

# Calvary Protestant Evangelical Free Church

2801 Park Avenue, Baldwin, NY 11510

Pastor Charles Lucchesi 516-223-4070

E-mail: [calvarychurch@optonline.net](mailto:calvarychurch@optonline.net) Website: [www.cpcbaldwin.com](http://www.cpcbaldwin.com)



## CALVARY CHRONICLE

VOLUME 23, ISSUE 5

MAY 2021

### If We Don't Love, We Won't Last Overcoming Offenses in the Church

*This is an article I gleaned from Desiring God Ministries and found it very appropriate for the times we are living in. Take and Eat! Pastor Charlie*

***“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*** (Romans 12:21)

When Paul wrote these words to the members of a small church in Rome, he wasn't merely imparting some sage advice. He wasn't merely trying to inspire them with a platitudinal ideal to shoot for. These words came stained with the blood and tears of spiritual trench warfare. Paul was telling the precious saints in this church how to stay alive in an evil world. For if churches don't overcome evil with good, they won't survive.

I'm writing this out of some personal grief. In recent years, I have watched churches I love dearly fracture, and even break apart. And in the cases I have in mind, the breaks weren't over doctrinal disagreements or gross immorality, but over offenses given and taken. Longtime friends, having lost trust in one another, could no longer fellowship together. Like most breakups, they're complicated. Certain parties bear more responsibility than others. But the heartbreaking result is that once-vibrant worshipping communities have ruptured, sometimes leaving a remnant struggling to rebuild from the rubble.

And what I find particularly grievous is that Jesus said, ***“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”*** (John 13:35). What do these breakups say about Jesus's love? What do they say about his disciples?

Such relational breakdowns didn't have to happen. But they illustrate a sobering reality: if we do not

love one another enough to overcome evil with good, we will be overcome by evil. Paul's instructions in Romans 12 on how to love one another with aggressive grace are critical to our churches' survival. If we don't understand that, we won't survive as witnesses of the love of the Lord Jesus that overcame the world.

#### **Most Potent Force in the World**

As Christians, *we know* that love is the king of the affections and the queen of the virtues. It's in a league of its own. For while every other righteous affection and virtue is an attribute of God, only one is twice said by the apostle of love to be at the core of the divine essence: **“God is love”** (1 John 4:8, 16).

***“Nothing is more offensive, violent, or destructive to the forces of darkness than love.”***

*We know* from Scripture of love's incomparable power. It encompasses all of the Law and the Prophets: **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind . . . [and] You shall love your neighbor as yourself”** (Matthew 22:37-40). And it was at the very heart of the most potent act in human history: Jesus's death on the cross. Love moved the Father to give his only Son (John 3:16), and love moved the Son to lay down his life for his friends for the glory of his Father (John 15:13; 17:4).

(continued on next page)

And *we know* this supreme act of love did more than redeem lost people. It was also the most powerful act of spiritual warfare ever committed. For through it, Jesus overcame the hate-filled world (John 16:33) and set in motion the eventual and total destruction of the devil and his evil kingdom (1 John 3:8).

Therefore, nothing is more Godlike or gives God more glory and delight than love. Nothing is more morally beautiful, profoundly meaningful, and joy-producing in the human experience than love. And nothing is more offensive, violent, or destructive to the forces of darkness than love.

*We know this.* But as Jesus said, ***“If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them”*** (John 13:17). Knowing isn’t enough. For the whole blessing of love is in the doing of love. Indeed, if what we do doesn’t proceed from love, we are nothing and we gain nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). But that’s not all: we can also wreak great damage in our churches.

### **Love With Aggressive Grace**

Paul had seen this damage firsthand. He had grieved over it. And so his instructions to the church in Rome were full of urgency - urgency the Holy Spirit wants us to feel over our churches as we read them today. The Spirit, through Paul, wants us to love one another with aggressive grace.

I call it “aggressive grace” for two reasons. First, we are not called to love one another as we deserve to be loved, but as Jesus loved us - with shocking, remarkably *gracious* love (John 15:12). Second, it’s *aggressive* because it is a remarkably pursuing, persevering, selfishness-slaying, overcoming love. Such aggressively gracious love is otherworldly, a taste of heaven on earth.

