



salt shakers

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23 Years of

The

**Grace**

of God



I will make a covenant

# of friendship with them

eze. 37:26

## Contents

|                                                            |       |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Salt for Thought   The Importance of Personal Devotions II | 04-05 |
| Fine Salt   Why We Must be Distinctively Reformed          | 06-07 |
| Shepherd's Salt   Cure for Spiritual Complacency           | 08-11 |
| Cleaning Corner   Remember Your Creator                    | 12-13 |
| Coarse Salt   Homeschooling II                             | 14-15 |
| Salt to Spur   Desiring the Office                         | 16-17 |
| Seasonal Salt   Camp Reflections                           | 18-19 |
| Salt & Paper   Remembering the Lord's Day                  | 20    |
| Oh taste and see!                                          | 21    |
| More Salt to Come                                          | 22    |
| Anniversary Salt   Letters to CERC                         | 23-25 |
| Local Salt   Looking Back & Looking Forward                | 26    |
| Special Salt   23 Years of Grace                           | 27-28 |

## Dear Readers

It is great to once again be able to share with you the Word of God, and His testimonies through our lives, by way of this publication, Salt Shakers. It is indeed a privilege to write for our Lord. Nothing we say or write in this life, however wise, will ever be remembered for years. But when we put down in words our confession of the truth and power of God's Word, we speak and write things that are for eternity. Without doubt, the writers and servants of Salt Shakers are blest. We pray, and hope, that our Lord blesses you as much as He has us, as you read and meditate on the articles contained in here.

This issue is released in conjunction with the 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church. It is a joyous occasion as we reflect on how our Lord has led us through all these years and also wonder about the great things He has in store for us as a church. I would like to share from Ezekiel 16 as we look back at the amazing grace and mercy that God has shown to His church and look forward to its glorious adorning and perfection.

We were pathetic beyond words, and it is difficult to express it in better terms than the prophet Ezekiel. As individuals we were brought out of darkness into light and made alive from being dead in sin. Even now, we struggle with the old man in us and daily increase our debt to our Lord Jesus Christ. As a church, we also constantly fail to be the witness that we should be. We struggle with doctrines because we are weak and do not understand many things. But God is merciful, and His unfailing love covers our nakedness. We were so unlovable, that no one would offer love. But, even if someone offered, no common love would have been sufficient, as only *His* love could fully cover the extent of our nakedness. It was an impossible situation. God's grace was our only hope, and so we are of all men most blessed, as those who are in the gracious Covenant of God.

Celebration for its own sake profits little, especially if it is man-centred. As we celebrate how far we have come, we should also remember the great debt that we have been forgiven of. In this frame of mind, our service to God becomes more and more acceptable as we say with John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

Another useful application, as we remember how much we owe, is that which we can draw from Matthew 18:21-35. We have been brought from an extreme of poverty – owing more than everything, to an extreme of riches – owning more than everything. How do we behave then? The parable shows us that it is simply unreasonable if we fail to forgive those around us! Of course there are many human obstacles that would prevent us from forgiving others. We might be unwilling to show forgiveness because we feel that the other person owes us too much. We might be unwilling to forgive because the other person has not begged us enough. We might even be unwilling to forgive in false holiness that forgiveness would show we have compromised on our high Christian standards!

Whatever our weakness is, God knows, and he *still* tells us "seventy times seven". The only reason we need for forgiving our brother is that we were forgiven of so much more. The focus is not on our unwilling hearts, or on the debt owed to us, but on the cross of Christ. If you, often times, run there to beg forgiveness from your Creditor, then you *must* forgive your brother.

Do you know of someone you have told yourself that you would never forgive? Forgive, and tell him or her that the only reason is because Christ has forgiven you. Should our Lord Jesus use this to bring a lost sheep into the fold, it will truly be cause for celebration!

As we celebrate our 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary, may we never forget where we came from, and remember the forgiveness of our brother we owe to our Lord.

Christ regardless, paul

# The Importance of Personal Devotions II

>> Prof. Hanko

Martin Luther, the 16th century reformer, considered his personal devotions to be crucial for his life and work. He rose at 3:00 every morning to meditate on the Scriptures and pray. He continued this meditation and prayer until 6:00 or later. One of his servants asked him once: “Dear Brother; you are so frightfully busy; how can you afford to spend three hours or more in your devotions?” His answer was, “The busier I am, the more I need those devotions.” That remark of Luther has often put me to shame. Three hours? If I spend a half hour, I am doing well. The greater the busyness, the more important the devotions? How easy it is for you and me to say to ourselves that we are much too busy for our devotions and we will have to skip them for the day. Or, at the end of the day we say to ourselves, “You are so exhausted that you can’t even stay awake long enough to have devotions. You had probably better just forget them today. The Lord will understand how tired I am.” Maybe Luther was the great man of God that he was because he knew the importance of devotions and faithfully practiced them.

I know I am speaking of family devotions, but the importance of family devotions reflects itself in our private and personal devotions. My father told us that his father had to be at work at 7:00 in the morning.

Because these were the days when automobiles were not yet used, my grandfather, who had his own painting business, had to harness the horse, hitch up the wagon and proceed at a horse’s pace to the place of work. This took a great deal of time and he usually had to leave the house by 6:00 AM. But he insisted on having family devotions at the beginning of the day. And so all the children had to be out of bed and at the breakfast table shortly after 5:00.

We tried to practice that when our children were home. It didn’t always work because sometimes our boys had to leave for work around 6:00; I had to take them to work; the distance to and from the place where the boys worked was probably nearly 30 miles. The result was that I and the boys (who worked in the celery fields, had our devotions together at breakfast; and then we had our devotions with the rest of the family when I returned. But we did always have devotions together at the beginning of the day. Both Mrs. Hanko and I considered it important to read God’s word together and pray together as a family. And we always tried desperately to have family devotions at the supper table. If the children were home, we also had devotions at noon. In every case we began with prayer and ended with Scripture reading and prayer. At the beginning of the meal we sought

God’s blessing, and at the end of the meal we gave thanks to God.

This seeking of God’s blessing is important for God’s gifts are sanctified by God’s word and by prayer (1 Timothy 4:3-5).

## What Should Be Included In Devotions (Scripture Reading)

Personal devotions are as important as family devotions.

It is quite clear from Scripture that the main essentials of devotions are the reading of Scripture and prayer. These two elements are important because, being consciously in God’s presence (which is what devotions are), is really a part of covenant fellowship with God. And covenant fellowship has as its main characteristic that those within the covenant have fellowship by conversing together. If they do not speak to each other, they have no fellowship, but each goes his or her own way. A man and his wife live in the covenant of marriage because they can and do talk together. So it is with God and his people. God speaks to them and they speak to God.

But we do not talk to God in the same way that we talk to our neighbor, or even our friend. God is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. He is great and beyond all description. The

difference between God and us is far, far greater than the distance between the most powerful king and a small spider that spins a web in the corner of a ceiling in the palace. God's greatness must be preserved in all our fellowship with him.

As far as our devotions are concerned, God always opens the conversation. He speaks first. He must speak first. But His speech is powerful, quickening, creative. His speech has to be first, for our speech is always and must always be a response to his speech. In fact, God's speech really creates our speech, for his speech brings with it grace and mercy and love.

God's speech does not come to us out of the air. It is not some inner voice which only you can hear. It is not the whisperings of the Spirit in our hearts, so that we say, "God told me to do this ... or that." That sort of thing is the nonsense of Pentecostalism. If that is the way God speaks to us, we can make God say anything we want him to say – and many people do just that. They use the speech of God, which they hear in their hearts to justify things that they should not do. They think they hear God when they feel something, – whatever that feeling may be.

God's speech is in the Bible. That is the only place you will find it. Nowhere else in the whole world can it be found. But that speech of God in the Bible becomes a speech we hear by the work of the Spirit. The Spirit

testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God, Paul says (Romans 8:16). But the Spirit does not speak except through the Bible. The Spirit ties himself to the Bible. He will not speak at all without using the Bible.

