

Thousands Witness Healings, Miracles at Madagascar Festival

I just returned from a soul-winning festival in the nation of Madagascar. Most people in North America know Madagascar as a funny cartoon with talking animals, but in reality this island off the coast of South Africa is a nation full of people that need Jesus.

Our outreach took place in the city of Sambava. The prime minister of Madagascar was on our plane. When we arrived at the airport, 30 people came to greet him. To his surprise, more than 1,000 Christians were at the airport to greet our team of evangelists. The believers paraded through the middle of the city to invite people to the festival.

Thousands of people showed up at the festival grounds. On the first night, a woman who was deaf in one ear was healed. Her eardrum was punctured, and for 19 years she was unable to hear in her left ear, but God healed her and she was able to repeat the quietest whisper. On the second night, a 7-year-old boy who could not walk began to walk. These miracles proved to the Malagasy people that Jesus is alive today.

Ten thousand salvation cards were distributed to people who decided to follow Jesus. More than 1,500 believers came to the Fire Conference for an impartation from the Holy Spirit. On our last day in Sambava, 41 people arrived at our hotel to be baptized in the ocean. Great joy filled the city as the people rejoiced that so many had been saved and healed!

The success we experienced in Madagascar is due to the work of the cross and the sacrifices of other missionaries and believers, some of whom paid the ultimate price to bring the gospel to this island nation. In 1818, the London Missionary

Society sent the first missionaries to Madagascar. At first they were welcomed, particularly because they instructed the people in brick-making and other practical skills. They translated the Bible into Malagasy and taught literacy. Several hundred people were baptized into the Christian faith.

But in 1835, Queen Ranavalona forbade her subjects to become Christians. She was worried their Christian beliefs would undermine the traditional religion of the Malagasy people. As queen, she relied on the traditional beliefs for her authority and felt threatened politically by Christianity.

At first she forbade Christian marriages, church services and baptisms for the Malagasy people. Later she expelled all the missionaries. Finally, she ordered that anyone in possession of a Bible or who attended a church service or claimed to be a Christian would be fined, jailed, tortured or executed.

Fourteen Christian leaders were taken to the top of a high cliff. When they refused to renounce Jesus, they were thrown to their deaths in the rock-filled ravine below. Many other believers were condemned to hard labor or had their land and property confiscated. By 1849, more than 2,000 Christians had been persecuted for their faith.

As I stood at the top of that cliff looking down into the valley, I reflected on how much we owe the Christians on whose shoulders we stand. Today a church stands next to the cliff, and I heard the sounds of hymns being sung in the place where Christians were once executed.

Despite persecution, the church in Madagascar continued to grow. When Queen Ranavalona died, her son, King Radama II, publicly converted to Christianity. One of his first acts as king was to build a beautiful church building next to his royal palace.

In the third century, during the midst of the Roman persecution of Christians, Tertullian said, "The blood of the

martyrs is the seed of the church.” Pastor Jules Randrianjoary explained, “The church in Madagascar is built on blood: first the blood of Jesus, and second the blood of martyrs.”

We were privileged to follow in the footsteps of the original missionaries who preached the gospel in Madagascar. Please pray for God to continue to move on the fourth largest island in the world.

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