

Five Envious Persons. -- a Dramatic Accusation. -- Service for Non-Adherents.

by Gwilym Hughes

The sermon addressed the challenges of reaching non-adherents while highlighting the need for humility and repentance among church members.

Scripture: Matthew 11:28, Luke 15:11, Acts 16:31, James 4:10, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Surrender To God", "Revival Meeting"

Description

Gwilym Hughes preaches in Liverpool on a unique gathering for non-adherents, where despite the enthusiastic crowd, the meeting faces challenges as church members outnumber non-adherents. Evan Roberts delivers a powerful message on surrendering to Jesus, offering rest and relief to the weary and burdened. The congregation experiences intense emotional moments, prophecies, and a call to intercede for five individuals causing obstacles. The meeting ends with a significant number of converts and a reminder to seek salvation and show self-denial.

Transcript

LIVERPOOL, Saturday Night, April 1 1905

A special meeting exclusively for non-adherents is surely a novel feature even in a revival which, from its beginning, has been run on unusual lines. The idea of organising such a gathering was conceived in Liverpool, and to-night we witness in Liverpool the first attempt to carry the idea into practice. On paper the arrangements were perfect. Hundreds of pink tickets were distributed exclusively, so we were officially assured, to non-adherents, while canvassers who were responsible for bringing these "esgeuluswyr" once more within hearing of the evangel, were supplied with white tickets, securing their own admittance only on condition that they brought one or more non-adherents with them. This is the first of three similar ticket meetings to be held during Mr. Roberts's visit to the city.

Very often, alas, the best laid schemes "gang agley," and to-night's effort, from all appearance, has not been the success it was hoped for. What than is lacking? Certainly not enthusiasm. The crowd is greater than ever. Shaw Street Chapel, in which we are now assembled, is the chapel of the Welsh Wesleyans, where the late Egiwysbach ministered for some years, and is possibly one of the most commodious places of worship to be found in the north end of the city. Now at 6.50, 20 minutes after the doors were thrown open, it is packed from floor to ceiling.

Looking at the congregation from the pulpit end, what do we see? Ministers and preachers of all denominations clustered in and about the pulpit pew; deacons and leading church workers, whom we recognise as having met at previous gatherings -- they are all here with zeal and vigour undiminished. Scan the pews closely and critically, and note how they are crowded with well-dressed men and women -- typical chapel goers, every one of them. And if you are in any doubt on that point listen to the singing! In what church or chapel in all Wales can you hear 'a heartier, a fuller-throated, a more soulful and "hwyliog" rendering than this of the music of the sanctuaries of Cymru? There is not a single hymn book in view on balcony or floor. Close your eyes, and as you hear hymn and prayer and testimony and confession, you can emphatically declare that this is a Welsh valley where revivalism is at fever heat. This a congregation of non-adherents? Have the Mission Committee been befooled on this first day of April?

When on the point of putting this very question to one of the officials, my ear caught a few phrases of protest from the Rev. W. O. Evans (Wesleyan), Bootle. He is in the set fawr, and facing the audience makes a pointed appeal -- "Outside there are hundreds of non-adherents with tickets, but they cannot come in. Will those in the audience who are Christian members quit the building and make room for some of them? "What a fine opportunity this for the exercise of a little Christian self-denial. But no; so far as I can see there is scarcely any movement. The appeals fall on deaf ears, and the next minute we are caught in the mighty sweep of another Welsh hymn. Turning to the Rev. W. O. Evans I ask, "Are there any non-adherents here?" and the sorrowful reply is, "There are hundreds of church members:" "Nay," said a voice behind him, "there are hundreds of esgeuluswyr, too. We have been bringing them in by the score all the afternoon, in cabs, in wagonettes, and by trams. Many of us have been for hours after non-adherents, just as on election days we run after the voters."

