

# Free Grace Evangelistic Association

(Mark 16. 15, 2 Timothy 2. 2, James 1. 27)

Registered Charity No. 1139084

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## **Report on the Visit by the FGEA Chairman to Zimbabwe and Malawi – September 2017**

Dear Friends,

I am thankful for the Lord's preservation throughout this mission. We have known many answers to prayer despite Satan's fierce opposition. As I was meditating on what I saw during the visit, I thought of Christ's words to his disciples, "many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." (Matthew 13 v 17) It has been truly remarkable and humbling to witness what I saw during the visit.

As I was preparing to leave the UK there seemed to be so many pressures, but the Lord was gracious to help me and the family through in the final days before departure. However, one such challenge was the last-minute cancellation of one of my flights (from Zimbabwe to Malawi). I had not been informed, but the Lord directed me to do some final checks on my flights, and so I made the discovery before leaving for Africa. In answer to prayer the airline agreed to reschedule me on other flights later the same day, so that the programme of teaching and distributing God's Word would not be hindered.

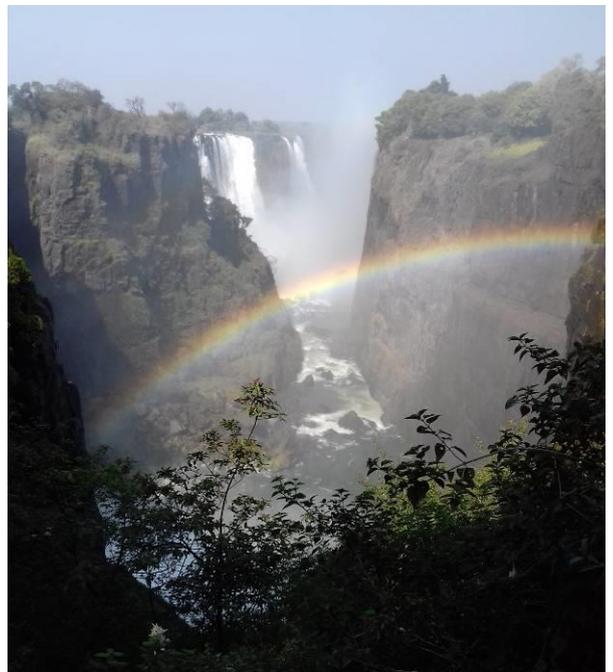
I left home on 1 September and flew first to Addis Ababa, then changing flights to Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, arriving lunchtime on 2 September. I obtained my entry visa on arrival without difficulty and carried my bags laden with literature through Customs without any problems. Whilst at the airport the first opening for Bible distribution arose; I was using the cloakrooms, and the janitor came to me seeking a tip. Instead I offered him a Bible, and his face lit up with delight and most gladly received the Scriptures. We could only talk very briefly, but it was a joy to see the way the Bible was received. May the Lord grant much fruit and blessing to the man's soul.

On arrival, I was met by Maxwell Msindo (FGEA Zimbabwe Co-ordinator) and his deputy, Alex Madzongwe; they were also accompanied by other FGEA brethren. After the long air flights, it was greatly encouraging to be met so warmly by the brethren. We then left for Victoria Falls town and a visit to the Falls themselves, which are a spectacular natural wonder of God's creation. By the first viewpoint was a statue to the missionary explorer David Livingstone, who was the first European to see the Falls, but more importantly the first missionary to bring the Gospel to that part of Africa. Whilst it was good to see the Victoria Falls, we had to press on with our journey of about 70 miles to the mining town of Hwange.

At Hwange, I preached on the Lord's Day, 3 September, at the church of one of the FGEA local representatives. He had heard me speak in 2013 at Bulawayo and told me how he had been deeply struck and his eyes opened to see the need for a faithful version of God's Word, and how he had been united in spirit to the work of FGEA, despite his evident bodily weakness and infirmity.



Speaking on the Bible in rural Zimbabwe



On Monday, we began our programme of FGEA(Zimbabwe) meetings at Hwange. The subject for the meetings throughout the visit in Africa was “Faithful to the Word of God,” speaking of Christ the Word, the attacks of Satan upon the truth, and the vital need of faithfulness. This covered teaching on how the faithful versions of the scriptures were given by God’s gracious hand, followed by a warning of how Satan has attacked the truth by bringing confusion through corrupt Bible versions and the spreading of error. At Hwange, there were about 70 people present; they were mostly pastors, some of whom had travelled long distances to attend. After the meeting, we travelled the 200-mile journey to Bulawayo through long tracts of remote countryside, including game reserve areas. We were told that if you broke down at night it was not safe to go outside your car because of the lions. Thankfully, we were given safe passage.



