

The Agonizomai Striver

“And we proclaim Him ... And for this purpose, also I labor,
striving according to His power, which mightily works
within me.”

Colossians 1:28-29

Dear Friends and Ministry Partners,

January 1, 2019

Debbie and I hope and pray this update finds you all ending 2018 and beginning 2019 on a high note after the recent Christmas season! The last three months have been a blur with numerous activities in both our personal and ministry lives happening simultaneously. Rather than trying to recount them all, we thought we would share a few highlights from life and ministry in Cape Town by way of some year-ending praises. For there is much from the last few weeks for which we can praise the Lord!

First, we praise the Lord for the wonderful opportunity to preach four sermons at Stellenbosch Bible Church's (SBC) first ever family camp in mid-October. SBC is a three-year old church plant started by fellow Master's Seminary alumnus Lonngren Taljaard and his wife Anna. Those in attendance eagerly received the messages from Psalms with great hunger and a deep appreciation for God's word applied to modern-day concerns. Throughout the weekend, I had several opportunities to chat with a number of Stellenbosch University students who attend SBC! Many of the young men in this church plant are desirous of pursuing vocational ministry. As a result, they are very interested the future of Christ Seminary, which we hope to launch sometime in 2020. Please pray for SBC and their strategic location in the heart of what is a university town. God is already using them to impact many lives in a town that is dominated by the excesses of both theological liberalism and the charismatic movement. God has certainly placed SBC there for such a time as this!

Secondly, we praise the Lord for the recent baptism of two young believers we had a small part in pointing to Christ. James Perry and Amy Darlow both made a public declaration of their faith in Christ by entering the waters of believer's baptism on the final Sunday of November! James is a former professional cyclist who suffered a career-ending crash and subsequently succumbed to alcoholism as a result. Three years ago, I counseled him and pointed him to the cross of Christ. This culminated in his repentance and God freeing him from the shackles of alcohol abuse. Thirteen years ago, Amy's parents began attending Living Hope Bible Church when we were still there. They eventually followed us to Everglen Baptist, because it is much closer to where they live. On more than one occasion, Debbie and I both advised Amy's parents on how to point their two daughters to Christ. Through her parents' diligence in conveying the gospel message, Amy believed on the Lord and was wondrously saved. Please continue praying for both James and Amy as they seek to grow in Christ and strive to honor Him in their everyday lives!

On another note of praise, we are both thankful that we now have final plans for the proposed renovations to Everglen Baptist Church's old sanctuary, for the purpose of housing Christ Seminary Cape Town. It took five months of meetings and deliberations with various parties to chart the best course of action. Because EBC's old sanctuary has a high vaulted ceiling, we have opted to add a second floor that will house three classrooms, an office, as well as a small library that can hold 5000 volumes and a computer lab. The proposed price tag for the renovations, furniture, and more books for the library is \$130,000.00 US dollars. In the near future we will be sending out a letter specifically addressing this project and the funds needed to press forward.

We also praise the Lord for the ten men who are currently in the Leadership Development Training I began in July. We had our last study together in mid-November and we will resume our discipleship times later in January. Please pray for these ten men as we aim them toward greater involvement in the church and possible leadership in the future.

On a more personal note of praise, I recently returned from a quick trip to Los Angeles where I had to take a PhD class entitled Old Testament Issues. This was basically an OT miscellany course that covered everything from textual criticism, ancient Near Eastern history, to archaeology and much more. All of the work and reading for the course began in September and had to be completed prior to arriving for the class. The course ended with a long (4 hours in length) and difficult exam which required 86% or above to pass. By God's good grace, I am happy to report this is one exam I will not have retake! Now, 2019 will see me focusing on both the theological German and biblical Hebrew exams. Both of which can be taken here in South Africa. Please pray that by this time next year, both of those exams will be in my review mirror and that I will be working on the dissertational phase of the program!

As well, we praise God for the opportunity that I had to visit both our kids while briefly stateside! Both Janelle and Micaiah are doing well and continue to excel by God's grace in their respective pursuits. Micaiah continues to excel academically at The Master's University in his major of computer science. Janelle for her part, is working fulltime now at the Santa Clarita library as the children's librarian while still working on a master's degree in library science online. She is faithfully attending and serving at Grace Baptist Church in Santa Clarita.

While I was visiting the kids before my return home, Debbie flew across South Africa to spend Christmas with her mom and brother. Instead of landing in Cape Town on the return trip, I landed in Johannesburg, so I could join them all for Christmas and New Year's. So, we are thankful both kids are doing well and that the Lord provided me with safe and uneventful travel halfway around the world and back again!

Finally, Debbie and I praise the Lord for all of you — for all of the prayers, support, and encouragement that been offered up on our behalf, without which twenty-four years of ministry would not have been possible. We both want to thank you for your ministry to us, which in turn makes the ministry God has given us possible. May the Lord Jesus Christ

richly bless and keep each of you as you seek to live for Him and serve Him wherever you may be in 2019!

Yours for the Master's Use!

Mark & Debbie Christopher

Cape Town, South Africa