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GOD NIGH – COMMUNION WITH HIM

Thomas Charles – a letter to his wife

Shawbury, i

My comfort is, and I doubt not but that it is your's also, that there is one all-sufficient friend, always and everywhere to be found. He is every where "nigh to them that are of a broken heart;" yea, he is their God, and dwelleth in them, as the father of mercies and God of all consolation. He hath all consolation to bestow, consolation answerable to every sorrow, from whatever quarter it may arise. I hope much of his presence comforts you. "Call upon him for he is near." Isa. iv. 6. He is within hearing, however weak the cry. A sigh, a groan, if sincere, pierces his ears; nor will he be inattentive to the silent tear, if it comes from a broken heart; he will bottle it and keep it in remembrance; yea, these bitter waters shall ere long be turned into wine, when the marriage of the Lamb is come. Through mercy I find that communion with God sweetens every thing, makes our comforts more comfortable and every bitter thing sweet. Wherever we meet him, it is not in vain. If we meet him when under a cross or in tribulation, his presence is sure to make it a heaven of souls. Though he brings us into the wilderness; yet, if he speaks comfortably to us, the wilderness will soon be turned into a paradise.

We should endeavour to enjoy God in every thing, and be particularly careful that nothing interrupt our particular and immediate

intercourse with him. In all our comforts of every sort, let us look for God, and by faith see him in them. In all our crosses and trials let us look for God. What are our prayers when in trials but vain repetitions, if we are not immediately dealing with God, if our hearts be not going out after him in holy desires and fervent affections? In the word also we must endeavour to see his majesty, holiness, mercy and goodness, or it cannot be profitable to our souls. Christ tells Paul that he was to be a witness of those things "in the which he should appear to him." When the eye of our understanding is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, we see, not only the world itself, but we see God in the truth which it expreseth. We see him in his law, infinitely holy, just and good: and we love him because he is what he is; and we love his law, which is a just representation of him in his holiness, justice and goodness. We see him in the gospel also – see him in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. The whole plan of the gospel appears to be a scheme worthy of himself; and every step in the accomplishment of the stupendous contrivance astonishes us with new discoveries of divine wisdom and goodness. And in every promise we must see him, and see him in all the infinity of his power, faithfulness and grace, capable of accomplishing it, if we intend being partakers of strong

consolation. The life of faith implies that we have particular dealings with God in every thing; for nothing can satisfy faith but God in Christ. But I find that this is not to be obtained without difficulty, without continual watchfulness, and aids from heaven to keep me losing sight of him.

Alas! In how many prayers have I been contented with little more than the mere performance, without any particular dealings with God at all. I see more danger in this every day. How often also am I found reading and studying the divine word without seeing any thing of the divine glory in it. Indeed, generally when this is the case, I feel earnest desires for divine illumination, without which nothing profits me. The light may shine; yet if it shines in darkness, darkness comprehendeth it not. Let us earnestly pray, that the Lord would keep the power of godliness alive and vigorous in our souls. Then our light will shine before men, and our Father will be glorified. An obscure old woman, that deals much with heaven, may glorify God more than many a gifted and shining preacher, who is a stranger to God in his soul. It signifies not where we are, nor in what sphere we move: but if we receive light from heaven, we shall shine to the glory of God; if we have salt in ourselves, we shall season the earth in some degree.

i. There is no date to this letter. It was probably written in the former part of the year 1784.

News of the Fellowship

At the end of July Mrs. May Rabey relinquished the “reigns” of the sisterhood. She had faithfully served the Lord for over 30 years booking speakers and often leading the meetings. She continues to attend and to support Mrs. Pfeiffer who has taken her place.

In September Mrs. Eileen Gwynne moved to the south of England to be near her daughter in her old age. Although only a member for the last 18 months, she endeared herself to the Church through her quiet commitment to the “means of grace.” We wish her God’s richest blessing on her move. Her address is:-

21, Homesteyne House,
Broadwater Road,
Worthing,
West Sussex BN14 8AJ.

It is with sadness that we report the death of another Church member Mrs. Gladys Charles. Gladys was born 1910 in Llangyfelach, near Morriston. She lived for the early part of her married life in Morriston and attended the Forward Movement hall. Her husband was a wheeler in the local tinsplate works. In 1959/60 Gladys and her husband moved to Trallwn. Her husband had been appointed as the Caretaker of Trallwn School and, consequently, she became the head cleaner.

It was on moving to Trallwn that she began to attend Peniel Green

during the days of the Rev. Luther Rees. She proved to be a faithful member attending the services on the Lord's Day and the mid-week meetings. She would pray in the prayer meeting.

