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Confirming the Churches

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Dear co-laborers for Christ,

It is my great pleasure to give you a happy report on the India mission, my in-person part of which was concluded just three days ago as I write this.

September 2. Brother Jeff Slag of the Saline church helped me to weigh my luggage, and drove me to the Detroit airport for my 4:30 PM flight to Frankfurt, Germany. *Lufthansa* is one of my preferred airlines, and their service on this entire trip was exemplary of what an airline should be.

September 3. Arrival was on time at 6:25 AM. I was pleasantly surprised to see that the interior remodeling construction that has plagued passengers for a half-dozen years is now complete with beautiful results. I had a bout a mile of walking, with several level changes, but the traffic now flows smoothly through clean wide corridors. During my 4-hour layover I was able to work on the editing of the translations book that has been in the works for about a year. The flight to Chennai, India was from 11:00 AM in Frankfurt to midnight in Chennai. I slept for a good portion of that flight, and woke up refreshed enough to work on some of the lessons I had prepared for the churches. A thunderstorm closed the Chennai airport just before our arrival, and we had to circle for about half an hour, but the landing was smooth – to the great relief of most passengers, who applauded the captain on touchdown.

September 4. The 7-hour layover in Chennai was expected to be the hardest part of this mission, but I was able to spend over an hour studying with a woman who had taken a seat next to me, and began to read her Bible. That's not often seen in India's airports, but she was reading the same book I was: Jeremiah. That started the conversation, and we ended it by exchanging e-mail addresses for future correspondence. The short flight to Hyderabad ended at 8:40 AM, and there was N. Suvarna Prasad to meet me. He is the son of N. Vijaya Rao, the local preacher in Ibrahimpatnam, and was to be my translator for most of the mission. We had breakfast together in the airport, then drove the four hours to my hotel in Vijayawada. Prasad and I had lunch in my room, then (after a shower and a much-needed shave) I rested for about an hour and a half until the rest of our traveling team arrived. Brother Vijaya Rao and his brother, N. K. Y. Das and I discussed the plan for the weekend lectureship and the travels for the following week. At 6:00 I was in the home of brother G. David to meet and pray with the family, then we went to the Vijayawada church building where he preaches. 59 souls attended as I preached "God Didn't Send Hananiah" (a lesson about rejecting false teaching).

September 5. At 10:30 in Ibrahimpatnam with 304 present I preached "Why Does the Church Exist." Afterward I distributed 1 each of 4 tracts to 63 preachers and several ladies' class teachers. At 1:30 I met with 15 Muslim ladies who have been asking questions of brother Vijaya Rao. This was, as you might imagine, a secret meeting – out of public view and unannounced to protect their safety. I spoke from Psalm 19, with reference to their own observations on the universe, to show evidence of the truth of the Bible. After lunch there was a 3:00 youth meeting. I preached "One Heart and One Way" from Jeremiah 32 to help the youth understand the uniqueness of the Bible and faith in Jesus Christ. For a 7:00 meeting we drove a very bad dirt road 5 miles to a secluded settlement called Riverside. There I preached, by request, on sacrifice, contrasting the Old Testament with the New Testament on the subject. Brother D. Kishore Babu had gathered 47 for this meeting. Two men were baptized in the river backwater by flashlight.



September 6. At the 10:30 assembly of the lectureship 346 people attended, including many of the Ibrahimpatnam church, preachers from around the state, and many neighbors. As it was the anniversary of the death of the preacher's father, brother N. Prasad Rao, who planted the church on this same date three decades earlier, I was asked to preach on the subject of death. Thirty-three people were baptized after this meeting, several of them thanking me for clarifying a dark subject. Today we also distributed new saris (dresses) to the widows. These were purchased with your contributions to Chris Parr Home for Orphans and Widows. Also, the orphans received your donated clothing. A preachers meeting was convened at 3:00, during which I preached one of my favorite lessons for preachers: "Fire in His Mouth" from Jeremiah 5:14. 108 attended. After the lesson I distributed to those from out of the area a small amount to help with their

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travel expenses. At 6:00 we had an outdoor meeting in an immigrant camp near a rock quarry in the forest at the foot of a mountain about 5 miles outside the city. People from Orissa state had come here for the jobs in the quarry and were living in makeshift shelters, most having only 3 walls and a roof. Brothers S. Sathym Babu and J. Hari Babu work here together, sharing a bicycle or walking when they can't afford the public transportation (which is most of the time) that comes only half-way to the camp. (You'll read more about these men later in this report.) At 8:00 were in the tribal area town of Gangeni where brother N. Vijaya Rao has been helping brother Samson in a slow and difficult work. I preached under a thatched roof (no side walls) on the subject of holiness from I Peter chapter 1. Five souls were baptized into Christ after this meeting.



