

Chapter 5

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

After my first overseas meeting in Greece, it would be four years before I had another chance to go overseas and minister again.

Meanwhile, the ministry continued to expand in the United States.

In each city we visited, we inevitably made friends, sometimes with the host pastor, sometimes with other ministers, and sometimes with people who had been touched through the meetings.

Every week, the mailbox in our new little house seemed to be filled to overflowing with letters from the friends we had made throughout the country.

Some people would send praise reports of miracles that God had done in their lives. Some people would write to let us know just how much the ministry had blessed them. Some people would write to request that we pray for them and that we agree with them for God to meet their specific needs.

I knew that each letter, each communication we received from our friends, was a very personal matter to the people who had written. They had taken great care and time to sit down and compose a letter to send to us.

It was important to me that each person receive a personal reply.

Since my calls to preach were ever-increasing and I was away from home more often than I was there, much of the responsibility of replying to these letters fell upon Theresa, who shouldered the work with great joy.

Many times, Theresa would come running into my study, smiling from ear to ear, waving a letter, shouting, "Morris! You've got to read this letter!"

Many of the letters requested that we send the writer information on how the ministry was doing, information on

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

how the meetings were going, stories of the healings and salvations God was performing through the ministry. Each letter writer felt they were a part of the ministry, as they prayed for God to use me and prayed for God to bring many souls to salvation through my ministry.

I was thankful to have so many people all over the country praying for me and participating in the ministry in such a powerful way. Theresa and I developed quite a correspondence list as we regularly began communicating with those friends, giving regular reports on how the ministry was doing, and telling them of all the wonderful works of God.

As God demonstrated His power through the meetings, the attendance was ever-increasing.

Soon, we were filling up the six-thousand-seat circus tent we had purchased, and not too long after we began filling it, the tent no longer would hold all of the people who were coming to the meetings.

We tried many solutions, including placing chairs outside the tent, but nothing seemed to handle the huge crowds that were coming to the meetings.

It was in Lima, Ohio, in 1957 that God hung a banner over my ministry that firmly established its course, a course that has never left, through the ensuing forty-three years.

I had rented a high school auditorium in Lima to minister there after having received an invitation from a local pastor.

Each night, it seemed the power of God was ministering more strongly, more pervasively than it ever had before, and each night, the Presence of God was more real.

Night after night, person after person was healed of all manner of diseases, from cancer to measles, from common colds to cripples walking for the first time and the blind seeing for the first time. Just when it seemed the power of God couldn't get any stronger – it did.

Son, Build Me An Army

Night after night, many people answered the call for salvation.

The Presence of God was so thick in that high school auditorium, that every night when I left the meeting to return to my room at the YMCA, God's Presence remained with me – it was all I could do to make it all the way to my room before I fell on my face praising God!

One night, after I had returned to my room and spent an especially worshipful time with God, I climbed into the little twin bed that was in the room, and gradually dozed off to sleep, still recounting the tremendous miracles that God had worked that night in my mind.

I don't recall exactly when I went to sleep, but I know I fell into a very deep and sound sleep.

But that sleep was unexpectedly interrupted by an intense light that filled the room where I was sleeping. The room had been completely dark before I fell asleep, and the contrast between the darkness and the now-brilliant light was very difficult for my eyes to adjust to quickly.

"Surely it's not morning already," I thought to myself. I usually don't sleep very long at night, maybe three to five hours, but I still felt very tired, as if I hadn't even gotten that much sleep. I looked over at the tiny little window in the room and realized that the drapes were closed, and that behind the drapes it appeared to be a lot darker than the light that was in my room.

The room's single bare light bulb hung directly down from the ceiling. I glanced up at the bulb and noticed that it wasn't illuminated.

I knew then that this wasn't any light produced by a natural source.

I immediately lost any residual grogginess I had been experiencing as I got out of bed and fell down, realizing that

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

a supernatural manifestation of God had entered the room and was very near me.

I could feel the incredible nearness of the powerful Holy Ghost as it permeated the room – it was the same feeling of holiness I had felt when I stood in the Presence of God in the vision He had given to me when I was fifteen years old. I could not ignore the fact that I was privileged to again be in the personal Presence of the living God.

I lay prostrate on the floor before God, not knowing why He was here or what He wanted, but knowing that I was in His Presence and that He certainly had a reason for this visitation.

I could hear my heart pounding in my ears...Ka-thud. Ka-thud. I could feel it pounding in my chest. I could even feel my pulse pounding in my wrists as blood coursed through my body, propelled by the accelerated pace of my heart.

As I watched, the walls of this little YMCA room disappeared before my very eyes, and I saw a great horizon toward the edge of my vision.

Above the horizon appeared huge banks of white, billowy clouds, moving in slowly from the peripherals of my vision toward the center of the horizon. The clouds were clearly heavy and ready to drop their cargo at any time.

As the clouds all moved into place, tremendous, large drops began descending downward, but they did not flow like water, they flowed more like oil.

I did not understand what I was looking at. What kind of clouds rained oil, not water? What was God trying to tell me?

“God,” I asked. “What does the rain mean?” I truly could not understand the vision I was seeing, and I needed to know what God wanted me to know.

“This rain is the outpouring of My Holy Spirit upon all flesh,” God replied to me. “It will be poured out upon all nations of the world.”

Son, Build Me An Army

I began to rejoice in my spirit. I had read the prophecies in the Book of Joel:

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.” (Joel 2:28-29)

I also remembered the second chapter of Acts, where the Apostle Peter had stood up and proclaimed the fulfillment of that verse, and was instrumental when the Spirit had been poured out on three thousand listeners on the day of Pentecost.

I remembered the stories I had heard of another great outpouring, this one in Los Angeles, California, in 1907, where a group of Christians under the leadership of a pastor named William Seymour had assembled together in a little church on Azusa Street and had prayed until God began pouring out His Spirit again upon them.

Remembering those stories, I began to wonder who God would be using to lead in this next huge outpouring. I began to wonder what great men must be already preparing to lead in the outpouring, how they must be sanctifying themselves even now, preparing for the tremendous and holy work they were about to undertake.

I began to look around in this vision to see the great men that God had called to do this work. But to my astonishment, I saw no one. Everywhere I looked, the scene was the same, clouds on the horizon, raining down huge drops of oil.

“Lord,” I asked, confused, “Who will lead this great outpouring?”

I hesitated for a minute and thought about my next question.

“Will I be an instrument that You will use to bring this to pass?”

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

I wanted to know exactly what it was God was wanting to show me. I didn't know how or what He had planned, but I was ready for whatever He had in store for my life.

"Son," God answered me gently. "You see no man because no man will lead. The work I am about to do will be without human direction. This outpouring will not be the work of a man, but the work of My Holy Spirit."