Her bungalow was severely burnt through a firework being posted through her letter box. It was at the time that her health began to decline. She moved to Cwrt Clwdi Gwyn in Neath Abbey and then to Cardonnel Court, Skewen.

We especially remember her son Clive at this time and his wife, Glenys.

On the Lord's Day morning of October 15th, we received two new members into the Membership of the Church. Mrs. Dorothy Bunting (sister to Mrs. Margaret Ham) originates from Llansamlet and after years away has returned to "her roots". Her son, Steven works as an actuary in Reading living there during the week and coming home on the weekend. We pray that God would continue to bless them here at Peniel and continue to make them a blessing to us.

On Thursday 26th October we welcomed Mr. Chris Richards of the Protestant Alliance. Mr. Richards presented the classic reformed position on the anti-Christ. Expounding 2 Thessalonians 2 he equated the Papacy with the "man of sin" and "the son of perdition." The Church of Rome effectually usurps the place of the living God. This is seen in the titles the Roman Pontiff takes to himself. We

were challenged to think that if it isn't the Papacy what is it? It was good to see a number of friends join us from the Port Talbot area and beyond. Free literature was available and some books purchased.

Five children have completed the Peniel Green Verse Memorization scheme. Bibles have been presented to Zoë Coulson, Esther Munday, Rebecca and Amy Newton and Angharad Pfeiffer. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalm 119 v 11).

The Bonfire night meeting was held at Mr. & Mrs. Munday's in Carmel on 3rd November. The event was well attended with children from the Friday Night Youth Club and from Young Explorers. It was a chilly night so, all wrapped up, we went out to the back garden to watch the fireworks display. Contributions of fireworks were given by members of the church and we all enjoyed a dazzling display. Refreshments were provided afterwards in the warmth of the Munday's house. Dr. Munday then gave a talk on the background to Bonfire night and the reason we celebrate it. He then gave a gospel message based on Luke 3 v 22. We all enjoyed it very much.

THE CHURCH ANNUAL FELLOWSHIP TRIP

On Saturday the 2nd of September, Peniel Green chapel held its annual historical trip. Unfortunately the trip organizer Mr. Edward Williams, was poorly on the day so Mr Higham and Mr. Rowlands led the day. Mr. Higham was the speaker at all the venues; the topic this year was “William Williams Pant-y-Celyn” and vicar Rhys Pritchard. The trip took place in and around the town of Llandovery.

We began the trip with our first historical venue, the church of Llanfair ar y Bryn. This was an important church in both the lives of Williams’s and vicar Rhys Pritchard. On entering the churchyard we noticed the outline of a Roman fort. The fort itself is called ‘Loventium’ while Llandovery was called ‘Alabvm’. This in fact was one of the major forts in Roman Wales alongside Caerleon (Isca Silurum) and Caernarvon in the North (Segontium). The church itself was built on a previous Roman temple and has been restored a number of times throughout the ages. As we entered the church we saw in front of us to the left the font where Williams himself was baptized. There were also various windows in the chapel. There was the leper’s window on the right hand side of the church, which has an inscription, written on it, ‘car di’ which means Love thou. There was also a window in the front of the church with Pritchard and Williams depicted on either side. These are two of the greatest Welshmen in the history of Wales.

Firstly Mr Higham gave a short account of these men’s lives. Vicar Rhys Pritchard was born in the town of Llandovery. After a good education he graduated at Oxford University in the year 1602. He was also ordained in the same year and was appointed to the church in Llandovery. Overall he led a disgraceful life being a drunkard and a “man of the world”. His conversion was truly amazing. One night in the tavern he offered some gin to his pet goat who followed him everywhere. The goat drank the drink and became drunk. Pritchard saw his goat as a joke. Every night the men of the tavern had to take him back to his home in a wheelbarrow because he was so drunk . The following night, Pritchard offered the gin to the goat once again, yet he refused for he was wiser than the vicar. His eyes were opened to the many sins he had committed, that night he determined never to touch drink again. His eyes had been opened, he had been converted. After his conversion his life changed completely to a godly life, and definitely no drink! Pritchard through his preaching blessed by God, changed Llandovery, opening the eyes of the people to their sin. He was a Calvinist in doctrine and was truly inspired by the puritans. Later in his life he became Canon of St David’s cathedral. He had the idea of

composing simple rhymes with the gospel in them. He entitled them, 'Canwyll y Cymru' or 'The Welshman's Candle'. Here is one verse out of the book:

Mene Tekel Llandoverly town,
God has weighed you up and down,
Because of all your filth and sin,
His just revenge will soon begin.

The old Vicar, as he was known, died two years after the outbreak of the Civil War. He is believed to be buried in the grounds of St David's Cathedral.

