



from Glenn and Beth Calderwood

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PNG Newsletter

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Dear Friends,

After a couple of months in Australia, visiting with our daughters and attending Ruth's graduation, and ministering at Trinity Church Tamworth and Grace Evangelical Church Newcastle, we're now back at Avili and almost back in the swing of things. We've been in the village a little over two weeks now, and much of that time has been spent greeting people, cleaning the house and office (the tropical climate and louvre windows seem to conspire to leave everything dirty and mouldy), sorting and putting away 6 months worth of supplies (we discovered one grocery item was 16 years out of date!), and of course catching up with the churches at Avili and Tatagufa. All our travelling went pretty much to plan, and we are thankful for our safe return to Avili, and for the continued opportunity for ministry here.

There are so many things for which we can be thankful, not least the fact that those who support the gospel work here in the Kanite are not "results" driven people – those who will stick at a thing only if there are immediate or spectacular outcomes. In a recent P.N.G. newspaper there was a warning issued to all women around the country that they are now no longer safe from rape, not even from their own clansmen. Traditionally they could have counted on their clansmen to ensure their safety, but no longer it seems. It's a sad illustration of the general decline in law and order in Papua New Guinea. The rape incidents earlier in the year at Tatagufa were not isolated incidents, but part of a larger and growing lawlessness throughout the country.

The modern trend is to think that Papua New Guineans are basically good people and really only need a bit of a hand up. That doesn't quite square with what we are seeing, nor does it square with the Scriptures. "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts."

It's pretty obvious that a hand up just isn't going to do the job. It's been tried here in Papua New Guinea to no good effect. People who are dead in their sins need more than a hand up. People who live only to gratify the cravings of their sinful nature, who follow only it's desires and thoughts, who are held captive by Satan and his cronies, need more than just a hand up.

The Bible gives us only one course of action in such situations. "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great

patience and careful instruction." To preach the Word is to preach the gospel – to make God known in and through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, calling for repentance and trust in Him who "justifies the wicked" by the faithful work of Jesus. It's clear that preaching the gospel cannot be fleeting. To do it in season and out of season, correcting, rebuking and encouraging, all with great patience and much careful instruction, indicates that time and effort will most certainly be required. That's what it takes to do evangelism and church planting in the world.

The apostle Paul goes on to tell Timothy that while others are dropping the ball on this one, he's not to. "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry." His description of what was coming is uncannily like what we are seeing in Papua New Guinea. Unlike those who would give up and head for what they might think a more "profitable" ministry elsewhere, Timothy was to remain focused, and stay a steady course in accordance with "preaching the Word".

Timothy was certainly blessed to have a good, gospel-minded man like Paul to help him see that no gains were going to be made for the kingdom of God other than sticking with preaching the Word with great patience and careful instruction. Missionaries are certainly blessed when they receive such counsel.

I know many of you are wondering how the churches at Avili and Tatagufa fared in our absence. Thankfully we're able to say that both churches seem to have continued on pretty much as if we had been here. In the light of what happened earlier in the year Iko has done a good job in keeping the Tatagufa church together. He certainly wasn't boasting about his efforts (as so many Papua New Guineans like to do), saying to me in front of everyone on Sunday morning, that while his efforts were substandard (so he thought) he had tried hard and did what he could.

The fact that just about everyone continued to meet each week, believers and unbelievers alike, and that a measure of calm and togetherness had been restored, was testimony that under God Iko's efforts were valuable, and certainly most welcome. At the two Sunday meetings so far, and in some visits in between, we get the impression that at least some are ready to take the gospel claims more seriously than before. Some even said so. Let's hope they follow through.



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Things were quite constant at Avili too. Leften, Ellien and Meron met very faithfully each week, doing what they could together, praying and reading the Bible. No-one in particular was left in charge (since we didn't want anyone to think that Leften was somehow restored to leadership), but all were to fulfil their duty to meet together regularly as God's people. I think they discovered this was a valuable thing to do. A number of the unbelievers attended their meetings quite regularly also.

We haven't caught up with Jeff yet as he is at Kainantu at the moment. Shortly after we left for Australia he took Keri, his wife, to the hospital at Goroka, and since her recovery was well on its way he moved her down to Kainantu where he has a number of relatives. No-one seems to know when he might return to the village.

There was just one sad note to our return to Avili. Our good friend Waiwa died, and he was buried on the day we arrived back in the village. Apart from being our "mail-man" and our occasional "rouseabout" he would often come to our house to chat and would attend the church meetings at Avili. Sadly, even though he had heard the gospel often, and even seemed to be interested at times, we think that he may have died an unbeliever.

Well, I must leave off at that.

All our love,
Glenn and Beth

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