On Tuesday, we travelled into a rural area called Kezi, in the Matobo District about 50 miles from Bulawayo. The beauty of the location for the church was a striking example of God’s creating hand. However, I greatly rejoiced and was much humbled to hear of the many testimonies of local people to the blessing they had received from the Lord through the distribution of the TBS Ndebele Bible by FGEA(Zimbabwe) last year. Some of the people had walked more than 10 miles through mountain paths to be present. There was abundant evidence that churches and lives were being changed by the Holy Spirit through reading and searching the Scriptures. Some of the people present had a background in various cults or churches that up to recently had had little concern for the scriptural truth. Some

testified that the Lord had used the Bible distribution and teaching in numerous conversions, including from members of heretical sects. During the meeting two policemen came and they asked if they could each have a Bible, which were gladly given to them. It was clear that I was labouring on a good foundation of the truth that the Zimbabwean brethren had laid by God’s grace and power. I felt a special help in preaching and it was a joy and privilege to be there. After the distribution of Bibles and literature, many said that there is a pressing need for more Ndebele Bibles. This same message was conveyed everywhere we went. “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.” (Psalm 115 v 1)



Maxwell Msindo (left) and Bible/book distribution at Kezi, Zimbabwe

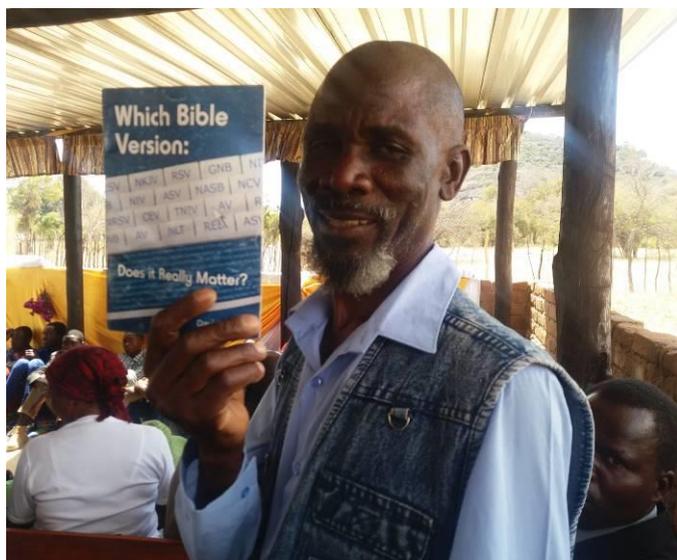
The following day we made another visit into the rural areas near Inyathi, about 90 minutes from Bulawayo. At this point we felt more opposition of the adversary of souls, because we spent much time trying to find the remote location, and then later in the day the car had problems. However, it became clear why Satan was opposing. The gathering near Inyathi was filled to overflowing with at least 200 people. As on the previous days, we received many testimonies of how the Lord had so blessed the Ndebele Bible distribution and previous FGEA visits. We really felt there were many there whose heart the Lord was opening, and many who were sincerely receiving the Word of Truth.

The photo below shows the venue; the large covered area which was used as the church was insufficient to accommodate the people who gathered, and many sat under the sun or under nearby trees.



The man pictured on the right told us of how he had been so blessed by receiving a Bible last year through FGEA. He had kept the TBS booklet on Bible versions he had received last year to show us, saying he had been so helped by it.

On Friday 8 September, we left Masvingo at 5-30 am for the 4-hour journey to Harare where we met with brethren for a few hours, including the FGEA Zimbabwe committee member in Harare. Then in the afternoon I took leave of the Zimbabwean brethren and left Harare on flights to Lilongwe and then Blantyre in Malawi, where I was met by Elwyn Maliwa (FGEA Malawi Co-ordinator) and the FGEA Malawi Executive members, Joseph Mbewe and James Mbwana.