Immediately I began to understand. As I pondered what God had told me, the vision dissipated, and the walls of the YMCA had reappeared. I don't know how long I had been there in that state, but I know I came away with a clear vision and a clear foundation for the direction my ministry would take for the rest of my life.

This is not the work of a man, but of the Holy Spirit!

With God doing so many tremendous miracles through my ministry, and bringing so many souls to Christ, I knew that my ministry would have to be based upon my relationship with the Holy Spirit and His direction, not upon my personality or the gifts God had given to me.

I remembered the words Jesus had spoken to His disciples: "*And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*" (Matthew 23:12)

This was God's ministry.

Although He was using a Jewish orphan boy to reach so many souls, it was not this orphan boy's ministry – it was God's ministry. It was not the work of a man, for no matter how hard I worked, I could never replace the action of the Holy Spirit. I could be the hardest worker in the world, but if God did not draw the souls, they would never come to know Christ. I remembered what Jesus had said: "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...*" (John 6:44)

From that day forward, I made an extra effort at every opportunity to be sure the people understood Who was to

Son, Build Me An Army

be praised, Who was to receive the glory for His tremendous workings.

I began to repeat what God had taught me every time I got a chance: "This is not the work of a man, but of the Holy Ghost!"

Not only did this revelation give the glory where it properly belonged – with God – but it took the pressure off me. The ministry would rise or fall, not because of my actions, but because of God's actions. He was in charge, He was responsible, He received the glory, and He directed the ministry. It was truly "the work of the Holy Ghost."

That foundation has been the most important plank of this ministry – this ministry that has touched millions of lives all over the world. To this day, many people ask me the secrets to a successful worldwide ministry, but the truth is, there's only one secret. It isn't a ten-step plan, or seven keys to reaching the lost. The truth is, the only way to be an instrument for God is to let God do what He wants, and let Him take the glory for it!

I never forgot that vision, and I was always careful to give God the praise for everything. Every time I stand before the people, every night of my life, as the people clap for me, I am quick to respond the same: "with all my heart, I thank you for your clap offering; I receive it as a token of your care. But I do not receive it for Morris – I receive it for the only One Who is worthy to be praised – yes there is only One worthy to be praised!" Then I ask the people if they can tell me what His Name is, and they all shout "Jesus!"

During the late 1950s, the flow of letters to our little home was increasing exponentially, and our correspondence list grew larger and larger. Even Theresa, who seemed to work all the time, had a hard time keeping up with the correspondence telling our friends how the ministry was doing.

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

Prayerfully, Theresa and I decided the ministry had to have a home base of operations. It had to be located in an area that was convenient for international flights, and it should be in an area where we could host large groups of people at any time of the year.

We began looking all over the country for a place that might be a good home base for the ministry God had called us to.

When we would begin to find a location that seemed good to us, we would pray, but we never received confirmation from God that we had found the right place.

Finally, toward the end of 1958 and the beginning of 1959, we began praying about a place called San Diego in California.

The warm climate was perfect, and San Diego's location at the southwestern corner of the United States was also perfect for flights to Asia and the South Pacific area that included the Philippines and China.

Theresa and I, after long periods of prayer, decided San Diego was the place to base this growing ministry.

We moved to San Diego, in 1959 and based the ministry there. Our three young children seemed to enjoy the California weather.

We lived in the Stardust Motel in the Mission Valley area of San Diego for six months, before we moved to Cabrillo Palisades, an apartment complex in the Kearny Mesa area.

We still were going out of our way to send out reports on the ministry to all our friends all over the country. Initially, we had a rickety old typewriter, and that's what we would write the letters on. Rarely did a day go by that we didn't spend hours corresponding prayerfully with people who were praying for the ministry.

Even the children got in on the correspondence, sometimes licking stamps, sometimes addressing envelopes.

Son, Build Me An Army

The children developed games with their part of the ministry, and we had envelope-stuffing contests with the children to see who could stuff the most envelopes in the shortest period of time.

But still, most of the work was done by Theresa, as she worked what seemed to be day and night letting our friends know what we were up to, and what incredible miracles God was working.

I had discovered that having a network of friends all over the nation was a tremendous source of spiritual advice and strength to the ministry. It was as if the web of friends we had made in ministry were serving as a tether line to keep the ministry strong.

Soon after arriving in San Diego, our list of friends had become incredibly large. It became clear that we could no longer write individual reports to each and every person on our list of friends. Even with the entire family helping out, there simply weren't enough hours in the day to write letters to everyone on the list – we would have been doing nothing else, we would have never found the time to minister to the nations of the world, or even at a small meeting at a local church.

It became obvious that we had to find a way to communicate with our friends, but not take up all the time God had called us to use ministering to needy people in crusades and meetings. I still desperately wanted to tell our friends how the ministry was doing, and inform them of God's workings through the world. We could not hire people to write all the letters, either, we knew God had called us to be good stewards of any money we got into our hands and use that money to reach out with the Gospel.

We faced a tremendous dilemma. Some ministries and large corporations had already started a practice of writing

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

one letter, printing that letter on a printing press, and sending it out to multitudes of people.

But I could not bring myself to do something like that. Each of the people on our list of friends had personally invested themselves in prayerful financial support of our ministry; I wanted a way to inform our friends of what was going on in the ministry without sending a letter addressed to “Occupant.”

Our dilemma was solved when we discovered a machine called an “autotype.” This machine was a huge gadget that would take our letters and type them out, with us addressing each letter to the proper recipient. It operated by sticking a tape, sort of like an audiotape, into a slot on the machine, and the machine would use that tape to determine which letter was printed when. Theresa became quite proficient in using the machines, even learning how to fix them when they broke. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, no one had ever heard of a computer – this machine was cutting-edge technology. It allowed us to still tell each of our friends what God was doing through the ministry in a personalized way, but we wouldn’t spend precious ministry time typing hundreds of letters a day by hand.

With the help of that machine, we were able to keep our friends abreast of what was going on so they would know exactly how to pray.

But if we thought that machine would take the work out of the ministry, we had another thing coming. Each letter still had to be folded, placed in an envelope, the envelope still had to be licked, and the stamp still had to be applied. For a little family of five, it was still a tremendous amount of work, a full-time job, especially since it was in our garage!

In 1959, I again received a call to minister overseas, for the first time since my meetings in Greece.

Greece had been a baptism by fire – one emergency after another. It was only through intense fasting and prayer that

Son, Build Me An Army

the meetings even happened. I had been called upon to print handbills and buy advertising, rent the theatre, but I had never really gained a true understanding of the logistics involved in arranging and executing an overseas meeting.

In Greece, I was flying by the seat of my pants, so to speak, reacting to each crisis as it arose, relying on God to move miraculously and still bless the people.

But God had impressed upon me to more diligently prepare for future overseas meetings.

“And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures...” (Acts 17:2)

Paul had a plan when he went into a city. He didn't just walk in blind and begin winning the lost to Christ; he carried with him a specific plan, and he followed it and reaped great rewards because of his organization.