Williams Pant y Celyn should be one of the most remembered of all Welshmen. Sadly many only acknowledge him in the singing of "Bread of Heaven" in Rugby matches. Born in 1717 at Cefn-Coed, Llanfair ar y Bryn, he was one of the greatest hymn writers the world had ever seen. The church at Llanfair was his local church. He abandoned his chances of becoming a physician after being converted under the preaching of Howell Harris in Talgarth. He became a deacon at Llanfihangel yet he was refused the priesthood for preaching too much outside the parish. He gave up the established church and devoted the rest of his life to Methodism. The great Calvinistic Methodist Movement of Wales had three of the greatest theologians of our time; Daniel Rowland the great preacher, Howell Harris and William Williams the hymn writer. In Llanfair ar y Bryn his famous desk where he probably wrote many of his hymns can still be seen. He wrote almost a thousand. He married in 1748 and settled in Pant-y-Celyn, where his descendants remain to this day. There we had a brief account of Pritchard and Pant-y-Celyn. We then left and headed back to Llandoverly for lunch.

After lunch we went to the farm of Mr. and Mrs. Williams. We saw Pantycelyn's tea set, clock which still works, and various other items of interest. We received a warm welcome there from the couple and we enjoyed our time. We then went down the road to the sister church of the church in Llandoverly. This was the church that held the Calvinist position during the split between the Arminians and Calvinists. We heard the second part of Mr. Higham's history and sang various hymns of Williams. We then returned to Llandoverly for tea. I think we all enjoyed the sandwiches and scones. We then had free time to wander before we set off back to Llansamlet.

Although it was a rainy day, I feel everyone enjoyed what was an interesting trip. It was a real blessing.

Nathan Munday.

Diary

Lord's Days:

December

3rd	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
10th	–	Pastor		
17th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - a.m
24th	–	Pastor		
31st	–	Pastor	–	Rev. R. B. Higham

January

7th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
14th	–	Pastor		
21st	–	Rev. A McNabb, Great Bridgeford, Staffs.		
28th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - a.m

February

4th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
11th	–	Pastor		
18th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - a.m
25th	–	Pastor		

Forthcoming:

Lord's Day 17th December - Open Sunday School, Rev. C. Jones

Thursday 21st December - Christmas Gospel Service
Rev. D. Morris

Christmas Day 25th December - Morning Service 10:00am

Lord's Day 31st December - After Church fellowship

**The Church now has a website! It can be found at:
www.penielgreenchurch.org.uk**

A Touch of Heaven

(This edited address was originally given by Max Munday at an after-Church fellowship meeting at Peniel Green Evangelical Church, Llansamlet on the 2nd of July, 2006).

Rev. Neil Pfeiffer (The present minister of the Church): "Our brother is going to be speaking about the blessing of God here in the 1980's. We are not doing this with any sense of highlighting man's glory but God's glory and this to stir us up to seek God's blessing afresh in the present time."

Introduction

I am not going to give to you a detailed history of what happened here in the 1980's. I think that would be tiresome. What I am going to try and do is to give to you a bit of a 'Snapshot'. In a way, I am not the best person to give you a history of the time because I was not here at the start. I was not converted until 1984 and God had already saved many people in this Church prior to that year, the period '79 to '84. The other issue is that if you have read books where God has visited individual Churches or where God has visited a nation, you will know that these things are better felt than told. It is very, very difficult to describe what happens. It is very difficult to know God's ways and means, they are just way above our heads. So, what you are

going to get here is a little bit of a 'snap-shot' or 'Cooke's tour' of what I saw when I came down here in 1984 and a little bit of background about the Church. I am not going to go back to 1885 when the Church was first established!

The Background To The Blessing

We look back to 1904/1905 when God really came to Wales in a very, very powerful way during the Revival but it is important to remember that God has visited individual Churches and individual areas in the period after these two years. For example, many people were saved in Sandfields, Aberavon under the ministry of the late Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. There was blessing in West Wales in the period immediately before the second world war. There was blessing after the war with the setting up of the Evangelical Movement of Wales. God has been good to 'our' nation. We may not have had that mighty outpouring of God's Spirit that we saw right at the beginning of the twentieth century but God has still been in touch with our land. We have a lot to be thankful for although there are so many Churches shutting around us.

What about the early '80's in this area? I think that it would be fair to say that when I came down here from Lancaster the Reformed position was a great deal stronger than it is now although I am not saying that a Reformed position is a necessity before God visits a Church. There were a ring

of strong Churches in this area and not just Peniel Green, with growing, solid congregations and Reformed and strong Biblically minded ministers.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones died in 1981. His death marked the end of an era. He has been described as a 'minister's minister' Many of the men that he influenced are now beginning to disappear 'out of the frame' during the '80's and '90's They have either died or gone into retirement. Since Lloyd-Jones' death there has been a slippage away from Reformed teaching and that was something that he foresaw. In his later years, he anticipated that there would be a falling away from the things of God.