September 7. In the 10:30 worship assembly of the Ibrahimpatnam church I preached on the book of Job. Many of the 342 assembled expressed their appreciation for help in understanding this sometimes confusing book. At a 1:00 Ladies' Bible Class I preached on "Women Who Worked With Jesus." Following the assembly we distributed the rice you purchased for the widows. After lunch in the home of Vijaya Rao's family – his wife N. Rajeswari is an excellent hostess, and prepared many satisfying and tasty meals for me during this mission – we drove out to a 4:30 meeting in Jaggayyapet, where brother Y. Krupa Rao preaches. The church usually has only an 11:00 assembly on Sunday, but had taken lunch

together and 61 had stayed to meet us. After I preached "Confirming the Churches" from Acts 14-16 one soul was baptized into Christ. At 7:30 we were in Chimmirala in the new state of Telangana. Brother K. Satyam Babu had gathered 68 souls to an outdoor location where I preached again the lesson from the book of Job. The light was poor here; Prasad held my flashlight on my Bible while he translated the lesson. One soul was baptized.

September 8. We were about an hour late for a scheduled 11:00 meeting with the church in Chevendra. Nevertheless, brother A. Neerikshana Rao and 60 others had waited patiently. I preached "Blessings of Redemption" from Ephesians 1, a sermon I have preached maybe 50 times all over the world since 1974 (a marvelously encouraging chapter is Ephesians 1). N.K.Y. Das said that he has preached the same lesson many times. Two were baptized here. At 3:00 we were in Gudivada, where brother Sanjay preaches. 23 were present as I preached "Why Does the Church Exist?" We were in a small block building with a low ceiling. As Prasad and I stood to preach we were in the rising heat. Both of us were concerned about being able to finish the lesson, but we did. 7:30 found us in the Dollas Nagar section of Vijayawada, where brother S. Ruben preaches. 52 were present as I preached "Dear Children" from Ephesians 5. We later learned that 3 were baptized as a result of this meeting.

September 9. We arrived in Mangalagiri for an 11:30 meeting with 40 souls crammed into a block building about 9 feet by 9 feet. Ten more stood around the door and window to hear from outside. After I preached "One Heart and One Way" nine souls were baptized into Christ. We were able to add a previously unscheduled meeting in Kamepalli at 3:30. Brother B. Swarna Raju, who preaches here, has been a Facebook friend of mine for over a year. It was a pleasure to see his work in person. He is well-respected in the town – many neighbors turned out to greet me. The church was able last year to begin construction of a permanent building, but didn't have the continued support to finish it. 120 people crammed under and around a thatched roof "prayer shed" (no side walls). I preached here "Saved to Serve" from Ephesians 2 (very practical lessons in Ephesians), and 4 were baptized in a canal while three water buffaloes watched curiously as they lazily bathed a few yards downstream. After the very long drive back to the city I was too tired to go to the house for supper; I went to the hotel, snacked in my room, and went to bed early, as I had to get up early.



September 10. I awoke at 3:30 for a 4:00 AM meeting with my very good friend T. V. Samson Raj. He travels these hours often, as I have learned in working with him over the years. We talked until 6:00 about the current political situation in India, and how it may affect the work of the church (strict Hindus are now in the majority in the government, and on a local level they often try to disrupt the preaching of the gospel), and about the progress on projects we have been working on for 2 years. Samson advised me last year to come to Ibrahimpatnam, rather than Hyderabad (his home) because of the political situation there. He says that I have become well known across the region for leading many Hindus away from their faith, and my return would likely put his work in jeopardy. Hindus had already made one physical threat to the students when I was there in February last year, invading the campus and harassing the dormitory after we had left for the day. After Samson left, brothers Prasad, Das and Vijaya Rao met me for breakfast at the hotel. At 11:00 we were in Singarayakonda where brother G. Krupa Rao preaches. 35 were assembled here. At 2:00 we met with 23 souls in Tanguturu, where brother T. Lazarus preaches. I preached under a tent erected for the purpose, and watched linemen reconnect wire to the pole at the corner of the shed, and remove palm fronds that had slapped the wire to break it loose. Another Facebook contact had traveled to this place to meet me: brother G. S. Babu. We had a good conversation over tea and cookies after the meeting. We heard later that two were baptized here after we left. Sixty-nine gathered at 5:00 in Chirala where Brother S. Sathym Babu (whom we had met Saturday in the immigrant camp - he also preaches here) labors diligently. I preached here "The True Godhead" because many Hindus were in the assembly. Seven were baptized.

