

The Clarion of Christ Ministerial Fellowship

-a non-denominational communion of ministries with the purpose of mutual encouragement, like minded fellowship and love toward one another.

The CMF Clarion

Welcome to the Clarion. It is our privilege to serve you, the reader, and our prayer would be that this instrument would be used to promote the growth of the Kingdom of God in your life.

The Clarion will be published on line on a quarterly basis.

Articles will be solicited by the editors and selected among authors of public domain. It is primarily a vehicle of expression for the members of Christ Ministerial Fellowship.

Prayer requests, photographs, and announcements may be sent in no later than December 5th for the next edition, to Bert and Arlene Ghilardi:
aghilardi@stny.rr.com

Blessings upon all who read.



Contagious Yawning

Most of us have been in situations where we've seen someone yawn and it has inevitably caused us to do the same. The medical field has given this occurrence a name; it's called contagious yawning. We may associate yawning with being sleepy but it's apparently our body's way to cool our brain so it operates more efficiently and keeps us awake.

Psalms 120-134 are known as the Psalms of Ascent. These songs were sung by the pilgrims as they made

their "ascent" to attend the yearly feasts in Jerusalem. They remind us of the importance and need for times of corporate worship. They show us that songs of worship are not only meant for The Lord, but are moreover a means of training and exhorting one another as echoed by Paul in Col. 3:16 Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

In Psalm 132:3-5, the psalmist expressed a most unusual vow that he had made to the mighty God of Jacob. He vowed that his own bed and his own sleep would be put on indefinite hold until he found a place of rest for The Lord. This intense desire for The Lord to dwell among His people did not originate in the heart of the psalmist, but rather is the heart's desire of the mighty God of Jacob. It was He that broke in upon Jacob's sleep, long before, to awaken him to the reality of God's house and God's presence.

Likewise only a 'visitation' to our own hearts will be able to awaken and maintain a deep longing and a zeal such as is expressed here in these verses. This desire of The Lord to dwell with His people is still just as strong in this hour. We understand that He isn't interested in bricks and mortar but rather the lively stones that now exist because of His Grace.

The prophet Isaiah, after giving us a clear and wonderful description of the coming Messiah, also provides a glimpse of The Lord's desired dwelling, and the place of rest for which He longs.

Isaiah 57:15 declares, For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Again in Isaiah 66:1-2 Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? 2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my Word.

May we also find ourselves about the same business as our Savior and in our lives provide a habitation; a place of rest for Him.

Throughout Israel's history millions of pilgrims would have made the "ascent" to Jerusalem, year after year, singing and reviving the Psalms of Ascent. On one of those pilgrimages was a young boy of twelve. As He joined in singing those inspired old songs, perhaps He was gripped by the truth of these words and felt the eternal desire of the mighty God of Jacob. Was it these songs ringing within His young heart that caused Him to stay behind in the temple while His family returned

home? Was this His "Father's business" of which He spoke; building Him a habitation; a place of rest? Yes, in that young heart and life, the mighty God of Jacob would find the One that would fulfill Psalm 132. Jesus would have nowhere to lay his head and would give no rest to His eyes, until upon the Cross He cried out, "It is finished!" He truly was the broken One that trembled at God's Word. May we also find ourselves about the same business as our Savior and in our lives provide a habitation; a place of rest for Him.

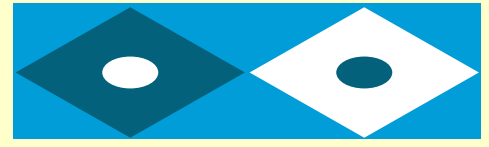
Perhaps, in our times of gathering together, we should yawn every once in awhile; as a reminder to others that it's time to stay awake, deny ourselves and build Him a house. After all, as you know, yawning can be contagious.Ω

(Part of my inspiration for this piece was taken from a photo of my son, Seth, and a comment by Tom Worth. Thanks to them, Ric)

Since 1987 Ric has been the Pastor of Bethany Fellowship in Farmingville, Long Island, NY. He is married to Merinell (Jackson) and they have eight children and eight grandchildren. In 2000 he began traveling abroad with Pastor Lou Pressman, conducting teaching conferences for local pastors and strengthening the Body of Christ.