The troubles in Greece had taught me that I had to inspect what I expected. I had to make sure that what I expected would actually get done. I had to be a good steward not only of the money God had entrusted to me, but the time God had entrusted to me.

So when I received the call to minister in Hong Kong and the Philippine Islands, I knew I had to work diligently to organize the meetings beforehand.

This time, Theresa would be able to go along with me.

As we prepared to leave for Hong Kong, and then the Philippines, we knew there was a mountain of work to do. Two ministers were to accompany us to preach during the daytime services, Gordon Lindsey and Lester Sumrall.

As I began making arrangements, I found out I knew next to nothing about things as simple as getting handbills printed in Hong Kong. The culture there was completely foreign to me.

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

In Greece, the culture was different from the culture in America, but in Hong Kong, the mentality was even more completely different. Even getting handbills printed and distributed seemed to be an insurmountable task, a task that took literally weeks to get finally rolling.

The logistics of setting up a meeting in Hong Kong were staggering. We had thought of the major things, such as advertising, renting the venue and creating posters – and those things were hard enough.

I knew absolutely nothing about renting a stadium. The stadium we rented in Hong Kong, the South China Football Stadium, was immense, with a capacity for some forty-thousand or fifty-thousand people.

We had no idea the sheer amount of money and hard work it took to set up an overseas meeting of any size. Greece had been easy compared to starting a meeting from scratch. While renting the Kentragon Theatre and doing all the advertising had cost only a few thousand dollars in Greece, renting the stadium in Hong Kong would cost quite a bit more.

After we found out how much it would be to rent the stadium and made arrangements in faith to do so, we had to figure out how to build a platform in the stadium. Every stadium has rules as to what you can and can't do on their turf. Because sports are played in nearly every stadium, you have to be careful not to do damage to their carefully cultivated turf.

We hadn't realized the complexities of even what we considered simple things, like arranging for power to be in the stadium so we could run the sound equipment and the lights. A permit had to be obtained, and we had to deal with power companies to be sure they would be able to get us power when we needed it.

Little details took us completely by surprise: we had to make sure the platform had a pulpit and had chairs. We had

Son, Build Me An Army

to make sure the stadium floor had enough chairs to seat the people who would come. We had to make sure the ministers who would be joining us would have airfare to get to Hong Kong and airfare to get back to the United States. We had to make sure they had hotel reservations. We had to make sure they had transportation from the airport to the hotel, and from the hotel to the stadium. We had to have a place to minister to those who would accept Christ during the meetings. We had to make sure someone would follow up later with the people who would accept Christ. We had to arrange for ushers to help the Nationals who would be attending. There were so many more details than this that it's hard to remember them all forty years later. There were details upon details, and every one had to be arranged by people who had no experience setting up such details. It was a daunting task for young ministers from America to try and accomplish in a nation so completely foreign.

But when we were working out the details, we discovered we hadn't even thought about getting a sound system capable of reaching the entire stadium. A stadium, besides being simply huge, is notoriously hard to set up sound in. Because of the sheer size, if you don't set the sound system up just right, people in the front will hear the message a second or so before people in the back, and when the people in the back are hearing the message, people in the front are hearing echoes of the message in the back.

I was completely naive. I had no idea the kinds of things that had to be done to set up an overseas crusade, and the tremendous logistical details that had to be worked out in advance.

We had to get permits to have an open-air meeting, which I knew next-to-nothing about. Once we got the permits, we were not certain we would be able to keep them. At the whim of just about any official in the

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

bureaucracy of a foreign nation, permits that are granted one day can be repealed the next day – or even sooner – for no reason at all.

Living in the United States, most people have no idea how powerful foreign governments are in the everyday lives of citizens of their countries. The word of government officials is law, and in countries that are grumpy about the Gospel – or even downright hostile – it can be months of work just to get a permit to hold a meeting, and even after all that work, there's no guarantee the permits will be there when you get ready to do the meeting.

These were all details I didn't know when I was preparing to go to Hong Kong and the Philippines to minister.

I had to pick them up in "on-the-job" training. It was an eye-opening experience, and the sheer expense of making all these details come to reality completely floored me. I knew that to operate in a ministry that consistently ministered to foreign nations of the world, I would have to be an extra-careful steward of the funds God entrusted to me. The staggering expense of foreign meetings demanded that every penny be made to count when arranging those meetings, every dollar to stretch like it was five.

To top it off, we didn't know anything about the climate in Hong Kong. We went to minister in that island city in February, the middle of winter, when the temperatures were literally freezing – for open-air meetings.

It was a bit discouraging and intimidating that we had to concentrate on so many little details to make the meetings happen. I was still only a young man ministering for only my second time overseas and really my first time in a truly "foreign" country.

When we arrived in Hong Kong for the meetings, however, we forgot the little details that had dogged us while we were preparing the meetings.

Son, Build Me An Army

Hong Kong was a fascinating place. The entire country was a little island off the coast of China. Nearly everything on the island centered around the fact that it was surrounded by water. It seemed everything happened by boat.

Hong Kong was a British colony at that time, so some signs were written in both Chinese and English, but many were not. Hong Kong, like Greece, was a study in contrasts. Some people were dressed in traditional Chinese regalia, and others were dressed in Western attire, working in modern-looking buildings and driving modern cars. And everywhere, the influence of Communist China was evident. The Communist party was strong in Hong Kong, and it was not uncommon to see people walking down the street dressed in the unmistakable uniform of the Communist party.

As soon as we arrived in Hong Kong, I immediately felt led of God to pray. No sooner had we checked in to the hotel and gotten into our room than I began to seek God, praying for the souls we would be ministering to, praying that God would work tremendous miracles, but most of all, the miracle of salvation.

If we were to have any effect at all, I knew we couldn't minister without the Presence of God coming into the services.

Unless He came, we could sing the prettiest songs, preach the most theologically correct sermons, and make as much noise as we could, but the people would never be touched. We needed the Presence of God.

Every day, the ministers who had come with me would minister to the multitudes of people. Every night, I was scheduled to preach the services.

Every night, the services were packed with tens of thousands of people. I had never preached to crowds so large.

Theresa had a little Keystone camera that she used to take pictures.

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

The weather was terribly cold, but once the meetings got going and the power of God began to flow, I no longer noticed the cold, even though I had to preach in an overcoat.

It amazed me, however, that the throngs of people stood outside in that cold, not seeming to mind, for hours on end to receive the Word of God.

Thousands of people gave their lives to Christ, but most amazing were the scores of Communists, who doubtlessly had come to revile the meetings, who came to the altar to give their lives to Christ – which is strictly against the principles of Communism. When the word of the meeting spread, many crossed over the Communist border and sneaked into the meetings.

God was faithful to show up with His healing power – the miracles in Hong Kong were simply incredible, as people with all manner of diseases were healed instantly.

