

A Review Of My Trip To Africa - Gowens

Written by Michael Gowens

Monday, 08 November 2010 09:47 - Last Updated Wednesday, 13 December 2017 16:49



“Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.” Acts 3:6

I was blessed to accompany Elder Vernon Johnson on a trip to Kenya & Uganda, 10/11/10 to 10/29/10. Our purpose in making the trip was to strengthen the brethren and to spend some time studying the doctrines of grace with several who are “asking the way to Zion”.

On our last night in Uganda, Elders Johnson, Martin and I were joined for dinner by the only American we had seen in two and one-half weeks. The subsequent conversation we had provides a good context in which to summarize my experience in Kenya and Uganda.

This 35 year-old veterinarian from Wisconsin was working for the United Nations on a humanitarian aid project. Her husband had returned to the States two weeks prior to attend to business and she was anxious for conversation with someone from home. After she asked a couple of leading questions about the menu, we asked if she would like to join us at our table.

She explained to us that her particular U.N. position involved both animal & plant husbandry. Together with her husband, she helped to “set up” poor Ugandan communities with poultry farms and row crops. She also bought cattle from various places for the U.N. World Food Program, which activity explained her visit to Mbale on this occasion.

We learned that she was a graduate of Dartmouth University, a prestigious Ivy League institution. Whatever her views might have been when she finished school, a decade of real-life experience on the ground, some of it in Africa, had taught her to appreciate the blessings we enjoy in America and to appreciate the impact Christianity has had on Western civilization. She talked freely about the blessings of living in a free republic, her concerns for the overtures toward a collectivist and socialist political paradigm in America over the past several years, and her faith in God.

The conversation soon turned to us. Br. Vernon explained that we were Primitive Baptist ministers and that we were here to visit some of our Primitive Baptist brethren and to instruct several inquirers in “the way of the Lord more perfectly”. She asked about the difference between Primitive and Southern Baptists and we explained our concern to emulate the simplicity and content of apostolic Christianity and to be as thoroughly Biblical in doctrine and practice as possible. Br Vernon added that we believe in the doctrines of grace. She nodded in understanding and inquired if we were similar to Orthodox Presbyterians. We explained that we do, in fact, affirm Total Depravity, Unconditional Election and other doctrines popularly associated with Calvinistic traditions, but were not “Calvinists”. Br. Vernon clearly defined that

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we do not believe in “Gospel Regeneration” like Calvinists do, but that the Gospel is for God’s people who have already been born again. She seemed to understand the explanation.

Her next comment surprised me. She said, “I wish you could come to my area. Truth is what these people need.” She went on to explain how superstition was keeping tribal people in bondage. She told how one man’s cow would die and instead of tracing the event to some disease or contaminant, he would explain it in terms of a neighbor’s hex. She talked about the cheap value many of them place on human life, the fact that many women tend to measure a husband’s love by how frequently they are beaten, the prevalence of polygamy, and the habit of measuring a man’s importance by how many wives and children he has. Personal superstition and government corruption keeps these people locked in a vicious cycle of poverty. She said, “Truth is what these people need.”

I wonder how many modern people would agree with her perspective. I get the feeling sometimes that folks today place a higher premium on humanitarian efforts to feed the hungry, care for orphans, provide medical care, build houses, and attempt to eliminate poverty than they do the preaching and teaching of the word of God. The popular attitude seems to be that the person who has only the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to give is not really providing much real help.

Indeed, the church of God should do all that it can to relieve human misery and alleviate human suffering. But that sort of humanitarian aid is not the primary business of the church. The main business of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ is to proclaim gospel truth, not to provide relief for economic and social ills. Our message is “Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”

You see, it is only the gospel of grace that truly explains the condition of the world and the cause of every societal ill. The gospel message begins with the premise that man is hopelessly fallen and inherently depraved. Because of Adam’s transgression, the world in which we live is under the curse of sin. Poverty, disease, war, crime, violence, human exploitation and every other problem may only be explained in terms of the native sinfulness of fallen human nature. Perplexity over the cause of suffering and pain vanishes in light of the clear Biblical doctrine of total depravity.

