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Four Frontline missionaries have returned from an intensive 10 week field outreach to Zambia and Malawi. They drove our two heavily laden trucks over 13 000km, distributing a ton of books, Gospel booklets, tracts and Bibles in six languages. They presented 12 Discipleship Training Seminars for pastors and evangelists, held film evangelism crusades in Mozambique refugee camps and conducted 70 evangelistic meetings, services and rallies including among the witchcraft dominated Maambwe people.

Malaria

For most of these outreaches and leadership training courses our team worked in primitive rural areas without any electricity or plumbing. And without any of the conveniences that go along with such "luxuries". Three of our missionaries also came down with malaria.

Few Westerners appreciate how seriously infectious and parasitic diseases afflict most of Africa. Every year over one million people die of malaria in Africa alone. Often we are asked how we cope with all the lions and the snakes in Africa. Well we do occasionally see lions and snakes but the daily threat is more likely to come from mosquitoes! Literally tens of millions of Africans are infected with malaria by parasite carrying mosquitoes every year. Each of our workers can testify to some of the effects of the debilitating disease: fevers, shaking chills, renal failure and anaemia. Even more seriously some cases of malaria require blood transfusions. And that often carries with it the attendant risks of hepatitis B and AIDS - with which much of the blood supply in Central Africa is infected. Even when the blood supply is not infected many of the needles are. Disposable needles are still rare in most of Africa.

In the light of these facts you can appreciate how fervently we prayed when Guy and Grant needed to be admitted to Zambian hospitals and placed on quinine drips.

Diseases And Death

A recent report by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** disclosed that infectious and parasitic diseases kill 17,5 million people worldwide each year. This includes 12,9 million children under five. Each year: about 7 million die from acute respiratory infections, 4 million from diarrhoeal diseases, 3 million from tuberculosis, almost 2 million from hepatitis B and over 1 million from malaria.

These infectious and parasitic diseases are overwhelmingly afflicting the so called Third World or developing countries. On the other hand the industrialised Western nations suffer more from cardio vascular diseases (CVD) which kill about 12 million people each year. This accounts for half of the mortality in industrialised countries. High alcohol intake, smoking, excess weight and lack of exercise are listed as the principal risk factors in CVD deaths.

The WHO report also pointed out that smoking kills 3 million people each year - 2 million in industrialised nations and 1 million in developing countries where cigarette consumption has risen by 70 percent over the last 25 years. According to the report 90% of deaths from lung cancer, 30% from other cancers, 80% of deaths from chronic bronchitis and 25% from heart disease and strokes were the result of tobacco use.

The report also noted that the numbers of medical personnel were lowest where people were the sickest. While there was an average of 25 physicians for over 10 000 people in Europe, there were less than 2 per 10 000 in Africa.

Time magazine recently reported on the tremendous resurgence of a severe epidemic of malaria. The report noted that many mosquito species are showing resistance to insecticides and multiple drug resistant strains of malaria are increasing everywhere, □ *“the prospect of a pandemic of untreatable malaria has become frighteningly real.”*

Their Graves Speak

This brought to mind the testimonies of thousands of missionaries who came to Africa in the last century despite the very real danger of death to disease, particularly to malaria. Yet even though they knew that there was no cure for malaria, at that time, they still came. They left home comforts, security, sanitary living conditions, friends and family behind to preach the Gospel in a wild and unexplored continent, and to inevitably die of little known diseases.

I remember a graveyard full of missionaries in Malawi. It was striking how short their lives had been and most had died within two or three years of arriving in Africa. West Africa became known as *“the white mans graveyard”*. Yet still they came - willingly sacrificing their lives so that Africans could hear the Word of God.

Few people today remember at what great cost the Church was established on this continent. And rather than produce inspiring true life films on the exploits and adventures of missionaries such as David Livingstone (who more than any other successfully campaigned to end the vicious Muslim slave trade in Africa), Hollywood delights in glamorising degenerate gangsters and other unsavoury characters as modern heroes.

Spiritual Warfare

Not far from where David Livingstone died in Northern Zambia our mission team battled disease, demons and deteriorating roads. The grip of witchcraft was so severe that there were whole villages and districts which had no churches.

Each day the team preached in the market places, distributed tracts and counselled desperate people who claimed to be possessed by evil spirits. Here are some excerpts from Martha's report:

“As we drove up to Lake Tanganika it reminded me of what the Lake of Galilee must have been like in Jesus' time. There were fishermen and merchants, rich and poor, young and old...We set

up the public address system and began to speak to the people through our interpreter. Several hundred gathered each morning to hear the Word proclaimed. I've never seen such emptiness and hunger in peoples eyes. At the end of the message we stayed behind to pray and counsel with those who wanted to know more. Each morning men, women and children came in need of the Saviour. As mockers taunted and onlookers shied away these people fell down on their knees convicted of their sin and cried out to God. One man burned his witchcraft items in public profession of Christ.

