

# God's Work in Athens and Crete, Greece

By

**Sammy Flanaary**



## Introduction

God provided me an opportunity to do His work in Athens, Greece with an extension of work in Heraklion, Crete. My opportunity began on March 16 and lasted until April 16. In some way, you had fellowship with me for which I am grateful and thankful. Know that the areas of work accomplished were in partnership with you. Your prayers were important as well as your financial assistance in these efforts.

This report will discuss the following areas of work. Hopefully, you will be able to rejoice in what God did through us. The areas are

- I. Seminar with Nigerian Charismatic Group
- II. Teaching in Sunset International Branch School (Athens International Bible Institute)
- III. Interviews and Discussions about future training with Alfred Habashy from Cairo, Egypt.
- IV. Teaching and Preaching to Sister congregations, Omonia Square Church of Christ and Evrou Church of Christ.
- V. Teaching Assignment with a new church plant in Heraklion, Crete
- VI. Small Group Bible Studies with those who desired questions answered.
- VII. Mentoring Opportunities with American workers and Greek workers.
- VIII. Fruit Supplied from God for the opportunities.

### **Seminar with Nigerian Charismatic Group**

In October and November 2006, I taught in Sunset's branch school in Athens. I had in my classes some Nigerians who were studying the Scriptures from Sunset International Bible Institute's curriculum. One of my students, Timothy Ukegbu, who studied with me also preached each Sunday for a congregation. I did not realize at the time the nature of that congregation. Later, Timothy invited me to speak at the congregation where he preached. After going there, I learned that the congregation was a charismatic church seeking to know the truth of God's Word. Although the church manifested the practices and style of a Pentecostal church, I still was invited to return to them and teach them about the Holy Spirit. That was the first

objective for my return to Athens on March 16, 2008. Some of you provided the funds to allow me to transport one hundred (100) copies of my book written on the Holy Spirit and to ensure my travel and expenses to accomplish this assignment. I shall be eternally grateful for you. Thanks!

The seminar lasted for three nights and day. It began on Friday night, March 21, 2008 and closed on Sunday night, March 23, 2008. Each night, I taught for three hours. On Sunday, I taught between two and three hours during their morning worship time and concluded Sunday night for another three hours of preaching and teaching. The interest was great. The minds of the people were challenged, reproved, and motivated for closer walk with Jesus.

I purchased white boards that provided me with an opportunity to write down the messages that I gave to the people. I used my usual colored markers to help keep the interest of those listening and watching. I made every attempt to formulate in their minds God's messages in time to a particular people with purposes in mind for God giving each message. I tried to build in their formative minds a solid and foundational message about the eternal God in heaven and His work among all people. I pointed out the absolutes of God in a changing culture. The receptivity was great. Even though some things challenged them in their practice, they were honest and humble in considering what I taught them.



The leaders were courteous and attentive to the instructions. Some of them were teachers in theological schools in Athens. Other leaders from other charismatic churches attended the seminar. Invitations were extended to me to return and to preach and teach in their congregations.

Timothy, far left in the picture, had been instructing the group for some time about the necessity of baptism in one's relationship with God. One couple, **Emmanuel and Angela Anyanwu**, had resisted the teaching of the necessity of baptism for the remission of sin for nearly six years, but they became convinced that baptism by immersion for the forgiveness of sins to receive the indwelling Spirit was necessary. On March 30, 2008, they were baptized for the remission of sins to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in the Aegean Sea on the outskirts of the city of Athens. Others in the congregation are considering their situation, and they continue to ponder within whether they have faith to move them to obedience as the Scriptures teach. Pray for this church. It is my prayer that God will allow them time to turn from erroneous views and practices to abide with the Lord and worship Him according to God's Word.

## Teaching in Sunset's Branch School, Athens International Bible Institute

In 1997, I first went to Athens, Greece to launch one of Sunset International Bible Institute's branch schools. It became one of the first branch schools in Sunset's program of work internationally along with Quito Ecuador and Branaul, Russia. From a small beginning, gradually, the school has flourished in training people of several nations. Currently, there are twenty-six students who study full-time. My assignment was two-fold in the curriculum. I taught the book of Ephesians and the book of Acts.

