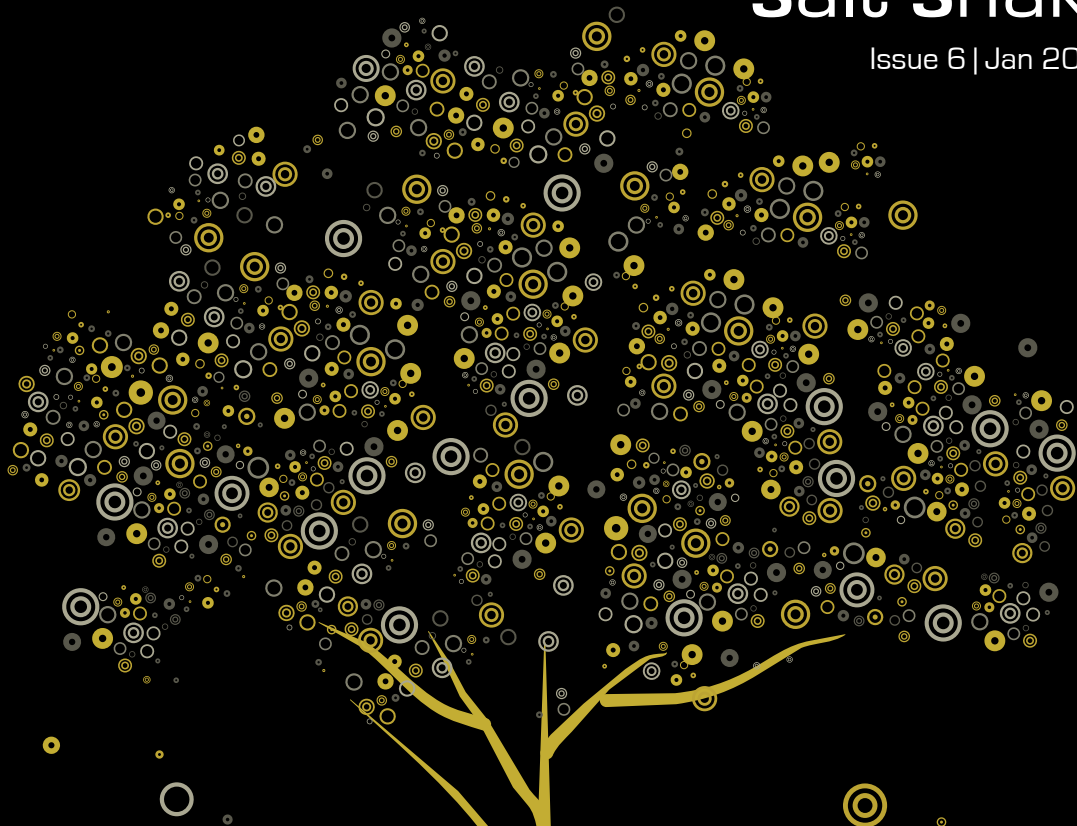




salt shakers

Issue 6 | Jan 2011



Rooted and built up in him, and
established in the faith, as ye have
been taught, abounding therein
with thanksgiving. Col 2:7



Introduction to TULIP

» Tian Loong

Hello dear Readers!

Welcome to the first Salt Shakers issue of the new year! There are many things to be thankful for, especially when we are reminded of the idea of NEW. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus, as we have been born again and are freed from the power of sin. Though we daily battle, and often fail, against the flesh, yet the Lord faithfully cleanses our hearts and renews right spirits in us, such that we are always brand new when under the blood of Christ. And this makes us so thankful that we sincerely desire to walk new paths and forsake our old ways. We want to be wholly new, and finally, we can't wait for the new heavens and earth. Indeed, a Christian loves to be reminded of the idea of NEW. So, happy new year. =]

CERC's theme for the new year is based on the passage in Colossians 2:7, "Rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." And if you look at this issue's cover, the image would probably be what you are thinking of - a tree, and its roots. But, you will probably never see a tree in this way, because trees do not normally like to show their roots. Yes, it's only when they are uprooted (most likely against their will) that we get to see what goes on underground.

What is the main goal of a tree's life? What is at the top of his "To Do List" every single day? You may think, "to stretch my arms to provide space for Mr & Mrs Robin at level 1", or "to give Mr Woodpecker more material for his work", or "to grow more leaves so people can enjoy the shade below me". Well, those are important, and probably define what a tree is, but read on. After a harsh winter, not all trees that were there before still remain. Time will tell, and we will know, when fresh green leaves poke out of those bare and dead-looking branches, which trees have survived the bitter cold. Not the trees that provided the most space for nests, nor the trees that gave purpose to other creatures, no, not even the trees that made people satisfied and pleased with their existence. The trees that survive have the deepest roots.

No one knew, of course, for all trees look the same during fair weather. But some trees struggled tirelessly, not content with flimsy and shallow roots, pushing and digging further with single-mindedness, until they found the life-stream of water which would ensure their survival through all circumstances. Other trees made it a point to look good, and do good, forgetting the need for roots. Sure, they looked beautiful before, but there was no more life after winter had taken its toll. This is not to say that trees who only concentrated on root-growing were ugly and of no use. Not at all! In fact, on finding the life-stream, they naturally grew bigger, spread their branches wider, and had leaves greener than ever. All these, they had, without any strain or effort, as it is natural that a tree well planted should grow, thrive, and abound.

So, what is the main goal of a tree's life? What is at the top of his "To Do List" every single day? Are you a tree? Is your church a tree?

Christ Regardless, paul

Rock Salt Introduction to Tulip	03-04
See Salt RYS Review	05-06
See Salt Association with Unbelievers Review	07-08
Salt to Savour Remember the Sabbath	09-13
Salt for Thought The Importance of Personal Devotions IV	14-15

Contents

Fine Salt Honouring our Office-Bearers	16-17
Salt for Thought Rooted in Christ	18-19
Salt to Spur Importance of Reading I	20
Salt of the Earth Church Ministries	21-24
See Salt Reformation Lectures Review	25
Oh taste and see!	26-28

Over the past year, Covenant Keepers (CK) has been learning about the Five Points of Calvinism. It can be said that this doctrine is the dividing line between the reformed and the non-reformed and thus it is important that the young people of the church are taught this doctrine from young and maintain the reformed heritage that has always upheld the truth of God's effectual grace and that all things are to the glory of God alone.

The Five Points of Calvinism is a body of doctrines concerning Soteriology, or "Salvation" with its emphasis on the sovereign good pleasure and working of God in choosing and saving certain people unto salvation as well as man's utter helplessness and wickedness. It is identified by namely, Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and the Perseverance of the Saints; also known as TULIP. Each individual aspect will be discussed more thoroughly in the coming issues but for now, an overview will suffice and such would be the scope of this article.

The Five Points and God's Attributes

Those who think little of this truth or any other truths for the matter would usually think that belief over this doctrine ought not to disrupt the "unity" among professing Christians. However, this doctrine is crucial because it concerns the attributes of God. Every work of God comes forth

from who He is or i.e., His attributes. How much more important is this truth since it involves the work of salvation itself? Since we know God by His attributes, thus, if a person denies this doctrine of salvation, the god he worships differs from the one true God whom we reformed believers worship and is nothing but an idol made up by the fancy of men's carnal heart.

The Sovereignty of God

Underlying this doctrine is the sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God begins with God being the decider of good and evil, of love and hate, of what exists and what does not, etc. In all things, He decides and it originates from His good pleasure. This is only befitting as He alone is king and ruler of all creation. Being the creator, does He not have the right to decide?

Regarding salvation, He alone, in His eternal counsel, decides who He will save and leaves the rest in their sins to their own condemnation. Using the language of the Bible itself, "Behold the goodness and severity of God..." (Rom 11:22)

While Paul could have used all sorts of soothing, nice-sounding words to soften the reality of God's sovereignty in salvation, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he was telling the Romans to accept it for He is God and has every right to do so. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Rom 9:20-21)

Though this reality is frightening and ought to strike fear in every person, yet this truly is good news to the child of God who in all things seek first the glory of God and is in every way God-centred (cf The Five points of Calvinism and Good News).

The Love and Zeal of God

"O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever." - Ps 107:1

Those who deny this doctrine of salvation must necessarily deny the everlasting virtue of the love and mercy of God. For they have to certainly claim, after having claimed that God loved everyone but condemns those who refuse to believe to hell, that the love of God ends for those people because of their unbelief. That is certainly untrue of the love of God. Alternatively, there are also those who claim that God only begins loving a person when they exercise faith to believe in Christ. That is untrue too. To those whom God has set His love on, he loves them to the very end (Jn 13:1). I.e., either God has loved a person and will love him or her to the end, or He has never loved that person.

Many would like to think that love is but a sentimental feeling and think that to be true of God. “O how God would love to save you and has done everything he can but he is waiting for you to choose him.” Truth is, God is zealous for those He loves and His love is a working love that is real and will definitely bring salvation to those whom He loves. “For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.” (2 Kings 19:31) and “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” (Mat 1:21)

[These are just a few examples of the attributes involved and other attributes which are not discussed includes the omnipotence, omniscience of God etc. which may be discussed in the later articles]

The Five Points to the Glory of God Alone

God is a being of reason and thus everything that He does is for the highest reason possible – that is, Himself and His glory. TULIP teaches man’s utter ruin in sin, and helplessness regarding his salvation that not even his will would wish that he be saved in Christ (total depravity) while teaching also, that God certainly saves those whom He for His good pleasure and glory has chosen before the foundation of the world was laid. Since God begins and finishes His work of salvation, TULIP rightly teaches that all glory belongs to God in the work of salvation.

The Five Points and History/Worldview

Why do nations rise and fall? Why do the things on Earth, despite the tremendous pain and suffering, occur throughout world history? Only a Calvinist can answer, and that is for the salvation of the Church.

