



FEBRUARY 2011

# “I SURVIVED 2010,”

reads a tee-shirt of my imagination. The earthquakes and following tremors of Haiti’s sorrow and continuing disasters challenge Christian ministries continually. Economic woes and forecasts bring little relief to families world-wide, and the news of terror plots foiled and succeeded hang over us like a pall of death.

I’ve become a bit jumpy looking ahead into this year, because last year was so full of news, sorrow and destruction, however, I am more confident than the year before, because I know of the Lord’s preparation for the days to come, bringing forth a harvest of souls, at the same time revealing the mystery of God and of iniquity.

I had lunch yesterday at a local restaurant and the conversation centered on Arkansas’ latest blackbird death toll where on New Years Eve, nearly 5,000 Red-Winged Blackbirds and Starlings fell from the sky—dead. It happened a few minutes before midnight and I guess it caused quite a stir locally. That event followed a fish kill nearby where several hundred thousand fish (Buffalo Carp) floated to the top—belly side up. In both cases, likely explanations are hard to find. In the case of the blackbirds, the state veterinarian, after examining several carcasses, declared that probably a loud noise frightened the birds causing them to fly into buildings, thereby killing them. That might be acceptable, except they died everywhere and where buildings weren’t. So, when people can’t find logical answers, they look to “Acts of God, or—SIGNS!” So then, as the discussion tapered off, one of the guys asked me, “So what do you think Tom, are these signs from God?” I thought, remembering my prayer in the morning that I might have opportunity to proclaim Him today, then spoke. “The disciples of Jesus asked Him what would be the signs of His Coming and of the end? He told them that there would be wars and rumors of wars, famines and pestilences and earthquakes in various places, and in another place He spoke of sin increasing and people losing their love for one another.” I then said that it would be wise to watch the skies and nature for it seems to tell of a balance that is broken, but look also at the beginning of sorrows, such as earthquakes, famines and wars. Jesus also said that we will know the “times” just as we are sure of a crop of olives not too far off, when we see the branches soften and shoots appear.”

“The fact that sin is overcoming us so that we can’t even recognize it as sin anymore and that our compassion and love for our neighbor has become something else, This would be a sign of our hearts numb to the Fear of God,” I said as the conversation continued. I have thought a lot more about these things and how they fit into the signs of the times so that we need to constantly check the water temperature with a thermometer, not our feelings, otherwise we will begin to boil like the frog in a pot who couldn’t tell he had become accustomed to the boiling water until he smelled frog soup. Re-

cently I shared with a couple contributors a few things that to me, are “signs of the times.” One thing, is the action of our President and Congress signing into law an open policy for homosexuals serving in the military. Perhaps I have gotten accustomed to the hot water a little, like all of us, but what brought me to my senses was the timing of this action — the lame duck session — with heavy tax and national debt problems, sky-high unemployment, three wars, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the war on drugs, immigration, and the list goes on. With all these heavy, life and death issues looming, what priority did our government choose? When President Obama secured the Department of Interior’s auditorium for the signing of the bill, it was more like a victory dance and insult to decency that brought to my mind



President Barack Obama signing bill repealing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

the last verse in Romans, chapter one, *“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”* “I couldn’t be prouder, this is a good day,” a “pleasured” Obama said, “This is a very good day.” Following the signing of that bill, Vice President Biden chirped in with his prediction of a national law allowing gay marriage, perhaps this year and then I felt the water come to a boil.

Our job today is to first be believers in Jesus Christ, then as believers, be reflectors of the One whom we worship and love. We do that by living our lives honestly and meekly, while honoring every other person, but at the same time not compromising the “Two Lines.” Those lines are absolute and guide the builder of buildings as well as of character, they are the “Plumb Line” and the “Level Line,” because our God is both the Plumb and Level Line. If we build our house according to His standard, it will stand the test of time, if we build it according to man’s standard — one of tolerance of sin — it will fall in a short time, as it decays and rots from the inside.



This society of Faithful is strong and committed to the power of God’s Word to change the heart of man. So many of you faithfully tithe and gift to grow God’s Kingdom by the printed page. I want to encourage you to not falter in this work, but at the same time I can assure you of our commitment to hold up our end of this Holy coalition — to be prayerful, faithful, and thrifty — as we seek to win the lost, disciple the saved and sound the trumpet of His Return. If you have considered doing more, I would offer that a monthly commitment to the printing of the Gospel page, would indeed please the Master, if given from a contrite

heart. *“The Lord gave the Word, great was the company of those that published it.”* Psalms 68:11

Brothers and sisters, we have our work cut out for us now. We must pray for this nation and its leadership as never before. We must preach Righteousness and Salvation. We must, with the time we have, put our hands to the plow and till this soil! And, as those who celebrate sin, we must celebrate Righteousness and the Lord of Heaven. It’s the only choice we have, we who love the Lord.

