

August, 2010

Dear Friends of the Bible,

"If this man believes, everyone will turn to Jesus," Ezekiel Ochala Alero said.

But how could he? Odola Wenyari was a witchdoctor. A very powerful witchdoctor.

He had cheated them all. He had taken their cows, sheep, goats and chickens. He had deceived all of them for many years. Everyone was afraid of Odola. **Everyone knew that he was the witchdoctor.**



"I am afraid of the people," Odola said. *"They will kill me if I believe in Jesus."*

Odola's brother, Babour, came to the missionary. He was very angry! *"Why do you speak to my brother, Odola? I, myself, will never leave the pouring of the beer on the ground as a sacrifice until I die!"* he exclaimed. Babour, filled with the blinding power of sin and the devil's works, said he would never believe in Jesus.

Odola wanted to believe in Jesus, but how could he? He was afraid the people would kill him. His own brother might do the killing himself should he turn to Jesus.

Odola would have to confess it all – he would have to bring his charms and all his fetish bones to the church. He also would have to bring the gourd he used to make the voices of the spirits. In front of everyone he would have to walk to the river and be baptized in the name of Jesus.

Where would he get the courage to do that?

One day, Odola said, "I am ready!" The day had come - the great moment when Odola Wenyari, the great powerful witchdoctor, professed his faith in Christ.

He said, *"I want to have the service in my village and to be baptized in the river in front of my house. I want all my neighbors to hear my testimony and see what I will do because of Jesus Christ."*



Odola's village was on the river. As the afternoon sun began to set, Odola's village was crowded; more than a hundred men, women and children had gathered. A couple of local Arab merchants who were Muslims and dressed in their long, white, traditional garments, were also there to see what was going on.

Odola still looked like a witchdoctor. One of his eyes had long ago ceased functioning and was focused at an awkward angle. His hair was always askew and standing straight up in the air. His actions were jerky and he seemed a bit eccentric. If you met him alone on a lonely path, you would be afraid of this man.

Before Odola was baptized in front of everyone, this is what he said: *"You people all know that I am Odola Wenyari, the witchdoctor. What I am saying is being heard by God. This is no time to be lying. God will punish me if I fail to tell everything I know. I have deceived you by taking your cows and your sheep and your goats."*



Odola began speaking into the neck of the gourd as he had done so often in invoking the name and power of the spirits. Now, however, **he was demonstrating how he had deceived the people** with those strange sounds that came back from the neck of the gourd. He then, dramatically, lifted the gourd and smashed it on the ground in a hundred pieces. The people were awestruck. Unbelievers could scarcely believe their eyes. How could Odola do this and not be afraid that the spirits would strike him dead?

Odola went on to give his testimony. He wanted to be forgiven by God and to have peace with God.

He said, "I want my liver to sit down (to be at peace). Because God has sent His son, Jesus, I have found that peace. Jesus, God's son, made the true sacrifice. We need not ever make another sacrifice of our sheep and our goats. We must all put our faith in the blood that Jesus shed. I am at peace because this Jesus was more powerful than death and those who killed him. This Jesus is alive because when his friends went to the place where they had buried him, it was empty. His friends saw him many times before he went back to God's place above, I never knew about this until these white missionaries came to tell us. At first I couldn't believe it. And, when I knew in my liver that they were telling the truth, I was afraid of what you all would do to me if I confessed how I had sinned before God and had deceived you by taking your sheep and goats. My liver was hard and I wanted to refuse to change. But, when I realized that I must fear God more than you all, I said, 'I want to leave my evil things and be baptized so I can follow Jesus with one liver (with my whole heart).'" With these and many other words, Odola Wenyari confessed and professed his faith.

The broken pieces of Odola's sacred gourd and other paraphernalia of his were all gathered up and carried by Odola and the other Christians down the steep riverbank and thrown into the river to be carried away or to sink out of sight forever. **Odola then went into the river waist deep, turned around and faced the people crowding the bank. With a radiant face and without fear he was baptized.**

The missionary and an ordained elder from the church gently pushed Odola under the water. He was baptized in the precious, saving name of Jesus Christ, God's only appointed Savior. **Odola Wenyari became a true and faithful follower of Jesus Christ. He never wavered in his faith.** He became a trusted elder in the Church. He was faithful in attendance and was always at the village prayer meetings. He continued to believe that God could speak to him directly. If he experienced a dream, he unfailingly shared it in the prayer meeting and closed his account with the words, "Now, God, I have told the dream. Let it be so."

Because of Odola's testimony, many in and around his village came to know and put their trust in Jesus as their own personal Savior.



Odola lived many years ago and has since gone to be with Jesus, but there are still hundreds of these witchdoctors living in Africa. People in villages all across Africa are being deceived by these witchdoctors.

We have an opportunity to reach 400 village chiefs in Malawi, Africa with the good news about Jesus, many of whom are current or former witchdoctors. With their conversion and their testimony, others are sure to follow Jesus.

Many cannot read and need a Bible to listen to. **Will you help provide a Talking Bible for one of them?** It takes only \$72.00 to get one of these precious life-changing Talking Bibles to a village in Africa.

One of the chiefs in Malawi came to know Jesus as his own personal Savior and received a Chichewa Talking Bible because he cannot read. He confessed that he was the mask dancer who terrorized his people for 34 years. Now he is saved and teaching his people about Jesus. God's Word is powerful and meaningful when presented in a format that non-readers can use, like the Talking Bible.

In Mozambique, 152 people burned the charms and fetishes a witchdoctor had given them. They made a fire on the sandbar next to the river and burned everything they had received from the witchdoctor. They danced and sang as they made their way down into the river to be baptized. **Not only the people were saved and baptized, but the witchdoctor himself and his entire family were baptized,** all because of the Talking Bible and God's love for them.

Your gifts do make a tremendous difference. Thank you for what you have done in the past. Thank you for what you will do after reading this letter so the village chiefs and witchdoctors in Malawi, Africa will each get a Talking Bible.

Because they need to HEAR!



Mark S. Hoekstra
President, Talking Bibles International.

P.S. Thank you for your generous partnership with this ministry. As you have just read, a Talking Bible can make an "eternal" difference in the lives of one, two or many people! A \$6.00 gift reaches one person with the Good News of Jesus Christ; a \$12.00 gift reaches two people. Your \$72.00 gift will place one Talking Bible in a home. On an average 6 to 12 people listen to **each Talking Bible. Sometimes as many as thirty people will gather to listen!** Again, thank you!