


DARKNESS RISING



Summer, 2021

Dear friends,

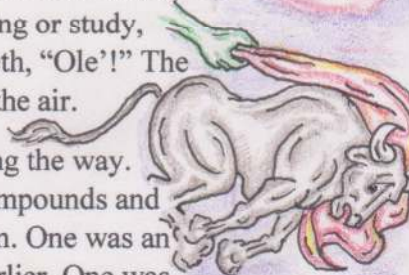
From Beth: You'll be hearing from Tim for our summer letter. I'm getting ready to head back to the United States tomorrow (the 24th), which Tim will talk about in his letter. Many things to pray about! God is faithful, no matter what. Glory to Him!



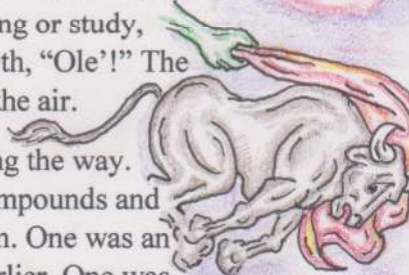

Our last few newsletters have been pretty upbeat with some amazing stories of what God is doing here, but I started to think we may have overdone it a bit. Our son Joel and his family have begun taking serious steps in the direction of coming over here to help with the work. After those newsletters, he told me in one phone call, "Dad, I don't know if you even need us over there." So, this letter is going to hit a more somber note than some of the previous ones, and with good reason. We have been struggling in several areas.



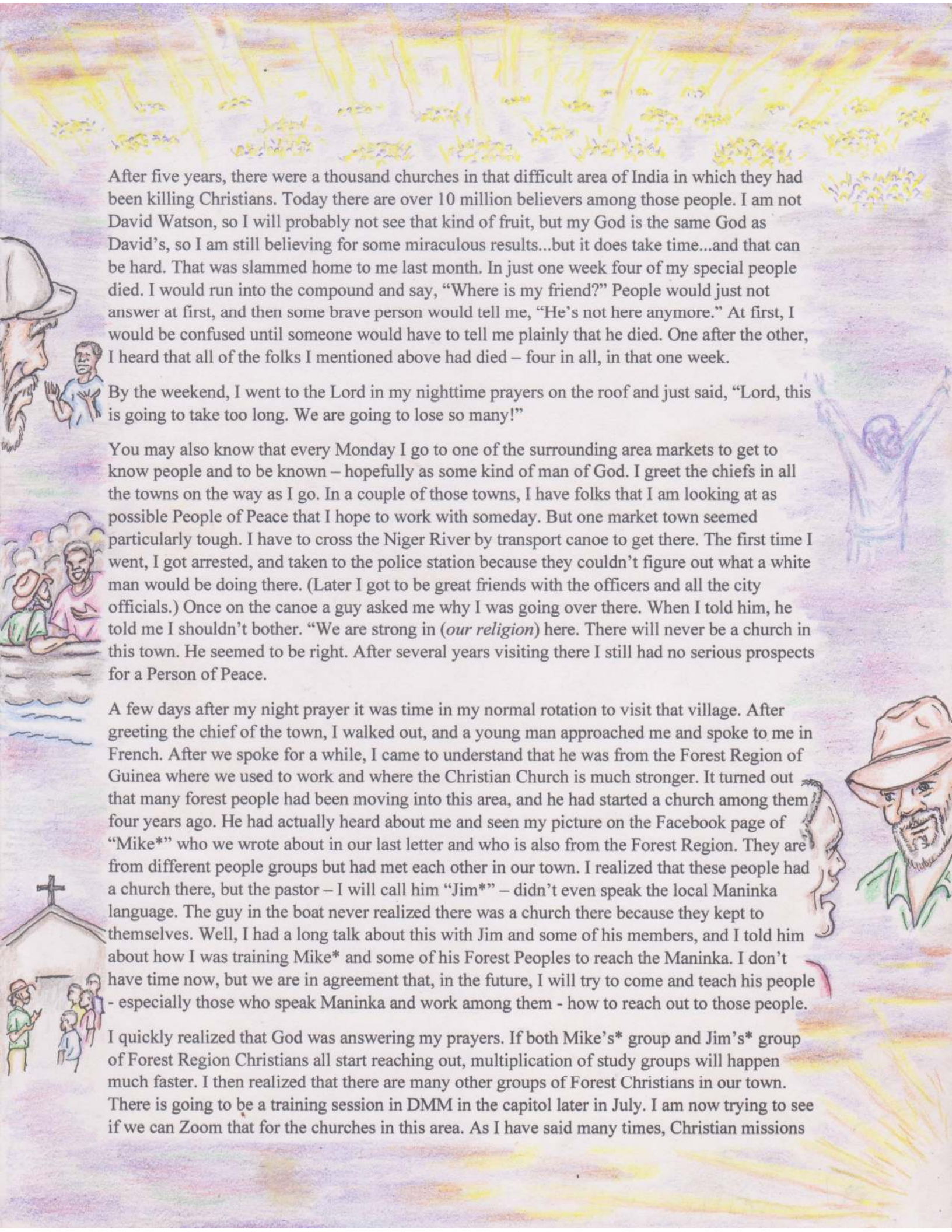
Lately we have been hitting some big roadblocks. As we said before, some of our Discovering God studies have finished, and as we had prayed, most of the participants moved on to start their own studies with friends who are practitioners of the local religion here. We have told some of the great stories of how some of these contacts were made. But after months, none of those new study groups have gotten past the first few lessons. I think there was only one place where they actually said that they didn't want to continue...and even that place started up again. But things just keep happening when meetings are supposed to occur. The Person of Peace gets sick. A family member gets sick. Our leader gets sick. Someone travels. There is a town meeting. There is a communal workday. There is a funeral that the Person of Peace or the leader needs to go to, and you always have to drop everything and go to a funeral. Most stopped for the month of Ramadan. It has been unrelenting. Even our stronger groups that have gotten quite far into the studies have only met a few times in the last few months. Most still seem to have good attitudes and are still interested, but Satan just seems to be shutting us down. Beth and I have even come up with our own term of frustration for this as, day after day, I prepare for a meeting or study, only to have it canceled at the last minute. I just walk into the office and say to Beth, "Ole!" The cape has been snatched away from in front of me again, and I am only lunging at the air.




