

UNLIMITED

NEWSLETTER

FREEDOM FROM FEAR

I have seen the world descend into fear during the last twelve months. As our societies have become more afraid, they have become more polarised in terms of political views, social issues, and all the prejudices that people use to divide us from one another. That's what fear does: it polarises us, demonising others so that we retreat into our separate camps.

The funny thing is that all sides blame the others for being fearful: of health measures, the government, of misinformation, or losing freedoms. Most people are fearful, and if you think you're not, you're probably in denial. Fear is the most prevalent epidemic in the world today.

If we're honest about these things, then we need to put all this in the context of the very tangible fears that people have in the face of the devastation and loss of war. For many today, these aren't just fears, but reality.

What is the antidote to the pandemic of fear? Jesus said, ... *don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom* (Luke 12:32, NLT.)

The assurance that we possess the kingdom of God, received as the gracious gift of our delighted heavenly Father, overwhelms all fear. That's referring to your assurance of salvation. That's all about the Gospel.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7).

Instead, he has given us the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22).

It might be time to do a "fear-check" on your life. Are you living with one foot in the kingdom of God and one foot in the kingdom of fear?

While we are all afraid at times, don't buy into the world's fear. Don't allow it to dominate your thinking, for through his blood, Christ has bought for you a grand entrance into the glories of eternal life. There, all things will be restored and all things will be yours (Joel 2:25-26; 1 Corinthians 3:21.)

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

The Antidote to Fear

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GROW IN GRACE: The Book of Romans, Part 6

Romans is a book about faith, hope, love, and the Cross.

Romans and Revivals

Since the days of Christ, these men we have mentioned have changed the world. Paul, Augustine, Luther, Calvin and Wesley were great men who were transformed by Romans. F.F. Bruce was right when he said, "Be careful when you read Romans. Anything can happen." All the great revivals in the Christian world have been triggered by this book.

Romans was responsible for the revival in America under Johathan Edwards. For the revival under Wesley in England. And that of George Whitefield in America and England. And Luther in Germany. All great and true Christian revivals are begun by this book.

Tread carefully when you study it. Anything can happen.

Law and Motivation

Romans tells us the truth about God. It tells us the truth about religion. It tells us the truth about how to live. These things we must know.

But Romans will also motivate us.

You see, we're all conscious of law. You don't have to have someone read the Ten Commandments. Everybody has convictions of right and wrong, whether in church or out of church.

However, law cannot muzzle desire. Law is helpless and hopeless to restrain us from evil. The only motive in the world that will keep me from sin is the knowledge that God is mine and I am his.

No commandment will keep me from sin. No law will keep me from sin. No creed can do it. Not even fear of my brethren can do it—and that's a very potent fear, because we want to be accepted.

The **only** motive that can keep me straight is the knowledge that God is mine and I am his. That's the essence.

Faith—Not Sectarianism

Romans is a book about faith, hope, love, and the Cross. It says nothing about sectarian shibboleths.

You won't find any fierce debate here about the nature of the Lord's Supper. Romans takes baptism by immersion for granted, but it doesn't try to polemicise on the matter. When it talks about the keeping of days, it makes it quite clear that the question of days is not nearly as important as faith in Jesus Christ.

Faith—the Key Word of Romans

That's the key word of Romans: faith. You find it 64 times throughout the book. You find it in the very first chapter, verse five: "The obedience of faith." And it's the last word of the book before the doxology, the same phrase: "the obedience of faith."

Life would be very different if Paul had written it the other way—the faith of obedience. That would be dreadful. But he wrote, at the beginning and the end, "the obedience of faith." It's as if he's saying, "only that which is done because of your faith in Jesus Christ is acceptable to God. Nothing else. Everything else done before faith in Christ is simply a sin. It falls short because it doesn't have that which stamps it as authentic—faith in Christ."

The only obedience God will accept is that which grows out of faith in Jesus Christ. It's wonderful that Romans should finish with that word 'faith'.

▼ DES FORD

To be continued: This series of articles on the Book of Romans was first published in 1995, and is being reproduced serially in Unlimited.

"I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU FED ME."

The ordinary people of Ukraine and Russia need the Gospel message of God's love and care.

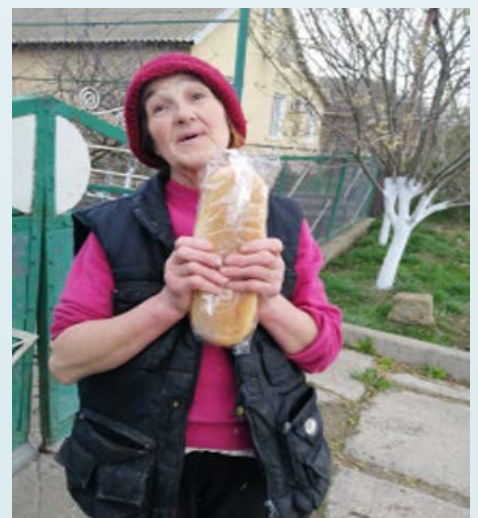
Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, GNU has been specifically bringing Gospel comfort to the people of Ukraine. In fact, we have reached 117,950 people with Gospel messages. We would do the same for Russia, but the digital platforms we could use have been blocked since the start of the war.

Some people might consider that this is not a "real" help or that this is not enough. My response is that sharing the hope of Jesus and eternal life is the most important task of all.

Of course, in the teachings of Jesus, sharing the kingdom of God does not happen as a theory alone, but in the practical outworking of merciful and compassionate hearts. As a result, hand in hand with bringing Gospel comfort to Ukraine, GNU has also been collecting and forwarding money to help meet the humanitarian needs of refugees and those sheltering in the cities as a result of the war in Ukraine.

On the next page, you can read a report from one of our friends on the ground in Ukraine.

