

**“We do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord,
and ourselves as bondservants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor. 4:5)**

“You also joining in helping us through your prayers” (2 Cor. 1:11)

West African Mission Update

March 2008

Steve & Patricia Phillips

~~~~~  
Most of Steve’s publications,  
Including *Workers Unashamed*  
can be read and/or downloaded by visiting the  
[Gospel for West Africa website](#),  
Then click on the [Publications tab](#),  
and select from the titles offered.  
~~~~~

Dear Brethren,

Suffering afflicts the soul of every mortal man here below. What we providentially may be spared outwardly will nevertheless need to be endured inwardly. Sorrow’s draught must trickle into all trembling lips without exception, Christ Jesus included.

That startling passage, Hebrews 5:8, confirms this: “Although He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.” Jesus! Tempted in all ways, yet without sin. Son of God! Ever doing what delighted His Father on high.

Yet He learned obedience; not due to fault in order to correct, not as enlightening a dull perception, but to taste sustaining support while sufferings threatened their cascading billows.

He relied upon grace abundant to counter necessity’s press, drank from wisdom’s fount when harangued by contradicting sinners, and was garrisoned by the Spirit’s embattlement when sorely assaulted by the tempter. It was in this stern and cheerless classroom that He learned what we all must.

Rightly perceived, the crucible of affliction is granted by a Father’s severe mercy to school us to obey; to obey when obscurity’s pathway overshadows in gloom, as anxiety churns its fearful foam within, when disappointment’s bitter herb is pressed onto our unwilling tongues.

Through these tutors, the virtuous twins of longsuffering and patience are nurtured to stalwart stature. Longsuffering, mingled with mercy, does not flare into flames of retaliation when

provocation prods against its even temper. Patience, abiding in hope, does not crack and collapse under weighty loads.

Neither will thrive in the hothouse of an affliction-free nursery. Rather, roots must extend to reservoirs unseen during droughts of isolation. Branches need lift their arms pleading even while unanswered beneath skies of scorching bronze. Leaves will tremble, yes, thrash, whipped by howling tempests of raging scorn.

And thus it is that the All-Wise grants sufficient grief in every life to fit our souls for His habitation and service, whether on the shores of American plentitude or amidst the jungles of African privation. The heart and need of man are one and the same on every continent. And if we will become like the Lord Jesus, we cannot eliminate the fellowship of His sufferings from the equation of knowing Him [Phil.3:10].

Yes, it is fellowship, fellowship with the Man of Sorrows, who was and is acquainted with grief, and sympathizes with our weakness, having faced all temptations like unto our own. "In all their afflictions, He was afflicted" [Isa.63:9].

Let us therefore draw near to Him for that grace to help which proceeds from this Savior of mercy during the times of our need. And while suffering according to Divine design, let us ever be entrusting our souls to the faithful Creator by doing what is right [I Pet.4:19]. And so shall sorrows contribute their quota for our everlasting gain and the glory of Christ throughout endless day.

Here in Sierra Leone, our own hearts are heavy, yet with comfort, in the bitter-sweet sending of our children back to the States while Patti and I attend to the necessities confronting us in the village. They are heavy with their departure and the circumstances surrounding that, as we love them so dearly. Yet we are comforted in the infinite wisdom that has ordained it so, committing them into the everlasting arms of our Father above.

We thank the Lord for being able to correspond with them weekly via email and, from all reports from them and the wonderful families that are caring for them, they are doing admirably for which we are very grateful to God. Thank you so much for your continued prayers and encouragement to our hearts during this difficult time for our family.

The most encouraging aspects of our work presently are in the responses of brothers Emmanuel, William, Foday, and Usman to the teaching of the Word. Brother Freeman is making good and consistent progress through the *Discipleship Experience* that we meet together weekly to discuss. He has faced much persecution and slander, primarily from those loving money in a prominent "Prosperity" preaching denomination in their area. Nonetheless, he has continued to speak the truth in love and currently there are more than 40 brethren meeting together in the east end of Freetown.

Brother William is attending the university here and has been the target of numerous attempts to initiate him into cultic groups on campus. There at school he teaches two Bible studies and is quite active and effective in evangelism.

Due to his influence with his colleagues, I am now teaching a weekly session with some very earnest Christians who are truly hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Whenever he is able to do so, he joins us here in the provinces [about 100km from Freetown] where he interprets into Temne as we teach the Word together.

One of the young men who are staying with us here in the house is brother Foday. We meet several times weekly for Bible study in preparation for his desire to do pioneer gospel work in the father reaches of the north here in Sierra Leone. He also interprets for me into Krio during our monthly radio broadcast that reaches the entire south of the country. This brother continues steadfastly to demonstrate the grace of Christ despite the slanderous opposition he is receiving on several hands.

Here in Rotaprr village is brother Usman, a former Muslim whom we had preached the gospel to on many occasions, who now is zealous for the truth along with his dear wife Nancy. He has shown much earnestness in the Word and has been testifying to his close acquaintances in the village. We see real evidences of true conversion in him.

Recently, in the village where his mother and relatives live and where he has some cattle he is rearing, several of his cows were stolen. The family, being Muslim outwardly though very traditional inwardly, urged him to go to the evil forest in their place in order to have the juju man put a curse upon the thief. He stood up against all of them and said that Jesus commanded that we not curse our enemies, but rather forgive, bless, and pray for them. And this he did, refusing to follow the very expected animist way of dealing with such matters. We were so glad to hear of this, as it came directly from his own heart of conviction and we were only told of it afterwards.

We are planning to have about 10 of these faithful ones to our home for a three-day intensive Bible teaching time during their spring holiday later this month.

Do continue to pray for us as we work with these and other faithful brethren to raise up servants of Christ to carry on the work among their own people.

**With all our love,
Steve and Patti Phillips**

oyinbosteve@yahoo.com

<http://www.gospelforwestafrica.com>

Sierra Leone Mailing Address:

Steve Phillips & Family
PO Box 1370
Freetown, Sierra Leone

US Mailing Address:

Steve Phillips & Family
PO Box 1531
Shelton WA 98584

US Fax (360) 427-8181