Again, as some of you know, I run almost every day, and greet kids and folks along the way. Some people become a little more special than others, and I run right into their compounds and say hello. This often happens when someone is sick a lot and ends up in their room. One was an old guy with one leg. One was the old father of a guy I had hit on a motorcycle earlier. One was a blind, mentally challenged boy that couldn't speak. I know he could hear since he would get all excited before I even got close because he could hear me coming. I would give him a hug, and he would bounce up and down with excitement. Since I began doing this, every once in a while, I find out that someone has died. That is always hard, knowing that they don't yet know their Savior. This DMM that we are using has been incredibly effective with this local religion in many places, more effective than anything has been since the founding of that religion many years ago, but it takes time to get going. I think we mentioned that David Watson, who first starting using this method, was almost shut down by his denomination because his work was showing no fruit after years of work. Then in one year eight churches started, the next year, 48.




OLE!




After five years, there were a thousand churches in that difficult area of India in which they had been killing Christians. Today there are over 10 million believers among those people. I am not David Watson, so I will probably not see that kind of fruit, but my God is the same God as David's, so I am still believing for some miraculous results...but it does take time...and that can be hard. That was slammed home to me last month. In just one week four of my special people died. I would run into the compound and say, "Where is my friend?" People would just not answer at first, and then some brave person would tell me, "He's not here anymore." At first, I would be confused until someone would have to tell me plainly that he died. One after the other, I heard that all of the folks I mentioned above had died – four in all, in that one week.




By the weekend, I went to the Lord in my nighttime prayers on the roof and just said, "Lord, this is going to take too long. We are going to lose so many!"





You may also know that every Monday I go to one of the surrounding area markets to get to know people and to be known – hopefully as some kind of man of God. I greet the chiefs in all the towns on the way as I go. In a couple of those towns, I have folks that I am looking at as possible People of Peace that I hope to work with someday. But one market town seemed particularly tough. I have to cross the Niger River by transport canoe to get there. The first time I went, I got arrested, and taken to the police station because they couldn't figure out what a white man would be doing there. (Later I got to be great friends with the officers and all the city officials.) Once on the canoe a guy asked me why I was going over there. When I told him, he told me I shouldn't bother. "We are strong in (*our religion*) here. There will never be a church in this town. He seemed to be right. After several years visiting there I still had no serious prospects for a Person of Peace.