## Haiti Update: WHAT NEXT?

**F**or forty-five years combined, my father, and I also, have showcased the plight of Haitians to the Christian Community. Not just us, but thousands of missionaries and ministries have done the same thing—to some degree. It has always been a roller-coaster of news reports, but instead of one consisting of good news, then bad news, and back to good news again, Haiti’s stream of news events is bad news following bad news and then comes worse news. The massive earthquake really put Haiti on the map, doing in hours, what we have worked to do for years, bringing Haiti to light. When it comes to something past unbelievable, the news cycle seems to jolt your consciousness with: “Can you believe this?” That is how most people who follow Haiti closely responded at the news of Jean-Claude Duvalier’s return to Port Au Prince, this past January 16th.

The now “pushing 60” exiled dictator has returned “with no political aspirations,” but only a “desire to help Haiti in the aftermath of the earthquake” and in the midst of contested election results. Now, given the history of dictators in general and Duvalier in particular, I find all the above statements hard to swallow. It is the smell of money and of power that I think has lured Baby Doc back to the land of lost dreams. There is a lot of money in Haiti today and most of it is siphoned off of NGO’s (non-governmental organizations) and foreign government aid programs and I believe Baby Doc just couldn’t stand by to watch the other politicians and gangsters get it: Enter Jean-Claude Duvalier! I don’t know if Haiti has come full circle or not: but, by the time you receive this letter—we might all know.

I need more than this letter and even more than our usual four page Haiti report section, to tell what Haiti has done to me this past year. I must spend more time with you in the March *Harvester*, because there is much to share. I haven’t been there now in over six months and I have relaxed some during that break. My digestive system seems to be back operating normally, so normal that I had forgotten what regularity felt like. The things that happened to me on my last trip broke my heart and the people of one church continued to segregate me from my compassion for Haiti’s plight, as their demands became more ridiculous and harsh. They have been so punishing in their actions and words toward me that I had difficulty remembering that like here in the U.S., not all who attend church are Christian, and that poor people have poor ways just as those without hope can behave quite shamefully. The accumulation of discouragements from within our ministry, coupled with the apparent and increasing hopelessness from corruption, seasoned with crime all around it simply became very easy to withdraw for a season. One simply cannot comprehend Haiti by watching the news, or even by one or two trips there. I have spent nearly a lifetime working in Haiti and I can say that had the Lord not called me with a voice I could hear, had He not shown me many times with amplification and illumination, had He not made a way where there was no

way, had He not miraculously protected and saved me from certain harm, had He not spoken to my wife to change her heart, and had His written Word not been so clear—I, in my flesh would walk away!

I have had to ask God, once again, “Where do we go from here, Lord?” His very still answer seems to reflect His character: “WHAT’S NEXT IN HAITI doesn’t change what you have been called to.”

We are printing in the next *Harvester*, an article by Debbie Corum, entitled: “Diligence With an Attitude,” an ar-



Jean-Claude Duvalier returning to Port-au-Prince Haiti on January 16, 2011.

ticle that in part spoke to me about faithfulness. So many I have spoken with whom have gone to Haiti for the first time this past year, seem to have the feeling of “Did it even matter that I went?” because the areas of need are so ample. Those areas have been there for decades and of course, now worsened. What hasn’t changed is: The poor, lost, orphaned, widowed and oppressed. The need is there, only increased and the call is there also. The only thing in lack is diligence or perseverance, and that isn’t really in lack just now, but more like “in pause.” In the next *Harvester*, you will read of our refined vision to bring the one thing we have to this land and that is the Word of the Lord. The earthquake changed the way we must operate and I know you will approve of our slight course correction. Until the Lord shows otherwise, and irregardless of Baby Doc or any other headline maker, we are going to help to their feet, those whom the Lord shows, establish a point of Gospel literature distribution, and sharpen our evangelistic mission while at the same time through our mission, educate as many youth as possible, yet not failing to care for the orphan.

Keep us in your prayers and save out a little or a lot each month for Haiti. We won’t let the crooks have it, but instead plow it into the future of Haiti’s own for the sake of the Kingdom of Christ.

Tom Buttram and the great Staff  
at the Gospel Tract Society.