Although TULIP does not explicitly teach that everything in history existed to save the church, yet it teaches that all who Christ had died for must certainly be saved and so therefore everything that happens in the world happened by the sovereign will of God that the means of grace (i.e. Preaching of the

gospel etc.) will reach the elect and through them, God irresistibly calls the elect to Himself.

The Five Points and Good News

Although previously mentioned that the sovereignty of God is frightening, yet to His people it is of great comfort.

“...or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God, which though men of perverse, impure and unstable minds wrest to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation.” (Canons of Dordt 1st Head art.6)

This is due to the certainty of salvation as taught by TULIP. For the world, the devil and his hosts, and even our sinful flesh constantly wages war against us and if we had to rely on our own will to be saved, we would be eternally lost. That, however, is not so as God promises otherwise that He would secure the salvation of His people.

Furthermore, the sovereignty of God is for, and not against, us. God loves His people in Christ and thus works all things for the good of His people. (Rom 8:31-39)

Also, in the sovereignty of God, God only gives us what is best for our salvation and His glory. As God does all things on the account of Himself (as previously mentioned), He, out of His own nature, can only give us what is best and anything less than the best would be contrary to His nature and His glory.

The Five Points and Other Doctrines

TULIP does not stand alone and as any other doctrine, it exists as part of a larger set of intertwining doctrines such as atonement, sanctification, justification, the assurance of faith and covenant theology etc.

Anyone who debates against those who deny TULIP will often find themselves debating against other doctrines as well, such as the disproving of dispensationalism or defending the perfect substitutionary atonement of Christ.

The Five Points and the Five Solas

The five Solas of the reformation was pointing towards a certain direction; the sovereign work of salvation by God alone. For if TULIP were to be denied, the five solas cannot stand too:

“Grace alone” and “Christ alone” would have to be denied since an external condition would be required.

Faith would then become a condition for salvation and that is not the true meaning of “faith alone” since faith has always been the means, and not the requirement, by which we are saved.

Thus, the denial of TULIP would not have been the teaching of “scripture alone” as it no longer teaches salvation to the glory of God alone since man has to fulfil certain requirements and crediting some glory (however little), to himself.

○ the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (Romans 11: 33-36)

Reformed Youth Seminar – The Life of Martin Luther

>> Milton Ho

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Ps 46:1

his life, his struggle with being right with God, and his steadfastness before the Roman Catholic empire where he held on to what he was convinced was the truth. Now, there are certain doctrines here that we can take note of and apply to our lives, and I would elaborate by first highlighting the key points of Luther’s life as spoken by Prof.

Luther, in his early years, was a bright student and was on his way to being a lawyer, which by his father’s thinking was the ticket to a luxurious life and retirement for Luther’s parents. It was going well until he was caught in a storm which seemed to him was the end of his life. There, he begged God through Saint Anne to spare his life with a promise to become a monk if he survived the storm. He survived, and had to keep his promise despite the protests of his friends and of his father.

After entering the Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg and being convinced of the graveness of his sins, Luther sought to seek redemption from God by doing every work of penance ever prescribed by the Roman Catholic Church. The source of what troubled him is found in Romans 1:17 which states, “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” His struggle was with the phrase “the righteousness of God”.

While Luther interpreted the phrase to mean that a man has to be righteous on his own in order that he could be right with God, his attempts to placate God through his acts of penance and by confessing every single sin to the head of his monastery did not seem to be working as he still found no peace within himself. It was only on one particular day of his preparation for being a priest, studying deep into Scripture

REVIEW

During the recent Reformed Youth Seminar, Professor Hanko (or “Prof”, as we affectionately call him) gave us a sermon outlining the major points of the life of Martin Luther, one of the key persons who shaped the Protestant Reformation which brought us out of the evils of apostate Roman Catholicism. He also illustrated the blessedness of being able to see God’s hand behind every step of our lives through reviewing the life of Luther and his own, and emphasized on the importance of being faithful to God’s Word no matter the cost.

Comparing his own life and work to that of Luther’s and of the other Reformation fathers, Prof refers to himself as a pygmy in the presence of giants. But as corrected by his colleague, he states that although we might seem to be pygmies, we stand on the shoulders of those spiritual giants and therefore are able to see further than they could. He refers to the development of doctrinal truths throughout the years, which God has beautifully refined through history in order that biblical truths are preserved, and heresies pinpointed and thrown out.

The life of Luther shows how God prepared him for his life’s work at each step of the way: the death of his friend which made him think more about his purpose in life, his experience in the terrible storm in which he swore an oath to become a monk if God spared

alone in a tower of the monastery, known to us as the “Tower experience”, when Luther finally realised that the term the “righteousness of God” did not describe an attribute of God in which He is so holy and thus wishes to punish every sinner, but instead is the free gift of righteousness – granted through faith – imputed by Christ’s death on the cross unto believers. Christ’s death washes away all the sins of His people, and that is what makes sinners righteous before God. This is what the prophet means by “the just shall live by faith” in Habakkuk 2:4.

A few years on, Luther had to deal with the orator and defender of Catholicism, Johann Eck, publicly debating on the issue of how they judged the truth. Eck’s stand was that the truth was to be determined by the church passed down from the councils of earlier times, the tradition of popes, and by the church which made decrees regarding various items of Scripture. This meant that one could live his life as he pleased, committing various gross sins while still being a member of the church – but if one deviated even a little from the doctrines of the church, he would face the wrath of the church. Luther, at that time, still believed in the traditions and the authority of the church in all various matters, but held on to the truth of being justified by faith alone. Eck then accused Luther of being a follower of John Hus, implying that Luther was teaching heresy and was worthy of being burnt at the stake. John Hus was an early reformer who believed in the authority of Scripture over the authority of the church. Luther, after reviewing the writings of John Hus, maintained that God’s Word, Scripture, is the authority of all doctrine and all of life – justification by faith alone, apart from the works of the law! This gave Johann Eck complete victory over Luther in the debate by being able to brand Luther as a heretic.

Nonetheless, the debate with Johann Eck was the starting point of Luther's conviction and maintenance of his stand of being justified by faith alone and Scriptures as the only authority. From there, he went on back to Wittenberg to drive away teachers of mysticism – heretics which took over Luther's place whilst he was away – by just preaching a series of eight sermons. Also, the conviction gained from the debate gave Luther courage to stand alone defending the truth before the Imperial Diet of Worms, which is the council of the Holy Roman Empire. Present were the Emperor, his servants and princes, and other powerful men including the elite of the Roman Catholic Church, each of them having the authority to end the life of whoever ticked them off. Luther had to face the Diet alone as none of his colleagues were permitted to attend the trial.

Luther was strongly advised by all his colleagues not to go to the Diet as the danger of Luther being taken away as a heretic and being killed was very great due to the immense combined power of the Diet. But Luther was convinced of the truth of God and the dangers which awaited him did not deter him from his conviction for the cause of Christ. The reply to his friends was that he had a mighty defender, God Himself. This courage to face imminent doom undoubtedly came from God.

During Luther's trial, he was given opportunity to recant his teachings before the Diet passed a verdict. Luther, after reviewing his past works in the books he wrote placed before him, was convinced that what he wrote and had been teaching over the years was indeed truth, and held on to his stand. The Catholic Church wanted him killed immediately, but by the Emperor's promise of safe conduct, Luther made it out of Worms.

God indeed is our refuge and strength! The words in this statement are found in Psalm 46:1, out of Luther's favourite Psalm of which he composed the well-known hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God". One who looks at Luther's life and sees God's hand behind it, preparing Luther every step of the way, will not find it a mystery where Luther got his inspiration to write the hymn.

This truth of God reminds me of the theme for our recent Covenant Keepers camp, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, which states, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." God, as Author of all that is in existence, not only determines the pathway of our lives, but, as Prof rightly states, also grants us the vigour and enthusiasm to do His work!

Nearing the end of the sermon, Prof quoted from Matthew 24:12-13, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved." Prof emphasised the use of two words in the text – "many", being plural, and the word "he", a singular. It is evident in Scripture and thus we can expect that, like Luther, we will one day stand alone in contending for the truth. Are we ready for it?

God's grace is greater than any human resistance, piercing through the hard outer shells of our stubbornness and disbelief, and softens our hearts with the grace that brings us to faith in Christ. The grace that brought Luther to Christ bound his conscience to the Word of God and with the courage which flows directly from God, Luther stood his ground in many instances in order to defend the truth. Can, and will, you and I do the same to defend the truth which we love?

One of the ending words of Prof in his sermon was a quote from Luther, saying that the busier we get, the

more we need to seek God in our devotions. We as servants of the living God require very much the direction of our Master, lest we go astray and fall into the cunning pits and snares of the devil, enticing us to embrace earthly comforts and to forget our purpose and calling as sojourners to lead godly lives and to gather the church. Will we dedicate our time to constant prayer and the reading and meditation of God's Word?

May we embrace our calling with joy and courage, knowing that God is our ever-present aid and guide. Let us, like Luther, put on the whole armour of God and our battle cry echo the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:31: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Defend the truth of the Bible, and spread the good news of the righteousness of God imputed to believing sinners through Jesus Christ crucified on the cross, and we will be able to sing the words of the versification of Psalm 46 in Psalter 126 with meaning:

**"God is our refuge
and our strength, our
ever present aid, And,
therefore, though the
earth remove, We will
not be afraid."**

REVIEW

By God's grace, we once again embark on another year of school life. In school, we often find ourselves in the midst of unbelievers. This leads us to a very important question: To what extent should we befriend the ungodly?

