

**As Usual?** Felt honored when invited to preach at Pastor Abner's conference assembly; Sunday evening and again Tuesday evening. Out of character I prepared a manuscript to help an inexperienced translator. Planned a miniseries based on the theology and ethics of the Apostle Paul, using Romans 12:1-2a.

Showered, dressed and manuscript in hand we went early for the 7 pm service. Church was dark so we walked to the beach and found pastor Abner on the sea in a small boat. We visited with many who eventually wandered home to "dress". Pastor's boat finally moored and he went to "prepare myself" he said.

I prepared to share God's word as usual, in prayer and meditation, as I watched the sun set into the sea. Many sailboat fishermen were taking advantage of the calm sea after a windy day. My dress shoes filled with sand, sweat soaked my good cloths and ants crawled down my neck. We watched as naked children came in from their swim, mothers bathed babes in aluminum tubs in the front yard, and lightning began to play across the canal. Haitian dance music wafted across the water from Port a Bonheur and the peace that only Christ offers filled my soul.

The church filled quickly, with light from two kerosene lanterns. Pastor Abner, now in slacks and dress shirt, sat making notes and leading those milling about in leisurely singing some very African sounding tunes. A volunteer translator escorted me to the chancel as Joe and Wilter went for a small generator to be "jury rigged" to their primitive lighting system.

I was "presented the pulpit as guest preacher" and groups offered rhythmic, harmonies with a drum and guitar. A few familiar hymns took on a more Haitian beat and I began my "message" in the dark. Never liked a manuscript, anyway.

A few lights finally punctuated the "amens" which inspired the message of a merciful God and the hesitant translation. In time the "amens" were coming before the translation was complete, as if the words heard were understood without interpretation. God's great mercies, filled and inspired, just as Paul predicted they would.

Dripping with sweat, I sat, and Joe said, "think your Haitian?" No, because I will never understand the gospel as those whose life is so hard, yet know a loving and merciful God.

Pastor Shirley, La Gonave, July 19, '08