It reminds me of something that happened in the Netherlands to a minister. He told his wife one week that he was not going to make a sermon, because he believed that the Spirit would give him what he had to say when the time came. That Sunday morning his wife could not to church, because she was sick. And so when he came home from church, his wife said to him, "Hans", for that was his name, "what did the Spirit say to you this morning?" He mournfully shook his head and said, "All he said to me was, 'Hans, Hans, how lazy you were.'"

You can see the point as far as our devotions are concerned. Bible reading is God's word. That word we must hear first, before we can speak to God. Our speech in our prayers is a response to what God says. It is not a response in the sense that we answer questions from God. It is a responses because we learn who God is, what he does, and why he loves us in Christ. Knowing all these things, we can say that we will tell God all that lies on our hearts and he will surely hear us and answer us.

So Scripture reading must be a part of our devotions. We will wait to discuss this matter of how to read Scripture for another article.

### Questions for discussion:

1. If God speaks to us only through the Bible, how do we know the will of God for us in the circumstances of life about which Scripture does not speak? For example, if we want to marry someone, how do we know it is the will of God that we marry the person we have chosen for our husband or wife? How does a minister who has a call to a different congregation know whether or not to move?
2. Are there any decisions we make in life without God's direction that our completely our decisions?
3. How can we be sure, having made a decision, that it is the right one? Or cannot we be sure?
4. Does God's word help us at all in these situations?
5. Why is it important that we read Scripture before we pray? Is this always necessary?

# Why We Must Be Distinctively Reformed

>> Aaron Lim

In the previous issue we briefly explained what Reformed distinctives are and their importance to the individual believer and the church of Jesus Christ. By distinctives we refer to the unique doctrines and practices of the Reformed church that give it its unique character. Without distinctives, a church cannot be Reformed. Our faith would not be Reformed.

We live in an evil age where churches prefer to be less distinct in order to be more accepting of men. These churches claim that doctrinal distinction is a hindrance to the unity of the church. They assert, moreover, that we must be loving and sympathetic towards those who share a different opinion in matters of the truth. Some would go so far as to say that the individual child of God can never be certain of the truth.

Confusion is bound to reign in churches which tolerate doctrinal differences amongst her members. Where their members confess sharply opposing doctrines, an accurate understanding of God's truth is lost. For example, on the one hand some members confess that God's grace is common to all men. Yet at the same time others believe that God's grace is particular only for His elect. On the one hand some claim that God's covenant is conditional upon faith and obedience. On the other hand others maintain

that no conditions are attached to membership in the covenant. On the one hand some claim that the Christian marriage can be dissolved by lawful divorce. Yet others in the same church maintain a lifelong marriage bond. The prophet Elijah's question comes to them forcefully, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow Him." (1 King 18:21)

The truth of the matter is that churches which prefer to be doctrinally tolerant and obscure do not love the truth at all costs. Their attitude is rooted in what Christ condemns as lukewarmness, being "neither cold nor hot" (Rev 3:16). They are not at all concerned about the purity Christ's doctrine. These churches desire to please men more than God. Christ would have none of that when He declared: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matt 12:30). The church of Jesus Christ either cleaves steadfastly to the truth and confesses it distinctively or sells it to the devil. No church sits on the fence. It is either or.

Toleration of false doctrine is toleration of lies about God Himself. The devil is the father of the lie that hates God and His truth. From the beginning in creation the devil deceived Eve by questioning God's true Word, bringing

mankind down in sinful ruin. Because the devil is cunning and subtle, he presents false doctrines as the truth and tempts the church of Jesus Christ to accept them. Gradually more false doctrines enter into the church and corrupts the whole truth. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (1 Cor 5:6). How sad is it today that the majority of churches have fallen sway to the devil's devices.

But the true church will always stand firm in the truth. One of the distinctive marks of the true church is her preaching of the pure doctrine of the gospel (Belgic Confession Art 29). Not obscure, contradictory and confusing but pure, unadulterated, decisive doctrine. It is the doctrine of her God who has revealed Himself to her. It is her confession of the truth about Him. Her love is manifested in the accuracy and boldness of her confession. She will do this because she loves Him with all her heart, soul, mind and strength. There are crucial reasons why a Reformed church must not only be doctrinally distinctive but also maintain her distinctives unashamedly.

1. All doctrine is principally a doctrine of God. God would not have His people confessing a shallow and obscure doctrine about Him, much less one that is false. For this reason He calls the church to be the pillar and ground

of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). Ever does the church that loves her God desire to be an unflinching witness to His truth. As a wife loves her husband as a unique person, so the church loves her God according to the unique truth that He reveals Himself in. She will not tolerate a speck of lie in any degree about her God.

2. The one calling of the church is to preach the gospel distinctly. The call of the gospel that extends to the people of God must be quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb 4:12). It is a call that pierces the believer's conscience, turning his heart to the sovereign Lord who graciously pardons the sinner in the cross of Jesus Christ. It is a call that comes with the full counsel of God, declaring Who He is and all His wondrous works. She holds forth the word of life (Phi 2:16) accurately, confidently and powerfully.

3. By doctrinal distinction the true church is separated from the false. It is striking that the BC in Article 29 declares that "we ought diligently and circumspectly to discern from the Word of God which is the true church, since all sects which are in the world assume to themselves the name of the church". For the true church, the Word of God is her infallible rule. She cleaves steadfastly to this rule for all matters of her faith and practice. She will not be flippant about observing this rule.

4. The church cannot be governed according to the rule of Christ where His doctrines are not distinctly confessed. A trumpet that gives an uncertain sound cannot prepare soldiers in Christ's army for battle (1 Cor 14:8). Where differing doctrines pervade in the church, members

can live according to any doctrine they believe in. After all, they insist that we should not condemn others for believing in a differing doctrine. There is not one doctrine according to godliness (1 Tim 6:3), but many according to them. Church discipline, the third mark of distinguishing a true church, can hardly be exercised in such a church.

5. Godliness and holiness of life are impossible without doctrinal distinction. The apostle Peter speaks of the fact that believers are to increase in their gifts and the fruits of the Spirit according to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:8). It is evident that doctrines flow into life. Without doctrine, we cannot be a holy people. Without doctrinal distinction, we would still be babes who cannot take solid meat from God's Word. We are to desire the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby (1 Pet 2:2).

6. Biblical evangelism begins with doctrinal distinction. Our evil age of tolerance prides itself in promoting mission work and evangelism to the unbelieving world. But where a church is not strong doctrinally, she will only promote a shallow gospel at best. A Reformed church does a great injustice to the blessed Reformed faith when she does not preach with doctrinal distinction.

7. The church in succeeding generations will grow stronger with doctrinal distinction. The psalmist declares that "one generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts" (Ps 145:4). They are able to do so because they know the works of Jehovah distinctly. They know Him intimately. Therefore the church prospers in strength and true unity.

"If in our day Reformed men would be a little less disposed to tolerate error and a little more disposed to refute and contradict the errors rejected by our fathers, Reformed churches in general would be doctrinally more vigorous and spiritually more healthy" (pg 292, *The Voice of Our Fathers*, Homer C. Hoeksema, RFP, 1980).

These words by Prof. Hoeksema underscore the importance of maintaining solid doctrinal distinctions. A vague and obscure understanding of the truth would be of little profit to the child of God. Our fathers at Dordt would not budge an inch in their condemnation of false doctrine. So must we not.

Well, do we in CERC confess that by the grace of God alone we have been delivered the Reformed faith? Doctrinal distinction is required for that faith to mature and develop. It requires a zealous striving to understand the deeper things of God found in His Word. It requires a godly courage to fight the enemies of the truth. It requires an impeccable boldness to stand alone for the truth's sake when friend and family forsake us. God's truth, to the Reformed believer, is above all. He will be distinctively Reformed.

