

Good Samaritan Baptist Missions, Inc.

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In the Aftermath of Hurricane Mitch

National Pastors Newsletter

November 30, 1998

Rich and Poor Crying Together:

We've heard this over and over since returning to Honduras on Thursday, 11/19. The Tegucigalpa airport looked the same but as we began our trip down the mountain, we began to see the devastation of "Mitch." In spite of the fact that roadwork had been going on for several days, we couldn't believe our eyes when we saw the results of the mudslides, the humongous boulders that had come down the mountains--half the roads gone--and the devastation caused by the water.

Friday, 11/20, we met with the pastors of the Choluteca area to make plans for new kitchens and to divide out some 50,000 lbs. of food that had been bought before our arrival. A whole day was spent in the Choluteca church. It was very hot and before nighttime Bob was taking a bad cold and I had stomach cramps.

Saturday, 11/21, we spent here in San Marcos and at the farm in Comali. It's hard to believe that rain could do that much damage...but, *we're thanking God for showing mercy in this town.* Only the roads and bridges (and our radio tower) show where "Mitch" had been.

Sunday Morning, 11/22, Bob is very sick with the flu, but Antonio, Aminta, Scarleth and I leave out at 8:30am for the Yusguare area. We stopped for church with Bro. Benigno and the church was packed. I shared with the people the love and concern of God's people in the U.S., and assured them that not one would go hungry--*how God was providing* for us to buy food now and soon shipments of food would be coming.

Benigno joined us for a trip into the mountains where we have already begun a new kitchen at a public school house where refugees are housed. No government food had gotten to these people who lost houses, clothes, crops, EVERYTHING. We had to park the jeep and walk up the mountain, crossing footlogs and rivers that used to be small branches. We began at 11:00am and returned at 2:00pm to the foot of the mountain. There I saw a group of moms, dads and precious children, who had lost everything--**I talked to them about Jesus who loves them and is sending them food.** Two big pots of beans and rice were cooking on the ground, food that Benigno had taken in to them yesterday. He had also had a service with them and taught them a little chorus. We then climbed further up the mountain and they showed us where their houses ONCE STOOD.

On our way back we went through the city of Choluteca. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. The tractors were at work trying to remove tons of dirt higher than the houses. Sections of the city were completely destroyed. We had to keep our windows up because of the horrible smell. No one thought the hurricane would reach this far--**no one was prepared**. Entire families were buried under the large mounds of dirt. There was *a lot of silence* on the way back to San Marcos. We didn't get home until dark and everyone was worried about us.

This next week we'll be visiting more places and I expect we'll see the same...but we're bringing hope to these precious people...Jesus Christ loves them and He's going to provide food for them. They won't die of starvation. Most of all He wants to save them if they're not saved.

*We haven't heard no one complain, no one murmur---
"We must accept what God sends our way," they say.*

Joan Tyson
11-22-98

November 10, 1998

These are faxes sent to us by several of our pastors in Honduras relating to their experiences in the Hurricane...

Carmen Carcamo, Choluteca

After all the problems we have passed through, we have the blessing of writing you to greet you in the blessed name of our Lord Jesus Christ, also to your beloved wife, and praying that soon you will be able to come to us.

My family and I are thanking God for taking care of us because **all of Choluteca was filled with water**. About 5:00pm on Friday, my family and I left for the church because water was coming in our house. We had no opportunity to take clothes, food, or anything - the important thing was to save our lives. We had to leave the car parked in the middle of the street and walk part of the way because a creek had overflowed and became a river. We suffered a few damages in our house but all can be replaced. What makes us sad is all the lives that were lost in the water.

Three families of the church lost their houses and one was the family of an Opportunity student. In the church, not everyone lost their houses but it is hard to buy food because it is very expensive. They brought me my support from San Marcos *but I shared it with the brothers who had nothing*. We are praying for you that God will use you there to be able to get help for the Christians who have lost everything. **Pray for us.**

Ramon Aguirre, El Triunfo

We hope you are able to get help for our country that has been battered by the hurricane...this started on Sunday, October 25, with strong winds and rain in the Northern part of the country and later came the flooding, reaching the Southern zone on Wednesday, the 28th, lasting until Saturday.

