

salt shakers

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© I do set my bow  
in the cloud, and it  
shall be for a token  
of a covenant  
between me and  
the earth. Gen 9:13

Hello readers!

Welcome to the September issue of Salt Shakers for the year 2011! This is a very special issue because it is released in conjunction with Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church's 24th Anniversary, and also because this is the 10th Salt Shakers Issue! At such significant milestones and points of time, we always look back in wonder at our Lord's leading hand and sure protection every step of the way.

Long ago, there was also such an event in the life of God's people. It was soon after much heavy rain and heavy feelings of helplessness. Did God forget there was an ark with His beautiful handiwork in it? Did He move on to another people because this people were simply not worthy? Maybe He couldn't find the ark?

Surely not! God keeps His promises! First, He isn't some wishy-washy person who may be very sincere in making promises but before long forgets who he has promised what. And second, He isn't a poor beggar who promises things even He hopes for; He is God, His will is done! And as His people looked back in thankfulness, God as a father who pities His children told them in Genesis 9:12-13,16, "This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it; that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth".

"Just in case", God says, "you forget that I am a faithful God, I shall give you something beautiful to remind you of my mercy." And how beautiful the science of this sign, that light should pierce right through the waters of horrid storms and floods to reveal the stunning colours of a rainbow. The journey may have been tough, and the way ahead seems darker. We may struggle through impossible storms, be troubled all round, perplexed to no end, persecuted alone, striked down viciously; but the children of light see only rainbows. They, because of Christ, are not distressed, neither in despair, and are never forsaken. They are, really, indestructible. As a church, she is spurred on to contend willingly and faithfully in the battle of the ages – the battle of, and for, the Truth. As individuals, they look back and see the many rainbows in their lives as God shines through the storms, and realise that everything is truly beautiful in God's time.

The Psalmist proclaims in Psalm 119:64, "The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes". To the opened eye, God's mercy is indeed everywhere visible. At every moment, in every situation, it sees God's love that upholds and strengthens. And the response is simply that of adoration, praise, and full surrender to Him. We long to be at Jesus' feet learning more of His love for us and we can only whisper "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

May God open our eyes to see His tokens of love and also bless you richly with the articles in this issue of Salt Shakers!

Christ regardless  
paul

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# ELECTION: The source of the Church's comfort

>> Sis Nicole

The doctrine of election is something we Reformed Christians are familiar with. It is the doctrine we confess that speaks about how the Holy God, in His sovereign good pleasure, chooses to set His love on certain individuals based on no merit of their own. (Deut 7:7, Rom 9: 11-13, Eph 1:4, 2 Tim 1:9, John 15:16 etc). However, the Word of God not only speaks of individual election, but of corporate election. The entire church, which is the body of Christ consisting of the elect only, is chosen by God, according to His sovereign good pleasure. Ephesians 1:4 says "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:" In this verse, Apostle Paul is addressing the church at Ephesus. This means that Ephesians 1: 4 can be read as "According as he hath chosen the church ...." This choosing of the church is referred to as corporate election.

Having said all that, why then is election the source of the church's comfort?

This is because election is the source of the church! It is election that determines the existence, size, location, continuance and membership of the church. According to early reformers John Wycliffe and John Hus, the church is the company of the elect. So, as long as there are the elected ones, the church exists! Would there be a church in Singapore? China? Vietnam? Yes there would, if God has His elected ones there! Would a church continue to grow? Yes it would, if God blesses the church with covenant seed or calls out His people from a heathen world! Would the church have good leaders that look after the flock? Yes it would, since God elects some to special offices and gives some spiritual gifts for the edification of the church! (Eph 4:8-12) All in all, the church is controlled and shaped by its unconditional election in Christ. This doctrine lies at the very heart of a Reformed church. Without God electing individuals to make up His elect church, there is no church at all! This is the very reason why all a heretic has to do is to attack this doctrine to destroy the church.

This truth has implications for the church. This means that all the church has to do is to faithfully preach the gospel so that the elect can come to faith (Rom 10:17, Canons of Dort 3rd and 4th Head Article 17). This means that the church does not have to engage in 'soul winning' activities of the many present churches. It means that the church does not have to blunt the sharp edges of the gospel so that more people would join the church. It means that the church has no need to degrade the gospel to some "sales pitch" and beg people to come and believe to increase its membership. It means that there is no need for revival meetings and altar calls, or adding contemporary music into the worship service so as to get people to be more interested. This is of special comfort to the pastor and the leaders of a church. The church does not have to wreck her brain to continually come up with new ideas so that it can grow. Neither would the pastor need to think of the best way to make his speech most engaging or attract potential members with his personality. It is a comfort to know the existence, size location, continuance and membership of the church does not rest on the devices of sinful and depraved men, who through those efforts mentioned above, only cause people to stray even further from the truth.

The doctrine of election, providing tremendous comfort to the church, can be explained in relation to the 5 points of Calvinism. The 5 points of Calvinism consists of the doctrines of Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints. God has elected His church out of a world of totally depraved sinners.

And since the church is elected in Christ, Christ died for her, and only her! She is the object of God's love! This is comforting to know because she is separated from the world, righteous before the holy God despite the debt of sins she owed and continues to owe. She is no more friends with the devil, but is reconciled with God and is guaranteed eternal life because Christ's death covered all her sins. Because she is elected in Christ, she is given grace that cannot be effectively and ultimately resisted by the most obstinate of sinners. God will certainly change the ugliest and vilest of her members into one that is after His own heart, so that the church would one day be ready to be received into glory. And although life on this earth is wearisome and tough, and sometimes full of persecution from the world and the devil, God promises her that nothing can separate her from His love (Rom 8:37-39). God will see to it that the entire church reaches Heaven safely.

