



Pastor Hani Sayegh (Akko Israel) Evangelical Baptist Church of Akko

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And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

It has been a while and many things have happened since we wrote our last newsletter. But nothing stands out as clearly as seeing and experiencing the deaths of a few of our own. When a person goes through the death of a loved one or friend, almost always the question that comes to mind first is, why? At a time like that, is hard to reconcile the scripture verse seen above with our feelings and emotions that we are experiencing. Yet, God is good!

Let me take you back to a previous time when we wrote about an Arab husband and wife, Elias and Bushra. Almost two years ago this couple had come to a home group meeting with many questions. At the conclusion of the meeting they were asked if they would like to accept Jesus as their Savior. After tearfully praying with us, Elias and Bushra were radically transformed and grew to become on fire for the Lord. We wrote about how 25 of Elias's family members came to faith in Jesus through their powerful witness. We also wrote about some of the miracles they saw along the way.

In September Elias' life was cut short by a construction accident. Naturally, this was received with much sadness. However, God let it be known that there was an important point here that we were missing. God was not surprised by Elias's death. He knew a year and a half previously that this day would be coming. Nevertheless, by His grace He orchestrated the opportunity for Elias and Bushra to come to a newfound life in Christ. Elias, who would not have been before, is now in the presence of God.

Since that time Bushra has received much persecution from relatives. They want her to come back to the Greek Orthodox Church. But she has stood strong in her faith with the support of our church. Recently Bushra received a call during a church service. Usually she would not take calls at this time, but this time she felt led to answer it. It was from one of her relatives. She asked Bushra why God allowed Elias to die. Bushra, in the strength of the Lord, said that Elias gave his life to Jesus and if you ever want to have the opportunity to see him again you better give your heart to him also. Afterwards Bushra went on to visit her family. Because of her joy and strength in the Lord, 25 of her family members gave their hearts to the Lord.

Bassem and his wife Maha were atheists. Maha was a very effective woman in the community who was known by many people. However Maha had been suffering from cancer for 5 years. Pastor Hani, and his wife Faten, met with the family many times to speak about the Lord. One and a half months before Maha's death, she, Bassem and their daughter Rula accepted Jesus as their Savior. Even before her death Maha experienced many miracles and visitations by angels to ease her suffering. One time because of much pain in her back, she went to have x-rays of the affected area. This showed much fluid in a tumor on her back. At home she saw an angel and felt the angel put his hand on the tumor. Immediately after, she felt that the pain released. She went for a follow up x-ray to see what happened and to the amazement of the doctor, the fluid was gone.

In these two deaths the enemy has tried to draw away the faith of the believers in the church. There have been various struggles and difficulties along the way, but he has not succeeded. When a person begins to think about a friend dying, it brings him face to face with eternity. These thoughts tend to change and direct your life. This has only served to strengthen, encourage and unify the body. Jesus said it best in John 12:24-26, "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me."

May you be eternally blessed, strengthened and encouraged by these testimonies in Christ Jesus, amen.

PRAYER POINTS:

- Keep the families of the above testimonies and the church body in prayer.
- Importantly: A church in England that has been supporting our church will be discontinuing their support in less than a year. We are a small church and very much rely on outside support. Please pray that the Lord will raise up new support and that He will pour out blessings on the congregants, moving their hearts to tithe.
- Please keep before you in prayer what to do with the old church building, and bookstore and the school, church, and Tour company project before you.