I remember one crippled man who came up for prayer. As I was about to pray for him, God impressed upon me to lay the man's legs on my own and pray. As I did, his legs were instantly healed, and he walked off the platform rejoicing and praising God.

But still, the most tremendous miracles of all were the salvations. Thousands of people answered the call to make Jesus Lord of their lives, and as they did, I couldn't help but weep for the incredible commitment they were making.

Later, we spent a few days ministering to the new converts in a theatre, teaching them the principles of their new life, and the importance of a deep relationship with Jesus.

It was at one of these meetings that we met a precious Chinese lady named Nora Lam. This lady related to us how she had been touched in the meetings, and we quickly became friends with her. So many people had been led to Christ during these meetings, that it became

Son, Build Me An Army

apparent the new converts needed a place to meet for weekly services.

None of the local churches in Hong Kong would have been able to handle such an influx of new believers – it would have simply overwhelmed them.

I didn't know what we could do to help these people to have a house of worship, so I did what I always did when I didn't have an answer to a pressing question.

I went back to my hotel room and fell on my face before God. During that intense time of prayer, God told me that the ministry should obtain a place for this new congregation to worship.

It was a tremendous step of faith. To find a place large enough to accommodate a significant number of Christians and to pay for it in a foreign country having never dealt with real estate in that country was certainly a tremendous proposition.

It would be nothing short of miraculous. But God's will was clear, so we set about to prayerfully find a suitable location for these new believers.

It wasn't easy. Hong Kong is not only a bustling island state, it's also tremendously crowded. Finding real estate is no small task.

After much looking and quite a bit of negotiating, we finally found the fourth floor of a building right on the Hong Kong harbor. The floor's size would be perfect for both a worship center and church offices.

We made arrangements to purchase the floor and turn it into a church – the New Life Temple. Nora Lam, the lady we had met in the believers' meeting, agreed to stay on as our secretary at the church, handling administrative functions and doing the day-to-day work of running a church.

She proved herself a capable and willing secretary, and a tremendous servant of God for the years she stayed with the

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

New Life Temple. Years later, Nora became world-famous when she wrote her life story of struggle in Communist China in the book, *China Cry*, which also later became a Hollywood movie.

When we closed the meetings in Hong Kong, our next stop was the Philippines, the meetings about which I wrote in Chapter One of this book. Again, the simple logistics of setting up the meeting were tremendously complicated. These two early meetings prepared me for a lifetime of often difficult and always expensive preparations for overseas meetings.

Truly, even through these first two really foreign meetings, I had seen nothing yet.

But if I thought those meetings were battles – through working out the logistics and praying intensely for salvations and miracles – I had no idea what a battle was, yet.

In 1960, I had become acquainted with a ministry called the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International, a worldwide outreach to men, based in Costa Mesa, California.

The group's founder, Demos Shakarian, had given me a personal invitation to minister in a crusade in the Caribbean island of Haiti.

Haiti is one of the poorest nations in the world. The people there live in unbelievable poverty and in conditions we in America have a hard time even imagining.

But once a year, during a seven-week period, the people of that island gather together in one of the most depraved, wicked displays of human sinfulness that can be imagined anywhere in the world.

The Mardi Gras celebration in Haiti is absolutely vile. It continues seven consecutive Sundays, with people dancing in the streets in drunkenness, and open sexual sin. We even received reports that five thousand girls were raped in one night, and no one did anything to stop it.

Son, Build Me An Army

And with the revelry of Mardi Gras always came the witchcraft. Most people on the island claim to be Catholic, but the reality couldn't be further from the truth. They may attend Catholic church services, but most don't follow the teachings of that church; after they attend church, they may go straight to the local witch doctor to practice their superstitious religion, voodoo.

At the time, I knew nothing of voodoo. I didn't know of its practices rooted in witchcraft, of its use of religious charms called "fetishes." I had no idea that voodoo priests believed if they burned someone in effigy, or if they stuck pins in a representation of that person that real harm would come to the person the icon represented.

The people fear the voodoo priests, whom they call witch doctors. They fear that the witch doctors might use their magic against the people, so to appease them, the people do pretty much whatever the witch doctors want. I had no idea this kind of fear and superstition gripped the island; I was just a young evangelist. All I knew was I was there to preach the Gospel during a five-day crusade.

In the natural, the timing of our crusade couldn't have come at a worse time. We were scheduled to begin right in the middle of Mardi Gras, the height of voodoo's pagan year. Little did we know that our very presence was stirring up a hornet's nest among the island's witch doctors, who got together and decided to organize against us.

By 1960, we were getting used to the logistics of arranging overseas meetings. Our practice had become to send out posters ahead of time to be posted all over the area of the meetings, advertising the upcoming crusade.

In Haiti, the posters had been put up all over the island. This stirred up the voodoo priests even more.

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

When my airplane touched down in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, I was immediately met by a string of dignitaries and high-ranking officials in a long motorcade of limousines.

As soon as I stepped off the plane, I knew something was different about Haiti – something was not right. I wanted to hurry to my hotel room and pray, but I didn't want to offend the dignitaries by rushing off, so I agreed to take part in their motorcade, which was to parade through town and in front of the president's house.

As I sat in the back of the limousine with a general and Senator Arthur Bonhomme, the motorcade began its trip through the streets of Haiti.

I began to feel sick. I turned to our crusade soloist and said, "Swen, if you don't mind, please help me. I want to go to my hotel. I don't want to go in this motorcade."

My hosts didn't initially understand, but they obliged, pulling the car out of the motorcade and taking me to my hotel.

The sickness seemed to be permeating my entire body. As soon as I got into my hotel room, for which my hosts had pre-registered me, I fell to the floor as one dead and began praying to God.

"Lord, what is it?" I cried out to God. "What do I feel inside me?"

"Son," God said, "this is not a physical sickness, but a spiritual discernment I have allowed for a reason. I want to talk to you. Tonight there is going to be trouble."

I had seen trouble before, to be sure. Many religious leaders had opposed our meetings, and many times we had extreme difficulty getting everything in order to make the meetings happen, but I sensed that the trouble God was speaking of was different from the troubles I had faced before.

"What is it, Lord?" I asked.

Son, Build Me An Army

“There are hundreds of witch doctors who are already mad at you,” God said. “They are coming to kill you. They have organized to break up the meeting.”

The words rang in my head for a bit: “They are coming to kill you.” This was the first time that my life had been directly threatened in the course of ministering to the nations of the world. I was a little bit surprised to find out that I could feel no fear within myself. I felt none of the trepidation I would have assumed I would feel. I felt no need to postpone the meetings or cancel them. In fact, I felt a tremendous inner strength and a special apostolic anointing.

“Well, now, Lord,” I replied. “I’m glad You told me. If I’m supposed to die, fine. I’ll be a martyr for Your sake.”

