

Calvary Protestant Evangelical Free Church

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CALVARY CHRONICLE

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Excuses For Not Praying

Excerpt from *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers* by D.A. Carson

I Am Too Busy

Lillian Guild tells an amusing story of an occasion when she and her husband were driving along and happened to notice a late-model Cadillac with its hood up, parked at the side of the road. Its driver appeared somewhat perplexed and agitated. Mrs. Guild and her husband pulled over to see if they could offer assistance. The stranded driver hastily and somewhat sheepishly explained that he had known when he left home that he was rather low on fuel, but he had been in a great hurry to get to an important business meeting so he had not taken time to fill up his tank. The Cadillac needed nothing more than refueling. The Guilds happened to have a spare gallon of fuel with them, so they emptied it into the thirsty Cadillac, and told the other driver of a service station a few miles down the road. Thanking them profusely, he sped off.

Twelve miles or so later, they saw the same car. Hood up, stranded at the side of the road. The same driver, no less bemused than the first time, and even more agitated, was pathetically grateful when they pulled over again. You guessed it: he was in such a hurry for his business meeting that he had decided to skip the service station and press on in the dim hope that the gallon he had received would take him to his destination.

It is hard to believe anyone would be so stupid, until we remember that is exactly how many of us go about the business of Christian living. We are so busy pressing on to the next item on the agenda that we choose not to pause for fuel. Sadly, Christian leaders may be among the worst offenders. Faced with constant and urgent demands, they find it easy to neglect their calling to the ministry of the Word and prayer because they are so busy. Indeed, they are

tempted to invest all of their activity with transcendental significance, so that although their relative prayerlessness quietly gnaws away at the back of their awareness, the noise and pain can be swamped by the sheer importance of all the things they are busily doing.

I Feel Too Dry Spiritually To Pray

Hidden behind this excuse are two presuppositions that are really quite monstrous. The first is that the acceptability of my approach to God in prayer ought to be tied to how I feel. But is God especially impressed with us when we feel joyful or carefree or well rested or pious? Is not the basis of any Christian's approach to the heavenly Father the sufficiency of Christ's mediating work on our behalf? Is not this a part of what we mean when we pray "in Jesus' name"? Are we not casting a terrible slur on the cross when we act as if the usefulness or acceptability of our prayers turns on whether we feel full or dry? True, when we feel empty and dispirited we may have to remind ourselves a little more forcefully that the sole reason why God accepts us is the grace that he has bestowed upon us in the person and work of His Son. But that is surely better than giving the impression that we are somehow more fit to pray when we feel good.

The second unacceptable presupposition behind this attitude is that my obligation to pray is somehow diminished when I do not feel like praying. This is to assign to my mood or my feelings the right to determine what I ought to do. And that, of course, is unbearably self-centered. It means that I, and I alone, determine what is my duty, my obligation. In short, it means that I am my own god. It is to act as if the Bible never says, "*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer*" (Romans 12:12, emphasis added).

(continued on next page)

I Feel No Need To Pray

This excuse is a trifle trickier than the first two. Few of us are so crass that we self-consciously reason, "I am too important to pray. I am too self-confident to pray. I am too independent to pray." Instead, what happens is this: Although abstractly I may affirm the importance of prayer, in reality I may treat prayer as important only in the lives of other people, especially those whom I judge to be weaker in character, more needy, less competent, less productive. Thus, while affirming the importance of prayer, I may not feel deep need for prayer in my own life. I may be getting along so well without much praying that my self-confidence is constantly being reinforced. That breeds yet another round of prayerlessness.

What is God's response? If Christians who shelter beneath such self-assurance do not learn better ways by listening to the Scriptures, God may address them in the terrible language of tragedy. We serve a God who delights to disclose himself to the contrite, to the lowly of heart, to the meek. When God finds us so puffed up that we do not feel our need for him, it is an act of kindness on his part to take us down a peg or two; it would be an act of judgment to leave us in our vaulting self-esteem.

