

Update on Work in the Philippines

by Harry Osborne

Over the 15 years I have been involved with preaching efforts in the Philippines, it has been my privilege to see great progress made by our Filipino brethren in carrying the gospel throughout that nation. The resulting abundant harvest of souls has been and is continuing to be great! Many people from every walk of life have been obedient to the gospel's call. Denominational preachers have responded to invitations for open study of God's word and have renounced human error to obey the simple truth of our Lord. Scores of congregations now exist in several regions of the country where few or none existed a few years ago. Open doors are constantly presented promising even more opportunities!

This great harvest of souls has left an enormous need for edifying those who have obeyed the gospel so that their faith might grow to maturity. The bulk of that task must lie with Filipino brethren and they are constantly fulfilling the challenge. I receive many reports every month from Filipino preachers who are tireless in their efforts across that nation to further evangelize the lost and edify the saints. However, we can be of help in that effort.

While they seek to help others grow, a great challenge exists with many of those preachers who have come out of denominationalism. Having grown up with denominational error and misuse of Scripture, they have much to unlearn and overcome. The vast majority of those preaching the gospel in that country came out of denominations. Several years ago, I saw the need for having in-depth studies of Bible books in order to give these brethren practical experience in exegesis of the text and specific application of its teaching. Subject studies covering topics of need and specific refutation of denominational errors are also needed.

Jonathan Carino and I agreed to try such classes two years ago by inviting men to Cebu City for a week of all-day studies on the book of Hebrews. The classes were more successful than we had ever hoped! The men present were excited by the opportunity to study and learn in this intensive way and asked for more studies of other books. We followed that study with classes on Romans, Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, the epistles of Peter and the epistles of John. We also had classes to cover the subjects of Premillennialism and Fellowship. Each day of the classes, I emphasize the need to preach from the text and require each student to hand in a brief sermon outline from the portion of text covered the previous day. We go over that assignment each day and show how to take the main thoughts of the text and arrange them for a sermon outline. A good number of the students from these classes continue to send me their outlines and ask for help as they implement that effort to focus on the Bible text in their preaching. The outlines show great improvement and increasing depth of thought.

Other brethren from across the Philippines heard about the classes and asked for the opportunity to attend such studies. We arranged two full week classes last Fall – one in Cebu and another in the Manila area. These classes were also very successful. This was the first time many of the preachers from Manila and other parts of Luzon had an opportunity to gather for such intensive classes on a particular book. The concept of focusing on the text of Scripture for their preaching, rather than going from one subject study to another, was also new to many of these men. They saw that focusing on the text and showing the thoughts of the inspired writers gave greater depth and a more balanced diet of teaching for the hearers.

To this point, I have not offered these classes in northern Luzon, though Rody Gumpad and other brethren in that area have asked for these classes in their area. Since we began having intensive preacher training efforts in Tuguegarao from 2003 through 2008, I knew many brethren there had been given the opportunity for such studies in that time. However, the rapid growth of the gospel in that area has given rise to numerous new congregations in that area and a number of preachers from denominations being converted. I had intended to have these classes in Tuguegarao this year, but the health challenges prevented that from taking place. The Lord willing, I will have a week of classes in that area early next year.

The trip beginning later this week will focus on classes all of next week (Monday through Friday) on the books of Ephesians and Colossians. With the complimentary themes of the books on the church as the body of Christ and Christ as the head of the church, it will be an excellent way to concentrate on that fundamental study. The students for these classes will largely come from the island of Mindanao. That island remains under martial law at this time due to the Muslim insurgency throughout much of that island. The U.S. Department of State has issued travel warnings for Americans urging no travel to that island at this time. Since Cebu is the easiest place of access for those on Mindanao, we think the best way of teaching those preachers is to invite them to Cebu and conduct the classes there. The remaining days of this trip will be used to help reach those outside of Christ with Gospel meetings. An invitation to preach at a Baptist church in Cebu was extended to me over a year ago. Since I have been unable to return until now, we are trying to arrange to fulfill that promised appointment on one of the Sundays I will be there.

The cost for these classes is significant. Expenditures for the classes include the travel costs for bringing the men to the classes, housing and feeding them, providing the study materials needed, venue and utility costs as well as other associated items. In addition, there are expenses for my travel and work in addition to the classes. At present, I believe all of those expenses have been met. As always, the 84th Street congregation has provided \$2500 towards those expenses and several members have helped from their own funds. I appreciate more than words can express all of the help and support from this congregation for this work. There is no way I could be involved in this work that I love so dearly without the kindness and generosity of churches and individuals interested in it.

While in the Philippines, I provide daily reports on the work done. The daily reports state how the funds are being used and update the work's progress. Those reports are available by a daily e-mail post as well as my blog (<http://harryosborne.blogspot.com>) that has pictures along with the report. Every effort is made to keep people involved and informed about the progress of these endeavors.

Please keep these efforts in your prayers! I will miss being at home with my family and the members of this congregation. It gets lonely at times being so far from home in a foreign country and it is such a comfort to know that your prayers are with me in this effort.