



Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

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Back to Africa . . . With the Gospel

By

Brian R. Kenyon

The influence of the Florida School of Preaching reaches far beyond the classroom in Lakeland. In addition to our graduates preaching all over the world, our extension classes located throughout the state of Florida, our annual lectureship and book, which are heard and distributed globally, and our website that can be accessed from any place in the universe with internet access, many associated with the school will be actively involved in foreign mission work this summer.

Two teams of missionaries are going to Ghana, West Africa, laden with personnel from the Florida School of Preaching. First, Bob Bauer, who teaches the extension class in Auburndale, is leading a team of five missionaries. They will be in Ghana from May 30 to June 21. Among the team members is Brian Kenyon, associate director of the Florida School of Preaching. Bob has been going to Ghana for seventeen years, and this will be Brian's third consecutive year. The team will be following up on new congregations and encouraging existing ones; spreading the Gospel to villages who have heard little to none of the

pure, unadulterated Gospel; working with the Village of Hope orphan home; and helping benevolent and evangelistic works in the areas where the team travels.

Second, Ted Wheeler is leading a team of missionaries from June 14 to July 10. Ted, who is a 1984 graduate of the school, preaches for the Venice church of Christ in Venice, Florida. In addition to his preaching responsibilities, he serves on the school's board of directors, teaches one class a week in Lakeland, and keeps our website running and updated. He and his family lived and worked in Ghana for five years after his graduation, and he has returned for a few weeks each year since moving back to the States in 1989. Included in this team are two graduates of the Florida School of Preaching: Rick Kenyon, who is presently a student at FHU; and David Stearsman, who preaches for the Media church of Christ in Media, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia. Also included on this team are two current Florida School of Preaching students: Brian Howard from Muncie, Indiana; and Will Vann from Evant, Texas.

These two students are

receiving help from the B. C. Carr memorial fund. The ones who started this fund stipulated that interest earned was to be used for mission work. No school funds are being used for these trips. Those going on the campaigns are responsible for raising their own funds. This is especially difficult for full time staff members of the Florida School of Preaching because many people see a conflict of interest between raising funds for the school and raising support for a missionary campaign.

Ted's team will mainly concentrate on the Northeast part of Ghana and perhaps even in the neighboring country of Togo, where they unknowingly started a congregation last year. National borders are not clearly marked in the bush! This team will work to strengthen these brethren and to further preach the Gospel in this region. They will also be involved in some fresh water well drilling, which not only supplies a necessity to physical life, but also opens many doors to spiritual life through teaching the Gospel. Like the first team, they will also be involved with work at the Village of Hope orphan home.

Why We Go

Before His ascension, Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:15-16). The people in the United States need the Gospel as much as those in Ghana, West Africa, or anywhere else in the world. However, when the providence of God opens a door of opportunity, how can the faithful Christian, whose health and talents permit, refuse to go? How can we sing, "Here am I, Lord send me," or pray, "Use me in Your service," and then refuse to go when the opportunity arises? We all have a responsibility to teach others the Gospel (Mt. 28:19-20), and Jesus did say, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Lk. 12:48).

Aside from the responsibility mentioned above, there are at least four other reasons for taking the Gospel to countries such as Ghana. First, the Gospel is the "power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Sin is still humanity's number one problem (Rom. 3:23), and the Gospel of Christ is still the only remedy for sin (Rom. 6:23; 10:1-17). The people of Ghana living in sin are just as lost as the people of the United States living in sin!

Second, in many ways the Gospel has a much freer course in a country such as Ghana than it does in the United States. One American evangelist was amazed earlier this year when he studied with some Ghanaians in the Northern Region. As he was giving examples of how certain denominations twist Bible passages into teaching things the Holy Spirit never taught (cf. 2 Pet. 3:16), his translator told him that

any mention of specific denominations or various divisions by name would mean nothing to them. Can you imagine studying the Bible with people who have never heard of the major denominations or their doctrines? True, these denominations and doctrines are nowhere found in the Bible and no one should view the Bible through their glasses, but so many people in the United States (and elsewhere) are conditioned into thinking that Christianity is denominationalism. Thus, before the personal evangelist can make good progress teaching the truth, he often has to unteach much denominational "baggage" (cf. Jer. 1:10).

Third, people in Ghana are not as skeptical as those in the United States. One missionary on our team last year was studying the Genesis account with the headmaster and other officials of an institute of higher learning. An American biology teacher from the Peace Corp sat in on the study which took place at a picnic table under some shade trees. She obviously believed in evolution and was heavily influence by radical feminism. Though her objections were quickly answered and she did not raise any other, the Ghanaian brothers working with us saw an attitude that they did not think existed in America. For the most part, many Americans automatically assume the Bible is nothing more than fables, the evolutionary work of mankind. Many Ghanaians, on the other hand, approach the Bible "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thes. 2:13). There is a tremendous difference between these two attitudes!

