The Jim Civale Family Prayer Letter – March 3, 2009

Dear Praying Friends,

We had so much joyful news to report last month that we could hardly contain ourselves. This month is not the same. We have experienced a serious setback. Knowing how many of you have prayed and rejoiced with us last month, it is not easy to report what has transpired since then. It reminds us all of the intense warfare involved in extending the gospel to places where our adversary has had a stronghold for so long.

In short, the village of Asau has just reversed its decision to allow us to plant a church there. As you recall, we first approached the village in November. After two months of debate, they accepted our proposal in January. In response, we came before the council in February with thank you speeches and gifts of appreciation (customary in our culture to close a deal). The village council was very pleased and excited by the amount of our gift and sincerity of our speeches and confirmed their acceptance. Case closed.... Or at least it should have been. But then, intense opposition arose. The pastors of the village churches began preaching against the decision of the council and demanding that the members of the church pressure the council to reverse their decision. On March 2nd, the village council caved in to the pressure and reversed their decision.

Of course, the real issue is that the four village churches fear losing membership and money if a fifth church is allowed into the village. We've always understood this opposition. They opposed the proposal for the three months leading up to the decision. We expected this all along. What we did not expect was for the opposition to intensify ***after*** the decision was made and then to lead to an overturned decision. In our culture, it is a great "*ma*" (public shame or embarrassment) for anyone to make a public ruling or deal and to accept gifts and ***then*** to renege on the deal. Evidently the pressure on them must have been great.

Despite this setback, we know God is on the throne without His sovereignty one bit compromised. We are still 100% His and 100% ready to follow His leading. Before Paul entered Macedonia, he tried Asia and Bithynia but was "forbidden of the Holy Ghost." We cannot ignore the belief that God would have us take the gospel to that part of Savaii where no gospel light shines. We do have several courses of action in mind and have had a plan B, C, and D on the back burner for some time. Please pray for patience and discernment as we consider our next steps.

In the meantime, while we are still here in American Samoa, we will continue seeking to win souls for His glory.

Thank you over and over again for your ceaseless prayers and support.

But I will hope continually,
and will yet praise thee
more and more.

Psalm 71:14

Sincerely yours,

Jim and Emi Civale

(and Carol, Michael, Joey, and Salvatore)

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