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GOOD NEWS *Unlimited*

BEWARE THE LION

By Ron Allen

Most cultures, Christian or otherwise, accept Jesus Christ's dictum: "From everyone that has been given much, much will be demanded" (Luke 12:48). For example, we hear these days about religious professionals guilty of indecent dealings with children in their charge. Community outrage in these cases is more heated than when similar crimes are perpetrated by run-of-the-mill offenders. The 'man of religion' is usually better educated, has had improved opportunities of development in ethics and social responsibility, in matters of conscience and spirit, that the 'average Joe' has not had.

He may wish that his advantages were less than they had been, for now they will weigh against him. They will be used as a measure of his culpability and to gauge his punishment. The community that entrusted him with his honorable position will now turn on him with grim resolve. To him *much* was given; of him, *much* will be required.

In the history of God's doings in the world, it is clear that he has not made himself known to every person, tribe, or nation, at the same time, nor to the same degree. Instead, he elected persons or individual nations. Then, having showed himself, entrusted these fortunate ones with a part to play in telling all the others what they had learned.

Scripture informs us that it was Abraham's descendants, the children of Israel, that God revealed his name. The watershed episode in that process was his rescue of Israel from Egyptian slavery. Thereafter, the founding event for God's special relationship with Israel is the Exodus.

"You are the children of the Lord your God.... you are the people holy to the Lord your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession" (Deuteronomy 14:1, 2).

Similar language to this can be found throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. No less so in the book of Amos. The familiar refrain is taken up in chapter three: "You only have I chosen out of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2). But what comes next is not as comforting: "Therefore I will punish you for all your sins."

Note: A special bond with God is affirmed—but that same relationship marks out special guilt. The matter is so serious

that God is even pictured as a threat, an enemy of his people. "The Lord has spoken against you O people of Israel" (3:1). What follows then is astonishing. God is portrayed as a lion, and his people are his prey.



God is portrayed as a lion, and his people his prey... The lion has roared. Who will not fear? We are called by God's love to do important things...

has failed to live according to its privileges.

"They do not know how to do right, declares the Lord. They hoard, plunder and loot in their fortresses" (3:10).

"I will tear down the winter house and the summer house; the houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed and the mansions will be demolished" (3:15).

In the 1970's, Chile was a similarly dysfunctional society. A large pool of chronic poor had not been able to afford proper nutrition for generations. As a result, there was an underclass who were physically shorter in stature and lower in

Listen to this:
"Does a lion roar in the thicket when he has no prey? Does he growl in his den when he has caught nothing?... This is what the Lord says: As a shepherd saves from the lions mouth only two leg-bones or a piece of an ear, so will the Israelites be saved..." (Amos 3:12). God is a lion; Israel is his prey. How come this turn of events by which God who has been savior, patron and protector, is now a terror and a dread to his people?

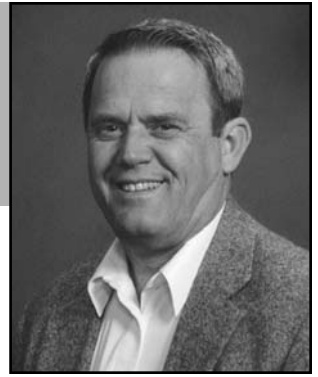
We are not left without answer. Israel

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EDITORIAL . . .



Pastor Ron Allen

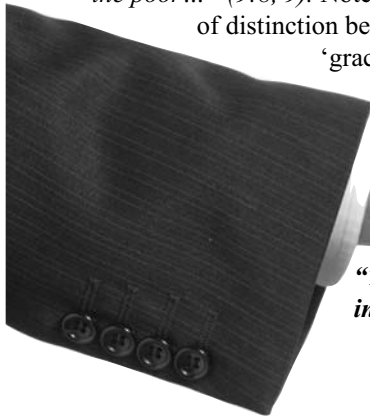
“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

This exclamation of gratitude and wonder comes at the close of an extended section of 1st Corinthians, beginning with the first verse of chapter eight. The apostle has been asking his Corinthian friends to participate in a collection for needy Christians in other places. He does not hesitate to cite the example of the Macedonians (8:1-4), who displayed remarkable charity, even from within their own poverty. This Macedonian phenomenon is called “the grace given by God” (8:1), and the invitation is extended to the Corinthians to also excel in “this grace of giving” (8:7).

What the ‘grace’ of giving entails is apparent from chapter nine, where Paul speaks of a cheerful and eager generosity—“not grudgingly given” (9:5); “not reluctantly or under compulsion” (9:7).