He never saw a Revival on the proportions that were seen in 1904/1905 but he did see God's blessing in individual Churches. Peniel Green was not the only Church in this area that saw spiritual growth during that time. Bethel, Gorseinon saw spiritual growth. Heath Evangelical Church, Cardiff, saw growth during the late '80s and '90s. Other Churches were also seeing strong spiritual progression. Prior to the arrival of the Rev. R. B. Higham, our previous minister, the Church here had seen several faithful Gospel-preaching ministers. His two predecessors were both evangelical, knowing battle and blessing and seeing conversions in this Church. Mr. Higham came here in 1979. Dr. Lloyd-Jones preached in the induction/ordination service. One of our current members, Terry Norris, was saved during that service while Dr. Lloyd-Jones was preaching. At the time, Lloyd-

Jones felt that it was a 'seal' on the work here.

Then, what about the Church in the late '70's? Obviously, I was not here but from my conversations with those of you who were, there were some faithful members here. There were some faithful deacons on the diaconate. The Church, I think that it would be fair to say, was ageing somewhat. It was also a 'mixed multitude.' There were some people who undoubtedly knew the Lord. There were others who were not clear at all on the things of God. But, between 1980 and around about 1986, God did a work here. I need to qualify this a little bit. I don't know precisely when it ended. I think God is still doing a work here. I think God is still being very good to us in giving us a minister at this time. When I look at what has happened in Churches around us, many of them have not got ministers and many have drifted away. So, we have a lot to be thankful to God for.

The People Who Were Blessed

I arrived here in 1984 What did I see? What impressed itself on my mind? I am going to try and answer these two questions under just a couple of headings. The first one that I want us to think about is the people who I saw. We are looking at symptoms rather than causes. I have marked out here just a little bit of Scripture in the Book of Esther. You might remember that in the Book of Esther Haman hatched a plot to destroy the Jews. It

was overturned by God's good hand. The Jews had been under very serious threat but, after it had been turned around through the good offices of Mordecai and Queen Esther, there is this verse in Esther chapter nine and verse sixteen, 'The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honour.' My feeling is that this best describes the sort of people I came into contact with here in 1984 and, in particular, they were a people who had light. I first came into contact with the Christians here at the Aberystwyth English conference in 1984.

There was a real brightness, sharpness and a light about the people. There was a measure of happiness and contentedness that you see in newly converted people. You don't see it much today because we are not seeing as many conversions. A lot of people of different ages had been converted and that light was shining out of them. You must have seen it. When people are saved, that first couple of days, it may be weeks, there is a light. You know when you meet them that something has happened. There is a new light shining there.

What did I also see? I saw a cleanness and a great spirit of community. Two areas in particular really saw God's hand upon them – Birchgrove and Frederick Place. God's hand was on those two areas and His blessing seemed to spread out from them. What happened? This is difficult to describe. The only way that I can put it is that in those places the Gospel was 'gossiped.' That is the only way that I can describe

it. The Gospel was gossiped in a very natural way. It was almost like there was a chain-reaction. It was very natural. There was no formal mission in these places. People gossiped the Gospel either in their daily work or with their neighbours and it just trickled out from these areas. A spill-over effect. I think that it would be fair to say that all of us spoke a lot more about God then than we do now!

What did I see practically? I saw people helping one another. There was a lot of sharing people going out of their way to do things for one another. It was very similar to what you read about in the beginning of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. The spirit of sharing, doing, and having all things common. It was a form of 'Gospel-snowballing.' It was not just local because the Gospel message went out far and wide. There were Chinese students who were converted that consequently returned back to China. People were saved in the Midlands and in the South-West of England as the result of what happened here. So, the Gospel 'feelers' went out quite a long way not just here. There is a big challenge to those of us who were around then to ask ourselves honestly whether we are like that now. Are we as zealous now as we were then? Sadly, I don't see the things happening then happening now. Many of us have suffered the 'tares syndrome' the 'thorns' have grown up and 'choked' us in our lives.