Further, the gospel points to the only solution for the miseries spawned by sin – the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. It affirms that man cannot save himself from the curse of sin and that his only hope is in a covenant-keeping God. How wonderful it is to see the light turn on in someone’s mind as they begin to see themselves in terms of the big picture of God’s covenant plan of redemption! How encouraging to see a person discover the rest that remains for the people of God in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Many of God’s children in this world are in the same condition as the lame man at the temple gate called Beautiful (Acts 3:2). Crippled by the carnal nature with which they were born, they have no strength to walk a godly walk. Indeed, like this lame man, they possess life, but have not yet found the strength to “Walk in the Spirit” so that they do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:19).

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Like this lame man, again, many of the Lord's born-again people have settled for a beggar's pension in life (Acts 3:2, 5). They do not even realize that a better life is available. They expect and hope for nothing more than a nickel of entertainment here and a dime of recreation there to go along with the dollar of material possessions they have managed to accumulate. They are children of the King but live like panhandlers and beggars in this world (Is. 55:1-2; Jno. 10:10).

Furthermore, like this lame man, they are oblivious to their real need. They think that they need a handout, but what they really need is to be turned toward the Lord and taught how to walk. They need to be saved from ignorance (Rom. 10:1-3).

It is to such people that we bring a gospel message that may initially disappoint them: "Silver and gold have I none." The Church of our Lord Jesus Christ is not primarily a charitable institution, but a herald of the name of Jesus. We traffic in real remedies, not mere band-aids—in real-life, long-term help, not mere temporary assistance. We are interested first and foremost not to remedy the poverty in someone's pockets, but the poverty of understanding in his mind, the poverty of emptiness in his soul, and the poverty of aimlessness in his life.

Whether or not a child of God is conscious of the fact, his greatest need is the truth of the gospel, not an extra coin or two in his pensioner's cup. So our message is, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." To give a man the truth of the gospel of grace is true humanitarian aid. Never underestimate the profound effect that an understanding of the truth may have on a person's entire lifestyle.

It is important to note that the truth of the gospel will only help the child of God who believes it (Acts 3:16). Gospel seed that falls by the wayside where the devil can snatch it quickly away (the prejudicial hearer), on shallow ground where elation is only momentary (the emotional hearer), or on briar-infested ground where the cares of this world choke the benefit of the word (the distracted hearer) will bring forth no fruit unto perfection (cf. Mt. 13). I have no doubt that some of the gospel seed sown in Africa fell into one of these categories. Some had preconceived ideas that made them reluctant to embrace the true gospel of grace. Others were caught up in the emotion of the moment but later reassessed their decision to unite with our people. And some were too involved in the affairs of this life to really concentrate on the truths we proclaimed.

Nevertheless, some gospel seed will fall on the good ground of a receptive and responsive heart. In Africa, only God's born-again people who believed and embraced the message experienced the humanitarian assistance we had to give. I pray that it will truly help them to walk in the old paths, to walk humbly with the Lord, to walk in the light as He is in the light, and to walk in close fellowship with Christ.

How does the truth of the gospel help God's children that believe it? Like the lame man, it tends to transform a person's entire attitude toward life. It fills him with joy, peace & hope (Acts 3:8; Rom. 15:13). It opens wide the door to new opportunities. He now realizes that he is not predestined to subsist on a beggar's pension, but has the resources necessary to live victoriously, like his Savior, overcoming the world (1 Jno. 5:4; Jno. 16:33). His heart is now filled

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with gratitude and love for the brethren (Acts 3:11). He treats his wife and children better; he becomes a more diligent employee; he practices honesty in his business dealings; in every sense, the truth he embraces has the potential to transform his daily walk.