September 11. We started our day with a visit to the home of sister Bushama, a widow who is a member of the church and a strong supporter of N. Vijaya Rao and the church of the Lord. She is an officer in a major hospital, and well-respected by neighbors, several of whom were on hand to help her show us godly hospitality. By 11:00 we were in Mulagamadu where brother J. Chennaiah is the excellent and enthusiastic preacher. 128 had come together for the occasion, which doubled as the memorial service for the preacher's father, who had passed away 2 days earlier. I combined points from my sermon on death and "One Heart and One Way," but had to keep it short as the funeral director was ready to go to the cemetery. We had arrived later than expected, and so had to decline his request to join them at the cemetery, as we didn't want to be even later at the next stops. We had been promising several families that we would visit in their homes. We were able to visit in three homes, and still have a short time to rest and visit among ourselves before the evening meeting. Through the week we had seen several occasions of churches clapping hands in worship with songs or at points they liked in the preaching. During this break time I finished the revision of my one of my tracts on the subject. Vijaya Rao was very excited to hear about it. At 8:00 we met with the church in Kattubadipalem where brother Yuva Raju preaches. During one of the songs a man started clapping, and Vijaya Rao stopped him silently. I took advantage of the occasion to preach on the subject from Acts 17, "Not Worshipped With Hands." Seven were baptized here. Back at the hotel, I sent the text of the tract to Vijaya Rao so he could evaluate it for use here.

September 12. Brother Vijaya Rao was very excited about the tract. I paid for the printing of 1,000 copies. As the week has progressed we have had some of the preachers join us in the car after we have visited their towns. Today we had 4 (the car has seating for 9 plus the driver, if they are small or friendly). We had a productive discussion on the needs of preachers and churches in India. At 9:30 we arrived in Boggamadharam. The preacher, brother Sundara Rao introduced us to the 58 souls gathered in the church building. After I preached "The True Godhead" two were baptized. After a long drive we stopped for lunch at a roadside restaurant at 2:00. I paid for lunch for the 8 of us, and then we were off to a 3:00 meeting in Kodad. Brother P. Raja Rao and 36 others received us warmly (as all do in India), and I preached on Sacrifice. As I was closing the lesson several started to applaud. I stopped them, and then preached a summary of the tract I had just written. On the way home Vijaya Rao informed me that his wife wanted me to stop a tailor for measurements for a "shirt" she wanted me to have. It embarrasses me to receive the personal accolades the Indian brethren constantly put upon me, but they are simply that grateful for the attention visitors give to them, and they are extremely hospitable people.



September 13. Brother Prasad, my translator, has been picking me up at the hotel every morning. Today we had time to talk before we needed to leave. We agree that the mission has been a very good one in its effect upon the churches and the preachers. This is his first time to translate for a foreigner, and he is sky high on the whole experience of preaching. He has a degree in electrical engineering, but he has been motivated this week to get a Bible education also, and to preach the gospel while he supports himself in his career field. He has been leading the youth group in Ibrahimpatnam for a couple of years, and has been evangelistic with them. They have grown in number and in service. He wants me to write a tract encouraging the youth to take their place as active members of the church, and another guiding them away from the excitement of sectarian parties that appeal to fleshly pleasure. Back at the house I took some pictures of the vacant lot next door, which the church wants to purchase for the building a dormitory for the widows and orphans for whom they care. After another great breakfast prepared and served by his amazing mother we met at 11:30 with the church at Velvadam where brother Yesu Babu preaches. 69 were assembled, and 1 was baptized. At 1:00 I preached in Chandrala, where 27 were

gathered with brother K. Prasada Rao. One was baptized here also: a young widow rearing her two small children with the help of a loving church. During the drive to our next meeting I conducted a brief Bible study in the car with the preachers traveling with us. As I have been working on a booklet for the preachers in India, I asked them what they thought were the greatest needs of the church in India today. Some answered "financial support" and "church buildings," but I got two excellent thoughts on lessons. Some of the Christians are interpreting dreams as messages from God, and some are seeking (or claiming to provide) so-called "faith healings." I took them through the scriptures on the healing issue, and promised to write on both topics in the very near future. At 3:00 in Sagguru brother K. Bhaaskara Rao had assembled 74, and at 5:30 in Mylavaram brother O. Prabhu Das had 23 gathered to hear the gospel of Christ. The day was so crowded with travel, introductions, preaching and pictures that I neglected to record what I preached at any of these places.