The Services That Were A Blessing

I now come to the Church services. They were very much the same then as they are now. We had the same sort of services and emphases as we do now. However, I would focus on the prayer meeting. Back in the '80's there was a much greater urgency in the prayer meeting. A lot more of us prayed. People were specifically mentioned and targeted. There were a lot more tears. In '84, '85 and '86 many left the prayer meetings on a Wednesday night not getting a chance to 'break in' because so many people wanted to get to the throne of grace. I remember that several times before a prayer meeting Mr. Higham had to appeal to people to be mindful of others wanting to get into the 'telephone box.' So many people wanted to pray. There was a far greater sense of anticipation. People were mentioned and you saw them being saved. It is a great fillip to more prayer when you see people's prayers being answered and people being saved. It urges you to even more prayer. There were some meetings here when God came very, very close. There were some prayer meetings that you went out of and you knew that God had 'peeped in at the lattice' that night or 'put His hand through the door.'

The other meetings that were very blessed at that time and saw people converted were the Bible studies. I remember that when I first came down here, Mr. Higham was going through the Book of the Song of Solomon. Not an easy Book for people to study who

are newly converted, but souls were saved as he worked his way through it. The meetings were packed with people wanting to hear about the Song of Solomon. The other Bible study in the Church Manse on Sunday afternoon was also very full. What was the impression given to me? Well, of a lot of young converts who didn't know anything about the Bible just wanting it opened up. From my own point of view, I just wanted to know what these Books meant. What did Leviticus mean? I remember the studies on Leviticus and the Tabernacle. I found it quite amazing and I am sure that it was the same with the other people that were saved at the same time. We wanted to know what was in these Books. There was a hunger for the Word of God. To see the links between the Old Testament and the New. You had a hungry people who wanted to move from the 'milk' to the 'meat' of the Word. We had a real anxiety to learn about the things of God.

The Sunday services were also very similar to what they are today. We can be very thankful to God that our Sunday services are still very similar because in many of the Churches that are dotted around us the Sunday services have changed immeasurably. We had the same kind of pattern of worship but my impression was that somehow we seemed to pack a lot more in. We were a lot more zealous for the things of God on Sunday. I am not going to speak about the Children's work but there was a lot of physical effort involved with organising the

children. There were a lot of kids coming in as well.

The Evidences Of Blessing

First of all, there were some surprising and extraordinary conversions. People who you thought would never be saved were wrought upon by the Spirit of God. We have a sovereign God who can save who He will. There was a surprising conversion in Frederick Place. I am sure that my brother-in-law, Tom Hill, would not mind me classifying him as a surprising case! It had a big influence amongst the unconverted.

Secondly, back-sliders, who had been saved ten, fifteen or twenty years previously returned to God.

Thirdly, there was forgiveness - such an important thing. For example, before Mr. Higham came here there was a 'spit' in the Church. There had been a 'falling out' between the previous minister and the deacons and the former had started another local Church. When God came to our Church this other smaller work had to close down because they lost their property. Although it was a bit of a battle, our deacons opened their arms to this other returning fellowship. That, more than anything, knowing the old deacons here, was a real evidence that God was working in this place.

Now let me give to you another instance or evidence of the work of God at this time. Heath Evangelical Church, Cardiff ran a Christian camp in Truro in the 1980's. Many of us used

to get involved in them. In the camp of 1985, Mr. Brian Higham was the Chaplain and he was assisted by Chris Hess and one or two others. It was a really hard week. You know what teenagers can be like! There were quite a few 'battles of wills.' The devil was active and a many of us felt it. We even had a special meeting in the week to discuss all the disciplinary problems and the devil getting in. On the Saturday night, Mr. Higham had to leave because he was preaching in the Heath on the Sunday so on the Saturday night Chris Hess preached. I started the service and then handed over to him. After the meeting, I drove back to Cardiff one of the biggest regrets of my life, because that night God came to that camp in a very powerful way. There were prayer meetings in the dormitories. There was singing for much of the night. Most of the fifteen to twenty youngsters that were saved that night are still going on with the Lord and have a very strong testimony for Him.

Fifthly, there was a lot of reading of good Christian books and literature going on. Everybody was reading. They were reading a lot of material.

Sixthly, on the negative side, a good evidence that God is working in a place is attacks on the Minister from within and without the Church. I can remember how often a very blessed Sunday was followed by an attack first thing on the Monday morning. There is always a Satanic fight-back. It happens in Revival also, indeed, more so. Where God works there will always be a Satanic back-lash. I am not going to

dwell too much on what happened but there were many instances when Satan got back in very quickly trying to regain lost ground. I was much more conscious then of the presence of evil, bad things taking place and things happening that cut light across the preached Word. A heightened sense of good and bad things comes when God is blessing a Church. Therefore, when God is blessing a Church, when a minister is seeing people saved it is not always a good time for him. It can be quite the opposite and for his family. You have got to put on the whole armour of God because you know that the devil will be trying to regain lost ground.

The End Of The Blessing?

