

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.

www.christianmaturity.com

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MORE THAN JUST A NAME



I'm sure we have all had those restless nights where we toss and turn, until attempting the old 'counting sheep' routine. When we are really desperate, we may try reading First Chronicles where the endless list of names usually produces yawns and droopy eyelids. It's easy for us to forget that these difficult-to-pronounce names represent relationships; real, living relationships with both man and God.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul, on a few occasions, also gives us a list of names, albeit much shorter than those in Chronicles. Some of the people Paul lists as just names; but every so often Paul pulls back the curtain, giving us a quick glimpse of their lives and their relationship to him and the church. Let us attempt to not only see what Paul saw in this particular name, but hopefully be encouraged, yes, even determined to become such a vessel.

The name Epaphras appears three times in only five verses in Paul's letters of Colossians and Philemon.

Philemon 1:23 tells us Epaphras is a fellowprisoner with Paul; which was a very small circle of relationship, having only three other members. It reveals Epaphras was not only willing to suffer and pay a price for the Gospel, but he indeed did so. In Colossians 1:7,8 Epaphras is declared as a dear or beloved fellowservant. Notice again the sense of identification or fellowship with Paul. Here he is also said to be a faithful minister of Christ. Faithfulness to Christ extends itself as faithfulness to His people; just as commitment to The Lord's body is a reflection of a prior commitment to Him. These qualities in Epaphras are seeds of the expression of ministry that follows in the third passage.

Colossians 4:12,13 shows Epaphras as the only one of Paul's friends and coworkers commended for his intercessory prayer ministry. Paul says, "who is one of you." I believe this is not just revealing that Epaphras was from the city of Colosse, but that, like the incarnation of Jesus, Epaphras fully identified with those for whom he prayed. Paul says that Epaphras is a servant of Christ. The word for servant is the Greek word *doulos*, or bonds slave, a word Paul often used to describe himself, but only used to describe two others, Timothy and Epaphras. Because Epaphras is a *doulos* he is "always laboring fervently for you in prayers." The Greek phrase 'laboring fervently' is *agonizomai*, from which we get the English, to agonize. These

2019 Men's Retreat Athens, PA

were not quick prayers but strenuous times of interceding on the behalf of others. Epaphras brings to mind our High Priest who is touched by the feelings of our infirmities and ever lives to make intercession for us. The name Epaphras means lovely, which is fitting because he revealed true love in sacrificial service to Christ and to His body.

We currently live in a day of so-called 'relevant' and trendy names for churches or conferences, such as Innovate, Mosaic, Impact, or Journey, that have very little relevance to Christ. I'm pretty sure that no one will be naming a church after Epaphras any-time soon, but maybe they should.

These scattered thoughts came to me as I stood by the hospital bed of Donald Doyle. Just a name that's on his wristband for the attending caregivers to read, but much more than just a name to His Savior, his family, his church family and me.



Ric Vargas

MISSION TO BOLIVIA

November 26 to December 16, 2019

It won't be long before Ric Vargas and Lou Pressman are on their way on a mission to Bolivia. No doubt this will be a crucial trip as the nation is split over election results that favored the incumbent president that has defied Bolivia's constitution in over staying his two terms of office. A socialistic government was "elected", many believe fraudulently, resulting in civil unrest and the persecution of the Church. The goal of this mission will be to strengthen the hands of the brethren as they will continue to go through difficult and dangerous times. Thanks for your prayers.

September 20-21 we had a wonderful men's retreat hosted by Bethany Christina Fellowship and Pastor Mark Waters. We were blessed by the food and the brotherly love displayed by our brothers and sisters in this Church. Bethany hosts the CMF Women's Retreat also for many years and it is always a blessing. to those that attend.

There were three speakers at the Men's Retreat: Bert Ghilardi, Gary Rose and Andy Wales. Friday night Bert preached on "Men That Saw the King". He had good liberty as he showed in the Word many that saw the King. When we see Him as King there will be a conversion and transformation of our whole being and everything around us will be touched and affected.

