

## THE MINISTRY OF D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

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The purpose of this paper is to investigate the life, basic theology, understanding of the church and methodology of ministry of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Lloyd-Jones was perhaps the greatest preacher of the twentieth century. His ministry extends today through his books, which are largely compilations of the edited transcripts of sermons or lectures which he delivered. A survey of Lloyd-Jones' life and ministry should yield many insights into building a church for the twenty-first century. This paper will seek to highlight aspects of Lloyd-Jones ministry that could be helpful in the building of contemporary churches.

### **Lloyd-Jones' Biography**

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones was born on December 20, 1899 in the town of Cardiff in Wales. He was the middle child between two brothers: Harold and Vincent.<sup>1</sup> In 1906, the Lloyd-Jones family moved to Llangeitho, Cardiganshire where they lived until Martyn was sixteen years of age.<sup>2</sup> From there the family moved in August of 1914, because of financial difficulty, to London.<sup>3</sup> With this move, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones had arrived to the stage on which the rest of his remarkable life would be acted out.

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<sup>1</sup>Iain H. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years 1899-1939* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1982), 1.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 1 and 32.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

In 1916, Martyn began studying medicine at St. Bartholomew's Hospital.<sup>4</sup> By 1921, Lloyd-Jones had completed his examinations and began to work under the leading physician, Sir Thomas Horder.<sup>5</sup> It was around this time that God worked conversion in the life of young Lloyd-Jones. He had been under deep conviction of sin for some time, but with his conversion there began an intense struggle over whether to abandon the practice of medicine.<sup>6</sup> When finally he had reached the decision to enter the ministry, many began to glorify 'the great sacrifice' which he had made in abandoning medicine. Lloyd-Jones would hear nothing of it, as noted by biographer Iain Murray:

In his own case . . . it was easy to emphasise the unusual and to speak of 'the great sacrifice' he had made in leaving Medicine, but he disliked such language intensely. To speak of any 'loss' in the context of being a Christian amounted, in his eyes, to a denial of the gospel. . . . Further, his view of preaching was such that to talk of 'sacrifice' in relation to that work was virtually absurd.

There could be no higher privilege than that of being a messenger of the God who has pledged his help and presence to those whom he sends. When, as happened at times, people referred in admiring terms to his self-denial in entering the ministry, he repudiated the intended compliment completely. 'I gave up nothing,' he said on one such occasion, 'I received everything. I count it the highest honour that God can confer on any man to call him to be a herald of the gospel.'<sup>7</sup>

Shortly after becoming the pastor at a church in Aberavon, Lloyd-Jones married a fellow doctor, Bethan Phillips who also gave up her medical work to be a helpmeet for her new husband in his ministry.<sup>8</sup> It was in Aberavon that the Lloyd-Joneses spent the next eleven years. God was pleased to bless the work there with numerous conversions and a real spirit of revival.

In 1939, Lloyd-Jones accepted the call to Westminster Chapel in London to serve as

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 150.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 126.

assistant to the great evangelical expositor G. Campbell Morgan.<sup>9</sup> Lloyd-Jones continued in that position until 1943, when on a Sunday in July, Campbell Morgan resigned as pastor at Westminster.<sup>10</sup> With the resignation of Morgan, Lloyd-Jones assumed full pastoral duties at the Westminster Chapel. The next twenty-five years would find him occupying the Westminster pulpit until his retirement in 1968.<sup>11</sup>

### **Lloyd-Jones' Basic Theology**

The best way to summarize the basic theology of Lloyd-Jones is in the words of son-in-law, Sir Fred Catherwood who said: "Martyn Lloyd-Jones was in the tradition of Spurgeon, Whitefield, the Puritans and the Reformers."<sup>12</sup> Lloyd-Jones was the heir to the great evangelical Calvinist preachers of previous generations and he bore their banner well. As longtime friend, assistant and biographer Iain Murray notes: "When people sought to explain what set ML-J apart in terms of his convictions they usually did so in terms of 'Calvinism'."<sup>13</sup>

As a Calvinist, Lloyd-Jones was, of course, committed to the key doctrines held by the broader evangelical community. Lloyd-Jones believed in the authoritative Word of God as Divine revelation. He also believed in the deity of Jesus Christ and the necessity of His work on the cross. The necessity of faith and repentance as evidence of the new birth were also affirmed

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 349.

