

To Our Friends and Supporters, far and wide,

It's March, and from my window I can watch the thunderstorms gather in the north. They are unpredictable, you know, and often very unnerving. It's the tropics. Tonight, I watch all the children and youth playing on the large field across the road. Football is always the game of the hour—but the younger children invent all kinds of games—until they get hungry and go home. The evening provides a little relief from the heat, but not the humidity, of the day.

Except for the miserable heat and humidity, the scene might be idyllic. But this is Africa, where most children have very limited futures, where the game of life is played for today, and where almost nothing (save the majestic presence of God) is predictable. Ruth and I have taught hard during the first half of the semester, and have seen some progress in our students. Her task, teaching English, is the more daunting and less rewarding than mine. But (in my opinion) she sets a priceless model of love, commitment, humor and industry before the students. I have the task of writing a New Testament Introduction and an Old Testament Theology for African students, continuing to upgrade my instruction in Apologetics, Hermeneutics and OT Introduction.



It has been a positively delightful privilege to bring to life the Greek and Hebrew worlds as the setting for the biblical texts and teaching. In Apologetics we listen as often as possible to podcasts by William Lane Craig. And in mentoring sessions we listen to, and discuss the audio tapes of C.S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*. The spoken word is very important here. In my spare time (*sigh*) I am supervising the work on putting a roof on our building; in the picture to the right the pillars are up; work is now beginning on the beams.

Ruth is no less busy, but her hours are taken up more with grading homework. But she often meets with the women to encourage them with both personal gifts and teaching. The heat and high humidity is perhaps harder on her than me—but not by a whole lot. And she misses her Desmond, her grandson—with whom she had a great visit over Christmas.

On that front our family news is positively miraculous. At Christmas time we left you hanging; Lyra, Desmond's mom, had been diagnosed with cancer of the tongue. Her surgery was scheduled two days after Ruth left Orlando. The surgeon, however, passed a restless night before the surgery. He decided that instead of performing major surgery, he would simply excise the tumor. This was not his normal approach, but on inspection, the tumor was encapsulated and no cancer had spread to the surrounding tissue. God's intervention was very evident in the matter, and our youngest son, his wife and the whole family weathered the storm—thanking God profusely.

Life here seems to be stormier as the days go by. The water and power outages are more frequent; the social and religious environment in which we serve seems more outrageous. *We routinely deal with false teaching and religious deception*—even among our students. Our two prime ministries are those of teaching and encouraging, both inside and outside the classroom. The bright side of this is that we've seen turn-arounds in several ministries where leaders were flirting with a gospel that is no gospel at all. Pray for our patience and forbearance in this effort. Though the building project is going well, difficult management issues arise almost daily. I must balance financial constraint with doing what is right. I need poise, compassion, cultural insight and toughness. Pray. It seems, subject to further clarification, that we will fall somewhat short of having the money to buy the aluminum roofing. From the start of the project we knew it was going to be an affair of faith. Another faith-project is my Ph.D. studies. I have done a great deal of work on the dissertation, but under the present circumstances I'm not sure whether I can finish the task. Please pray that we will be able to steer both of these remarkable efforts to completion. And yes, do pray for patient loving stamina on our part as we face the uncertainties here. The current turmoil in Africa has not reached Cameroon—not yet, anyway.

Hannah, Samuel's mother (What a woman!), said, 'It's not by strength that one prevails'. Hannah was of course referring to physical, perhaps even the strength of violence. To finish well we need physical strength but more importantly, we need the inner strength that comes through the presence and leadership of the Holy Spirit to weather the 'storms' we will face. Through your financial support and intercessory prayer you have been part of that strength from God that has sustained us. Thanks for your living, sacrificial commitment.

Under His Mercy,
Gary and Ruth Stephens