My Country Has Been Left Completely Poor and all the crops destroyed, thousands of head of cattle drowned, houses destroyed, roads destroyed, bridges ruined, and a total of 15,000 dead up to now. Here in El Triunfo it is sad to see the people walk the streets with hunger and *can't find food*.

Here every Christian was in their homes praying night and day to the Lord for Him to put *His hand of POWER* and hold off this storm. My sons went out on Friday to try and save some of the things that were left in the Christian's homes where the winds had torn off the roofs. We had one family staying in the church because all the others were taken to a school because the mayor gave out a little package of food to take away a little of the hunger. We can't let our children out of the house because all the bridges are broken and the water is still high and it is too dangerous. Since Thursday there has been a great food shortage because people who had money began to buy up all the food. We couldn't go anywhere to buy food because all bridges were out and roads blocked and **WE LIVED ONLY BY THE MERCY OF GOD**.

The whole town was at a point of dying because the river that goes around the town was at a point of overflowing but I believe that *God heard our prayers* and we were saved. In one part of town 20 houses were washed away from the waters of the creek - four families of the church lost everything. In my house the winds beat the roof day and night and took some of the roof off and that is where the water came in and we were wet for two days and nights - now the children are starting to get sick with fever, sores on their skin, and colds and headaches.

In the church all of the electrical part was ruined and eight sheets of asbestos because of so much rain. Now the poor will be without any work because the melon fields and the market at the border was all affected and many businesses went under water.

Please tell the pastors of the churches in the United States to pray for us...we are having to drink contaminated water and bad food, and we do not know what will happen out ahead. *May God bless you*.

Carlos Ordenez, El Jicarito

I walked 8 hours to come to Yusguare. Thank God all of the children of Opportunity are well. They didn't suffer any grave damage but only are sad that their parents lost all their crops. My wife and I live in the pastorium but in our house there was a mudslide that completely destroyed it. I lost 2 manzanas of beans. I was opening a new mission camp in a place called Cacao and there were 10 people saved in this place. The mudslides and water destroyed 17 houses here.

Pompilio Escalante, Azacualpa

I want to tell you what has happened here in Azacualpa from the Hurricane. The river filled up at 1:00am and my family and I ran into the streets in the rain. We were crying and praying that God would save us from the river and that it would not wash us away but it did not get us, thanks to our God. But on the 30th, Friday, it was worse and it got to one block from the church and the pastorium. All of the friends and brothers, who were ready to reap their harvests, lost everything...*it has been a terrible, terrible experience*. On Friday the mercy of God was upon us and it was only by *His mercy* that we escaped. One of the Opportunity children lost their home but their lives were saved. There is not one place in Honduras that the Hurricane didn't reach...all the crops are gone; communication

to other villages cut off because of bridges out and mudslides...**but in the midst of the storm, I preached the Word of God** and many people came to the church. We had the generator there and we had a campaign of prayer. The brothers who lost all their crops were very sad but we thank God He gave them strength. I am praying to God that you will be able to get help for all of us. We will keep on preaching the Word of God.

Julio Cesar Aguirre, Pillado

We want to tell you the experiences that we lived through during the days of the Hurricane. The 29th and 30th was when the rain was so hard day and night and the ground began to sink - later the hills around us could not hold any more water and on Friday night the mountain came down bringing stones, trees and everything in its way. The rivers overflowed their banks and brought about the washing away and sinking of everything in its path. We were cut off totally...on Friday, the 30th, at 9:00 at night when **we began to live moments of terror, fear and anguish**...where many houses were carried away by the torments of water. *But God manifested Himself to us in a great way.* We had to risk our own lives to be able to rescue others who lived close to the river...with much difficulty...and with the crying of the children and the roaring of the waters.

