



Visit to Gaborone, Botswana May/June 2008

I was excited when Basil, the pastor from Grace Gospel Church in Durban, asked me to accompany him on a visit to Harvest Christian Church in Gaborone. I've been blessed to be able to travel up to the church a few times this year, and I'm really grateful for the opportunity to be a part of what the Lord is doing in Botswana.

As the day of departure drew nearer, we notched up some extra travellers in the form of Lyn, Kara-Jayne, Brenden and Tyrone, who all decided to tackle a 10 hour drive to join us, and to bring freshly printed copies of the new and improved Amazing Grace - Basil's account of his life leading up to his salvation. Marietjie joined Basil and I on the flight up, which went well apart from a jarring landing in Joburg that gave us a fresh revelation of what the seatbelts in airplanes are actually for.



It was great to see Riaan Smit at the Gaborone airport. He drove us back to his house in Phakalane where we were to spend the week, and we were met by the smiling faces of Anli, Charlé, Annerique and little Lisa. It has been such a blessing to spend time with this family and be encouraged by what the Lord is doing in their lives.

Day 1

We woke after a good rest to prepare for the ladies meeting, although we soon discovered that any effort on our part was totally ineffective as an army of females descended on the Smit house, armed with all kinds of dangerous eats.

It was wonderful to see some familiar faces; including Ndumiso who had made the trip through from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. We were most grateful to have him with us. I was also very happy to see Rudi and Kelly, who have just returned to Botswana as a re-united couple.



Glenda opened the meeting, and then Lyn shared wonderfully about how we have no rights or positions in the Lord. She told of how much religion she had in her life, and how she realised that she needed to be broken if she wanted to contribute anything in the spirit. It really was special to hear her heart, and to witness how the Lord is using her life as an encouragement for other women in the church.

Basil then started on a powerful theme that would set the tone for the visit. He spoke about how our salvation is a total gift from God. We did nothing to earn or deserve it. We are saved by grace through faith, and even that faith is a gift from the Lord. Therefore we have nothing to boast about, but there is a great freedom in this because if our salvation is not up to us, then we cannot get ourselves 'un-saved'. This should give us an incredible gratitude towards the Lord. Basil elaborated a bit on the life of freedom that we are called to live in Christ, and then he called for anyone who had not been born again to come forward for prayer. Two ladies, Karen and Amanda, came up and gave their lives to the Lord.

Day 2

Thursday night was the official launch of Amazing Grace. It was wonderful to see many brothers and sisters again. Basil spoke about what terrible bondage it is to be a Christian and struggle with sin. Jesus died to remove the power of sin, which is the law. The law only reveals our sinful state, but it doesn't give us any hope.

Before we were saved, we had a passion for sin. We were slaves to sin. After we are saved, we no longer want to sin. We are slaves of righteousness. We sometimes sin because of the weakness of our flesh, but it is not what we want to do.

Basil re-iterated just how important it is for us to realise that we are not saved by any effort on our part. God is not surprised when we are saved. Paul makes this clear in Ephesians 1:4. We can

be eternally grateful because of this choice that God made to save us from our sins.

The first question that many Christians ask when they hear the message of grace is, 'Does this mean we are free to sin?' We ask this question because we're carnal, and we don't understand that we're no longer slaves to sin, so we believe that we need law to keep us from sinning. In fact, the reason that Christians still sin is because they are under law. Just because we don't show sin outwardly does not mean that we are innocent. Jesus said that if a man even looks at a woman with lust, he has committed adultery with her in his heart.



It was a truly powerful message, and it's clear that this theme of being free from the law is strong in Basil's heart.

Day 3

We had a good Friday, with many people visiting us at Riaan and Anli's house. Lots of tea, coffee and delectable eats were consumed, apart from the spiritual food, of course.

At the church that night, Basil continued to share about how we need to live our Christian lives by grace. He said that being born again is an amazing experience, but the problem is that when we begin to lose this 'fire', we develop techniques to keep us going. Shall we continue in law after we have been saved by grace?