All this of course may be, but what business have these church members at all in this meeting, arranged for those who are outside the pale of the Christian churches? How obtained they the tickets? Have non-adherents been trafficking with the passports supplied them? Outside, as I write, many hundreds have assembled who have come by a late afternoon train from Wrexham, Rhos, and other districts in North Wales in their eagerness to attend one of the Liverpool meetings; but, alas! they are turned away disappointed.

From six to seven, the meeting is more or less in charge of the pastor of Shaw Street. the Rev. Robert Lewis, and others in and around the platform include the Revs. Griffith Ellis, M.A., Bootle (C.M.); W. O. Evans, Bootle (Wesleyan); Thomas Hughes (Wesleyan); Owen Owens, Anfield (C.M.); John Hughes, M.A., Fitzclarence Street (C.M.); J. D. Evans. B.A. (C.M.); David Powell (B.); John Hughes, BA., B.D. Princes Road (C.M.); Hawen Rees (C); O. L. Roberts ('C.), Tabernacle; D. C. Edwards, M.A. (C.M.), Llanbedr; Hugh Roberts (C.M.); E. J. Evans (C.M.), Walton; Thomas Charles Williams, M.A. (C.M.), Menai Bridge.

It is 7. 15. Here comes the missionary. What's this change? Swiftly mounting the pulpit he stands facing the vast congregation with delight in every feature. Is this he who last night at that memorable Birkenhead meeting threatened a terrified congregation with Divine wrath? The pain, the sorrow, the anguish, the pity, and the anger then reflected in his countenance are apparently gone -- all gone. The Evan Roberts whom we now see is the smiling, jovial, light-hearted, merry evangelist who in the early days of the revival spread the gospel of hope and joy through the mining valleys of South Wales. What has happened?

There is to-night, no suggestion of that mood of reticence and reserve, which have hitherto marked his appearance in Liverpool. Bending over the pulpit desk he beams with delight upon the congregation. His

face wreathed in captivating smiles. Some one starts a hymn as he is about to speak, and someone else cries "Hush." "Nay. nay," replies the evangelist, "you sing on, sing on," and thus encouraged, we have hymn after hymn, and prayer after prayer, now in English, now in Welsh and as often as not half a dozen engaged in public prayer together. Suddenly Annie Davies's voice rings through the building, and there is instant silence. In the middle of her solo she is overcome with emotion: the solo is turned into a sobbing prayer, Turning to the audience, we observe hundreds in silent tears who a moment ago were jubilant singers. But it is only a gentle summer shower, and anon the clouds pass away, and all is sunny again.

A few minutes later the missionary is on his feet with a new-found text. It was evidently suggested to him by the prayer of the Rev. W. O. Evans, who in his supplications had asked that their ears be attuned to hear the voice of Jesus. "This is His voice," declares Evan Roberts, "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" -- On this favourite verse, the young preacher founded a bright, winsome address, in which it was shown how the needs of the 'fallen race were more than met by the love of Christ. He alone could relieve us of burdens. "Come," and the missionary beckons again and again, as if addressing individuals in the audience. "Come! Come!" What tenderness, what pathos, what loving-kindness, he throws into this one word, "Come!" "You have fallen to 'the depths, some of you," he continues, "but Jesus has not yet given you up. His word is still 'Come.' When to come? Jesus has no special hour of call. Come early, come every hour, every minute, every second. You feel too weak? He will give you strength. Naked? He will clothe you. Steeped in sin? He will cleanse and purify you and attire you in a royal robe, a robe that shall cover not filth and iniquity, but purity, and a purity that will whiten the robe."

A Prediction and its Fulfilment.

The speaker is silent. For a moment he surveys the congregation with love-lit eyes, and then remarks, in a low, soft, musical voice: "When I came in, this place was full of angels. There is a fierce battle now going on here. Who is going to win? Jesus Christ." Again he pauses, again we have silence, and hundreds are in an expectant attitude as if listening for the flutter of angel wings. "Think not," is the next remark, "that this great effort of yours in Liverpool is going to fail. No, there is too much love in it for failure."