"One day a woman came, fell on her knees and cried out. As she received hope and forgiveness she begged us to come to her village. She has no postal address, no way of contacting her. She said, "Please come to my village. We have no churches, no missionaries. The people are hungry to know of God but there is no one to tell them, please come." My heart broke as we had to tell her that our schedule was already fully booked. We encouraged her to take the Bible and tracts and take this message back to her village.

"With a smile on her face and a new joy in her life she said, "I will try, I will try." Her desperate request challenged everything within me. There are so many who have never heard, so many living and dying in the dark...Where are our priorities? It reminded me of a quote from Oswald J. Smith in *The Challenge of Missions*:

"If there is one thing more than any other that makes one want to go, it is the fact that we are preaching over and over again to those who have heard it all their lives and have had every opportunity of Christian instruction, many of whom do not even appreciate what they get so easily, and some who Sunday after Sunday refuse to accept Jesus Christ though they have had every possible chance; while out yonder there are tens of thousands who have never heard the Name of Jesus, who could not if they would, get to a place where they could hear the Gospel. Is it fair? Should they not also have a chance?"
"But the Lord said, 'You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Ninevah has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"
Jonah 4:10-11"

Grant wrote: "While preaching down at Mpulungu the Lord convicted a young man of his addiction to smoking and drinking. As he submitted to the Lord Jesus he was released of these addictions and the next day after a time of preaching he came up and testified as to how the Lord had delivered him from the urges of these addictions. Clearly he was a completely different man to the day before.

"On another occasion a man walked up to me and asked 'What must I do to be saved?' The man probably did not own a Bible, yet he used the exact same words as did the rich ruler with our Lord Jesus Christ in Mark 10. It could only have been the convicting power of our Lord to

place these words on his lips. The joy of seeing a man realising his desperate need for a Saviour was overwhelming. After showing him the Way you could see the peace of God on his face, as he surrendered his life to Christ.

“Witchcraft in this area is very strong and many people are under extreme bondage to it. Once told the truth about the wickedness of this demonic dabbling, many turned and repented. One old man came forward and confessed that he had been involved in witchcraft. Immediately he took the charm off from around his neck and burnt it symbolising his break with witchcraft and his submission to King Jesus.”

Johan reported: “In our prayer times in preparation for the outreaches in Northern Zambia we believed that God wanted us to trust Him for great answers to prayer. We prayed that He would set men and women free from the bondages of sin and satan. We prayed that in His grace and mercy He would bring people from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Light. And that is exactly what God did!

“One lady asked us to go with her to her house as she wanted to burn all her witchcraft charms and fetishes. This was done and she rejoiced as we gave her her first copy of God’s Word in her Maambwe language.

“After one service near Mbala, where Guy had preached a Biblical exposition on repentance from sin and faith in Christ, he was told that they had never heard this message before. Apparently the local priests had encouraged the people to continue in the prevalent sins of polygamy, drunkenness and adultery. But even there many repented and sought full salvation in Christ.

In these witchcraft dominated areas it wasn’t unusual for demon possessed people to seek counselling. Martha related this incident: “On one occasion at Kutaila we spent a whole day in prayer and counselling with 20 women who were tormented by evil spirits. The women would go into trances, speak in various languages, sometimes violently shaking and writhing on the floor. They spat and cursed Christ and ourselves. After 12 hours of painstakingly proclaiming God’s Word and patiently praying, we were overwhelmed by the power and presence of God. As each of these tormented women confessed their sins, burnt their witchcraft charms and placed their faith in Christ their faces were transformed and they radiated the love of God who had suffered and died so that they could be set free.”

Strongholds Of Islam

Martha reports that “in Malawi, Islam seems to be the stronghold that Satan is using. Mosques are everywhere - especially along Lake Malawi. Islam is basically buying the people. Education is provided through the mosque for their children...Even in the most remote areas you can find beautifully constructed mosques. They are definitely seeking to dominate Malawi and they have the money to do it. This stronghold of Islam started with the Muslim slave traders that came in along Lake Malawi. The need for Muslim evangelism in this area is desperate.”

Grant reported a Muslim dominated area in Malawi where almost every Christian pastor or missionary who came to minister there had fallen sick with malaria. One of our workers came down with malaria at the beginning of our outreach there last year. When the interpreter suddenly contracted malaria at the beginning of this outreach our team saw it as a spiritual attack. Through persistent prayer the interpreter recovered and was able to translate for the Discipleship Training Seminar and for the counselling sessions.

The people saw this victory as a breakthrough which opened the way for liberating this area from the oppressive grip of this false religion. Shortly thereafter a Muslim woman came to our missionaries and expressed her desire to become a Christian. "I am a Muslim, everything you have said today spoke straight to my heart. I know that I need to submit to Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord." As Martha said, "Once again we simply stood in awe of the grace of God that reaches to the remotest areas and into the darkest hearts."