

June 2015 France, Malawi

The *Bible Companion* readings for this Sunday include James 1 and there is an MP3 about this chapter at <http://www.aletheiacollege.net/audio/james1.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>

MALAWI

We have reported over the years the wonderful story which arose from the baptism of a Malawian couple in Norway, who returned to Malawi, converted the pastor of their church, who in turn has taken the Gospel to many. Brother Leonard reports that this week he baptized 25 former Moslems in a remote part of central Malawi. They have ceased attending the local mosque and have built a grass-roofed structure where they meet. You can see them here with their copies of *Chichewa Bible Basics*. Whilst much of the Western world is now online, there is a huge need in the poorer world for hard copies of Bibles and our books, especially in local languages. Without the faithful investment of funds in such printing and distribution projects, we simply would not be able to report this kind of progress of the Gospel into the deepest corners of the globe. *Please do direct donations and legacies towards us for the furtherance of this work. Contact us for details of how best to leave legacies to enable this work to continue.*



FRANCE

We're pleased to report the baptisms of SAM and RAPHAEL. Brothers David and Steve from the UK report as follows:

As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country (Prov 25:25) was our brief visit to Melun, just twenty miles SSE of Paris, for two days, 3-5th June. Steve Gretton and I were visiting the temporary home of Duncan and Cindy. It was hugely pleasant to witness the baptism in the Seine of Raphael from Nigeria. Like all people baptised by Duncan, he fully knew the Scriptures and understood the grace of God. Large, very large in stature, he gave a good confession, eager to embrace our Lord. The angels surely rejoiced in heaven as this new child emerged from the muddy water with a radiant smile. Three African brethren were present; Kingsley, Samson and another Steve (besides our Steve), Duncan and myself. Steve, the African one, was typically able only to find temporary work on less than minimum wage and with erratic hours, he was working at MacDonaldis. (See the separate article about the exploitation of the immigrants.)



Photos: Baptism in the river Seine, in scenes more reminiscent of Africa, given the hot weather in France at this time:

Also present, back at the apartment for lunch were Rita, with her little boy, and Eva. All praise to Cindy's culinary efforts. Using a little of the 40kg of rice we had taken from England, she produced a fine African spiced rice dish, an excellent flan and much else.



Earlier in the day we had visited sister Fatmata at her refuge with the Red Cross. We were only allowed to talk with this young sister outside. Helpfully, the weather was warm and sunny. She was from Sierra Leone. In her mid-twenties, she had lost her parents in warfare and a brother to Ebola. Now she is in France without ID, nor is she likely to obtain any. She accepted a little clothing from the contribution we had taken over, her eyes lighting up at the sight of a purple sweater - her favourite colour, she said. We felt that this attractive sister may still be vulnerable where she is and prayed about her situation before leaving.

The absence of identity paper is of huge concern. Like most of the people arriving from Africa, our new brethren have no ID. They cannot prove who they are or where they are from. They cannot therefore be rened to wherever they came from. They are without identity or status. The hosts can only try to provide very basic needs: adequate food and sufficient clothing. We must at least do that (Matt 25) and we have the privilege of passing to them the clothing provided by Christ - a wedding garment.



At the time of writing, these people and several more have no accommodation for meetings and for the welfare / feeding programme. The warehouse which had been meeting place was lost to them where the Manager objected to Duncan and Kingsley's plain speaking about the true doctrines of the Gospel. Urgent prayers are asked of all readers for a suitable location for our brothers and for the situation of our sister from Sierra Leone.

Bro. David Welch

Bro. Steve Gretton adds:

As we walked back along the bank of the broad river Seine, Raphael told me that his name means - God heals.- We talked about the significance of that in the context of his new life in Christ. *Healing* in God's way of thinking conveys much more than we normally associate with the word in modern English. Healing is the word we use for what happens after an illness or accident and defines the recovery in the medical sense. But when God heals us he is talking primarily about salvation, about forgiveness of sins and about eternal life. The KJV of the Bible sometimes uses the word - made whole - after Jesus heals someone instead of - healed -. If you read the account of the man healed in John 5, you will notice that both words are used, and in Hebrew thinking, a healing from God includes healing in the spiritual sense as well a making whole.

So Raphael and I talked about how at his baptism from a few minutes ago, he had received from God the healing that his name implied. He had been named 'Raphael' and now in his baptism he had, in truth, been healed - not from a physical ailment but from sin and death. He was now Raphael in name and in truth - healed by God.