# THE CURE TO SPIRITUAL COMPLACENCY

Dear young people,

Your calling as a child of God is to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Now, you must not misunderstand the word of the apostle Paul. He does not mean that you are to work for your salvation or to work at your salvation. No, that would mean that you are working in order to earn or to merit salvation. That surely is not the meaning of the apostle Paul. Notice very carefully, he says, “work out your salvation...” This means that, in the first place, by implication you are already a child of God. Thus, you are already saved from your sins and you inherit eternal life. You are already in possession of salvation. Therefore, to work out your salvation means to live out your Christian life in obedience and love to the Lord, fleeing youthful lusts and cleaving to the Lord your God. This is illustrated in your own family life. As a child of your father and mother, you need not earn your way into your family because by virtue of your birth, you are a son or daughter of your parents. But, as a child of your parents, you want to obey your parents out of love and gratitude to them for raising, feeding and clothing you. One of the ways in which you are moved to work out your salvation is by recognising that you are a child of God, implying that certain godly behaviour is expected of you and this is pointed out in verse 15.

Negatively, according to verse 14, you are to do all things without murmuring and disputing. To murmur is to complain within oneself or to speak under one's breath. It is to have a discontented and unhappy spirit. Immediately our thoughts turn to the murmurings of the children of Israel in the wilderness. Their journey was characterised by murmuring: they complained against Moses and in fact, they were complaining against God for the lack of water, meat and food for them. Oh, they said that they would rather die in Egypt than to die in the wilderness. What did this murmuring reveal about their spiritual condition? According to Hebrew 4.6, it reveals a heart of unbelief. That generation died in the wilderness for the Lord was not pleased with that generation. There is another thing that ought not to characterise the child of God – disputing. The fruit of murmuring is disputing, which is to argue, debate and strive. In the same chapter, the apostle already exhorted the saints that nothing should be done through strife or vain glory. These concern self-interests and when our desires are not met, we are unhappy and we quarrel and fight. Did not the apostle James say that these wars and fights come because of the lusts within you? James 4:1-4, “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have



“Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain”.

## Philippians 2.14-16

not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

Why does the apostle forbid murmuring and disputing among the saints? This does not work out the salvation of God's people, in fact, it works the opposite. That entire generation that murmured against God died in the wilderness because of their unbelief. God's people must be characterised by contentment with the ways of the Lord, whole-hearted trust in God and possessing the assurance that God will be with them. Only then, are we working out our salvation with fear and trembling.

The result of obeying this exhortation is to achieve the result that “you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, upholding forth the word of life...” To be blameless means that no one is able to charge you with sin. If you live a godly life, you will receive all kinds of accusations. Did not the apostle Paul said that they who live godly shall suffer persecution? To receive accusations does not mean that you are certainly to be blamed. When you receive these accusations, it is very important not to engage in self-pity or to conclude that you have sinned; what you must do is to evaluate them one by one and judge them on the criteria whether you have sinned in those instances. You are not blameless if others rightly accuse you of sin.

Furthermore, also note that to be blameless does not mean that you are sinless. We cannot achieve sinless perfection while we have this body of sin. Notice the emphasis upon the word blameless is not so much as what you feel in your hearts but rather what others see in us through our behaviour. When we are living a life that is characterised by blamelessness, we are pure and innocent from our sins that we are accused of. This is the idea of the next word “harmless” which the apostle uses. Literally, the word means “pure, unmixed”. This is a description of a character that is marked by integrity and innocence of purity, and sincerity. By such living and impeccable behaviour you would be without fault and no one would be able to censure you.

The apostle wants us to know that we do not live in a friendly environment. He reminds us that we live in a crooked and perverse nation. The idea of those

James 4:1-4, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

two words means that the nation is characterised by people who have wandered away from God. This is the result of rejecting the revelation of God in the creation of this world being understood by the things that are made. They ought to have seen the invisible things of God, namely his eternal power and Godhead. And thus, they were without excuse. Instead of glorifying him as God, they were unthankful and became vain in their imagination and their foolish hearts were darkened. As a consequence, they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into images of corruptible man and beasts. Therefore God gave them over unto uncleanness through their own heart's lusts unto vile affections: women with women and men with men and doing that which is unseemly in the sight of God. God gave them over to a reprobate mind and they are filled with unrighteousness, fornications, wickedness, covetousness and maliciousness. This wicked world is characterised by those who depart from the living God because they have rejected the revelation of God. One thing that must impress us is that we are not living in a Christian friendly environment but in the company of those who hate God.

But what are we doing in this environment? What is God's purpose in putting us in this environment? What is our calling? Your calling is that you shine as lights in the world. You are light. You shine because God has commanded the light of the gospel to shine in your hearts through our Lord Jesus Christ to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6). First, the light that you have as young people is not inherent for you were originally darkness as you have sinned in Adam. But thanks be to grace of God that

you possess the light of the gospel so that you are no longer in darkness but in the light. Secondly, this gospel is light because this gospel is the person of Jesus Christ, in whom there is no darkness at all. He is the only begotten Son of God and He came to teach us the glory of God. The glory of God is the shining forth of all the attributes of God – His almighty power, His omnipotence, and His sovereignty. So, the gospel teaches us about the Almighty God and His attributes. God is love and in His great love for us He sent Jesus Christ to die for us on the cross and whosoever believes in Jesus Christ shall not perish but have everlasting life. This is the gospel. Young people, you shine as lights in this world because of you have believed in Jesus Christ. To use an illustration, the torchlight shines because of the battery that is in it. The torchlight by itself does not shine; it needs a set of batteries. Christ is those set of batteries so that you as the torchlight is able to shine.

As you shine as a light in this crooked and perverse generation, you are holding forth the word of life. First, this life is eternal life. Eternal life is the knowledge of God through Christ and is given to those who believe in Jesus Christ. This life is not living in the way of sin but living in the intimate fellowship with God and His Son Jesus Christ. This intimate fellowship takes place when we abide in Christ through the Word of God that dwells in our hearts. We abide in Christ through the obedience of His Word as God communes with us through His Word. How do we receive this eternal life? Jesus Christ promises us in His Word that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. We are given eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, to hold forth this Word of Life does not

refer to the work of the minister of God preaching the Word of God but rather you as young people hold forth the Word of life by living a godly and holy life. This passage is all about working your salvation through your Christian conduct. And so how are you holding forth the Word of life? Firstly, you hold forth the word of life through your speech. You speak in a way that testifies to others that you are a child of God, and no one is left wondering whether you are a Christian. Dear young people, are you as light shining in this crooked and perverse nation? Do others recognise that light and stop and ask you what is that special something about you that is not found in others? When others ask you what your secret is, do you give praise and glory to God? Secondly, to hold forth the word of life means that you speak the gospel. When was the last time you told others about Christ and the way to salvation? Did you tell them the promise of the gospel, that whosoever believes in Jesus Christ shall not perish but have everlasting or eternal life? When was the last time you called upon others to repent and believe the gospel? Remember, you hold forth the word of life through your Christian conduct and the gospel that you present to others.

Finally, the apostle makes his appeal to us to obey this Word on the basis that you are the children of God. Dear young people let us pause here and just meditate on the fact that you are the children of God! What a great privilege and honour the Lord has given unto you – you are sons and daughters of God, God's own family! But lest you become conceited and have the wrong idea, you must be reminded that you are the children of God only by the grace and mercy of God, not because of anything that is in you. You do not merit anything with

God because you are undeserving and you are born as children of wrath and are dead in trespasses and sins. Furthermore, you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:1-2). As children in the family of God there is a certain behaviour that is expected of you that reflects who you are.

This appeal is personal: that the apostle may rejoice in the day of the coming of Christ. And what is it that will cause him to rejoice? It is this, that there are fruits to the labours of the apostle. This fruit comes about when the Philippian saints live as children of God in their conduct. So too is my rejoicing when I see you as God's covenant youth live a life that is blameless and pure, as children of God and in this way holding forth the Word of life. Then, you will be working out your salvation. Amen.

# remembering our creator

What makes human nature stand out among all the other creatures of this world is his powerful memory. But what is memory if we cannot recall it accurately for further use? And among the things we recall in remembering can we see God therein? "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

## **Its meaning and importance**

The creator of a thing is the one that stands behind that created thing as its designer and maker. An honest scientist who experiments and observes a thing must humbly acknowledge that there is design in the thing he observes. If a thing moves and changes without any good and consistent reason, then science and knowledge become impossible. Science and knowledge is about defining relationships among objects. When there are no consistent rules of laws governing changes, then science has nothing to observe which it can later repeat in experimentation. When these laws are seen to be purposeful, there is design in the object observed.