### **What Love Looks Like**

Listen to some of the ways Paul describes the love we are called to feel for and give to one another.

***“Let love be genuine. . . . Love one another with brotherly affection”*** (Romans 12:9-10). It doesn’t take long before we realize what it requires for us to keep loving like this. We all sinfully stumble in many ways (James 3:2). Which means we repeatedly offend one another. It takes persevering graciousness to keep love genuinely affectionate.

***“Aggressively gracious love is otherworldly, a taste of heaven on earth.”***

***“Outdo one another in showing honor”*** (Romans 12:10). Note the aggressive, even competitive, word Paul chose: “outdo.” Imagine a church’s culture so marked by the healthy humility of considering others more significant than ourselves and overtly making the case for it, that the sin-diseases of selfish ambition and conceit we all carry are held in check (Philippians 2:3).

A foretaste of heaven. But this kind of humility is cultivated only by intentional, even stubborn, habitual practice.

***“Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep”*** (Romans 12:15). With the influence of our indwelling sin, we all know how challenging it is to actually obey this command. But if we’ve been on the receiving end of such love, we know how blessed it is.

***“Never be wise in your own sight”*** (Romans 12:16). The more seriously we take this, the more carefully we will listen and respond to others. This alone would prevent many relational conflicts. But it is hard to die to the self-blinding assumption that we’re wise and don’t really need counsel.

***“Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all”*** (Romans 12:17). Implicit here is that we each will sinfully wound each other. And we all know it requires aggressive self-control not to respond back in sin. “Give thought” captures the intentionality this love requires.

***“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all”*** (Romans 12:18). How far is “so far”? This can be difficult to answer. But if we are to bear with and forgive one another *as Jesus has with us* (Colossians 3:13), “so far” is likely much farther than we naturally wish to go.

And, of course, Paul says so much more in Romans 12. But this sampling helps us see to some extent the aggressively gracious, costly Calvary love to which we are called as Christians. It is the love of Jesus, the love the world is meant to recognize in his disciples, the love that overcomes evil with good.

### **Overcome Evil With Good**

Paul ends the chapter with the exhortation I opened with: ***“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”*** (Romans 12:21). It is the high calling of each church. And it is an admittedly hard calling, for ***“the way is hard that leads to life”*** (Matthew 7:14). It requires each of us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow in the footsteps of our Lord, who so loved us (Matthew 16:24; John 15:12).

The stakes are high. For if we will not overcome evil with good, we will be overcome by evil. If we will not love one another as Jesus loved us, we will not last together. The demonic forces know this and aim their fiery darts strategically. Which is why the demise of too many churches is due to internal conflict rather than external persecution. Which is why once strong churches can break apart.

This doesn’t have to happen. But our churches’ survival is staked on whether or not we, their members, love one another with the aggressive grace that comes from Jesus. *We know these things.* But knowing isn’t enough. Blessed are we if we do them.

# Church Updates

We are encouraged with what we see happening all around us. Our lives, businesses, schools, sports teams, and churches are getting back to a more normal schedule. The Lord is moving and bringing more of the church family back home to worship together again (with ample safe distancing).

In the church body there is a desire to get back together to feed on God's Word and fellowship. Within the next couple of weeks we anticipate having Children's Church held in-person during the 11:00 service. In the near future Sunday School will be able to meet again. The church is considering going to one service. We would greatly appreciate your thoughts and feedback as we move forward.

It is important to be able to minister and fellowship with one another once more. We anticipate by God's mercies to be able to fellowship and serve one another again, and are reminded we are children of the great King!

Updates will be e-mailed each week. Contact the church if you have not been receiving the Friday e-mails.

In the meantime the church will continue to have two worship services on Sunday: **9:30 a.m. service is held downstairs; 11:00 a.m. service is held upstairs in the sanctuary.** The sermon is recorded and posted on the church website ([www.cpcbaldwin.com](http://www.cpcbaldwin.com) - click on "YouTube") and streamed on YouTube at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (search for Calvary Church, Baldwin, NY).