This avid, joyous, and unstinting inclination to share has its source in God. He is “able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things and at all times, having all that you need.... He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor...” (9:8, 9). Note the absence

of distinction between ‘grace’ as



“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift.”

God’s generosity to humans, and ‘grace’ as the same generous spirit exercised by them—itsself seen as God’s gift (8:1, 7).

Paul thinks of the cosmos as saturated by the kindly disposition of God—grace, definitively expressed in Jesus. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich” (8:9). Not rich as in having lots of money, but rich in grace; rich in becoming gracious like God. Hence: “So that having all that you need you will abound in every good work” (9:8). “You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion” (9:11).

That men and women begin to share the benevolent Spirit of their creator; that the divine goodness which “scatters abroad its gifts to the poor” be reproduced in them—is the goal of the gospel. “Men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ” (9:13).

What a tragedy if we should hinder the momentum of God’s gracious intention.

God’s free mercy streameth over all the world, and his banner gleameth, by his church unfurled. Broad and deep and glorious, as the heaven above, shines in might victorious, his eternal love.

-William H. How.

Gratitude! Gratitude expressed by emulating the love of God. That is the only reasonable way to live; the only way to live forever.



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Good News Unlimited magazine also seeks to keep readers up-to-date on all aspects of GNU’s ministries. This includes news on national and international radio broadcasts; public seminars, congresses, and Bible schools within the USA (as well as

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intelligence. The Allende government was struggling to rectify this imbalance in access to basic services and resources, but found itself under immense pressure from enemies of change, within and without the country. Food shortages began.

The government had acted to ensure that poor folk had access to beef, because it has usually been available only to the wealthy. When the food shortages started to bite, thousands of middle-class housewives took to the streets with saucepans and spoons. They banged their empty saucepans, protesting that they were unable to get beef to eat every night. The reason why there was not beef every day for these middle-class women was that the government had acted to make it possible for other people to buy it as well as them—poor people.

The relatively well-off saucepan brigade were still able to purchase chicken or mutton, but they did not accept that it was better for *all* to eat beef one or two days a week, than for a small group to eat it every night while others had none.

So convinced were these women of their right to live at a standard to which they had become accustomed—even if it meant that some starved—that they welcomed the onset of a military coup and the violence against the poor that followed it.

These scenes from a deformed South American society in the 1970's and 80's illustrate Israel of the 8th century B.C. Well-heeled groups in Samaria made sure of their comfortable lifestyle by driving large numbers of their fellow citizens into conditions in which they suffered restrictions, penalties, humiliations, injustices; where they had no prospects and no hope.

Now, Israel, the beneficiary of God's largesse, knows things about God that others have not the privilege to know. Israel knows that God is the underdog's champion, the helper of those not strong enough in a brutal and indifferent world. Israel knows how God likes to side with the broken and dispossessed; that he is the advocate of those who have no voice. Once herself forgotten, a reviled and vermin race in the eyes of the mighty, Israel was rescued, redeemed, valued, and loved by God. Yet, how little there is in Israel's life to indicate a thankful recollection of those events.

God is so vexed by this sorry state of affairs that he does something quite unexpected. He calls on nations that have not had the privileges of his sponsorship like Israel has, to join him in condemning them. *"Proclaim to the fortresses of Ashdod and the fortresses of Egypt. Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria; see the great unrest within her and the oppression among her people" (Amos 3:9).*

Two of Israel's ancient enemies are invited to participate in her shaming: Egypt, the arch-persecutor, and Philistia, a serial thorn in Israel's flesh. Nations from outside the sphere of the covenant are called on to judge those within it. Literally: *"Come and look at what is happening in Samaria; see the oppression; see the injury wrought through violation of human rights; they hoard they plunder, they loot..." (3:10).*

Behaviors that desecrate God's image in human life—the failure of mutual regard, distortions in relationships by reason

of greed, the incalculable damage done through the normalization of privilege and disproportionate want—in other words: all that God stood against when he overturned Pharaoh; all these evils are now mainstreamed in the society of the redeemed. Now God appeals to 'graceless' Gentiles to pass judgment.

Sheila Cassidy was a British doctor working in Chile in the 1970s when the Allende government was overthrown. A fascist dictatorship followed and after helping a wounded man, Sheila was arrested, imprisoned, and tortured by the secret police. She writes about her imprisonment with resistance fighters in that country:

I found myself in a paradoxical situation, for I witnessed a day-to-day living of the Christian message of love, sharing, and sacrifice, by people whose preferred ideology was opposed to Christianity.... The revolutionaries were motivated by deep, loving care for their fellows. They obeyed more instinctively than any Christian I knew, the most devastating of Christ's

commandments: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.



