



Saved By God's Grace November 2013 Newsletter

Hi Friends,

Thanksgiving, black Friday and Jesus...one of these things just doesn't belong here. I was very fortunate to celebrate the "day" of Thanksgiving three times this year. Maybe God was allowing me this delight since we have not celebrated the day for the last three years (no official day in Kenya like this one). The first was with my children in Phoenix (all but my oldest who was in Houston working with Mission Year). My youngest, Amanda, cooked dinner for us and we sat around the table at our "former" home and I loved it. I was blessed to go around the table and thank the Lord for those closest to me who He, in his graciousness, had given to me to love first and foremost, second only to Him. I have to admit it was very emotional as I thanked Him for each child (Tarrin also even in her absence) and my amazing wife, letting each of them know why I felt the way I did and telling them all I was very proud of them and what God was doing in their lives.

The second was with my parents, brother and sister and their family, Tammy's mom and sister, and other family members and friends...it was a grand day. We had around 22 or so and it was a blast. I once again was given the privilege of thanking the Lord publically for the day, the people, and His grace through Jesus. It was very festive and loving.

The third was a private celebration on the Saturday after Thanksgiving day at Tammy's mom's house. It consisted only of Tammy and me, her mom and sister, and my parents. Once again I was asked to say the blessing and I was honored to publically tell the Lord once more thank you for the gift of life, the people gathered around the table, the provision He always adequately provides, the food placed before us, and for Jesus who made it all possible. Afterwards we told Paula, Tammy's sister, "see you later" as she would head back to LA and we would be leaving for Kenya. It was a very nice moment as each of us assured the other we loved them, not knowing if it was going to be this side of Heaven or in the Eternal that we would "see them later".

Now comes the day in between these amazing events...black Friday. It has become the "beginning of the Christmas shopping season". Let me tell you my observances of this day. First, no where during the day did I hear any mention of Jesus...not once. As a matter of fact I heard Christian music whose words were changed so they had nothing to do with Jesus, but rather had to do with what our shopping experience would be that day if we came to their store. So, the meaning of the "beginning of the Christmas shopping season" must not have too much to do with Jesus (and silly me, I thought He is Who/what Christmas was all about). Second, as I mentioned, we tout that day as the "beginning of the **Christmas** shopping season"...I didn't know that Christmas was a holiday which was to be celebrated by excessive, outlandish shopping. Christmas was a day set aside to celebrate the birth of Jesus (yes, I know, it was of pagan origin, but changed to celebrate the birth of our Savior). Instead we have turned it into a shopping event which is not matched anywhere in the world. Lastly (I could go on but it would certainly seem like I was on a rant), we begin the season of Christmas with an incredible day of shopping for stuff the day after (this year the day of) giving thanks to our Lord for the grace and providence of meeting our needs He has always been generous to do. We head out to buy more stuff which we certainly can not say are "needs" and forego using this providence He has given us to further the Kingdom of God.

Now I have no issues with celebrating Christmas. To celebrate the birth of the One who I consider my Savior and my God is a blessing to me. What I don't get is how do we justify celebrating by doing almost opposite of what Jesus said and what the life of Jesus was all about. Jesus told us He considers the poor blessed, He told us we should live simple lives where we should die to self and serve others. He warned us of giving into the world (excess anything and everything). He told us with the blessing we receive we are to assist the poor and the widow. He told us to pray to our Father to give us our daily bread...meet our needs. The amount of money spent on black Friday alone (estimated at around 57 Billion dollars) could serve not only those in the US who are hungry or homeless, but it could literally put life-giving water throughout the entire continent of Africa saving millions of lives....and this is only the money spent on that one day...not the entire season.

Now I will admit, my "disdain" for the day could be even greater since for the last three years I have been in a place where there are no lights, no presents, no money to meet the daily necessities. There is only a plea put up to the Righteous One to provide the daily bread, for their families to be able to survive, and for His love and grace to continue. But while I admittedly have a disdain for the day, I also know what happens on that day is not supported by anything Jesus said in Scripture nor is

any part of Scripture telling us this is how we should be spending our finances nor how we are to live our lives...it smacks it in the face.

With that (yes I am done), I believe black Friday is the one which doesn't belong among nor in between Thanksgiving and Jesus...not just my opinion, but what I see in Scripture.

By this Sunday we will be back in Kenya...I am ready to return by His grace. We have been blessed by the opportunity to come back to the US for these last few months. It was a period of reguvenation, a period of once again loving those in person who we have not seen in years, including our kids, parents, extended family and friends, and simply a chance to regain our health which had declined over these last years of service. Just like in Kenya I have experienced God's grace as I became "strong" once again. I really didn't know how sick I was, but when I was told by people who saw me when I first came back and then again as we are now leaving, "Wow, you look like a different person", I am recognizing the toll which it had taken on me, both physically and mentally. That said, the Lord used all of you to bring me back to a state where I am ready and anxious to return to the call He made on my life back in 2006. We have so many things the Lord has for us to do and now I believe I can go back and with His grace continue to humbly carryout His will for my life, the kids He has graciously given us, and for the community at large.

Let me end by giving thanks publically one more time...to You! What we do could not be done if not for your obedience to the call of Christ. We were told by the Lord to always talk about the need and He would "move those who He would move" to help...through your assistance He has certainly done that. We had a matching program which began as we entered the States and it was totally matched as of last week. We had a need of getting the airlines charge of \$200 per case to ship all the donated items for the kids back to Kenya and as of today the total amount for all of the cases (18) was received. I don't know if you can understand the encouragement this gives us when we totally rely on God to move you to help...and you do. It is such a blessing and gift which we can not really thank you enough for, but the Lord knows and His reward surpasses anything I can possibly say or do...so simply, thank you.

The next newsletter will be our Christmas newsletter and will be sent from Kenya, Lord willing. If you would like to contact us from this point forward the best way will be at our email addresses oftammy@savedbygodsgrace.org or chuck@savedbygodsgrace.org. We actually check them many times a day. You can also contact us on Facebook. If you are interested in donating to the mission or finding Tammy's blog you can go to the website at www.SavedbyGodsGrace.org by clicking [here](#).

May God continue to bless you during this most holy season...the celebration of the birth of our Savior, Jesus.

Serving with you only by His grace,

Chuck

Missionary to Kenya.