Saturday morning, Andy Wales taught on how God loves diversity in His Body and the more excellent way is love. Andy proceeded to give a very colorful presentation on how Jesus transformed 12 spiritually dull disciples and used them to fulfill His purpose. This message gave hope and grace that the Lord could take the lowest of the low and transform and use them.

The last message was by Gary Rose who spoke on the theme "Pinching In". Pinching in is a military term that means when a soldier becomes weary his brothers mush hold him up or even carry him. It was a very anointed word that inspired all to fully love the brethren. This word released a move of the Sprit that resulted in word of prophecy and deliverance to set free many of the brothers. This type of retreat can work to deliver us from the self-centered, loner spirit that is prevalent in the Body of Christ today. May the Lord bless all our retreats and gatherings in the future with the richest love and brotherly unity.

Bert Ghilardi



The Claudius Stone, Bulgaria

Nineteen years ago it was prophesied that Ric and I would travel and minister in Europe. This was the year that it happened. Our brother Tom Worth has been traveling to Bulgaria for I believe about twenty years so the path had already been made. Ric, as a Bible School teacher, also taught some of these brethren. In God's perfect timing He opened up for us a wide door of effectual ministry.

It has only been about thirty years since Bulgaria had come out of the control of communism. Which means the church is relatively young. The need for sound Biblical teaching is apparent to them and to the glory of God we were embraced and found favor wherever we went. In their city of Silistra there were actual ruins of a church that commemorated the death of martyrs for Christianity first came to Bulgaria in the third century. There is even a stone marker within a short walk from our hotel called the Claudius stone, the same Claudius named in Acts 11 & 18. There has always been a people of God in Bulgaria even withstanding the oppressive spirit of communism.

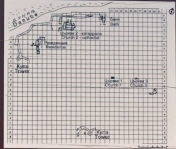


It's a beautiful country, with many precious saints of God. They have taken a stand against the European Union. Much industry and funding is needed in Bulgaria and the EU is willing to help. However one of the EU's condition is that they would accept gay marriage. The church rose up and even though refusing their aid would be detrimental the leadership led by the church arose and gave a resounding NO to the EU. Almost unbelievably the EU accepted their no but for the

first time ever is moving toward their acceptance with monies and aid with no strings attached. We are thankful for this tiny nation in the underbelly of Europe that God has pinpointed and will be used to bring the Gospel to other European countries as well.



THE CHRISTIAN DUROSTORUM-DRASTAR



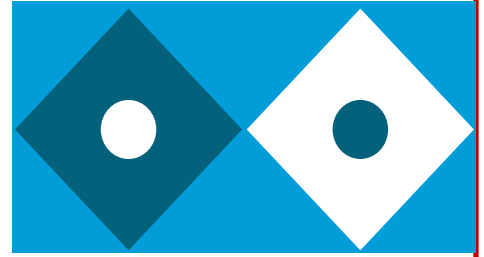
Silistra, the antique Durostorum the Middle Age Drastar, is amongst the leading centers of Christianity, Christian culture and civilization in Dobroudja. Here from the end of the 3rd the beginning of the 4th c. there was an early Christian community, in which brighten-up the 12 saints, who died as martyrs between the years 303 and 362. Material evidence of their martyr history is two martyr temples and a grave, in which a golden ring with early Christian symbols was found.

The martyr glory of Durostorum is a base for creating a bishop desk about the year 380, which was headed by Merkurian-Auxentius, a student of the apostle of the Goths Ulfila. In the mere centre of the city were raised basilicas and a bishop's palace. With the arrival of the Asparuh's proto-Bulgarians in the end of the 7th century was set the end of the early Christian past of Durostorum. The early Middle Age Drastar became a pagan center, for which is evidence the temple of Tangra from the 9th century and several sacrificial altars, which were found in the city.

