

Spirit Moves Among Hostile Crusade Crowd

Thugs jumped Bernie Gillott as he walked around the band shell, praying for the crusade, during the setup of sound and staging equipment.

Six men jostled him, barking, "Give me money!" The global evangelism coordinator for Global Teen Challenge managed to escape after showing that his pockets were empty. Meanwhile, street people seized the stage area.

It was just one of many attacks that threatened to ruin the Hope and Destiny Crusade in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in October—but prayer turned the tide.

As evangelist Jimmy Jack reports: "Battling violence, weapons, torrential rains and warfare in the spirit, we thank God for thousands that met Christ."

The crusade, sponsored by West Babylon, Jimmy Jack Ministries in cooperation with Teen Challenge Haiti and Global Teen Challenge, attracted almost 50,000 people. An evangelism grant from the Foursquare Foundation, as well as help from 100 interdenominational churches and local ministries, supported the three-night crusade.

Jack knew ministering in Haiti was risky when he went in, as the country remains in turmoil since its devastating earthquake in January 2010.

As the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, about 80 percent of Haitians exist below the poverty line. Unemployment hovers at 40 percent, and more than two-thirds of the labor force do not have formal jobs.

Cholera has claimed more than 7,900 lives since 2010, and

close to 400,000 still live in tent cities.

The U.S. State Department recently issued a travel warning to Haiti, reporting that U.S. citizens have been victims of violent crime, including murder and kidnapping, predominantly in the Port-au-Prince area.

Under this ominous cloud of need and despair, Jack was compelled to bring Christ's message of hope. Yet beyond Gillott's mugging, serious obstacles surfaced several days before the crusade opened at the Champs de Mars Park near the National Palace.

The sound crew, saying they feared for their lives from hostile locals, begged Jack to intervene. By preaching the love of Christ, Jack calmed the crowd—including the ringleader sipping from a bottle of rum.

With tears in his eyes, Jack grabbed the man's face, urging, "We are here because we love you. Jesus has a plan for your life, just as He had a plan for me."

Stunned by the Holy Spirit, the man broke down, weeping.

In another incident, a corrupt official from the mayor's office, hinting for a bribe, ripped the crusade permit to pieces. He incited the surrounding crowd of 100 people to steal the sound equipment and shouted, "Take it all! Break down the equipment!"

Chaos ensued. The mob hurled rocks, cans and bottles—but God intervened when the mission team was called to urgent prayer. The police suddenly appeared, cooling the melee.

To top it off, torrential rains from Hurricane Sandy almost ended the entire crusade before it opened.

But Jack refused pleas to cancel it and begged God to put a spiritual umbrella over the city park. Miraculously the storm halted.

"It was a supernatural beginning to three days of ministry and miracles," Jack says.

Street thugs, originally hostile, turned friendly and even protected the crusade staff and equipment. Jubilant praise and worship, as well as stirring testimonies from Haiti Teen Challenge students, softened the audience. Tele Ginen, Haiti's largest TV and radio network, broadcast the crusade live around the world. The crowds increased each day, peaking at about 25,000 at the final service.

"The thickness of God's presence was rich and powerful," Jack says. "About two-thirds of the crowd repeated the sinner's prayer with their hands raised."

Thousands of salvation cards were distributed and those submitting them are being followed up with by Haitian churches. The crusade also strengthened Teen Challenge's role. With a waiting list of more than 250, the ministry hopes to expand its men's program and open a home for women.

The ultimate success of the crusade proves God's sovereign power. "We are called to push back the darkness," affirms Gillott. "When we step out, God shows up."

Jack, who recently wrapped up a February crusade in Santiago, Dominican Republic, where he established a Teen Challenge center in 2010, plans to head to Ecuador next, in conjunction with a new center opening there.

"I'm excited about continuing the flow of God's anointing that we experienced in Haiti breaking the claw of Satan," the evangelist says.