The different types of friendships

Let us first consider the different types of friendships that exist. There are 2 types of friendships- the first is being with the world, and the second is with God's people – His elect. We should be careful in mixing with the former for God clearly instructs us in various passages not to do so. (II Cor. 6:14-15) states, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers..., for what part hath he that believeth with an infidel (unbeliever)." Also, in James 4:4, the Apostle reprimands the people for committing spiritual adultery since they are married to Christ and in 2 Cor 6:13-7:1, we are once again instructed to have nothing to do with the "unclean" – the contamination and the filth of this world. We are called to walk a godly life in this world, but how can we do so if we mix with those who do not fear God nor keep his commandments? Our friends should therefore mainly be the people in the Church, the church which preaches the true word of God. This is so that our friendships are covenantal – friendships forged in the Lord. As Psalm 119:63 states "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts."

The beauty of covenantal friendships

Covenantal friendships are priceless and precious. They are friendships of praise and thanksgiving to God and of an intimate bond. Question and Answer 55 of the Heidelberg Catechism, for example, teaches us the importance of befriending godly people and using our gifts for people of the church: "What do you understand by the 'communion of saints?' Everyone must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, to the salvation and advantage of other members." There is a need for us to make godly friends so that we can not only assist our fellow saints both spiritually and physically in this dark and sinful world, but also to be strengthened in the faith.

The bible states a few examples of covenantal friendships: Jonathan and David, and Daniel and his three friends. 1 Samuel 18:1 describes the friendship between David and Jonathan:

"And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

>> Ruth Teo Association With Unbelievers

Remember the Sabbath

>> Elder Wee Ghim Teng

It was a friendship rooted in the Lord. When David was in trouble and in great distress, as Psalm 57:6 states “They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah”, Jonathan as a godly friend helped David and encouraged him in his grief.

Daniel and his 3 friends also shared a covenantal friendship with one another. They loved God, feared Him, and were faithful to Him. They defied the king’s decree and refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar’s image even though the punishment was that they be thrown into a burning, fiery furnace.

The problem we face

Matthew 5:43-48:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

Who is our neighbour that God instructs us to love? They are those who come into contact in our life be it fellow saints in the church or even teachers or our boss in the office. When God calls us in Matthew 5 to love our neighbour, He wants us to esteem our neighbour higher than ourselves and to love them in the manner as Christ as first loved us. As Colossians 3:14 says: “14And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” Love is a bond of fellowship; it is also total self-forgetfulness. The love for our neighbour is an emulation of the love of God towards us. It is giving no thought to me for the benefit of my neighbour.

The well-being of those we love

As Christians, the well-being of those we love is not only to help them in their time of need, but firstly to care for their salvation in Jesus Christ. We should also take every opportunity we can to witness to the unbelievers, both in our speech and with our life. As 1 Peter 3:15 says “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” We should, however, not neglect those who are Christians but belong to the false church as well. Rather, we should also witness to them and bring them along to a church that preaches the Truth in meekness and in fear.

Conclusion

The friendship that we enjoy with God in Jesus Christ is a friendship that we also share with all other believers. Psalter 370 beautifully versifies Psalm 113:

“Behold, how pleasant and how good That we, one Lord confessing, Together dwell in brotherhood, Our unity expressing.”

Let us therefore pray every day for strong covenantal friendships, friendships that are pleasing in God’s sight, for it is a blessing to be able to associate with His people. Meanwhile, may we associate with unbelievers only for the purpose of showing them the mercies of Christ, and loving them the way Christ loved us – not for our own selfish enjoyment, but only for their salvation.

The 4th Commandment

Exo 20:9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

Exo 20:10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

Exo 20:11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

We are living in an age of great evils and apostasy. The Evil One attacks the Church from every front; ranging from overt false doctrines to subtle ways to undermine and weaken the Church. One of the ways to undermine and weaken the Church is to make Christians indifferent about Sabbath observance.

Today, many Christians disregard the Sabbath Day. Some Christians have thrown the Ten Commandments out of the window, saying that we are living under grace and hence the 4th Commandment is no longer applicable to them. Others, who still hold to the keeping of the Ten Commandments, would keep all the nine, except the 4th Commandment. They contend that by attending worship service, they have already fulfilled their obligations to the 4th Commandment. Once the worship service is put aside, they would have the entire Sunday for their own pursuits of pleasures, business and worldly entertainment. There are yet other Christians who think that Sabbath observance is in the realm of Christian liberty i.e. something neither commanded nor forbidden by God. They argue that every day is alike and that we are not to observe one day as more ‘holy’ than another.

Given what’s happening in today’s Christian world, there is an ever more urgent need, in fact a very URGENT need, for the Church today to take heed to the teaching of Scriptures regarding Sabbath observance.

Admonition to Remember

If we were to do a quick survey of the Ten Commandments, it is easy to note that only the 4th and the 5th Commandments are worded differently. They are worded positively. The other Commandments start negatively with “Thou shalt not...” and the First Commandment has it in a negative way “Thou shalt have no other gods before me”. But interestingly, the 4th Commandment begins with the word “Remember”. I submit to us that God has deliberately used the word “Remember” for a good reason.

Our Jehovah God knows our weaknesses and sinfulness. We have a great tendency to forget the Lord’s Day. First, we tend to forget because of the depravity we inherit from Adam. As Christians, despite regeneration, we still have the old man of sin constantly struggling against the new man in us. We struggle against our sinful flesh and often do not have the desire to keep the Sabbath.

God knows our tendency to order our life’s priorities wrongly. Therefore, He says in the 4th Commandment: Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. We are commanded to remember the Sabbath Day. It is an active and deliberate act

of remembering. It is not to remember the Sabbath Day when we feel it is convenient to do or have the time for it. It is not to remember the Sabbath Day so long as we are able to schedule it in our calendar of events. It is not to remember the Sabbath Day so long as we feel like it or so long as we wake up on Sunday morning feeling good. It is not up to us to decide if we would like to remember the Sabbath Day. We are commanded to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy! Just like any of the Ten Commandments, if we fail to keep any, we have broken all the Commandments. So it is for the 4th Commandment. Failing to remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy, is therefore a sin against the Lord.

Second, we allow the Sabbath to be crowded out of our lives. There are many things we want to do, and often, we let these things have priority over the Sabbath, choosing rather to give Sabbath a miss because it comes in the way of our pleasures, business, or studies etc. The Lord's Day is quickly forgotten. It is used as though it does not belong to the Lord, but to us. Some of us even have the strange notion that the Sabbath can be occasionally broken. Some supposed that if I remember the Sabbath for 51 weeks of the year, it is 'OK' to forget the Sabbath for one week. We justify it by saying that our Lord understands the situation. Perhaps we reason that examinations are coming soon and so it is more important for me to study and skip the worship service, just this once. Perhaps we reason that we can keep the Lord's Day by reading the Bible, listening to a tape (or CD) and doing some meditations by the beach while we go on vacation. Perhaps we reason that the foreign lecturers from the overseas university come once a year over the weekends, so it is alright to miss just one Lord's Day and attend the classes on Sunday, after all "I

have paid so much for the course fees already". Perhaps we reason that the Lord understands when we skip Church for only one Sunday to spend time with our families on a special leisure trip. Perhaps we reason that the Standard Chartered Bank Marathon and the New Paper Big Walk only happen once a year, so it is alright to participate in these events on the Sabbath Day. We have a lax view of Sabbath observance and have many excuses for not keeping the Sabbath! The keeping of Sabbath has taken the backseat! Our Jehovah God knows that we are so consumed by our daily affairs (work, studies, business, leisure etc.) that we need to set aside a day in seven to worship and praise the Creator.

The tendency of God's people to profane the Sabbath Day is shown in the history of God's people. In the days of Nehemiah, he had to remind the people that God was angry with them because they had once again profaned the Sabbath. We can read this in Neh 13:15 – 22. Nehemiah reminded them in verse 18 that they had forgotten God's wrath. He reminded them that Judah's profaning of the Sabbath had caused God to banish them to 70 years of captivity in Babylon and yet they were still profaning the Sabbath by buying and selling. Judah was disregarding the holy day of the Lord again and was profaning it. Judah had not learned her lesson. She was about to bring more wrath upon herself.

The battle to uphold the Sabbath Day was also evident in the history of the Churches. The problems were so serious that at the Synod of Dordrecht on 17 May 1619, six formulations 'Concerning the removal of the dishonouring of Sabbath' were passed.

They were (translated into English) as follows:

1. There is both a ceremonial and moral element in the fourth commandment of the divine law.

2. The ceremonial [element] is the rest of the seventh day after creation, and the strict observance of the same day was especially enjoined upon the Jewish people.

3. The moral [element] is that a certain and definite day be set aside for worship, and for the purpose that as much rest as is necessary for worship and for pious reflection upon it [be provided].

4. The Jewish Sabbath having been abolished, Christians must solemnly keep Sunday [in the original Dutch it is "the day of the Lord," RJS] holy.

5. This day has always been observed from the time of the apostles in the ancient Catholic Church.

6. This day must be so set aside for worship that on it people may rest from all ordinary labors (excluding those that love and present necessity demand) together with all such recreations that hinder worship.

Some of the problems against which the Synod of Dordrecht wrote are the same problems that our Churches face today. History is simply repeating itself! Many Christians today are not concerned about keeping the Lord's Day anymore!

