

Daring Nighttime Rescue Whisks Aid Workers Out of Afghanistan

One of the eight freed said the release was 'like a miracle'

Two days after a dramatic rescue from Afghanistan by the United States military, eight Christian aid workers, including two Americans, said they owed their lives to Jesus.

Exulting in their freedom at a news conference on Nov. 14 in Islamabad, Pakistan, the eight—who included four Germans and two Australians—thanked U.S. troops and the Christians who prayed for their release. They thanked God for sustaining them during more than three months in a Taliban prison in the capital city of Kabul on charges of preaching Christianity to Muslims.

“We believed in Him [Jesus],” said German detainee Georg Taubmann, one of the workers of the German-based Christian charity Shelter Now International. “We experienced His strength. And when we were reading the Bible, reading through the Psalms, it was so encouraging, just to know that God is in control of our lives,” he said.

American Dayna Curry, 30, added: “I just know that it was through the prayers of the people that we were able to come out alive.”

The Taliban had agreed to release the workers to the Red Cross. But they were left behind in a jail south of Kabul as the Taliban army fled from Northern Alliance rebels, resulting

in the workers' dramatic rescue by U.S. troops who whisked them away by night in helicopters.

Curry's stepmother, Sue Fuller, said she never thought Curry would die, despite some scary moments. Curry had told her in a letter that she and the other detainees had "no idea how [God] is going to get us out of here, but we trust He has a good plan."

Taken to Pakistan after their release, the jubilant workers—who were in good health—said that after Alliance troops broke into the jail and freed them, they walked into the streets to hugs and clapping.

"It was like a miracle," Taubmann said at the German embassy in Islamabad, according to the Associated Press (AP). Sixteen Afghan aid workers detained on similar charges with the Westerners were released during the same week.

Curry and Heather Mercer, 24, both of Waco, Texas, and members of Antioch Community Church, had a 10-minute conversation by phone with President Bush, who hailed their rescue.

"They both said to say thanks to everybody for their prayers," Bush told reporters from his ranch in Texas. "They realized there is a good and gracious God."

In Islamabad the women were given medical checkups and then flown to Europe to receive counseling from a Christian psychologist. After their return to the United States, the two women met with Bush at the White House. Later they made numerous television appearances.

When asked by NBC's Katie Couric if the women were guilty of preaching Christianity, Curry told the audience of the Today show that she and Mercer showed the Jesus film in the home of an Afghan family.

"We were just sharing about what we believed, and they were interested to know who Jesus was," Curry said. "The family was willing to take the risk, so if they wanted to see it, then how can you say no?"

Both women told CNN's Larry King that they would like to return to Afghanistan some day to work with the poor. "Any opportunity I can share about Jesus when there is an opportunity, it would be great," Curry said.

After the women were released, "joyful pandemonium" erupted at Antioch Community Church, The Waco Tribune-Herald reported. The newspaper stated that "church employees joined members who were in a nonstop prayer vigil for the workers, exchanging high fives, whooping, skipping and shouting, 'Thank you, Jesus!'"

When news aired of their release, Antioch Senior Pastor Jimmy Seibert thrust his arms into the air and shouted, "Thank you, Lord," the AP reported.

"It is more exciting than we could have imagined," Seibert said. "The great thing I learned is that prayer works. That if we persevere, ask God for what's on His heart, we can trust Him to see us through."

After visiting their families during the Thanksgiving holiday, the women spoke

at a citywide worship service held at Waco's Ferrell Center.

-Eric Tiansay