<sup>10</sup>Iain H. Murray, *The Fight of Faith 1939-1981* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1990), 99.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 587.

<sup>12</sup>Fred Catherwood, "Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: His Life and Ministry," *Evangelical Times* [on-line]; assessed 2 April 2004; available from <http://www.mlj.org.uk/biog.html>; Internet.

<sup>13</sup>Iain H. Murray, *The Fight of Faith 1939-1981*, 193.

by Lloyd-Jones. All the fundamentals of the Christian faith were held by Lloyd-Jones, as well as the particular theological convictions commonly referred to as Calvinism.

### **Lloyd-Jones' Understanding of the Church**

Lloyd-Jones preached that: “This whole question of *the nature of the Church, the unity of the Church is indeed a fundamental matter.*”<sup>14</sup> He defines the usual meaning of church as “a local gathering of saints where the presence and the lordship of Christ is recognised. But over and above that, in the local churches, all those people who are truly born again and spiritual are also members of the unseen spiritual Church, the true body of Christ.”<sup>15</sup> In a sermon on Ephesians 2:19, Lloyd-Jones listed four different metaphors used by Paul to describe the church: “The Church, he has already suggested, is like a body. But here he tells us that the Church is like a city, a kingdom - ‘fellow citizens’. He says that the Church is also like a family - ‘the household of God’. But the Church is also like a temple, in which God Himself dwells.”<sup>16</sup>

Lloyd-Jones held a high view of the universal church: “There is one perfect mystical Church, unseen and spiritual. There is only one body. This Church consists of people of all types and kinds and colours, from many continents and climes . . . . There are people in this Church from all nations under heaven, from all tribes and peoples throughout the earth.”<sup>17</sup> He took great delight in this understanding of the church as one body across the ages. He once

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<sup>14</sup>D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God's Way of Reconciliation: An Exposition of Ephesians 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1972), 347.

<sup>15</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *The Church and the Last Things* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 7.

<sup>16</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *God's Way of Reconciliation: An Exposition of Ephesians 2*, 312.

<sup>17</sup>D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:1-16* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1980), 52.

preached: “Consider the story of the Church. I am glad that I belong to the same company, the same kingdom, as Augustine, and John Calvin, and Martin Luther, and John Knox and the Puritans, and Whitefield and Wesley and all the rest. We are all one, we belong to that company of people.”<sup>18</sup> What a fellowship of saints is the church!

In addition to his strong view of the universal church, Lloyd-Jones held an equally high view of the local church. Remaining in the Reformed tradition, Lloyd-Jones declared that a true local church can be recognized by its adherence to three main marks. Those marks are, first, “*the preaching of the word,*” second, “the true administration of the sacraments,” and third, “the exercise of discipline.”<sup>19</sup> Next, Lloyd-Jones described the government of the local church as “autonomous and independent.”<sup>20</sup>

For Lloyd-Jones, the church was not just a place to congregate, but a body that is meant to be active: “Many seem to think of the Church as just a building to which they come to sit and listen to sermons and addresses, and in which they do nothing. This is a denial of the fundamental proposition that to every one of us is grace given in the Church and as parts of the body of Christ. Every one of us has a function, and we are not meant to be entirely passive.”<sup>21</sup> These “parts of the body” must be built up. The means by which God accomplishes this is through the Sacraments. Lloyd-Jones affirmed the traditional Protestant position of recognizing only two sacraments: baptism and the Lord’s Supper.<sup>22</sup> The practice of which guarantees “that

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<sup>18</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *God’s Way of Reconciliation: An Exposition of Ephesians 2*, 310.

