

Mustard Seed

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Kalona Mennonite Church

Risk-Free Christian Living

Special points of interest:

- As believers in Christ, we have the great assurance that we are overcomers in the face of failures, rejections, trials, and tribulations.
- I don't want to stand before God in heaven and try to explain why I didn't do everything I could to bring honor and glory to Him through the power of the Holy Spirit He placed in me.

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The other day while traveling to Des Moines, I noticed a large billboard with the words, "Risk-Free Farming." At the bottom of the sign was a phone number to call for more information on how to farm without any risks. In reality, we know that there is no such thing as risk-free farming. Yes, there are some forms of insurance one can buy that will protect against certain disasters, but there are still risks in farming that no insurance will cover.

In our Christian life, we can ask the question, "How can we protect ourselves against failures, disappointments, and unexpected events that rock our world?" Is there any such thing as a risk-free Christian life? We know the answer to this question. On the one hand, the answer is no. In looking at the life of Jesus, it is plain to see that He did not have a risk-free life. Doing the will

of God led Him to experience rejection from the very people He came to save. On the other hand, as believers in Christ, we have the great assurance that we are overcomers in the face of failures, rejections, trials, and tribulations. This is one of the key messages in the book of Revelation. No matter what may happen, we are overcomers because of the "blood of the Lamb."

In the Christian life, there is no such thing as a risk-free life; yet we are promised that on that day when we go to meet Christ, the righteous will be rewarded (II Timothy 4: 7-8). In other words, we will face failures and unexpected events, but as righteous believers in Christ, we will never face everlasting failure. In Christ, we have the victory now and forever more.

Scott Swartzendruber

In Pursuit



For my impatient nature, God usually wants faith and expectancy from me long before I will see results.

“Elijah was a person just like us.” James 5:17a is a part of the Bible that makes me pause and think. Elijah, fed by ravens. Elijah prayed for the rain to stop and it did. Elijah, against the Baal prophets and fire from heaven burning the water soaked altar. Elijah strengthened by God’s power, outrunning Ahab, who was riding. Elijah went up to heaven in a fiery chariot. Wow, what a life he led! Yet James says, *“Elijah was a person just like us.”*

Part of me says, sarcastically, “Yeah, right.” Yet part of me wonders what possibilities God has for my life. Especially if I look at Acts 10:34b-35 *“I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right.”* Along with James 5:17a these verses make a strong statement about the potential for all of our lives.

The thing is that I don’t often think of my life this way. I think of “my possibilities” based on my earthly skills, instead of “God’s possibilities” based on the power of the Holy Spirit He has placed in me. (Refer to Ephesians 3:20) This way of thinking is not helping me to live the life God has planned for me. So how do I change? How do I get the Holy Spirit’s power to have full reign in my life?

This, I think, is a very important question for everyone. It is one that I have put some time and study into answering. I don’t have the complete answer, but there are a few things I have come to believe are key in allowing the Holy Spirit’s power to operate fully.

The first is that you need to be a disciple of Christ. For me this means that you believe Christ died for your sins so that you could have eternal life. Because of that belief you have asked God for forgiveness and are now doing your best to turn from your

former sinful life and toward the life that God instructs you to live through His Word, the Bible. Ephesians 1:13-14 confirms that the Holy Spirit comes to you when you become a disciple of Christ. *“You too hear the Word of Truth in Christ, which is the good news of your salvation. You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit because you believed in Christ. The Holy Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance, which is applied toward our redemption as God’s own people, resulting in the honor of God’s glory.”*

Baptism is another part in the puzzle of how to let the Holy Spirit work powerfully in your life. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:5-8 this *“I assure you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, it’s not possible to enter God’s kingdom. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. Don’t be surprised that I said to you, ‘You must be born anew.’ God’s Spirit blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going. It is the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”* It is also interesting to note that when Jesus was baptized John the Baptist saw the Holy Spirit come down and rest upon Jesus. This marked the start of Jesus’ ministry. Plus John the Baptist tells us that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit. (John 1:33) These things lead me to think that baptism has a part in the power of the Holy Spirit within each of us.

An interesting account about baptism in Acts 19:1-7 leads me to another part in the power of the Holy Spirit within us. In this passage Paul was in Ephesus where he found some disciples. He asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit. They told him they had never heard of the Holy Spirit.