A little later he again embarks upon a prophecy. "Are there some who are to come to Him to-night? Yes. How do I know? Because I have asked that it shall be so, and because I have the assurance that it shall be so. Jesus is waiting to relieve your burdens, and scores of you here are going to yield yourselves up to Him to-night and when the burden is removed you can then sing in the day and sing in the night (canu'r dydd a chanu'r nos). There will be then no night, for you will be with Him, Who is the Light."

Just at this moment, as we marvel at the prophecy, and wonder whether we shall witness its fulfilment, Miss Annie Davies's voice is heard softly rendering Sankey's hymn in Welsh, "Os caf Iesu, dim ond Iesu" ("If I have Jesus, Jesus only").

"This is the beginning of glorious times in Liverpool." The speaker is the Rev. John Williams, of Princes Road, who now stands at the pulpit desk. With tact and delicacy he proceeds to test the meeting. "All who want to love Jesus, will they raise their hands?"

A second invitation is not needed, every hand is up. "Da lawn." remarks the reverend gentleman; "but if you really desire to love Him, your place is inside, not outside the churches."

When those who were already members of churches were asked to stand, about two-thirds of the congregation sprang to their feet. Ah! I thought so. Non-adherents are in a hopeless minority. In less than a second the set fawr is emptied. Ministers and officials who had sat there are now rapidly threading their way in and out of the crowded congregation in all parts of the building in search of stricken ones.

The net having been thrown out is drawn in. We now see the prediction fulfilled. Dozens of repentant sinners are discovered, some prostrate with grief, others engaged in prayers, and still others too overcome to speak. Names of converts are called out in apparently endless succession. I keep record up to 30 and even 40 and then the names come in too rapidly and in batches, and I am unable to follow. This must rank amongst the most successful meetings that even this unrivalled revivalist has ever held. Surely he must be overjoyed. Where is he?

While the congregation are, for the sixtieth time, singing *Diolch Iddo, Byth am goflo llwch y llawr*," I try to discover the missionary, who for ten minutes past has been silent. Ah, there he is at the far end of the pulpit, his face buried in his hands as if weeping. Why this mood, when all is so bright? We see signs of a coming storm.

Returning to the pulpit, the Rev. John Williams announces "There are scores here engaged in a bitter struggle. Let us pray for them," and at the word the Rev. Owen Owens leads the congregation to the throne of grace, and he is followed by dozens of others in English and Welsh. Meanwhile a lady in the congregation, with a rich contralto voice, gives a fervid rendering of the sacred solo, "There is life for a look," and presently a thousand voices join exultantly in the refrain.

But we are suddenly pulled up by the missionary. With both arms raised he sternly demands silence. He is in tears, and his brow is clouded. What's wrong? "Don't sing." He speaks with a voice that is choked. "Don't sing. Oh, the tragedy of it. When salvation has been secured by so many, the Spirit has suddenly departed, and some of you know the reason." Why? The congregation looks bewildered, failing to detect the slightest reason for the interruption, and possibly many resent it. A minister, more courageous than his brethren, calls out, "Here is another soul crying for rescue. Let us rejoice." "No," replied the missionary, with increased severity, "Don't sing, *Diolch* (thanks); there's no *Diolch* due to some who are here, though there is praise due to Heaven for all that." Then with scorn-flashing eyes, clenched fists, and in a heightened voice he exclaims, "Some of you are jealous, envious (*eiddigedus*) because of the rescue work that has been accomplished, and you who are guilty must at once ask God to forgive you -- yea, to bend you. This, oh this, is awful. Men jealous because Christ is being glorified! "

A thrill of something akin to horror passed over all present at this extraordinary pronouncement. In the pulpit, on the gallery, on the ground floor, everywhere around us, men and women cry out in prayer. The air is full of the sounds of moaning. The missionary, as he bends with closed eyes over the pulpit desk groans as if in physical pain. The moaning gives way to loud, and bitter lamentations. Women shriek, and many are on the point of fainting. The situation is excruciatingly painful, almost intolerable. Well-known ministers exchange despairing glances. "*Plyga nhw, O! Dduw*" ("Bend them, O Lord") cries the missionary, and the prayer is repeated by hundreds of others, who are kneeling.