I Am Too Bitter To Pray

We cannot live long in this world without coming across injustice, chronic lack of fairness. Many of us accept such sin with reasonable equanimity, reasoning that it is, after all, a fallen world. But when the injustice or unfairness is directed against us, our reaction may be much less philosophical. Then we may nurture a spirit of revenge, or at least of bitterness, malice, and gossip. Such sins in turn assure that our prayers are never more than formulaic; eventually such sin may lead to chronic prayerlessness. "How can I be expected to pray when I have suffered so much?" "Don't talk to me about praying for my enemies: I know who has kept me from being promoted."

Life itself is consumed by the petty assessment of how well you are perceived by those around you. In this morass of self-pity and resentment, real prayer is squeezed out. In other words, many of us do not want

to pray because we know that disciplined, biblical prayer would force us to eliminate sin that we rather cherish. It is very hard to pray with compassion and zeal for someone we much prefer to resent.

I Am Too Ashamed To Pray

Shame encourages us to hide from the presence of God; shame squirrels behind a masking foliage of pleasantries while refusing to be honest; shame fosters flight and escapism; shame engenders prayerlessness.

We cannot successfully hide from God anyway, "*for a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths*" (Proverbs 5:21). "*Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account*" (Hebrews 4:13). But if it is futile to run from God, our sense of shame can scarcely be an adequate ground to excuse our prayerlessness. Rather, it ought to be a goad that drives us back to the only one who can forgive us and grant us utter absolution, back to the freedom of conscience and the boldness in prayer that follow in the wake of the joyful knowledge that we have been accepted by a holy God because of his grace.

I Am Content With Mediocrity

Some Christians want enough of Christ to be identified with him, but not enough to be seriously inconvenienced; they genuinely cling to basic Christian orthodoxy, but do not want to engage in serious Bible study; they value moral probity, especially of the public sort, but do not engage in war against inner corruptions; they fret over the quality of the preachers sermon, but do not worry much over the quality of their own prayer life. Such Christians are content with mediocrity.

God doesn't demand hectic and frenetic schedules; he only wants his people to know him more intimately. The apostle Paul found that spiritual closeness in his own fellowship with the Father. Christians today can still achieve the confidence Paul enjoyed by following his life-changing principles and searching for a deeper devotional experience.



THANKSGIVING DINNER & SERVICE

Thanksgiving is a time to count our blessings and give thanks to the Lord for all He has done for us - even though we should be giving thanks each and every day during the year.

The church family and friends are invited to get together for our annual Thanksgiving dinner and service which will be held

Sunday, November 24th.

The dinner will start promptly at 5:15 p.m., followed by a worship service at 6:30 p.m., then dessert to top off the evening. The church will be providing ham as its main course for the dinner. Those attending are asked to bring a side dish such as a vegetable, potato dish, type of salad, or a dessert (pies are the preferable choice).

Please be sure to let us know you are coming as there is typically quite a crowd that attends (we want to make sure enough tables and chairs are set up). A sign-up sheet is available at the church, you can call the church office at 516-223-4070, or call Barbara directly at 516-223-4210.

Come join with us as we celebrate Thanksgiving together and praise God and give thanks for His infinite blessings. *"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever."* (Psalm 107:1)



Collection For Men

Last year the men at Recovery House were so appreciative of the Christmas gifts they received from the church family that the Ladies Bible Study once again has decided to collect items for the men.



The following is just a sample list of items the men can always use: new or gently used clothing such as pants, flannel shirts, t-shirts, socks, shoes, belts; outer clothing including coats, gloves, hats, scarves; example of toiletries including soaps, shampoos, combs, tooth brush, tooth paste, razors, aftershave (please be sure aftershave does not contain alcohol); stationery items including pens, notebooks, highlighters; and miscellaneous items such as mugs, cups, thermos, and umbrellas.

If you would like to share your blessings with someone who is in need, please bring the items to the church and place them in the designated area marked "collection for men." The ladies will prepare the "Christmas Gift Bags" and have them delivered before Christmas. If you have any questions, you can speak to Kathy Guerin, Patti Senita, or Barbara Lucchesi.

DECEMBER

SENIORS LUNCHEON

The last two months of the year usually fly by as there are so many holiday activities and events to participate in. Be sure to note on your calendar that the next Seniors Luncheon will be held

Tuesday, December 3rd.