Sixteen students studied the book of Ephesians. Others audited the classes. Some former graduates came and participated in the study. Three students studied the book of Acts. Occasionally, others came and sat in on the study from Acts. At the conclusion of the study in the book of Acts, two of the students saw a need to be baptized for the remission of their sins to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to indwell them. What a joy it was to witness the power of the Word of God. Jude Muet Uzonwanne saw that his journey through life religiously had not yet yielded his obedience by faith. Also, Tonye Briggs, a man who had just graduated from A.I.B.I was taking his last course of the curriculum, the book of Ephesians. He was assigned to write a paper on the topic, "Living in the Heavenly Realm." He dropped by my classroom to turn in his paper. He became interested in the study. It was my last class period of the term. He became so interested that he spent the afternoon listening to the teaching from Acts 18 and 19. It was during this study that Tonye recognized that he had not obeyed the Lord properly. His baptism as a child was not sufficient.

When the class concluded, I approached the Dean of the school, Ron Kretz. I said to Ron, "These men have something to say to you." Jude Muet, first, began to tell his history or journey through life religiously. He concluded by saying, "I want to be baptized for the remission of my sins to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Then Tonye told Ron his story.

Ron stopped the class instruction of Beni Leke and had all students to assemble in the auditorium of the Evrou Church of Christ. He informed all students about what was taking place. Then, Ron took the confession from both men. He then baptized them into Jesus Christ for the remission of sins to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Lord added to His number that day two souls, precious souls. These men will go forth with the gospel to the world.

At the turn of the millennium, Sunset International Bible Institute received a man from Cairo, Egypt to study the Word of God. His name was Francis Habashy. He and his wife Evon came to Lubbock, studied at Sunset, and studied also at Lubbock Christian University. They had been converted a few years before by a brother in Christ from Kansas. I got to know the Habashys in 1992 while my wife and I came back to Sunset to raise up a team to evangelize and to do mission work in Perm, Russia. While in Lubbock, we became friends.

When my wife and I returned to Sunset in 1997 to work as Mission Coordinator, we began to interact with the Habashy. Twice, we went to Cairo, Egypt, and each time recognized the need for the Gospel to the Arabic world. We developed many impressions that stayed on our hearts. Knowing the brethren in Raleigh, North Carolina and the church that became the overseers of the Habashy, our interest multiplied. We met the children of Francis and Evon. At

their home, three still lived. The oldest son, Alfred, and their two daughters, Phoebe and Violet, still lived with them. As time continued, all three children married and began families of their own.

Francis and Evon returned to Lubbock to assist in the formation of a work in the Arabic world. Finally, the time has arisen to do something in training Alfred, who is willing to be trained to continue the work that his father and mother have been involved in or to launch out to another Arabic-speaking nation.

Arrangements were made by Sunset to bring Francis and Alfred to Athens, Greece to interact with Sunset's Dean of Europe, Doug Reeves, and me to consider the feasibility of where we could train Alfred and to formulate a plan to accomplish the tasking of training him. We gathered with Alfred and his father Francis for ten days. During that time, we interviewed, we taped, and we observed his abilities in speaking, in communication in English, and in manifestation of desire to be trained for ministry.



Doug and I determined that the best place for him to be trained would be in Lubbock, Texas. Many reasons led us to this conclusion, but the main reason was the concern that he had for his family entering a multi-cultural nation like Greece. The adjustment might be too difficult for them; therefore, we have decided that it should be in Lubbock where they could have a better support system in transitioning from family and school life in Cairo to one predominate culture found in Lubbock.

We also determined that Alfred would be able to learn from instruction in English and would be able to communicate well enough with his instructors in English. We believe that Alfred will gradually become more fluid in his English as time and exposure take place. The plan will be as follows:

- 1) Alfred and Hala his wife will prayerfully consider the opportunity and assignment for one month.
- 2) If their decision is affirmative, then we shall arrange for them to come to Lubbock as soon as they can make the transition, hopefully in the summer.
- 3) Alfred and Sammy Flanary will spend six months seeking his support for his training. Sammy will lead him to congregations in this effort.
- 4) Alfred projects January 2009 to begin his studies at Sunset.
- 5) This plan shall be presented to Sunset's Administration for approval and confirmation.