Clear as a bell rises the resonant voice of Mr. William Evans, of Newshani Drive, one of the deacons of Anfield, and an ex-member of the Liverpool City Council. "Forbid it, Lord"-- this is his supplication-- "that there should be any elder brothers among us to-night." "But there are," swiftly rejoins the missionary, "and these persons have not yet asked for forgiveness. They are the obstacles. In the Name of the Lord I ask

them to go out or bend. Let us as one great army again beseech the Lord to bend them."

And once again the building resounds to the earnest, almost hysterical, pleadings of hundreds. Presently, the terror increases, when the missionary, having presumably received a still further revelation, commits himself to a still more definite statement -- "There are five persons here who are obstacles. Will you five go out or seek forgiveness? We shall not be allowed to sing or to test the meeting, nor shall we see any mere saved here until something happens. If this proceeds much longer, perhaps the names of the five shall be revealed to me."

Wild and Delirious Scenes.

What is to be done? The scenes now witnessed are wild and delirious. Tension is at breaking point. A happy thought occurs to the Rev. W. O. Evans, a Wesleyan minister. Perhaps the five are Englishmen who do not understand that they are rocks of offence, and, presumably, with a view to enlighten them, the minister breaks forth into an English prayer for a relief of the crisis that has arisen. But the missionary forbids him to proceed.

"They are not English friends," he cries, "they are Welsh, all five of them." "Save them, Lord," a woman prays. "No, no," excitedly interrupts the revivalist, "don't pray; God is not listening; Heaven is locked against us, as it were. Three of the five are preachers of the Gospel. There is a terrible ordeal in store for the five."

It needs a more graphic pen than mine to depict the sensation produced by this declaration. "Five men, three of them preachers." This is the statement, and inferentially it is a statement made under Divine inspiration. It is received with loud and general exclamation of "Oh, dear oh, dear!" in tones of mingled pain and astonishment.

The uppermost feeling seems to be one of utter despair, and I experience an uneasy feeling that unless this acute tension is speedily relieved there may be a panic. The Rev. John Williams, standing in the pulpit behind the missionary, who is bent as if in a trance over the desk, appears to share this disquietude, for, placing one hand firmly on the missionary's shoulder, he with the other beckons silently to the congregation to depart.

A few take the hint, and frantically endeavour to push their way out. The great mass remains, anticipating developments. Then Mr. Williams, resolved to take no more risks, quietly makes a few simple announcements, and without consulting the missionary pronounces the benediction and declares the meeting over.

Just at this moment Mr. Evan Roberts stands upright, and realising what is happening, turns an affrighted glance to the minister and assumes an attitude of protest. Then appealing to the congregation he cries: "No, don't go out. Pray! Pray! Pray! We cannot leave until Christ is glorified. This meeting is not a failure. It is a success. There will be no envy after to-night. God is awful in Zion. Woe be unto those who are obstacles; woe be unto those who are obstacles."

A section of the congregation makes another attempt to sing, and the hymn "Dyma Gariad fel y moroedd" is started, but the revivalist peremptorily calls upon them to stop. "No, there is to be no singing just yet. We may have singing presently. It is beginning to lighten. You can pray as much as you like, but the only subject of prayer now must be these five. No praise, and no prayers for salvation."

Five minutes later, after innumerable prayers have been offered, singly and in chorus, Evan Roberts, with face streaming with tears, declares that "All who are here must before they retire to rest to-night interceed to God on behalf of the five. Now we shall sing, and let us sing

"Duw mawr y rhyfeddodau maith!