The luncheon starts at 12:00 noon and will include roast beef, potatoes, vegetable, and a cake for dessert.

We invite our seniors to celebrate the Christmas season with us. Enjoy lunch while listening to some holiday music, bring along your Christmas spirit for a sing-a-long of favorite carols, and we encourage everyone to dress festively for the occasion. Pastor Lucchesi will be there to present a holiday message, and plans are being arranged for special entertainment.

As with any meal at Calvary, please let us know you are coming by signing the sign-up sheet at the church, or call the church office at 516-223-4070.

MISSIONS CORNER

UPDATE ON HAITI MISSION

MISSIONS CORNER

Pastor Steve Exantus, from Reaching Haiti 4 Christ Ministries (RH4CM), recently sent an e-mail to the Missions Committee with a greeting, photos, and an update on the Bombardopolis church/school building.

Hello Calvary Church: May God be with you.

I was in Haiti in September able to attend the first day of school in our new, unfinished church/school building. I give thanks to God! After many years under the tent (since hurricane Matthew in 2012) the Lord allows us to be in, under a roof, and protected by walls, this year. Thank you for all support coming from Calvary.

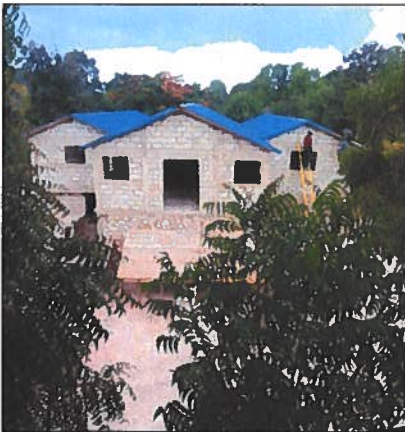
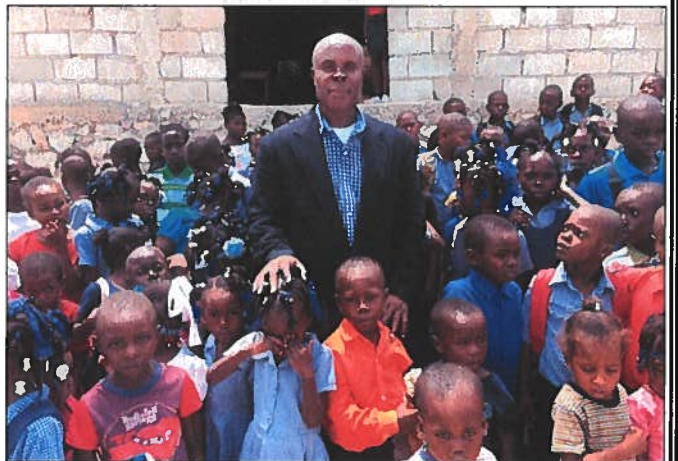
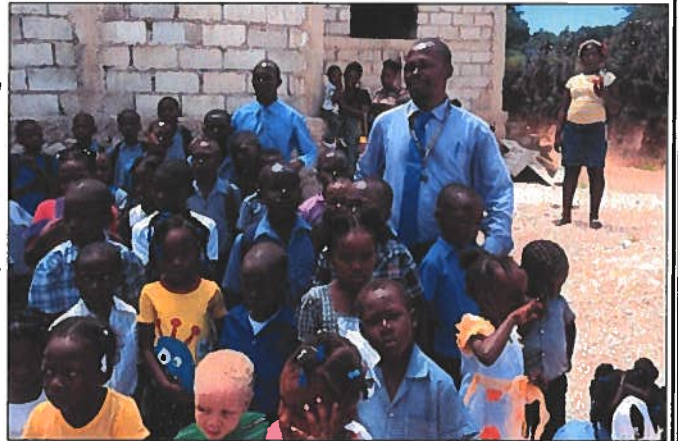
*Sincerely yours in Christ,
Pastor Steve Exantus*

For almost three years Calvary has been helping to support RH4CM after their church plant and school were damaged from Hurricane Matthew. Following the hurricane, the island of Haiti was also hit hard with an earthquake and landslides as well.

