

Chalon, April 2013

Dear Friends in the Lord,

"Welcome to Paris Charles-de-Gaulle airport, the temperature is 2°C (35.6°F)..." That was my arrival in Paris after 3 weeks in temperatures around 40°C (104°F)! Because of the heat, this was a very tiring trip, but the Lord gave strength.

The occasion this time was mainly the 2013 Grace conference for West Africa, held once again in the usual centre in Bohicon, Benin. We had a record number of registrations but, as is often the case in Africa, many did not turn up for various reasons. There were about 50 participants. Although we often say that numbers don't count, the little twinge of disappointment I experienced showed me that they do a little! It is amazing how this desire to see and quantify the Lord's work sticks to us!

The level of ministry (5 sessions a day) was very good. The fact that the last few conferences had been exceptional made this one something of an anticlimax, but it was still good. We had men from 5 different countries, although those from Burkina Faso did not make it. The two colleagues from Ivory Coast were able to come and share in the teaching. Among the subjects dealt with were: "The mystery of godliness & the mystery of lawlessness", "The ministry of the Word", "The foundation and object of faith"...

Our friend from Brazzaville, Gildas, was with us again this year, and another good friend and brother, Matthieu Hanto, pastor of a small fellowship in Libreville, Gabon, also came. He is the person who plans my visits there.

Other places in Benin

I arrived in Benin a week before the conference as I was invited by the church in Porto Novo, together with fellow preacher Cyriaque Aholou, to preach at a week-end seminar. This is the third time we had such an opportunity, and we had a good time around the Word. On the Saturday, we went by boat to a little village on the lake where a group of people meets regularly. We also had a session with the young adults of the church, looking at their questions in the light of Scripture.

I had planned to travel north, right up to the border with Niger. However, Islamic terrorists had threatened French citizens with kidnapping. I therefore stayed in the south while the others went to visit the churches in Glazoué, Parakou and Banikoara. This was a great encouragement for the brethren, as not many people come their way.

Just after the conference, I was due to preach in a church in a small village nearby where I had been for the past two years. But the leader told us that the visit had been cancelled as he was not sure he wanted his people to hear "that" message, i.e. the Gospel of Free Grace! This is sad as I had good responses from the people on the last visits – probably why the leader did not want us there again.

Then we went to Klouékanmé and Agbédranfo, a small town and a village in the Couffo area, the birthplace of voodoo. There is a faithful church in the village and, over the past year or so, the brethren have helped a little group start in the nearby town. It was lovely to see the work of the Gospel spread in this way.

Togo

My colleague Julien and I then drove on to Lomé, the capital of Togo. The purpose of the visit was a second invitation for a week-end retreat to preach the Gospel in a Baptist Church there. The contact came a few years ago when the pastor of the Church attended a similar retreat we held in another place. He then started the Preachers' Course and invited us to come and preach in the Church where he is pastor. We had a good opportunity to preach and to answer questions from the Scriptures. We also had a session with the young adults of the Church who are full of questions. This was a good opportunity to show them how to find answers in the Word and how to think biblically.

Central Africa

I am not sure how much the news was published in the Western media, but there has been another coup in the Central African Republic. It is very sad to see this poor country unable to rise above its troubled politics. I guess that the presence of diamonds in its soil goes a long way

to explain this instability. The friends we have there are safe so far and they are still meeting every other Saturday around the Word. The books are still being distributed for the moment. Let us pray that the political turmoil will not affect this activity.

Congo Brazzaville

As I mentioned earlier, brother Gildas came to Benin to attend the conference. It was a good opportunity for him to familiarize himself with the message and with the brethren there. In Brazzaville, we face a new challenge as we want to strengthen our operations there in order to touch more people with the Gospel in a lasting way. Please pray for this new step which is quite daunting for this young man. He could then, not only have an impact on the city but go to other places in the country. Gildas needs to realize that it is a ministry given by the Lord rather than a job with Westerners. He needs our prayers.

The books

Thanks to the support of many friends in the autumn, we were able to reprint short runs of several titles which had been out-of-print for some time. Half of these are already out-of-print again. Several more titles are ready to go to press now. The present crisis has meant that we really had to change the way we operate. However, we try to keep all the foundational titles in print as much as possible. A very challenging time, when the Lord continues to open doors in very needy places! We recently had news that one of our books ("The art of divine contentment, Thomas Watson) was used of the Lord to give great comfort to someone in Switzerland going through a very difficult ordeal. It is good to see the ministry of the books in unforeseen directions.

Future projects

We have a few titles being prepared for publication; in particular a very good book by Sinclair Ferguson ("By Grace Alone"). Hopefully, this will be of great benefit to the people of God and to sinners alike. I plan to be in the US in June and part of July, visiting churches and friends. Then, I would like to go to Brazzaville to strengthen the situation there if possible. This would probably include a visit to Gabon. I had planned to return to Haiti in June, but it will be preferable to postpone this till November or December in order to better prepare better for such a visit. Please pray for all these plans, that I may discern the Lord's will in all I do.

May the Lord bring glory to His name through the work of the Gospel.

Jean-Claude



One of the houses on the lake



peaceful boat ride to the village



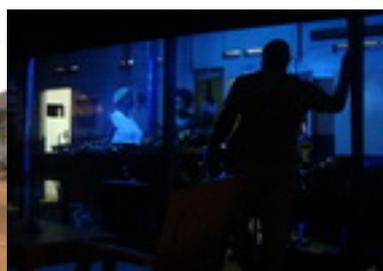
The men at the Grace conference



(l to r) Julien (Benin) - Matthieu (Gabon)
Vincent (Ivory Coast) - Gildas (Brazza)
JCS (France) - Paul (CI)



Street view in Klouékanmé



road side eating place in the evening



traveling cheap !