There are designs all around us, not only in man-made objects, but also in the natural objects. Take the human being for an example. Within this natural object, there are many systems at work simultaneously and harmoniously. There is the digestive system to ensure that the human body is well nourished. There is the nervous system to ensure central, intelligent control of the body in all its actions. So there is intelligence behind the human body testifying that there is a Designer behind all things.

The glory of this Designer is what the heavens and the earth unceasingly speak of from day to day. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and

the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard." (Psa 19:1-3) Yet the creature that is made after the image of the Designer (man himself) fails to appreciate that glory. In fact, some vain men (in their folly) even dare to declare that there is no God. Those who know better say: "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth." (Psa 57:5)

Solomon, the wise, at the end of his book on the meaning of life (Ecclesiastes 12), calls upon the youth to remember their Creator. So there is no wisdom when a youth has no time for God – to know, appreciate and make known His glory. In fact, such foolish attitude is sin which must be repented of by all youth.

To remember something is to call to mind again some past memories of the thing. To remember our Creator is to recall past memories of our encounters with God as our Designer and Maker. It is only natural that a human being wonders about the origin of all things, at one time or another. His conscience which excuses or accuses him of wrong doings also testifies of the fact of his accountability towards God. Belief in subsequent lies of the devil may render a person neglectful of the knowledge of God. But God's calling towards men is always to remember their Creator.

In this fallen world such a remembrance of the Creator would lead to the knowledge of Him as the Redeemer in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

It is the calling of every human being to seek salvation from Jesus Christ alone. And this begins by the remembering of the Creator.

## **Its priority for youth in particular**

Youth in particular must remember the Creator, so thought the wise man, Solomon, after some deep thinking. At the time of writing, Solomon had the wisdom from above, confirmed in his own personal experiences. In that wisdom, he declared that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, when God is not in them. The saving knowledge of God in thought, word and deed, is fundamental for right living.

Some people may think that the knowledge of God can wait as there are more important things for a person to learn and experience, and so little time to do so. It is true, of course, that the knowledge of all things is impossible for any man. One must pick and choose what he wants to study and learn. If he does not prioritise, he would be wasting his time learning the unnecessary and distracting things. With good guidance from experienced people, a learner can advance faster and easier.

Solomon, as king and preacher, commanded that his people remember their Creator in the days of their youth. He did not think that young people had too many important things to learn to be concerned about knowing God. Not only must they know God, they must recall Him in all their thoughts.

The best time to learn anything is the time of youth. At this stage of growth, a person is sharpest in all of his faculties. All his five senses are up and about to transmit and receive information. His brain is being used most actively to process the information and make sense of the things around him. Ecclesiastes 12 contrasts the days of youth with “the evil days” of old age when a person finds no pleasure in the use of their various faculties.

For the Preacher, things learnt during the formative years of youth are vain without relating them to the knowledge of God. If indeed all things come from God, then they must all be related to Him in the most meaningful way. True knowledge is about relating all things around us in a meaningful way. Godless knowledge is the lie of the devil. It is foolishness which finally leads to destruction.

Do you agree with the wise man? Is God in all your thoughts as you learn many things in your youth? Are you a wise and godly person?

### Answering its call

If you are a young person from a Christian home, you can now understand why your parents regularly bring you to Church since you were born. They want you to have the true knowledge of God, which can make you wise to salvation as you grow in grace. You can appreciate their concern for you and co-operate with them in the pursuit of God.

You are also encouraged to be active in the Covenant Keepers’ activities. In these activities you not only learn about God intellectually but also how to relate to Him in real life. God is in our midst, and we must not live as if He is not around overseeing us to protect and guide us. We must remind each other of God’s presence, so that we may remember Him in the days of our youth.

Any forgetting of God must be repented of if we are to correct ourselves and get rid of the harmful errors which hinder right learning. We are always learning, and especially so when we are in our youth. So keeping clean from this sin is most important for us at this age of our development.

When we remember our Creator in our youth, we learn early in life how to live antithetically as the people of God in this dark and sinful world.

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;”  
Ecc. 12:1

I have been in public schools since kindergarten till secondary school. I am sure most of us know what being in a public school is like. So I will be talking about the benefits and challenges of Public Schooling in my spiritual life.

I have a vague memory of sharing God's word with a particular kindergarten friend. I do not remember any details but I remember that she told it to her parents and her family attended church soon after. This proves that even from a young age, public school does have its benefits. The major benefit is the opportunity to share the true gospel with our non-christian and Christian friends. I have had plenty of small 'arguments' with my Christian friends over certain doctrines, especially over Limited Atonement and Unconditional Election. I feel that defending the gospel makes me stand firmer in God's word and encourages me to read up and memorize more scripture so that anytime and anywhere, I would be ready to defend God's word.

One notable problem I have faced is curriculum that contradicts God's word. My first encounter with such a scenario was when I was in Secondary 1, and the teacher was talking about the Himalayas being created million of years ago. When I heard that, I was deeply troubled. Perhaps I was still young, but I felt that it would be wrong to write that on my exam script. It was as if I believed that the world was formed millions of years ago due to the big bang or even evolution. I even felt the need to speak up about this nonsense that was being taught. Of course, those teachings did not stop at Secondary 1 – they last till now. Silently, I assure myself that God's word is the one true word, and if there were any doubts, I would immediately check the Bible. This is when our faith is put to the test. Will we believe what the world teaches us? No! We must stand firm in God's true and living word!

Once, my principal announced that we were not allowed to spread religion around school, due to cases of seniors inviting juniors to their churches and

Isa &lt;&lt;

# PUBLIC / SCHOOL

parents complaining. When I heard this I was frustrated. How could he say such a thing? Since when did spreading God's word become a 'crime'? Certainly it is only the devil's work that can cause anyone to say such a thing. It discouraged me, but God has provided me with church friends who have told me to continue doing what I do and not let what he said affect me.

In terms of time management, waking up early to do devotions isn't really a problem although sometimes it can be difficult and requires a lot of will power. Personally, school does not require me to spend huge amounts of time in the school compound. However, my co-curricular activity requires me to attend lots of practices and sometimes skip Covenant Keepers (CK) youth meetings. Every time I skip any church event I would be filled with a terrible sense of guilt. Therefore placing CK activities as my number one priority over band practice or school was my first step to attending more CK meetings. Furthermore, after joining the CK committee, I have felt more responsibility to attend CK meetings. After all, they are spiritually enriching and no company beats the warm fellowship of God's people.

Matthew 5:14 "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." We are indeed God's children and we must show the world our good testimony. In a public school, we are given the opportunity to share the gospel. Certainly we must set a good example, so that people can immediately identify that we are the light of this world.

Finally, let me share from 1 Timothy 4:12 "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." In an environment where worldly influences abound, we must continue to be strong in our faith, and remember our eternal prize.

# HOMESCHOOLING

>> Ming Hui

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” What better way for parents to teach their children the ways of the Lord than through homeschooling?

Homeschooling enables families to spend their days together. And because families spend their days together, parents and children, as well as siblings, have more bonding time and develop closer relationships. This is in contrast to most children in public schools who spend most of their time in school, and spend whatever time left at home on the ever-present burden of homework, projects, and studying for tests. Personally I enjoy homeschooling because I have lots of free time to read and pursue other hobbies. Our family also enjoys the flexibility to have family outings on weekdays, as well as cheaper travel during off-peak seasons.

Another of the “pros” of homeschooling is that it enables Christians to have a closer walk with God. Public schools in Singapore nowadays are assigning more and more homework to students, so that they have practically no time for anything else. This could be one of the devil’s attempts to draw believers away from spending

time reading God’s Word and praying. Homeschooling allows more free time, and thus more time to pray and meditate on the Word of God.