**Teaching and Preaching to Local Congregations in Athens**  
Omonia Square Church of Christ and Evrou Church of Christ have been significant in Sunset's training men in Athens to go to the nations. The first five years were spent at the Omonia Square Church of Christ. Since 2002, the school has operated in the building of the Evrou Church of Christ. More space has been available; however, future growth may demand a neutral facility because the growing school demands still more space. The Greek evangelists have been such an asset to Sunset's school for which Sunset is grateful.

As always, God presents opportunities for visiting instructors in the school to interact with the members of the congregations. On Wednesday evening, I spoke to the Omonia Square Church of Christ. For three hours, I taught about God's law. During the study, a lady from the Ukraine became touched with the Gospel. She had been studying with members of Omonia congregation. Eleni Melirrytos, Ludmila, and Victoria, all sisters-in-Christ, had spent six months studying with Irene. On this occasion, she saw the need to obey her Lord. God granted still another soul unto Himself through the Lord Jesus Christ.

I shall never forget Irene's comment upon being baptized into Jesus. She said, "Burdens are now lifted." How true this is. No wonder we have the great hymnal, "Burdens Are Lifted At Calvary." I continued to study with Irene, Eleni, and Victoria. Ludmila had difficulty meeting with us at the time that we did study, but her encouragement and care remained supreme.

On Sunday morning, April 13, 2008, I was invited by Dino Tzanetos, the preacher of Evrou, to speak to the Greek congregation. I had to have Dino to interpret for me from English into Greek to the congregation. As always, it has and still is a great blessing to speak to the Greeks about our common faith in Jesus. It was again fascinating this time.

For me, one of the great thrills was to have all representatives present from the congregations to listen to the teaching at the Seminar with the Nigerian charismatic church. It gave them opportunity to show their solidarity in God's work in Athens. All of the ministers from both groups attended. I love all of these men – Dino Roussos, Alexander Melirrytos, Dino Tzanetos, and Beni Leke. They with our Dean of Sunset's branch school are becoming more solidified in sharing the message of Jesus to the world from their point of reference. Praise be to our God.

The Evrou Church of Christ now has one of our graduates working with them. He is wonderful. His name is Victor. He is from Nigeria, but the spirit and worship of the Evrou congregation was at its zenith since I first met them in 1997. It is amazing how wonderfully God is working among the sister congregations. God has and continues to be honored in that large city. Our hopes are that there can be more and more congregations planted in Athens, Greece. It is great to witness the different congregations meeting in the facility at Omonia Square. The Greeks, the Russians, and the Bulgarians meet at separate times. It is amazing what God has done.

### **Teaching Assignment in Heraklion, Crete**

God always presents opportunities. His work for us is mind-boggling. Just before I left America, I received a letter from Greek evangelist, Alexander Melirrytos. Alex asked me if I would go to Crete and teach a young church there between the days that I taught in Sunset's branch school. I told him that I would be free to go from Wednesday through Saturday since my class assignments were on the other days. He arranged for us to go. What a wonderful opportunity.



John Adesoye was converted by the Greek evangelists. In fact, Dino Roussos had gone there and taught. After Dino's return home, he received a telephone call from John Adesoye. He wanted to become a Christian. John got on the airplane in Heraklion, Crete and flew to Athens. He was met by Dino. Dino baptized him that day, and John flew back to his home and work in Heraklion.