REPORT FROM THE JAPAN TRIP

Lou Pressman and I recently returned from a trip to Tokyo, Japan. It was Lou's 3rd trip and my first. Initial trips are always filled with many different experiences. One's senses run on overdrive as you try to process all that you are seeing, hearing, smelling & tasting for the first time. So let me try and describe what I saw, heard, smelled & tasted. I'll work my way backwards. **Smell** and **taste**, as you might have guessed, is usually associated with meals and eating; a table if you will. It was at the table of Eric Huang, our host, that I was reminded of the hospitality of our Heavenly Father. In Ps.23:1-4 David describes The Lord's relationship with him as a 'shepherd,' then in vs 5 as a 'host,' the sort of host that abundantly cares and supplies for our needs. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus describes a scene that, had He Himself not uttered it, would be impossible to comprehend. Luke [12:37](#) "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." Through Eric I was reminded that it is hospitality, the sense of welcoming and of home, that reveals our Father in Heaven; the kind of home Jesus describes in John 14:2 as having many rooms. I **heard** a language that was very different from my own, a barrier that left me on the outside looking in. It was through Takako Namiki, our interpreter, that this gap in communication would be bridged. Through Takako I heard and understood what, on my own, I never could. In the person of The Holy Spirit we have been given One who knows perfectly the 'language' and 'culture' of heaven. Through Him we can begin to live and function in a kingdom unlike any known to man. Through Takako's gift and service, I was reminded of just how dependent I am on The Holy Spirit. While in the home of Etsuko Sotoura we met her mother, Masayo Sotoura. I **saw** Masayo's spiritually blind eyes opened by our wonderful Savior. She is an 86 yr old woman who, on our initial meeting, confessed she was a Buddhist as all of her ancestors had been. But I saw Jesus draw near, so very near to her that her confession would change and she came to acknowledge Jesus as her Lord and Savior. While in Japan, it is true that my senses in the natural were stretched but I also found that my spiritual senses found something very familiar; a reminder of a verse that is more of a reality than we often "**sense**." Habakkuk [2:14](#) "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Ω



***Registration
for the CMF Fall
Ministerial Conference
is due by***

Tuesday, October 4.

***Mail all registration
forms and payment to:***

***Christ Ministerial
Fellowship c/o Mark
Waters, 25 Warren St.,
Sayre, PA 18840-2925***

Visit the web site:

www.christianmaturity.com

for audio/video messages of conference messages, articles and more information about us.

**To contact
Christ Ministerial Fellowship
by mail write:**

**CMF
c/o Bethany Christian Fellowship
311 South Elmira Street
Athens, PA 18810-1117**

“Speak; Your Servant is Listening, and will Obey” Gary Rose

In the First book of Samuel chapter 3, we are introduced to Saul, Israel’s first anointed king. The calling on Saul’s life was to defeat the Philistines – the giants in the land. The Philistines were the prevailing army of Saul’s day seeing themselves superior; a superior thought, a superior mindset that would seek to mold the hearts of God’s people. Yet, the tragic end of Saul’s life is a man (although once filled with God’s Holy Spirit) was found naked and stripped with his head hanging in the enemy’s house. There is much to be gleaned from Saul’s life but to understand just how tragic it was one must first look at Samuel. “The word of the Lord was rare in those days, and visions infrequent” (1 Samuel 3: 1) – In other words it was rare to find a word that stirred, challenged and provoked true change in one’s heart and mind, a word that penetrated deep into one’s being bringing reproof, conviction and true freedom.

There was no open vision: no spiritual seeing. There was no sight of divine purpose. It was a time of no “real evidence” that God was moving and working; nothing that would cause the heathen to look and say, “God is with them!”. It is my conviction that we are living once again in such days when great conflicting forces impose themselves intensely upon that which is of God; when divine thought is being forsaken, when heavenly truth in its purity and power are departing. It is a time when the world looks on, and sees a God which to them is still very much in the grave.

Israel’s testimony hinged on one very important word: *obedience*. The Lord was looking for a *faithful and obedient priesthood*. Eli and his sons were to represent that holy vessel but mixture, disobedience, and spiritual declension prevailed (1 Samuel 2: 22; 27; 30b). Eli’s passive resistance brought the judgment of God on his house. He could no longer see and discern what the Lord was speaking and doing. Eli himself, who was to be that spiritual channel that God would speak through, lost the capacity to hear and see.

“Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli; and the lamp of God had not yet gone out”; “And the Lord came and called as at other times, and Samuel said, “Speak, for Thy servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3:1; 3; 10). God’s answer to this state of declension, was a boy. God revealed Himself to Samuel by the *word of the Lord*. *Spiritual obedience releases revelation, releases the voice of the Lord*. When Samuel heard the word, his heart in obedience was to submit and conform himself to it. Our responsibility is the same. It should be the cry and longing of every true child of God to be molded to the truth that is being presented to us.

True spiritual health is the obedient response to truth that will set us free, truth that will set others free as well. God’s testimony and witness will not be silenced. His promise is there will be a boy once again! God is never “voiceless” – He is always speaking – Are we listening? Are we giving ourselves to hear and obey? Hearing from the Lord to Samuel was not a light thing, but something he took seriously.

Let me ask, is obedience really to be that difficult? What if the Lord is speaking something we don’t want to hear? What if obedience being required has to do with those things we love and hold so dear? Oh, how we approach it; how we weigh it down with so many things, all sorts of excuses that make it seem almost impossible to do.

Obedience can sometimes be a fearful thing. We may not fully understand it or we see it “as through a glass dimly” (1 Corinthians 13: 12). It requires faith to be obedient and “without faith, it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11: 6). Listening with the intent to obey puts down all argument. Samuel doesn’t question the voice of the Lord, he simply resolves himself to hear and obey.

Perhaps you’re thinking as you read this: Lord I want to be that obedient son/daughter but I’ve failed, I’ve made too many mistakes. God knows where we’ve been in our hearts; He knows just how far perhaps we’ve strayed. The Lord in His mercy speaks to Samuel “tell them to return to Me with a whole heart”. God tells them to turn from those things they have given their strength to, put away the things that captivate the heart, the mind, and lead to further bondage. The Lord is saying, “*return*” and I will renew your mind. I will be that river that flows into you and out from you. I will carry you in life and bring you to a desired end.

Samuel could be fearless in his anointing because he was fearless in his obedience. When God speaks His word to us; when we take heart to listen and obey, we begin to see that the Philistines are “bread for us”; their domination is as “cords that can be burnt”; cut from our life, as well as the lives of others. Samuel understood this and in radical obedience and faith couldn’t wait

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to see what God would do. God would arise, and His enemies would be truly scattered!

The scripture tells us that because of one man's obedience: "the Philistines were subdued and did not come anymore within the border of Israel. And that the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. The cities they had taken were restored to Israel even from Ekron even to Gath" (1 Samuel 7: 13-14). The place the Philistines originated from was Philistea. It's where we get our English word Palestine today. It was located on the coast and was an area always under Philistine rule and domination. They were people of the sea, mighty warriors, but because of Samuel's obedience Israel not only got her cities back, but went into the enemy's heartland and stripped them of the coast and their ability to oppress other nations. Samuel's obedience brought freedom and deliverance to many. Eventually though, the time came in Israel's history when they grew tired of being a theocracy, (where GOD IS KING); an exact mirror image of our culture today. Like other nations they declared, "we want a human king to reign over us". The Philistines during their history had five kings that ruled over them. In the Philistine language the word king is where we get the word *tyrant*. Let us be careful what we ask for. Saul is a type and shadow of the human heart and its willingness to be un-submitted and un-surrendered to the will of the Lord (He is a human king, that must bow to an "unseen king"). The human heart wants to be its own king. It wants to rule its life as it sees fit. In asking for a king Israel was being given a mirror into their own hearts and Saul is that picture of the human struggle within all of us. God eventually gave them what they wanted. Samuel on the other hand in type is the obedient son that God is looking for once again in our



day *for such a time as this*. A son that will hunger and thirst to hear and obey, no matter the cost involved. Obedience beloved, isn't just for the great. It's for the humble and repentant. There is great reward for our obedience. Saul's real battle wasn't with the Philistines. It was with his own heart. The Lord is looking for a boy! Will we be willing to say, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening" and will we obey?Ω

Gary Rose is Associate Pastor/Worship Leader at Montrose Christian Fellowship church in Montrose, PA. He and his wife Dana live in Conklin, NY. They have four children and 4 grandchildren.

