

GAMBOA UNION CHURCH, GAMBOA PANAMA

REV. WILLIAM E. WILBUR, PASTOR

PTY 2299 Box 025207 Miami, FI 33102

www.gamboaunion.com e-mail: bill@gamboaunion.com 011-507-6600-5200

JULY 2010 The shooting took place just five miles from Gamboa. On Tuesday, July 20 a 39 year old pastor was returning from the Renacer prison after his meeting with the inmates. Renacer is the former Canal Zone Prison just one mile from Gamboa where I have been having meetings for over 30 years. As he was leaving, the man who had been driving him changed places with the pastor because he was tired. So as they were passing the Summit Gardens on their way back to the city, armed gunmen rammed and attacked their car with an AK 47 killing the driver.

It was mistaken identity. They were not after the pastor but the man who had driven the car out to Gamboa. It turns out that both were former inmates. The pastor was a regular at the weekly meetings I held back in the mid-nineties. He had had an experience with Christ that had led him into the ministry while he was in prison. He was now serving the Lord in a gang infested area in Panama City and this was a gang related killing.

So two days later as I went into Renacer for my regular Thursday meeting, I wondered what the response would be. What would I find? What would I speak about? What questions would the men have? Would they ask the standard question "Why would God allow this to happen to a man serving the Lord?"

This question has been asked for hundreds of years, especially after some kind of tragedy which involved the death of Christians. Many books and sermons have dealt with this subject.

So that morning I shared with them some basic thoughts that have helped me cope with this subject: God is good and loves us; we live in a fallen world; we are in a spiritual battle; Christ conquered sin, death and the devil on the cross; and God has a way to make all things work for His purposes for our lives (Romans 8:28).

Then I told them the true story featured in the film "END OF THE SPEAR." This movie was made in Panama and released in 2006. You can see the trailer for it on our web site www.gamboaunion.com.

In 1956 the Christian world was stunned to learn that five young dedicated missionary men had been speared to death in a remote jungle area by Indians in Ecuador. How could God allow this? Questions abounded but the hearts of the faithful turned to the living God for comfort and direction.

Shortly thereafter two women related to the men and a three year old daughter actually entered the tribe to live with them to tell them about the love of Jesus. Amazing transformations happened in the lives and culture of these people as they experienced the forgiveness and love of Christ. A very complete and compelling account is recorded in the recent book by Steve Saint, son of the missionary pilot, in a book with the same title as the movie "END OF THE SPEAR."

As the years have gone by testimonies have been heard of how lives have been impacted by this event. Many gave their lives for missionary service to take their place and have served all around the world. Books have been written by the widows of the men which touched many lives... one of which was mine. Shortly after giving my life to Christ, I read the diary of Jim Elliott and was challenged by such a level of commitment.

So as we gathered recently on that Thurs. morning, many were challenged to “take the place” of the fallen pastor and prayed that God would make good come out of this tragic event. Thanks for praying with us!