

“FIRE IN HIS BONES”

A Biographical Sketch of the Life and Times of Jeremiah Shaibu Tsado (JP)

By

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*Fading away like the stars of the morning
Losing their light in the glorious sun
Thus would we pass from the earth and its toiling
Only remembered by what we have done
And as Christian to the glory of God Almighty*

The home call of Baba Jeremiah Tsado closes an epoch in the life of St Andrew's Anglican Church, Kakpi, an era characterized by the awesome deeds of our great God and the faithful witness of men and women irrevocably committed to Him. Baba Jeremiah was indeed a frontline member of an elite band of early believers who faced danger with courage, people who exhibited determination in the midst of persecution and who through faith triumphed over satanic opposition to the gospel. When Jeremiah died the faithful celebrated the life of a saint, not weep but rejoice at the triumphal exit of a spiritual colossus.

Early life

Jeremiah Shaibu Tsado was born in July 1929 to Baba Tsado Ndatsumbura and Gogo Shibi (Kaka Ruth). He was the fourth of five children between his parents. According to “Ndagi,” as Jeremiah Tsado was popularly called, his parents were strict disciplinarians who wanted the best for their children. Quite early in life, and contrary to the norm in those days, his father bought him a copy of the Nupe Prima as an aide to learning to read and write. A skill he later excelled in and which enabled him to become an effective communicator of the gospel. Ndagi's parents were also local musicians, a skill which is today evident in the life of the children and grandchildren.

Conversion

Baba Jeremiah was introduced to the Christian faith through the ministry of the great and renowned evangelist and teacher, Rev Paul B. Ndagi who brought the gospel to Kakpi village. Rev. Ndagi first sowed the seeds of the gospel in the village around 1934 and won his first convert in the person of Jacob Ndagunu. Soon, most of the villagers embraced the faith, including young Jeremiah. The year 1947 was however a turning point in his life. That year, at the age of 18, Jeremiah had deep personal encounters with the Lord, which brought to life the Word of God and through which he now fully committed his life to Christ. As he could also now read the Bible, he became a leader in the Church.

The real test of his faith however came around 1949 when, in the face of persecution by the then village head, most of the villagers backslid from the Christian faith, leaving only six people standing as believers in the whole village. These six people, who have

come to be known famously as the “Kakpi Six” include: Baba Joshua Sheshi; Baba Daniel Tsado; Baba Job Taidi; Baba Josiah Gana; Baba James Gana and Baba Jeremiah Tsado. These six people faced the most intense persecution from the hands of the villagers who now became their sworn enemies. They were blackmailed and ostracized. They were attacked spiritually and physically. But the Lord helped them. Contrary to expectations, they found wives and bore children. They did not die off, even when whole families were poisoned. And their numbers even grew, for in the midst of persecutions and terror, three prominent youth of the village opted for Jesus all at the same time. It was dramatic and miraculous. Baba Jeremiah’s house was their refuge and they found much encouragement and solace from him and the other believers. The three men were: Mr. Peter Amako, Mr David Taidi and Mr Moses Mamudu who joined the six to become the Kakpi Nine, a band of committed believers, sold out to the Lord. Through this band of nine, the Lord established the strong foundations of the church in Kakpi, which has withstood the storms of time. They suffered, but never surrendered; they labored without getting tired; they repaid evil with good and diligently beamed the light of Christ in the midst of darkness and ignorance. They were indeed “men that hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 15:26). Baba Jeremiah was a strong pillar of this foundation because even though he was the youngest, he was also the most articulate and became the leader of the church.

Christian Life and Faith

As lay leader of the church in Kakpi, Baba Jeremiah devoted his life to the study and teaching of the Word of God. He loved the Bible and was passionate about scriptures. Although not highly literate in English language, he acquired countless study Bibles and other Christian literature and actively utilized them to deepen his understanding of the scriptures and as sermon aids. Not only did he study for himself, he also taught the scripture consistently at every possible instance.

Those close to Baba Jeremiah easily knew him as someone who believed in the efficacy of prayers. He was a prayer warrior who believed firmly in the power of God to heal, deliver and to perform miracles. His daily routine was to rise up as from 3 am for personal prayer before ringing the church bell at 5:30 for corporate prayers. He attested to seeing visions from God several times while praying.

Baba Jeremiah had a deep burden for souls and actively evangelized his communities. The clearest expression of his passion for the gospel was the numerous evangelistic trips he undertook to nearby villages and communities. He established a strong gospel band in Kakpi, which was notable in the whole of Bida District. The Kakpi choir became a frontline instrument in the gospel campaigns in Nupe land by the New Life for All and the Anglican Communion. He undertook personal trips to Kpada and Patigi, long distances in the 1960s, to learn new songs and choruses from the ECWA Churches. Music was for him a major tool of evangelism. Baba Jeremiah was an adherent supporter of the Anglican Church in Nupe Land and served the church in various capacities, one of which is the position of the Lay Reader.

Jeremiah Tsado lived his life in service to his community as he was seen by many as an apostle of peace, a bridge builder and a selfless individual who put the interest of others above his own.

In the quest to instill religious values to the younger generation, Jeremiah Tsado was employed by the Niger State Ministry of Education as a Christian Religious Knowledge Teacher in Kakpi Primary school, a task which he carried out passionately until retirement from service.

Marriage and Family Life

Baba Jeremiah got married to Mama Deborah Maimuna in 1952, with whom he shared his life for 63 solid years. It was difficult in those days for a Christian to get any girl to marry in Kakpi, as the villagers vowed never to allow any of their daughters marry a believer. But Maimuna, who was the only child of her parents from Ndako village agreed to marry Ndagi Jeremiah even though he was a Christian. She ignored the reproach of the villagers and embraced Jesus as her Lord and Saviour. Ndagi testified that Maimuna was the pillar in his life. Together they raised six biological children and numerous spiritual and foster children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. His children include: Rev Paul Abubakar Tsado; Dr Jacob Shaibu Tsado; Mrs Lois Zainab Ndagi; Mrs Margaret Aishatu Ndace; Mr Ananias Nmadu Tsado; and Mr Benjamin Saidu Tsado.

Conclusion

Jeremiah Tsado has indeed lived a life in total commitment to the will of Christ and service to humanity. His indelible legacies will remain with us until we meet at the feet of Jesus. Unique: Baba Jeremiah was born on Tuesday 30th July 1929; took ill Tuesday 8th March 2016; died Tuesday 15th March 2016 and buried Tuesday 5th April 2016. Baba Jeremiah Shaibu Tsado JP, lived 1929 - 2016 to the glory of God and Jesus Christ.