Next Clarion: January 1, 2017

Submission deadline is December 5. Photos, prayer requests, testimonies, announcements & comments are welcome. Send your contributions to Bert Ghilardi, aghilardi@stny.rr.com

Women's Retreat Report

Just a brief note to let you know how very much I enjoyed the Ladies Retreat. Not only did I enjoy it but it was very relevant to what the Lord is trying to work in us. I was so blessed, and could not stop "drinking in" all the Lord was pouring out through you and our other two speakers. I will be pondering and digesting all of these things for weeks to come. For me, there was some clarification and a deeper understanding of things I had been thinking about for a long time. I felt the whole atmosphere was "super-charged" with the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is so amazing when the Lord is able to change our perspective on how we perceive things of the Spirit - He always knows just what we need to become "un-stuck" from where we are enabling us to move forward. He definitely answered many heartfelt prayers. It was a pleasure to meet and get to know our two sisters, Cony and Maria, from Colombia. They did a wonderful job and were so open. The Lord really used them to minister to us in a special way. They were even very gracious to put up with my attempts to speak Español! Rodger was also blessed in being able to spend time fellowshiping with the men. He was very glad that he was able to bring me and meet some of the men he did not know previously.

The efforts of all those ladies who helped put the retreat together are greatly appreciated. I do not know if I will be able to attend future retreats, but am surely glad I was able to come to this one.

I will keep future retreats in my prayers asking for God's direction and His Will to be done.Ω

{Taken from an email written by Gayle Smeall of Easton, PA to Arlene Ghilardi about the recent Fall Women's Retreat at Bethany Christian Fellowship in Athens, PA}



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fall Retreat Christ Ministerial Fellowship

This retreat is for pastors, elders, deacons and their spouses and all those who feel a call to ministry.

October 26-28 Tuscarora Inn & Conference Center, Mt. Bethel, PA.

Cost varies as to the accommodation chosen. To register call Mark Waters 570 888-1055 by Tuesday, October 4th.

Men's Retreat

The retreat is open to men 15 years and older.

Friday, November 11 and Saturday, November 12 Lighthouse Fellowship West Pittston, PA The cost is \$30. For more information call Shane Nichols 607 348-6381 .

If anyone lacks the funds to attend a retreat, please call the phone number provided for information.

Death to Life

By E. V. Baker

"If ye then be risen with Christ." - Col. 3

You will notice in this chapter two words emphasized, death and life. If we are risen then we must have life. Those two thoughts run all through the scheme of redemption. Life is of two kinds, natural and supernatural; but the latter is not derived from the former. It is not reformation, but a new birth. First, in this spiritual life we mount on wings. A caterpillar has a comfortable existence probably, but not a lofty time. But it winds itself a cocoon, and dies, as it were, and rises after a little, a beautiful creature that lives on rose leaves. It is altogether a different thing. A caterpillar seeing a butterfly might feel a stirring within, a longing to be like this brilliant creature; might even crawl up into a hush and struggle to fly. But it would only fall back in despair. Then if it was told "You can be like this, but you must just die, you must give up eating leaves," it would probably say, "I can't do this, they are necessary to my life and I can't die." At these watering places I see principally caterpillar-life. It must be abject slavery. It is even worse than living on leaves. If you talk to these people about dying in order to live, even though they are restless and unsatisfied, they will probably tell you, "Then I don't want it, I can't give up this and that." Well, you can live on the caterpillar plane if you so elect; but you can never rise on wings but through death. Some, however, do try to put themselves to death. That is, they say they do, but you will observe they never touch the vital spot. The center of some life is in one place, and in others, in another, but the true vital point in each is self. As soon as you are trying to be good of yourself you are keeping self alive. As soon as you find you can't, God comes in and slays self for you. Just yield yourself, say to Jesus this afternoon, "I am a candidate for death, and for life." And when you get life, you will find your existence transformed, and every relation lifted into a higher plane. You won't want to live on leaves any more. A diver is encased in a suit of armor when he goes into the water, and there is a rubber tube connecting him with the upper air

through which he breathes. So the Christian must be connected with God. If there is a break in the tubing, the dangerous element gets in. Beloved, that is why you are so weak. You are not breathing altogether the pure air from above. There is a break somewhere. Christians as well as sinners are exposed to trials. But no Christian can suffer as a sinner if he lives in the divine atmosphere. God's life is at your disposal, you can claim it if you will. This life on wings cannot be described any more than a butterfly can explain it to a caterpillar. No soul ever knows real liberty till it knows it in the Holy Ghost. And all the tastes and feelings undergo a change. You find you don't love certain things anymore, you just love Jesus so much. His life crowds out the old life. Test Him at all points after you have tested Him in one, and believe that you will die at any and all points. Let us not speculate nor reason, but just take it simply and believe. Just say; "I depend upon You, dear Lord, to bring me through" and He will surely do it. Don't keep the Lord waiting either. I pray that this afternoon decisions will be made for death and for life. May the Lord add His blessing to these words, and enable us to rise on wings through death to life everlasting! Ω