▼ ELIEZER GONZALEZ



Bread is a precious commodity for many desperate people in war-torn Ukraine.

LETTER FROM UKRAINE

Hi Eliezer

It's time to report on the use of your donation. Once again, I want to thank you for the help. It is, first of all, a show of compassion and care for us, which is no less important than material assistance itself at this difficult time for Ukrainians.

From the first days of the war, the needs of people affected by the war had several directions: evacuation, shelter, food and hygiene, medications.

At the beginning of the war, temporary shelters were extremely important because people could stop and spend the night there on the way to Western Ukraine and abroad. It was necessary, especially because movement was difficult due to traffic jams and lack of fuel. The goal was to have at least mattresses and blankets, and of course food available. In time, we also installed additional bathrooms, washing machines, boilers, kettles, etc., as we could.

Many of these shelters also needed to serve as bomb shelters (usually the basements of the same building). Stocks of food and water were formed in these basements. Over time, the shelters also became a place of humanitarian distribution to migrants (who settled in private settlements) and a place to help the local population, who found themselves in difficult circumstances due to job loss, damage to housing, infrastructure (heat, electricity, water), and much more.

Evacuation stories are most touching when you hear stories like the just operated person who had to be evacuated. The trip was rough and the seams diverged during the journey, and the patient suffered a dangerous open wound.

Twenty people squeeze into a car with eight places; drivers re-equip cargo trucks; the traffic is so slow on the congested roads that children are surprised that it's safe to get off the van and take a walk. Some people managed to get 10 litres of gasoline for \$100 to get from Berdyansk to Zaporozhye.

Employees of the Ukrainian Humanitarian Institute in Bucha had to spend several weeks in the basement of

their building, hiding first from the bombs and then from the occupiers. They were finally able to get out, but had nothing left. We were able to provide them with some money for food so they could survive.

This letter is filled with so much pain. Not everything we experienced is included in here. I do not want to describe everything, but I will write some things that we learned and happened to us while living in the war.

We have had to learn to sleep surrounded by the sounds of war: bombs and shooting; the cries of the wounded and dying; the wimpers of hungry, frightened children.

We have experienced the chill of an unheated apartment during freezing temperatures, knowing that we cannot afford to get sick.

Looting is a regular part of life. But what is looting? Is it OK to take food from a bombed-out store when it is the only way to survive?

We have learned to wear white headbands at all times, so the occupiers will recognise us as civilians and not shoot us. We have also learned that we must open the door immediately, otherwise we are in danger of being shot.

We need to learn where shots are coming from, to identify what plane is flying over us, when to run for the basement; who are the saboteurs, whom to trust, and how to manage when no one can be trusted.

We know what it is like to leave your city under rocket explosions and shootings of the invaders. We have experienced what it is like to leave your home, knowing that you may never see it again.

How to live on? It is a million dollar questions because when we were evacuated, we came to a completely different world, where people are clean, full, have a place to live and their only fear is a siren at night.

Once again, thank you so very much for caring about us!

▶ **"V.G.", ON THE GROUND IN UKRAINE**

my gift to spread the comfort of the Gospel

Eliezer, I want to give a gift so those who desperately need comfort in the midst of trouble and conflict can know the peace and love of Jesus.

Enclosed is my gift of \$ _____

Where there is
hatred, let me
sow love.

▶ Francis of Assisi

Please follow the instructions on the reverse, cut along the perforation, and return this slip to GNU in the enclosed reply-paid envelope.



From Eliezer TO YOU

Dear Friend

I thank the Lord that I've been spared the clinical depression that runs in my family. But that doesn't mean that I have been able to respond to the anxieties and fears of life in the right way. I've tended to respond with negative thinking, using controlling behaviours, and by internalising my fears rather than dealing with them properly.

Part of the reason why I haven't dealt well with the anxieties and stresses of life is because I was brought up to believe that a Christian should always be positive and cheerful. If you fell into depression, then you just needed to read the Bible and pray more. Mental health issues were implicitly considered to be an indication of little faith. Just believe more, and everything will be fine.

But that's not reality. Those archaic and judgemental attitudes heap condemnation on those who are suffering. How Jesus must weep! There are always reasons why you feel the way you do, and it's not your fault.

In this newsletter, we have been dealing with fear. In Australia, over 12% of the population lives with anxiety or depression, and the percentage is similar in Christian churches. (The perfectionism that I grew up with and which is overtly or covertly rampant in many Christian groups has a lot to answer for.)

If you are one of these people, may I suggest that you reach out to a trusted friend and talk about it. Let them help you make a plan to get better. You may need to see a counsellor or a doctor. There are some great professional Christian counsellors! If you don't have anyone to talk to, Lifeline is just wherever your phone is: 13 11 14.

I encourage you to start your journey of healing, and to rediscover the joy of the kingdom of God.

And if you are one of the fortunate ones, think about who in your circle of friends needs you to stand alongside them patiently, and gently encourage them.

Grace and Peace

YOUR INVITATION TO JOIN OUR GNU INNER CIRCLE ROOM

The GNU Inner Circle is an exclusive online group for financial donors to Good News Unlimited. It provides you the opportunity to interact with the leadership of GNU every Friday, to receive announcements about the progress of the Gospel through GNU, and to post encouragement to spur us on to do great deeds for Christ!

GNU Inner Circle is a private group, so you can be confident your privacy is always protected. Only members can see who is in the group and what they post.

You can ask questions and join the discussion, which is exclusively about GNU's ministry. Naturally, we don't permit any comments that are judgemental or degrading; we specialise in 'love speech', not hate speech, even when we have a difference of opinion.

Our Inner Circle has been operating for close to two years, helping our members to feel closely involved with our work to spread the Gospel.



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