Also, the transformation in one person's life opens doors of opportunity to a larger audience (Acts 3:9-12). That prospect, in turn, has potential for doing even wider good in an entire community and culture.

Contrary to the secular idea that those who preach and teach the truth of the gospel are providing no real help to poverty-stricken people, I claim that they are the only ones who actually do something to remedy the malady. The gospel enables the born-again children of God who believes it to walk a truly Christian walk. It is true humanitarian aid! The old adage puts it well: "Give a man a fish and feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime."

It was the eagerness with which our African brethren wanted Gospel truth that impressed me. I didn't get the impression that these good men were motivated by material concerns. Though there are exceptions to every rule, the overwhelming majority of these folks are sincere seekers of the true Gospel, not demagogues using religion to line their pockets. They value truth more than silver and gold. I'm thankful we have ministers and faithful church members who are willing to make the sacrifices necessary to make sure that those who value truth so highly might have the opportunity to be exposed to it.

May God bless Elders Johnson, Bryant, Ivey, Kitchens, Blair, McCool, Crawford, Hasenmyer and others who carry and broadcast the precious seed of the Gospel of grace to come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them. Such truth to inquiring children of God is, indeed, what people really need.

Thank you to everyone who prayed, encouraged, and assisted me to be able to make this journey. May the Lord abundantly bless you, each and every one.

For His Glory,

Elder Michael Gowens
Lexington, Kentucky
11/1/2010

The following are excerpts from "updates" I sent to my wife during the course of the trip.

Kenya

Africa is beautiful! It is like nothing else I have ever seen. I have not felt insecure or in danger once. The people are extremely gracious and friendly. Ninety percent of them say, "Ahhh! Welcome!" and shake your hand every time they see you. They have a special handshake that consists of three parts – first the traditional handshake, then the "thumb rolled back 90 degrees"

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like we used to do with a buddy at school, then a finish with the traditional handshake again.

Elder Martin is doing a great job translating our messages into Swahili and the Kisii dialect. During one of my messages, I gave him about two phrases and he talked for the next 30 to 45 seconds. Then when I read the rest of the verse, he turned to me and said, "I've already told them that." I asked him if he wanted to just go ahead and finish the message for me. :) He admitted to me after the service that he was getting excited and was just doing a little preaching. Ha!

He is a prince of a man – humble, industrious, wise, and incredibly kind. He offers heartfelt prayer each morning when we begin the day and in the evening when we return safely to our hotel. Elder Johnson said that Br Martin is the busiest Primitive Baptist preacher he knows. His phone rings regularly from church members, inquirers, and others as he seeks to serve the Lord in Africa. He travels great distances to minister God's word, teaching and preaching 4 to 6 times per week. His organizational skills are unusual and his attitude exemplary. I have gained tremendous respect for his servant's spirit though I've only been around him for a week.

The Kenyan people, as a rule, are some of the happiest people I've ever met. They don't stress over much. You may know that the phrase "hakuna matata" originates here, and they take the advice to not worry seriously. :) Everyone operates on what they call "African time". That means if they give you a time frame of 10 minutes, they may mean 30. Or if they say 20 minutes, you're lucky if the task is completed in an hour. For instance, Br Martin was supposed to pick us up at 9:00am today. Br. Vernon and I were ready and waiting by 8:30. At 10:15, he finally arrived. We had a 45-minute drive to a 10:00 worship service. Of course, we didn't arrive until 11:00. :) I told him I wanted to introduce him to a new concept – a wristwatch. He laughed and said, "I was very sleepy Brother Mike and I couldn't seem to wake up." :) Do you think the church folks were worried? No. They just kept singing until we arrived. No one seemed to be the least bit disturbed by it. :)

