

# Paul Williams in South Africa

June 2, 2023

Dear Brethren,

Joel took his cousin, Philip, and his two children, Eden and Levi, on the plane to Gqeberha (Kobeka) (nee Port Elizabeth) and Uitenhage (you-ten-haig), on the southwest corner of South Africa where were small congregations of Christians meeting.

The two elderly and very sick preachers died shortly before they made their trip, so they were a comfort and a strength to those brethren. The two congregations met as one while they were there, and I think they will probably continue to do so.

The children were enthralled by a visit to a game park, where they saw elephants, baboons, antelope, ostriches, and some other things. They came back with pictures and stories.

And the flu.

Philip and Levi were both very sick. Joel took Levi to the hospital one night for emergency treatment, and he received an antibiotic injection. But the two recovered very well, and Philip was able to make the 3-hr trip to Nongoma the following Sunday to preach to the church of about 20 people which meets in a creche (daycare).

And Philip's recovery meant that he and I could have a couple of really good talks. (Well, I got to talk a lot.) I learned that what brethren see the clearest is that the difference between those we call "liberals" and us conservatives is whether eating in the church building is permitted. I was a bit upset by this, because that was a side issue which came out of understanding what our gatherings are for, but the real issues which split brethren were church support of institutions such as orphan homes, schools, Herald of Truth, and World Bible School. I appeal to preachers everywhere—make sure those issues are taught very clearly and often, please. If we don't, many brethren may be lost because of their ignorance in practicing those things. There is a clear difference between what God has given the organized congregation to do and what individuals are to do. And we need to keep that clear in our minds.

Philip is a great listener, so I got to talk a lot—which I enjoy. We certainly are good friends, now.

Our thanks to the brethren who made their trip possible. Our thanks to God for the good that they did and for their safe return.

**Monday, 19 June**

Dear Brethren,

Yesterday Zipho drove me to Newcastle for my farewell visit to that small congregation. Today I am very tired.

I planned for the trip to take the usual three hours on Sunday morning. But I had not been there for a long time, and we found the highway was full of traffic-calming speed humps. The three-hour trip took more than four hours.

But the brethren were waiting for us in Bro. Mhlongo's spacious house, and we received a warm welcome. I had planned two lessons, but did not have time for both. So I gave a quick summary of Lazarus and the Rich Man as an introduction to my lesson on Romans 6, and the presentation went well. Bro. Masuku said, "Well, he can still preach."

It was good to be with the brethren, and there was a full house. I have close spiritual connections with the three leading families.

But the road home was a long trip what with the extra traffic of the end of a holiday weekend and the traffic-calming speed humps. I was really tired when we got home last evening. I am satisfied that my decision to make this my last trip to Newcastle was a good one.

Joel drove that road coming back from Johannesburg on Saturday. He had brought a lecture on the subject of "Baptism" for the church in Diepkloof, Johannesburg (a part of Soweto), then driven home late on Saturday. I am thankful that he had no problems with the trip.

July fourth is rushing toward us now. That is the departure date for Joel and family. He plans to be in the U.S. for three months, and we will certainly miss him.

We will arrange for someone to be at the house with me most all of the time every day. I am doing well, but if I fall or have some other problem, I want someone to be here with me to help.

Keep us in your prayers, please. May God be with all of you.

Paul Williams