After the conversion of the Bulgarians in 865 Drastar became again a bishop center, which was headed by bishop Nikolay, for whom we have the evidence of an inscription from the year 870 and seals. Then on the shore of the Danube was raised a cathedral basilica and western from it a residence. In 927 the Drastar bishop Damian became the first Bulgarian patriarch. The cathedral basilica was reconstructed into a patriarchal beehive temple; the residence became a patriarchal castle. Here in the 11th-12th c. found residence the Byzantine bishops, and in the 13th-14th c. the Bulgarian metropolitan bishops. Silistra is a metropolitan city also during the Ottoman epoch from the 15th to the end of the 19th c.

Please pray for Bulgaria!

Lou Pressman



Save the Date **The CMF Spring Gathering**

**Wednesday, April 22—
Friday, April 24, 2020**

There's a place for you!

Tuscarora Inn & Conference
Center, Mt. Bethel, PA.

For more information call Mark

Waters 570-888-1055 or
CMF7001@gmail.com

*Pastors and workers are
welcome.*

*If scholarship is needed
please, let Mark know.*

Women's Retreat

June 5-6, 2020

**at Bethany Christian
Fellowship, Athens, PA.**

**The registration deadline is
Monday, May 25, 2020. The
Registration form will be
sent out in February of 2020.**

**Send articles for the Winter
"Clarion"
to arleneghilardi@gmail.com
by December 15.**

2019 Fall Christ Ministerial Fellowship Conference ***October 30-November 1*** ***Mt. Bethel, PA***

It was wonderful to gather with some of God's choicest servants. Many of us have a long history together. The praises of God were powerful and on a high prophetic note. Truly, Christ, as the center of all, was magnified. Lou Pressman lead us off on Wednesday night with a message on God's true temple. Pastor Lou gave the history of God's natural temple through the Bible and how God will judge all efforts of man to build a natural temple. Revelation 21:22-27 shows that Christ is the Temple, the Lamb will be the light, and all nations will come into the glory of it. Amen!! Thursday morning we had open sharing. Five speakers shared. Ron Moore gave a timely word about what it means



to take the Lord's Name in vain. Tom Worth blessed us with Psalm 136 about the Lord's mercy and how it endures forever. Tom's message moved us to fresh love for what Christ did for us on the cross and the mercy that is available to us today.



Thursday evening we heard from a spiritual father and seasoned missionary, Charles Wilner. Brother Wilner taught us out of John 10. He illustrated this truth by sharing his testimony of how the voice of the Lord had lead him throughout his life and work as a missionary to Africa. It was 40 years in 40 minutes!



The last message was given Friday morning by our dear brother, Ric Vargas. Ric spoke out of 1 Samuel 23 how David was betrayed by his brethren and how his friend Jonathan strengthened his hand in God through it all. It was good to see two old friends, Jim Brown and Tom Worth. We were blessed by their presence. We hope to see many of you at our April conference the 22nd through 24th in the year 2020. It is vital to gather together in this dark and perilous hour.

CHANGING OUR GARMENT

Ephesians 4:11-And he gave some, apostles; some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Exodus 35: 30-35 speaks of two men, Bezaleel-which means in the shadow of God-and Aholiab-which means tent of his father, dwelling place, or tabernacle- being able to function in whatever capacity that was needed at that time. There are three sets of five in this scripture. The first set is verse 31-wisdom, understanding, knowledge, all manner of workmanship, and verse 34 teach. The second set is in verses 32 and 33-gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood. The third set of five is in verse 35-engraver, cunning workman, embroiderer, weaver, and of them that do devise cunning work. These two could function in whatever capacity that was needed at that moment. They were not stuck saying I am one thing and can't do anything else. Too many people get stuck today in a mold and do not want or accept change. God could tell them to do something else, but because they hate change they do not respond to God. It is more than just a five-fold principle, it is a daily principle of not being willing for God to move them in a new direction. Are you like that? We need to examine our hearts.

