

July 2016 UK, Italy, China

The *Bible Companion* readings for this Sunday include Romans 7 and 8 and there is an MP3 file about this at <http://www.aletheiacollege.net/audio/rom78.mp3>

You can see the archives of our MP3 files at <http://aletheiacollege.net/archives.html> and on iTunes at <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/podcast/christadelphian-bible-talks/id987163468>

Download the *NEV Bible* with commentary and *Bible Companion* bookmarks at <http://n-e-v.info/NEVBIBLE.pdf>

ITALY

We reported previously of a group of disillusioned Pentecostals who were meeting for Bible study in a town near Bologna, Italy. We baptized one of them, lectured the rest about the doctrines of the true Gospel, and gave them each *NEV Bibles* and *Bible Basics*. We repeat the invitation we then made, to come and visit with these dear folks. They are mainly African immigrants who are well established in Italy, some having lived in Italy many years or were born there. Our visit with them this week was greatly blessed, and it is a pleasure to see such humility to God's word and sincere desire to serve Him and His Son in Spirit and truth. We were able to baptize OMO, GEORGE, MOFI, PETER, VICTOR, GODSPOWER and HENRY. Our brethren are conscious of the huge numbers of migrants now washing up on the shores of Italy. Since the closure of the Greek route, the majority of migrants are now arriving by sea in Italy, risking dangerous sea crossings in often leaking boats. Each month, at least 20,000 migrants arrive on the Italian beaches; and at least 700 drown each month, on average. 900 drowned in the last week of May alone, and many boats capsize without being noticed and reported, so the figures are likely far higher.

Italy doesn't know what to do with them, as they are supposed to deal with these people themselves. Public opinion is strongly against the migrants. We baptized our brethren on a crowded beach on a Saturday. There were hundreds if not thousands of bodies lying on the packed beach- white bodies. Our group of 10 black males [including some other contacts] drew quite some attention as we walked past the sunbathers, undressed by the waters' edge and went into the sea. The association of black people with the beaches of Italy was provocative and there was some severe racism and shouting of abuse.

One German tourist ran up to us and explained she was a Christian and was ashamed of the abuse, especially seeing we were sincere Christians performing a baptism in the sea. She pressed some money into the hands of our baptismal candidates and walked off, herself getting scorn. God bless her. It was some of the most primitive racism we have experienced in Europe. It reflects the fast pace of change in Europe and the deep divisions which are opening up within society, which of themselves are enough to bring Europe down.

After the baptism we went for a cold drink but were repeatedly told by the bars that our group of 12 was too big, or some such excuse. We had to walk some way before we found a bar willing to accept us. So the baptisms, performed on a beach where the deck chairs were almost to the water's edge, was a wonderful witness to many of the unity of persons and ethnicities in Christ:



The racism doesn't end there. When the migrants arrive, they are registered and taken by the Government to various hostels or camps. They are given no public support for several months.

Then, they are registered and given support for a few months, and after six months they can work. Which Italians complain is taking away their jobs. The Government seems to hope that by not supporting them apart from accommodation, the migrants will move further north to other parts of Europe. This means that it is over to local charities and local councils to support them- if they wish.

Our brethren are reaching out to such newly arrived migrants in four different camps. They arrive on the beaches with totally nothing, just their trousers and T-shirt. The mood against helping the migrants varies from area to area, but where they are, the support level has decreased markedly in recent times. There were young men wearing literally the clothes they arrived in, another with only pyjama bottoms to wear which he had picked up from a garbage bin. Food is delivered to them by various charities, but very little, and the Muslim charities give preference to feeding the Muslim migrants, of whom there are many. We spent significant funds on buying food for them- they have cooking facilities. Rice, yams, cooking oil, vegetables and also clothes.

We are open to donations to replace our funds spent on these things and to continue assisting. We also arranged for them to phone home to their families. Here we are loading sacks of rice, beans etc. into the car to take to the camps:



The journeys of those who came from northern Nigeria were amazing. They crossed the Sahara, going several days packed in trucks or standing, drinking dirty water from oases, eating dead camels or nothing at all. Until they reached Libya, where some were put in the migrant prisons there, experiencing whipping and starvation, seeing Christian migrants killed quite arbitrarily by the Muslim guards. Many also died on the Sahara journey.

If a tyre got damaged, the armed drivers would just push off some of the migrants to lighten the vehicle and leave them in the desert to die. Then there was the dangerous crossing of the Mediterranean. All we spoke to said their boats leaked and all of them were brought to Italy by rescue ships as their boats had sprung leaks or been swamped by waves. One of those we baptized had changed his name to Godspower as he was for ever impressed with God's power to save him. One described paddling a dinghy with their hands after losing their oars. They had all been involved in scenes like this:



Every single one we spoke to had arrived the same way at different times; and they each said that during the perilous sea crossing, during which they all witnessed death or came near to it, they vowed to God to serve Him and His Son if they came alive to Italy's shores. It all has shades of the John Thomas story. It makes us wonder how many of those who survived the shipwreck with Paul later also came to true faith.

And in their cases, they got to Italy... and met with our brethren. And now some of them have been baptized- on Italy's beaches. We talked with them of how baptism is a crossing of the Red Sea, and then a wilderness journey by grace to the promised land. It fitted so well with their experiences. Their baptisms really were a vow of a good conscience to serve the Father and Son who saved their lives for the purpose of their coming to know His grace. Here's brother Joseph [whom we baptized last time] doing a Bible study session with some from one of the hostels; we

had to go outside the hostel to a local park as the other Muslim migrants found it offensive. All are using the *NEV Bibles* given them, and you can see one young man wearing green pyjama bottoms he found in a garbage bin [not very comfortable in the high temperatures of up to 40 C]. He literally has the clothes he stands up in. It meant so much that we arranged for him to call his mother in Africa.



We are in process of producing a video with their testimonies and will inform you next time Lord willing.

UK

We had another encouraging house church meeting in Croydon last Sunday, and were pleased to baptize MOHAMED, a friend of brother Ali. Amazing how full immersion can be achieved in a bath tub- if you have someone like sister Hilary assisting holding the feet down! Do let us know if you'd like to come along.



CHINA

Brother Donald reports the baptism of another contact, JING. We pay the fares of brother Donald as he travels to meet and baptize and pastorally care for contacts throughout China, and are open to your donations to enable him to continue this wonderful ministry he has done for many years now. He reports:

"I baptized br Jing in a swimming pool. He first heard about Jesus from his grandparents. He came to this city from rural village in the northwest part of China searching for a better life for his family. He experienced lots of difficulties and pressures in both in secular and spiritual life, and the pressure of the materialistic life led him to search for the truth about Jesus and the Kingdom. When we parted ,I told him to keep the faith and learn to pray every day. May Jesus come soon"



PRAYER POINTS:

- For those recently baptized
- For our refugee brethren in Italy and the new group there
- For Brother Donald's work in China

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks