IS OUR MIND.

We go because the people of Burma
are God's children and it is right
to try to help them
and to be with them.
THIS IS OUR SOUL."

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Shan children at a GLC program.



Chin children learn about anatomy and health.



Relief teams provide checkups in Karenni State.



LEARNING TO PRAY WITH A CLEAR HEART

—By Ka Paw Say

Ka Paw Say leads GLC program in Arakan State.

DEAR FRIENDS,

I want to share this experience with you.

When I was young, my parents taught me to pray for my enemies, and that it would be like putting coals of fire upon their head. I never understood that.

I prayed for my enemies, but my heart was not clear. I felt hate for what they had done to me or to others, and hated them even when praying for them. I did not know how it could be right to pray for them, or the right way to pray for them. I did experience something when I prayed for my enemies to receive fire on their head: the answer I received was fire on my head instead. I did not give up and still prayed for them, but was not sure whether my heart or my feelings were clear or not. I thought “No,” it was still not clear.

I experienced something different about prayer for our enemy during this last mission to Arakan State. When we visited villages, we felt very bad for the people receiving us. They really needed our help, as we were trying to give them medical care, but they were afraid of what would happen to them after we left their village. Their background story was that some of their children had joined the resistance group. Later, the Burma Army came to their village, questioned them and tortured them. Some were so damaged that they’ve suffered through long medical treatment, and some died because of the Burma Army’s torture. And so they were still afraid of that. They dared not receive our help and we left their village, as we could not stay there.

A group of villagers stood, watching our backs as we walked away from their village. We could read in their eyes their feeling that they were letting go of something that was in their hand, that was very valuable and needed by them, but that they also dared not receive it, because of the fear. We felt very bad and prayed in our heart as we walked away: “Lord, we have made the villagers feel worse, though we only wanted to help. We want to solve this but we cannot do anything. Please give us a chance and help us to do something.”

When we arrived to the next village, we found the headman of the village we had just left visiting this village headman. We talked to both of them about what we had planned. Both were afraid to receive us. They talked to each other, and our Arakan FBR team talked with them in Arakan language, for over an hour; finally they agreed to receive us.

**WE ONLY THOUGHT OF HOW
THEY NEEDED HELP AND HOW TO
CLEAR THE FEAR AWAY FROM THEM.**

We went back to the village we had left the next morning to give medical care. A lot of the people came for the program but their faces were still afraid and their eyes were full of fear. It made me feel worse. We learned that they were living in a big village but were still poor. Worse than poverty was the oppressive fear that was torturing them all the time. Whatever they did was led by fear.

**I FELT THAT MY HEART WAS
VERY CLEAR WHEN I PRAYED THEN.
NO HATE. NO BLAME.**

We were feeling very bad for them as we started to pray for the program. We didn't think of judging anyone. We only thought of how they needed help and how to clear the fear away from them. The leaders of the Burma government are some of the people most responsible and able to help. We deeply focused on the people's needs and prayed for the government. We really forgot about the evil things that government had done and felt that nothing was bigger than the people's need in that moment. We prayed that God would open the hearts of the leaders for love, and open their eyes for seeing their people's needs, and their minds for building up the people and the country as other countries have developed. I felt that my heart was very clear when I prayed then. No hate. No blame.

After we prayed, we started the GLC program. We sang with the children. We sang the songs with actions and the children sang and laughed at the others making mistakes. As the children laughed louder and louder, the parents came, and joined, step by step. Later, all the children and parents were laughing together. No more fear was in their faces. In this moment we felt like this was God's presence. God was healing their fear.



Arakan children singing at GLC program.

Honestly, I haven't focused on GLC programs before. I mostly run around and put more focus on getting information. This time, as I had to lead the GLC program, I found something meaningful in it.

Even when we thought we did not do much, at least we could ease someone's heart. Even if it was only a minute, or an hour, we were helping them to relax in their mind, to be free from fear, sorrow, worry. This is our mission: "free the oppressed" - physically and spiritually.

I thank God for opening my heart step by step to see what He wanted me to do and to understand His ministry. Thank you very much for supporting us to do what we need to do, and praying for us.

GOD BLESS YOU,

Ka Paw Say, FBR leader, pastor and video man 🙏



Arakan team medic treats patients.

A large photograph showing a group of people and pack animals (horses and mules) swimming across a river. The animals are in the water, and people are visible on the bank and in the water. The title 'TRUSTING GOD' is overlaid in large, stylized, yellow letters.

TRUSTING GOD

CHRISTMAS AND AIR STRIKES

Swimming the pack horses and mules across a river on the way.

DEAR FRIENDS,

May God bless you all this New Year. We are sending this out from Karen State where we had Christmas on the move, going through Burma Army lines but with no attacks. At the same time up in Kachin State, Burma, military attack helicopters, jet aircraft and artillery bombard the Kachin people. This is our story of the Christmas mission with the new FBR teams and how God is leading us. As we tell this story we are grateful for the FBR support team and how they keep this and all the missions going.

TRUST IN GOD

At the first village we arrived late in the evening and near midnight I was getting ready to sleep when our host spread out a mat and said, "Younger brother, please pray with me." As I sat with him he read from scripture and then prayed. I felt God's presence and holiness around this man. I was thankful. The next morning he told me that he used to be a witch doctor but that a Karenni evangelist came to his village and led him to Jesus. Ever since then he has followed God and been a leader in his community.

The next day the witch-doctor-turned-pastor took us to his dilapidated church and asked for help to build a new one. Later, on a reconnaissance of a nearby Burma Army position, we walked through the overgrown remains of where this pastor and the villagers used to

live before the Burma Army drove them away. In the center of the abandoned and vine-covered ruins stood a once-magnificent teak church, slowly disintegrating under the watch of a Burma Army camp on a mountain-top above. We prayed with the pastor for God to send the help the villagers needed to rebuild their church as it was before. We promised to help him for part of the cost, not knowing how we would get the funds, and told him God would provide somehow.

Our teams continued south the next day, crossing two Burma Army-controlled roads. There is a ceasefire here and the Karen have agreed to conduct their crossings to miss the Burma Army movements, while the Burma Army has agreed to not patrol off the roads or attack the Karen. However, after we crossed the second road we found the trail of a Burma Army patrol and then from other sources found out there were actually two columns of troops on patrol far off the roads and very near to us. There was one column in front of us somewhere in the jungle and one behind us. We sped up our movement and did not meet the patrolling troops. If we had met them, there would have been a fight as the Karen soldiers had orders to shoot if the Burma Army patrolled off the road. The Burma Army are regularly patrolling off the roads, and using the ceasefire to build up their camps.