When did all this end? I don't know. I believe that God is still blessing our Church. Eventually, problems did occur. We saw two 'splits' in the Church where some of the diaconate and some of the members went their own way. Many who walked then are not walking with God any more. Many that were blessed have fallen back into what I can only describe as very spiritually sedentary ways.

In order to give to you a flavour of what happened at the time I am now going to read to you extracts from two letters. My younger sister, Penny, was converted during this period. She had come under conviction of sin when she had come to visit Val, another of my sisters, in Frederick Place. Obviously, God had started to work in her life.

This extract is taken from one her letters dated the 10th of October, 1985:

'I have something that is all at once very exciting and very serious to tell you both. My first experience of it was after our first visit to Val after her conversion when I realised that there is a whole world lying before me which until then I have been unaware of. Since then, as you probably realise, I have periodically sought the Lord and then fallen by the wayside. However, over the past few months I have become increasingly aware of the Lord tapping me on the shoulder and calling me to Him. Never have I felt the call so strongly as I do at this moment of writing to you but I am sure that He is directing me in this. I write because I know that you will understand what I am saying. I am all at once in a state of confusion and in a state of being very close to being converted, I think. God feels very close and very remote all at once. I think that I can truly say that I now believe in God but I am still unable to say that I know the Lord and that I know Jesus Christ as my Saviour.'

Then, exactly a month later, Sunday the 10th of November, 1985, she wrote the following to me from Exeter where she was at college:

'I really don't know where to start or what to say in this letter. It is so difficult to express what I feel in words. Simply, I am a Christian! Praise God for what He has done! I thank Him with all my heart! At the moment I hardly dare believe it but I do know that I put my trust in the Lord Jesus to lead me on. All this has not happened

in a flash but it has happened. It has been a slow realisation of the Gospel and all that it means. I went round to talk to my Pastor and he explained the Gospel to me like I had never heard it before I thank the Lord for answering my needs by sending me so many people to show me the way. I thank you for all your prayers. I know how important these prayers are now. I thank the Lord for all the support that He has given through His people. I must admit that Thursday and Friday were the blackest days that I have known. I could not work it all out. Then yesterday, around lunchtime, it came to me that all the worrying in my head about theories and theology were useless. It was my sin that was blocking the Lord from moving to my heart from my head. Since then, very slowly, things have all started to fall into place. I knew that what I had spent so long praying for was proof and who am I to look for proof I wanted the Lord to show Himself to me so that I may know that He was alive. How proud and self-righteous have I been! I know now in my heart that the Spirit of God has put all this into perspective. I know Jesus died for me and why He died for me and I know that He is alive today and I hope one day to see Him in glory.' That is a bit of the spirit of the times.

Conclusion

People often talk about times when they feel very alive. I am mad keen on the hills. Sometimes on the hills you do get a day that is pretty

unforgettable. You start early in the morning and you are low and in the clouds and it is a bit drizzly. Your wife has not put enough food in your lunch box! It is a bit grey and dank. Suddenly, you see the sun start to filter through the clouds and it looks like you are going to climb out of them and you reach a place where you come out of the cloud. It is crisp. It is colder and the clouds are all spread out before you. You are kicking up the dew with your feet. It is absolutely still and you feel very alive. I think that, as a Church in the 1980's, we came out of the clouds for a little while. I think that I felt as alive in the mid-1980's as I have ever done. I was spiritually alive and physically alive and that was what I saw in other people too when I came down here. I saw the light that you see in a people who are fully alive and not half dead. The challenge is that we really have got to seek God again because obviously, in God's economy, that was only a very slight touch of God's hand to see those people converted over those years. We must pray that God would visit our Church again, bless the preaching of our Minister and that we would see people, many people, saved again through the faithful preaching of God's Word.

Max Munday

What is Evangelical Calvinism?

By Malcolm H. Watts

At the time of the Reformation, biblical truth was rediscovered. It was not long, however, before error began to challenge Reformed theology. James Arminius (1560-1609), who had studied at Geneva under Theodore Beza, became Professor of Theology at the University of Leyden, and began to disseminate views which were at variance with the teaching of the Reformed Churches and their Confessions. He succeeded in influencing many; and in 1610, one year after his death, his followers met in the city of Gouda, in the West Netherlands, to draw up a document called 'The Remonstrance' (i.e. The Protest). It set forth their views under five points - 'The Five Arminian Articles'.

This was recognized at once to be a serious departure; and in 1618 a Synod was convened in Dordrecht, a city in the south of the Netherlands, not far from Rotterdam. There were 84 delegates at this Synod: 58 from the Netherlands and 26 from other countries, including Great Britain, Germany, and Switzerland. It began on November 13, 1618, and on April 23, 1619, the Synod approved the famous Canons of Dort which restated the five

essential points of Calvinism. These are commonly referred to by the mnemonic TULIP: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints.