(Cont. on page 3)

(Cont. from page 2) Paul tells them about the Holy Spirit and they are baptized and receive the Holy Spirit. They didn't have the Holy Spirit because of their lack of knowledge. They didn't know what to ask of God.

They didn't know what to ask. Thinking about this brought me to thinking about the parable of the prodigal son. I realize this seems like a leap, but stick with me for a little bit. The older son in this parable is upset at the party for the return of the younger son or more truthfully he is upset because he feels cheated. He feels hurt because his father never offered him a party. The father's response is what strikes me. "Son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours." The older son had missed that fact. All he ever had to do was ask. He was missing the knowledge that everything his father had was there for his asking.

When it comes to the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, are there things we don't know enough about to ask for them? Are we studying God's Word to find out? Also, are there things we know about the Holy Spirit, but have never asked? Do we not realize that we can ask or are we too afraid to ask? These are definitely topics we need to spend some time on.

So let's assume that we have been asking God for the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in our lives, what then? The answer is short but not simple. Expect. Faith is important. Unfortunately, for my impatient nature, God usually wants faith and expectancy from me long before I will see results. This verse helps me. Luke 11:13 "So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him." God's timing is perfect. I need to be reminded of this over and over and over again. I also need to be reminded to listen for God. He always guides perfectly, but I need to listen in order to follow. It does me no good to ask a question and not listen for the answer. How quick will God answer? I don't know. Sometimes it feels like forever, but like I said, God's timing is always perfect.

Once we hear God's guidance the hard part starts, obedience. Romans 8:5-8 "People whose lives are based on selfishness think

about selfish things, but people whose lives are based on the Spirit think about the things that are related to the Spirit. The attitude that comes from selfishness leads to death, but the attitude that comes from the Spirit leads to life and peace. So the attitude that comes from selfishness is hostile to God. It doesn't submit to God's Law, because it can't. People who are self-centered aren't able to please God." This shows us one of the reasons why obedience is important. It isn't a complicated concept. There are two ways to go in life. Either you go God's way led by the Holy Spirit's power or you go the world's sinful way. The concept is simple, but actually doing it is difficult. We have two natures living in us. They are enemies. Our sinful nature wants to be disobedient to God and the nature of the Holy Spirit wants obedience to God. Which nature will we feed? That one will grow and thrive and the other one won't. Galatians 5:16-17 supports this. "I say be guided by the Spirit and you won't carry out your selfish desires. A person's selfish desires are set against the Spirit, and the Spirit is set against one's selfish desires. They are opposed to each other, so you shouldn't do whatever you want to do."

Since we all have the sinful nature within us, we are more than likely going to sin. Sin suppresses the power of the Holy Spirit working through us. Andrew Murray says this about sin: "Sin consists in nothing but this, that man determined to be something and would not allow God to be everything." We need God to be our everything. Let us repent readily and quickly. I need to keep a short account of my sins, so that the Holy Spirit can work His power in full strength through me. This is a quick overview of a few things that affect the Holy Spirit's power in my life. They are discipleship, baptism, knowledge, asking, expecting, waiting, listening, obedience and repentance. It can seem like a lot, but I consider it vital. I don't want to stand before God in heaven and try to explain why I didn't do everything I could to bring honor and glory to Him through the power of the Holy Spirit He placed in me. I don't think you really want that either. After all, "Elijah was a person just like us."

As always, in pursuit. Dawn Wyse

Central Plains Mennonite Conference Annual Meeting



If you travel to or through the area show her your support and order up some good soul food at "Big Mamas".

KMC delegates to CCMC this year were Atlee and Carolyn Yoder, Wilbur and Elsie Mast and Lane Schrock as the Youth delegate. Jeff Miller also attended. Following are some insights of the weekend.

The 12th Annual Meeting of Central Plains Mennonite Conference was held in Henderson, Nebraska on June 28 to July 1. Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, was the guest speaker for the three worship sessions. He spoke on the active work of the Holy Spirit, being sent by Jesus into the world, and our responsibility in the forgiveness of sins.