At another program, we met a lady who had started a boarding school in an area attacked 10 times in the last 20 years. She had moved there, she said, "Because

people here need to know God's love." In running her school she told us her main problem was feeding the children. We asked if she had more land to grow rice, would that solve the food problem? She said it would but, "Where would I get the money to buy land and in this area very few want to sell it." We prayed with her for the land, knowing God can do anything.

We then arrived at a village where there was only one Christian family, and they also ran a boarding school. The head teacher asked if we could help with a piano keyboard for them. We had just enough money to help, prayed about it and gave it to her. Later she came by our camp, which was set up by a nearby stream, and told us that she and the students had prayed since last December for a keyboard. She had told the students a month before we arrived, and before she knew we were coming, that she felt God would answer their prayer in December. I was amazed. We had never been to this area, had only thought of going at the end of September, and had made no sure plans until November. We thanked God together.

The shaman-turned-pastor and the two teachers had bold visions and needs none of us could meet by ourselves: a new church, food for their students, a new keyboard. We told them not to depend on us, only on God and that God would choose the way and vessel to help. In each case we helped as we could but felt moved to pray with them for what they needed. I also felt committed to help each one, but with no idea how to – just a sure feeling from God to commit. A week later towards the end of this mission we received a message of new help that would cover some of these needs. We thank God we can do something.

During this mission we were in constant contact with our Kachin teams who were reporting increased Burma Army attacks and heavy mortar and artillery bombardments. As we were praying about how to



Burma Army helicopter attacks Kachin people.

respond – go now or send money now and go later – the body of one of our Kachin rangers, Zau Hkawng, who had been missing in action since August, was found. Then, three days after Christmas, we got the report that the Burma Army was now attacking with helicopter gunships newly-acquired from Russia, and Chinese-made jet fighters. We helped coordinate the reporting of escalation of attacks, as well as sending more help. We would join them at the end of the current Karen State mission.

These words of Mother Teresa when she was answering a request of prayer for clarity spoke to me: "I will not pray for clarity for you, what you need is to trust God. I will pray you trust God." You, dear friends, help us do that.

Dear reader, thank you for being part of this and helping us trust God more. He has a way for each of us.

**MAY GOD BLESS YOU
THIS NEW YEAR,**

Dave, family and all of FBR 🙏



Teams and children leap for the sky at the end of a GLC program.



RANGER BROTHERS: SAW SUN & TOH WIN

SAW SUN WAS BORN ON A JUNGLE TRAIL IN THE RAIN. His brother and sister held a sarong over their mother's head to ward off the rain and his grandmother delivered him, while behind them smoke billowed up from their burning village. His first days were spent on the run and in hiding. Toh came ten years later. The family was still on the run, having been continuously uprooted by marauding Burma Army soldiers. This time, their mother was in a small hut in a deep jungle hide-site. Their father, a commander in the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), was usually on the frontlines of the Karen people's fight for freedom from the oppression of the Burma Army.

Saw Sun's mother, Naw Plaw Htoo, was a schoolteacher who carried books on her back when they fled and would set up makeshift classrooms in every hide site they settled in; both boys learned to read and write from her, learned how to do math, and learned that knowledge was one path to freedom. Though their father was often gone, the boys learned from him that freedom must be fought for, and fought for for all people. And from both of their parents, they learned that love often means sacrifice.

When Saw Sun was fourteen his mother and father sent him to boarding school at the Karen National Union headquarters. For the first time in his life he felt relatively secure. He focused on his studies as well as the military training that was given at the school and excelled at both. Two years later, his school, too, came under attack and Saw Sun found himself where he had always dreamed of being: on the frontlines. As a 9th grader, he didn't fight but helped run food and ammo from the backlines to soldiers at the front.

The year after Saw Sun left for school, and when Toh was seven years old, their father contracted a tropical disease and died. While there were medics there to help him, they had no medicine. From this point on, Toh was interested in studying medicine and helping save his people from preventable health problems. The brothers took to heart some of the last words of their father to him and his brothers: "I have no inheritance to give you boys, except the resolve to free your people." They aimed to continue the fight for freedom.

Saw Sun officially joined the KNLA when he was 17; while completing his basic training he also found

himself teaching – it didn't take long for his leaders to recognize his quick mind, and that he actually liked to teach and wasn't afraid to be in charge. He continued to teach his fellow soldiers, many of whom hadn't completed primary school, in between his other duties. Eventually he was sent to computer training at KNU headquarters; there he was given the assignment to travel with a new group, the Free Burma Rangers (FBR), and help coordinate their logistics, as well as observe how they operated. This new activity came at just the right time; years of fighting the Burma Army without either winning or losing, only killing, had begun to discourage him. He was looking for a new way to help, to work for freedom, and the FBR mission of helping the people through both relief in the war zones and training of relief teams, was something he wanted to be involved in. He became the KNU's official liaison to FBR.

The school has graduated 38 new medics and has 26 students this year who will finish in February 2014. The aim of the school is to produce enough skilled medics each year to begin meeting some of the basic healthcare needs in Karen State. Toh's responsibilities are to oversee the students with their training, oversee the inpatient department (350 patients last year), the outpatient department (1200 patients) and manage the staff ten. He lives at JSMK with his wife, young son and a baby on the way.

Saw Sun joined FBR full-time and got a new nickname: Koala Bear. He is now the coordinator for all the FBR teams from his district. He also runs the main FBR training every year, and for hundreds of new rangers from all over Burma, it is Koala Bear that ushers them into the movement to bring help, hope and love to people being oppressed. As the situation has



Saw Sun instructs a new group of Rangers.



The brothers' mother with her grandson.



Toh teaches a class for new medics.

THE BOYS LEARNED THAT FREEDOM HAD TO BE FOUGHT FOR, FOR ALL PEOPLE.

Toh, in the meantime, had finished 7th grade and had no options for school except to move to a refugee camp. There he graduated from high school and went on to four years of Bible school. After graduating from Bible school he still wanted to study medicine so he attended and finished a community health worker training. Like his brother, he was an excellent student and hard worker. He soon started working for the Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW). After getting four years of experience working in their office and helping to run their TB program, in 2008 he joined the FBR medical department.

He worked closely with their medical director and learned more about medicine from the medical trainings. In 2011 he helped to start the Jungle School of Medicine (JSMK), which he currently directs.

worsened in other parts of Burma, he has traveled to Kachin and Arakan states to help and encourage the FBR teams and people there. The resolve to free his people has not left him; last year he boldly invited Burma Army officers from a nearby camp to a Good Life Club program. They came – with only one known outcome: the truth was shared. Saw Sun's wife is also a Free Burma Ranger and they have one son.