RH4CM vision statement reads:

"We envision a Haiti with strong, educated, and healthy youth. Young people who will dream dreams and have visions about what their community can do to build a better Haiti. A Haiti full of tangible opportunities for everyone. Opportunities for health, economic stability, food security, and ultimately spiritual contentment."

Please pray for Reaching Haiti 4 Christ Ministries, the people in Haiti, and for the children attending the school in Bombardopolis.



To learn more about
RH4CM, visit
www.hope4haiti.net.



PASTOR APPRECIATION

October is designated as Pastor Appreciation Month. The church family celebrated the occasion together after the service on Sunday, October 27th.

A pot-luck luncheon was held with a variety of sandwiches and salads. Tim had everyone laughing with bloopers Pastor Charlie has said during the service, and also whimsical comments he heard from people during Bible studies.

Numerous people stood and personally expressed their appreciation for Pastor Charlie: Magalie, Steve, Tony, Sarabeth, David, Giselle, Charlie H., and Ralph spoke. They all noted how Pastor Charlie loves the Lord, cares deeply for those in the church family, is a prayer warrior, and teaches from God's Word.

We thank everyone for arranging the luncheon, bringing food, and for participating. Pastor Charlie felt so blessed.

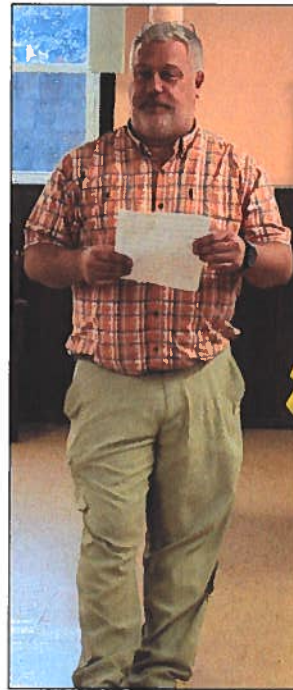


Above - pictured left to right: Colleen, Kathy, Denise, and Pastor Charlie. Below - pictured left is Tim, pictured right is Tony D., who pastor has known for over 30 years. Pastor calls Tony our resident "muscle man and tough guy."



Above - the Sandoval and Corcoran families getting ready for lunch. Below/left - Steve expressing his gratitude to the pastor with his nephew Ronnie looking on.

Below/right - Magalie showing her gratitude to Pastor Charlie.



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Baldwin, NY 11510

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BIRTHDAYS

NOVEMBER

2nd Charlie Hetzel Jr.
3rd Courtney Gross
3rd Lou Kelting
4th Ronnie Roddy Jr.
7th Sherry Valentine
8th Bridget Dowling
8th Paul Nembhard
9th Zavier Foster
9th Paula Kulla
12th Kirk Nehring
18th Roy Seymour
19th Shannon & Shelby
Verity
20th Florence Emeigh
20th Nadeline Sandoval-
Vallejos
22nd Barry Senita
27th Nicole Alcindor
28th Joe Waldvogel

DECEMBER

1st Lauren Nicolich
6th Trevor Watts
10th Noelle Nehring
11th Daishaun Elliott
15th Anthony Alex Ramos
20th Stephanie Verity
21st Diane Benedetto
24th Helen Johnson
24th Wren Waldvogel
25th Sean Deedy
27th David Manuel
31st Dylan Rose

**Happy
Birthday!**

ANNIVERSARIES

NOVEMBER

5th Lou & Ree Kelting
13th Fred & Sherry Valentine
19th Bob & Diane Benedetto

DECEMBER

4th Lou & Wally Capasso
26th Carmine & Mary Jo Dapice
31st Jim & Terry Tucci

A Remarkable Day

Thanksgiving Day is one of the most remarkable days of the year. Decreed by a layman, the President of the U.S., by authorization of Congress, it is obeyed by Catholic, Jew and Protestant, and by many who have no church affiliation. The response of more than millions of people to this call is one of the most encouraging events in our national life. Thankfulness blesses and enriches our daily life. Not only is it deserving of a special day, it merits everyday observance.