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In 1894 Elizabeth Duncan Baker (c. 1849-1915) and her four sisters began a faith ministry in Rochester, NY. During convention of 1907 a great revival broke out that eventually birthed Rochester Bible Training School (est. 1906-1924). It became the first permanent 20th century pentecostal Bible school. Ivan Q. Spencer (founder of Elim Bible Institute) and John Wright Follette were among the graduates.

The Importance of Fellowship

John Penrosa

Fellowship is a mighty weapon. The enemy hates when God's people come together in fellowship. Matthew 18: 18-20 states "Truly I say to you whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in my name there I am in the midst." In verses 18 and 19 the scripture instructs us to bind, to loose and to agree; all for the working of the kingdom of God. This working of fellowship is what the enemy wants to destroy. He uses many battle plans to try to separate and divide God's church. Satan desires to descend death upon our lives and our souls (our mind, will and emotions). 1 John 1:6-10 states "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us".

The fellowship of the brethren is very important for the manifestation of life. We express our life through the outworking of fellowship with the Son and His Body. Life is sustained and girded up in fellowship.

This is why the enemy always attacks God's people in fellowship. A form of death comes when fellowships are divided or broken up. Some may feel inclined to stay away from a place where God has joined them. Many are tempted to stay away when they become spiritually low. Keeping away from God's people will not attain any good thing. Separation will bring a time of wandering and confusion. We cannot be an island unto ourselves. We must be connected to His body at all times. If Satan can get us alone it won't be difficult for him to achieve his goal. A lone sheep separated from the flock is easy prey for any wolf. To avoid death of one sort or another we must get back to the fellowship of God's people where we will be encouraged and strengthened and receive life into our very beings once again.

Hebrews 13:3 says "but exhort one another daily while it is called today lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Fellowshiping with each other safeguards our life. Encouragement will keep us from the cunning strategies the enemy has in wait for us. Hebrews 10:24-25 Amplified Version "...and let us consider and give attentive continuous care to watching over one another studying how we may stir up (stimulate and incite) to love and helpful deeds and noble activities not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together as believers as is the habit of some people, but admonishing, warning, urging and encouraging one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the day approaching." The place of fellowship is God's place of recovery and restoration.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Physical Needs:

- ◆ Joseph and Gloria Nieves
- ◆ Steve Wilber

Mission Trips

Missionaries: Lou Pressman
Ric Vargas

Visakhapatnam, AP, India

October 11 to October 25

Pereira, Cali, and Bogota, Colombia:

November 17- December 12

Please see page ten for a "Praise Report" from Gary and Sandy Keeney who we had prayed for regarding an accident where Gary was burned on 20% of his body.

We need fellowship not only on a Sunday but as many times as possible during the week. All should value fellowship. We can give and we can receive. Fellowship is not only spiritual or heavenly but it is also tangible and practical. Through fellowship we can receive wisdom, knowledge, council, confirmation, confidence, deliverance, girding up and love.

The Lord desires every member of his body to be related to Him through their walk and fellowship with each other. Whose responsibility is it to ensure that we have fellowship? It's ours, of course. The more we fellowship with Christ and His body, the more we will be safeguarded and the more sin will be out of reach. It's our responsibility to give and to receive valued fellowship with each other. Fellowship is a mighty weapon against death and separation from Christ and His body.Ω