Keeping the 4th Commandment is a question of love for the Lord. The whole summary of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) is to first of all to love God with all our heart, soul and mind; and the second is to love our neighbour as ourselves. Rom 13:10 tells us that love is the fulfilling of the law. If we fail to keep the Sabbath, we

do not love the Lord and as a result transgress against the first table of the Law. Love requires us to want to spend time communing with God, to serve Him and to keep his laws. If we say we love the Lord, we would want to set aside the Sabbath, as commanded, and spend as much time as possible with the Lord. It is just like a husband or a wife telling the better half, "Honey, I love you very much, but I don't have the time for you. I have more important things to do than to spend my precious time with you." This is what we are telling the Lord when we skip the Lord's Day for some events which we deem to be more important or if we totally ignore the Lord's Day. This is what we are telling the Lord when we have the notion that after the morning worship service, the rest of the Sabbath is mine to spend and use as I like. This is what we are telling the Lord when we cannot wait for the worship service to be over, so that we can be about our own business. We see this in Amos 8:5, "When will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn? And the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat ..." The wicked people were so eager for the Sabbath to be over so that they could get on with their lives. Is this our attitude? If we love God, we would want to spend time to commune with Him as much as possible. We would want to keep the Lord's Day!

How are we to remember the Sabbath Day?

Are we to remember the Sabbath Day by coming up with a list of Dos and Don'ts? You may do this, and you may not do that?

Legalism is a great enemy to Sabbath observance not because it disregards the Sabbath but because it destroys the joy of the Sabbath by making Sabbath observance a matter of keeping

endless rules and regulations. It makes obedience to the 4th Commandment become mere external behaviour and actions. It stresses the keeping of man-made regulations and traditions but ignores the spiritual significance of the Sabbath. We can see this in the example of the Pharisees. They were very careful about the external acts of the Sabbath. They accused the disciples of breaking the Sabbath by picking and eating a few ears of corn (Mark 2:23-28). In Luke 13, the Pharisees accused Jesus of healing a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years. They were so diligent in adding precept upon precept, and law upon law, that Sabbath observance became nothing more than a joyless burden. Sabbath observance, in this case, becomes outward conformance to some strict regulations of Dos and Don'ts.

Our Lord Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28), condemned the outward observance of the Sabbath by the Pharisees when He told them that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). Sabbath is not given by God to be a burden to man by simply keeping some Sabbath regulations or traditions. God, in His infinite wisdom, gives man the Sabbath for man's good so that he can rest from all his earthly labours and worship Him. Man is to use the given opportunity to show and declare God's glory.

If having a list of Dos and Don'ts is improper, how then are we to remember the Sabbath Day?

Exo 20:11 says that we are first and foremost to remember to "keep it holy". There are some passages that show us the nature of the Sabbath (Exo 31:15, Exo 35:2, Lev 23:3). These passages tell us that the Sabbath is holy to the Lord. Sabbath is a holy day; a holy convocation and God hallowed

it and we are enjoined to keep the Sabbath holy.

Keeping the Sabbath holy means setting it apart from ordinary use. It is to be devoted to the Lord. It is for the sacred use of worship and to serve God. The Sabbath Day is, therefore, not a common day, but a sacred and holy rest unto the Lord.

In the Old Testament temple worship, the tables and utensils were called 'holy' because they were to be devoted exclusively to sacred use. They could not be used for other purposes but only for the worship of God. In the same way, when the word of God says that we are to remember to keep the Sabbath holy, it means that the Sabbath Day is exclusively for sacred use. The Sabbath Day is only for spiritual use. It is the holy day of the Lord. God has staked His claim upon it. It belongs to Him. We are therefore required to deliberately set the Sabbath Day aside for spiritual use.

If the Sabbath Day belongs to the Lord, we have to keep the Sabbath in the way He wants us to keep it. We should not keep it in any way other than the way prescribed by the Lord Himself. We have to keep the whole day holy unto the Lord. Not just the morning worship service only, but the entire day is the Lord's! Let us ask ourselves honestly, what do we do after the morning worship service? If we are not found in the House of the Lord the second time, what do we do to keep the Lord's Day holy?

The Sabbath is a day of rest. First, the word "Sabbath" means "rest." Second, God called Israel's weekly Sabbath "the Sabbath of rest" (Ex. 31:15, 35:2; Lev. 23:3; see also Ex. 16:23). Third, God's law prescribes that on the Sabbath Day, we rest from our ordinary daily labours (Ex. 20:10; Deut. 5:14).

However, Sabbath as a day of rest is not to be understood as a day of idleness and minimal physical exertion as the Pharisees conceived and manipulated it to be. The Pharisees had all kinds of man-made rules and traditions to enforce the day of rest and those were not pleasing to God.

We are to keep the Sabbath Day as a day of rest by patterning it after God's rest. In the Creation account in Gen 2:2-3, we notice that God created all things in six days and on the seventh day He ceased from His work of creation and enjoyed the works of His hands. This is the Lord's Sabbath or Rest. Just like God ceasing from His work of creation and enjoying the works of His hands, we are to cease from our daily labours and enter into His rest. We enter into God's rest by enjoying His wonderful work in Christ. We enjoy His work of salvation in saving His people from sin and destruction. We enjoy by worshipping God in the hearing of His Word and in the use of the sacraments. In this way we are spiritually strengthened and refreshed.

We are to keep the Sabbath Day by patterning after how our Lord Jesus kept the Sabbath. Our Lord Jesus frequented the Synagogues and preached the Word. He was also always doing good to the distressed, healing them and destroying the power of the Devil on the Sabbath Day. This is evident in many passages in the New Testament (Matt 12:9, 13:54; Mar 1:21, 6:2; Luk 4:16, 4:31, 13:10; Jn 8:59, 18:20). Our Lord Jesus performed many works of mercy on the Sabbath Day. He healed the man with an unclean spirit in Mar 1:23; He healed Peter's mother-in-law in Mar 1:31; He healed a man with a withered hand in Mar 3:1; He healed a woman with a spirit of infirmity in Luk 13:12; in John 5, He healed the lame man on the Sabbath Day. When the Pharisees

objected, Jesus said in verse 17 "My Father worketh hitherto and I work". Let us emulate our Lord Jesus by frequenting the Church and doing works of mercy on the Lord's Day.

Negatively, the 4th Commandment gives us clear instructions of what we are not to do on the Sabbath Day. The Lord has given us six full days to do all our labours and enjoy our pleasures. We are therefore to plan all our activities, including our leisure activities, during these six days. However, on the Sabbath Day, we are not to do any work. The purpose for the command not to work is not for one to remain idle. The reason for commanding not to work is so that we can enjoy our spiritual rest. When the Israelite worked on the Sabbath in Num 15:32, he was later stoned to death. The sin was not that he picked up sticks on Sabbath Day, but that by doing so he was despising the spiritual rest of God i.e. the Rest that Christ purchased for His people at the cross. This man revealed himself to be an ungodly man and he deserved the death penalty.

Notice here that in the 4th Commandment God addresses the head of the home, the husband and the father, "in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter..." The father is responsible for the obedience of his house. The wife is not mentioned, because she is supposed to be one with the husband. And if the husband sanctifies the Sabbath, it is taken for granted that she will do likewise. The father is to rest with his family. It is his duty to see to it that his family sets aside all the ordinary work that they do in the week and devote the Sabbath Day to the Lord. It is his duty to see that not only the working adults put aside all ordinary work and play on the Sabbath Day, but even his school-going children should also put away their ordinary

work of study and homework in order to keep the Lord's Day holy.

Keeping the Sabbath is not limited to his family. If he has employees and if he has cattle or an ox or an ass (likened to our businesses today), the head of the house has to make sure he does not require them to work. The 2nd giving of the Law in Deut 5:14, adds "that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou." The master of the house should not require his servants to work just as he does not work on the Sabbath Day. His servants are to rest as well. He has to enforce it for his business as it is obvious that if the animals do not rest (in our case, if his businesses are opened), his servants will have to work on the Sabbath Day too!

Positively, we are to devote the Sabbath to the Lord. The Apostolic Church gathers on the first day of the week to worship: to hear the Word; to break bread; to pray and to lay aside gifts for the poor. This is what we should follow.

Specifically, we are to attend to the public worship. We are to attend Church to hear God's word. We are to do this wholeheartedly and with joyful eagerness. We are to attend the worship service as often as the services are being held each Sunday. The Heidelberg Catechism, in the commentary on the 4th Commandment, speaks of diligently frequenting the church of God on the Sabbath Day. The question on your mind: Is attending one service is good enough? Well, it is true that the bible did not speak about attending two or more services on the Lord's Day. It is silent on it. However, we do know that it is a Reformed tradition to attend two services. This is a good practice since the whole day belongs to the Lord and what better way to spend the day hearing God's word than

to spend our time at home, often being tempted to take a 'deserved' nap, do some secular work, or engage in some leisure pursuits. We should come together as often as we can to praise and worship Him, who deserves all our praises, by attending the worship service the second time. After all, the Lord's Day is the Lord's and we have been commanded to keep the whole day holy. It requires diligent effort on our part to come to the 2nd Service. This is especially true since it is not our practice, nor our habit, to attend two services. However, let us not use cultural difference as a reason for not attending the 2nd Service. Attending 2nd Service is not a matter of culture. Rather, it is a matter of the heart. I would like to encourage us to attend the 2nd Service and may we encourage one another to frequent the House of the Lord on the Sabbath Day.

On the Sabbath Day, there can be private worship. Our families can discuss the sermon on the Sabbath Day. Our families can also read, study the bible and sing together. Parents can use the Sabbath Day to teach their children Catechism and assist them in their Catechism homework.

Sabbath is a good day for meaningful Christian fellowship with one another. It is a good time for us to encourage one another in the Lord. It is good to invite each other over for dinner fellowship. We can spend the Sabbath Day meaningfully by praying, reading the scriptures, and reading books (good, solid theological books) and magazines that explain the scriptures. We can also visit lonely saints and bring comfort to the distressed.

Sabbath is a day for thinking holy thoughts. It is a good day to think spiritual thoughts especially after six days of much secular concerns. We can meditate on the truths of God's word on

the Sabbath Day. We can meditate on the wonder of God's great love for us in Jesus Christ. We can meditate on the Christ and our redemption, the glory of God and His love for the Church. There is so much to do on the Sabbath Day that the day seems all too short to do all these.