<sup>19</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *The Church and the Last Things*, 13-14.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>21</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Christian Unity: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:1-16*, 170.

<sup>22</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *The Church and the Last Things*, 33.

the truth should always be proclaimed, through the Church, and often by men whose words denied what they were actually enacting as they administered the sacraments.”<sup>23</sup>

If the sacraments are the means by which the members of the church are built up, the man by whom they are built up is the pastor-teacher. Lloyd-Jones describes the pastor as “a man who is given charge of souls. He is not merely a nice, pleasant man who visits people and has an afternoon cup of tea with them, or passes the time of day with them. He is the guardian, the custodian, the protector, the organizer, the director, the ruler of the flock.”<sup>24</sup>

The man that God uses as a pastor must be called by God and be, above all things, usable:

The call of the New Testament to us primarily, is not to do anything but to be something. The one thing absolutely necessary is that we should be usable. The main hindrance to His working is that we are not usable as we should be. The lives of all the men who have been used of God in the most mighty and signal manner all reveal the same striking truth. Their first intense struggle was always the struggle with themselves, and with their own abilities and powers. A point came when they were driven to their knees, realizing their impotence. They then submitted themselves utterly to their Lord, and were filled with the power of His Holy Spirit. . . . They went out as men transformed, and did amazing and mighty things. What they were enabled to do was not temporary but permanent. Their works have left their mark upon the history of the Church because they were used to revive the whole Church and to build up the people of God. Primarily, it is for God to act, not for us. The first question must not be, What can I do next? but, rather, What am I? Am I being filled according to the measure of my capacity with this divine energy that comes from the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit? Every one of us should ask that question personally and ask to be filled with this energy divine; and let us not only ask it for ourselves, let us pray this for the whole Church.<sup>25</sup>

This is the kind of man that Lloyd-Jones believed God uses. A man surrendered, usable and filled with the Holy Spirit. In regard to being filled with the Holy Spirit, Lloyd-Jones once

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>24</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Christian Unity: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:1-16*, 193.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 276-77.

commented, “To me there is nothing more terrible for a preacher, than to be in the pulpit alone, without the conscious smile of God.”<sup>26</sup> This leads clearly to the final section.

### **Lloyd-Jones’ Methodology of Ministry**

To summarize the methodology of the ministry of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones is to quote three words from the Apostle Paul’s final letter to Timothy: “Preach the Word!” This was Lloyd-Jones entire methodology. He had an exalted view of preaching. In his lectures on ‘Preaching and Preachers,’ later made into a book by the same name, Lloyd-Jones declared: “The work of preaching is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called . . . . I would say that without any hesitation that the most urgent need in the Christian Church today is true preaching; and as it is the greatest and the most urgent need in the church, it is obviously the greatest need of the world also.”<sup>27</sup> With this high view of preaching it is no wonder that Lloyd-Jones’ methodology was what it was.

Although Lloyd-Jones was an heir and admirer of the Calvinistic Baptist Charles Haddon Spurgeon, his preaching style differed considerably. Sir Fred Catherwood writes, “In his approach to the work of the pulpit Dr. Lloyd-Jones did not follow Spurgeon. He believed in working steadily through a book of the Bible, taking a verse or part of a verse at a time, showing what it taught, how that fitted into teaching on the subject elsewhere in the Bible, how the whole teaching was relevant to the problems of our own day and how the Christian position contrasted

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<sup>26</sup>Tony Sargent, *The Sacred Anointing: The Preaching of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 17.

<sup>27</sup>D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1972), 9.

with currently fashionable views.”<sup>28</sup> This approach of in-depth verse by verse exposition produced the many volumes of commentaries which are still in print to this day.