This general happiness is even more unusual when you consider how poor, at least by Western standards, many of these people are. Outside of the main highway from Nairobi to Kisii, roads (for the most part) are dirt and literally lined with people walking, 50% of them barefooted. There are very few fences and the whole menagerie of animals roam freely. It is not uncommon to see a whole flock of sheep or herd of goats or donkeys feeding just inches from the roadside. Some people do in fact tether their cow or goat to keep it nearby, but others (Br Martin told me) allow their animals to graze wherever they please. The animals come back home at night. ;)

The amazing thing about it, though, is that these people do not feel poor. They seem content with food and raiment. I'm sure "unemployment", at least in the classic sense of term, is high, but most people seem to be busy or engaged in something productive activity. Most families have their own garden spot and animals (chickens, sheep, a cow or two). They harvest their produce (corn – which they call maize, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, bananas, etc) and gather whatever crafts they have made and take them to town on Mondays and Thursdays for "market day".

Yesterday was "market day" in Kisii and in all candor, the streets were teeming with people,

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selling their wares and buying from neighbors. You haven't lived until you've attempted to drive through a town with tens of thousands of people on either side, dodging potholes, motorbikes, makeshift wagons pulled by donkeys, little children running across to the other side and oncoming traffic that misses sideswiping your vehicle by mere inches. :)

The low price of goods, however, is surprising. I bought souvenirs today that would have totaled at least \$250 in the States for 1500 Kenyan shillings. Does that sound like a lot of money to you? It is equivalent to approximately \$20 in American currency. :) Electronics, appliances, exercise equipment, and other such items, however, are much more expensive here than in the States. We saw a simple treadmill at the Kisumu Nakumatt (a store much like our Super Walmart) for almost 100,000 Kenyan shillings. That is equivalent to approximately \$1,500 in America.

It is difficult to describe the kindness with which the Kenyan PB's treat Br Vernon and I. They show us so much deference and it is certainly humbling. I try to return a display of respect as much as possible, but they seldom permit me to fill the role of servant. They seem genuinely grateful for every kindness shown and express gratitude over and over again that we came to help them. Though it sounds trite, I am very sincere when I say that I have gleaned more than I've given in this effort to strengthen our African brethren.

I feel that both Br Vernon and I have enjoyed good liberty in our preaching efforts thus far. On Wednesday at the PB Fellowship in Nairobi we had about 18 ppl in attendance. I preached from John 17. That evening at the Navaisha PB Fellowship, 12 ppl attended, 10 of which were little children. I spoke from 1 Sam 17 on the narrative of David & Goliath, drawing a connection between David's victory over the enemy and our Lord's victory over our sins on the cross.

On Thursday, we made the long drive (about 150 miles) from Navaisha to Kisii. We drove through the Great Rift Valley and saw tremendous landscapes. Much of this region is inhabited by the Masai tribe, a nomadic people who seek to preserve the heritage of the past, much like the Amish or Mennonites do in our culture. We saw zebras, two giraffes, three antelope, an impala, and scads of sheep, goats, and cattle.

That evening, we met with the Omogonchoro Fellowship, led by Br Peter Ongera, and had an "open air" worship service. There were at least 40 people in attendance. As they sang "Pass me not O gentle Savior" and "Rock of Ages" in Swahili, Br Vernon and I sang in English. My text was Jonah 2:9, "Salvation is of the Lord" and I felt the Lord blessed.

On Friday, we had another "open air" meeting beside a tea field with the Ogembo PB Fellowship. Br Vernon preached an outstanding sermon from Mt 10 on the expression "You are of more value than many sparrows" and I preached from John 1:29 - "Behold the Lamb of God." The pastor, Br Peter Mbegera, and people have been studying with Br Martin the materials that Br Vernon provided on the doctrines of grace and have expressed substantial interest in PB doctrine. They are a "work in progress", however. I am hopeful that they will continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth because they have real promise with such a sizable and trans-generational group.