Little did I know this was the first of many times I would have to say this during my life as radicals from countries all over the planet threatened and planned to kill me, and I had to face audiences knowing there was a very real possibility I might be killed.

“If this is what You want,” I continued, “it is all right with me. But what should I do?”

I was prepared to die for God’s sake, but I wanted to know what He had planned for me to do. If that plan was for me to be martyred, I was fine with that, but if that plan was something else, I needed clarification from Him as to exactly what it was.

God showed me how I was to identify them in the crowd – where they would stand, and then He spoke.

But what God said to me was unexpected, and awe-inspiring in its implications. He had never said anything even remotely close to this to me before, and I have never heard Him say anything like it since:

“Son, the word that you speak will be exactly as if I had spoken it, and that word will come to pass.”

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

Although it took a minute for what God had said to sink in, I knew exactly what He had told me. God was letting me know that this night, I had the power of life and death in my mouth.

What a tremendous and heavy responsibility! I thought of the apostle Peter, who also had apparently been in charge of this kind of responsibility:

“Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.” (Acts 5:9-10)

It was not a responsibility to be taken lightly. It was not an authority to be used at the whim of a man, after all, “...it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish...” (Matthew 18:14).

God’s will was not for the people who had planned to kill me to perish. His will was that they “...may know him, and the power of his resurrection...” (Philippians 3:10). But God had placed in my hands the tools to ensure that His will was accomplished in the rest of the people at the meetings. If the few were standing in the way of salvation for the many, God had made it clear to me that He would not stand for that kind of disruption.

It wasn’t very long until there was a knock on my hotel room door. As I opened the door, I saw many of the local ministers in Port-au-Prince who were hosting the meeting. As I looked on each of their faces, I saw the same thing in all: fear.

Son, Build Me An Army

I could immediately tell that some of these ministers believed in the power of the witch doctors. They began to tell me what I already had learned by the power of God.

“Brother Cerullo,” one of the ministers said. “We don’t want to tell you what to do. But we don’t think you should have a Sunday night meeting.”

The man’s face was furrowed with worry, and it was sincere. I could tell he believed every word he was saying, and he was genuinely concerned for my safety.

“A Sunday night meeting will conflict with the Mardi Gras celebration,” the minister continued, gesturing with his hands as he spoke. “In Haiti, that is the most important celebration of the year. The witch doctors would not like it if you interrupt that celebration with a Gospel meeting. Already, they have torn down your posters all over Haiti.”

He paused and seemed to be pondering within himself whether he should tell me what he had to say next.

“Some of the posters they have burned in effigy,” he continued, obviously deciding he should go ahead and tell me everything. “The only posters they have left up are the posters they have poked with their voodoo pins, which they believe will inflict actual harm on you. Already, they are calling their evil spirits down on you to keep you from conducting the meetings.”

I could tell from the faces of the other ministers that they agreed with what this sincere man was telling me.

“If you decide to have Sunday meetings, we will come with you,” the minister said. “But we don’t think you should.”

I sat back for a minute and tried to think of just the right words to use to explain to this minister why I would not only hold meetings on Sunday, but why I had to. But just as I was about to speak, C.C. Ford, a friend of mine, and one of the

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

executive directors of the Full Gospel Businessmen, spoke up and answered before I could.

“Let me tell you something about Brother Cerullo,” Mr. Ford said gently, in the most reassuring tone I had ever heard him use. “One thing about him you will come to understand is that he is not consecrated unto life.”

Mr. Ford let that statement sink in, and I could tell by the puzzled looks on the faces of the ministers that they were in a hurry for him to explain what he meant.

“Brother Cerullo is consecrated unto death. He has no fear of death, nor of your witch doctors.”

I couldn't have said it better myself. Mr. Ford had articulated exactly what I wanted to say to these concerned ministers. God had called me to preach the Gospel, and if that included dying in the course of that calling, I was ready to die. Certainly, I didn't want to die if it wasn't in the will of God, but death held no fear for me. I could completely understand what the Apostle Paul was thinking when he said, *“for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* (Philippians 1:21)

Paul had no death wish. He wanted to live in the action of the Gospel. But he also understood that if he was to die, it would be a gain to him as he knew he would wake up in glory, face-to-face with the King of all creation.

I had nothing to lose. If I lived, I would live to Christ. If I died, I would die to Christ – either way, I won.

The ministers who had come to warn me didn't seem too convinced, but they respected our decision to hold the meeting anyway.

I laugh a little bit when I think of what these precious ministers must have thought at that moment – “nice knowing you.”

But I had a promise from God...

Son, Build Me An Army

I knew God intended to bring souls to salvation that night, and He wouldn't let a few measly witch doctors stand in His way.

Haiti's president, Francois Duvalier, had invited the Full Gospel Businessmen and me to come to his country and conduct these meetings.

So when we arrived at the stadium, nearly two hundred dignitaries and high-ranking military officials came and sat on the platform with their wives as the crusade opened.

It looked more like a royal revue than a miracle crusade to look at the bevy of dignitaries who were sitting on the platform. Many of the military men were wearing their full dress uniforms, decked out with gold and medals, ribbons and other symbols of recognition of their valor and skill at military affairs.

That first night, five thousand people were jammed all around the platform, which had been erected in the middle of the stadium. Another ten thousand people were crammed into the stands that surrounded the open area in the center of the stadium.

The crowd was by far the loudest and wildest I had ever faced.

In those days, church crowds were much different from what they are today. No one was moving around during the service. There was a reverent silence during most of the services, and people sat attentively watching everything that went on.

But this service in Port-au-Prince was the exact opposite of the subdued reverence I was accustomed to.

The crowd was in havoc. Many people were laughing and jeering, making faces and intimidating other people in the crowd.

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

Some were waving their arms around and making strange noises. Others were pointing at the platform and shouting and laughing.

It was a mess.

Milling about through the crowd were three hundred witch doctors. God showed me where each one was. It was as if they completely stood out in the crowd. I could tell every single one. As they made their way around in the crowd, people around them gave them plenty of room. It was clear the people of Haiti weren't interested in incurring the wrath of these voodoo priests.

When I was introduced, the mayhem in the crowd quieted down just a little bit. Many of the people who had been laughing and jeering quit what they were doing just long enough to hear what was said about me.

I approached the microphone and looked out into the crowd. Every eye was upon me.

"I greet you tonight in the Name that is above every name, Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God," I said into the microphone.

It was as if I had fired off a pistol at the start of a track meet.

In the midst of the crowd, in little pockets positioned everywhere, the witch doctors started to chant.

Boom, ba boom, ba boom, ba boom.

Boom, ba boom, ba boom, ba boom.

Boom, ba boom, ba boom, ba boom.

The chant swelled, as the people around the witch doctors began to take up the chant and amplify it by adding their own voices, whether out of compliance or outright fear of crossing the witch doctors.

The witch doctors began to move about the stadium, coming down from the bleachers and heading toward the platform.