Lloyd-Jones emphasis on preaching resulted in a three-prong attack. Gary Brady describes his approach as follows:

The Doctor preached with three different emphases. On Friday nights the approach was more doctrinal, a Bible study. On Sunday mornings he endeavored to help believers in their Christian living. On Sunday nights he was invariably evangelistic. In all the meetings the aim was to make everything simple with everything focused on the 40 or 50 minute sermon exposition of Scripture. The trends in evangelicalism were all away from this 'old fashioned' approach but Dr Lloyd-Jones was used of God to bring people back to it.<sup>29</sup>

In the above three ways, Lloyd-Jones attempted to fulfill his God-given ministry. The needs of growing Christians were met with a special emphasis on Sunday mornings. Unbelievers were reached with an evangelistic emphasis on Sunday nights. Friday nights were an opportunity for a more in-depth, doctrinal Bible study.

It was in the Friday night meetings that Lloyd-Jones preached his famous series on the book of Romans that resulted in three hundred and seventy-two expositions. One eyewitness of a Friday night service during Lloyd-Jones tenure has written: “After the second hymn Dr Lloyd-Jones expounded for about 50 minutes and then concluded with prayer. There was no final hymn. The prayers all brought home the fact that we were there primarily for the awesome business of the worship of Almighty God and not simply to be instructed, although taught we certainly were.”<sup>30</sup> Obviously these meetings were designed by Lloyd-Jones to focus upon God and His

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<sup>28</sup>Fred Catherwood, “Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: His Life and Ministry,” Internet.

<sup>29</sup>Gary Brady, “The Fight of Faith,” *Grace Magazine* (November, 1999) [on-line]; assessed 2 April 2004; available from [http://www.mlj.org.uk/grace\\_mag/FightOfFaith.htm](http://www.mlj.org.uk/grace_mag/FightOfFaith.htm); Internet.

<sup>30</sup>Robert Oliver, “Friday Nights at Westminster - a personal testimony,” *Grace Magazine* (November, 1999) [on-line]; assessed 2 April 2004; available from

Word as a means of fulfilling the charge committed to him by God as pastor.

### **Helpful Aspects of Lloyd-Jones' Ministry for the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Since Lloyd-Jones' high view of preaching reflects a Biblical understanding of the nature of Scripture (i.e., 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2), his emphasis on preaching the Word should be emulated by pastors in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. Lloyd-Jones was right when he said in his lectures on *Preachers and Preaching* given at Westminster Seminary in 1969, "The work of preaching is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called."<sup>31</sup> He was also correct in assessing, with clinical precision, the greatest need of the church and the world as "true preaching."<sup>32</sup> Therefore, any model of ministry for the church in the twenty-first century must include, as a vital component, the regular and systematic preaching of the Word.

Lloyd-Jones' three-prong approach to preaching to equip his church is another aspect of his ministry which needs to be adopted in some fashion by pastors in the twenty-first century. While one may not devote Sunday nights to an evangelistic emphasis, Friday nights to in-depth doctrinal study, or Sunday mornings to assist the Christians in living the Christian life; these three emphases need to be part of every pastor's ministry some way and somehow. Evangelism, providing an opportunity for deeper study of God's Word and equipping the saints for living the Christian life are all goals which must be a conscious part of the pastor's approach to his work in the pulpit.

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[http://www.mlj.org.uk/grace\\_mag/FridayNights.htm](http://www.mlj.org.uk/grace_mag/FridayNights.htm); Internet.

<sup>31</sup>D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Preachers and Preaching*, 9.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

## **Conclusion**

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was perhaps the greatest preacher of the twentieth century. He was what he was because of his single-minded approach to the ministry. For him preaching was the highest calling and therefore the focus of his ministry. Pastors in the twenty-first century and beyond would do well to follow his example. Instead of the CEO model, which is so prevalent in our day, we need a return to the pastor who is, above all else, a preacher. Church members deserve this from their pastor, and the world needs this from the man of God. Lloyd-Jones was faithful in the discharge of his ministry both at Aberavon and Westminster. His ministry continues today through his books, which is a testimony in and of itself to the lasting validity of his approach to the ministry. Lloyd-Jones' focused preaching in three distinct services to address three specific needs (not felt, but real) is worthy of our consideration as we attempt to faithfully discharge our own ministry in the church for the twenty-first century.

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