When our family first started homeschooling, many well-meaning relatives and friends strongly advised my parents against it, thinking that homeschooling does not provide enough opportunities to socialize. Although it is true that special effort has to be made to socialize, the socialization found in public schools might not be very good either. There are many worldly influences like inappropriate speech (Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 10:31-32; Colossians 3:8) and undesirable values from ungodly teachers and peers in public schools nowadays (Jude 4), and we should be careful who we socialize with. (1 Corinthians 15:33; Proverbs 13:20)

Another reason for the strong urging of many of our family and friends not to homeschool was that they thought homeschooling did not provide as good an education as public schooling, and that there was therefore no future for homeschoolers. That is definitely not true. Homeschooling provides as good an education as public schools, or maybe even better. In homeschooling, there is a wide variety of curricula to choose from, and a curriculum can be found to fit each student according to his/her character and needs. In contrast, public schools use the same curriculum for every student, no matter how different they may be and regardless of whether it works well for them.

The last reason for the advice against homeschooling from our friends and relatives was that students in public schools meet people with good and evil intentions, and when they are older, they will supposedly know how to tell such people apart. Homeschoolers, they think, will not know how to tell these people apart because they have not had “experience”. In my opinion, Christian homeschoolers will be able to tell these people apart just as well as students who attend public schools, because they will have been firmly grounded in the Word of God, and will know what goes against the Law of God. But, finally, no one, except God, will know the true intentions of man, for God alone knows the heart, which is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

Despite its benefits, homeschooling also has its challenges. One of the challenges is self-discipline. Because there is no competition from peers, there can be a lack of motivation, and self-discipline is needed to withstand the many temptations we are surrounded by, like books, the television, and the computer. (James 1:12)

One of the “cons” of homeschooling is that because there are lesser opportunities to socialize, there are also lesser opportunities to witness to others. But despite this disadvantage, we must not take it that we have no opportunity to witness at all. There are still people to witness to, like the people we meet in our daily lives, for example, unsaved relatives, neighbors, and even our parents’ friends and colleagues. We are to be good testimonies, both to Christians (to strengthen and encourage them) and non-Christians (to gain them to Christ) alike. We should also pray for opportunities to witness.

From my two-and-a-half years of homeschooling experience, I have gained a lot. Not only have I gained a closer relationship with my family, I have also gained a closer walk with God. And I hope that what I have written will give you a better perspective of homeschooling.

# desiring the office in a reformed church

>> Deacon Chan

It is the joy of every godly parent to bring up god-fearing covenant children, and greater joy it is to hear that their sons desire the office in a reformed church. It is therefore my delight to advise a young man desiring the office because he desires a good work. One of the first questions in this young man's mind is whether it is God's will or whether God is calling him to the office. Is that desire an indication that God wants him to be in such offices? I hope he will find here some principles which will guide him to answer those questions.

## The call

In the first place, I am convinced that he is to prepare himself for the office without first asking or knowing if God wants him in it. God does not call a man to office by some mystical internal call known only to him. There is only one way that God calls a man to office - through the church. But how does the church know who to call? The Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 21 Q&A 55 summarises God's calling to every believer within the church when it says, "...that everyone must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members". It speaks of 'employing his gifts'. There are no gift-less Christians (Rom 12:5) but there are three types of gift users. Those who use them for the salvation of others, those who use them for themselves and those do not use their gifts. It is when the young man performs his duty that the church will recognize God's calling for him and extend the call to him.

The use of gifts must not be equated with being active in church activities. While it is a good thing, it is not necessarily a good measure of a man's qualification for office. It is a common mistake to nominate men who are "active in church". Active members often stand out in the crowd but the church must look out for members with the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and who use such gifts for the salvation of other members. An example of such gifts is being apt to teach. For both pastors and elders, the ability to diligently study the Word of God is necessary. The form for the ordination of elders says this about the need to be apt to teach: "... for the performance of which [watching diligently against the wolves] the elders are duty bound diligently to search the word of God, and continually be meditating on the mysteries of faith". The young man ought to be able to do such before he is in office as entering the office will not make him suddenly knowledgeable in the word of God. The church needs men who are able and willing to defend the faith, not great organisers or people with abilities to lead it forward in the next lap.

Until the young man is already diligently using his gifts for the good of members in the church, which is his basic Christian calling, he is outside the radar of the church's search for office bearers.

## Qualifications

The qualifications have been expounded by many at great length and I must insist that these qualities are not opinions or words of wisdom but scripture prescribed requirements. Except for that of ruling one's house well, being apt to teach and not being a novice, all the qualities listed are to be expected in every regenerated child of God. More so, it must be true of office bearers so that they can be an example to the flock. These requirements must not be compromised for the sake of filling vacancies.

This is not to say that only a perfect man will do because then no one would qualify in this life. The Lord uses the weak things of this world to do His work so that all glory goes to him alone. It is a true saying that "... when I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Cor 12:20). The qualifications of the offices are qualities given by God as He sanctifies us so that in our service to God we can only say 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me' (Phil 4:13). Therefore, the church must look out for men "full of the Holy Ghost", that is, men who are evidence that God sanctifies and chastens because the Lord only sanctifies whom He loves. The evidence of God's love in the man is his love for the brothers, the members of the church. (1 John 4:21)



## **The Church**

It must be remembered that this whole matter is first and foremost about the Church and not about the person. The local church, as part of the Universal church, is a very special entity in this world. She consists of those called out of this world to be members the body of Jesus Christ. Unlike membership in an earthly organisation where members voluntarily join for some benefits, Christ saves us into the church. None of the true members of the church would have joined voluntarily and no heavenly benefits would have enticed sinners dead in sins except God had chosen them before the foundation of the world and given them faith to believe. So the young man must remember that the church consists of sinners saved by grace who in this life continue to struggle with the power of sin and the weaknesses of their flesh. As a member in this imperfect body of Christ, he seeks her good with every gift that God gives him. More than just desiring the office, he cannot allow himself to neglect the apple of God's eye bought with the blood of Christ. He is duty bound to prepare himself to be ready to answer when called to serve in the special offices.

Furthermore, desiring the office is equivalent to desiring the work of Jesus Christ in the church. Every child of God, without exception, must be a servant of Jesus Christ but some, the Lord calls to be chief among us. To these, the Lord says, 'whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant' (Mat 20:27). Faithful servants do not lord over God's heritage but use their gifts to serve them. A faithful and diligent servant "well purchase to themselves a good degree" but mediocre servants put the church at risk of having its candlestick removed. (Rev 2:5).

## **Considering the Call**

How should you consider a call that the church extends to you to serve in one of the offices of Christ? This call means that the church recognises that you have been faithful in the office of believer and now calls you to a specific office. It is not a promotion but a call to already faithful servants to take up a specific and honourable task.

Such calls from Christ, through His church, must be considered with all due diligence. Throw false modesty out of the window when the Master calls. As I said in the beginning, you should have prepared yourself for it before and, with few exceptions, be ready to give the answer "Lord, send me". We have to humbly accept that there are times when the Lord does put us in difficult circumstances in life which will not be advisable for us to be in the office and it pains us to have to say "no". If, after much prayer, you have to reject the call, a substantial reason must be given. To be godly is every man's calling but not every godly man is ready for the office.

## **In a Reformed Church**

The young men desiring such office must be an example of submission to the rule of the elders. In the Reformation, God returned to the church such offices and the truth of the plurality and equality of elders so that there is no hierarchy where one elder or pastor rule above others. There is only the rule of Christ in the church and it is through the rule of the elected elders.

Any church that calls itself reformed but is dominated by an elder or pastor denies the rule of Christ and is far from being reformed. I doubt an office in such a church is desirable or worth consideration because they essentially deny Christ. In fact, my advise to the young man would be to come out of an apostate church because by continuing in her, he bears the corporate responsibility of her errors and is guilty before God for propagating her errors.

Finally, office bearers are mere men, unable of themselves to do the work; but like us, they can do all things through Christ Jesus. We pray that God may replenish them with gifts of wisdom, courage, discretion and benevolence so that they may take heed in doctrine and life, keep out the wolves, reprove the disorderly and comfort the poor with the Word of God. We also pray for ourselves, that God will give us grace to submit to their rule, that His holy name may be magnified and the kingdom of Christ may be enlarged.

# CAMP REFLECTIONS

>> Cornelius

The CKS Retreat 2010 was held from the 22nd to the 25th of June, which was also the week after the church camp. Despite it being so close after the church camp, I felt that I was both spiritually and mentally refreshed by it.