Rhyfeddol yw pob rhan o'th waith."

Great God of wonders! all Thy ways are matchless, Godlike and divine!

But the fair glories of Thy grace more Godlike and unrivalled shine.

Who is a pardoning God like Thee?

Or who has grace so rich and free ? -- President Davies.

There is no need to repeat the permission. The congregation seizes the opportunity with avidity, and finds refreshing relief for its pent-up feelings in the noble strains of "Huddersfield."

Still the congregation is loth to depart, though 10 o'clock is now long past. Miss Roberts reads the story of the prodigal son, punctuating it with quaint and picturesque comments as she proceeds. After this the meeting is again tested, and a shoal of converts is added to the already large list.

Above the clock sits a man, who to the stewards has declared he cannot surrender, for he is not ready. Under the gallery is another man, of whom it is announced that he lacks not in knowledge of the plan of salvation, but he declines to surrender. Looking in turn at the two, the revivalist is heard to remark. sotto voce, that the man over the clock will give in, but the one under the gallery is to be left alone. A few minutes later the first-named is seen to collapse in a paroxysm of grief. He has surrendered, and once more the chapel rings with the strains of "Dio!ch Iddo". This brings the total number of converts at this one meeting up to 70.

In response to the missionary's request the congregation stands, and in one great volume of sound repeats after him, thrice in Welsh and thrice in English, the verse, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "There," he declares, "that verse will ring for years to come in the ears of scores that are present, and let none of you come into any more of these meetings without first asking God to save."

"This," declares the Rev. John Williams, "has been a meeting we shall remember for ever, but we who are church members have room to show more of the spirit of self-denial. A large number of non-adherents, for whom this meeting was intended, have been turned away because hundreds of you members who are here ought to have been at home." Thus ended one of the most remarkable gatherings yet held.

Back to the city I travelled with a number of Liverpool Pressmen, to whom this had been a first experience of the revival. "What think ye of it all?" asked one of the others. "My thoughts are too tumultuous for expression," was the reply elicited, "but this man Roberts seems to me to be beyond human comprehension."

On Sunday, Mr. Evan Roberts enjoyed a rest, but in the afternoon accompanied by the Rev. John Williams, he paid a surprise visit to the Princes Road Welsh C.M. Sunday School, and there officiated at a distribution of prizes.

The Missioner as Thought Reader.

LIVERPOOL, Monday.

The startling declaration of Mr. Evan Roberts at the Shaw-street meeting on Saturday night that there were present five persons envious of the work of saving souls then proceeding, and that three of the five were preachers of the gospel will be recalled.

A Liverpool barrister, in a letter to the "Liverpool Daily Post," writes "I was present at the meeting and at that period when the names of converts were being taken. A minister was standing close behind me. Just then another minister came up to him having a piece of paper, apparently with the names of converts on it. The latter minister said to the first minister in reference to a young man whose name he had taken, and who had prayed with great fervour, 'It's all humbug,' and then went on to mention a charge, which would show that the said young man was not fit to be a member of a church. Then the first minister began to speak about Evan Roberts, and said, 'I have heard him at Princes-road and at Anfield, and I see nothing in him? The second minister agreed, saying, 'I see nothing in him either.' It was shortly after this that Evan Roberts went into a paroxysm, and made the declaration about the five persons -- three of them ministers -- who were full of envy and jealousy. I relate the story without any comment. Evan Roberts certainly has the rare gift of saying the right thing at the right moment."

This letter has aroused great interest, and is being keenly discussed. The writer, however, is not quite correct. Mr. Evan Roberts did not say, "Three of them were ministers." His exact words were, "Tri yn pregethu yr efengyl" (three of them preachers of the gospel).

In private conversation afterwards the same evening Mr. Evan Roberts said, "They were preachers, not ministers. The fourth was the son of a minister, and the fifth the son of a deacon."

Source:

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