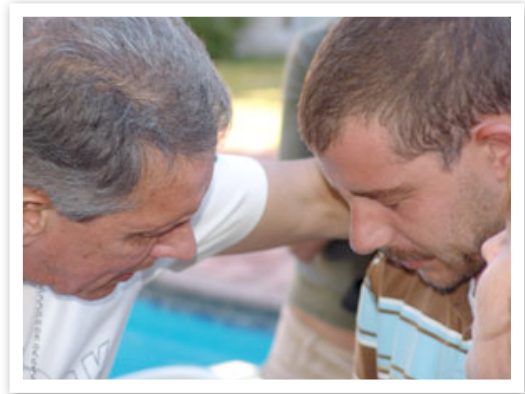
The problem is that many Christians think they need law to keep them from sinning, but after we are born again, we are dead to sin, and the law is written on our hearts. We are completely free, and we live by faith in what Jesus has done... not by our thoughts and emotions.

There is a strange comfort in the law, even though it keeps us in bondage, because it causes us to have confidence in our own abilities.

Freedom is close to us. God will give us the grace to deny ourselves and take our crosses.

Day 4

On Saturday morning, a whole bunch of us met at Riverwalk shopping centre for breakfast and a wonderful time of fellowship. After that it was off to the Watts' house for a special youth meeting, which was to include the baptism of Fanie, a young man who works for Riaan.



Basil shared on what baptism truly is; how it's not just an act of obedience, but a spiritual event that is a symbol of our repentance. After that it is something that we live every day as we take our crosses and give our lives. Basil also spoke about baptism in the Holy Spirit, and how this gives us power to serve the Lord.

Basil's message was clear and powerful. Rudi asked to be baptised in water as well, and Rudi, Kelly and Fanie were all baptised in the Holy Spirit.



We had another meeting at the church on Saturday night, and Basil continued by sharing about how the Lord uses us on the road of the cross, despite all of our weaknesses. When we come to Jesus, he clears the record of our wrongs.

Basil read from Galatians 5, and said that the fruit of the Spirit comes from a crucified life. If we have these fruits in our lives, we are truly free because there is no law against them.

He then spoke about enemies of the cross, and said that these are not unbelievers, but Christians who live under law and encourage others to do the same. When we are under law, we want everyone else to change and become like us, so that we don't have to change.

Basil finished by speaking about the importance of keeping a pure heart. We can't have the privilege of holding anything against anyone!

Day 5

On Sunday morning, Brian asked Rudi and Kelly to come forward. It was wonderful to hear them share openly and clearly about what has been happening in their lives. John also shared, and it was humbling to hear him speak about how he had been an enemy of the cross until he came to rea-



lise that this road of the cross was the only way. It's encouraging to see him share his heart so openly. Ndimiso then spoke a bit about the incredible things that the Lord is doing in the church in Bulawayo, especially amongst the youth... really encouraging stuff.

Basil expressed how grateful he is for the hospitality of the church, and for their desire to serve the Lord. He continued from the previous night by posing the question, 'If we're saved by grace, why do we need formulas to grow?' He spoke a bit about the Galatian church... how they had eagerly received the gospel, and then turned back to the law. Paul wrote his letter in order to bring them back to the gospel.

There is only one gospel. The revelation of this gospel comes through the apostolic anointing. If there is a lack of this in the church, then we will go astray. A true apostle does not just bring the message of the cross, but a crucified life. The true gospel cannot be taught; it's a revelation.

Basil used the example of Paul rebuking Peter in Galatians 2, and expressed how grateful he is to be part of a team, because it exposes lives and this is such a protection for the church.

Basil ended on a powerful note, saying that if we are standing on the outside and criticising people in the church, we are still babies. We need to submit to the five-fold ministry in order to come to maturity.

The message was clear and direct, and the choice clearly set before us... what road will we choose? Do we remain detached and in a place where the Lord has no access to our hearts; or do we decide to submit to the elders, be broken, and serve the Lord with our entire lives?



Afterwards we enjoyed a fund-raising lunch at the church, consisting of intimidating, yet delicious boerewors rolls, and of course wonderful fellowship.



We ended our visit with a braai at Riaan and Anli's house, involving a ridiculous amount of wholesome Afrikaans food, and a good time with everyone present.

It was a true blessing to be with the Botswana church these few days, and even though the time was short, we were encouraged to see fruits of what the Lord is doing in the lives of so many people here.

*Lots of love
Marc*