John Penrosa, Pastor
Beacon House Full Gospel Church
Wallingford - CT

Report on trip to Bolivia



The potential to reach five million people, pretty astounding! But that is exactly what happened to Ric Vargas and myself on our last trip to Bolivia this past July. We were invited to do a radio interview, actually several interviews and as Ric said “we have the perfect face for radio”. But seriously, this was our third time in Bolivia and we are thankful to God for the doors He has opened. There is a hunger for the word, so much so that while we planned on going to at least two or possibly three cities in Bolivia the hunger in La Paz was so great we were unable to leave. We had a great number of Pastors/Leaders meetings and to the glory of God a great hunger were in the hearts of these brethren and in the local churches we preached at. Many of them were ferociously taking notes, meeting with us after we shared, wanting prayer and the faithfulness of God caused a great move of the Holy Spirit in every way. This is what we are seeing wherever we go. A hunger for truth, a hunger for insight, to sum it up a hunger for Jesus. This year is turning out to be quite productive. We have already been to Japan and Bolivia and just before our Gathering we will be in India. Then before the end of the year we will be in three cities in Colombia. It is truly an exciting time and may we allow the Lord to order all our steps. ☩

In Him, Lou Pressman



Emmanuel Fellowship Church Youth Retreat July 17-22 Refreshing Mountain Camp Stephensville, PA

It was a most unusual time with about 30 youth from various churches of Pennsylvania and New York. From the very first day the youth were ready and eager to give themselves to God in a fresh and new way.

Hands were raised in worship, hearts were ready to receive and attentive to the Lord from the beginning. The Lord had already broken the ice before their arrival so there was no time spent “warming up” the group.

The ministry team was composed of Michelle Goodman, Director, Gary Sclafani, evening speaker, Seth Vargas and Dana Rose small group teachers, Gary Rose, worship leader and boy’s counselor, Mark Reed, Lori Minotto, Cindy Rinehart, assistants and counselors.

The participants had wonderful testimonies of how the Lord spoke to them not only in a general sense but personally. They spoke of how the Lord met physical needs for healing, needs of the heart, and convicted them to take steps of faith and commitment to the Lord like being baptized. The youth returned hungry for God and more unified than ever to focus on serving the Lord.



The Knowledge Which Releases Us in Our Calling

Joseph Faillace

*“Jesus **knew** that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was re-turning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him” (John 13:3-5).*

Through the Holy Spirit John reveals Jesus’ stabilizing thoughts that empowered him to wash his disciples’ feet even in the midst of the trouble he saw coming. You see, **Jesus knew who he was, where he had come from, and where he was going.** Because of this knowledge he was able to look beyond the circumstances of the evening where one would betray him, all would deny him, and the suffering to take place on the cross was before him. **In the same way it is imperative for us to know who we are, where we came from, and where we are going, in order to see our true calling in Christ.** Having this understanding will securely establish us in Christ and keep us from looking for a road to religious glory. It will keep us humble enough to serve our brothers and sisters, and will keep us weak enough to allow them to care for us in a deep and meaningful way.

Where did we come from?

The key in remembering where we came from is that there is absolutely nothing of which to boast. Spiritually we were completely depraved and dead, with no hope of rescuing ourselves from our deserved judgment. Then Jesus came to take our place of punishment, to die the criminal’s death we deserved, and to give us the gift of His righteousness and the Holy Spirit.

From a natural standpoint, we were of no account in this world. Paul, in a reminder to the church to not become proud says the following, *“Brothers and sisters, think of **what you were** when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of this world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly and despised things of the world, and the things that are not to nullify the things that are so that no one may boast in His presence” (1 Cor. 1:27-29).*

Jesus’ true heavenly call is strengthening us with hope, and then bringing us back to earth, to the dirty feet of our brothers and sisters.

Who are we now?

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Elsewhere, it says “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). These two scriptures point to the reality that **we are simultaneously a sinner and a saint.** Our sinful nature is not counted against us since we are righteous in and through Jesus Christ, but it still has an effect on our actions every day. Paul testifies to this by saying “for what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.” In another place, he reveals the continued power of the old nature saying “in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me” (2 Cor. 12:7).

Where are we going?

Confusion around a proper understanding of who we are can create doubt in the heart of the believer about where we are going. The assurance of everyone who believes in Jesus Christ should be that they are going to be welcomed into heaven with open arms. While all “good” Protestants know that good works do not lead to heaven, many observe that a works-based system has crept back into the church and, though the terminology has changed from prior religious movements, the same underlying meaning and the effect on people is just as debilitating. The comfort of Jesus’ promise that He is going to prepare a place for us may be placed into doubt for some, thereby producing an undue concern of their standing before God.