Our Eternal Rest

Finally, the sharing is incomplete if we do not talk about the eternal rest that we as people of God are looking forward to.

The Sabbath we keep here on earth is a foretaste of the eternal rest! It is an emblem of the eternal rest that God promises. Hebrews 4:9 tells us of "a rest remaining for us". There is still a rest remaining for us as we are yet to enter into the eternal Sabbath, our eternal rest where we will enjoy the presence of God. The weekly Sabbath we keep here points to that eternal Sabbath with the Lord. When our Lord Jesus shall come again, our weekly Sabbath here will end and we shall enjoy the eternal Sabbath with God. This is what the bible says in Rev 21:3. It will be the culmination of all things, where our eternal Sabbath begins, though it has already begun in principle while we are here on earth. We shall dwell with our covenant God forever in heaven and have covenant fellowship with Him forever and ever.

Beloved people of God, think of the eternal Sabbath wherewith we will enjoy God's everlasting presence. If we do not desire the weekly Sabbath we have on earth, if we do not desire to keep the weekly Sabbath holy, how can we really enjoy the eternal Sabbath that awaits us? May God help us, and give us the grace to really desire to keep His Sabbath Rest diligently.

I would like to quote these verses by way of conclusion. May we find it a

great joy and privilege to come to the House of God for worship. May we have an earnest longing for the House of God. If 'a day in thy courts is better than a thousand', than coming for 2nd Service should indeed be our great joy and longing.

Ps 122: 1 I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go up into the house of the Lord!

Psa 84:1 How amiable (lovely) are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!

Psa 84:2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

Psa 84:10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. AMEN.

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The Importance of Personal Devotions IV

>> Prof. Hanko

Reading the Bible is an important part of our personal devotions. How we read the Bible is very important. The Bible is the infallibly inspired record of the revelation of Jehovah God, the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ. I used to explain to my students in Seminary that the Bible was a “portrait” of Christ; and that through the study of the portrait, we could come to know God. Jesus himself said this in John 14:9: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” God is made known to us through Jesus Christ.

Paul uses a similar figure in I Corinthians 13:12: “:For now we see through a glass (mirror), darkly; but then face to face.” The Bible is like a mirror. While we are on this earth all we have is the mirror. Christ is, so to speak, behind us, but is reflected in the mirror. When we get to heaven, we turn around, look away from the mirror, and see him “face to face.”

We make the bible an important part of our devotions when, as we read it, we ask ourselves the question” What is God saying in this passage about himself? We can find an illustration of this in the passage I have quoted before in I Peter 5:6, 7: Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you”

When we ask ourselves, first of all, what does this text say about God? there are several answers. For one thing, the text says that all the afflictions of this life come to us from the hand of God. That is, he is sovereign over our whole life. That surely is a good place to start in our meditations.

Second, the text says that God’s hand is mighty. We know that this is true, for God is omnipotent – all-powerful. But in this context, it means also that when God’s hand is upon us, and our

afflictions are very great, we indeed experience it as a “mighty” hand of God.

Third, the text says about God that God exalts the humble. That is a wonderful promise – especially when we look at the verse just before it: for the God who exalts the humble also resists the proud. Those are important things about God that we ought to know.

Fourth, the passage also tells us that God cares for us. There are times in my life when it seems to me that God cannot possibly even have time for me. He is so great, so immense, so glorious that we cannot even comprehend it. And, as Isaiah says, all the nations of the earth are as grasshoppers in his sight. He moves the stars in the sky. He rules sovereignly over all the billions of people in this world. He has much to do. How can he possibly take the time to pay any attention to me? I am so small, so wicked, so insignificant. But there it is in the text: “He cares for you.” That says a lot about God: about his grace, his mercy, his compassion, his love.

And I think anyone can see that if once we see what the text says about God, the text means a lot more when we ask ourselves the second question: What is the text saying about me?

Even here we have to be careful. There are all kinds of pitfalls and traps into which we can fall. Let me mention a few. Sometimes God says nothing about me personally, but rather about his church. And he speaks to me only because I am a member of the church – something he says elsewhere. But it is very different to ask: What is God saying to me? personally? from the question: What is God saying to me as a member of the church. If we are, as Paul says, members of the church, which is the pillar and ground of the truth (I Timothy 3:15), then

when in that verse he speaks to me, he speaks to me in the church; and he says something about my calling and my responsibility as a member of the church, which is the pillar and ground of the truth. Ah. Then what he has to say directs me to ponder my responsibilities as a member of the church, which is created and formed by God to stand for his truth in the world.

Sometimes God simply says things about his own glory and power. I used to read Isaiah 40:18-27 to my students. And then, when it sank in what God was saying about himself, especially in comparison with idols, then we could read verses 28-31. What a powerful word that is to me – after letting everything in verses 18-27 sink in. Try it once. Read it for your devotions. Think about it carefully, sentence by sentence. Hear God telling you how great he is. And then when you get down on your knees to pray, read verses 28-31. If those words do not make your heart soar on the wings of eagles, there is nothing that can move you.

Sometimes God speaks directly to us with fierce reprimands – as he does, for example in Isaiah 1:10-17. Don’t say that those words are spoken only to the wicked reprobate in Judah; they are, of course; but they are spoken to you and to me. They cut like a whip into our souls; they break all our stubborn hearts. Or read James’ words: “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” (James 4:1-4). And do not say that this is spoken to wicked people, and not to you. James spoke these words to the church of which you are a member. The cut like a whip into our souls. They almost knock us senseless as a caning would. They come like thunder from heaven. God says this to me!

Yes. What does the Bible say to me? That is an important question. But we do not always like that very well and would rather slide over such passages with a hasty glance and immediately forget them. But when the publican in the temple did not dare to look to heaven, but cried out as he beat his breast: “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and went home in the joy of forgiveness, then God is speaking to us also, and leading us gently and kindly to the cross to tell us what he did there for such sinners as we are.

Sometimes in our grief and sorrow God through Christ comes with love and tender compassion. I need to hear the word of Christ again and again: “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. And I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). How sweet those words can be to my troubled soul.

There are other things that are involved in this part of our devotions. I mention a few. First, in order really to learn what a text is saying about God and about us, we have to read the text in its context and hear God’s Word in the context of the whole chapter, and the whole book.

Some outrageous explanations of Scripture have been preached because this important rule is forgotten. One minister preached a series of twelve sermons on the twelve lions on the steps leading to Solomon’s throne (I Kings 10:20), one sermon on each lion. He made each lion a Christian virtue, such as love, hope, compassion, wisdom, etc. At the end of his series, one of his parishioners said to him: “You preached twelve sermons on Christian virtues, but there are more than twelve Christian virtues mentioned in the Bible. Why did you not preach on them?” The minister responded: “I couldn’t because there were only twelve

lions”. (Anyone who makes those lions symbols of Christian virtues is putting into the text something that God did not put in.)

Another minister did not like the new fashion in women’s hair-dos. The new fashion was to pile one’s hair on top of one’s head. And so he preached on the text: “Top-knot come down.” After the service, some women, not too happy with the sermon, asked him, “Where in the Bible do you find that text?” His response was, “The text is in Matthew 24:17: “Let him which is on the housetop not come down.” (This sort of thing is playing with Scripture and making a game of it.)

And yet ministers are fond of doing similar things, especially some Baptist ministers. I heard one Baptist minister once tell his people that the purple cord by which Rahab let down the spies from Jericho was a picture of an artery in Jesus’ body, for just as the spies escaped wicked Jericho by this purple cord, so we escape the wicked world by the artery of Jesus that poured out blood when a spear was pushed into his side. We must not do this sort of thing, for we make Scripture mean more than God wants it to mean. And the person with the most vivid imagination becomes the best preacher, because he can find the most surprising things in a text. The way to avoid this evil is to explain a text in its context and in the light of the rest of Scripture. “Scripture interprets Scripture,” the Reformers shouted. How true. Let us follow their good advice – also in our daily devotion.

In such a way as I have described we “meditate” on Scripture. Meditation on Scripture is the key to our devotional life. Arthur Pink, the author of “The Sovereignty of God,” a book you all ought to read, said somewhere that the way to meditate on a given verse is to ask yourself what every word in the text means. I think that is solid advice. There are, of course, words that are only prepositions or exclamations, but paying attention to each word helps us to understand the text.

We must, after such thorough meditation, then face the question: What does the text as a whole mean? I do this when I make a sermon. I think

about, write notes on, every word and every point of grammar. Only then do I proceed to ask myself the question” What is this text teaching? What is its main theme? And how does every part of it say something about this one theme?

To succeed in this we frequently have to read a text over and over and over again until we are completely familiar with it. You say, “Yes, but all that takes too much time.” Well, it is better to read only one verse, or even a part of a verse, and understand it than to read fifty verses and not know five minutes later what they said. God’s word is worth our best efforts, and our best efforts will give us much blessing.

Questions for discussion

1. Find a passage in the Bible and apply to it the principle of “Scripture Interprets Scripture.” It would be good if at a discussion, the group would all work with the same text in private, and each would report back at the next meeting.

2. Look up Galatians 5:4 and discuss what this verse means when taken out of context and interpreted by itself. How do you harmonize it with Galatians 6:15?

3. Why is it very wrong to misinterpret a text? Is there a difference between misinterpreting a text out of ignorance and by mistake? And deliberately making a text say what one wants it to say?

4. My father had a lady in the congregations who told him that she was commanded by God to marry a certain man, who turned out to be married to another woman. She told my father that if he would not approve, he would be telling her to disobey God, something she would never do. What was the right answer to give her?

5. Why is it so wrong always to do nothing else but apply the Bible to ourselves only?

6. If some friend from another church says that John 3:16 proves that Christ died for every person, how will you deal with that? Is it possible that the Bible has two meanings? What if the person is a sincere Christian?

