

May 13, 2012

Dear Praying Friends,

Last Saturday was a joyful celebration of our brother "J" being baptized!

"J" is the Afghan I wrote about in the last update. He has spent his entire life in Iran, where he often watched Christian programming on satellite TV. He loved the message, but couldn't imagine what this faith might look like in real life –he didn't have a Bible and had never met a Christian. Late last year, "J" left Iran to seek a future for his family (his wife and young son). In Greece, "J" reunited with an old friend, who is now a follower of Jesus. This friend shared his faith with "J" and brought him to our ministry center. After reading through the scriptures and asking questions "J" put his faith in Christ. **"J" is now truly alive**, experiencing the freedom and peace of union with Christ!

Please also find below a recent update written by Greek staff member of Helping Hands Kallie Skaife. The "A" she writes about was largely discipled by our friend Ilir Cami but I have been privileged in recent months to spend one-on-one time with "A", as well as fellowshiping with him in our Community Group, and welcoming him as part of our Leadership Course group. Rejoice as you read his story in how God changes lives, and please pray for him as he is under spiritual attack in these days and is also in need of work and a country that will grant him asylum.

April 11<sup>th</sup> was to be a day of baptisms; three of them were to be in the sea!

In the afternoon as we stood on the edge of a public seashore of Athens, we worshiped the Lord of heaven and earth and there were no words worthy to give voice to our lost in wonder. The three men went through the waters and time stood still for a moment. Gazing at the horizon line where heaven meets earth, we came to the threshold of another imperceptible horizon line, the one between the seen and unseen worlds and we felt the realities of heaven pour out to swamp the realities of the world we see. It was a moment of eternity and our hearts were flooded.

One of the men who went into the waters to help the local pastor with the baptism was a precious friend, Amir.

Amir had been a muslim man who fled his country for political reasons, almost 7 years ago. On his way to Europe he stationed himself in Turkey for 4 years where in no time he found himself in the close company of a woman who was a practising satanist and he was sucked into it. He soon lost himself on women, satanist practices and chemical substances until his weight came down to 45 kilos, but even then he thought it 'a paradise of indulgence-no-rules!'

*'I had everything my senses longed for....'*

Eventually he arrived in Athens. Here he assessed the local price of heroin in the thriving drugs market, imported heroin from Iran, created a stir in the market by dropping his price and became a successful drug dealer.

He held two houses, he lived in one and in the other he housed six others who sold for him 'the stuff'.

He lived like a king.

But one day his nightmare that he called 'dream' was interrupted by a dream.

*"There are only two things I fear in life, my parents and God.*

*One night, unexpectedly, my father appeared in my dream.*

*'Son, is this the way I raised you up to be a man? To make money without working? Without using your hands? Are you making a living by the death of others?'*

*I woke up sobbing. I took my fathers picture, placed it on the table, sat opposite him and wept.*

*'Father, never again my hand will touch this stuff.'*

He took the two kilos of heroin that were in the house and flushed it down the toilet!

THE FATHER.....

... '*...But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran,.....*' Luke 15,20

Will He not tax every force in the universe to the help of him who has started in any faltering way, the journey back!

Amir appeared at our centre and started offering his services as a cook. His heart was being drawn but he had many struggles, the fiercest one his battling with the notion that he who knew the way to earn up to 1000 euro a day, had, sometimes, to make ends meet with less than 30 euro a week! It was a relentless luring to go back to his old life dressed with the clothes of a relentless battle of survival.

He became in many ways my right hand as a translator day in and day out.

One day he came in to office greatly perturbed. He had developed an abscess at the very end of his spine; a condition that needs highly skilled surgery if it is not to have recurrences.

I discovered that perhaps there might be one more thing he was afraid of. Disease!

We advised him to go to hospital and have it seen but he was too worried to do that. That day he called upon the name of the Lord and asked for healing. God healed him.

Amir had been hovering for a long time with what he was going to do about Jesus and this healing demolished the last resistances of his heart and mind. He gave himself to the Lord and his process of sonship begun.

He has become a close brother and a close friend to me and he has been growing in stature ever since.

A few weeks ago a telephone call came as I was leaving the office at the end of a long day. '*I have to see you right now*'. When he came he had a smile that started from his right ear and finished on the left and one could almost see his heart dancing outside his chest! He was highly animated, adrenaline, by the buckets! Is he tripping again?!

*'You will not believe this, the three men I have been helping through the scriptures, they have come through and have asked me today for baptism!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Never in my life I thought I would experience such joy! How can God give to someone like me such big honour!'*

Amir has brought countless men to hear the gospel over the last two years and he and another colleague, one of his best friends and mentors, have been sharing the gospel with these three, (hard nuts), every Tuesday afternoon, for the last 8 months. And suddenly they were born!

These are the men Amir and the local pastor are baptising today.

*'Now I am a godfather'*, he says and his smile spreads beyond his ears!

Genealogies stop in the New Testament with the genealogy of our Lord Jesus.

From then on, a genealogy begins through those who God brings to birth through His Spirit and those who come to Him through them!

Amir revels in the fact that a new genealogy has begun with him.

How long a line will it be . . . . ?

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