

Dear Pastor, friends and family,

10-11/12-2019

AN EXPERIENCE WE WILL NEVER FORGET.

Thursday night after we returned from the Ladies meeting at church, we were met by one of the leaders of our mission work. He had just learned his oldest brother had just died.

His brother lived about six hours from here. Because of the seriousness of his illness, he was transferred by ambulance to one of the large government hospitals where there was more equipment that was needed when he passed away. Because he did not have identification with him, he was taken to the government morgue. It took a ton of paperwork and hours and hours to get him out. His body finally arrived in our town about 3 in the morning.

Because of the poverty level, the body was **not** embalmed and was placed in a very cheap wooden box. The law states that the body has to be buried within 24 hours of death. He was to be buried at 2 pm Friday. We went to the wake for a while and I was asked to bring a short message at the viewing and another at the place where he would be laid to rest.

I noticed a plastic box under the casket with a tub on top close to the casket but still about six inches away from the bottom of the casket. I asked what that was for; I had never seen that before. They had ice in it to keep the body cool to slow down decomposition. Well, I didn't say anything but cold goes down and not up, it wasn't doing anything. Later that evening the casket began to give out a bad odor.

At about 1:45 pm I was told to go ahead and preach. Afterwards one of the nephews, not a preacher, brought a real good salvation message as a personal challenge to his family. There was not anything organized or planned except for my message. Normally someone in the family plans everything but nothing had been planned except the funeral march to the cemetery was to start at two. That didn't happen.

Well, two-o'clock came and went. A very upset family told me that the grave site was not ready. The family had hired a bricklayer to dig and prepare the place to lay him. There were not any preparations made ahead of time so the site had to be dug, cement poured for a floor, and bricks laid around the edge. After the casket is placed a cement pad is poured over the top the same day. The bricklayers got drunk and the work was not being done. Family jumped in to push it along.

Normally at five pm the cemetery is closed. It began to rain, this is the rainy season and the ground is already saturated with water and sloppy mud. Now it is getting worse. There seemed to be no way that he could be buried that day so most of the people left.

My cell phone was dead and the man's brother was trying to call me to come back. Realizing he couldn't get hold of me by my phone he called one of the ladies from the mission and asked her to call Lena. Someone got permission to keep the cemetery open for us. We rushed to the pickup and started out. I received word that the funeral procession had already started. Since it was raining, would I go by the funeral home and pick up a family with a baby and bring them with their baby stroller.

Evening traffic was terrible so after picking up the family, I took a detour around town and got to the cemetery as the casket arrived. We got out and had to walk about a quarter of mile over a dirt trail for oxen to deliver material to the workers preparing the grave. Now,

where oxen go, they leave a messy, smelly trail of evidence, if you know what I mean; and there was a lot of it, and very fresh.

At the end of that trail while it rained fairly hard, we had to turn and walk through graves. The pall bearers had to carry the casket through about four inches of uneven, slushy mud another fifty yards. They had to set the casket down twice because of the weight, and this through grave sites to get to the final resting place. It is now very, very dark with no light at all except a couple of cell phones. The top of the casket had not been fastened down and it bounced open several times as they carried it to the site.

Oh! Did I tell you that the grave site still wasn't ready when we reached the end of the ox trail? The casket and people had to wait another thirty minutes. All the ladies finally left because of the circumstances and only the pallbearers stayed to carry the casket. There, therefore, was not a prayer given nor the message even though I was with them. There was no means to lower the casket into the grave; therefore, two men at each end got down in the grave to lower the casket while the rest did their best to help.

We left about six thirty p.m. very wet, shoes totally caked with mud and the bricklayer crew still had to pour four inches of cement over the grave. We took people to three different places to drop them off so they could get home. We arrived home after seven too tired to eat. It was good to shower, put on dry clothes and shoes and thank the Lord for His ever present help.

IBFI Missionaries Harold & Lena Priday, Honduras