Saw Sun and Toh's mother just recently stopped teaching officially. But she still tells stories – and in those stories are lessons perhaps more enduring than reading, writing and math – lessons of courage, sacrifice, resolve and love – those qualities that continue to drive her sons as they work for the freedom of their people.

IN MEMORIAM



ZAU HKAWNG

Kachin State, Burma

On 16 August 2012, 20 year old Zau Hkawng, a Good Life Club counselor, was killed by the Burma Army while defending his people in Kachin State. He had been missing in action but his body has now been found. We are very sorry to lose him and pray for his family, team and friends. In the sacrifice of his life Zau Hkawng lived out Jesus' words, "Greater love has no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends."

Zau Hkawng was carrying food and giving assistance to Kachin soldiers who were in a line of defense protecting the Kachin people under attack by the Burma Army in Pang Wa, Kachin State. The Burma Army overwhelmed the Kachin position and the Kachin soldiers were forced to retreat. Zau Hkawng chose to cover their retreat and remained as the last man in the position until all others had escaped. By his actions the Burma Army was not able to kill more of the Kachin and were slowed in the taking of the position. In doing this he lost his life. He was last seen defending the hill alone. His body was recovered on 10 December 2012 after the Burma Army left the immediate area.

Zau Hkawng said he joined the FBR because he loved his people and wanted to serve them well. In his role as a Good Life Club counselor he focused on the needs of women and children. He was a loving, energetic and humble young man who gave his all to anyone who needed help. We thank God for him and for his life and are sad for his death. In the midst of our sorrow we trust that nothing precious is eternally lost in God's hands. And we believe we will see him again in the place God has prepared for all of us. We honor Zau Hkawng's courage. His loss makes us more determined to make good his sacrifice for freedom, justice and reconciliation for all in Burma.



SAW WAH

Karen State, Burma

Saw Wah, a 26-year-old Karen video cameraman working in Mergui-Tavoy District, died 23 May 2013, of pneumonia after months of fighting Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, which weakened his immune system. He is survived by his wife and infant son, and his mother and two sisters. Saw Wah served as a Free Burma Ranger on the Ler Doh Soe Township team.

Saw Wah was active, energetic, smiling and laughing as he worked. He was a good cameraman and crucial member of his team. His illness began while he was working for his people inside Burma; he was then sent to a hospital in Tavoy when he developed swelling all around his body. After two months there he was moved to the border for better care. His team leader, Saw Sei Sei, showed a great deal of care and concern, helping him throughout his illness. Some of us were able to visit him and pray with him before he died. Another missionary in the area faithfully kept trying to find good medical care for him. He had told her that he believed in Christ and wanted to go to Bible school if he recovered but he also knew he would go to Heaven when he died.

Saw Wah said, upon joining FBR, "My goal in joining FBR is to help my suffering people. I give my life to help them until I die." This is what he did and we are grateful for his life, his service and his example that we will try to follow.

We are sad that Saw Wah is no longer with us, but also know we will see him again in a great land of freedom and peace. Until then we stand by his family, mourning his loss but grateful for him in our lives.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU,
Free Burma Rangers



NOT FREE OR SAFE

by Dave Eubank

Thousands of villagers in Kachin State and northern Shan State have been displaced from their homes for nearly two years by Burma Army advances and see little hope of an imminent return. This is in spite of ongoing talks between the Burma Army and Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) to resolve the conflict which has continued for over two years since 9 June 2011. While fighting in Kachin State is greatly reduced, clashes continue in northern Shan State as the Burma Army advances against Shan, Ta'ang and Kachin positions there.

Relief teams recently visited five Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps in southern Kachin State, providing medical care and Good Life Club children's programs in each camp. All together in these five camps live about 155 people, a fraction of the over 100,000 who have been displaced since 2011 in northern Shan and Kachin States. During this mission, the Government of Burma and the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) held talks and released a statement on 30 May 2013, in which they "agree to undertake efforts to achieve de-escalation and cessation of hostilities" but did not agree to a formal ceasefire. IDPs staying in the camps said they wanted to return but could not do so while the Burma Army was still in and near their home villages. According to a leader at one IDP camp, "If we have safety and freedom in our land we can go back, but now we are not free or safe." The Government/

KIO statement mentioned agreement "to continue discussions" on repositioning troops but made no concrete plan.

The IDPs' home villages feel like ghost towns; they are full of dilapidated homes and farms after two years of abandonment. A few people have chosen to return to their villages despite the risks. In Ma Gi Gun Village, eight of 48 families had returned after initially fleeing in December 2011 when the village was attacked by Burma Army Light Infantry Division (LID) 99. Ji Tawng, age 33, returned in May 2012 and since then has had to run from the village four times whenever Burma Army patrols come close. She said that living in the abandoned village is difficult and she does not feel safe, but prefers living in her home to living in the IDP camp.

***"THERE SHOULD ALSO BE AN
EQUAL AND JUST INVOLVEMENT
WITH THE ETHNIC GROUPS
AT EVERY LEVEL..."***

There are few reports of fighting in Kachin State since the Government/KIO talks. On 14 and 16 June 2013 in northern Shan State, fighting took place between Kachin Independence Army (KIA) soldiers and Burma Army troops from IB 242 and Burma Army proxy forces.

At one IDP site 894 men, women and children were gathered to join us in a Good Life Club and medical program. Our Kachin, Karen and Karenni rangers sang, gave medical and dental care, performed educational programs and played with the children.

As we were greeting the IDPs at the beginning of the program, a bent-over old man walked in, leaning shakily on a stick. He was beaming and said, "Thanks so much for coming, I am so happy, I am so happy you Americans came again. You helped us when we needed it in World War II and helped us be free of the Japanese oppression. Now in our time of need you have come again." As he shook our hands and thanked each of us I asked him how old he was. "I am 98 years old and thankful to be able to be here," he answered.