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Saturday morning we drove to the Kisumu PB Fellowship, about 2 hours from Kisii. I used 2 Samuel 14:14 as my text. In this passage, the woman of Tekoah urges David to bring Absalom home from exile by appealing to the fact that God “fetches home again His banished”. The passage provides an excellent outline for proclaiming the gospel of grace. It describes the plight of man and his inability to rescue himself from that plight. Then it says, “Yet God doth devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.” I used this passage of Scripture to talk about the Covenant of Redemption that God made before the world began.

On Saturday afternoon, we returned to Kisii for a service with yet a further group. I preached on the Doctrine of Eternal Security.

We had over 200 worshippers at the Sunday morning service, held at Bombure Primitive Baptist Church. Because the crowd was so large, we held the service outside. It was thrilling to see so many African PB's singing and rejoicing in the gospel.

Of course, they sang “Pass Me Not O Gentle Savior”. In fact, they have sung it at every single service we've had. It is virtually the “PB national anthem” here. Br Vernon said that from the first time they heard the song, they identified with it. These people are touched by the sentiment of the chorus - “...while on others Thou art calling, do not pass me by.” I will never again hear that hymn but what I will think of these devout people.

Br Aikins Doh from Ghana spoke first He is an exceptionally talented young man. I've enjoyed every effort he has made and have high hopes for his ministry in Ghana. He speaks good English with a strong British accent. He spoke from Philippians 3 on “pressing toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Br Aikins has a delightful personality and really connected well with our Kenyan brethren.

Br Vernon spoke next on the experience of Cornelius in Acts 10. It was an excellent sermon showing how Cornelius was undoubtedly born again before he received the gospel.

I spoke last from John 6 on the contrast between the multitudes that left Jesus because they said he preached “hard doctrine” and the few disciples who refused to leave because they deemed his teaching “the words of eternal life”. I felt unusually good liberty. I told the congregation when I started how thrilled I was to worship with so many Primitive Baptists and how humbled I was that Br Vernon trusted me enough to ask me to assist him in this good work. When the invitational hymn was sung, three came forward amidst much rejoicing seeking baptism.

Several from this large crowd asked us questions regarding theological and practical issues. I was impressed at the thoughtfulness of the questions. These people are quite astute. Though preaching with a Swahili interpreter has made me more “simple” in terms of “cutting to the chase” or getting to my point without so much fluff, I have not downgraded the subject matter or content of the sermons in the least. They grasp arguments, respond to humor, appreciate illustration, and see the distinction between the Biblical doctrine of salvation by grace alone and the popular idea that man must do something in order to make the work of Christ effective. I learned quickly that textual preaching was more conducive to the fact that I was both speaking

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through an interpreter and sharing time with other brethren. The only way in which I've simplified my sermons over here is in terms of 'stream-lining' them, not in terms of 'lowering the bar' of intellectual argument. These folks are sharp. Don't let anyone tell you differently.

After a wonderful meal in the home of Elder William, the pastor of Bombure Church, we left for Nyarenda Church. I didn't realize that I was in for quite an experience.

Nyarenda Church is located about an hour from Kisii in the mountains. This is the rainy season in Kenya and we made the drive to the meeting house in heavy rain. When we arrived at the road that leads up the mountain, we found it almost impassable. It was literally the roughest road on which I've ever traveled. We bounced, slid, got stuck twice, and finally had to stop at the base of the hill approximately 300 meters from the house of worship. Br Wyckliffe, our driver, said: "Well, this is the end of the road." The people came down to meet us, literally holding our hands as they helped us navigate our way up the slippery, treacherous road. My shoes were literally caked with mud when we arrived.

About 20 people met us there and we enjoyed a sweet service. Br Aikins preached on Eph 2:8. I followed on the 3 Appearings of Christ in Heb 9:24-28, and Br Vernon closed with an outstanding message on the Love of God.