Honouring Our Office-Bearers

>> Aaron Lim

“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine” (1 Tim 5:17)

The 16th century Reformation restored proper government to the church of Jesus Christ. In those times, the church was entirely corrupted by the Roman papacy, who taught that Christ rules the church only through the pope and his bishops. As the pope represents Jesus Christ, he is therefore infallible. Convinced that this teaching was wrong and unbiblical, our Reformed fathers fought fiercely to restore biblical church government. The fruit of this reformation was the regulative principle. According to this principle the Reformed church declares that the church must be governed according to God’s Word – the only infallible standard for her faith and life. God, by a wonder of sovereign grace, reformed and purified His Church through the Reformation.

It is important and urgent for us as young people to understand the role and honour due to our office-bearers. God places them to rule over us in the church the same way He places parents over us in the home. Broken homes lead to wayward and delinquent children. Likewise, a church with unfaithful office-bearers produces undisciplined and ungodly members. Our Belgic Confession explicitly states that faithful church discipline is a mark of the true church (Art 29). A faithful church needs faithful office-bearers and faithful members who honour them.

Scripture abounds with examples of office-bearers who led God’s people astray. We are reminded of wicked kings like Ahab who caused Israel to turn away from God and to follow after idols. When compromising and unfaithful office-bearers allow false doctrine into the church, God’s people are led to believe Satan’s lie. They allow wolves to enter the sheepfold and destroy God’s flock (Matt 7:15).

God places faithful office-bearers in His church because He knows that we are weak and often go astray. We know too well how often we fall into sin or neglect our spiritual duties as members of the church. Scripture illustrates the church by using the figure of a sheepfold. Sheep are dumb creatures which do not know how to survive on their own. They often walk into dangerous paths, or into the paths of predators, and perish. That is why God gives us shepherds to serve as our guides and examples (1 Pet 5:3).

Christ calls men to serve Him by the power of His Spirit. He works in their hearts in mysterious ways, convicting and calling them to office. That is why office-bearers affirm the call of Christ when they stand for election. They declare publicly that they feel in their hearts the call from God’s church, and consequently of God Himself, to their respective offices (Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons). Whom Christ calls He gives the necessary gifts to discharge their office faithfully and effectively.

What is especially humbling is that God calls weak, sinfully depraved men who are no different from us, to rule over us. God in His wisdom does this in order that we do not worship our church leaders, nor allow the leaders to think that they are better than the ordinary members. It works humility both in us and in them, knowing that we are both under the Headship of Christ. Speaking of ministers, Calvin writes that “it forms a most excellent and useful training to humility, when he (God) accustoms us to obey his word though preached by men like ourselves, or, it may be, our inferiors in worth” (Institutes Book 4, III).

With the office comes authority. Office-bearers bear the authority of Christ when they discharge their office. They are not functioning on their own, but are “bound in service to God and the church”, as Calvin puts it. They are the slaves of Christ, instruments in His hand to accomplish His purpose. Therefore they function to “train the people to true piety by the doctrine of Christ, administer the sacred mysteries, preserve and exercise right discipline”. Christ stands behind their work. When the minister speaks, Christ speaks. When elders rule, Christ rules. When deacons perform works of mercy, Christ is dispensing His mercy.

The 5th commandment highlights our duty to honour our office-bearers. Explaining this, the HC declares that “I show all honour, love and fidelity...[to] all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction, with due obedience; and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand” (LD 39). Scripture instructs us to esteem them very highly for their work’s sake (1 Thess 5:13) because they bear the rule of Christ and serve His cause.

Our sinful natures often prevent us from honouring our office-bearers as we ought to. Failing to honour them can come in the form of unnecessary and unkind criticisms, backbiting and plain disrespect. We speak evil of them behind their backs and mock at their work. Our proud natures assume that we know better than them, and therefore refuse to subject ourselves to their rule. We make their work very difficult when we behave like this. We become constant sources of grief to them, as do rebellious children to godly parents. More severe is the fact that when we mock our office-bearers, we mock at Christ who is pleased to use them.

It is our privilege to have faithful office-bearers. Remember how valuable their wise words have been to young people. Their greater experiences in life have aided us immensely along the pathways of life. God uses their faithful leadership to assist us on the way to heaven. An important way in which we honour our office-bearers is to bear patiently with their faults. We should speak well of them and offer our assistance to help make their work easier. We should love and cherish them as God’s gifts to us. We must acknowledge that He is pleased to bless us through their ministries.

The incentive for faithful office-bearers is that they will receive double honour. It is difficult to imagine what this honour involves but we may be certain that it exceeds any earthly honour a man can receive. For this reason they must strive their very best to serve the cause of Christ. Their one goal in exercising the office is to edify the body of Christ. They labour to build up the church “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

In an age where there is little respect for authority, the call to honour our office-bearers becomes increasingly urgent. By God’s grace we will do so, for when we honour our office-bearers, we honour Christ.

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”
Colossians 2:6, 7

Dear Young People,

Every year, around the month of December, the Session of CERC will pick a church theme. This will serve as the theme for pastoral visitation, the various camps like CK, CKS and family camps and other ministries in the church for the New Year. So, for 2011, the Session has chosen the theme, “ROOTED AND BUILT UP IN CHRIST”, which is taken from Colossians 2:6, 7.

Verse 6 begins with the words, “As you have therefore Christ Jesus the Lord”. The apostle had previously warned the saints against false teachers. In verse 6, the apostle presents the positive conclusion. Rather than listening to the beguiling words of the false teachers, they must walk in the sphere of Christ, even as they have received Christ. The word “received” does not mean to emphasise the activity of faith whereby they accepted Christ as we may say it today. Instead, the emphasis is on their having received Christ and having come into contact with Him through the preaching of the gospel. We see this in verse 7, where the apostle writes “as ye have been taught”. Through receiving the gospel, Christ had been brought to them.

Who did they receive? Note the full name of the Saviour: Christ Jesus the Lord. He is the Christ, that is, the anointed. He is anointed to be the officially appointed Saviour. Anointed to be the qualified Saviour of His people. He is anointed in the three-fold office of Prophet, Priest and King. As their Prophet, He is anointed, appointed and qualified to instruct them. As their High Priest, He represents them in heaven. He sacrificed for them, intercedes for them to the Father, and gave the promise of the Holy Spirit. As their King, He rules over them, as one who is officially appointed and qualified to be their King. He is also Jesus, that is, Jehovah Salvation. He is ordained to be their Saviour from sin and death and give to them righteousness and eternal life. As such, He is not only ordained, He is also qualified. And thus, He is also the Lord. As your Lord, you have been taught to know Him through the gospel. As your Lord, you have so received Him. This means that you know Him and are conscious of the fact that you are His possession which belongs to Him both in body and soul, in life and death. It implies that that you are conscious of being His servants, so that it is your delight to listen to His Word, to keep His Word and thus to do His will. Hence, because you have received Him as Christ Jesus the Lord, you must walk also in Him.

The word “walk” refers to the entire active life of the believer, both outwardly and inwardly. It is the active life of the body as well as of the soul: their thinking, willing, desiring, powers, gifts and talents. It is their active walk and life in the midst of the world and in every relationship of life, in home, in school, in church and in state. And this walk must be in Christ as they have received Him through the gospel. In no way must you move away from Him in your walk. In Christ, you must be moved by Him as you have received Him. In your behavior, you must be ruled by His Word. Thus, you have received Him, as the Lord who rules you inwardly by His Spirit and directs you outwardly by His Word of Truth.

Verse 7 constitutes the necessary means for such a walk in Christ. This means that the main thought of both verses is “walk ye in Christ”. If you are to walk in Christ, it is absolutely necessary that you be rooted and built up in Him, taught and established in the faith and abounding in thanksgiving. “Rooted” refers to the abiding in Christ and the firm relation of believers with Christ and they must never be separated from Him. The source of all our spiritual life is Christ. As the tree draws all its life-sap from the soil in which it is rooted, so believers draw their entire spiritual life and blessings out of Christ. Without Him, you are nothing and can do nothing. How did we become rooted in Christ? How did the plant find its place in the soil? Did it plant itself in the soil? Surely it was the gardener who decided to grow a chili plant and so he planted chili seeds and then through the process he has a chili plant. So, in the same way, we are rooted in Christ. Our Father is the Gardener and by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, the Father engrafts us into Christ. The picture here is stem grafting where a stem from

another plant which is not growing is cut and engrafted into another plant which is very fruitful and in turn that stem becomes fruitful. Why is this stem chosen for engrafting and not others? God chose us sovereignly and sent His only begotten Son to die for us in order that we may be engrafted or rooted in Christ. Being rooted in Christ is absolutely necessary for us to be built up in Him. The believers are here as a building, established on a foundation. This foundation is laid by the preaching and teaching of Epaphras, their pastor. And this foundation is laid by preaching that is in Christ only. So the figure of the building is not that the stones are believers and that the building grows by adding more stones. Rather, the stones are the truths and doctrines of the Christian faith. They must be built up in Him: that is, in the sphere of Jesus Christ and in Christ, they can be built up by increasing in the knowledge of the truth.

It is also necessary that they be established in the faith. They must grow in Christ by means of increasing in the knowledge of the truth. But

this knowledge of the truth must not be a mere intellectual knowledge of the various doctrines of salvation, but by the spiritual knowledge of the faith. And by that faith they must be established lest they be driven to and fro with every wind of doctrine and by false philosophy. They had been taught so that they could be rooted and built up and established by the faith in Christ. And they are to abound in thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is the principle of gratitude of the heart. This is the mark of a Christian. You are to be a thankful Christian. And you are to be abounding in thanksgiving. Here is the picture of a cup that is full to the extent that it is overflowing. Therefore, you are to conduct your life in such a way that it is overflowing with and abundant in thanksgiving unto the Lord. Why? The reason is that we have received Christ Jesus the Lord and all the blessings of salvation. It is a great joy to walk in Christ.