“NOW IN OUR TIME OF NEED YOU HAVE COME AGAIN”

98-YEAR-OLD KACHIN MAN TO A RELIEF TEAM LEADER

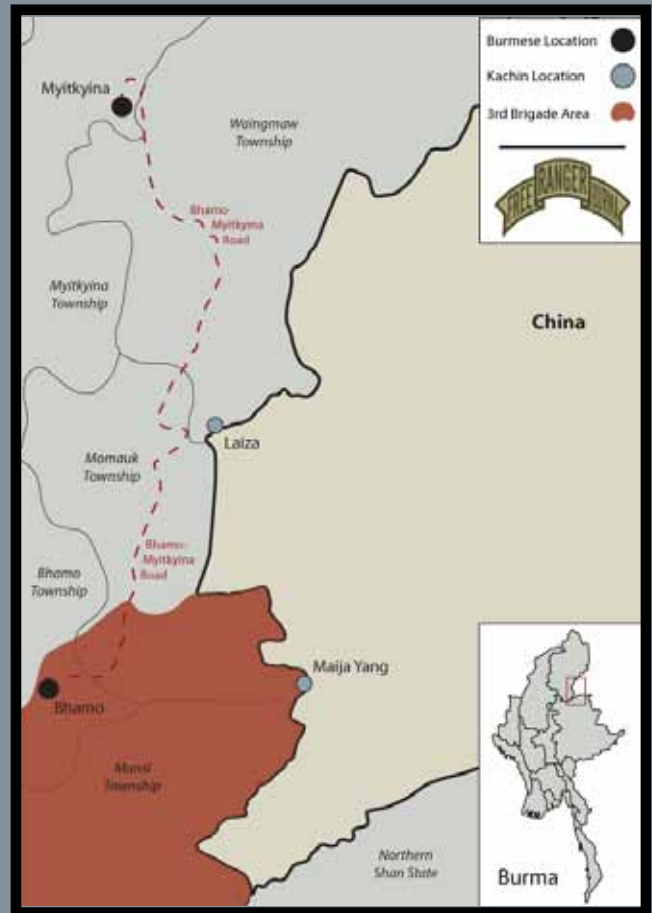
Halfway through the program he grew tired, motioned me over and said, "I am too old, I love this but need to rest, and please excuse me". He got up shakily but could only manage a few feet leaning on his stick before he was out of breath and strength, he dropped to the ground and began to crawl. I went to him and lifted him up. I held him up and helped him get to his plywood, bamboo and tin shelter about one hundred yards away. Upon arriving at his shelter he lay down, panting in front of the opening. After a short time, he sat up and smiled and told me, "Thank you so much."

I was touched and also felt sadness and concern – sadness that we could not help him very much, and concern that some people were now considering sending military advisers to the Burma Army, the very army that had displaced him. He helped the USA during World War II, loves Americans and trusts us.



Kachin medics at Kachin IDP camp.

SOUTHERN KACHIN STATE, BURMA



It is good that the US and international community are involved with Burma, and there should also be an equal and just involvement with the ethnic groups at every level. If the international community is going to engage with the Burma Army, the 98-year-old Kachin man and his people need it to engage with them as well. I prayed with him and then he prayed for me, a long, powerful prayer. As he prayed I felt I was in the presence of God and one of His special people. I saw that though his body was frail and wasting away, his spirit was strong and rose out of him. A great soul was here and he shone brightly. His humility, faith and joy lifted me up as I walked back to the program. I thanked God for the privilege of knowing this man and seeing the power of his soul.

While exploring the area, we met several young Kachin volunteers who were working in the camp. They had come from government-controlled cities and had taken risks by crossing the battle lines to help the IDPs. There



Good Life Club spreads cheer at Kachin IDP camp.

was a 31-year-old civil engineer from Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State, who took a leave from his job to build a school and a water system for the camp. There was a 24-year-old woman from Bhamo, who was volunteering with a charity building toilets and delivering aid. There were other volunteers: a teacher, a medic, a relief administrator; all in their twenties and early thirties. I was impressed with all of them: all smart, educated, idealistic and taking risks to do something good for people in need.

We explained to them that the US Government is considering extending certain types of training to the Burma Army and we asked them what they wanted to say to members of Congress about it. They said the US is welcome to get involved in Burma, but if they will only get involved with the Burma Army that will encourage the military to increase its oppression. The Burma Army will use US involvement to its own advantage. If the US

wanted to engage not only with the Burma Army, but also with the ethnic resistance groups, then it could be a good thing.

They said that even in the government-controlled cities in Kachin State, most people support the KIO and KIA because they want there to be an organization and an army that stands up for them against the government. They said that there is, of course, a diversity of opinions and some people see the KIO as a negative influence, but most see it as their representatives standing against the oppression of the government.

One of the volunteers said, as a final comment, that what she really dislikes is that there are governments in the world that love their people and work to help them, but the Burmese government only takes away from the people to help themselves. 🙄



Ji Tawng pointing to bullet holes in her house from the Burma Army.



Kachin house destroyed by a rocket from Burma Army attack helicopter.

GOOD LIFE CLUB REPORT:

Rangers Expand the Mission – New Junior Rangers and New Front-lines



by Hosannah Valentine



Kids sing during GLC in Karen State.

Fifteen new Free Burma Ranger teams recently completed relief missions in Muthraw and Nyaunglebin districts of Karen State. Rangers from Karen, Karenni, Lahu, Mon and Naga areas helped treat over 2000 patients, led Good Life Club (GLC) programs for students from about 100 schools, and recorded the Burma Army's activities in the areas visited while also interviewing villagers to learn the details of their situation. A new Junior Ranger program was begun to initiate leadership and skill development in the older students.

"YOU CAME FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH"

23 December 2012, Karen State, Burma: This was the song we were greeted with on the eve of Christmas Eve, Sunday morning at the Mae Nyu Hta school, sung by nearly 100 students who were mostly Buddhist. We had met the teacher the night before when she visited our camp outside the village to welcome us. We found out that she is the head teacher of the boarding school, she

is from Yangon (Rangoon) but after receiving a theology degree from a seminary there she had come here, to the front-lines of her people's struggle for freedom, to teach and be a missionary. Hers is the only Christian family in the village. We had never been to this village before and she was excited to see us.

"You came from heaven to earth to show the way" – as I listened to those words, and to the preacher speaking about them, I realized that Jesus came from heaven not just with a message about "the way" – but because in that coming is the way. To go from heaven to earth – to descend into the mess to stand with humankind, whom He loved, in all the joy and desperation and uncertainty that is human existence, that is the way, and the model of love. Just like the teacher had come from Rangoon to help the Buddhist students in the front-lines.

This year in our Good Life Club program we've been performing as a drama the parable of the Good Samaritan, which Jesus told in answer to the question of


what is the way to eternal life. Like the story Jesus lived, this story is also about entering into someone else's mess: the desperate and injured man is a Jew, and is by-passed by different sets of religious Jews who desire to distance themselves from an ugly situation, who want to stay holy. The Samaritan is disdained by the Jews and typically treated as a second-class citizen. The bloody, beaten man by the side of the road is not his mess. But he enters it anyway; he descends into someone else's mess with compassion and that, says Jesus, is the way.

In the Junior Ranger program we teach about service, about servant leadership. We pull the older students out of the afternoon part of the GLC program – sometimes to bamboo classrooms, sometimes the rangers haul blackboards outside to a shady spot, sometimes everyone just sits on the ground, notebooks in hand – and they all learn first about leadership for about half an hour. We tell them they are all beginning to be leaders, as the younger children in their schools start to look to them for guidance and the adults look to them for help.

