

Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

Volume XIX

September 1998

Number 2

Jamaica '98: Life, Death, and Preaching the Gospel

By
Brian Kenyon

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:16-18). Let us note two facts concerning this text. First, all accountable people on the face of this earth are right now either the slaves of "sin unto death" or the slaves of "obedience unto righteousness." There is no middle ground! This fact should motivate all Christians to be concerned with mission work, whether at home or abroad. Second, there is only one way to cease being a slave of "sin" and become a slave of "righteousness"--obedience to the Gospel! This fact should motivate all Christians to study, learn, and teach the

doctrine of Christ.

With these two facts in mind, Brian Kenyon led the following brethren on an evangelistic campaign to Jamaica: Jim Beltz and Ben Radford (from Kissimmee Church of Christ), Mark Bernhardt and Justin Gerhardt (from Central Church of Christ, Clearwater), Dudley Gushman (from North Lakeland Church of Christ), Howard Johnson (from Mt. Olive Church of Christ, Live Oak), Rick Kenyon and Nate Stewart (from S. Florida

Avenue Church of Christ, Lakeland), and J. Manston Kerkula (from Second Street Church of Christ, Winter Haven). Most of these brethren are either current or former students of FSOP. The group departed from Tampa on July 17 and returned July 31. When we arrived at the home of Cliff and Dolly Martin, our gracious hosts, we met the following Christians with whom we worked: Kathy Dawkins (from Middleton, TN), Denise and Melody Toms (from West Memphis, AR), Shawn Paden (from Grand Prairie, TX), and H. D. Simmons (from Corpus Christi, TX).

Gospel Meetings

On our first Sunday, July 19, the twelve preachers were distributed among the following four congregations to lead singing, teach Bible classes, and preach God's word: S.W. Constant Spring and Hughendon, both in Kingston; Faith's Pen in St. Ann Parish; and Hope Bay in Portland Parish.



Jamaica Workers

Some of our brethren returned to Faith's Pen during both weeks to conduct their regular scheduled services. Beginning Sunday night and continuing through Thursday, Brian Kenyon preached in a Gospel Meeting at S.W. Constant Spring. Simultaneous with this meeting, brethren from our group conducted a Gospel Meeting in Hope Bay, which was about a three hour drive each way. Preaching responsibilities were shared by H. D. Simmons, Dudley Gushman, and Ben Radford.

On our second Sunday, July 26, our twelve preachers were again distributed among four congregations. Instead of being in Hope Bay as we were the first week, some of our brethren went to Ti Dixon in St. Ann Parish. Resuming this Sunday night and continuing through Thursday, Brian Kenyon continued preaching the Gospel Meeting at S.W. Constant Spring, with the exception of Monday in which Jim Beltz preached at S.W. Constant Spring, while Brian Kenyon preached at Faith's Pen during their regular "prayer meeting" night. Simultaneous with this meeting, brethren from our group conducted a Gospel Meeting at Ti Dixon, which was about an hour and a half drive each way. Sharing the preaching responsibilities were Dudley Gushman, Howard Johnson, Shawn Paden, H. D. Simmons, Ben Radford, and J. Manston Kerkula.

Vacation Bible School

On Monday through Wednesday of both weeks, our sisters from the states, Denise, Melody, and Kathy, along with some of our preachers conducted a VBS at Maxfield Park Children's Home. This orphanage was in years past operated by the government, but is now under a private board of directors. The church of Christ has been a great influence on the Home

and those associated with it, especially the Central congregation in Clearwater. Children from area neighborhoods were transported to the children's home for these special studies. The attendance at one point was around three hundred (potentially unruly) children. During the first week of VBS, Mark Bernhardt, Howard Johnson, and "Big Nate" (as brother Stewart was affectionately called) led the singing, taught the teen-agers, and assisted in "crowd control." During the second week of VBS, Jim Beltz, Justin Gerhardt, J. Manston Kerkula, and Shawn Paden fulfilled these roles. This was probably the most difficult and exhausting of our tasks, yet those involved willingly worked without complaint. These workers are to be especially commended.

All in a Day's Work

The typical day's activities began with wake up at about 7:00 a.m. We later ate breakfast, held a devotional, and departed from the Martin's around 9:30 a.m. Those who were involved in VBS went to Maxfield Park Children's Home, often making several stops along the way to pick up children and/or additional workers. Those who were not involved in VBS usually either went to previously arranged Bible studies or to the church building at 22 Lincoln Crescent (S.W. Constant Spring) where they "door knocked," distributed tracts, and/or conducted Bible studies with those in the neighborhood. Also during this time, wayward members of the church were visited and encouraged to return to God. The VBS and campaign workers usually returned to the Martin's house by 2:00-2:30 p.m., and dinner was served around 3:00 p.m.