Boom, ba boom, ba boom, ba boom.

Boom, ba boom, ba boom, ba boom.

Boom, ba boom, ba boom, ba boom.

Son, Build Me An Army

I called for quiet.

But the witch doctors and the people who were following them stopped for a moment, then ignored me.

Boom, ba boom, ba boom, ba boom.

Boom, ba boom, ba boom, ba boom.

Boom, ba boom, ba boom, ba boom.

I called for quiet again. I knew what God had called me here to do, and I knew the lengths to which He was willing to go to ensure His message came across, but I hoped it wouldn't come to that.

The witch doctors, stopped again, and then ignored me again.

Boom, ba boom, ba boom, ba boom.

Boom, ba boom, ba boom, ba boom.

Boom, ba boom, ba boom, ba boom.

The chants were increasing in volume. We had set up speakers to amplify my voice to reach the huge crowds in the stadium, but as the chanting built in volume, it was hard for me to hear myself when I called for silence a third time.

Still the witch doctors stopped and resumed their chants, their chants building even more in volume.

Boom, ba boom, ba boom, ba boom.

I tried one last time, and called for quiet.

The chants increased even more.

Boom, ba boom, ba boom, ba boom.

The dignitaries on the platform looked worried. Some were looking around, as if searching for a quick way to exit the platform before the entire place broke out in a riot. There was no escape, however, the platform was built in the middle of a sea of people.

The ministers who were hosting the meeting appeared frightened, and they, too, seemed to be looking for a way out.

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

Inside me, a righteous indignation rose up like none I had ever experienced. It was as if the Spirit of God completely overwhelmed my being and took over.

My interpreter at this meeting was a Bible school boy named Nelson. I turned to Nelson and sternly pointed my finger at him.

“Son,” I shouted to him over the noise of the witch doctors and their cronies. “I want you to interpret exactly what I say – every word! Don’t you dare change a single word. Not one syllable!”

Nelson’s eyes were wide with fear. “Yes, sir!” he replied. “Yes, sir! Yes, sir!”

I turned to the crowd and began to speak.

“People of Haiti, this is the last time I am going to speak. I have asked for reverence and quiet three times now to be able to give you God’s Word. I want you to know that I didn’t just decide to come to Haiti. God sent me here. The true and living God sent me to you. He gave me a message of love. He gave me a message of healing for you. He loves you. He wants to save you. He wants to forgive your sins, to bless you and heal you. Now that is the message He sent me here to bring to you. But that God is also a God of judgment.”

The crowd’s noise quieted a bit, and I could tell they were paying attention to what I was saying. I continued.

“Today, in my room, God showed me that there were hundreds of witch doctors who would be here tonight to destroy this meeting.” As I spoke, I pointed to some of the red-shirted witch doctors who were milling about the platform.

“I am going to be here in this city for some time,” I continued. “We had better find out tonight – this first night – whether you and your devil have more power than I and my God!”

Son, Build Me An Army

I could tell the Spirit of God had their attention, especially all the witch doctors. But the righteous indignation that had risen up in me wasn't finished. God had a point to make. I turned to look at the dignitaries who were assembled on the platform.

"Now, I serve notice that I take no responsibility for what happens from this point on. The NEXT PERSON IN THIS STADIUM who opens their mouth and says one word to hinder or destroy this meeting, I will take no responsibility before all these dignitaries on the platform when they carry you out of this stadium...DEAD!"

Immediately, the stadium was filled with silence.

No more chanting. No more "boom ba boom."

I didn't even hear crickets chirping. Everyone was so silent, if someone had dropped a hairpin on the ground, I believe everyone could have heard it.

It looked as if some people might not even be breathing.

The witch doctors apparently did not want to find out if God actually would kill them for disrupting this service after they had been warned.

I began to preach a powerful message of salvation under the anointing of God.

For fifteen or twenty minutes, my voice and the voice of my interpreter were the only sounds that could be heard in this massive stadium, the only words that circulated around the fifteen thousand people gathered were words of life flowing directly from the Bible.

After I had been preaching that length of time, a sudden scream from the back of the crowd pierced through the night air like a hot knife cutting through a stick of melting butter.

Many in the crowd turned around to look, as a commotion that began in the back began to work its way through the crowd toward the front.

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

As I peered over toward where the noise was coming from, I could see many people with their hands over their heads, and they appeared to be passing a little baby over the tops of their heads, one by one, moving the baby toward the platform.

The place was erupting in commotion.

I turned to Nelson and said, "What is going on?"

"Brother Cerullo," he answered, "while you were preaching a child back there who was born blind can now see and is grabbing for his parents' eyes, nose, ears and head. The place is going wild."

They continued to advance the child toward the platform, over the heads of the people, who were passing her forward.

Finally, she reached the platform.

The little girl was gazing in awe at the commotion all around her. She had never seen anything before, and she was amazed at everything.

Her parents were pressing through the huge crowd of people who were assembled around the platform. When they arrived, they began testing her vision, waving their fingers in front of her little eyes. Her eyes followed their fingers everywhere.

A few moments later, a large grin came over the little girl's beautiful little face, as she saw her daddy's nose and began grabbing it. Her father, tears in his eyes, smiled and laughed as his daughter played with his nose.

The little girl's mother was worshiping God, tears pouring from her eyes in what seemed to be torrents.

Behind me, one of the high-ranking Haitian officials stood up and began to shout out some words in his language.

I turned around to my interpreter and asked him what this man, whose uniform was decked with all kinds of gold bars and braids, was saying,

"He's saying, 'My God! That's my neighbors,'" my interpreter said.

Son, Build Me An Army

God had begun demonstrating His power to this crowd of people, who formerly were so afraid of the witch doctors.

I had issued a challenge earlier, telling the witch doctors that we would find out whether God was more powerful than the devil they served.

In the eyes of the crowd, the question was settled.

Revival began to break out in that crowd of fifteen thousand, as more healings began to take place all over the stadium.

God poured out His Spirit into this group of spiritually starving people.

But God was not done.

If He had simply healed these people and demonstrated to the masses that they had nothing to fear in the witch doctors, it would certainly have been enough to ensure the salvations of many thousands upon thousands of people.

After all, they had tried their worst, and nothing had happened. God, on the other hand, had shown the people that He is alive, and still working in the affairs of mankind.

But I began to remember the Scripture I had thought of in my hotel room, that God didn't want even one person to perish.

As I did, I saw the most amazing thing...

Some of the witch doctors – wearing red shirts – were weeping and crying at the sight of this little girl's healing.

And all over the crowd, from my vantage point on the stage, I saw witch doctors drop to their knees, lift their hands and pray to Jesus to save their souls.

They had for years practiced a religion that promised them power and held them on a pedestal of fear in the eyes of all the people, but this night, they had witnessed the power of a very real God and they realized they had given their lives to the wrong side.