Many people lost their lives - homes that were do not exist anymore...there is only sadness and loneliness...but in these difficult moments *We Have Our Comforter Who Is the Lord Jesus Christ. He never fails!* Here the situation is extremely difficult...the crops were planted at the foot of the hills and the mudslides carried them away...There is NOTHING - ABSOLUTELY NOTHING...no corn or beans...but we thank God He has spared our lives to be able to struggle and go forward. There are members of the church who do not have a change of clothes; there animals were drowned...they lost everything.

I want you to know that the church was saved...*nothing happened to the house of God.* Sixty children of our Sunday school come from families who lost it all and the church does not have the means to help these people but we are trusting in God to provide. The night of the great rain many people stayed on their rooftops all night long and were able to survive. *God did many miracles and the Honor is all for Him.* May God bless you. (A NEW LUNCHROOM IS BEING OPENED HERE.)

Jorge Rizo, Nacaome

I want to tell you that we have passed a very difficult time but God has been with us and has freed us from *so great a catastrophe that hit Central America* and especially Honduras and Nicaragua. In the states of Choluteca and Valle the torment began on Wednesday, the 28th of October, but the terrible thing is that on Friday, the 30th, it was still raining day and night and on Friday there was six hours of torment and then the rains continued all night. We left home at 7:30 at night when the Choluteca river carried away our door to the house. The next day I returned to see the house filled with water and mud. I thank God that we were able to clean it all out and our things were saved.

In Nacaome where the church is, it was **terrible**...the big bridge broke and two families of the church lost their homes but there was no loss of life. Two other families' homes were damaged but the waters didn't carry them away. Brothers, we are praying for you and for the church in the United States. **God has shown His wrath here**...and in the future there will be much suffering because all the crops and areas to work are washed away. (A LUNCHROOM IS BEING OPENED HERE.)

Roberto Espinoza, Marcovia

I want to tell you what the hurricane did in Marcovia. *Nothing happened to our church...* Only in the new pastorium one side fell to the ground. The children of Opportunity are fine - only one child lost its home.

In the houses that are close to the river, 5 were carried away...in the middle of the town 60 houses were washed away where the waters passed in the middle of the village. There is a great economic problem here because now there is no work and no food. We thank God there was no loss of life, only houses and other material things. I am fine, thanks to God, just a little bruised and beaten from the great beating of wind and water but we have had a campaign of prayer in the church *giving thanks to the Lord for having protected us in this great tribulation* of the waters. We are praying that God will provide for our needs. When the river was carrying away the houses some 70 people stayed in the church praying and asking God for mercy. All of the crops were washed away. **But the power of God is GREAT...**this is giving me a great opportunity to preach the message of salvation. Many are reconciling with the Lord and some have been saved. In our place the worse times were between Saturday and Sunday when the rivers were rising even more. **Please pray for us.**

Manuel Ramirez, Morolico

We, by the will of God, are well and away from danger - and now more than ever we need to help Christian families who have lost it all. The house where we were preaching was washed away, only the motorcycle I was able to save. **All the town was completely destroyed** because Morolico is situated between two rivers and many people left out with water up to their necks because they did not want to leave their houses. They did not believe that something like this was going to happen but thank God that no human life was lost in the town BUT in the villages around the town, many were killed. We lost everything we had - cookware, stove, dishes, bed, blanket, bicycle, a PA system that we used for the church, guitar, typewriter and sewing machine, and all of our clothes. We escaped with only the clothes on our backs. *It was a terrible tragedy - Rich And Poor Cried Together Like Children.* One week later my wife and I were able to go through the mountains to our home town, Duyure. My family was waiting for us on the other side of the river and we passed on boards. I had to tie my wife on a board to keep her from falling off. Later we went by horseback and two times my wife fell and was bruised but we thank God we got there well. I would like to tell you more but this is sufficient for now. *We need your prayers.*