As Br Vernon was finishing his sermon, the rain started again. By the time we decided to make our way back down the mountain, it was raining fairly steadily. A young man from the church was holding my left hand when my left pants leg was caught by some briars. As I struggled to free myself, my foot slid on the slick mud and I was on my back in an instant. Br Martin and the young man lifted me to my feet and literally held me up the rest of the way down the mountain. I felt like an old man having to be helped by these two young brethren, but I was sure thankful for the help.

I climbed into the vehicle with mud-caked shoes and the left-side of my pants. When we finally arrived back at the hotel, one of the attendants looked surprised at how dirty I was. I showed him my shoes and asked: "Do you know what this is?" When he answered "mud", I said "No. It's Kenya. I'm going to take some of Kenya back to America with me." :)

After a week in Kenya, my impression is that these good people are sound Primitive Baptists in doctrine and practice. The experience of worshipping with such a large crowd of people committed to the doctrines of grace and the simple practice of the NT church this morning was incredibly encouraging. Under the leadership of Elders Martin and Charles, the churches here are walking in the old paths and feel it to be a privilege to do so. I've been blessed to distribute about 40 books to the ministers here and they seem so grateful for the materials. Br Vernon has invested so much in these men without fanfare or plaudits. He truly has a servants heart and is practicing the kind of "giving ministry" that Paul encouraged the Elders at Ephesus to maintain. His organizational skills and logical mind has made his particular gift tailor-made for these folks. I pray the Lord will continue to provide every need so that this worthy ministry may continue to the glory of Christ's name.

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Mbale, Uganda

On Monday, 10/18, Br Vernon and I traveled with Br Wycliffe, Eld Martin and Eld Charles to Mbale, Uganda. For the first time in my life, I crossed the equatorial line into the southern hemisphere.

On Tuesday, we began meeting with a group of 10 to 12 men who have expressed interest in our doctrine and practice. They have been studying materials sent from Br Vernon. Over the course of the first three days, we devoted a good 4 ½ hours of intense study each day. I spoke on the subjects of the New Birth, Particular Redemption (or Limited Atonement), and the Effectual Call as distinguished from the Gospel Call. Br Vernon spoke on Total Depravity, the relationship between Belief and the New Birth (showing that birth must precede belief, as life must precede action), the Covenant of Redemption, the Eternal Preservation of the Saints, and the Substitutionary Nature of the Atonement. Br. Martin spoke on the subject of Predestination and Br Charles on the subject of Election.

A few of these brethren were not immediately convinced of our doctrine. We had several exchanges with them in which they expressed opposition. One of the men who insisted that a person must “accept Christ in order to be saved” kept quoting Mark 16:15-16 (“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”) and Romans 10:10 (“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, then thou shalt be saved.”). I finally recalled something that the late Elder Obey Ndalima had said about how the only hope he had when he thought about his African ancestors arose from an understanding that salvation is by the grace of God alone. I asked this man: “What about your African ancestors? Did they confess the Lord Jesus with their mouths? Did they believe in him? Were they baptized?” This question stunned him momentarily. Then he did something that I’ve never heard anyone do. He mentioned how God had clothed Adam and Eve with animal skins and surmised that God had covered their sins with the blood of an animal sacrifice. He claimed that his ancestors were likely saved the same way, through the animal sacrifices of pagan religion. My mind went immediately to the book of Hebrews 10:1-3: “For the law having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things, could never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. For in those sacrifices, there is a remembrance made of sin every year.” Br Vernon and I insisted that the only blood that every remitted sin was the precious blood of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that Old Testament animal sacrifices simply anticipated and prefigured that perfect sacrifice that was to come. I sure was thankful that the book of Hebrews was in the Bible! J Br Vernon also asked this brother a very pertinent question about the text in Romans 10. He asked, “Do you confess something in order to make it true, or do you confess something that is already true? When a person confesses to committing a crime, does his confession cause the crime or does it simply acknowledge something that is already true?” He added that confessing with your mouth that Christ is your Savior does not make salvation true, but simply acknowledges something, after the fact, that is already true. This barrage of polemical debate silenced the detractor, but it was evident that he was still not convinced.