1. Total Depravity

ARMINIANISM: Everyone who hears the gospel receives grace sufficient for regeneration. If, therefore, a person is not regenerated, it is because, by an act of his own free-will, he refuses to cooperate with God.

DORT: 'All men are conceived in sin and are born as children of wrath, incapable of any saving good, inclined to evil, dead in sins, and slaves of sin. Apart from the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, moreover, they are neither willing nor able to return to God, to reform their depraved nature, or to prepare themselves for its reformation.'

SCRIPTURE: 'As many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God' (Jn 1:13); 'He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy...So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy' (Rom 9:15,16) 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures' (James 1:18; See also: Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:14).

2. Unconditional Election

ARMINIANISM: Divine election is prompted by God foreseeing that certain persons will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

DORT: 'The election has taken place, not on the basis of foreseen faith,...but to faith...Election therefore is the fountain of every saving good, from which flow faith, holiness, and other saving gifts, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects...The cause of this gracious election is only the good pleasure of God.'

SCRIPTURE: 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed' (Acts 13:48); 'The children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth; it was said unto her (Rebecca), the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated' (Rom 9:11-13); 'He hath chosen us in him (in Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will' (Eph 1:4,5; See also: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 1 Timothy 1:9).

3. Limited Atonement

ARMINIANISM: Christ died for everyone, making it possible for all to be saved; but his redemption only becomes effective if men believe.

DORT: 'God willed that Christ through the blood of his cross (by which he confirmed the new covenant) should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe nation, and tongue all those and only those who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and were given to him by the Father.'

SCRIPTURE: 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep' (Jn 10:11); 'Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood' (Acts 20:28); 'And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy...for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation' (Rev 5:9; See also: Matthew 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27).

4. Irresistible Grace

ARMINIANISM: Men have the power to resist grace and successfully to resist it.

DORT: 'Regeneration is by no means brought about by outward teaching or preaching, by moral persuasion, or by such a method of working that after God has done his work, it remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not regenerated, converted or not converted. It is, however, clearly a supernatural, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, marvellous, secret, and inexpressible work, which, according to the Scriptures inspired by the author of regeneration, is not inferior in power to creation or the resurrection of the dead. Hence, all those in whose hearts Gods works in

this amazing way are certainly, unfailingly, and effectually regenerated and do actually believe.' SCRIPTURE: 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me' (Jn 6:37) 'Whom he did foreknew (foreloved, as in Jer 1:5; Amos 3:2 etc), he also did predestinate...Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified' (Rom 8:30); 'God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he love us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ' (Eph 2:4,5; See also: John 6:44,45,65; Titus 3:5).

5. Perseverance of the Saints

ARMINIANISM: It is possible to relapse from a state of grace and actually to become devoid of grace, so that salvation is lost.

DORT: 'Because of (the) remains of indwelling sin, and also because of the temptations of the world and of Satan, those who have been converted would not be able to remain stedfast in that grace if they were left to their own resources. But God is faithful, who mercifully confirms them in the grace once conferred upon them, and powerfully keeps them in that grace to the end'.

SCRIPTURE: 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish' (Jn 10:27-28); 'Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be

saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life' (Rom 5:9,10); 'Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ' (Phil 1:6; See also: Jn 4:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24; 1 Peter 1:5).

Spurgeon declared Calvinism to be 'the revealed truth of God' and 'the religion of God's own church'. In 1860, preaching at Exeter Hall, the Strand, he boldly said, 'This may seem to you to be of little consequence, but it really is a matter of life and death. I would plead with every Christian - think it over, my dear brother. When some of us preach Calvinism, and some Arminianism, we cannot both be right; it is no use trying to think we can be - "Yes", and "No", cannot both be true...Truth does not vacillate like a pendulum which shakes backwards and forwards. It is not like the comet, which is here, there, and everywhere. One must be right; the other wrong'.

The Bible must determine it, and it does: Calvinism is right and Arminianism is wrong - totally wrong. The Lord grant to each of us a true, heart-felt conviction about it and may we ever glory in the truth of God's sovereign and free grace!

What is a Calvinist

The calvinist is the man who has seen God and who, having seen God in His glory, is filled on the one hand with a sense of unworthiness to stand in God's sight as a creature, and much more as a sinner and on the other hand, with adoring wonder that nevertheless this God is a God who receives sinners. He who believes in God without reserve is determined that God should be God to him in all his thinking, feeling and willing: in the entire compass of his life activities, intellectual, moral and spiritual; throughout all his individual, social and religious relations is by force of that strictest of all logic that presides over the outworking of all principles into thought and life by the very necessity of the case a calvinist.