We tell them that being a leader isn't just about having power, but also about being able to really help and provide a real service to their people. Being a leader is about serving, and being together with your people when they need help. So we also teach them a practical skill, something they can use to serve. The Rangers teach basic medicine and wound care; map, compass and GPS navigation; and reporting and video and digital camera use. The students choose one of these subjects to focus on for the rest of the day. These skills are potentially useful now in the students' lives, and give them an introduction to something they might be able to do in the future.

BEING A LEADER IS ABOUT SERVING, AND BEING TOGETHER WITH YOUR PEOPLE WHEN THEY NEED HELP.

In 2012, sectarian violence broke out in Arakan State in western Burma, as predominantly Buddhist Rakhine clashed with mostly Muslim Rohingya; villages were burned and destroyed, hundreds of thousands of people were displaced and many

were killed. The government did little to control the violence or protect anyone and there is still very little aid for these people. Three Karen Rangers volunteered to go there, encourage the people, provide what help they could and also encourage the FBR Arakan teams. As we were midway through our Karen State mission, these three left for Arakan State: one medic, one pastor/leader and one GLC leader. They went, with this prayer from Ka Paw Say, the team pastor and FBR deputy director: "Lord, you know us very well. We are very small and can do nothing without you. We need you as the newest people to do a mission like this. We lift everything up to you. Forgive us and prepare the way for us. Open our eyes to see what we should see. Open our hearts to feel what we should feel. Give us strength and boldness to do what we should do. Do not let us miss what we should do and guide us for your glory. In Jesus' name we pray." While we did the GLC tour in Karen State, they also did GLC programs in Arakan State, bringing the message of abundant life in a place they hadn't been before to a people who hadn't heard it before. 



Singing in Arakan State.



Teaching Junior Rangers in Karen State.

One way to help the Good Life Club is to put together children's packs and mom-and-baby packs. These packs are then delivered to mothers and children by relief teams.

SHIPPING INFORMATION

Please send standard gift size boxes with the description "household/personal goods, no commercial value" on customs form.

Send via airmail to:

(USA: not to exceed 79 in length/width/girth)

Christians Concerned for Burma (CCB)
PO Box 14, Mae Jo PO,
Chiang Mai 50290, THAILAND.
Mark the Package: GLC

KIDS PACKS

- Small comb and mirror
- 2 children's toothbrushes
- 1 fingernail clipper
- 1 small toy
- 1 picture of you
- 1 postcard from your city or state with a Bible verse

MOM-AND-BABY PACKS

- Small fingernail clippers
- 2 outfits for baby, including cap, mittens, shirt (not a onesie) and socks
- 1 teether
- 1 picture of you
- 1 postcard from your city or state with a Bible verse

WELCOMING GRACE

by Mon Parker




W

orking as a nurse and midwife at the Jungle School of Medicine (JSMK), I often find myself wondering what my life would be if I had been born in Karen State instead of Australia. As I meet many women of my age in various stages of pregnancy, it's clear that I would likely be married and have several children – and probably I would have lost at least one child, maybe as many as two or three. All for reasons most likely preventable.

Naw August is a Karen woman my age. We have similar desires to love and be loved, a value for education, and the other good things of life. We met in the first half of her pregnancy. It was her third pregnancy but would be her first child: sadly, for unknown reasons, her first two had been stillborn. As I got to know her better, I became personally invested: we had to find a way to help her take home a happy, healthy baby.

Her pregnancy progressed nicely; however, as she came closer to her due date, the baby continued to lie across her abdomen rather than shifting into the ideal head-down position. This unsettling circumstance made it even worse when I suddenly found out I had to leave earlier than intended, two weeks before she came full-term. I was determined to give her the best chance possible to have a healthy baby, so made a decision that she did not agree with – to transfer her at 36 weeks to the refugee camp. She would be able to travel before she went into labor and have time to settle in and make a plan with the clinic there. The day before she was to leave, one of our staff went to take travel documents and a referral letter to her and send her on her way.

Instead she came back with Naw August in a hammock, two hours into labor. She had been praying that God would allow her to have her baby



close to home, and where she knew the staff and felt comfortable and safe. God answered: she was going to have the baby early – but the baby was still lying sideways. She lay on the clinic floor with a towel over her head and I wondered what was going through her mind, with her only experience of labor resulting in death – it must have been something like: "Please God, please, give me a healthy baby, fill my arms with life, I cannot face death again. Please God..."

We prayed for wisdom and for God's blessing and grace. There were no surgical back-up alternatives. We had an ultrasound, medicines – and God. It turns out that this was more than we needed. The ultrasound gave us an important view of the baby and position. Between contractions, with gentle pressure from the outside, we were able to ease the baby into a position where it was possible to birth. It was not the most preferable position, bottom first, not head first. I had two thoughts: "We can deliver this!" – promptly followed by, "Don't get overconfident – we don't have any back up."

These competing thoughts were overridden by a voice in my head that said, "Don't forget about me." The presence of God in the clinic was palpable as, seven hours after beginning labor, Naw August delivered a healthy daughter. I believe that we had an exquisite encounter with God that day, as He orchestrated what will go down as one of the most amazing births I have attended, resulting in parents holding new life, for the first time.

We as a staff thought together about what to name the baby. I wanted a name that could be spelled in Karen and told a story. We finally decided on "Hannah," because this life was undoubtedly given by the "Grace of God." 🙏

GOD'S ENDURING PRESENCE

by Mon Parker

When a miracle unfolds before you, seeming to exactly answer your prayer, faith is easy. When things go sideways – well, it's harder to believe, yet no less true, that God is present.

Late one evening at Jungle School of Medicine (JSMK), a mother hurried in with her 14-month-old son, who was unconscious. The story was simple: her son had had diarrhea, and she had been sold a new “miracle” medicine from a salesman peddling medicines from inside Burma. Unfortunately, this medicine is not miraculous in infants and children and the result was not simple: it had effectively shut down his bowel and this in turn was poisoning his body. Over the next three days, our team pled with God and fought hard for this little man's life. We clung to the knowledge that God never leaves us, and we had story after story to lean on where God had shown His might and power and healed. Surely this would be no different.

After two long days he woke up, a lively and clearly mischievous young man. He didn't understand why his head wouldn't stay up on its own, and why his legs wouldn't hold him. We laughed at his feeble yet persistent attempts to be independent, and took them as a sign of hope. Yet his body continued to struggle, and after four days he couldn't fight the incredibly high fevers any longer. My heart wanted to break as I reluctantly and almost shamefully told his Mama that we had done all we could. I had nothing else to say. Words felt empty.

