

# UNLIMITED

## NEWSLETTER

# FEAST



When I was growing up I heard a lot about the love of God. Still, the version of religion that shaped me in those early years was one of a God who was predominantly sombre, judgmental, and harsh.

That's why it's been such a revelation for me to discover that there is so much partying that goes on in heaven!

You know all those stories of Jesus that typically start off with, "The kingdom of heaven is like..."? Have you noticed how many of them end in a party? I know we can use words like "banquet" and "feast," because somehow they sound more "serious" and appropriately "biblical," but these were basically just parties.

The people in Jesus' culture certainly knew how to throw a party. For example, a wedding celebration could go on for seven days. Do you really think they just sat around for seven days, eating politely and saying wise things to one another? Of course not! They ate and drank, they made music and danced, they made a lot of noise, and there was a lot of laughter. If you've ever been to a middle eastern celebration, you might start to get an idea of what it must have been like.

This was precisely the idea that Jesus evoked in his parables. In Luke 15, for example, there are three parables of lost "things": a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. Each of these parables ends with a celebration. Many of the parables end like this. Then, of course, we have the various parables specifically about parties: the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Luke 14) and of the Parable of the Great Banquet (Matthew 22).

In the book of Revelation, when John tries to explain what heaven will be like, he tells us that it will be like a wedding banquet:

*the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready (Revelation 19:7).*

We know that life this side of eternity isn't a "picnic," let alone one big party! However, we can actually live in the joy of heaven right now. We can have complete joy! Jesus said,

*(continued on Page 4)*

## Celebrate Salvation!

### IN THIS ISSUE...

- Celebrate Salvation – Eliezer Gonzalez 01
- Grow in Grace: The Book of Romans, Part 7 – Des Ford 02
- A Second Life in Jesus 02
- GNU Activities Update 03
- From Eliezer to You 04



# GROW IN GRACE: The Book of Romans, Part 7

*Romans is a book about true religion.*

## A Circular Letter

Many ancient manuscripts of Romans don't have chapter 16—because it's a list of names. Probably what happened early on was that an edition of Romans without chapter 16 was circulated among the churches. The chapter omitted has the names of the Christians in Rome who Paul knew, so it was probably assumed to be only of local interest.

Still, it's a chapter with many beautiful statements. Paul greets Priscilla and Aquila, who risked their lives for him (15:3-4). Paul speaks tenderly of Rufus and his mother, "who has been a mother to me" (15:13).

A circular letter among the churches would be the only Bible some early Christians had. They recognised that Romans contained the sum and substance of Christianity. They had oral traditions about Jesus, and these were circulated widely. But Romans was the only **written** Bible some people had.

That's why so many manuscripts of Romans bring it to a conclusion without chapter 16, because it went to all the churches.

## Only Two Religions

Romans is a book about true religion, majoring in the majors. It's a book that tells the truth in such a way as to warn us against its opposite.

There are only two religions in the world. The Bible refers to them symbolically as the religion of Jerusalem and the religion of Babylon. These are mentioned in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, and they're mentioned in the last book, Revelation. They are mentioned in a middle book, Daniel, also.

One religion is the religion of good views. That's **not** the Christian religion, though many Christians practise it. The other is the religion of good news.

There's a big difference between good views and good news.

## Good News, Good Views

The false religion of good views centres on humanity. The true religion of good news centres on God. The false religion looks at human activities, human achievements; but true religion looks at the Cross.

False religion makes Christ first of all our Example. That's a miserable teaching. It would depress any of us who are honest. You cannot compare yourself with Christ without feeling very far gone.

True religion looks upon him as a Substitute. "Jesus was my substitute on Calvary, and he's my substitute in the last great day." None of us can get through the judgement without that Substitute.

Bobby Burns said, "My life isn't what it should be." He said, "It's not even what it could be." He spoke for all of us. Our life isn't what it should be. Our life isn't what it could be, or what we would have it be.

But we have a substitute in the judgement. That's Christ

## ▼ 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.*

## A SECOND LIFE IN JESUS

### Badly injured in a road accident, Ratnam has the joy of being twice saved by Jesus.

Ratnam lives in Hindupalli, India, with her husband. They are the poorest of the poor, living in a tiny hut on the bank of the river and catching rats, snakes, frogs and fish to survive.

Early one morning while walking to a neighbouring village, Ratnam was badly injured in a hit-and-run accident. Her leg was broken in several places; she was covered in blood and she lay on the road unconscious. Her husband initially thought she had been killed instantly, but on realising she was still alive, put her on his shoulder and carried her back to their hut.

Eventually, Ratnam was taken to hospital. She was so badly injured that her neighbours did not expect she would survive.

Pastor Joseph had recently met Ratnam and had shared the Gospel with her and her family. When he heard about the accident, he went straight to the hospital to pray over her and share more of the Gospel and the news of Jesus' love with her. Lying in her hospital bed, Ratnam believed that only Jesus could save her. She began praying.

Gradually she healed, and eventually was able to go home to complete her convalescence. Her joy is doubled as she realises that her life has been saved twice. Jesus has given her a 'second life' now, but most importantly, she also has the certainty of his love and salvation and can look forward to eternal life in him.



