

*Real Life Stories  
He Forgave Them!*

WAZIRI Kagoma lay in the dark, wondering what had awakened him. At first he couldn't identify the crackling sound. Suddenly he smelled smoke and jumped out of bed. He hurried his wife and children out of the round mud hut. Their thatched roof was on fire. In minutes the roof collapsed, destroying most of their possessions.

Waziri spotted a man not far away still holding a burning torch. When the man saw he had been detected, he ran for home, with Waziri following to identify him.

This was not the first persecution Waziri Kagoma and his family had experienced in this pastorate in central Nigeria, but it was by far the most serious. Furthermore, opposition seemed to be increasing. Pastor Waziri refused to take the case to court. He wanted the Lord Himself to deal with the man.

Not long afterward Kagoma's six-year-old daughter came home very ill. She was vomiting, and soon lost consciousness. They rushed her to the nearest hospital. "I'm sorry," the doctor said sadly. "Your daughter has been poisoned. I can't save her." In a few hours the bereaved parents took their daughter's body home and buried it. There were only a few Christians to help, or to comfort them.

The next day the district head visited Waziri. "Let me force the villagers to tell who poisoned her, he urged. "Don't do it. Just let it go," was Waziri's firm answer.

Not long after the second calamity, the man who burned the Pastor's house came to see him. "I know you burned the house", Pastor Waziri told the man. "But I don't know if it was you who poisoned our daughter."

I didn't poison your daughter, but I admit I burned your house. Do something to me! Do something to me!" The man seemed almost beside himself.

"Putting you in prison wouldn't forgive your sins or bring back our things that burned." His voice was full of concern. Pastor Waziri said, "Christ can forgive your sins. I want you to receive Him." "Only that?" the man asked in amazement. "That is a big thing. You'll have God's forgiveness now and eternal life too. As for me, I forgive you."

The next Sunday the man attended church. At the close of the service he stood up. "I can't eat! I can't sleep! I burned the Pastor's house and when I asked him to have me punished, he just told me that God would forgive me. Today I want to repent and receive Christ as my Saviour!"

Several weeks had passed when Pastor Waziri had another visitor. "You don't know me," he said, obviously upset. "It was I who put poison into food and gave it to your daughter. I wanted to drive you away. Now I'm going crazy! Have me punished!"

The Pastor hesitated a moment. "If a court had you hanged, that wouldn't bring back my daughter, or forgive your sins."

"Do something!" the man insisted. "I can't live like this."

The Pastor was the calmer of the two. "Here's what I'll do," he said. "I'll tell you how to have God's forgiveness."

The next Sunday the second man came to church. Only the Pastor knew of his crime. At the close of the service he stood up. "I have something to say," he told the congregation. "I am a murderer. I poisoned the Pastor's daughter." A murmur of voices showed the people's amazement at such a confession.

"What are you going to do with him?" someone asked the Pastor.

"Just tell him how Christ can forgive him." The Pastor himself prayed with the murderer as he repented and received his new life and peace in Christ.

Now 17 years later, these two men are leading elders in that church.

Waziri was about 12 years of age when he attended a Sudan Interior Mission church. The Nigerian Pastor preached from Revelation. Waziri didn't want to be without Christ another minute.

When he got home and told his parents he had trusted Christ for salvation, he was beaten mercilessly. The beatings continued until his father saw it was useless to try to turn Waziri from following Christ. Two of his brothers also believed, and one of them has been village head since their father's death.

Waziri wanted to learn to read the Bible, so he entered first grade as a teenager and completed third grade.

Time came for marriage, and not realizing the problems he could get into, he married a pagan girl. However, she soon accepted Christ.

They spent two years in the Kagoro Bible School, one year as student Pastor, then two more years in the classroom. Later, one year of graduate training completed Waziri's formal education.

It was an early pastorate that their severe persecution came. The Lord sustained them, and Waziri's ministry has been the richer for it. Later sorrow visited again when the Pastor's wife died. In a few months the Lord gave him another Christian wife who loved and cared for his five children. She has since brought three more children into the family.

In 1963 Waziri went to Azare in northeastern Nigeria. There was no church — no local Believers — just a couple of Christian nurses in a government hospital. At first they worshipped in homes, then a small church was built. When the crowd outside got larger than those who could squeeze into the church, they built again.

In 1967 Waziri became Chaplain at Evangel Hospital in Jos. Each morning he conducts short services, with the several hundred outpatients who come, and counsels those who want spiritual help. But the most thrilling ministry has been with ward patients. He visits from bed to bed and has seen a number turn from "not interested" to "willing to listen" and finally to "I repent and receive Christ!"

Talking with a Christian woman suffering persecution one day, Waziri found himself telling her about his own experiences. His mind went to 2 Cor. 1:3, 4. "God . . . who comforteth us . . . that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble . . ." Seventeen years later God is still using his persecution to glorify himself.

Waziri has pastored a church on the outskirts of Jos with hundreds at Sunday services and many new converts in his baptismal class. Evening devotions at the Waziri home are "open house" to the neighborhood. Many come. On Saturday evenings they have a longer informal discussion from God's Word. Here too, in a different section of Jos, many are being edified under his ministry.

The last week of March 1969, Pastor Waziri spoke at a Bible Conference in the town where he was so severely persecuted. Ten professed Christ. The Sunday morning service was attended by 750. Much of this progress can be attributed to the ministry of a Pastor who refused to take his enemies to court, and then led them to Christ!

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