As we struggled to understand why, a second case came in, a three-year-old girl this time. She was spunky and clearly dad was her best friend. Her story was almost exactly the same as the boy we had just lost, except this time the medicine had been sold to her parents as the latest and greatest worm treatment. She too was in a bad way and I became fearful of losing another life – needlessly. As before, it seemed that there was improvement, then everything fell apart. Again we had pled with God and, like with our little boy, her body could not withstand the assault on it. As this reality set in, her mother and father sat in shock, weeping and rocking back and forth in grief. One tablet had caused immense sorrow. I gulped back sobs as we sat with the family.

Later, in frustration and fatigue, I demanded encouragement from God. And He delivered. It took me by surprise, as it was not related to this little girl, it was something uniquely encouraging to me. Not unlike His message to Job, He simply communicated that He is there, acting in all parts of life. He didn't address my specific complaint, but did let me know that He is in control. Throughout life there are many situations that hurt, and are 100% unfair, but, rather than there being an absence of God's presence at this time, He is there and available to cling to. He is our strength. We are not left to endure on our own. 🙏



/// **HE IS OUR STRENGTH.**
WE ARE NOT LEFT TO ENDURE
ON OUR OWN. ///

Mae La Bible School THROUGH THE FIRE

testimony by Reverend Dr. Simon



The Bible school after the fire.



The rebuilt Bible school.

"THIS IS MY SHORT TESTIMONY OF HOW GOD IS SO good and so faithful in fulfilling His promises to all His loving children. God gave me a dream and He is fulfilling it step by step. I was born in 1949 (the year the Karen started their struggle for justice, rights and freedom) and grew up in a Christian family in a village called Naung Boh, in Kawa Township, Pegu/Pago Division. After finishing my primary school education, I wanted very much to pursue higher education but my parents could not afford to send me to school. But praise the Lord - they allowed me to leave the village to continue my further education. Before I left, though, God gave me a very wonderful dream, which I dreamed for three consecutive nights. It was March 1963, one year after General Ne Win led a military coup and took the power from U Nu, the then Prime Minister of Burma, and established military rule in Burma; but in my dream I was flying in the air, over the seas, over the mountains, and over the valleys, like a superman, free of worry and fear.

God gave me the gift of education, thanks to relatives and opportunities all over, culminating with study in the Philippines for my Master and Doctoral studies at the Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary (ABGTS); there, with my own eyes, I witnessed the People

Power Movement and the power struggle between Corazon Aquino and Marcos. I had the opportunity to teach at the Myanmar Institute of Theology, where I was during Burma's 1988 demonstrations that led to another military coup, resulting in the closure of all the schools, universities, colleges, and all Bible schools and seminaries. Through this upheaval, I had no worry and no fear.

But my direction changed: I decided to come to the Karen State, Kawthoolei, to be with my suffering people and serve God in the jungle. I left Rangoon in March 1989. I was elected to serve the Lord as the Principal of the Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College (KKBBS) in 1990."

During the afternoon heat on April 28, 2012, a fire started in the school's kitchen, with the flames quickly consuming the entire structure and several of the closest buildings. Two different fire trucks eventually came to help fight the fire, but not in time to save the school. Though the school could not be saved, the fire was contained and did not spread anywhere else in the camp. There were no injuries.

Clouds hover over the wreckage that once was Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College (KKBBS) – a Bible school in Mae La Refugee Camp that has provided education for thousands of refugees from Burma, and inspiration for many more people around the world. A steady rain bounces off the piles of ash that only days ago were hundreds of textbooks and photos of smiling students on their graduation day. Charred posts now tower over a snarl of steel and tin that once served as a shelter for students, staff and guests since the school's opening in June of 1990.

Rev. Simon was not present during the fire, but told us about his initial reaction to receiving the news that the school was aflame. "Immediately, I prayed to God that the fire would be contained, and not destroy any more buildings than the school. Later, when I arrived at Mae La, people told me that shortly after the fire started, the wind unexpectedly changed direction, blowing the flames away from most all of the homes surrounding the school."

Despite the loss of the 22 years of work contained in the school and his home, Rev. Simon remains positive. "We have lost everything. But, we have everything – because we still have God."

WAR: Wallei Village was where the KKBBS was originally, before it was attacked in March 1990 and we had to move to Mae La Refugee Camp in Thailand. I thus became the newly-elected principal of the KKBBS without school buildings and teachers and students. But we prayed and rebuilt and started our ministry of teaching and equipping in Mae La in June, 1990. The Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) also later attacked the camp in February 1996, killing two grandmothers.

FLOOD: there was a great flood that destroyed our kitchen and the Church on September 24, 1996.

FIRE torched to ashes all the KKBBS buildings in the compound on April 28, 2012.

In all these things, critical and difficult times, God gave me no fear and no worry. Like Psalm 66:12 says: "We went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a spacious place."

Thank you all so much for helping us in ways and means you can, as with our hands we have rebuilt our buildings. God's new gifts are bigger, wider, stronger, greater and better. This gives us a new vision and new insight of always growing bigger, wider, stronger, greater and better in the ministry of serving the Lord through serving his suffering people.

OUR LIVING TESTIMONY II

We lost everything with the fire that caught our KKBBS on April 28, 2012, but we still have everything, because God is our Everything.

Gone with the fire are our sins and transgressions, not His Mercy and Grace.

Gone with the fire are the buildings and material things that can be replaced even with the better ones, but praise God no life was lost.

Gone with the fire are the visitors' notes that contained best wishes, prayers, encouragements and promises by friends around the world, but not their continuing love, care and concern for us expressed in their words and deeds.

Gone with the fire are our fears and doubts, not our faith in the almighty and living God.



Rev. Simon's gospel choir.

In November 2013 the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) came to Chiang Mai, Thailand, to bring the Abundant Life Festival to tens of thousands of Thais. Performers and speakers came from all over Thailand and abroad, including Korean and Thai pop stars and American gospel bands. Two weeks before the festival, Dr. Simon's Bible School choir was invited to perform there. With the urgent help of many friends and by the grace of God, 120 refugee Bible School students were given a slot on the program and granted permission to travel across two provinces, arriving the day the festival began – the first time most of them had left the refugee camp. They performed on two separate nights, and shared a powerful testimony of resilience and redemption in the face of war and destruction. Their final performance was, according to Franklin Graham, "One of the most powerful renditions of the Hallelujah Chorus I've ever heard." 🙏

From ceasefire to sustained
**ETHNIC
POLITICS
IN 2013**
by Ashley South

This has been an extraordinary year for ethnic communities in Myanmar. For the first time since independence, government forces and most Ethnic Armed Groups have stopped fighting. This is an historic achievement in peace-making. However, the ceasefire process has yet to be transformed into a substantial and sustainable phase of peace-building.

