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Newsletter No. 3

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The month of April has been a happy and eventful one for us in Nigeria. During April I have gone on twenty-seven preaching appointments, witnessed twelve baptisms, and helped to establish one new congregation. The second quarter in our training school at Onicha Ngwa began this month. Fifty-three men are studying the Bible and Bible-related topics with us to better prepare themselves as gospel preachers. I am teaching Life of Christ, Bible Topics, I Corinthians, and Denominational Errors. Almost every day I have opportunity to teach the unconverted, instruct the brethren to observe all things whatsoever the Lord has commanded, and serve Christ as Matthew twenty-five directs. I thank God for opportunities to serve and for strength to labor.

Preaching appointments ^{in Nigeria} here are trying and rewarding experiences. No two appointments are alike, and none of them are like appointments in America.

For example, I began going to Eberi Omuma on Monday afternoon, March 17. My interpreter and I went at the invitation of one of the village chiefs. We preached in a public square under a giant cotton-wood tree. The people gathered around and listened with great interest. They asked many questions. I gave them Bible answers. The third Monday afternoon we went, my hopes were high for another good appointment. After I had waited an hour past the scheduled time to begin, the chief came and said the people had gone to market. "Gone to market," I thought. "Gone to market! I have come 10,000 miles to preach to them. I have left my Nigerian home and important work I could do there this afternoon to keep this appointment. They seemed interested. They promised to come. But, they have gone to market!" Then, almost simultaneously, I remembered how far Christ had come and how long he had waited for me. This thought crucified my flesh and the selfish, impatient lusts thereof. The Spirit bore its fruit in my heart, and I promised the chief that we would return one week hence. We did, and on the sixth Monday afternoon nine men were baptized into Christ. The church of the Lord is now in Eberi Omuma.

One Saturday afternoon my appointment took me seventy-five miles to the compound of a polygamist. The man is an uncle of one of our first year students named Benjamin. Benjamin told me his uncle had between 60 and 80 wives. We drove down a bush road for many miles and finally came to his compound. It was surrounded by a high mud wall which enclosed a multitude of small native huts. The area was dominated by the main house which resembled a medieval castle. Most of his wives were working on his farm. Only about 10 of them and a brother or two came for the preaching. When I had been preaching about 30 minutes, a tropical storm began and broke up our service. I hope to return there some day.

My last appointment on Sunday, April 27th, was in a village named Akanu where there is a strong church with 75 or 80 members.

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The interest and attention were very good. The worship service was conducted decently and in order. At its conclusion, three expressed a desire to be baptised. The congregation heard them confess their faith in Christ. Then a few of us entered my station-wagon to drive to the nearest place for baptizing. We drove three or four miles and turned down a bush path through a rubber plantation. After driving a mile or two, we had to ¹⁰⁰ stop and leave the motor because of a tree that had blown down across the path. We walked another half mile. Finally, we came to a steep bank which led abruptly to the stream. A heathen village lay alongside the stream just under the bank. We passed through it to the water's edge. To our right was a juju shrine. Behind us was the heathen village. Upon us an African night was settling. But around us, and over us, and in us was the love of God. As the light of day disappeared, three penitent believers went down into the water. In his own tongue, a Nigerian preacher said, "...into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...." He baptized them. They came up from the water, up from their sins into a new life in Christ Jesus.²⁰⁰ Then all of us came up from the stream and up the bank from the heathen village. By then it was dark. I switched on my flashlight. Its welcome light flooded the path ahead. But a greater light flooded the souls of three Nigerians who had just obeyed the gospel of Him who said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

During April we have seen three men leave Nigeria for America. One week ago today we said goodbye to James L. Finney and his family. The Finneys were our next-door neighbors and co-laborers in the work in Iboland. In one month's time we learned to appreciate and love them very much. Their leaving places a great responsibility upon me since I am the only American preacher whom churches of Christ now support in Iboland. The same day Lucien Palmer also left for America, to join his wife and children who had returned earlier. Only a few days before that Leonard Johnson and his family had left. The Johnsons and the Finneys left at the end of two year's service. Bro. Palmer was here for his second two-year term of service when the doctors advised him to return to America for medical treatment for his son. The departure of these men reduces the number of American preachers churches of Christ support here to five. Besides myself these four remain: Tommy Kelton at Ikot-Usen, where the work first began in Nigeria; Wendell Broom, Eugene Peden, and Sewell Hall at Ukpom, where another school for training evangelists is being conducted. Brother Hall plans to return to America in July. However, since Bro. Joe Cross is coming in May to work with Bro. Kelton at Ikot-Usen and Bro. Nicks is returning to Iboland in June to work with me, our total will soon be six families, at which point it will level off for a year unless new families come or unforeseen circumstances arise.

My family and I thank you again and again for sacrificing to make this work possible. May the Lord bless and keep you.