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

That meeting ended with a tremendous altar call where thousands of people gave their lives to Jesus. The dignitaries behind me could hardly believe their eyes, and many of them also gave their lives to Jesus.

The next night, the stadium was filled to capacity, as word of the witch doctors' defeat spread throughout the island. Thirty-five thousand people crammed themselves into the stadium to receive from God.

The sky was very overcast, with heavy-looking gray clouds looming over the stadium, threatening rain at any minute.

My hosts explained to me that Haitians are very superstitious, and being rained upon was a sign of bad luck. When the dark clouds filled the sky, the crowds at the meeting began to run out of the stadium, not wanting the bad luck of being rained upon.

I grabbed the microphone and shouted into it: "In the Name of Jesus, I command you to stop running and stand still!"

Again, the words just spewed forth from my mouth, under an incredible anointing of God's power and direction.

It was as if I had thrown a gigantic power switch. The people who had been running in superstitious panic suddenly stopped in their tracks, as if a movie playing the scene had stopped dead in the projector.

"In the Name of Jesus, turn around and look at me," I shouted into the microphone. Everyone turned around to see why this preacher was talking to them like this. "You see those dark clouds?" I continued. "Now you are going to know what kind of prophet of God I am. IT WILL NOT RAIN while the service is going on!"

I don't know if the people were just curious to see if what I said was true or not, or if they stayed because they believed what I had said, but the people stayed, and I began

Son, Build Me An Army

preaching, and preached an entire message, about an hour and a half to two hours long.

After I had given the altar call and prayed for salvations and for the sick, the blind saw, the deaf heard and the crippled walked. I spoke into the microphone one last time.

“People of Haiti, the service is over. After I pray, if you don’t want to get wet, you should leave quickly, because it’s going to rain.”

After I had closed the service in prayer, the people began filing out of the stadium quickly. About ten minutes later, the sky opened up and rain began to pour down in the stadium in torrents.

God had once again demonstrated His power to the Haitian people, who so desperately needed the Gospel and the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ!

Indeed, the meetings, which were only supposed to last for five days, ended up lasting for three weeks, during which dozens and dozens of witch doctors gave their lives to Jesus, and thousands of other people also gave their lives to Jesus. As each witch doctor or believer in voodoo gave their lives to Jesus, they would bring their pagan fetishes to the altar and cast them upon the altar as a sign of their new commitment to the living God. By the end of the week, thousands of fetishes had been thrown on the altar by voodoo practitioners who had given their lives to Christ.

One evening, during the middle of the first week, several people connected to the crusade came up to me and wanted to speak to me.

“Brother Cerullo,” one of the men said to me. “The leading witch doctor in Port-au-Prince wants to speak to you. This is the witch doctor that holds all the others in fear. He is the one to whom all the others answer.”

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

I wondered what this witch doctor wanted with me. But as C.C. Ford had said the other night, I was not consecrated unto life, I was consecrated unto death. No matter what this man wanted, I knew when he requested to see me that I had to go.

We got into several cars and headed out to the house where the witch doctor lived, in the middle of town. His house had all kinds of voodoo items placed at strategic locations, whether to scare others or work some kind of magic, I never found out, but it was not hard to tell that someone who had believed strongly in voodoo lived in this house.

When we got into the man's house, he told a tremendous story. He and his entire family had been at the meetings we had held during the first week, and they had seen the power of God and had been miraculously converted! As a testimony to his newfound life in Christ, we meticulously went through every room in his house, collecting the relics, fetishes and other charms related to his voodoo practice, and we piled them all up in a giant pile in the middle of the street in front of his house.

As we did, we could see the eyes of curious neighbors peeking through the windows of their homes, some through cracked front doors. Some brave neighbors actually came out and stood in front of their houses to see what was going on at the house of the chief witch doctor in town.

We finally got everything voodoo-related out of the new Christian's house, and made a final pass-through to make sure we hadn't missed anything. When we were sure everything was collected in this huge pile in front of the house, we doused the pile with gasoline, lit it on fire and began to march around the giant fire that sprung up, singing "What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

The former witch doctor joined in with us, his formerly scowling face that had inspired fear in thousands now cracked

Son, Build Me An Army

wide with a toothy smile as he repeated the words to the old hymn and rejoiced over his new life as the relics of his old life burned in the center of the street.

After the second week of crusades, the usually raucous Mardi Gras no longer had enough people to be significant. Too many people had given their lives to Christ! There were no longer enough people willing to participate in the ungodly displays of Mardi Gras to keep the celebration viable!

The rapes and drunkenness had stopped! The witchcraft and voodoo were no longer readily apparent. God had wrought a mighty change in that tiny island nation.

God had birthed a spiritual revival in that nation that they never would forget, and many souls were won to the Kingdom of God.

From that point forward, the ministry seemed to explode. Everywhere we went, crowds got larger and larger, reaching into the hundreds of thousands.

Everywhere I went, thousands upon thousands of salvations followed. Truly, I was fulfilling the vision God had given me when I was fifteen years old to reach out to the nations of the world, but even though at the age of thirty I had one of the most successful ministries in the world, it didn't feel like that to me.

Every time I saw someone get saved and commit their lives to Jesus, I stood in humble awe of the providence of God. I will never, as long as I live, get over the humbling feeling of knowing that God is doing His most incredible miracle – and He's letting me be a part of it!

Every time someone is born again, I feel almost overwhelmed that God has allowed me to be in the presence of His greatest miracle.

As I began to witness thousands and thousands of salvations in each of the meetings we were holding all over the world, I began to have a concern deep in my spirit,

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

although I couldn't yet articulate it. We were winning thousands of souls to Christ, but what was happening to them afterward?

We did the best we could, giving these precious souls Gospels of John and following up as closely as best we could with literature and all other means, getting names on decision cards so we could keep up with them, but I felt as if there was more we could do.

I began to wonder and pray about how we could more effectively be a help to the tremendous influx of souls that were being won to the kingdom.

I didn't know it, but God was preparing to answer my prayers in a dynamic and life-changing way that would forever provide a guiding framework for my ministry.

In 1962, I had been called to Porto Alegre, Brazil, to preach a crusade in the huge Exposition Grounds.

I was in Porto Alegre for ten days. The newspapers were covering the accounts of the miracles in the meetings on the front pages. People were bringing the sick in from miles around on carts, beds and couches. The streets were lined all day long with those wanting miracles to heal their infirmities. About five days into the meetings, I had been in intense and powerful prayer for God to bring His Presence into the service. After an hour or two, I felt God's Presence and knew He would minister in a special way in the service and bless the people.

As I got into the car to go to the Exposition Grounds, I knew God was about to change lives – but I had no idea how He was about to change mine.

By the time I got to the Exposition Grounds, the music service was already well under way. The music seemed to flow in a rhythm of incredible spiritual synchronicity – everything seemed to fit together like the pieces of a jigsaw. Already, I could see the Presence of God fill the Exposition

Son, Build Me An Army

Grounds to minister to the fifty thousand people who had crammed themselves onto the field.