In addition to the need to consolidate the ceasefires, the peace process in Myanmar is unlikely to be sustainable without the start of political dialogue between the government and ethnic stakeholders. There is an urgent need to agree to a framework for talks, including not only Ethnic Armed Groups, but also ethnic political parties and civil society actors. The clock is ticking - with the 2015 elections less than two years away, and the prospect of a Naypyidaw government increasingly preoccupied by Chairmanship of the ASEAN regional grouping. The window of opportunity to reach an agreement will not remain open indefinitely.

In this context, Burma's Ethnic Armed Groups reached an unprecedented level of agreement at a meeting in late October and early November 2013, in the Kachin Independence Organisation capital of Laiza. Although significant tensions and differences exist, most Ethnic Armed Groups are coordinating their positions through a National Ceasefire Coordinating Team - which met with the government in early November, in Myitkyina. This was the first time the government had met with Ethnic Armed Groups collectively, rather than on a group-by-group basis. Likewise, on the government side, there is now greater clarity and seeming ownership of the peace process, both by the President, and the Burmese security establishment. There now seems to be a relatively clear expression of both government and ethnic actors' positions. It is hardly surprising that very significant differences remain. The road towards agreeing on a National Ceasefire Accord will be long, and no doubt difficult. Indeed, serious doubts remain whether the government and Myanmar Army will be willing to accept ethnic demands (for example, in relation to federalism)—either in principle, or in practice. Furthermore, there is a need for international supporters and donors to the peace process to be better informed, and engage more constructively with ethnic communities. Nevertheless, the year ends with a degree of optimism that has been absent from Burma's ethnic politics for many decades. 🌿

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BURMA SITUATION UPDATE

The Changing Scope of **BURMA'S PROBLEMS**

A relief team leader recently reflected on the current situation in his country. "It used to be easy to know who posed a threat to us: it was always the Burma Army. Today, I think it is much more difficult to know. Now, we face the Burma Army and all these companies that are coming and taking our land."

With the recent opening of its economy and the lifting of international sanctions, Burma continues to experience an influx of international companies that are vying to tap into the resource-rich nation. Yet, with an incomplete transition to democracy and a history of oppression that has gone largely unaddressed by the current government, displacement, forced labor and oppression of the ethnic people could likely continue. Often times, foreign investors collaborate with current or former military officials, increasing the risk of perpetuating a cycle of abuse.

Land ownership is often disputed, largely because the government of Burma has historically declared that all agricultural land ultimately belongs to the government, a claim reinforced by the 2008 Constitution. With 70 percent of the country in the agricultural sector, there is a large majority that are at risk of losing their livelihood. This also means that

areas reserved as national forests or vital water sources stand to be polluted or destroyed in the wake of business ventures.

This is already happening in regions throughout Burma. In Sagaing Division, where the ethnic Naga live, over 2,400 local people were forced to move from their traditional lands into compounds as India's Hydroelectric Power Corporation prepared for the construction of the massive Tamanthi Hydroelectric Power Project on the Chindwin River. The joint Chinese Wanbao and Burma military-backed Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings development of the Leptadaung Copper mine, also in Sagaing Division, has been met with resistance by hundreds protesting farmers, whose access to 7,800 acres of farmland has been cut off as the mine has been expanded in the past year. The Italian-Thai Development Company dam project in the Tenasserim Division in the southernmost region of Karen State will affect or displace a total of 26 villages as disputed construction on the Dawei Dam continues. According to a 2013 report from the Myanmar Parliamentary Farmland Investigation Commission, the military has taken nearly 250,000 acres of land from villagers across Burma. 🌿

ARAKAN-ROHINGYA *Attacks on Muslims Increase*

Interethnic violence and government repression continued to mar the human rights landscape of western Burma through 2013. Fighting between the local Arakan and Rohingya populations in Arakan State over the last two years has resulted in hundreds of fatalities and currently over 140,000 Rohingya people are living in government IDP camps on an unprotected coastal plain, with minimal provisions. The government of Burma denies the minority Rohingya citizenship and requires registration with the title "illegal immigrant" in order to receive rations. Many of the IDPs have attempted to flee to Malaysia or Indonesia by boat, oftentimes falling victim to natural calamities or human trafficking operations.



The loosely-affiliated Buddhist movement known as "969" has been blamed for fueling the violence, some of which has spilled out of Arakan State and into other areas of Burma as well. Anti-Muslim attacks have taken place in Mandalay Division and Shan State, as well as throughout Arakan State. Flow of aid into affected areas and information flow out is severely limited by government restraints. Extremist Islamist organizations in Central and South East Asia have begun to notice the situation. In one case a group of Muslim extremists allegedly bombed a Buddhist temple in Indonesia in retaliation for anti-Muslim violence in Burma, showing this formerly localized conflict to have potentially far-reaching implications. 🌿

Treasures in HEAVEN

by Doh Say

I LEFT MY HOME, FOR GOOD, IN 1991.

I haven't been back since. At that time, I was living near my parents and working in the same mines they had worked their whole lives; I was making a lot more money, but it was dangerous work. My parents had risked their lives every day in those mines to give us a comfortable life; they did it out of love but I felt the burden of that risk and sacrifice heavy on me. It was a debt I had to repay. I left, to find treasure – the famous jade of Kachin State. I was determined to come back with enough money to make us all happy. When I left I did not even go home to say goodbye. I did write two letters: one was to my parents. I asked them to forgive me for leaving abruptly, for not saying goodbye. The other was to an older friend. To this day I can't remember what I wrote her, or why. I only remember that I included a verse I had learned in middle school, Matthew 6:19: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." This would prove to be a seed.

The Burma Army stopped us on our way north, saying the situation wasn't good and we couldn't go further. After weeks of waiting, I hopped a boat going the opposite direction – south – anything was better than sitting around. And so my search for riches was diverted. God changed my direction – quite literally. As I headed down river, I met up with Karenni resistance fighters, including a cousin who was a captain and medic on the front lines of the war with the Burma Army. I joined up – and was shot in action. The bullet entered my chest and exited my back and as I tumbled down the hill in a black fog of pain. With the chaos of battle around me, God spoke to me. He said, "Doh Say, you must change your direction, and you must love your parents." At first I refused, but I was dying – I looked down at my chest and saw only blood. Finally I relented and as I blacked out, two friends came and dragged me to safety.

I was able to mail a letter to my parents that both passed away before I could see them again.