Ezekiel 1:12 says and they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went. Are we allowing the Spirit of God to truly lead and guide? Do we embrace change or stay in a same path when we know God wants us to change direction? Do we accept when God changes seasons in our lives? I live in a college town. It could be dead of winter and the students are wearing shorts. They love the summer and don't want to let it go. Are any of us like that with our spiritual seasons-holding on and not changing our garments?

Can we accept change when it makes no sense? Look at Philip in Acts 8. He was doing miracles, unclean spirits coming out of people, healings, preaching. Great things were happening, and God tells him to go to the desert. He was to leave a great revival where he was being mightily used and go to the desert. He was not told why he was to go. There was no reason given. Verse 27 says and he arose and went. No questions asked. We know the rest of the story. The gospel was taken to Ethiopia because of his obedience, and Ethiopia was changed dramatically. What if he hadn't gone? Will you go? Will you change your garments for a new season in your life and see God do things you never thought of? In Genesis 24, Abraham's servant was sent to find a bride for Isaac. He found Rebekah and gave her new raiment for the trip, and her family proceeded to hold her back. Abraham's servant had to hear it from Rebekah's lips as her brethren asked her will you go. And she said I will go. One translation says I am ready. Are you ready for God to give you a new garment for your journey? It was a 450 mile journey, dangerous, on camelback, no Dramamine. It took about 30 days. And yet in verse 67, we see that Isaac loved her. Had she not taken that journey she would not have known his love. Likewise, our being obedient to do what we know we are to do, will show us greater depths of Jesus' love for us. Will you go?

I have a friend who everyone was telling him that he was called to be a pastor. He desired to be a pastor, but there was no open door. He was in a church where there was one pastor and two assistants. The Lord spoke to me that the main pastor was to resign, but he was waiting knowing he was to resign. Eventually, he did resign, and my friend became one of the assistants. So I asked him if what I had heard was right. He said the pastor admitted holding on even though he knew he was to leave. By his holding on, he was hindering the call on my friend's life. Could we be holding anyone back by our holding on to an old garment too long?

Genesis 41:14-Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon; and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment... Things happen quickly sometimes. He changed raiment to see Pharaoh. How much more should we want to change raiment in obedience to God? In verse 42, look at his last change of raiment-ring-linen-gold chain-which is his 5th change.

Benjamin, the son of the right hand, the last son of Jacob, was given five portions in Genesis 42:34.

'As the mountains are around Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever.

Ps. 125:2

Prayer Requests

Joe & Gloria Nieves-
Allentown, PA

Phyllis Fischer, Green Bay WI

Don Doyle-member of
Bethany Christian Fellowship,
Long Island

Colleen Konoby-Courtice,
Ontario, Canada

Fredy Lopez & Gloria Osorio;
Gloria is facing surgery at the
end of November.

Alejandro & Maria Paula
Holguin: direction for their life
and ministry.

Ric Vargas, Lou Pressman: this
month are marking the 20th
year of mission travel as a
team. Their travels have
taken them to Asia, Africa,
Europe and South America.

In Genesis 45:22, Benjamin was given five changes of raiment and 300 pieces of silver. The last son, the son at the return of Jesus will have such a revelation of the depths of our redemption that one garment will not be enough.

Will you go?

Susannah Wesley was quite a remarkable woman. She endured much hardship on her journey. But, her desire was that she wanted her life to count. That was the cry of her heart. Do you want your life to count enough to change directions and raiment when it makes no sense?

Will you go-not looking back-only forward, trusting God that he knows what he is doing? Will you go?

Jim Laws, Salisbury, MD

Editor's note: This message by Jim Laws was the message he was going to preach at the CMF Conference. Unfortunately, he fell sick the day before the conference and could not attend.

We are grateful that he put his message into writing so that all of us are able to benefit from the Word of the Lord.

The messages from the CMF Conference
are now up on the website.

Go to: www.christianmaturity.com

Click on Messages.