The true upward calling of God in our life keeps us low and well grounded

The Lord wants us to remain well grounded in Him, not tossed to and fro. The upward calling of God in Philippians 3 is about holding onto Jesus and the blessed hope we have in Him. This consistent focus on Jesus and what He has done is the mature view Paul was referring to. (vs. 2-4, 9-11, 20-21) The pressing on is not a seeking of a new movement or revelation, but a continuing in the faith no matter what the consequences. (vs. 8-14) Unfortunately, there is another upward calling that does not come from above, which has plagued the church since its inception, rooted in the fall of man. Theologian Gerhard Forde wrote “the fall is not what the word implies at all. Rather, it is an upward rebellion, an invasion of the realm of things ‘above,’ the usurping of the divine prerogative.” In many cases the bad fruit we see in the church comes when we overreach beyond the call of Christ

and the ground He has established searching for a more glorious road to tread upon.

The true upward calling of God is revealed in this - I am a poor miserable sinner not sufficient of myself to do anything worth preserving. I need the Lord Jesus Christ to work in and through me. In order to discern what is of God and what is not in my life I need good men and women around me to keep me well-grounded on the foundation of Jesus Christ. This is the foot washing Jesus instructed us to perform for one another. We need to stay open and vulnerable to the washing that comes from our friends. I am thankful for Godly examples of people around me who are able to confess their faults, failures, and weaknesses, who aren't afraid to be transparent about their own concerns and doubts. These people have a flesh and see their need for help; people who are so desperate for the Lord and His Church that they would allow themselves to be called a dog just to get the scraps from the Master's table. These are the people who I can be at ease laughing with and would gladly suffer with and for. Jesus true heavenly call is strengthening us with hope, and then bringing us back to earth, to the dirty feet of our brothers and sisters. It shows up in the mundane places of life, in dirty diapers, spouses arguing, long commutes, stressed out moms, angry customers, and our brothers and sisters who need strengthening in the midst of it all. "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst." Let's remember the sweetness of the Gospel which saves us, keeps us, and will bring us to our desired goal. This knowledge releases us to see the people we are called to love in front of us, and wash their feet, while allowing them to wash ours.Ω

Joe Faillace

A recipient of the grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, a co-laborer in the ministry of Gospel Outreach Christian Fellowship of NJ for 19 years, husband to AnnMarie and father of six beautiful children, ages 4 to 13.



PRAISE REPORT

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,
Hello to all and blessings.

My name is Sandra Keeney and my husband is Gary. We are members of Bethany Christian Fellowship, in Athens, PA. As some may remember in late June, my husband was in an accident that caused burns to 20% of his body. I wanted to let you know how he is doing and to praise the marvelous workings of God.

The Lord was wrapped around my husband from the second this accident occurred and continues to be there daily. My husband was relighting a pig roaster that had gone out when a ball of fire shot out and enveloped him in flames. His clothing protected the main trunk of his body and blessedly did not catch on fire. His eyeglasses protected his eyes; his beard protected his lower face, and he did not inhale any flames into his lungs. Our car was parked behind him and when he was thrown backwards it kept him falling to the ground and possibly injuring his head (he is on blood thinners and this could have been a serious brain bleed). I feel that the Lord orchestrated all of these protections during this event. He suffered 2nd degree burns to his face, left arm and both lower legs, and 3rd degree burns to his right arm. He was sent to Lehigh Valley Medical Center's Burn unit where he remained for 15 days.

During that time the wounds to his left arm, legs and face healed quickly and have left minimal scarring. He showed enough healing to his right arm that he would not need skin grafts or lose any of his fingers. The presence of the Lord was felt by us both throughout this time. The Lord was so good to me as well. He made sure I had a parking spot always near the entrance to his section of the hospital. God orchestrated a guest house that was not costly and he showed me how much we were loved and cared for by our family, friends and by people we did not know.

Gary continues to need wound care to the right arm but we see improvement daily and believe he will have full recovery in time. This entire experience was very humbling for me both emotionally and spiritually. It made me aware how much God loves me (taking it from the intellectual knowing to the spiritual knowing) and how much we mean to those around us.

Saying "thank you" does not seem to be nearly enough to express the gratitude Gary and I feel for the prayers, monetary support and "Get Well" wishes we have received during this time of trauma and healing. The results of prayer are seen every day as his wounds are healing quickly and without complications.

It has touched us deeply to know that your support and concern for us is overflowing. May God's blessings flow back to you as we have experienced them during this time of need.

All our Thanks and Love,
Gary & Sandy Keeney