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Sunday, September 23rd, 2007

Greetings Prayer Warriors,

Last Friday, September 21st, we received a letter from the Hong Kong Immigration Department informing us that, after seven months of reconsidering our application for a visa, they have found no reason or justification for reversing their previous decision to deny us a visa.

When we first read their decision, it felt as if somebody had knocked the wind out of us. We felt dazed, and maybe a little confused about the whole application process. But, we have never doubted God's calling to be in Hong Kong. Every time we have prayed, talked about or even just thought about this whole "episode", we have always felt a strong peace and confirmation from the Lord that we are where we are supposed to be.

Since we received the letter we have been in an attitude of waiting on the Lord to seek His perspective on the current situation. We have been asking Him for "the Word of the Lord" to us in this circumstance. This morning we believe He spoke to us as we were reading from 2 Chronicles 14-20 (especially 14:2-13, 16:1-9, 20:1-30). Please allow us to share with you what we believe He is saying to us at this time so that you can stand with us in prayer.

1. This is a spiritual battle...

The first thing the Lord confirmed to us is that this is a spiritual warfare circumstance. It is not just a "human" resistance issue. It is not the Hong Kong Immigration Department who does not want to issue us with visas. Rather, we are being directly resisted by spiritual forces over Hong Kong. As you know from our previous e-mails, we have known this all along, and have continued to stand and walk in what the Lord speaks to us. But, we believe the Lord is saying we are just getting to the "heat", or the main part of the battle. More on this in a moment (point 3. below).

2. We must turn to (rely on) the Lord for help, not men...

From the story of King Asa (2 Chronicles 14:2-13 & 16:1-9), the Lord reminded us to not fall into the temptation of turning to people for help. Rather we must turn to Him, as we have been doing, and seek His help (He may direct us to a person or people to talk to, but we must always go to Him first). King Asa was a righteous king who walked before the Lord. In chapter 14, when attacked by a huge army from Cush, he sought the Lord for wisdom and guidance. The Lord delivered him from Cush and gave him a great victory. Some time later he was again being attacked (chapter 16). This time however, instead of turning to the Lord, he turned to the King of Aram for help. He still experienced victory, but the Lord sent a prophet to tell him that because he had not turned to the Lord for help, he would experience war the rest of his days.

3. The battle is the Lord's...

As we continued to read in 2 Chronicles, the Lord spoke to us again, this time from the story of King Jehoshaphat, the next king of Judah who was also a righteous king. In chapter 20 the armies of Moab, Ammon, and Meun came up against Judah. When Jehoshaphat was told, he was alarmed (20:3-4) and immediately turned to the Lord for help. The Word of the Lord for his situation came through a man named Jahaziel (20:14-17). We believe the Lord spoke some very specific things to us for our situation through this word also. Here is what Jahaziel said:

2 Chronicles 20:15-17 (NIV) ¹⁵He said: Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem [Stephen & Karen]! This is what the Lord says to you: "**Do not be afraid or discouraged** because of this vast army [current situation with your visas]. For **the battle is not yours, but God's.** ¹⁶**Tomorrow** march down against them [go to the Immigration Department]. They will be climbing up by the pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. ¹⁷**You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem [Stephen & Karen]. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out and face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.**"

Guess what we're doing tomorrow? We're going to the Hong Kong Immigration Department, in humility and the fear of the Lord, to "take up our position and stand firm." We are going, not in our own strength or wisdom, but in the Lord's strength. The battle is not ours. It is His. We go in faith and courage, not fear and discouragement, and with excitement in our hearts to see how the Lord will be glorified in this situation. We know that He is with us.

We felt that the Lord wanted us to send out this e-mail and let you know what He is saying to us, **ahead of time**. This is a step of faith. We are trusting in Him and believing that this is the Word of the Lord to us for now. We don't know exactly what is going to happen, just as Judah did not know. But they did what God told them to do - go out tomorrow; take up your positions; stand firm; don't be afraid or discouraged - and God did the rest.

Please stand with us in this. We do need your prayers, and invite you to add your faith to ours, believing that God is able, willing and faithful to do the things He says He will do.

God bless,

Stephen & Karen