*Ratnam is doubly grateful to Jesus for saving her.*

## GNU SPIRITUAL RETREAT 2022

It's great when like-minded friends get together! That's exactly what we're planning to do when we get together for the GNU spiritual retreat planned for the weekend of 4–6 November. The theme for this weekend will be "Understanding the Bible." We're aiming for lots of learning, discussion, and a deepening of our relationship with God.

Our chosen venue is at Mount Tamborine, in southeast Queensland. This is where we enjoyed the last Spiritual Retreat, before Covid came and disrupted our lives.

GNU is a far-flung family, and I know that some of us don't travel very far these days. However, if you can come, we'd love to see you!

Please book early since places will be limited! The reason is that if we book a big place, then we end up having to pay for a big place, even if we can't fill it.

You should have received your invitation in the mail. To indicate your interest in attending, please complete and return the slip that came with your invitation. If you haven't yet received your invitation, or if you have any questions, please contact Eliezer on 0413 473 043.

## FRIDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY

Did you know that you can join us to study the Bible together every Friday night?

It's held every Friday at 7.00 pm AEST (Brisbane time). *(Note: there will be no sessions scheduled between mid-September and mid-October, 2022).*

Eliezer conducts the Bible study live on Zoom, and it is simultaneously broadcast to the Facebook Group called the "GNU Discipleship Room." You can join on Zoom with or without your camera, and interact; alternatively, you can watch it live on Facebook, or the recorded version afterwards.

We currently have around 80 people watching it every week, although apparently there are only a few of us who are brave enough to jump on Zoom for the live Bible study!

We're currently studying through the deep truths and powerful teachings of the Gospel of John.

To join in the Bible Study, or to view it, you need to be a member of the Facebook group, the "GNU Discipleship Room."

Go to this link, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/GNUDiscipleship> and come along and join us! We'd love to have you with us!

### "I believe God is going to open doors here in the Solomon Islands"

We are delighted to welcome Pastor Jeremiah in the Solomon Islands to the GNU family. He's a member of the South Sea Evangelical Church (SECC), has formerly served as the church's National Mission Coordinator, and as a lecturer at an Interdenominational Bible College in Honiara. He is currently serving as an itinerant preacher and teacher of the Word of God in SECC and other churches. He reached out to GNU after meeting Eliezer online at a GO Movement Zoom Prayer Meeting.

Pr Jeremiah is excited to be able to access GNU Gospel material and use it to share the Gospel with people across the Solomon Islands. God is already touching the lives of

many people through Pr Jeremiah's ministry, and we look forward to working together to share the Gospel.

There are many people across the Solomon Islands who can't read, and the videos in their own language form a powerful means of reaching them with the Gospel.

Pr Jeremiah has already received testimonies from people who have been blessed by GNU's Gospel material. Lloyd Dauara Jr is a young man who has just completed GNU's free online course on Becoming a Follower of Jesus. He is now encouraging other young people to complete the course to help them grow in their spiritual life.

## my gift to help spread the invitation to celebrate with Jesus in his kingdom

Eliezer, I want to give a gift to help share the celebration of Jesus' salvation with the world.

Enclosed is my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

There will be  
joy in heaven...

▶ Luke 15:7

*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

In May, when I sent you the last newsletter, I alerted you to the fact that the cupboard was starting to look bare in terms of our finances. You responded magnificently around April and May, and we had a couple of really good months.

Since then, however, the result for our June EOFY was very poor (we didn't even cover our expenses for that month.) This was a significant blow because this should have been one of our key appeals for raising ministry funds to continue our work for the year. Then donations for July were very low as well. Talk about feast and famine!

I feel like it shouldn't be this way. But it is. And I understand why. It's because we live in a world in which we struggle with most things. We struggle with our relationships, we struggle with our health, and we struggle to make ends meet. Some of these issues become more of a struggle the older we get. I actually find myself regularly asking people not to give to GNU, when I know that they are having these kinds of struggles. We have such generous supporters that I sometimes have to urge them to take care of their own personal needs first.

I am by nature a stressor. I often worry too much and trust too little. However, I can echo the words of the prophet Samuel, *Thus far the LORD has helped us* (1 Samuel 7:12).

As Jehovah-Jireh, he continues to provide, and as he provides, GNU is able to continue reaching people from every nation on earth with the best news ever!

I hope that you will continue to acknowledge the Lord as your provider also.

Grace and Peace

## THE PROMISE OF CELEBRATION IN THE KINGDOM OF JESUS

*I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete* (John 15:11).

It is possible when we remain in Christ's love (John 15:10). This means that we are to remain receptive to the love that God has poured out upon us at the Cross, and committed to loving others fully and freely (vv.9-13).

The former gives us the reason, and the latter gives us our mission. After all, it's no fun partying alone! That's how you can help share a little bit of heaven right here on earth.

I'll see you at the table!

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**



## My gift to help spread the Good News fast

I would like to give my gift by:

Credit Card (Please indicate card type)  Visa  Mastercard  Amex

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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Direct Deposit: Acc Name: Good News Unlimited Ltd BSB: 032-278 Acct Number: 651816  
Ref: Initial, Surname, & 'Donation' Swift Code: WPACAU2S (for international transfers)

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