Still, the work in my heart was only begun. I asked my leader if there were any paying jobs with my organization. In my heart, I wanted to help my people – seeing dying soldiers and the evil of the Burma Army

had stirred both anger and compassion; but in my head I was still thinking about myself – and wanted money. My leader laughed and said, "There is a lot of work to do for the people. There are no paying jobs." I continued to work in the foreign relations department of the Karenni government, but always there was this divide. I called home once, 10 years after I had left. I talked to a friend – she reminded me of the letter I had written long ago. Once again, Jesus' words came to me: "Do not lay up for yourself treasure on earth..." That same year I went on my first FBR mission, and I saw the suffering of my people from a new perspective – a shared perspective. I realized that my life was very easy. If I always lived at that higher place, how could I really know the suffering of my people? I couldn't, and God used the FBR missions to humble me and to soften my heart; I began to learn how to share love and have less pride and more compassion. I was gradually changing.

In 2005, I consciously committed to live fully for Jesus. In 2005, the dream I had always had was placed in my hands. I was offered several jobs with big NGOs, a paying jobs that would allow me to save money, to send it home. I would be working for freedom. Maybe someday I could go home with something in my hands to give. My FBR leader said to take it, if I wanted to – it was a good opportunity. I sat and calculated the different benefits of each job; as I did so something stood out in my head. One potential employer had said they would pay me enough "that I could live on it." I realized I could live anywhere, on anything. I realized I was already living, in my work with the people, that living did not mean having money. I turned down all the paying jobs and committed to FBR full time. I felt God wanted me with my people. I needed to be working for them; I needed to be working for freedom. If I went home with money, but there was still oppression, that was a poor gift.

Again I was on a mission, to deliver teacher stipends to rural teachers in Karenni State. In one village I had a good friend and we shared our rare time together with joy, and he invited me to stay and preach the sermon in church the next day. I felt too busy and said I had to carry on. As I left the village, I met the headman and he too invited me to preach the sermon. Again, I said I was too busy. I arrived at the next village and met an old friend who had also traveled many days to get there, on her way somewhere else. It was an unexpected meeting. We talked joyfully, and she asked me my plan and suggested I stay, and share in church the next day. I gave my standard response, "No, I'm too busy" - but then I was struck to the heart. I felt like Peter, who had denied his Lord three times. I felt bad. I agreed to preach. The next day, standing on the stage, greeting

the people, once again I remembered the letter I had written to my grandmother. I remembered the verse I had inexplicably included, about treasure in heaven. I realized, with the smiles of the people, and the sharing of God's love, here was the treasure of heaven. Joy filled my heart. I couldn't stop smiling, I felt like I wanted to dance on stage. After 23 years of treasure seeking, I had finally discovered heavenly treasure. God had given me that verse years ago, without explanation, and it had been a touchstone throughout my life. After 23 years, I finally felt I could go home - even empty-handed, even though Burma is not yet free - I could go home, even with my imperfection, and share something. God's love was the heavenly treasure, and He had given it to me, given it to me to share - here on earth. 🙏



NOT ABANDONED

by Karen Eubank



Injured Kachin soldiers receive treatment.

THE MEN GATHERED AT THE ENTRANCE of the hospital, standing to watch or sitting in the blue plastic chairs the staff had set out for them. They were quiet and respectful; two were blind and missing fingers, one was missing an arm, one a leg, and one had a head injury that left him unable to speak. They were Kachin soldiers. While most of our work focuses on civilians, and women and children, these were the men sacrificing their lives to protect the people we bring our program to; most of them also had wives and families and their futures had just changed dramatically. We were happy to meet them and pray with them.

I have seen God's strength meet changes in our lives in dramatic ways, giving new hope and courage to overcome obstacles, and I asked how I could pray for them in the process of their recovery. I asked, "What are you most concerned about? I want to pray about what worries you most." Their replies amazed me: their own issues didn't even make the list. The blind man with two fingers left asked to pray first for his uncle, and then cousin who were posted on the front lines. Another asked that we pray his family would not worry about him, and another prayed for the health of his elderly uncle and ailing mother and grandmother living far away. Several echoed each others' prayers for fellow soldiers, their leaders, and even the doctors and nurses

at the hospital. Only briefly did these men ask anything for their personal situations, although their needs were so stark and inescapable. We did pray together, for all their requests, as well as for their own help and healing.

And I wondered: had they been so secure in their faith before their accidents? Or had God given them an immediate assurance of 'a future and a hope' afterward that covered them so completely they weren't worried about their own situations?

HE WAS PRESENT IN THEIR ENDURING LOVE FOR EACH OTHER.

In the same way, when we talked to one of the women's group leaders here, she clearly articulated her refusal to leave the fighting area. Speaking on behalf of many women raising children in the conflict zones, she said, "When we stay we support our soldiers and husbands who are fighting for us and our land. When we all stay it is not so easy for the enemy to destroy everything completely. Even our enemy knows we are here. If we left the soldiers could be defeated more easily. I am not afraid and I want to stay to support our troops."

Despite appearances, God had clearly not abandoned these people; He was present in their enduring love for each other, and that faithfulness that does not lose heart. 🙏



RUN FOR RELIEF

A Poem by Melanie Carey

At the call to line up, I tighten my shoes
Tying my baby to me, I grab what I can carry
A wave of apprehension washes over me
Fear threatens to overwhelm me
The fear of failure
Cold, stark, fear
Of not being able
Of not being able
To finish the race
To protect my child
Surging forward in the mass of bodies
Surging forward in the huddle of villagers
I withdraw inside myself
I withdraw inside myself
Listening to the music
Not listening to the distant gunfire
Establishing a rhythmic pace
Or the whimpering of frightened children
Within minutes my legs are burning
Within minutes my legs are burning
And I'm panting hard
And I'm panting hard
It's the hills that kill me
But it's the hills that offer safety

And I feel like giving up
And I know that giving up is not an option
The sun beats down
The sun beats down
And I long for the next cup of water
And I wonder where we will find water
I dream of a shower
Will our rice crop survive
And ponder what I might eat later
And how long will this food last?
Just a few more measured minutes
Just how much farther must we run?
The sight of the finish line
Where will all this end?
A surge of adrenaline and relief: it's over
A surge of anxiety sweeps over me again
And as I cross the line in thankfulness
And as I climb the next hill
I offer up a prayer
I offer up a prayer
For those who have no choice
For safety for us all and for the strength
But to keep running
Just to keep running

GET INVOLVED

Run for Relief events happens all over the world where people join together to race in support of freedom in Burma. Find out if there's an event near you or how to plan your own by visiting: runforrelief.org.

Join a prayer network and we'll send you monthly prayer requests as well as real-time immediate prayer needs from teams in the field. For more information or to sign up, email info@prayforburma.org.

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