



from Glenn and Beth Calderwood

December 21 2009

PNG Newsletter
Number 3/09

Dear Friends,

We know many of you have had Meron very much on your minds since our last letter. Please keep praying for her, for we have always thought of her as a true believer, and feel deeply dismayed, as no doubt you do, that things could turn sour for her so easily. It was disappointing to learn that Meron did go off to another "church" for some weeks. However, she found the teaching awful and the gospel lacking (her words). Realising her folly (again, her own expression) she approached Ellien, one of the believing women at the Avili church, apologised for her foolishness, and vowed not to let it happen again. This seems like a wonderful resolution!

In any gospel ministry, it is unwise to use worldly enticements, or pander to sinful tendencies, to keep people in the "fold". The gospel of Jesus must be what keeps people. We are grateful that the gospel prevailed in this instance with Meron, and it gives us encouragement to hope that she is indeed one of the Lord's elect. It was striking that Meron could see and admit her folly, and actually come back. In addition, it was wonderful she was welcomed back without recriminations. Please keep praying though, for Meron and all the believers, for there are many dangers out there seeking to ensnare God's people. Meron may not be entirely out of the woods, but we sincerely hope she has made a good start.

Please pray also for the continuing evangelistic meetings up at Kimiagomo each Friday morning. Some weeks I think it is time to give it away and use my time in seeking other gospel opportunities elsewhere in the region. Nevertheless, there are weeks, when I think that progress is being made and that there might yet be conversions, and a new church established. This week the preaching caused some very good discussion afterwards, with a number of people understanding the critical difference between the biblical gospel of grace and that of the established religions in the area. However, we must wait to see if they will do anything about it. Understanding is not the same as conversion., and a conviction of sin is not equal to repentance. Assent to the gospel of Jesus is not identical to a commitment to him. Sadly too many of the Kanite are like the rich young ruler who understood the implications of what Jesus was saying only too well, but was not prepared, in the end, to place his life entirely in Jesus' hands.

It is sorely tempting to accept less than what Jesus was prepared to accept – he let the rich young ruler go, but would we? What is important to remember is that the work of evangelism and church planting is not our work, but his. We are simply instruments in his hands as he gathers all those for whom he died from the four corners of the earth,

for his own glory and honour, not ours. It is our task to bear witness to the Lord Jesus, faithfully, purposefully, rigorously – and he will gather his people. The gates of hell cannot and will not prevent him. That is the wonderful thing about gospel work – there is no need to manipulate the results. We preach, we teach, we explain, we urge, we plan, we pray, but he is the one who gathers his people and builds his church. He does it his way, and he does it in his own timing.

We all should be very encouraged with how good things are in the church down at Tatagufa. That is not to say there are no issues that people need to be dealing with, or that some ought to do better than they are. Nevertheless, we do believe we are seeing the results of patient laying down of solid foundations.

Take Iko for example. It is just so lovely to hear him speak of Christ's work on his behalf. He is a leader in his community, a "big-man" colloquially, but still he can speak easily of his bankruptcy before God, his life before his conversion and his ongoing struggle with sin. Just recently, when we were dealing with a young man, seemingly a believer, who got a young girl pregnant, he spoke firmly and definitely at all the right points, and then at other points spoke so gently and personally, urging the young man to deal with his sin. This was all the more impressive since the girl was one of Iko's own clan – the pregnancy brought much shame on the family. The customary way of handling such matters is to get upset, to shout and to brawl. Iko did none of these, but sought to keep the peace, offering solutions that would resolve the angst.

Then again, in another situation, where traditionally Iko would have been shown honour by receiving a large portion of food (it was at a funeral feast), he stated that whether he did or did not receive his due, it was of no consequence, for these things do not matter any more. You see, Iko's worldview has changed. Where once these things would have mattered very much to him, now, in the light of the gospel, he was able to let it go. His worldview altered so significantly, not instantly on the day he was converted, but rather through a process of sound biblical teaching over the years that chipped away at his tribal worldview, vitally altering it to what we see it today. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." That is it concisely.

So often in cross-cultural ministry, superficial change is celebrated as proof of conversion. This ends badly for the church for such people are frequently elevated to ministry positions, later proving to be unsuited or even unconverted. It causes great harm. How much better it is to be cautious,



from Glenn and Beth Calderwood

settling down to a solid teaching and preaching ministry, and looking to see worldviews being irreversibly changed. Of course, in tribal conditions such as in the Kanite, it takes time, but faithfulness requires us to give it our time.

Incidentally, the young man mentioned above apologised publicly to the church for his sin and for the shame he brought on the Lord's name and to his gathered people. Many quietly thanked him. We are encouraged to believe this is further evidence that people are no longer conforming to the pattern of their culture and that renewal is taking place, for in the past they would have handled things quite differently. While all is far from perfect, there is much for which we can be grateful.

Most of you will know that we plan to travel down to Australia in early January for Alice (our daughter) and Adam's wedding. To assist the men in leading the churches in our absence I am at present organising a study book on Paul's letter to Titus. It involves preparing eight sermons, and then distilling them down to a manageable amount of text. For semi-illiterate people it is important to get the

balance right between having enough information to understand the teaching and application of each of the Scripture passages, but not too much text that they get discouraged and lose the overall theme. I also like to have each sermon connected so that they can grasp the progression of the book and be able to fit each part into its context. (This is to help prevent wild interpretations as they study the Bible for themselves, and to prevent discouragement or fear when other groups make wild interpretations.) All of this worked well with the Timothy study books we prepared for earlier in the year; although this time, I have increased the volume of text just a little. As they are getting more practice, we have reason to hope they have improved in their reading ability.

We are looking forward to seeing many of you in January.

With all our love,
Glenn and Beth Calderwood.

Please note our new e-mail address: glennbethc@gmail.com

PO Box 479 Ukarumpa EHP 444
Papua New Guinea

Tel fr Aust 0011 62 868 1102 1625

*E-mail glennbethc@gmail.com
(unformatted text only)*

Please do not use CRMF address