

The old clan leader, a veteran of many inter-tribal wars, stood up and hesitatingly began to share age-old tribal secrets and grudges to the masses sitting on the grass airstrip. "Seven of my siblings were murdered by those over there", he announced as he pointed to one clan on the airstrip. "We have taken revenge for that killing," he continued, "only to see that you, in turn, strike back. We have tried to make peace in the past, but have always been unsuccessful. Usually, when we come to this point in forging peace between our clans, we cut open a pig and spill its blood on our hands. Today however, as we attempt to make peace, we will not cut open a pig."

The soft blowing of the wind touched each silent, listening face.

The silence prodded the old leader to continue, "I believe the symbol of blood is still valid, but I believe the symbol should be a different kind of blood."

As the other clan leaders digested the old veteran's words we sensed the work of the Holy Spirit among the hundreds of people listening intently on the hilly landing strip. It had taken two generations of mission work to see these warring clans come together to forge a peace that, hopefully, would be different from those in the past.

The wrinkled clan leader continued, "In the past we had wars where sometimes the majority of our men died, not even leaving enough people to bury the dead. The arrows that pierced the victims soon sprouted new shoots of bamboo even as they remained in the bodies of the slain. Women and children fled in fear to the hills. If we as a people are going to embrace the future and forget the past, we need to work together to accomplish a lasting peace."

As I listened to the old man, I marvelled at how the Holy Spirit had once again chosen to use His word as the basis for bringing about reconciliation. The week long seminar that was drawing to a close was meant to get people behind the mother-tongue translators who were just beginning the task of Bible translation. We had prayed fervently about bringing the warring clans together to support the Bible translation committee through prayer and daily provisions. It would be a difficult task. The long history of animosity between groups and conflicting political agendas had resulted in several families deciding not to come to the seminar. However, we pressed on knowing that the only way to ensure acceptance of the final Bible translation was if all groups would support it from the beginning.

The week had progressed with a series of messages on how to build your life on the principles of the word of God. Discussions had been held about the power of Satan, the necessity of repentance, and the free gift of salvation. We discussed how the Bible could transform communities and provide a basis for anticipating modernization. Most of these people had no idea how the traditional values that held their families together would be threatened by the encroaching electricity and telephone lines. As the people listened, discussed and reflected, they, themselves decided to make some key decisions.

In the past, when they had tried to bring about reconciliation, they had burned many of their demonic fetishes but found that this burning never got rid of the dark secrets of their hearts. This week the challenge to evaluate their society against the light of God's word had taken root, "But if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his Son purifies us from all sin." (1 Jn. 1:7) How could they apply this concept to themselves?

Together the clan leaders reached a conclusion so profound it could only have been inspired by the Holy Spirit. They sat down together and confessed their dark secrets to one another. Secrets about black magic used in warfare, grudges that led to continued revenge killings, and deep seated malice

that had kept each clan in a state of fear.

Together they concluded that only by bringing to the God of Light the dark secrets that held them could they enjoy the fellowship that is found in the presence of the Light. Only by together embracing the God of light could they throw off the chains that bound their people to age old fears and revenge killings.

As the clan leaders freely confessed their clan's sins to the hundreds of people sitting on the airstrip I was asked to pray for the peace. Each leader laid his hands on the Bible as the emblem of the blood of Christ. Peace no longer would be forged on the spilt blood of a pig, but on the living blood of the One who created the only way of true reconciliation. As the blood of Christ brought reconciliation, the hundreds of people on the hillside wept with joy.

We all sensed the defeat of the Prince of Darkness. With this victory the realization of the power of God's written word began to take hold. "Please won't you stay with us to help the translation process. We have never understood what we read in church. We need scriptures that will speak our language."

Later in the day young and old participated in the preparations for the peace feast. The buzz of activity reminded me of what an Old Testament feast must have looked like. Thirty pigs were butchered and ladies prepared hundreds of bags of vegetables all through the night.

As the smoke of the fires climbed heavenward the unity of fellowship sent by the Holy Spirit bound the activities together.

As the food was about to be dispersed the peoples' traditional call-and-response type hymnology echoed from the surrounding mountains reminding me that "His love endures forever." (Ps. 136)