Pedro Estrada, San Lorenzo

I want to tell you that the experiences that we have lived in Honduras have been terrible. *Never have we seen anything like this.* When we heard about the notices of the Hurricane that was affecting the Northern part of our country, never did we think that this would affect the Southern zone. I remember on Friday night, the 30th, when it hit with more power and the wind blew in a horrible manner and it didn't stop. The water was a threat and was coming in from every side. *It was the longest night that we had ever lived.* By the flashlight I would look at my watch and the time was going so slowly. We waited for daylight so that we could see what was going on. At last daylight came and as we looked around we gave thanks to God for saving our lives. Later we went to see what had happened around us...there were sad and worried faces. We went to the neighborhoods and there we saw the disasters so terrible...houses fallen in, trees uprooted, houses under water, electric and telephone lines destroyed, bridges destroyed and creeks and rivers rampaging. The situation is critical here in San Lorenzo

because food is scarce; the markets and the stores are empty because those who had money bought up the food before the storm hit. **We need help...** May God bless you. (A LUNCHROOM IS BEING OPENED HERE.)

Efraim Sandoval, El Corpus

We have had the Opportunity to preach the **Word of God in the midst of torment**. In the town of El Corpus no one lost their life but in the material, there was a great loss. Everyone lost their crops. I had planted two manzanas of corn, and I lost that. We had a total of 27 living in the church with us for 3 days and 3 nights and we shared food and clothes because these people were left with no clothes and not even any shoes. I helped to evacuate people on the outside of town and there we had two deacons whose homes were partially destroyed and their crops gone. One brother from Agua Frio lost all of his crops and also an elderly lady with her two sons lost their homes. On the outside of town one of our members lost her brother-in-law and his daughter, 11 years old, when they were trying to cross the river.

All of the melon fields and the sugar fields are gone. People are going from house to house to see if they can find someone with food. We have given food and clothes to the worst hit. We can buy beans, rice, corn and sugar but it is expensive - and besides all this many people are getting sick. My wife has bronchitis and asthma and my daughters also. My nerves are real bad and now I have a cold from trying to help the people out in the rain for two days. *I am grateful to all the pastors and churches who are trying to help us.* Please greet the Gunter family and Brother Lamar and his family.

Aminta Inestroza, Wife of Antonio Inestroza

Right now Scarleth has gone to the river with food to pass over for the lunchroom of Duyure. They are doing it in a boat - she is taking it to the other side of Benita and putting it in a boat and the people are waiting on the other side with donkeys and horses to take it to Duyure to the lunchroom, which will take hours to get there. We are working to get the three new lunchrooms open. Pastor is looking for food. Thank God, everything is under control.

Manuel Chavarria, Los Tablones

The strong winds began on Wednesday when the hills began to come down and continued Thursday and Friday nights. A reservoir of water which could have drowned the whole village threatened to overflow and **the people were in panic**. As pastor, I had to try and comfort them. When the reservoir did break, the water went to the other side where there were only a few houses and the people had already left their houses to come to the church. Only three houses were destroyed. Almost all the houses filled with water because of the rain and the cries of children could be heard in the midst of the rain. If the reservoir had opened in our direction we would not be writing this letter. Two large trees fell on top of the church. At 11:00pm, the water began to carry trees and rocks and the trees were falling on the houses. I went to the neighbors to try and calm them but the time came when I could walk no more because of all the sticks, rocks and thorns in the water. My feet began to swell and I said "Lord, what can I do if I can't walk?". When I returned to the church the room where we sleep was almost filled with water. We moved to the children's kitchen and covered our children with plastic until morning. ***THIS HAS BEEN SAD; WE ARE IN NEED OF EVERYTHING.***

Oscar Vallejo, El Puente

Here in the community many friends and Christians lost their houses and their crops. Fifteen houses were destroyed and these families are refugees in the Kindergarten. We have been preaching the word of God there and *many have received the Lord*. We are feeding many more in the lunchrooms.