The theme for the camp was Covenant Defence 101 and our camp master Jonah gave an opening address on how our precious truths are constantly under attack and there is a need not only to be well grounded in our own beliefs but to know what the opposing doctrine is as well. Like what Sun Tze wrote in his Art of War – “If you know both yourself and your enemy, you can win a hundred battles without a single loss.” (Jonah did not actually say this but I thought that it was an apt description).

Pastor Goh was our camp speaker and he gave us 3 messages over the course of the camp. The first was on God’s Covenant with Noah. The covenant was a covenant of friendship and God was the one who initiated the covenant with Noah playing no part in it. The rainbow is also the sign of the covenant, with the white beam symbolising the covenant and the splitting of the light representing the manifold aspects of the covenant of grace. Through the rainbow God also promises us that he will not destroy the world by flood again and it is also a sign that God will judge the wicked while proclaiming His blessings to His elect.

The second message was on Defending the Reformed faith, where pastor Goh mentioned the 5 pillars of the reformed faith. (And also on TULIP)

1. Glory of God
2. Sovereignty of God
3. Scripture Alone
4. Committed to Faith Alone
5. Covenant of Grace

He also mentioned about the regulative principle of worship which refers to the elements that should be included in worship. Only elements which are explicitly taught in scripture should be included, the basis of this is found in the second commandment.

The third message was on Living the Antithetical Life where the idea was to have a spiritual separation from the world as the bible mentions that we are not to be unequally yoked. This message yielded a very interesting discussion and some interesting questions were brought up in the area of music. Is all worldly music bad? Is it the lyrics or the tune that is bad? How do we draw the line between good and bad music? And finally, is the music we listen to glorifying God?

There were also two workshops; the first was conducted by Elder Wee on the Heresy of the Conditional Covenant. What we believe in is the Unconditional Covenant where the covenant is established and maintained by God alone for his elect. And that we cannot be saved by our own faith. Rather it is only by the grace of God are we able to have faith in Him.

On the other hand, the Conditional Covenant teaches that faith and good works are conditions to our salvation. This is to say that God makes the covenant with many but only those that can fulfil the conditions will be saved. This is false because it makes keeping the covenant the work of men and compromises the sovereignty of God.

The second workshop was conducted by Elder Lee on Pentecostalism. They believe that God is still revealing truth beyond the scriptures today and the emphasis is on emotion rather than logic. And the heart of its error is the denial of the sufficiency of the Bible as the only authoritative and complete revelation of God’s truth.

We also had much time of fun and fellowship together. From normal captains ball to improvised captains ball with fruits such as tomato, banana, papaya and durian (just kidding). Let’s just say that after the game we were not very clean, especially Isaac’s CK shirt which he wore for the first time. There was also the epic battle of the Koh’s which was a no holds barred fight. (I won’t tell you who lost though :P). Then there was the BBQ which was awesome. On hindsight I should not have gorged myself as that left me with no room for the durians later.

Finally, I would like to thank God for all those who took time to help out in the camp and also those who attended the camp. Thank God for all the people that have made this camp such an enjoyable one, people like Jonah the song book hugger (spotted hugging the ck songbook while sleeping by Joshua), Julia the love sick (she came despite feeling sick and having lessons in the day, maybe a special someone played a part as well), Ivan the lost (guess who got me lost on the first day), Isaac the Strategist (\*nearly\* won the couch game for the guys), Claudia the queen of spades, Josiah the fruit smasher (don’t stand near him), Aaron the fruit smashed (he found out the hard way), Paul and Joshua the duet (they make lovely music together through the night) and who could forget Marcus the cat.

>> Isa

On 4-5 June 2010, God blessed CK with a retreat.

The retreat started off with an opening address from our retreat master, Daniel Tang. After the briefing on what to expect during the day's activities, we headed to the multi-purpose hall where we had our ice-breakers, which was in fact, to make our own lunch. We had to make our own pizza lunch out of bread or dough, and other ingredients like capsicums, pineapples, mushrooms, ham, cheese and hot dogs. I believe the campers enjoyed their very own 'self-cooked' meal, despite the long queue at the oven. Thankfully, we had enough food to go around.

Since Pastor Lau was not well enough to present his message after lunch, we played games planned by Vera instead. This game tested our memory power to the limits as we smacked plates and endured the forfeits!

We were thankful to God that Pastor Lau was well enough after our games to give the message. He exhorted us on the theme, God's peculiar people, which is our CK theme, as well as the CK retreat's theme. The text was taken from Exodus 19:5-6. I learned that due to the great departure, man is in a state of death, and only God can deliver us from this death. Man therefore must look to God for mercy and deliverance. The fruition of God can only come through a divine covenant, the Covenant of Grace. What struck me was that calling ourselves Covenant Keepers makes it really important for CK to keep this covenant. We see the need to continually study the subject of the Covenant of God.

I believe we all took something home from God's Word.

After the message, CK divided ourselves into groups for the message discussion where we talked further about God's Covenant of Grace and examined the subject through the discussion questions. There was much food for thought after the spiritually edifying message.

We took public transport to the barbecue pit for our dinner. Before the dinner, Jonah gave a word of exhortation by the beach. The dinner was the effort of some youths and all the mothers who came prepared with food and drinks. The BBQ dinner was indeed a real treat for our already grumpy stomachs.

Then we took off on our bikes to venture around Singapore, well, at least part of it. Safety was such a high priority that the retreat committee readied medics, adult helpers and even standby emergency drivers! Night cycling can be dangerous and the journey was long and tiring but it was indeed a good time of singing God's praises along the way and looking out for our fellow brethren. Sleepy people with sore muscles, we finished the course safe and sound. I could not wait to jump into bed!

Psalms 121:5 "The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand." Truly God has kept his people during this period of fellowship during this CK retreat. The teens definitely had a good time of spiritual bonding through the activities. Even though it was only 24 hours but I believe that God used this time to bring his people together, even parents, for a blessed time together.

I would like to thank God for guiding the retreat comm, Daniel, Vera, Ruth, Josiah, Boaz, Noelene, Marcus and myself through the planning and running of the retreat. Serving God in this committee has been a blessing in itself. I would like to thank all the people who have helped out in one way or another, whether it be through providing food, or feeding us with spiritual food.

Quoting Pastor Lau in the Retreat Speaker's voice, "May God show you that His peculiar people are those in covenant fellowship and friendship with Him. They are His special treasure, the apple of His eyes. You should not be ashamed of His Covenant of Grace, but appreciate it deeply and keep it dearly not only yourself, but in the generations to come."

# Remembering the Lord's Day

>> Bro. Seow Thong

On 11 May 2010, the Reformed Reading Book Club met to review and discuss the pamphlet on 'Remembering the Lord's Day' written by Prof Engelsma of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. Though this is only a ten page pamphlet, Prof Engelsma has concisely pointed out the essence of keeping or remembering the Lord's Day.

In his introduction, Prof Engelsma equated the Lord's Day to the dikes in Netherlands that keep back the threatening seas and preserve the Hollanders from destruction by the seas. In his analogy, he explained that the Lord's Day holds back the raging waves of materialism, earthy mindedness and pleasure-madness that threaten to engulf the Church and the Christian.

In the subsequent three sections, Prof Engelsma stressed and elaborated the one and fundamental truth of Sabbath-observance – As of today, or in the present time, and according to the Fourth Commandment, Jehovah God still sets apart one day of the week as a special day and requires His people to remember this day by ceasing from their secular work and play, in order to devote themselves to worship Him. He also gave both the Biblical and confessional proof to show that remembering the Lord's Day is the will of God.

In the last three sections of the pamphlet, Prof Engelsma gave some ideas on how we can go about remembering the Lord's Day.

Prof Engelsma emphasised the urgency of remembering the Lord's Day and he gave three reasons for his emphasis :

- First, keeping the Lord's Day is a commandment that belongs to the first table of the Law.
- Second, the 'Lord's day' belongs to the risen, glorious Lord Jesus Christ. It is not our day.
- Third, by the Lord's grace, we receive the greatest benefit of rest, by remembering the Lord's Day, because the Sabbath was made for man.