On that Thursday afternoon, we had a worship service with Br Jonathan Mande’s group. I

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preached first on the Pharisee & the Publican (Lk. 18). Br. Vernon followed with an exposition of Romans 10:1-10, showing that the salvation that Paul desired for his Jewish brethren was a salvation from ignorance to an understanding of the truth. Br. Charles closed with an excellent message from Romans 8:2.

I feel that Friday was a turning point in our studies with these men. Br Martin spoke first this morning on the subject of Glorification and then Br Vernon went into great depth developing the difference between unconditional eternal salvation and conditional gospel (or temporal) salvation. It was during that session that one could almost see the light of understanding turn on in those who had remained somewhat skeptical. Once they saw how scripture does not contradict itself but harmonizes to form a consistent and coherent whole, the passages that they thought supported a free-will system of salvation fell into place. Everything seemed different after these brethren grasped the concept that the Bible teaches more than one "salvation". Attitudes among the two or three that opposed us changed dramatically after this session and I was so thankful to the Lord.

On Friday afternoon we had a worship service in which Br Martin preached from Heb. 4:12-13. I followed on the subject of "Rest" from Heb. 4:9-11. I developed the thought that as a result of Christ's labor on the cross, the saints look forward to an everlasting rest in the presence of the Lord. Then I emphasized that there is a rest that remains right now for the people of God, a gospel rest in the fellowship of the gospel church. We were worshipping between some houses in an extremely poor little village. One of the buildings nearby was constructed from bricks made of red clay. I illustrated Mt 11:28-29 ("Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest") by asking them whether or not a dead man might feel the burden of that pile of bricks on top of him. They laughed and shook their heads. Then I asked if a living man might feel the heavy burden of the load upon him. They nodded in agreement. I made the point that the only person who feels the burden of conviction and the need for spiritual rest is the person who has already been given spiritual life. Several of the people began to clap and say "Hallelujah!" and "Amen!". I felt the Lord richly blessed this service.

That service was held in a little village called Nauyo on the outskirts of Mbale. It is, without exaggeration, the most poverty-stricken place I've ever visited. Though the people looked like they had been fed, it was evident that they had very little of this world's goods. As I preached about the rest from toilsome labor, tribulation, and trials that we will enjoy in heaven's pure world some day, several had tear-filled eyes. Several of the little toddlers had no clothes; very few of the people wore shoes; barnyard animals roamed the grounds while we were assembled; at times the surrounding noise of people talking, babies crying, cows mooing, and wind whipping the awning above us made it difficult to hear all that was said. During Br Martin's sermon, a group of 8 to 10 Muslim men wearing the habit of Islamic holy men passed beside our gathering in single file and circled around the rear of the assembly. It was obviously an effort at intimidation. Nevertheless, we kept right on with the program. I leaned over to Br Vernon while Br Martin was preaching and said, "This is not a glamorous ministry." He concurred. It is hard work to preach and teach God's word in these conditions, but the Lord has opened a door to minister to several who have inquired and expressed a desire to understand the word of God and they are rejoicing in the truth. To see God's blessing upon these hungry sheep is worth everything we might have to invest for the kingdom of God.

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On Saturday, we finished the material we had wanted to cover in our studies with these men. I spoke first on the Three Types of Justification taught in the Scripture. I asked Br Samson Nyaberi (an attorney from Nairobi who had joined us for studies) if the judicial structure of Kenya was similar to American, i.e. with a High or Supreme Court and then lower courts at the State and Local levels. He replied that it was. Then I asked Br Boaz Munga, our Ugandan host, if the same was true in Uganda and he affirmed that it was. I then asked which court is the final court of appeal? They replied the High Court. It has the last word. I developed the forensic concept of Justification and showed that justification by grace (Rom. 3:24; 5:9) has to do with the High Court of Divine Justice. God declared his people to be righteous at the cross by virtue of the imputation of Christ's righteousness and Supreme Court has issued the verdict of "Not Guilty" regarding each of God's elect (Rom. 8:33-34). The question answered in this courtroom is "What is God's verdict of your case?" That is the question of ultimate importance.

