

ETERNAL, UTMOST LOVE

1.3.23
Dearest Bro. John +
Sister Flame,

It's about 2:58 A.M. I could not still sleep. I'm coughing a lot. When I came home from our outreach in Dallas last week, I felt very weak and pretty tired. Since Dec. 20, I have quarantined myself, praying that my coughing will subside significantly.

One thing, though, as a blessing of being sick, I realize that I do not have total control of my health, regardless of my preventive actions not to get sick. More and more, I'm ushered to one of the most forgotten realities of life—that *it's short*—and that *eternity* is just a breath away.

And for those have lived for over a half-century now, good health and life are gifts from the **Heavenly Father** for us to walk closely with Him and give our utmost for His praise and purposes. At times, I wonder for those who don't know our loving Father through the works and merit of our Lord Jesus, who ransom us from the pang of eternal death. *What would be their basis of hope and life?*

Grand News from Baku

You read my story about **Emil** of Baku, Azerbaijan, last October. You also glanced at Sister Stella's note to us last month. I hope you have been encouraged by their love and courage to stand and continue on their faith journey despite the hard culture they are in the Islamic world of Azerbaijan.

Grand news! Last month, I received an e-mail from **Bro. Rustam** [a ministry leader in Baku] that Emil has finally surrendered his life to our King Jesus. I was so thrilled to hear this news. It's indeed great, joy-filled news!

And you have a vital role in Emil's conversion since you, and I have prayed for him and reasoned with him that **Jesus is indeed the Lord and the Messiah** and the One who created the *only access* or the only way to the Father through His death at the Cross and His resurrection from the grave. *So praise be to Jesus Christ, our King!*

Highlight from Azerbaijan

During one evening in our training seminar in Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan, there was a knock on the entrance door of the main gathering room. One brother checked the peeping hole on the door, and he gestured something, and things got "whacked" quickly: One senior leader of the fellowship grabbed me and hastily rushed me to one of the inner rooms of the buildings. She told me that there were police outside the office. I was in this closet for over five minutes. Finally, she returned with a big smile and assured me it was a "false alarm." She said that the police were collecting "protection taxes." I did not further probe about the incident. Later, though, she mentioned that in other underground fellowships, local Jesus-followers were taken into custody for questions and "hardships."

Since 2017, I have been to Azerbaijan three times, but it was the first time it hit my guts: "I'm in an Islamic land. Life is dangerous here for true Christians!" Coming from the West, in many instances, I don't understand that. Yet, because of

their love for our Lord Jesus, many Christians in these places have answered Paul's bold invitation to "*share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*" [2 Tim. 2:3]. Indeed, many of them do.

Sister Seda

With that in context, our night commenced on a beautiful note. A young couple who faithfully attended the training came with their boys, aged 7 and 10. One is named **Steban**. I can't forget his name since it's my paternal grandfather's. The other is **Paulu**. Most likely, he is named after the Apostle Paul of Tarsus in ancient Asia Minor.

The wife, named **Sister Seda**, came and told me that she was so grateful for changing her heart's views on the **love and acceptance of Jesus** to her as a believing sinner. She was thankful for telling her that God's love is *not* dependent on her responses to Him. I assured her that God's love is shown vividly and convincingly at the Cross of **Jesus, the only born-God**, the true High Priest who, at the same time, the Final Sacrifice whose blood washed away all our sins for all times and eternity. So there's no need for her to add anything to His offering—no more *Ramadan* is required to atone for her sins. Jesus's sacrifice is complete. Her sins are completely paid in full at the Cross [*tetelestai*, "It is finished," John 19:30]. And God amazingly remembers her sins no more [Hebrews 10:17]. She wept and hugged me. Me, I cried as well. *Glory to King Jesus for His grace and mercy to a lost sinner like me.*

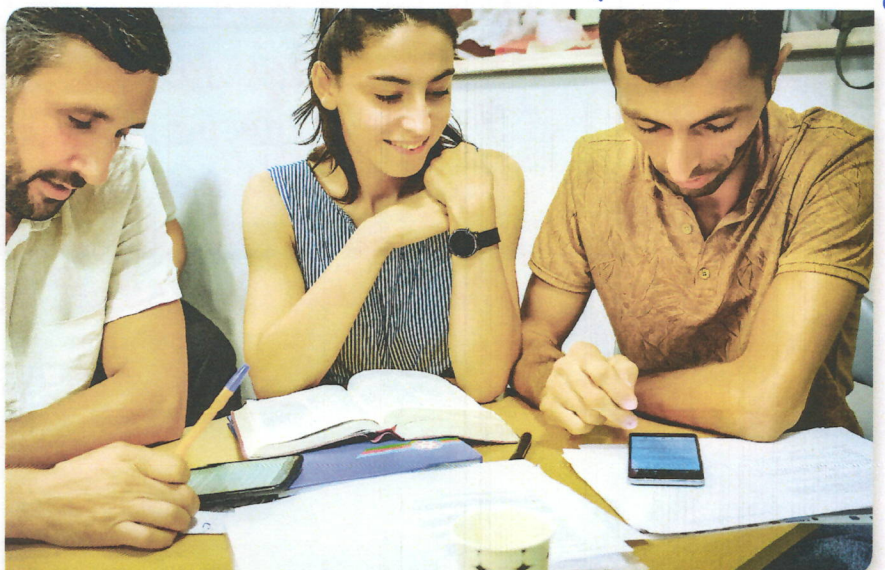
Emil was interpreting for me. So I turned to him and whispered to his ears: "Thank you, Bro. Emil for translating the lines to Sister Seda. Without you, the spoken words are just like empty air to her." Emil smiled and raised his hands, saying, "Hallelujah."

At the backside of this page is a letter written by Sister ~~Seda~~, transcribed by Bro. Emil. I pray this note will be a glimpse of light and a ray of joy to your walk with our Master. For HE loves you with eternal utmost love.

Have a JESUS-filled New Year,

Joel Ardle
endorsed a small gift from Albania
& the program we designed

No need for her to add anything to His offering—no more Ramadan is required to atone for her sins. Jesus's sacrifice is complete. Her sins are completely paid in full at the Cross. 'Tetelestai.'



Sister Seda in our training class

*For Operation Care int'l - Malabo
So much for your care + prayers - Liel*