Friday evening, Pat Barron from North Omaha spoke of the ongoing efforts of Northside Chapel in her community. She has been a lay leader in the small congregation for many years. Her restaurant "Big Mama's" has received national acclaim and has been a beacon of hope in the blighted area of the city. She works with ex-felons by giving them jobs and increased responsibility as they integrate back into the community. So if you travel to or through the area show her your support and order up some good soul food at "Big Mamas".

The Friday delegate session included the introduction of a New Ministries Fund. This fund is designed to provide monies for any congregation in our conference that has a vision for a new ministry. The application form is available through our conference ministers. Their contact information is available in our church office or on

the conference website.

Following a discussion with feedback from delegates regarding the new conference leadership structure we affirmed and voted to continue with the new leadership structure that has been in place for the past two years.

As a conference we accepted the request of St Paul Fellowship to leave Central Plains Conference and join the care of Central District Conference. Delegates shared in a litany of release acknowledging our failure to live into the oneness of the Body of Christ and how we long to be a conference that lives into that oneness.

Ervin Stutzman presented the Mennonite Church USA's Purposeful Plan document: Desiring God's Coming Kingdom: A Missional Vision and Purposeful Plan for the Mennonite Church USA. Much work has been put into this document. It will be a tool to use as we move forward as a denomination. There is a copy available in our church library.

Saturday the acceptance of three new Hispanic congregations (Torre Fuerte, Iglesia Evangelica Agape and Iglesia Menonita Centro Cristiano) into our conference was a highlight along with the graduation of 11 students from the Instituto Biblico Anabautista (a Spanish language leadership development program of the Mennonite Church). (Cont. on page 5)

(Cont. from page 4)
 For nearly 2 years, the Faith Mennonite congregation of Minneapolis has been working through the issues of homosexuality and same sex unions. Their pastor, Joetta Handrich Schlabach brought the concern of being asked to perform a same sex union. She has not done so at this point but is asking for conference discernment together regarding this issue. The conference leadership is planning to facilitate four regional meetings this fall for discernment and conversation. Each congregation is asked to send three discerning representatives to participate.

Joe WalksAlong Jr. from the Lame Deer Mennonite Church gave an emotional invitation to delegates to attend next years meeting. Congregations in Montana will be hosting the annual meeting on June 20-23.

Atlee and Carolyn Yoder

At one of our delegate sessions, we were asked to write down as many scriptures as we could that have had an impact on our lives. We were to choose five of them and number them 1-5 as the most influential in our lives. Later we shared around our table why one was the most important. It was a very good exercise. I suggest you do this as Sunday school class. We put those five up on a wall chart to see where they were located, Old Testament or New.

Dave Boshart shared that the Ashland Christian Fellowship, which is mostly Native Americans, asked him last year to see if he could find some money for their church for some much needed ex-

pansion. But after searching, he had to tell them he didn't know where to get it. At the next session, David said that someone would match \$15,000 if the delegates attending could come up with that much. Well, when the day was over they raised \$44,000. Also they were worried that the church might not survive the wild fires. Those that were from there kept checking where the fire was.

Wilbur Mast

The 12th Annual Meeting of Central Plains Conference was held in Henderson, Nebraska. They were very good hosts! The theme of the conference was Guided by the Spirit So That the World May Know. Wilbur, Lane Schrock, and I rode with Jeff Miller. We got to know Jeff a lot better than before we went. We arrived on Thursday eve just in time for the evening service. The guest speaker for the conference was Ervin Stutsman. He gave an example of entering God's Kingdom is like going through airport security. We have to leave everything before we enter. He took off his shoes, his electronic devices, his billfold, etc.

There was also a drama one evening. People came from different areas of the auditorium with flags of red, brown, yellow, black, and white. They laid them on the stage, connecting them side by side. We had all colors of people in our conference. We then sang "Jesus loves the little children". A special highlight for us was being able to stay with Norm and Linda Yoder-Wilbur's first cousin.

Elsie Mast



Entering God's Kingdom is like going through airport security.

At a recent KMC fundraiser for a new workshop for Troy Miller, volunteering with Water for Life in Haiti, participants were surprised and delighted to see Troy there in person! Well, not quite, but the near life-size picture of Troy was a great addition. Many old towels were donated for use in Troy's new shop as well as nearly \$4,000.00 for building the shop. Thank you to all who donated so generously.