Then I talked about justification by faith. I indicated that this phase of justification takes place in a lower court, i.e. the courtroom of individual conscience. I explained from Romans 4 and 5 the dynamic. God has already decided the case of His people at the cross. Their judgment has already taken place. That verdict is reported in the gospel. As the preacher announces and proclaims the finished work of Christ on the cross, the little child of God who has been asking himself the question, "Am I his or am I not?" finds peace in his heart when he believes the gospel message. I said this is what happened to the Publican in Lk 18. He came to the temple to pray as a person under conviction of sin, and went home "justified", that is, with peace in his heart, for He saw that God was merciful to sinners in Jesus Christ. I talked about the fact that justification by grace has to do with our legal standing before God, and justification by faith has to do with our personal experience in this world. Whatever judgment a person passes on himself, whether "I am righteous" or "I am condemned", does not have the last word. The High Court alone determines destiny: "For if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things."

Finally, I mentioned that there is a further court. People pass judgment upon us based upon our actions. They watch us and conclude from our behavior either that a person is righteous, or sinful. This is justification by works, as taught in James 2. It has to do with the courtroom of public opinion. I stressed that what people think of you does not affect your standing before God; neither does what a person thinks about himself. What ultimately matters is the judgment that God has passed upon each of His people. The good news of the gospel is that "None can lay anything to the charge of God's elect, for it is God that justifieth." I felt that this was a very profitable study.

Br. Vernon followed on the different "callings" taught in Scripture – the effectual call, the gospel call, and the call to the ministry. As he "rightly divided the word of truth", many of those present nodded in agreement.

I closed the morning session by talking about the Purpose of the Gospel. I offered ten biblical ways in which the gospel is said to save, comfort, strengthen, guide, inform, instruct, motivate, feed, convert, encourage, and liberate the regenerate child of God who believes it.

We had a worship service on Saturday afternoon. I preached on the Sovereignty of God from

A Review Of My Trip To Africa - Gowens

Written by Michael Gowens

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Psalm 115:1-3.

On Sunday morning, nine brethren were baptized into the fellowship of Kiorina Primitive Baptist Church, where Elder Charles is pastor, and one into the church where Elder Martin is pastor. These churches will extend an arm if/when churches are constituted later. Elder Charles plans to travel to Uganda once each month to continue teaching these new converts and to oversee their growth and progress in the faith.

After baptism, we met at Br Boaz' home for morning worship. I preached from Habakkuk 3:17-18 on Rejoicing in God's Salvation. Br. Martin followed with an excellent message from John 10:27-30. Elder Johnson closed the meeting with a clear message on the importance of Entering the Kingdom of God.

Since we had covered the material we wanted to cover, our final service on Monday 10/25 was a worship service. Br. Vernon delivered a good message from Genesis 4 on Cain and Abel. He taught that "God is no respecter of persons" in the sense that he does not recognize a Jew over a Gentile, a male over a female, a white person over a black person, etc. But he is a "respecter of persons" in terms of his covenant of redemption. God had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and his offering, God had not respect. It was a wonderful explanation of how our service to God is acceptable, first and foremost, because God has made us accepted in the Beloved.

I concluded with a message from 2 Corinthians 1:10 on the Three Deliverances. Paul trusted in the God who "hath delivered us from so great a death" (past tense), who "doth deliver" (present tense), and who "shall yet deliver us" (future tense). Others came forward at the close of this service. Br. Charles will return to baptize them, God willing, next month.

To God be the glory. Amen.