In our discussions, we asked ourselves these questions:

- What does the Lord's Day mean to you and me?
- Does keeping the Lord's Day still apply to Christians today or is it only valid in Old Testament times?
- Does keeping the Lord's Day require Christians to cease from work and play on that day?

We concurred with Prof Engelsma that the Lord's Day is still applicable to Christians today, and of the importance and urgency of keeping the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day is a sacred day, out of the seven days of the week, set aside for God and for our spiritual rest.

The Lord's Day is a day where we come to meet God, worship Him, sing praises to Him and enjoy fellowship with the saints. The Lord's Day is a time when we hear the preaching of the Word of God as we have been hearing the preaching of the world and the lies of the devil for most of time during the week. As faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom 10:17), we come to receive the Word of God on the Lord's Day. Through receiving the word of God, we will learn more of God, understand more of His will for us and be reminded of the blessing of the forgiveness of sins. The Lord's Day is a place where we can have a foretaste of heaven; entering into the heavenly kingdom and having a glimpse of heavenly worship. While most of the time in the week, we are subject to the unrest in the world, the Lord's Day brings us into His sanctuary where we can find peace and rest in the presence of God.

As those in the office of believers, we are always on the receiving end on the Lord's Day; however, for the office of the pastor, instead of receiving, he gives the word of God to the people through the preaching from the pulpit.

Lastly, we all recognised that to be in church the whole day on the Lord's Day takes effort. We can do our part by encouraging each other, out of love one for another and love for God, to keep the Lord's Day Holy, as a whole day.

# Prayer & Thanksgiving

## THANKSGIVING

- Thank God for sustaining our lives thus far.
- Thank God for spiritual nourishment every Lord's Day during sermon, Sunday school lessons, CK and CKS meetings.
- Thank God for the election of the deacons, Dn Chan Chee Seng and Dn Daniel Ong. Let us rejoice in their faithfulness and willingness to serve in the office.
- Thank God for the Confession of Faith by Daisy Lim, Liem Peng Lan, Chua Boon Seok, Tan Wei Choo, Han Kait Yen.
- Thank God for Adult Baptism of Mdm Tan Keok Neo (mother of Sis. Ng Kim Neo).
- Thank God for upholding Pastor Lau so that he may be able to join us for most of the services on Sunday.

### *Penang Reformed Fellowship – Sharing by Leow Sian Beng, member of PRF*

- A nice new premise for our weekly gathering.
- The recent baptism of our little sister Caitlyn Neo.
- God's faithful sustenance and care upon all of us on a daily basis. We marvel at His loving kindness towards us.

## SUPPLICATION

- Pray for leaders of the church for wisdom to guard the pulpit well and direct the church in the way of truth.
- Pray for the Singapore government that it will rule our country justly and morally.
- Pray for Pastor Goh as he ministers in Singapore and Penang. May God grant him the strength and wisdom to preach in both congregations.
- Pray for the covenant families in church that all will grow strong in the Lord and be bound by Christ's love.
- Pray for the youths that they will value the importance of God's word above anything else.
- Pray for older youths that they will seriously consider taking their Confession of Faith.
- Pray for the youths studying overseas –Isaac Chan, Aaron, Hui Shi, Matthias Wee, Daniel Chew, that they will stay close to God even while living away from home and have a good Reformed church to worship in.
- Pray for the organizing committee of the Reformation Day Conference, that God will guide them in their planning.
- Pray for the organizing committee of the CK/CKS end-of-year camp that they will be granted wisdom and perseverance to plan a spiritually beneficial camp for the youths. Also, pray for Prof. Hanko who will be speaking at the camp.

### *Penang Reformed Fellowship – Sharing by Leow Sian Beng, member of PRF*

- To place a strategic signboard on our new premise.
- Our road towards institution of the Church and understanding and one mindedness in doctrine and practise.
- God's provision of leaders and labourers.
- For those sitting for major examinations this year (Nicholas Tan in Sept & Timothy Tan in Nov).



# CK/CKS ANNUAL CAMP 2010

13 - 16 DECEMBER

SINGAPORE VISION FARM

SPEAKER: PROF. HERMAN HANKO

**SURVIVING THE RACE TO HEAVEN.**

1 Thes 5:24 "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

It's neither a game,

Nor is it a show.

So if you're wondering what's with the name,

Sign up to know!





# Letters to CERC

Prof. Hanko

Congratulations on this significant milestone in the history of Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church. Your existence today as a congregation is solely due to the mercy and grace of our covenant God. In a certain way I am almost as aware of this as many of you are. I, along with Rev. Van Baren and our wives, did participate in the activities of CERC from the time of its organization. I well recall the organization of the congregation, the installation of its first office bearers, and the ordination of its first pastor. It all took place in the Kampong on River Valley Road, and the pictures of that event have a treasured place among our many pictures of our travels abroad.

I, with Prof Dykstra, was in Singapore when the congregation was meeting in its own place of worship on Tessensohn Rd. I preached for the congregation and spoke various times in that building; I and Prof. Dykstra met with the Session in the upper room. This was the one time I was in Singapore without my wife. When Mrs. Hanko and I were in Singapore for six months from October, 1999 to March of 2000 we spent many happy hours with the congregation when it was meeting in the Bible House. We were there frequently to preach, and remember well the times of fellowship we had.

In the last two or three years we have been in Singapore four or five times. You will all remember how I told the congregation, early in these visits, that we would probably not see each other again until we met in heaven. How little we knew then of God's plan and purpose for us in our lives. And now we hope to see you all again shortly, if the Lord wills it. But the history of CERC is not only one of moving about for places of worship and visits by me and my wife; it is also a history of considerable trouble. The Lord has led the congregation through many difficult times. It was difficult when the congregation had reluctantly to bid farewell to Pastor Mahtani because of serious incompatibilities. It was surely a very trying time when the Lord took from the congregation its shepherd, Pastor Cheah. But indeed in the memory of most of you the most grievous event was the sharp disagreement with many in FERC over the question of divorce and remarriage. That brought about a necessary but sad breach with others who had been one with you in the household of faith.

All these difficulties have this result that today there are now only a few members who were members of CERC when it was first organized. But the congregation was preserved through all these troubles and today stands as a monument to God's faithfulness in preserving a Reformed witness in Singapore. Not all the struggles are over and not all the difficulties have been overcome; but you may be confident that the Lord who has preserved you up to this point will surely continue to be your strength and help.

Mrs. Hanko and I have been very close to the work of CERC in the last few years. You were never far from our thoughts, and many were the prayers we made for you in our own devotions and in congregational prayers in the churches of our denomination. You have become dear brothers and sisters in the Lord and we have that sense that the cause of CERC (the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ) is also our cause as well as yours.

May our God who has preserved you all these years, also preserve you in the years to come. May you grow in grace and the knowledge of the great truths of the Reformed faith and may your witness in Singapore and in SE Asia become more widely heard that you may be an instrument of Christ to gather His church in your part of the world.

To God alone be the glory! May it be His will that we see each other in a few weeks.



# Letters to CERC

Rev. Daniel & Sharon Kleyn

Dear Youth of the CERC,

Greetings from the Philippines!

It is a joy to extend to you, from just a relatively short distance away, my congratulations for this your church's 23rd anniversary. We join you in thanking the Lord for blessing you with and in the truth of His Word, and for His faithfulness in preserving you in that truth. It is our prayer that you may continue to experience these blessings from above.

I know from my own observation through our recent visit among you that the Lord has blessed your church with a large group of godly young people and young adults. We see in this the evidence of God's covenant faithfulness. He has fulfilled and is fulfilling His promise to save and gather His church in the generations of believers and their seed.

At the same time we realize that you, the youth, are the future of the church there. Thus you are crucially important for the church's continued existence. Under God's blessing, you will be the future fathers and mothers, and leaders and office-bearers in the church. With this in mind it is my prayer that you youth will remain steadfast and immovable in the ways of God.