The **Wednesday Night Bible Study** meets at the church each week at 7:00 p.m. The men and women are studying from the book of I Peter, and also have a time of prayer.

The **Ladies Bible Study** meets the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom at 7:30 p.m. The ladies are studying the book of Acts.

## Coming Soon - VBS 2021

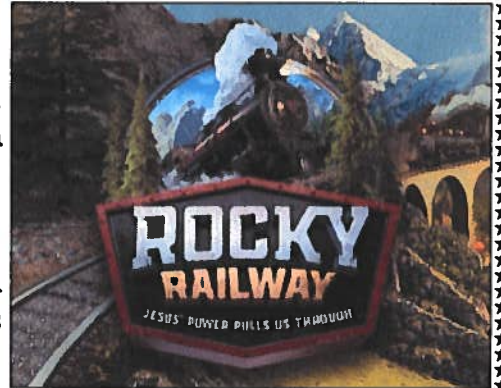
Plans are moving forward for Calvary's Vacation Bible School. **VBS will be held Monday through Friday, June 28th through July 2nd.** This year's theme is:

### **ROCKY RAILWAY - Jesus' Power Pulls Us Through!**

Children are welcome to climb aboard for mountains of fun in this faith-filled adventure, and discover that trusting Jesus pulls them through life's ups and downs.

VBS will be a little different this year as a limited number of children will be meeting in-person at the church, with the opportunity for others to join via Zoom.

Look for more details in the June newsletter.



## Remembering Ken Hults

For many years Ken Hults would faithfully attend Sunday School, the worship services, Bible studies, and special events at the church. He had such a yearning to spend time with the church family and to learn more about God. He often spoke with Pastor Charlie if he had any questions and to further his knowledge with the scriptures.



Ken did not have any immediate family who lived nearby. He considered the church family as "his family." Ken's nieces knew how much the Calvary church family meant to him and were so appreciative for all the church did for him. To thank the family of Calvary they sent flowers to the church along with a note: *"Thank you for being my Uncle Ken's church family"* - from the family of Kenneth Hults.



Ken passed away in February and we know he is resting in the arms of our Lord.

# Calvary Chronicle

Calvary Protestant Church  
2801 Park Avenue  
Baldwin, NY 11510

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Baldwin, NY  
11510-4100  
Permit No. 192

## BIRTHDAYS

### MAY

4th Laura Seymour  
4th Kaia Waldvogel  
6th Mike Senita  
10th Bob Bennett  
10th Dawn Manuel  
11th Jonathan Linhart  
11th Alicia Seymour  
12th Nancy Bennett  
13th Reed Waldvogel  
17th Pat Watts  
18th Caleb Nehring  
21st Wes Carman  
29th Barbara Hindley  
30th Dianne Chalavoutis-  
Miller

### JUNE

1st Sharon Knoernschild  
3rd Joel Sandoval-Vallejos  
4th Mike Tralongo Jr.  
5th Gina Chalavoutis  
5th Ian Waldvogel  
10th Melissa Watts  
12th Charles Hetzel Sr.  
16th Trudy Hetzel  
17th Oliver Miller  
18th Angeline Alcindor  
18th Justin Rose  
20th Kyle Knoernschild  
22nd Sarabeth (LaLa)  
DiCostanzo  
22nd Elsie Ramos  
24th Jacqueline Santanello  
25th Keri Bennett  
29th Melissa Rose

**Happy  
Birthday!**

## ANNIVERSARIES

### MAY

3rd Ralph & Bonnie Rose  
9th David & Dawn Manuel  
21st Charlie & Trudy Hetzel  
24th Lou & Colleen Arena  
28th Chris & Melissa Watts  
30th David & Christy Senita

### JUNE

5th Anthony & Elsie Ramos  
8th David & Melinda Jones  
22nd Barry & Patti Senita  
29th Larry & Paula Kulla  
29th Tim & Kaia Waldvogel



### Mother's Prayer

I thank you from the heart  
For all you've done for me  
And I bless the Lord for giving me  
The best mother there could be!