September 14. We were back in Ibrahimpatnam for the 10:30 worship assembly of the church. I preached from Acts 17 and the text of the new tract on clapping, which Prasad's brother had picked up from the printer yesterday while we were out of town. After the assembly we distributed the tract to the members of the church (329 were assembled). Sixteen asked to be baptized into Christ. While others were making the trip to the river for the baptisms we went to meet with the church in the Kilespuram neighborhood for what amounted to "a word of encouragement" to the church. I spoke for less than 10 minutes on "Confirming the Churches" for the 60 assembled, and we walked out the door with cookies



in our hands (they had wanted us to stay for refreshments). As we were about half-way through baptizing the 16, brothers S. Satyam Babu and J. Hari Babu came up in a couple of “3-wheelers” (think Cushman scooters used for taxis) with 8 to be baptized from their work in the immigrant camp at the quarry in the forest. These souls had been motivated by our Saturday night flashlight visit to study some more, and the brothers had been there for them. At 3:00 in the afternoon we had another preachers’ meeting with 24 in attendance. I preached another lesson I like to preach to preachers everywhere I can: “Qualifications, Character and Work of a Preacher.” We distributed several copies of the new tract to each preacher present. At 6:00 there was a farewell gathering of the church out on the plaza before the church building. Lots of hugging and tears brought the public work of this mission to a close.



September 15. The team met for breakfast at the hotel at 9:30. N. Suvarna Prasad paid for it as his honor to me for all I had meant to him personally during our time together. From there we went to the house where the four of us compared notes on the mission, and considered areas for improvement in our approach in next year’s efforts. As another worship issue had come up during the week, we talked about the implications of the confusion of singing during the communion and contribution. All agreed that there is no authority for the practice, and I was asked to write a tract on this subject as well. At 2:30 we left for the airport after posing for numerous pictures with those who had been waiting outside the house. Arriving at the airport at 6:30, I said my final good-byes to brothers I had come to love dearly in a very short time of working together. My flight left Hyderabad at 9:10 and arrived in Chennai at 10:15.

September 16. Lufthansa left Chennai at 1:20 AM and arrived in Frankfurt at 8:30. The final flight to Detroit left at 10:50, flew smoothly all the way, provided me several hours of sleep, and arrived safely at 1:50. Jeff Slag was there to meet me with his constant companion, “Bo,” his beautiful white 3-legged dog. After a long wait for luggage, and a short drive, I arrived back home a little after 3:00.

I thank you sincerely from depths of my heart for your participation in this very successful and encouraging mission. If it is at all possible, will you please make support of this work a part of your regular on-going service to God? Surely, He will bless you as He has blessed me and the hundreds in India who have benefitted from what you have done so far.

Two encounters in this mission deserve additional notice here. The preachers, S. Sathym Babu and J. Hari Babu (not familial brothers; the family is given first in India, and usually indicated only by an initial), are two of the hardest-working evangelists I know. As members of the church in Ibrahimpatnam (Andhra Pradesh, India) they became motivated to evangelize their country. Together, they travel several times each week - usually afoot most of the way; sometimes by borrowed bicycle - 22 km on completely undeveloped dirt roads to that immigrant camp near the rock quarry. Their target audience for the teaching of Christ is a group from the state of Orissa who live without utilities in makeshift huts, and work in the quarries. These same two brothers travel by train 110 km every weekend to the village of Chirala to work with a small church in a Hindu community. We met them in a one-room (9x12 feet) concrete block house, that S.S. Babu and his wife use when in the area.

Brethren, these two soldiers of Christ desperately need their own mode of transportation. They could go to the immigrant camp more often if it took less time to get out there and back (even our trip by car on that awful road took over half an hour - imagine riding a bicycle double). A good quality used motorcycle (the most common mode of motor transportation in India) would cost in the neighborhood of \$1,200, and ongoing operating expenses would run about \$60 per month. Surely someone who is reading this can do this alone, or is a member of a church who can. Please contact me (alparr@acts1541.org or 903-721-0332) to discuss details. Neither of the brothers speaks English, but brother N. Vijaya Rao, who trained and encourages them, can do so, and has agreed to facilitate your communication with them. I can put you in contact with him. Please help. Thank you.

The other matter is that land for the widows and orphans. That will require several of us working together. Land is extremely expensive in India. This single lot is available for \$166,000 – and that is 1/3 less than the standard price because the seller is a member of the church and has discounted it as far as he can for the church. The elders of the Ibrahimpatnam church want to build here a residence for the Chris Parr Home for Orphans and Widows. Can you help us to raise the necessary funds?

May God bless you for your love and support for this work.

In His service,

A. L. Parr