WHAT'S HAPPENING!!!

Hello there KMC'ers. We just returned from a dip in the Kalona Pool along with our son and two granddaughters from "The City" - so life is good. And, we did see Carlie and Dillon Bender at the pool, they have been "lifeguarding" this summer. Well I really don't know much news right now so forgive me if I just ramble on.

I did hear that Ian McDowell got back from a 2 ½ week trip to China. Now that would be one long flight! Probably a leadership or music trip of some sort, just check with Ian because I am sure he has some good stories to share.

Saw Merle & Marlinda Beachy in church this past Sunday so they are back from their most recent "Lighthouse Vacation." I think they were somewhere on Lake Michigan. Ask them.

Fred & Judy Yoder are grandparents again. Their son Scott & his wife Annie are the proud parents of a newborn son, Leonardo Grant Sessa Yoder. They live in Hoboken, NJ. Congratulations!

Nolan Yoder was at KMC several Sundays ago, however was leaving soon for Fresno, California. He will be taking a job as Assistant Athletic Director at Fresno Pacific University. FPU is a General Conference Mennonite 4 year college with an enrollment of 3500 + students. Nolan was on his way to Fresno and stayed overnight at a motel. He went to leave the next morning and discovered his pickup & trailer had disappeared. Apparently someone had stolen his entire rig. What a strange feeling that would be. Well, hopefully Nolan will get to experience some good hospitality from the Fresno community. Wow, what a way to start a new job!

The dog days of summer are here and the locust are humming. Well, stay cool and enjoy the long days and the final days of summer before school starts again.

So long for now, Ed V. & Carol Miller

Chimney Swifts at Pleasantview

Every night at sunset over 200 chimney swifts fly in a circle around an old brick chimney on the Pleasantview campus, and then drop into the chimney for the night. It is quite a sight!

Chimney swifts weigh less than one ounce. They make their homes in hollow trees or chimneys. Swifts do not have claws that allow them to perch on a branch or stand on the ground, so once they leave home in the morning they fly all day without stopping. They are extremely fast and agile which allows them to catch insects. At sunset they return to their home for the night.

Chimney swift populations are in significant decline. Hollow trees are often cut down now, and most chimneys today are either capped or not made of brick. Chimney swifts are not an endangered species, but if they continue to lose suitable trees and chimneys they will be. When they do find a suitable home it can usually have no more than a dozen swifts. This is why the Pleasantview chimney is so unique. It has become home to over 200 swifts. This year the National Audubon Society recognized Pleasantview for providing this habitat to so many chimney swifts.

Chimney swifts live in Iowa from April through September. They migrate to South America where they live from October through March. Their typical

winter home is Peru.

The best time to come is 15-30 minutes before sunset (about 8:30 p.m.). That is when the chimney swifts start to return to Pleasantview's chimney. Instead of flying into the chimney right away they continue to fly in a circle around it. As they fly they chirp and catch insects. As sunset approaches a couple hundred chimney swifts will be chirping and flying around Pleasantview's chimney. About 9:00 they start to drop one by one into the chimney. Before it is dark all will have returned to the chimney for the night.

The best place to see the chimney swifts is at the east end of Pleasantview's main three story building. Use the entrance off of Third St. in Kalona, park near the car port, and go to the east side of the street opposite the car port. It is advisable to bring lawn chairs. Most evenings there is a small group of people who have come to see them. All ages will enjoy seeing the chimney swifts.

Pleasantview Home



The best time to come is 15-30 minutes before sunset (about 8:30 p.m.).

Kalona Mennonite Church

902 6th St.
P.O. Box 819
Kalona, IA 52247
Phone: 319-656-2736
kmcjanice@kctc.net

Editor: Shirley Hochstedler
Design & Layout: Janice Hostetler

Articles for the Mustard Seed may be submitted to Shirley Hochstedler at shirleyh@kctc.net or placed in the Mustard Seed mailbox.



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READING THE MUSTARD SEED IN LEAMINGTON, ONTARIO, CANADA!

On a recent visit,
Cal and Shirley
Hochstedler
shared the
current issue of
the Mustard Seed
with former
KMCer's Dave
and Mary Groh.