The heat was almost overwhelming, like opening an oven in a hot kitchen in the middle of summertime. I hadn't even gotten to the platform to speak yet, but my clothes were already starting to get damp.

By the time the song service was over, a tremendous atmosphere of praise had permeated the entire Exposition Grounds.

My crusade director stepped up to the platform and began to address the people. The congregation listened in reverent silence, and then the crusade director introduced me and called me up to speak at the microphone.

The microphone was placed squarely in front of a small board that had been nailed to the railing of the platform that I was to minister from. That was the only pulpit that was available to me, so I set my Bible on the little board and greeted the crowd in the Name that is above every name, Jesus.

I knew God had already begun to minister to this huge congregation, so I launched right into my message, a message on salvation, healing and miracles. Between phrases, my interpreter would translate my words into Portugese, following each of my gestures with gestures that exactly matched.

I had been preaching for about ten minutes – everything was flowing in an awesome demonstration of God's power.

But suddenly, I was stopped cold in my tracks, as what felt like a hot butcher knife seemed to slice through my chest, directly into my heart.

When my tooth had been chipped as a young boy, I had never felt such pain. When my jaw and cheekbone had been broken by a line-drive softball, I had never felt such pain.

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

This pain was so intense that my very legs wanted to give out from beneath me. It was only sheer willpower that kept me on my feet. For a few seconds, my mind went completely blank. I could think of nothing but the pain – intense, penetrating and devastating pain.

The pain continued to intensify from that point to where it was almost completely unbearable.

I grabbed onto the little board that was serving as a pulpit to keep myself from falling down.

My entire body was now racked with pain. I was completely doubled over, and the pain only seemed to be intensifying.

“Am I having a heart attack?” I thought to myself. I was only thirty years old – far too young in my estimation to be having a heart attack, but I could think of no other explanation.

“Am I going to die?” I thought as the pain increased in intensity. “Is God going to take me home now?”

I had never envisioned myself dying of a heart attack. But if God was going to take me, I was ready, only I didn’t want to die on stage in front of fifty thousand people, who needed God’s salvation and healing power.

I reached over and grabbed my crusade director by the arm.

Using the very last of my strength, which was being sapped by the debilitating pain, I pulled him to the microphone and whispered to him: “Finish the services. I must go back to my hotel room.”

He looked bewildered, but the look in my eyes must have convinced him, because he immediately took over the service. I somehow made it to the back of the stage, where the car I had arrived in was parked, and I literally fell into the back seat.

The driver rushed me back to the hotel room.

Son, Build Me An Army

When I opened the door and entered my room, I didn't even take time to remove my clothes, which were now completely soaked.

The pain had not subsided at all, in fact, it was still just as sharp and piercing as it had been on the stage.

I fell onto my face in the middle of the hotel room and began to cry out to God.

"Lord," I asked, gasping for breath between words. "Are You going to take me home?"

Sometimes God speaks to me in an audible voice, just as clearly as one person talking to another. Sometimes, He speaks to me through His Word. Sometimes, God gives an inaudible impression in my spirit, which is just as real as His audible voice – because I know Him, I understand that it is His voice.

This day, when I asked God if He was about to take me home, He let me know that this pain was not for the purpose of finally taking me home.

God let me know that He had allowed this pain to happen to me for a special reason, to get my attention in an undivided way.

He said to me: "Son, I have permitted this to happen to you for a purpose."

Personally, I would have preferred another way of getting my attention, but who was I to argue with God? In any case, I noticed that the pain had left my body completely. To this very day, more than thirty-seven years later, I have never had a recurrence of that pain, or anything that even slightly resembles it.

If God had gone to such lengths to get my attention, I knew He must have something very important to tell me; I wanted to give my full concentration to what it was He wanted to say.

"Lord," I said to Him, "please teach me."

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

God began speaking to me in an audible voice, and He called me by name:

“Morris, what do you want out of this life?”

God had almost always spoken to me in unexpected ways, with unexpected messages, but this was the most peculiar question I had ever been asked by Him. I thought within myself that it was readily clear what I wanted out of this life, with the single-minded dedication I had given to winning souls all over the world at any cost, even facing death to ensure those souls were reached. But obviously God had a reason for asking me this peculiar question, so I asked him:

“God, why would You ask me that? You know the dedication and the consecration I have made to You; why would You ask me what I want out of this life?”

And then I began to think of what it was that I really wanted out of this life. I could have said that my only desire was to reach souls, but I was already doing that, and I knew that there was something more that I needed to be doing.

So many times, I would receive requests from ministers and hosts where I was preaching to “stay, stay and minister the Word of God to us.”

Most of the time, I would stay as long as I possibly could. I would take along a certain amount of money, and when that money was gone and I could continue no longer, I would return home to raise money to plan the next meeting I could minister in. But my real desire was to do more than just reach souls.

I blurted out my desire to God from the depths of my innermost being, from the deepest part of my being:

“Lord, there is only one thing that I ask of You in this world – only one thing. God, give me the ability to take what

Son, Build Me An Army

You have given me, the power and anointing that is upon my ministry...and give me the ability to give that to others.”

God had taught me in such a powerful way in Lima, Ohio, that this wasn't the ministry of a man, it was the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It was not Morris Cerullo who was leading so many salvations and healings all over the world, it was the anointing of God that had been imparted into my ministry. It was God Who was causing the success of our rallies, Who was bringing thousands and thousands of souls into the kingdom of heaven.

If I could impart that anointing and power to those I went to reach, they would not need me to stay and minister to them – the same anointing would be on their own lives, and they could more effectively reach their neighbors than I could ever hope to do.

At the time, there was a tremendous movement afoot in many of the foreign countries of the world to reject foreign ministers who came to the countries to hold crusades. Many people resented these foreigners coming in and trying to reach their populations. I understood that an African would be far more effective at reaching Africans in the long term than I could ever hope to be.

I knew that Brazilians would be more effective in the long run reaching out to their own nation than I could ever be holding large national crusades.

Both were needed, but I knew that it would be only through duplicating what God had done in my life that the world could be reached.

I knew that my only hope of impacting the world, my only hope of realizing the vision God had given me when I had looked through His footprints and seen the multitude of souls burning in hell, the only way I could ever make a lasting mark on the world was to train others to reach out as I had and bring the lost to Christ.

SON, BUILD ME AN ARMY

It was then, on the floor of a seedy hotel in the middle of downtown Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1962 that my life and the course of my ministry would forever be changed.

I knew in myself I was standing on the precipice of a fundamental change in the way I was to do ministry. I understood that what was about to transpire would forever modify the way I had grown accustomed to doing things. But I was ready.

God spoke to me in an audible voice the words that would change history:

“Son, Build Me an Army!”