Perhaps this is difficult at times, also because of the reality that you are a relatively small and isolated church in Singapore and in Southeast Asia. But be assured that you do not stand alone. This is true, first of all, because the Lord is with you. But it is also true because of fellow believers here in the Philippines who, with you, also love and confess and defend the glorious truths of the gospel of God's sovereign and particular grace. May this be an encouragement to you, as I know it is to the believers here when they hear of you and of your commitment to God's truth. May God be pleased to provide ways in which we are able to continue to encourage each other – even in person, the Lord willing.

Again, thanks very much for enabling my wife Sharon and I to visit this past June. We thoroughly enjoyed our time with you all in Singapore and at the June Camp, and came home here with many good memories.

Congratulations and God's blessing to you all. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." (II Thessalonians 2:15)

PROTESTANT REFORMED FOREIGN  
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Dear CERC,

Blessed 23rd Anniversary! It's amazing how God has kept the church by His grace for such a long time

since it first started in 1987. It is my prayer that in the years to come, as we face increasing apostasy and prevalence of false teaching, the church will still hold fast to the truths of our Reformed faith, and be a beacon for truth even in these darker last days.

We can draw assurance from God's promises in Isa 41:10:

**“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”**

May we be sanctified and cleansed day by day with the preaching of His Word and be presented to Christ as a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish (Eph 5:26-27).

I hope to fellowship with each one of you soon as I return (finally) in mid-Nov, God willing. Till we meet!

Love in Christ, Matthias Wee

# Looking back and looking forward

Being personally part of the history of Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church (CERC) for some 15 years, and having read its history since its institution in 1987, I must say, as the prophet Jeremiah spoke of Judah in her captivity, that “it is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.” (Lam 3:22-23)

I do not intend to pen down a lengthy reflection on the entire history of the church (I think that should be reserved for the occasion of the church’s 25th anniversary in 2012, God willing, and perhaps it would be more meaningful and appropriate to get some founding members of the church to author this), but just share some brief thoughts with regards to how I have seen God lead CERC over the past few years.

The past 5 years had undoubtedly been a trying time for the church. We went through our first ever doctrinal controversy in the denomination. In the early stages of that period, the Lord took home our then-resident minister, the late Pastor Cheah. This “double-trial” tested the unity of the church severely. There was tension and uncertainty in the air. Many members were unsettled and undecided as to what to do. Fellowship was strained and spirits were downcast. All, young and old, were discouraged. The vitality and zeal of the church diminished. A flock without its shepherd at a time of doctrinal controversy seemed destined to be scattered. But the Lord carried us through.

Behind His frowning Providence, the Lord has His perfect plan. He provided another resident minister for us in Pastor Paul Goh, as well as new elders and deacons. Over time, new members settled down and gradually but surely, the life of the church returned. The church took on a new character and ‘face’, with renewed love and zeal for the truths of sovereign, particular grace and the doctrine of the covenant. In this regard, I am especially thankful for the coming of Professor Hako over the past two years to help us and reinforce these truths through his clear and powerful preaching and teaching. The heightened interest in these precious truths among the young people of the congregation was also evident as they initiated the study of Reformed doctrines in their meetings and Covenant Instruction classes. The publication of this very magazine is testimony to their desire to learn, apply and spread the Reformed faith!

The Lord has preserved CERC through one of the most difficult times in her history. It was painful and wearisome during the period of the controversy, but looking back, I would say: “we were better for it.” We had developed a greater appreciation for the truths of sovereign, particular grace and the unconditional nature of the covenant. The church has become more united in the truth, in our fellowship and in our mission to preach the gospel of sovereign grace. The Lord would have the church purified in the crucible of the doctrinal controversy. As we emerge from the controversy, may we not forget the lessons we have learnt. It is my prayer that God would imbue in each of us a passion to know, maintain, defend and develop the precious heritage of the Reformed faith that He has entrusted to us. May He make CERC a pillar and ground of the truths of sovereign, particular grace and of the unconditional covenant in our generations.

What does the future hold for CERC? I do not know what tomorrow may bring, but I know God holds tomorrow. He has gone before us. He is already there. No doubt there will be more difficulties, challenges and perhaps controversies, but our confidence must always be in the Lord. For He is the ever faithful One, Whose love never changes. Through every mountain and valley that He would lead His church, He will never leave her nor forsake her. “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.” (Isa 49:16)

Now and always, our confession remains “Our help is in the Name of Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth.” (Ps 124:8)

Elder Kong Wee

23 years



1987-2010



**2000**  
CERC commences worship services at Bible House on Armenian Street, renting the fourth and fifth floor chapels for worship services.



Covenant Keepers (CK), the youth ministry of CERC is formed, catering to teens 13 years and older.



◀The Eastern Cell Group having a meeting, 2002.



▲CERC at Bible House in 2001.



▲Church office at Bible House.



# THE PAST DECADE...

As CERC celebrates her 23rd Anniversary this September, Salt Shakers brings you a reflection of the events that God has placed CERC through this past decade.

**2002**

The Voice of Truth radio ministry is started on 23 June, broadcasting messages every Sunday from the PRCA Reformed Witness Hour. Among those involved were Bro. Ishu (pictured) and Bro. Chee Seng. The ministry was discontinued on 1 April 2006 due to a lack of funds.



Voice of Truth advertorial card. ▲



▲Pastor Cheah Fook Meng



Farewell for Rev. den Hartog, with wife ▲ Sherry and daughter Laura.

**2004**

A controversy over the issue of Divorce and Remarriage surfaces in the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore (ERCS), the denomination consisting of CERC and First Evangelical Reformed Church. In 2006 the Session of CERC officially adopted the stand that the Bible does not allow all remarriages after divorce, on the grounds of the unbreakable marriage bond.

**2005**

Rev. Arie den Hartog, PRCA missionary pastor to the ERCS, accepts a call to pastor Southwest PRC and returns to the USA.

**2006**

Pastor Paul Goh is called to be minister of CERC after the home-going of Pastor Cheah Fook Meng in 2005. Pastor Goh accepts the call and is ordained as the third residential minister of CERC on 30 July.

CERC takes over responsibility for the ministry to the Penang Reformed Fellowship (PRF). Members of the PRF would now be received as associate members of CERC.



▲Pastor Goh with his wife Suet Yin.



▲Pastor Goh being ordained at Bible House.

23 years



1987-2010

**2007**

The ERCS is dissolved on 30 June following the Divorce and Remarriage controversy in which both member churches took different stands. CERC now becomes an independent congregation.

Rev. Lau Chin Kwee is appointed Emeritus Minister of CERC following congregational approval at the Annual General Meeting in June.

▼ 20th Anniversary celebration



Pastor Lau (in brown jacket) with some of the youths of CERC. ▲

▼ Church retreat on Christmas Day, 2007 at DPS International School. The plan to hold worship services there was later cancelled.



▲ CERC before leaving Bible House.



▲ Christmas caroling at St Andrew's Hospital, 2008.

**2008**

CERC leaves Bible House after 9 years as the premise will be demolished and rebuilt. Alternative worship locations were used at EDB Learning Centre and NUS Prince Georges Park while the Church Expansion and Relocation Committee searched for a permanent premise.

# THE PAST DECADE...

**2009**

CERC returns to EDB Learning Centre, now known as City College, for her worship services.

The congregation votes in favor of purchasing property at Jalan Mesin. Renovation work commences in November.



▲ CERC at NUS PGPR, 2009.



▲ 22nd Anniversary celebration held at City College, 2009.



▲ Our soccer team at Inter Church Sports Day 2010



▲ CERC's last day at City College, 2010.

◀ 11 Jalan Mesin #04-00

**2010**

CERC holds her first worship service at 11 Jalan Mesin at 9.30am on 17 January. A dedication service was held a month later on 24 February. The CK Magazine Committee launches the Salt Shakers magazine in March. This issue will be the fourth for Salt Shakers. Covenant Keepers celebrates her tenth anniversary on 3 April. A new logo for CK is unveiled.



▲ Salt Shakers launch

**Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church**

We are a Reformed Church that holds to the doctrines of the Reformation as they are expressed in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt.

Place of Worship:  
11 Jalan Mesin #04-00  
Standard Industrial Building  
Singapore 368813

Time of Worship:  
Morning Service: 9.30am to 11.00am  
Afternoon Service: 2.00pm to 3.00pm

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