What is the implication of these truths for us? This year’s theme is “Rooted and built up in Christ”. And this year’s focus is on being rooted in Christ and

next year’s will be on being built up in Christ. The focus for 2011 is very important for how can we be built up in Him before we are rooted in Him? First things first: being rooted is first, and then we are built up in Him. We said that to be rooted in Christ means that we are to abide in a firm relationship with Christ and we must never be separated from Him. In other words, the source of all our life is Christ. Practically, we can be more firmly rooted in Christ in two ways that you can put into practice in your life. One: daily and earnest prayer. You cannot be said to be rooted in Christ if you are prayer-less or not communing with Christ daily. Pray daily; attend the church prayer meeting monthly. Second: daily reading and memorising of the Scriptures. How can you commune with the Lord if you are not interested to hear what the Lord will say to you? How many of you have read through the Bible? Let’s try to read the bible within two years. Are you reading the Bible daily? Or are you more religious in going to Facebook than the face of God in the Scriptures? Covenant Instruction teachers should give their students weekly memory verses and their students must eagerly memorise them. Lastly, you cannot do all these in your own strength. How do we get strength for all these things? Pray. Dear young people, I pray that in this year you will be more rooted and built up in Christ.



The Importance of Reading I

>> Prof. Hanko

It was originally the intention of the Session of CERC to ask me to make a speech on the subject, "What Does the Bible Say about Reading?" Quite frankly, I was a bit puzzled about this request, chiefly because I always considered reading a normal part of the Christian life. Because other subjects I was asked to speak on took more time than anticipated, this matter of reading was pushed aside.

But then it was brought to my attention that there was good reason for a speech on reading, because Singaporeans as a general rule, do not read very much – that is do not read very much apart from their textbooks. "There isn't any time," students say, "to read anything else but that which has to do with our studies." And so, interest in and love for reading are lost in the welter of learning what has to be known in order to have a successful career.

Hence, it was with some urgency that it was suggested to add a speech on reading. When that proved impossible, it was suggested that I write what I was going to say in the speech in an article for "Salt Shakers," and this I gladly do.

The Bible's References to Reading

There are not many references to reading in Scripture. This is probably due to the fact that there was not much reading done in those days prior to the invention of the moveable type printing press. Books were scarce and expensive and most people did not have them. The books that were available were scrolls, difficult to store and handle and easily broken.

The scarcity of books is the reason why all Israel or Judah were gathered together to hear the books of the Bible read to them (Deut. 27:14 – where the Levites are probably commanded to read all the words of the law to those on Mount Gerazim and Mount

Ebal; Neh. 3:5, 8; Esther 6:1). Paul in his instruction to Timothy concerning what was required of him to be a good minister admonished Timothy, "Give attendance to reading" (I Tim. 4:13). Though the apostle was nearing the end of his life, when he urges Timothy to come to him, he tells Timothy to "bring with thee the books, but especially the parchments: (II Tim. 4:13).

There are a few metaphorical references to books in Scripture: The decree of election is sometimes referred to as the Book of Life; and the great event of the Judgment Day will be that the books, which record all that a man did, will be opened. But these references are not about our calling to read.

When we discuss the importance of reading we must also take into account the differences between people. Some people have a "knack" for reading and usually learn to read before they go to school and before anyone teaches them. Others never learn to read at all except in a very limited way. I had a cousin with whom I spent many hours, trying to teach him to read. I never succeeded, although, without every learning to read, he became a very successful business man.

There are others who, while they learn to read, for some inexplicable reason, never learn to enjoy it. Reading for them is laborious, difficult, a constant struggle and barely worth the effort that needs to be put forth.

It is worth mentioning in this connection that reading of good, solid, worthwhile material is necessary in the life of a Christian, even for one who enjoys reading, but finds "heavy" reading most difficult.

Reading skills are like muscular skills. The harder one works at it and the more intense is the effort the more reading skills improve.

I recall that especially in college, when taking courses in philosophy, I ran into some pretty difficult reading, for philosophy can be very difficult to understand. Some of the material had to be read and re-read seven or eight times before it began to make sense.

I recall one man, a Presbyterian, told me he was reading Rev. Herman Hoeksema's "Reformed Dogmatics." There were passages, he said, that he felt like he was driving a snow plow trying to break up a huge snow drift. The truck, in order to break through, had to back up, put the accelerator down to the floor, and ram the snow drift as hard as he could. He would probably advance about four feet. Then the same actions had to be repeated.

This is the way the ice is broken in the big lakes near where I live. They freeze over in the cold of winter, sometimes to a depth of more than 6 meters. But cargo ships are eager in the spring to begin hauling cargo through the lakes, and so ice breakers are sent out with powerful diesel engines and thick steel prows. They back up and then, with full speed, smash into the ice, sometimes even riding up on the top of it, hoping that the weight of the boat will break the ice. Foot by foot, they open a path for cargo ships to get through.

So it is with reading. One does not automatically find all reading easy and enjoyable. He must work at it, persevere in thinking hard about what he is reading, and he will find that gradually his reading skills of "heavy" material will improve.

But the point I am making is that people vary widely in their ability to read. Yet, even slow readers and readers to whom reading is difficult can and must improve their skills, if they are to be responsible Christian readers.

Christian Literature Ministry (CLM)

The CLM is established to promote and distribute good Christian Literature to our members and friends in Singapore and around this region.

Our stock of literature ranges from doctrine to church history and Christian living. Topics of immense practical worth such as family worship are also available. These pamphlets serve to promote knowledge of the true God as revealed in the Bible and expressed in the Reformed faith.

Reading good reformed literature is one of the means that can help us grow in the knowledge of God's truth. We pray and hope that through reading these pamphlets, God's truth will be established in the hearts of His people, bearing fruits in their lives to the glory of His Name. We also pray that our visitors would be led to the knowledge of God's truth from reading these articles.

We covet your prayers that God will bless the following work performed by CLM:

Pamphlets on various topics are placed in the rack at CERC's reception counter for free distribution to members and visitors;

A series of reformed material is printed bimonthly for distribution to church members;

Daily meditations based on the Heidelberg Catechism, written by various PRCA ministers, will be distributed on a monthly basis to CERC members, God willing. The inaugural issue for January was released on 1 Jan 2011, during the Prayer & Praise cum Church Retreat. The ministers who have contributed thus far include Prof Herman Hanko, Rev Korterling, Rev Gise Van Baren and Rev Brummel. Tentatively, Rev den Hartog, Rev Dennis Lee, Rev Rodney Kleyn and Rev Steven Key will also be contributing. Thank God for the labour of love of the ministers and for help from Rev Lau for the preface as well as Saltshakers' design team for the cover page;

Work-in-progress: CLM website for visitors who wish to order the literature. Many thanks to Bro Melvin for his help in putting the catalogue of tracts, order form and links to meditations on the Heidelberg Catechism online. Do visit the CLM website <http://clm.cerc.org.sg/>! Any queries can be directed to clm@cerc.org.sg.



The Follow up Committee

Act 18:24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Act 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

Act 18:26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

Background

When the follow up committee was first set up, it was tasked with doing both the work of missions and follow up. This broad scope over the years proved to be too much for the committee to handle and work effectively. As CERC grew in size, the demands of both missions and follow work up grew too. By God's grace, more members joined this work and the follow up committee then was split into two smaller committees now known as the Follow up Committee and the Mission Committee.

What is follow up?

As the name says, the follow up committee focuses mainly on 'following up' with visitors or new believers in our midst by befriending them. For visitors, the follow up committee oversees befriending them and constantly updates them about upcoming church activities so as to encourage them to join us regularly.

For new believers and those new to the reformed faith, the follow up committee arranges bible studies for them and builds Christian friendships with them. We hope that the bible studies will help them come to a better understanding of the Word of God and the precious reformed heritage. By our fellowship with them, we hope to show an example of Christ's love for His people. These bible studies are led by a more mature believer and he or she would remain committed to holding such meet-ups with the new believer for a period of time.

The follow up committee also needs to work closely with the mission committee in order to be effective and responsible for the proclaiming of God's truth.

Follow up work within the church?

The follow up committee does not only 'follow up' on visitors, it also 'follows up' on brethren within the church. Follow up work can range from visiting a brother in Christ, bringing him the word, and praying for him (Mobile Prayer Group) to organizing diligent brothers in Christ to committing themselves to have regular bible studies with weaker members that they may learn the way of God more perfectly (Acts 18:26).

The Mobile Prayer Group (MPG)

Set up by the follow up committee to provide support and encouragement to any member who is sick or in need of encouragement. This is done through visiting the member, praying for him or her together at home and also providing comfort from the word of God. Church members can also request this visit for their friends, relatives and family not yet worshiping in the church. It is an excellent way to bring them the gospel on a more personal basis.



Current work

Apart from organized outings during public holidays (like the recent farm visit) that aim to bring church members together outside church time to fellowship more and also give opportunities for them to invite friends and family, the follow up committee also plans visitations to a Christian old folks' home in Toa Payoh. This is where a church member is currently 'attached' to one of the elderly folk there as a follow up on past gospel meetings held there. We hope to slowly build up and share the everlasting gospel of Christ's power and grace to the saints in that home.

This year, the Lord willing, we hope to organize a series of workshops on follow up work. Please pray for the committee as the task is rather big. All who are interested to be a part of this in any way are urged to approach uncle Boon Kwang or any of the follow up committee members.

Setbacks and Limitations

After feedback and hearing the difficulties church members face, most agree that the language barrier is a big factor which hinders work with the elderly and work the church carries out at the "Singapore Christian Home for the Aged".