Benigno Rodriguez, Yusguare

We have lived through a time of GREAT TRIBULATION - a time of Confusion, Suffering, Pain and Agony; we didn't think we would live anymore....it was sadness upon sadness....we were cut off from anyone....houses being washed away and others completely covered by mud. At last when it was over we began to look for food...walking 7 hours to buy food, only to be told there was no food. We looked at one another in desperation and some began to cry. We returned to our houses with nothing. Two bridges fell in Yusguare and 12 houses - on the outskirts of Yusguare a community completely disappeared. Many Christians lost their houses; the pastorium fell in. We have been preaching in the school house where refugees are and 25 have been saved. Three pastors and I walked for 18 hours to the town of Morolico in search of one of our pastors and we walked 18 hours back. We didn't find him because he and his wife had crossed the river on boards and made it to the other side, but we preached to the people in Morolico in the refugee camp. There were 350 houses in this town - now there are only 20. We need your prayers.

Jose Beltrand, Divisadero

Many people here in Divisadero lost their houses, their clothes and everything. We have children of Opportunity who lost their houses. I walked with Bro. Benigno looking for Pastor Manuel. We walked 18 hours there and 18 hours back. It was a difficult journey but we were able to see many communities that are now no more. The people walked from one place to another crying because they had nothing...**no house, clothes or food.**

Luis Pastrana, Duyusupo

We are fine - *just amazed at how God has protected our lives.* Remember there was a creek behind the lunchroom and this became a raging river. Everything in its way was swept away but God protected the kitchen and the pastorium...when the water from the road began to come into the lunchroom I dug a trench at night at 10:00pm to re-route the water. All the crops are gone but no lives lost.

From Nicaragua:**Ramon Urrutia, Director of Opportunity of a Lifetime in Nicaragua**

I GIVE THANKS TO GOD THAT THERE WERE NO VICTIMS IN THE OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM. There was one Opportunity child who lost a 5 month old little sister in the village of Yalaquina. In regard to material things, there was much loss. My family and I worked trying to rescue people and I also walked with Brother Santos Casco to the zone of Limay, 35 kilometers, carrying food on our shoulders for the pastor and other Christians who had lost everything. I will send you a detailed list later on all the damage caused by Hurricane Mitch.

Santos Casco, Condega--National Director in Nicaragua

It was sad to see people running from one side to another, weeping over the loss of family members or their homes gone and all material goods. For me, it was a good opportunity to testify of Jesus Christ. I was caught in the hurricane in the road from Managua to Condega - I had gone to Managua on Wednesday for a service and I had to walk three days (some 100 miles) to get back to Condega. I suffered hunger and cold. One night I slept on the top of a house sitting in water, my clothes soaked with water, and there around me were others in the same condition and ***I was able to preach Christ to them and they had to listen to the Word of God.*** Someone asked me why God punishes man so, and I answered that God had been provoked by man and if man did not repent then worse things would come. I returned to Condega, beaten and bruised by the rain and the rivers because I had to pass deep rivers with the risk of drowning. As the same time Brother Lucio, another pastor, and I were trying to cross, we saw so many others who fell into the rivers and ***we were unable to save them.***

At this writing I do not have a report of all the damages in our mission but I know of four church buildings completely washed away and one is semi-destroyed. We lost almost a whole family in the zone of Limpa - many villages and towns were heavily damaged, such as Pueblo Nuevo and Condega, and some communities are completely gone. The family that we lost all died when a mountain buried them in their house when it came down on top of them. Only the father and one son escaped. We lost three pastoriums. *In my case, I believe that God has me here for a purpose and I will continue to serve Him until the last moment.*

Three pastors have lost everything they had and only escaped with their families and the clothes they had on - some were barefoot as they were already in bed when they had to flee. The young pastor of the church in El Carmen, Wiwili, Alonso Canales, lost his mother and all of his brothers and sisters (except one brother and his father) when a mountain came down on their house. They were members of El Pedernal church in Limay. A total of 53 Christian families lost their homes and 4 Christian families' homes were semi-destroyed in Condega. Four church buildings completely destroyed in El Pedernal, Los Platanares, Tranqueres and Baarrio Sandino in Ocotal and 1 church building was semi-destroyed in Pueblo Nuevo. Three pastoriums were completely destroyed, 1 pastorium was semi-destroyed. The radio tower was not damaged but several electrical posts and wires going to the radio were severely damaged. The Mayor of Condega had this repaired and we're back on the air.

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