At first, the church in Crete requested me to teach as I did in the seminar in Athens; however, I thought that the greatest messages that I could give them would be from the Gospel of John. I wanted their faith to be stronger in Jesus; therefore, I gave them lessons of Jesus' miracles from John's gospel. The foundation of their faith needed to be strengthened. After teaching for three evenings for two hours each evening and studying with some of them after the teaching, a young lady by the name of PATIENCE expressed a desire to be immersed for the forgiveness of her sins. The time and place for the baptism was set. We were to meet at 5:30



P.M. at the motel where the Melirrytoses, Ty Nicol, and I were lodging. We did meet and took two cars full of people to the baptism. The enclosed pictures will give all of you an idea the setting. Patience is a twenty-eight year old lady from Nigeria. She rooms with Grace another member of the church in Crete. The fellowship that we had each evening was tremendous. At one time, this church was also charismatic; however, as they have learned the Scriptures, they have stopped playing instruments in worship. They now take the Lord Supper

on the first day of each week. Since I have returned, John has invited me to come again and to teach more of them. Since I was not there on a Sunday, I missed teaching many of their number. They desire me to come again and instruct them when all are able to assemble.

### ***Small Group Bible Studies***

As usual, I spent much time studying with small groups. I studied with Irene, Eleni, Ludmila, and Victoria down at the Seaside. I listened to their questions and tried to answer according to the Word of God. I also went to the home of the Melirrytoses and studied with them I spent some time in their home with a group of Christians from Pepperdine University in California. They were there training their young people in Pepperdine's efforts to form quality students who are enrolled in Pepperdine.

Diana Kretz and I rode several mediums of transportation to go to a home of one of my students. The student was Juliana Negedu.



Julie was a former Olympic basketball player. In visiting with her at Evrou's assembly, I asked about her husband. She told me that he was Catholic. I asked her if I might come to her house to study with her and her husband. She talked it over with her husband, Festus. He agreed for me to come. I took Diana Kretz with me.



We rode the bus, metro, and taxi. Finally, we found where they lived.

For two or more hours, we studied the Bible, trying to answer their questions. To our surprise another student of mine from my study at the school in Ephesians and Acts came to the study. Her name was Nifarta Andrew. The relationship grew. Dino Tzanetos began a study with Festus and Juliana about marriage. Although Festus and Juliana are married, they need to comply to the Greek law in legal documentation. I only had one study with them, but the door is open for others to interact. Festus is Catholic. I studied about the doctrine of original sin, showing them that each person has responsibility toward God. It was a great study.

Since Juliana had played in the Olympics and had made the winning shot for her team in triumph, I told her about my co-worker, Ty Nicol. I suggested that they play a game of basketball. Juliana had told me that her strength was defense. I insisted on their playing each other and coached her to put the defense on Ty so that he could not score. They did play. She did defense him very well.



### **Mentoring Opportunities**

God has given me many people to teach in my life time. Across the country, there are individuals whom I have had the privilege of mentoring them in Christ. Three of these men were invited to join me in Greece. I wanted men who could handle the Scriptures, especially, the Scriptures that would enlighten people about God and His Spirit. I chose Mike Richards, Ty Nicol, and David Burton.

Throughout the years, it has been a blessing to teach and to baptize numerous people. Always, it is more a blessing to witness those whom I have taught to teach and baptize. At the seminar, when I finished giving the instructions, I opened the last session up for questions and answers. Before I took any questions, I asked my three co-workers to come to the front of the auditorium. I then said, "These men are capable of answering your questions as well as I. Please asked them whatever questions that you want to ask." They did, and the three of them were able to give book, chapter, and verse for the answers to their questions. For a mentor, this is the

best of all worlds, witnessing those whom you have instructed and mentored in action. God was honored and their presence with me fulfilled my intended purpose for having them there.

When the seed is sowed, it ~~is a gift for God's glory~~ **Fruit to God's Glory** some hear and never obey; others hear and believe but the Word has no foundation for growth; still others hear and grow but cares of life choke out the very existence and power of God in their daily lives; and then, there are those who hear, obey, and go and bear fruit. Certainly, that is our hope for all of the work done in Athens and Heraklion.

Besides the instruction, counseling, and encouragement given, God added to His number six souls. Only the future will determine what good was done from the efforts. I just want each of you to know that I consider you partners in this effort. Both you and I must present the effort unto God for His glory and praise. Rejoice and know that I am eternally grateful to you. I am humbled that God took the effort and brought glory unto Himself.

# 6 Souls - SAMMY FLANARY