But as I cast my mind back to the actual baptism another Bible truth emerged. The banks of the

Seine had been reinforced against the wash of the passing barges. They were steep and deep and we searched for a safe place. At one point we found a step down, but there was no saying how deep it was, though the water was clear. It was actually very dangerous and although we could have got in, it was uncertain how to get out again.

We walked along until a muddy bank appeared surrounded by trees making a secluded, accessible place. But as we stepped into the water we sank knee deep in the mud. This made for some difficulty in balancing and feeling secure underfoot, although the water was conveniently shallow. We churned up the mud and Raphael was immersed in the muddy shallows. But it was here that Raphael became a new man in Christ - rather than in the clear water flowing nearby. And I was reminded of Naaman and his baptism - his healing - in the muddy water of Jordan rather than in the clear flowing waters of Abana and Pharpar which he would have chosen for himself. And so we remember that is God and Jesus who save and not we who have to provide the perfect environment for this to happen. New life is given to those who, like Raphael, seek the Lord in the way He has designed and provided - in this case in a muddy pool at the side of commercial waterway in the middle of a largely indifferent continent.

They come from all ends of the world

There are large areas in France and many other parts of Europe when you seriously wonder which part of the world you are visiting. Massive numbers are fleeing from other countries to Europe and to other more prosperous parts of the world. They come from Iraq and Afghanistan. They come from many parts of Africa and Asia. And they come for a wide variety of reasons - some to flee war, some to be free to practice their faith away from persecution, some for political reasons. Many come because they believe they will get a better life here and some perhaps because they wish to exploit the generosity or resources of the richer nations.

It is clear that many come genuinely believing that life will be better and more prosperous, and it is therefore a huge shock for them to find that they are not welcome and that they cannot find work or a home. Those we have talked to are prepared to work to pay their way and are conscientious people who would make good neighbours to us if they had had the opportunities we have had. But work is hard to come by, accommodation is in short supply, and what they can find is often rough and at least as bad as what they left behind. And it seems that the capitalist West is quite happy to pay low wages, and to allow poor conditions and no franchise to those who have no rights so they can provide us with the life style we take from granted at rock bottom prices. It doesn't sound much different from exploitation or even slavery. It pays us to keep the poor poor.

The provision for food, welfare and education is very patchy across Europe and many such people are exploited. Some countries like Greece routinely imprison people and give them no prospects. In Turkey many are subject to persecution and violence. Young women are particularly vulnerable and some can be rather naive about what they will experience. But many others are caught in a vicious trap where they either have to accept exploitation by people who are willing to use their labour at low wages, or they may find themselves turning to crime. We may wonder why our government doesn't send them back - particularly those who have turned to crime or who are here for no good reason. But there is no simple solution. The situation is much more complex than appears at first site. Even if the person cannot provide a good reason to stay, then governments cannot simply send the individual back to their purported home country. The problem is that there is considerable cost in repatriating someone and in the

absence of papers there is no certainty that the original country will accept back one of their own if they turn up there. Take brother R. Who arrived in Latvia a few years ago. Following the common advice given to him before leaving Africa, he destroyed his papers after he arrived. There is now no way for him to prove his identity or nationality. Even if he were given the money to go home, no airline would accept a booking from him without a passport and visa. And even if he were to return to his home country and they have no way to identify him as one of theirs and they would refuse him entry and leaving the airline with the problem of returning him to Latvia. He tried to contact friends and the authorities back "home" to try to obtain some formal acknowledgement that might pave the way for identification and return, but it failed. Carelinks provided him with a home and the basics needs of life for several years, but he was seriously depressed and now, sadly, has disappeared and we have no word about him. We fear that he may have died in the attempt to improve his situation. And if the authorities try to deport people, they are up against the same obstacles.

This is serious problem and although we wring our hands at some of the situations that arise, we have to accept that this is the way of the world these years. In France there are tens of thousands who have no way to return even if they want to. They have no money, no rights, no welfare, no papers and no prospects. They are effectively stateless wanderers struggling to make ends meet. Yet it is to them that the gospel has such a great meaning. Here is hope and the prospect of being accepted by a Saviour and by God in a world where truly they are strangers and pilgrims looking for an abiding city. What a privilege it can be then to support those who bring the gospel of truth about Jesus and God to such potential children of the Kingdom. The blind receive their sight, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. We may not have the physical cures, but we have the spiritual cures implied by each of those diseases mentioned by Jesus, as we share the truth of God.

PRAYER POINTS:

- For a meeting place in Melun, France
- For the many desperately poor brothers, sisters and contacts in Western Europe
- For wisdom in how best to assist
- For the new converts from Islam in their remote location in Malawi
- For those newly baptized

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks