

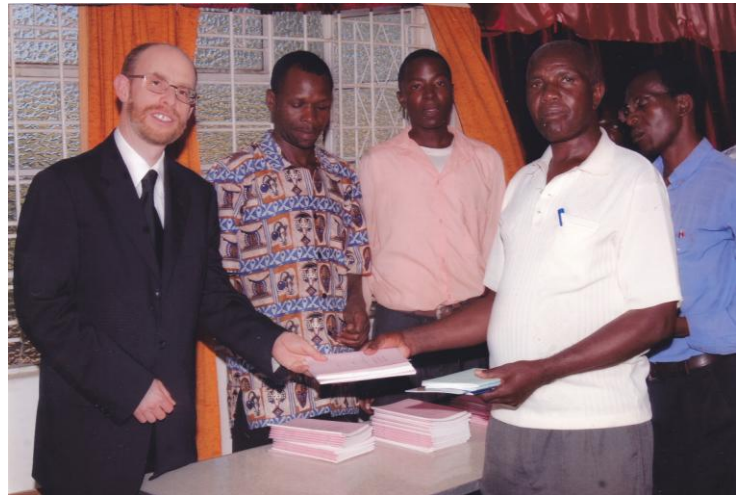
Zimbabwe - Sowing the Word of Truth

By I A Sadler

This report gives a short account of my visit to Zimbabwe in November 2010 as Chairman of the Free Grace Evangelistic Association (FGEA), and to record the Lord's goodness and watchful care over me and African brethren throughout the programme.

I left home at midday, and arrived at Bulawayo Airport just over 24 hours later, having travelled from Heathrow via Johannesburg Airport. I had packed out my bags with 25 AV Bibles and 288 booklets "Why the King James Version?" I arrived to find that the Zimbabwean customs required me to pay duty. After lifting my eyes up to the Lord and a deal of discussion amongst the customs officers, the demanded duty was reduced. This I paid, knowing that it would secure the distribution of the Holy Scriptures to another 25 souls. Having thus passed through the border formalities, I was met by Pastor Maxwell Msindo (FGEA Zimbabwe - co-ordinator). Later that afternoon Pastor Duwen Musaka (FGEA Zambia - co-ordinator) also arrived in Bulawayo after a 24 hour bus journey from Zambia. We were thankful that the Lord had brought us together over such distances.

At Pastor Msindo's house we inspected the stock of Bibles and books that were to be distributed. Thankfully all of the AV English Bibles for distribution (1100 AV English Bibles kindly granted by Bible Spreading Union) had been received by Pastor Msindo. There were also 300 TBS Ndebele New Testaments, 84 Shona (Union 1949 edition) Bibles, 600 TBS booklets on Bible Versions and 2380 books re-printed in Bulawayo (1080 "Love of God", 1030 "Jesus the Way" and 270 "Mystery, Babylon"). Pastor Msindo also showed me the Shona translation of "Jesus the Way", which is awaiting final formatting and checking prior to printing.



The main part of the programme was for me to speak at two FGEA conferences in Bulawayo and Zvishavane (120 miles from Bulawayo). At these conferences most of the Bibles and much of the literature were distributed. Whilst in Zvishavane I also preached at a church on the Lord's day, as well as at a mid week house meeting.

Each conference lasted three days, with the final day being solely for ministers or leaders. In total over 200 people (at least half were ministers) attended the two conferences. The principal theme was Christ the eternal Word, and the Holy Scriptures which set forth the way of salvation. I spoke particularly about the inspiration of the Scriptures, their providential preservation, and the fundamental truth that God the Holy Spirit will never lead or teach anyone contrary to the Word of God. I also testified against modern corrupt translations of the Bible and the so-called "prosperity gospel" of health and wealth in this life. In doing so I knew that I would be contradicting much of what is commonly preached in Africa; however, it was quietly and graciously received by the hearers. It is our earnest prayer that the seed sown would bear precious and abiding fruit to God's glory, and the edifying of the church. I can testify that the Lord gave much liberty in speaking, and strength despite the challenging temperatures and conditions (in Zvishavane it was about 40 Celsius in the day, no running water, usually no electricity and multitudes of flies and mosquitoes).

Pastor's Msindo and Musaka also spoke from an African perspective about Bible versions. It was a very striking moment, when they asked someone with an NIV to read out Acts 8. 37 and Matthew 18. 11. One minister stood up and holding out his open NIV, said in amazement "It's not there !" Likewise, Pastor Musaka asked one person to read out aloud John 8. 11 in the NIV concerning the Lord's words to the woman caught in adultery (AV - "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more"), but asking everyone

else to shut their Bibles. The NIV ends the verse “go and leave your life of sin”, but when an African speaks this it sounds like “go and live your life of sin” ! When this was put to the test by someone reading aloud John 8. 11 from their NIV, a number of ministers exclaimed in astonishment, “What !? What did you read ?” Pastor Musaka then explained that even when reading, many ordinary Africans can not tell the difference between the English words “leave” and “live”, but that the AV words are crystal clear. Many of the ministers testified to being very deeply challenged about what they heard about Bible versions - we encouraged all to read prayerfully the booklets on Bible versions that were distributed, and above all to compare the AV with the modern versions many were using.



Conference venue in Zvishavane (above); Dr Sadler and Pastor Maxwell Msindo (FGEA Co-ordinator in Zimbabwe) answering questions (right).



The conferences included a short session in which we spoke about the work of FGEA and many ministers present desired to join FGEA (Zimbabwe). It was an encouragement to see the realisation amongst many for the need that African ministers themselves must stand in God’s grace for these truths, and to stand against the flood of error in their midst.

On the last morning in Bulawayo before going to the airport, we visited the Scottish Free Presbyterian Mission in Bulawayo. We had opportunity to meet with the lead translator for the Ndebele Bible and to discuss the early work being undertaken on a Shona translation. These translations are being done in conjunction with the TBS and on the same basis as the AV English - there is a very great need for such versions.

Both Pastor Musaka and myself were given safe travelling back home. Pastor Musaka took back with him 300 books to Zambia for distribution there. The remaining stock of books was for distribution by other FGEA contacts in Zimbabwe.

It is with thankfulness to the Lord that we knew a spirit of union and love one to another in Christ. Despite one’s many fears and shortcomings, the Lord mercies endureth for ever. Great is His faithfulness ! (Lam. 3. 22-23)