Fourth, people in Ghana are generally more interested in the

Bible than people in the United States. At one time in our country people would travel long distances, sometimes on foot or horse back to hear the Gospel preached. Church buildings would be packed, often times with people crowded outside the windows and doors just to get a glimpse of the preacher and hear the Gospel message. Additionally, people were not afraid to publically discuss the Bible and even debate religious positions. Those days in this country are long gone, even in the "Bible Belt"! Our culture is too concerned with political correctness. Not so in Ghana. People will travel great distances on foot and/or public transportation to hear the Gospel. Locations where preaching takes place are often overflowing with people eager to hear the Gospel. Public debates are also conducted. A Ghanaian brother who has hosted and worked with Bob Bauer's team for many years debated a Muslim last August. The debate was so successful in helping to pull down the strongholds of Satan that the Muslim spokesman

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TRAINING PREACHERS SINCE 1969

declared that the debate was a draw! We must pursue the doors God opens for us (cf. Acts 14:27; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3; Rev. 3:8).

All of these reasons add up not only to the saving and spiritual strengthening of souls, but also to an encouraging experience to all involved, Ghanaians and American missionaries. Sometimes preachers in the States can become discouraged by the lack of response many Americans make toward the Gospel. Sometimes we might even feel fortunate if one, like Agrippa, would at least respond by saying, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Yes, we would love for people we study with to say, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36), but too often the sad reality is that people will not even give us the opportunity to present the Gospel to them.

Why We Do Not Go

We do not go to the foreign mission fields to "Americanize" their people. Neither the Gospel nor the church of Christ is an American invention. To the contrary, God designed the Gospel and the church of Christ to work in any culture. This is why Paul could say, "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means

save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you" (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

Paul's point was that he could adhere to any culture in which he worked in order to save souls as long as he did not violate God's will by doing so (cf. Acts 5:29). Necessary principles and obligations are still binding no matter what the culture, but the ways those principles and obligations are carried out may be different in various cultures. For example, in Ghana men and women, even if they are husbands and wives, do not hug and kiss in public. If we go in as missionaries and teach them that if they really loved each other they would not be afraid to show affection in public because that is the way it is in some parts of our culture, then we are guilty of trying to "Americanize" them. Instead, we should teach, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord....Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:22-33), and then let them carry out those obligations within their own cultural framework.

Furthermore, neither Bob's nor Ted's missionary team is going for a holiday. Some "missionary trips" taken by brethren are nothing more than glorified vacations. They spend more time sight seeing, taking in recreation, and relaxing than working in the vineyard of the Lord. Although both Bob's and Ted's team will take some time to relax and or visit a place of interest, there will be much hard work. The landscape is rugged, which makes for sometimes slow and bumpy travel; the native languages are foreign, which necessitates great

patience with translators when preaching and/or studying; the conveniences of running water, bathroom facilities, and electricity are often scarce; the food is not exactly that to which we are accustomed; and the separation from loved ones back home can weigh heavy on the heart. However, the souls that are saved and encouraged are well worth the efforts, knowing that our "labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Conclusion

The influence of the Florida School of Preaching reaches far beyond the facilities in Lakeland. As friends and supporters of the school, we hope you can see and appreciate what is being accomplished. Without the Lord's blessing, the generous supporters of the school, and the work being done by the school in Lakeland, this soul saving influence would not be possible. Please pray for the success and safety of each of these and other missionary teams.

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Honorable Appearances

By

Gene Burgett

Events that take place regularly often lose their significance. This morning I looked in my mail box and found an envelope I receive every month from the Florida School of Preaching. The envelope contained the soon-to-be-mailed May issue of the Harvester, a report accounting for how the funds received by the School were used last month, and another envelope for the convenience of any who would like to contribute to the work of FSOP.

From time to time I have had those who believe in our work mention how much money might be

saved if we discontinued this mailing. It is nice when people express confidence in one's integrity by suggesting that certain protocols need not be observed. However, it should be noted that one reason trust is gained is because the protocols have been faithfully observed in the past. To cease the practice is to flirt with future mistrust.

The apostle Paul, a man surely above reproach, believed in this principle. In Second Corinthians 8:20-21 he wrote these words, "avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us—providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (NKJV).

The context of the above quote concerns a collection Paul had been gathering from churches

throughout Europe, Macedonia, and Achaia. These funds were to be taken to Judea to aid people suffering from a famine that had gripped the land. It might have been cheaper if Paul had collected and delivered these funds by himself. If nothing else it would mean paying the expenses for only one man. But Paul would have no part of such an arrangement. Instead he invited churches to send their own agent to insure all things were done in an honorable way. The above quote references that the churches had selected one "whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches ... to travel with us with this gift" (2 Cor. 8:18-19).

Appearances do matter. Accountability is important and we at the Florida School of Preaching desire your continued trust. Therefore, we offer this report

every month to those who support us in the work of training men to preach.

A quick reading of that report shows that most months the funds we receive in contributions do not cover the expenses incurred by the work. Please help us in this matter. Please tell others about our work and urge them to support our efforts. If it is possible, please consider increasing the support you are already so kindly supplying.

I stand prepared to personally give a report of our work to any churches or individuals interested in having fellowship in our efforts to train men to preach the gospel. Do not hesitate to contact me.

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