All campaigners usually left the house around 4:50 p.m. and went to various (what most in the states

would call ghetto-like housing project) neighborhoods near the church building at S.W. Constant Spring. At these locations, one of our brothers would "street preach" over a loud speaker, while the rest of the workers walked through the area distributing tracts, inviting people to the meeting, and conducting Bible studies. We would arrive at the church building around 7:00-7:30 p.m. While the song leader lead singing over a P.A. system which could be heard in the streets, others were distributing tracts and inviting people to the meeting. Ben Radford usually led the singing, but also leading songs were Justin Gerhardt, Rick Kenyon, and Nate Stewart.

The preacher usually began around 8:00-8:30 p.m., and he usually preached for a little more than a hour. Following the invitation song, another preacher would give a second exhortation which was followed by more verses of the invitation song. Each Gospel Meeting night concluded with an open forum, which involved a number of questions involving doctrinal truths as well as the scripturalness of certain cultural practices such as women wearing pants and people eating "unclean" animals (i.e. pork, crabs, etc.). Needless to say, we did not leave the

The Harvesters

Published Monthly

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TRAINING PREACHERS SINCE 1969

church building until 9:30-10:00 p.m., sometimes as late as 10:30-11:00 p.m.

Gone to Be with God

On Saturday, July 25, we received news that sister Doreen Jackson passed from this life. Although we were saddened by this news, we do take comfort in the fact that she was one of the most faithful sisters at the S.W. Constant Spring congregation (cf. Ps. 116:15; Rev. 14:13). She seemed to have been recovering well from diabetes complications. In fact, we held our morning devotional at her home two days before her death. At that time, she was in good spirits, and it seemed to be just a matter of time before she would be able to resume the activities to which she was accustomed before her illness. Our prayers continue to be with brother Nevil Jackson and the rest of the family during this time of bereavement.

Responses to the Gospel

For the most part, the Jamaicans with whom we studied were attentive and sincere. They recognized that obedience to the Gospel demands repentance. Some were not willing to obey because they knew they could not be baptized into Christ and continue their present life-style, which often involved drugs and fornication as a means of physical survival. Although our hearts were broken when many who knew the truth refused to obey it (cf. Acts 24:25), our prayer is that God will grant them time enough in this life to obey His word.

While only God can truly assess the full impact of this campaign in Jamaica, there were some visible, positive responses to the Gospel. In Hope Bay, one person was baptized into Christ during the week of our Gospel

Meeting. How much influence our work had on this conversion is known only by God. Certainly, the local brethren were also greatly involved in this new birth. In Faith's Pen, three were baptized into Christ during the weeks of our campaign. Again, the influence that our work had on these conversions is known only by God, but certainly the local brethren, especially the preacher, brother B. S. Brown, had a great influence upon the salvation of these souls. In Kingston, at S.W. Constant Spring, three people were baptized into Christ as a result of personal Bible studies conducted by those of our group. In addition to those whom the Lord added to the church (Acts 2:47), eight souls repented of public sin and were restored to the faithful body of Christ. Some of these had been previously disfellowshipped because of continued sin (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thes. 3:6-15).

God Gives the Increase!

Although fifteen souls visibly responded to the Gospel in a positive way, many more were exposed to the life giving message. The Gospel seed (Lk. 8:11) was sown over the entire Island. Every one of our brethren, including young Rick Kenyon, participated in and/or conducted numerous personal Bible studies. Additionally, our preachers courageously proclaimed the unadulterated Gospel of Christ, even in the face of opposition, and encouraged the saints to continue in the faith. By the grace of God, we accomplished the goal which we set: to plant and water the Gospel seed. Therefore, we have confidence in God that He will give the increase in due time (1 Cor. 3:6)!

Concluding Thoughts

Before we departed for Jamaica, we knew that we would not

be the same when we returned. Obviously, this campaign helped us to better appreciate the blessings of living in the USA. However, even more importantly, this campaign helped us to appreciate even greater the responsibility that God has placed upon us to "teach all nations" (Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16) and the strength which He provides His children to accomplish the task (cf. Mt. 28:20; Phil. 4:13; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:17). We also formed relationships within the family of God that will continue in eternity. We thank all those who made this mission possible, especially FSOP and its supporters; sister Juanita Wardlaw, who supplied us with personal work material at her expense; the elders and congregations who supported and allowed their preachers to be gone for two weeks; family members who willingly sacrificed in order for their husbands, dads, grand-dads, and sons to be away from home fighting the "good fight of faith;" and all the Jamaicans who received us and took such good care of us. May God receive the glory!

Cornelia Bradshaw Memorial

Dear Bro. Stearsman:

I trust that all is going well with you and your work for our Lord and His church.

I have some sad news for you. Our sister Cornelia Bradshaw died Monday, July 20. She lacked just one month of living to be 96 years of age.

She liked and helped support many works including the Florida School of Preaching.

I have included the following as a memorial to her and all she did for the church

Keep up your good work. May the Lord bless you.