It was at this point we experienced a forceful attack from the enemy of souls. Firstly, our Regional Director from Zambia, Duwen Musaka, texted to say that he was detained by a severe challenge in Zambia and unable to come to Malawi as planned (he later informed us it was a tragic event very close to his family and church). Furthermore, the car being used to collect me from Blantyre experienced problems on the way to the airport, and needed roadside repairs. Then within 20 minutes of being met at Blantyre airport at 6-15pm a front tyre failed. After receiving some assistance the spare was fitted, but we then suffered a brake failure due to loss of fluid and by God's grace we were preserved from crashing. After stopping to repair the brake pipe, the spare tyre also failed leaving us stranded in the dark by the roadside. A passing car stopped to offer assistance; the wheel had to be taken away and a replacement tyre found and fitted. After a further 3-hour delay we were on our way, but not before I gave a Bible to the stranger who

helped us and prayed with him by the roadside. At that moment, I felt the Lord's special presence and His light shining through. We arrived at the Lodge at Balaka in answer to much prayer at 2am in the morning. We rested for the remainder of the night, then arose for the first of the FGEA conferences in Balaka on Saturday 9 September. We felt a sense that Satan had been attacking because the Lord had purposed a blessing; and so it proved to be. The church for our venue was packed with nearly 200 people, including many pastors. As in Zimbabwe, there were testimonies to the Lord's blessing and evidence that the Malawian brethren had laid a sound foundation by God's grace in previous FGEA meetings. I also felt the Lord's special help in preaching at Elwyn Maliwa's church on the Lord's Day.





On the next two days, we had meetings in the towns of Zomba and Mulanje, at which 230 and 130 people (mainly pastors) were present, respectively. At both places, those present were very attentive and testified to the favour the Lord had given them through the work of FGEA. It was not the first FGEA meeting in these locations and there was a well-organised local committee led by a senior pastor. (The photo shows Pastor Elwyn Maliwa (left) and our hosting pastor and FGEA representative in Mulanje.) Once more, one must say “What hath God wrought!”. God was very gracious to preserve us on the road, despite the opposition of Satan. The car had to be driven slowly, especially as it was carrying five people, plus a large quantity of Bibles and books for each journey. Despite the condition of the car, we completed our journeys, arriving in Blantyre on Tuesday 12 September. It was decided that we must get another

car the next day for travelling around Blantyre for the final conference, whilst a mechanic could work the vehicle. In God’s providence, another car was lent to us to use for our last conference in Lunzu, just outside Blantyre.

The final FGEA conference at Lunzu was different in that none of the people attending had previously heard of FGEA, nor of the corruption of most modern Bible versions. This was the first FGEA meeting in this area. Nevertheless, there appeared to be a great attentiveness to the message amongst the 140 that were present. It is our heartfelt prayer that they would be like the Bereans, who searched the scriptures whether these things were so. As with each of the meetings, Bibles and literature in English and Chichewa were distributed to all who registered. A small registration fee was charged to help cover the cost of the meeting, although this only covered part of the actual costs, the rest coming as a grant from the UK. Malawi is a very poor country and most people can only contribute a little. A number of those present at each meeting applied to join the FGEA Malawi branch as members.

Whilst in Blantyre I discussed with Elwyn Maliwa the next stage of the Chichewa New Testament project, which is being done in partnership with the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS). It is hoped that by the end of the year, all reviewing of the draft New Testament will be complete, and that the proofreading, typesetting and approval phase can then commence. Elwyn and I also visited the printers near Blantyre that FGEA has used over many years. This was to have exploratory discussions on behalf of TBS to investigate whether they had the capability to print the Chichewa New Testament. At each of our meetings in Malawi we requested the prayers of the brethren for the Lord’s favour in the completion of this project, and that funds would be provided to print the New Testament in significant numbers. There was a universal desire and eager expectation for the publication of this new TBS edition of the Chichewa New Testament, given both the serious problems with current Chichewa Bible versions and the acute shortage of the written Word of God amongst so many churches in Malawi.

I flew back to the UK (via Addis Ababa) on 14 September from Blantyre airport, after concluding the final session of the Lunzu meeting. As I took my leave of the Malawian brethren, we could truly thank God for His preservation through the mission and deliverance from many dangers seen and unseen.

I would wish to express my heart-felt thanks to the brethren in Zimbabwe and Malawi who have laboured so faithfully to support and organise the arrangements and meetings on this visit. May the Lord bless them and encourage them with true blessings in their churches. I would also thank TBS, the FP Mission in Bulawayo and the Bethel Pulpit for their assistance with Bibles and literature, and our donors in the UK who helped to support the costs of this mission.

With warm Christian regards,

Ian Sadler



Distributing Bibles at Elwyn Maliwa’s church. This was only the second Lord’s Day since the building was opened; previously they were renting a room.