

VIETNAM

Brother Paul

"The Hmong people, for the most part, believe they will be lost for eternity. Our culture offers no salvation. No way to heaven. My people live in a recurring state of fear from the 'spirits' of their ancestors and often sacrifice animals to petition their forgiveness. The Hmong have little or no hope. So when we bring the saving message of Jesus Christ, we are well received!" -Brother "Paul," a Hmong pastor.

It was the second time we met with Brother Paul, who is one of the few native pastors bringing the hope of salvation to more than 500,000 Hmong villagers in Vietnam. The Hmong tribe is the largest in Southeast Asia and has witnessed an incredible surge of new converts in recent decades.

"We were without hope. Now we know Jesus has died for us, and we are safe in Him. Nothing can steal that from us. Not even the persecution of the communist police. Not even if they kill us. We will not deny Christ." -Sister "Ruth," a persecuted Hmong believer.

In recent months police have moved into Hmong villages. No one is allowed to leave or enter without permission. Any villagers confessing their faith in Christ are immediately taken into custody where they are pressured to renounce their faith. A statement is prepared that reads (in part): *"I will not take part in Christian practices. I will return to traditional practices of the Hmong culture (animal sacrifice). I accept that I have a responsibility to warn others not to follow the Christian faith. I have a responsibility to report others who become Christians."*

If converts recant and sign the statement, they are taken home and told to sacrifice an animal in front of the police as demonstration of their renunciation and to make peace with the "angered ancestral spirits."

Those who refuse to recant are beaten and often subjected to inhumane tortures. The photo of Brother Paul was taken after one of these "police sessions." He represents thousands more.

We can rejoice with Hmong believers who have traded their bondage to spirit worship and sacrifices for freedom in Christ (Galatians 5:1). We can share in their sufferings through prayer and continued support for pastors and families of martyrs. When we asked them what we can do, Hmong church leaders simply told us: **"Please pray for peace and the continued salvation of our people.** And if you can, please help those who have brutally suffered for their faith."



PRAYER CONCERNS

- * Pray for strength for Brother Paul as he shares the gospel.
- * Pray for safe delivery of Hmong Bibles into this closed nation.
- * Ask God to continue to provide opportunities for ministries to provide Bibles for restricted nations.

SUDAN

Damare Garang

Damare was captured by Islamic soldiers when his Sudanese village was attacked. Only 7 at the time, he was sold as a slave to a Muslim family. He became a camel boy even though he knew nothing about caring for them. His master enforced his learning with beatings. One day a camel got away. The master threatened to kill Damare for this mistake, but something restrained him. The next day when he found out that Damare had sneaked away to attend a Christian church in the village he became determined to punish this boy.

The master found a large board, several rusty spikes and a hammer and dragged Damare out to the edge of his compound. He forced Damare's legs over the board and drove the long nails through his knees and feet. Then he turned and walked away, leaving the boy laying in the field screaming from pain.

A man passing that way heard Damare's screams and sneaked into the compound and carried this boy to the local hospital where the nails and board were removed. A year-and-a-half later, Damare and the man who saved him were in a village that came under attack, and they were separated. After the defense forces managed to drive away the Islamic soldiers, Damare was left standing alone. When the commander heard him speak, he realized that he was from the Dinka Tribe and took him back to their camp. After hearing his tragic story he tried to locate some of Damare's relatives. When none could be found, the commander adopted the former camel boy and took him to his home.

Today Damare is 15 and lives in Mario Kong. He cannot run fast like the other boys, but he says he has forgiven the man who nailed his legs to the board. He knows that Jesus was nailed to a cross so all our sins could be forgiven. He asked the Christian children in America to remember to pray for the children of Sudan.



PRAYER CONCERNS

- * Pray for Damare. He has forgiven the man who nailed him to the board but still bears the scars and handicaps resulting from the punishment.
- * Pray for the leaders in this violent country that they may reach a just peace and end the civil war.
- * Pray VOM's projects into Sudan will be directed where God is leading.

American Teenager Visits Christians in Sudan

"The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against all travel to Sudan. Although the two parties to the long-running civil war are negotiating a peace accord to end the war, travel in the south is still dangerous. In addition, there is serious fighting in Darfur and a humanitarian crisis brought on by fighting, drought, and famine."

—June 30, 2004 U.S. State Department Travel Warning

"The kids in Sudan need hope. God told me to go bring hope to those who have none."

—Sam A., American teenager

Sam A. is a sophomore at a Christian school in the U.S. In 2003, he had the opportunity to visit a place that most Americans will never see.

Tom Z., a man who attends Sam's church, asked Sam if he wanted to go to a village in Southern Sudan! The village had been attacked by Muslims soldiers from Northern Sudan, and the school and many other buildings were destroyed. Mr. Z. and other Christians are helping the villagers rebuild their school.

Sam prayed about the trip, and God led him to some Scriptures about hope. Sam believed that God was telling him to bring hope to the kids in Sudan.

A Long Journey

To prepare for the trip, Sam met a few times to pray with Mr. Z. and a schoolteacher who was also going to Sudan. Sam got shots to keep him from getting diseases that he might catch in Sudan.

Many kids in Sudan are very poor and do not have toys to play with or treats to eat. Sam bought a soccer ball and some candy to share with them. He also packed two Frisbee discs and a football.

The trip to Sudan wasn't Sam's first long journey. He was born in New Zealand, and his family moved to the U.S. when he was 2.

But this trip was different. First Sam, Mr. Z., the schoolteacher, and two workers from The Voice of the Martyrs flew from Chicago to the Netherlands. Then they flew to Kenya, where they boarded a very small plane. The little plane landed on a dirt strip in Sudan, because there was no airport where they were going. After Sam and the others got out, the plane flew away, leaving them on the ground for two weeks.

Life in a Village

In the mornings Sam and the rest of the American team got up at about 8:00. For breakfast they ate "peanut butter and honey on a tortilla," Sam said. He often ate rice and goat meat for other meals. "It wasn't too bad," he said. "I ate it and was happy to have food."

Many of the Sudanese people slept until 11:00 a.m. School started at about 1:00 p.m. During the day, Sam went to the school that was being rebuilt, and he visited with Sudanese kids. Sam is shown with two of the kids in the photo above. The children asked Sam questions about America. "What is it like in America?" they asked. "Are there many Christians in America? Are there many Muslims?"

In the evenings Sam watched soccer games played by Sudanese school teams. After the games Sam slept in a mud hut with a grass, cone-shaped roof called a "tukel." On Sunday the Sudanese Christians welcomed Sam and the other Americans at their little church where they praised and worshipped God in their own language.

Pray for Sudan

What did Sam learn on his trip? "I really don't need everything," he said. "I just need to be content with what I have." Sam said that Christians in America can pray for the Sudanese Christians to stay faithful to God and can ask God to bless the people of Sudan.