—Brotherly, Royce Powell

Sarah M. Taylor Memorial

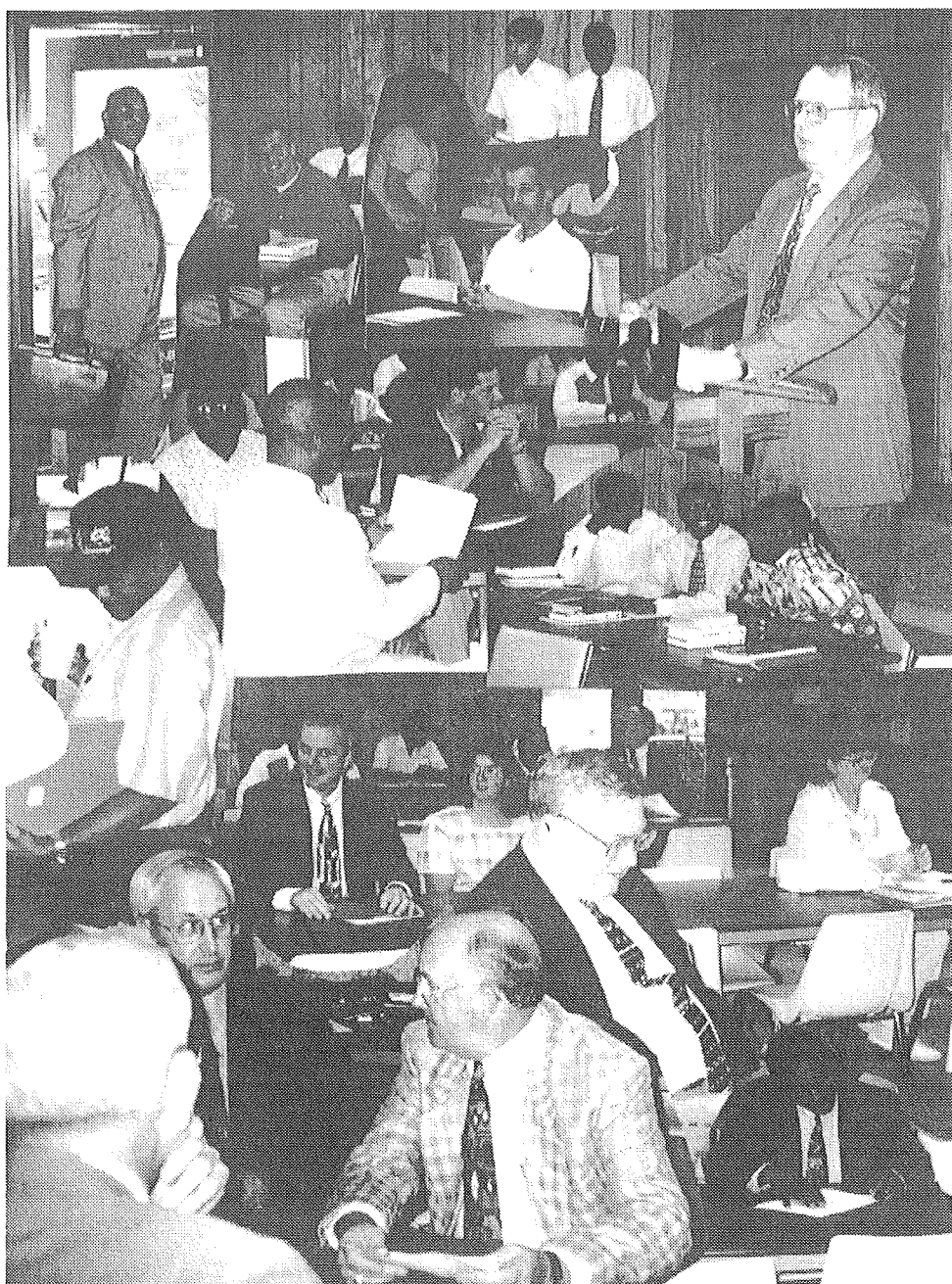
"This is to let you know that my mother 'Sarah M. Taylor' who was a faithful contributor, passed from this life June 10, 1998. She was a very sick lady there at the end. She was a true Christian. One who put the Lord first. A fine example to others and always willing if able to help in the Lord's work. She was loved by many and is being missed by many." —Sandra Smith, August 7, 1998

John Terrell Memorial

John Terrell passed from this life, August 5, 1998. Brother Terrell was a 1982 graduate of the school. At the time of his death he was serving as both an elder and a preacher with the Eastside Church of Christ in Brandon, Florida. Funeral services were conducted at the Bell Shoals Church of Christ building, August 15, 1998.

While we are saddened at the death of these friends of the school, we take comfort in knowing that they were Christians (Psa. 116:15; Rev. 14:13).

—Brian Kenyon



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Panorama

From

Orientation

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