



from Glenn and Beth Calderwood

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PNG Newsletter

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Dear Friends,

You would think that after 16 weeks of a very pleasant respite in Northern Ireland we'd be all fired up and ready to get stuck into our work here in Papua New Guinea once again. We are glad to be back, and grateful to have been given this work to do, but to be honest it's been a bit of a struggle getting going. Hopefully we'll soon settle in and be able to get on with things with more ease. We constantly remind ourselves of the great privilege we have in making God known through the faithful work of Jesus, for his glory and honour, and for the gathering of the elect. That's pretty special, isn't it?

It's really nice to be able to say that the churches at Avili and Tatagufa have by and large remained constant and faithful. The church at Avili is quite small, and remains so, but there is much to be glad about. Leften and Ellien, a believing couple, have shown their maturity by remaining faithful to the gospel of Jesus in the face of some serious criticism and censure.

Leften, an elected magistrate at the Village Court level and a recognised community leader, declined to be part of a function organised by the local indigenous missions which he rightly discerned to be a farce. Culturally Leften was expected to attend the function in this capacity, to give weight and approval to their activities. Not attending attracted considerable flack. It was heartening to hear Leften's response to their criticism, and how he was able to disentangle the issues of what he now believed as a Christian and his responsibilities as magistrate and community leader - it was reminiscent of the argument made in previous centuries to keep separate church and state. Leften and Ellien and their family were probably the only people who did not attend this function, which also showed much courage on their part.

Ellien, too, is such a joy to us. In the past she has been very scornful, openly ridiculing both us and the gospel we preach. No hint of that now. Just a couple of weeks ago, when she prayed, it was obvious how she loved the Lord Jesus and how grateful she is to him for his faithful work on her behalf. It would have done all your hearts good to have heard her. We've noticed even a change in the manner of their nephew, Vako, whom they have adopted as a son. He's about 12 or 13 years old, and has been showing signs of mutiny. Yet, in a conversation with Beth recently, he sounded like he may have become a believer! We know it's the Lord who changes hearts, yet the change in Vako may well be an indication that good things are happening within the home, and that would be very encouraging.

The only sad news from Avili is that Meron is not doing so

well. We would not be surprised if she left the church entirely. Our hearts ache for her. While it has been difficult to get to the root of the problem we think we have a fair idea of what might be going on. Here in the Kanite it has been common practice by the local indigenous mission groups to offer inducements for our people to defect. Mostly, they are offered positions of importance which in this culture is highly prized. People need to be very wise and very strong to be able to resist. We would not be surprised in the least if this is what is happening to Meron, especially since we know of efforts like this in the past towards her.

We have not given up hope for Meron, but we have seen these sort of things so often that we can't help feeling disappointed and saddened for what may be the likely outcome. Lets pray that we are wrong.

Things have been good with the church down in the village of Tatagufa. The men seem to have worked well together in assisting Iko as they made their way through the books of 1 & 2 Timothy (with the aid of the little study book we produced for them). None of the men fully meet the requirements set out by Paul to be elders and pastors, but as believers they are required to gather, together with other believers, around God's word as God's people. Men are to lead at all sorts of levels and we have encouraged them to lead, not as elders and pastors, but as men who have been redeemed by Jesus.

We felt this was an important distinction to maintain, both for the integrity of the gospel and church, and for the wellbeing of the men themselves. Paul warns of the danger of appointing a new convert to the work of pastor/elder lest he be destroyed by self-importance, and similarly we didn't want any of our men to be destroyed by thinking they were something they were not. Of course, we are praying and working towards the time when we can appoint men to the formal position of elder/pastor, and that will be a great day indeed. In the meantime it's been very pleasing to see the men leading without thinking more highly of themselves than they ought, and that, I think, bodes well for the future.

Another pleasing aspect was the Tatagufa church's commitment to stick strictly to the written Word. This is not the norm in Papua New Guinea, partly due to people not catching on to the idea of the importance of the Bible being the only authority in the church, but also because of poor ability in reading and understanding literature. People tend to just say what comes off the top of their heads rather than what is written on the page. However, even when they do understand that God's Word rules, they do still remain ill-equipped to be able to divide the Word rightly.

It is going to take years of teaching and training and education to get them to a point where they can do justice to



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the written Word. In the meantime we who can divide the Word rightly must stand in the breach. What a great responsibility and privilege that is!

It's been really good to be able to get down to Tatagufa on Wednesdays again. Beth does literacy and Bible teaching with the ladies, and I take the men for Bible study and advanced literacy (which is the next step after learning to recognise the words, learning how literature works).

The ladies have not carried on with their studies in Beth's absence, so they have lost some ground. That's been disappointing. The men likewise have not really done anything in my absence, and have forgotten a fair bit of what they had been taught. Again, disappointing. Without making excuses for them, they do find it hard to maintain a program of learning without outside assistance and encouragement.

Some of you have inquired about Beth's neck injury. This is an old injury which has been aggravated through the years by our jarring roads. It's gotten to a point where she can't afford further injury. What this means is that Beth won't be able to travel on the motorbike any more, as this does hurt her neck. That will make it difficult for her to get down to Tatagufa each Sunday as we have only a short period of time between the Avili and Tatagufa meetings, which does not allow time for the walk down. However, some weeks she might by-pass Avili and walk on to Tatagufa arriving about the same time as I will on the motorbike. On Wednesdays we will both walk down together - just a little jaunt of 14 kilometres round trip.

Well, that's about it for now.

With love,
Glenn and Beth.

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