Six Short Rules for Young Christians (*By Brownlow North*)

1. Never neglect daily private prayer; and when you pray, remember that God is present, and that He hears your prayers. (Heb. 11:6).

2. Never neglect daily private Bible reading; and when you read remember that God is speaking to you, and that you are to believe and act upon what He says. I believe all backsliding begins with the neglect of these two rules. (John 5:39).

3. Never let a day pass without trying to do something for Jesus. Every night reflect on what Jesus has done for you, and then ask yourself, "What am I doing for Him"? (Matt. 5: 13-16)

4. If you are in doubt as to a thing being right or wrong, go to your room and kneel down and ask God's blessing on it. (Col. 3:17). If you cannot do this, it is wrong. (Roms. 16:23).

5. Never take your Christianity from Christians, or argue that because such and such people do so and so, therefore, you may. (2 Cor. 10:12). You are to ask yourself, "How would Christ act in my place"? And strive to follow Him (John 10:27)

6. Never believe what you feel, if it contradicts God's Word. Ask yourself, "Can what I feel be true if God's Word is true"? And if BOTH cannot be true, believe God and make your own heart the liar. (Roms. 3:4. 1 John 5:10-11).

EPILOGUE

PHILIPPIANS CH 4 vs 6&7

If anyone had an excuse for worrying it was the Apostle Paul. His life was in danger at this time as he was a prisoner of Rome. His trial was about to take place and death was imminent. He was chained to a Roman soldier and he was not able to preach the Gospel in public, we can only imagine what frustration it must have been for the worlds' greatest Church planter.

Did he fret and fume? Did he give way to anxious care? Did he worry? No! on the contrary, Paul overflowed with joy and peace. He knew that even the most adverse circumstances would fall out for the furtherance of the Gospel under the overruling hand of a Sovereign God.

Paul did not worry, instead he takes time to explain to us the secret of victory over anxious care, in a word, the antidote to worry is prayer.

We have three things in our text, **a principle, a precept and a promise**

1. **The principle** Be anxious for nothing - these word echo something our Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount--Matthew Ch.6 v25 " that we take no thought for our life." This is no advocacy of carelessness, the Christian must be a caring person, but we are warned against anxious thought or painful worry about life's daily concerns. Nothing is to be allowed to disturb our hearts and our peace; this is blessedly possible when we commit everything to God in prayer and supplication. To say to someone, "don't worry" is in itself a counsel of despair, but with prayer and supplication it becomes a glorious possibility. We should be careful for nothing, but prayerful for everything.

2. **The Precept** "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer" Paul commands us, "don't worry, but pray, the answer to care is prayer". In the epistle of James ch 5 v 13 he says " Is any afflicted ? let him pray" Notice the contrast in the text, Nothing - Everything. The reason why we are to be anxious for nothing is that in everything we are able to come to God in prayer. If we are able to bring every conceivable thing to the Throne of Grace, then there is no conceivable thing about which we need to continue to be anxious.

Paul commands us to pray to God in a certain way, in effect he says, "let your prayer begin with God. Go to Him with the spirit of worshipful adoration, praying out of a deep sense of need, specifying every detail of your problem. So

often in prayer we are so vague that we aim at nothing and we hit nothing. We are encouraged to bring to God and big and the little things of life.

We are to do this with a spirit of thanksgiving, this underlines the fact that there is always something to give thanks for. Even when praying for very urgent concerns it shouldn't be long before we are remembering our mercies and the many times that God has helped us and answered our prayers in the past.

**“Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”**

There is nothing more calculated to reassure us than the remembrance that we have a living God who answers prayer.

3. **The Promise** This is a promise of peace. If we pray in this definite and specific way, then something wonderful happens. God does something to us and in us, we experience the gift of peace, it comes when we have committed everything to God. We need to realise that before our prayers are answered **we** are answered . Even when God answers with a "no" rather than a "yes" and the actual problem is **not** resolved, we still enjoy the peace of God because it comes through submission of the heart to the good and acceptable will of God.

When it comes to the heart it is an experience beyond anything merely natural either in quality or extent, for "it passeth all understanding".

This is something that Christians have experienced again and again with amazed wonderment. In the words of an old Scotsman "better felt that telt."

In times of anxiety and distress - a power beyond all comprehension has come to take possession of their hearts and stand guard over them. This is the force of the word "keep" (verse 7). It is a picture of a Roman soldier guarding the walls of a city, acting as a wall of fire around us in our hour of need.

It is the promise of God coming to assure us that "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." (Isaiah 43:2). We are commanded to pray in this way.

Let the peace of God rule your heart and mind

Rev. Colin Jones