Sheila Cassidy was a British doctor working in Chile in the 1970s

More than anyone, Christians have reason to care about what happens in their world, their nation, their city. More than anyone, Christians have reason to be interested in social issues, in how people live. More than anyone, Christians have reason to disavow isolationism; to reject the attitude that says; 'it has nothing to

do with me, it's not my job to shelter every stranger, to eliminate abuse and prejudice.' More than anyone, Christians have reason to value every soul, to feel the burden of the weary and heavy laden. More than anyone, Christians have reason not to be mere defenders of the status quo. More than all others, Christians have reason to cry out against the legitimization of violence in every sphere of life.

Why? Why should Christians care about their fellow man more than others? It is because, having met Christ, they know things about God of which others are yet ignorant. They know the high worth conferred on them by a God willing to give his one and only Son for them; to suffer for them.

Christians know something of the God who looks out for those least able to take care of themselves. They are learning that God's love is the greatest thing in the world. They know they are grasped by it; kept by it forever; that nothing can separate them from it—not even death. Girded by this love they know that whatever expenditures love may involve them in, they will never be emptied, never be bereft. More than anyone, Christians have reason to give, to share, to bear, to commit to others, because to emulate God is to cause love to multiply.

The lion has roared. Who will not fear? We are called by God's love to do important things; to answer challenges that he has not laid before others. Much has been given. Much is expected.



M.A.N.N.A. UPDATE

With the recent attention of the Sacramento, California area and Tent City, many people have been asking about Good News Unlimited's homeless ministry, M.A.N.N.A. Outreach. We wanted to give you, the reader, a first-hand update of our outreach ministry and our recent encounters.

Recently, we have been encountered with more demand than ever. What used to be a few tents has been replaced by what seems to be endless tents. In the past, a normal M.A.N.N.A. night would consist of searching for the homeless camps alongside the American River. We would walk for miles and miles until we completely emptied our backpacks of food and other necessities. We want to show people that Jesus cares about them so much that he would send us to find them and meet their needs.



Last Friday, we made it about 200 feet before being emptied by the many hands reaching out in need and desperation. In the past, the people we encountered have had many issues that either entailed mental disorders or addictions. In the past, these scenarios could be provided with aid as we referred people into discipleship and recovery programs. This dynamic has changed. Now, those that we encounter do not have addictions or special needs that provide a facility for help. Now, the new issue is they no longer have incomes. "The least of these" has become our everyday neighbor. In the Sacramento area, this has become a predicament, especially considering the fact that all housing assistant programs and financial service aids have waiting lists that far exceed the hundreds that are already in need.

Even with the overwhelming amount of hurt we see, God has still allowed us to witness his glorious work. Not too long before receiving all the attention from the media, we met an eighteen-year-old. He was homeless, empty and broken.



Earlier that year, his father and sister were going on a mission and tragically died in a car accident. He was left with no family and no direction. He asked where we were from and we explained our ministry with Good News Unlimited. He asked, "Isn't that with Des Ford?" He told us that his parents listened to Desmond Ford when he was growing up. That night, we stopped what we were doing in feeding the homeless and rescued this man from the road he was going down. He walked away from his bike, his belongings and his friends and said, "I'm getting out of here!" We took him to a year-long recovery home that night. A month later, we heard that he was doing great and fully committed to the discipleship program. In instances like this, it makes every Friday night worth it, especially in those nights where it seems like we haven't done much at all to make a dent in the homelessness that surrounds us.



Now, we'd like to share with you the ways in which you can get actively involved with M.A.N.N.A. Outreach. We realize that while not everybody lives in an area that is suffering these hard conditions, nor is everyone in a physical condition where they can hike out to feed the homeless, but everyone is in the condition where they can pray for Good News Unlimited and M.A.N.N.A. Outreach daily. Pray for our leadership, pray for our provisions, and pray for the souls to be saved and the deliverance of hardships that so many are going through. With your financial support, you directly control what we can bring out and what we can't. Your finances go toward buying food, sleeping bags, bibles, hygiene products and many more needed provisions, along with the hosting of those who are in desperate need of discipleship. If you support M.A.N.N.A. with the finances for us to buy somebody water and a blanket, the Lord is constantly supplying the volunteers to hike the items out and reach the people who are in need. Together, we can help change lives by showing His promises are true, and that His love and grace is forever unchanging and alive! We thank our faithful supporters of M.A.N.N.A. Outreach and share this story with you so that you can know you were part of the solution. 