A few days after my night prayer it was time in my normal rotation to visit that village. After greeting the chief of the town, I walked out, and a young man approached me and spoke to me in French. After we spoke for a while, I came to understand that he was from the Forest Region of Guinea where we used to work and where the Christian Church is much stronger. It turned out that many forest people had been moving into this area, and he had started a church among them four years ago. He had actually heard about me and seen my picture on the Facebook page of "Mike*" who we wrote about in our last letter and who is also from the Forest Region. They are from different people groups but had met each other in our town. I realized that these people had a church there, but the pastor – I will call him "Jim*" – didn't even speak the local Maninka language. The guy in the boat never realized there was a church there because they kept to themselves. Well, I had a long talk about this with Jim and some of his members, and I told him about how I was training Mike* and some of his Forest Peoples to reach the Maninka. I don't have time now, but we are in agreement that, in the future, I will try to come and teach his people - especially those who speak Maninka and work among them - how to reach out to those people.



I quickly realized that God was answering my prayers. If both Mike's* group and Jim's* group of Forest Region Christians all start reaching out, multiplication of study groups will happen much faster. I then realized that there are many other groups of Forest Christians in our town. There is going to be a training session in DMM in the capitol later in July. I am now trying to see if we can Zoom that for the churches in this area. As I have said many times, Christian missions





came here over 100 years ago, and there are only a handful of believers. If all the churches that have come into the area because of the gold rush could be mobilized to make every effort to reach out with this effective means, it seems that God could surely do amazing things here in a much shorter time.

In the meantime, there have been other discouragements. Santigi, our long-time house worker fell while trying to pick a mango for his son and hurt himself. For a while he seemed to be recovering nicely, but then, after a month or two new symptoms started showing. His eye began to wander, his mouth drooped, and he was staggering. It seems he had a stroke sometime after the fall. Then our guard, who is quite old, lost his wife. A week later he became bedridden with a mysterious illness. All this against the background of the heart problems our son Jonathan is experiencing. As I write this, we are in Bamako for Beth to catch the plane back to be closer to him. It almost seems like the world is darkening around us at times.*

So, yeah, we are experiencing some really neat moments sometimes here as the Spirit of God moves in individual incidents. But in the big scheme of things, we are still losing in many ways and not making real or sustained progress. There have been no baptisms of Maninka people yet. So, by all means, keep praying for us and our people and the work here. We need miracles from God for sure if we are to see the mass conversions that we so long for.

If you have been reading these newsletters, you know that I signed up to be coached twice a month in Zoom meetings with Paul Watson, David's son. As I write this, I just had a coaching session earlier today. When I laid out some of the situation above, Paul said that he believed that we are now in a serious time of spiritual warfare. I thought about that... DUH!!! He outlined one way that they have used in other obvious warfare situations for spiritual breakthrough. He asked me to find 10 people to commit to fasting and praying over the situation. This I have done. Now, I would ask you to join me and these ten in this commitment, and I would ask you to also enlist anyone and everyone else that you might know of who would be spiritually equipped and willing to do this sort of thing. Beth's prayer calendar that comes out every two weeks lists the times and days of the Discovery Bible studies that are happening. Maybe you could pick one or two of those to really concentrate on. Paul told me stories of other situations in the past when they have used this type of set up, and how stunted situations have suddenly burst into glorious movement and growth. So, I am asking as many of you as are willing to join me and the ten in this commitment now, and to enlist as many others as possible. Thank you for this. And now unto Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is a work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen

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In Jesus,
Tim + Beth

Tim and beth ><

* I COULD ADD THAT AROUND THE SAME TIME, OUR SON, JOEL, CAME DOWN WITH COVID. AFTER RECOVERING, HE BROKE HIS FOOT IN THREE PLACES. DAUGHTER KATIE, SERVING IN SOUTH ASIA, IS HAVING A DIFFICULT PREGNANCY WITH UNKNOWN RASHES + BODY PAINS. SHE + HUSBAND DEWAYNE BOTH CAME DOWN WITH TYPHOID FEVER