The follow up committee is planning and working on materials in the different dialects to help minimize this barrier.

Another challenge is the lack of manpower to carry out much needed bible studies with new believers and those new to the reformed faith. This may have something to do with the Asian culture where we are very slow to warm up, befriend and work with new comers.

Conclusion

This is a brief outline of the work of the follow up committee. Our main goal therefore, is to further share our reformed faith with unbelievers or to those new to the faith and bring them to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. As this same goal is shared by all the members of the CERC, we hope and pray that God will bless the follow up committee, that it may be used as an effective instrument in this area of work.

We thank God for graciously keeping this committee going and we urge all who are available and able to join us in our activities and gatherings, to work together and diligently share the precious reformed truth to all!

Soli Deo Gloria!

Making Audio “Audio-ble”

What is the Audio Ministry, more commonly known as ‘Audio’, about? Is it about people sitting in a room fiddling with sound knobs? Is it about people scurrying about with microphones during Q&A Sessions? Or is it about burning CDs for people upon request?

It is all that, and more. In Audio, we try our utmost to seek the glory of God in everything we do. Audio is an important ministry in the church, and we acknowledge that with humility. Every member in Audio is blessed by God with the opportunity to serve, not because we are more gifted and knowledgeable than another member of the church, but because God has graciously allowed us to glorify him in such a way. Below are two ways which Audio functions to let us do so.

The primary function is to provide loud and clear sound such that church members in the sanctuary, various other rooms and even overseas can hear the word of God being preached. It is stated in Romans 10:17 “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” In God’s sovereignty, He has decreed that the gift of faith be bestowed upon man through hearing the word of God. He is pleased to use Audio as a means to strengthen the faith of believers and plant its seed in the heart of new believers, by allowing the gospel to be heard in church.

Our other function, behind the scenes, is the recording of sermons and talks. This serves a two-fold purpose, one of which is in line with the primary function: to hear the word of God. Recording sermons makes it possible for members of the church who are unable to attend worship but would like to hear God’s word, or who want to hear sermons again, to do so. We also burn CDs which can be distributed to others for the spread of the gospel. Recorded sermons are also archived, which may have a crucial role in the unforeseeable future, such as in the day of the antichrist, when severe persecution may render attending church on Sundays impossible. Recorded sermons can then be a means of spiritual nourishment to the believer.

Audio has indeed come a long way since the days of worshipping at Bible House, when there was few or no equipment and we had only two or three members. We are extremely thankful to God for every blessing, and know that it is not by the hand of any man that this ministry has prospered, but by God alone (John 1:3).

On another note, I strongly encourage church members to seriously consider joining Audio (we are recruiting!). Age and gender is of no concern, and one only needs a willingness to serve to be ‘eligible’. Everyone in the church has their own talents (calling) that God has given, and let us not be as the slothful servant in Matthew 25 who buried his talent instead of using it to further his Lord’s cause. If you are seeking an avenue to serve God and the church, do consider joining this ministry. Be part of this brother(and sister)-hood, and have a memorable and meaningful time serving the Lord!

PS. If you do join and subsequently feel that Audio is unsuitable for you, you can always ask to be excused from it. So, do not be worried of venturing into an ‘unknown’ ministry. We would never hold you back against your will to serve here in the church. =)

From Audio, with love.

The Translation Ministry

We began more than 15 years ago at Tessensohn Road when a non-English speaking elderly saint, Mdm Yip, started to worship with us. Now, a group of dialect speaking volunteers take turns to do one-on-one translation. As translators, we have to be very attentive and focussed on what the speaker says or we will be lost for words. We are thankful that a room dedicated for this purpose is provided because we need the privacy to do our job freely.

Although we can speak the dialects, some of us hardly use them to communicate. We realise then that speaking may be simple, but translating is quite a different challenge. It is understandable that we sometimes feel a sense of inadequacy. There are times when we are at a loss for words as we are confronted with abstract doctrinal words and truths which have to be explained slowly ‘from scratch’ so that the proper ideas are brought across. We thank God that these elderly saints are very forbearing with our ‘inadequacies’.

Other than needing the ability to speak the required dialects, the main and only criterion to do this work is willingness. This is a ‘heart’ ministry which can open up doors of opportunities to bring the Gospel to our elderly folks at home. You are welcome to support this work with your prayers and by making yourself available to our ministry.

Reformation Lectures: 1) The Authority of Scripture 2) Comfort - The Spirit of Truth

>> Sis Kah Pik

REVIEW

This is an extremely important topic as it is the key idea of the Protestant Reformation during the 16th century. Martin Luther established many important and fundamental truths for church life and church government, as well as directions and guidance for the Christian home. Luther stood firmly on the authority of Scripture (being the gift of God) as the absolute rule in church confession and daily Christian living. However, this is being systematically denied and rejected, both by Reformed and Presbyterian churches today. Scripture brought tears to believers and theologians at the time of the Reformation but people now make Scripture a toy, less than what God intended it to be for the church.

One of the powerful enemies that held Europe in its grip was the Renaissance. It came and swept through Europe, causing many to be led away from the truth. Renaissance ideas denied that man needed the Scripture and taught that man stood as king in the centre of the universe and that he was in full control of his own life. The Renaissance focussed on human reasoning while the Reformed faith rested on Faith alone (Sola Fide). Another threat was the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church itself. It taught that Mary was sinless and that she ascended to heaven without dying. Renaissance gradually became the mother of modern philosophy; Scripture is no longer needed as we are capable

of studying all things ourselves and reason with it. Theism, a system of thoughts which believe that God is the creator but denies sin, atonement, and providence has become part and parcel of conservative Christianity.

Many churches today are gradually plagued by the belief that scripture has both a divine and human element and so is tainted and influenced by human writers. Higher critics who try to tear God’s Word apart and try to interpret God’s Word through man’s view ultimately deny the authority of scripture. What is your view on the Scriptures? We can do nothing apart from the Scriptures!

In Part 2 of the lecture, Professor Hanko talks about the Comforter. Christ promised to send the comforter to the distressed disciples at the last supper, and assured them that He would be with them to the end of the world. The comforter came through the Holy Spirit, that is, the spirit of truth. We have greater blessings today than the disciples had at that time because His spirit dwells in the church forever. The Spirit of Truth is also known as ‘the subject of truth’. There is no other way to know the truth other than through the Holy Spirit. He will teach us all truth and comfort us in all sorrow and trouble. He knows all the minute details of the elect, and will search out his elect in the remotest parts of the world. He brings to them the scripture through the power of the exalted Christ

to salvation and faith in Jesus Christ. In this way, His elect are given the knowledge of truth. The wicked has no knowledge of truth because they hate and despise the truth. Only through the Holy Spirit is the hardened heart changed and renewed, and willing to follow the Saviour and surrender his life to Him. Only through the scriptures is the truth revealed. The devil cunningly robs the church of its truth through subtle heresies, coupled with materialism and worldliness, causing the church to fall. However, there is always the remnant that God preserves through history. There is no room for tolerance of and compromise with heresies. It is therefore the calling of the church of Jesus Christ to develop the truth. Many churches today are not strong enough to do it because they are not willing to read theological books and thus lose their way through confusion. What our church teaches is nothing new and, more than ever, we need to maintain what our forefathers have taught as the Comforter guides us along.

Thanksgiving

Thank God for His keeping hand upon His church for the year 2010, for us as CERC and for the church universal as He always continues to uphold us just as he also upholds all things in heaven and earth.

Thank God for His faithfulness and providence in our own individual lives.

Thank God for His abundant mercy and grace towards us. We are truly unworthy sinners.

Thank God for always forgiving us and even for being the One who brings us to the cross to confess our sins.

Thank God for giving the increase to CERC as the committees labour in the church.

Thank God for the many new visitors that have come and are still coming to church to hear the word of God.

Thank God that CERC can be used as a shining light in Singapore.

Thank God that CERC has the Word of truth.

Thank God for the many gospel meetings that were held in the year 2010.

Thank God for our office bearers who have been used by God to defend the truth and also teach it to the church.

Thank God that Prof Hanko was able to visit us twice in 2010 and for the Word brought through him.

Thank God for prayer in which we are able to worship Him, give praises to Him, fellowship with Him and find comfort in Him.

Supplication

Pray that God will teach us how to pray prayers that are pleasing in His sight, according to His will, having the desires of God's own heart.

Pray for the interview of Penang Reformed Fellowship leaders in Jan 2011 by our office bearers that the office bearers will have God's wisdom in the decisions they make.

Pray that CERC will see the importance of attending the afternoon worship service.

Pray for those who are of age to make public confession of faith that God will speak to them and encourage them.

Pray for labourers in the church as 2011 starts.

Pray for the sick and the elderly that they will find strength in God and more importantly, find comfort in the salvation that they have and grace to go through their difficult situations.

Pray for the lonely and distressed that they will seek God's presence to persevere on this earth.

Pray for those who are weighed down with school or work that they will be strong in their spiritual life.

Pray for the church universal that God's will be done in all His true church and also in the lives of His children in this year 2011.

Upcoming Events

- | | |
|------------|---------------------------------|
| Jan | |
| 22 | CKS – Youth Mobile Prayer Group |
| 29 | CK workshop on prayer |
| Feb | |
| 5 | CNY visitation |
| 11 | CKS BS – Romans (2) |
| 12 | CK BS – Ecclesiastes (1) |
| 19 | CK workshop on agape |
| 26 | CKS Outing |



REFORMATION DAY CONFERENCE



CK/CKS CAMP



WEEEEEE! Competing in the soap slide!

Thanking the camp master



We've survived!!!



PROF HANKO'S DEPARTURE AT CHANGI AIRPORT



A farewell song



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 Dort.

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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