This truth is immensely practical for the church. The church consists of sinful, totally depraved creatures who are not yet made perfect on this earth. This means that there are countless times her members step on each other's toes and offend one another, sometimes to very great extents. Using our physical eyes, it is sometimes very discouraging to see such sins and weaknesses in the church, especially when it seems as though the members of the church are not behaving very differently from the world. However, having this knowledge that Christ died for her despite all these, we obtain great comfort. God still forgives, and thus, it encourages us to learn to forgive one another. Moreover, we have the assurance that God will grant His people grace that would change them to the likeness of Christ in His time. This encourages us to learn to be patient, forgiving and understanding of one another's weaknesses and to continually strive to keep the unity of the church, especially because we are going to spend eternity with one another.

Besides this, we gain much personal comfort from the doctrine of election because it assures us that our salvation is certain and sure. This is because those who are elected of God are regenerated, then justified, then glorified, according to the golden chain of salvation in Rom 8:29-30. This means that no child of God can be lost and not end up in Heaven. This gives us comfort especially in times when we start to doubt our salvation. There are times when we cry out, like the psalmist, and wonder if God has forgotten to be gracious (Psalm 77:9). Also, there are times when the Christian's foot almost slips when he looks at the great prosperity of the wicked (Psalms 73:2-3). However, we do well to remember God's particular goodness and all the blessings He freely gives to His elect. "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." (Psalm 73:1). It is promises like these, to God's elect, that grant them the confidence to face each day with the consciousness and assurance of His great love. Furthermore, because the church is elected, her members are given the new man which thoroughly opposes their sinful nature. As a result, there arises a great spiritual battle within. However, the knowledge of how far short we stand before the holy God does not discourage us. Instead, it cures our spiritual complacency. It helps us remain humble and stay at the foot of the cross, striving more and more to be sanctified so that we may be more and more holy. Knowing that we are preserved to the very end, we become truly humble, reverent, pious and rejoice solely in God. The purpose of this work that God does in conforming us to the image of Christ is so that we may be used for His glory. The doctrine of election makes us spiritually strong and confident Christians, who are assured of our salvation. It is through such people that God builds spiritually strong and godly families, which make up a strong church. All in all, God builds His church for His glory.

In conclusion, the doctrine of election is so comforting for the church. It means that God builds His church! It is His work! None of this work depends on sinful men! That in itself is such a great comfort.

# When my body fails....

## My encounter with cancer.

>> Sis Daisy

On 15 July 2011, out of the blue, out of nowhere, I suddenly realised a lump (2.5x2.5cm) on my right chest, close to my shoulder. It felt hard and rather bony. I sought medical attention immediately. The doctor wasted no time and referred me to National Cancer Centre (NCC).

The consultant at NCC did a needle biopsy on me. The results confirmed that I had 3rd degree breast cancer. More tests were scheduled – CT scan, mammogram, bone scan, breast biopsy and a referral to an oncologist to mete out the most feasible treatment – chemotherapy and surgery.

Friends and colleagues who came to know of my sickness were very concerned. Some offered alternative cancer treatments based on the experience of their friends and relatives. I read about Protocol. I went for a body check using Bio Resonance Therapy at Novena Medical Centre. I was at a loss as to what was best for my body.

I have suffered from 1st degree breast cancer before, way back in Jan 1989. At that time, the SGH surgeon Dr Kee Sue Gee operated on my cancer. It was neat work. I had radiotherapy and recovered very shortly. I continued with follow-up observations by NCC doctors for a few years and then decided to discharge myself.

Now, I am experiencing my 2nd encounter with a fiercer enemy – 3rd degree breast cancer. Friends have urged me to seek a second medical opinion. They “googled” and found my ex-surgeon Dr Kee. He is currently at Kee Surgery Pte Ltd, located at Gleneagles. He found my cancer serious enough to warrant immediate chemotherapy as from 11 Aug 2011.

The first 5 days of my first dose of chemotherapy was dampening. The body was a wretch. I felt weak, nauseous and tired most of the time. Thankfully, the doctor prescribed some anti-vomiting pills and booster jabs (to balance my white blood cells), which helped a little. At least I could, at intervals, spend some time to read my Bible, read newspapers, read Christian literature, sing Psalms, talk to visitors and do a little writing.

But through this experience when the body fails, I realise my great need to be spiritually right with the living God. All of us, whether young or old, sooner or later, will experience the day our body of flesh will fail us. What else do we have in life or death? Is the extinction of the body the end of life?

I thank God that He has given me to know of great and precious promises in His Holy Word, the Bible. They enable me to be a partaker of His divine nature, regardless of my physical condition. (2 Pet 1:4)

“My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (Ps 73:26). God sustains me in my spirit and in my soul.

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” (Rom 8:5,6).

The promises of God’s Word come alive in my heart, spirit and soul. Though my body fails me, I am no longer downcast. My body is but a temporary earthly dwelling place of my spirit and soul. Sooner or later, it must give way.

Now I rejoice, that I have full assurance in my soul that...

- 1) The true and living God is the everlasting and eternal God. He is the great God, Almighty. In Him is Truth, Righteousness and Holiness.
- 2) This world of humanity has fallen into death – God’s just judgement against our sin of hatred against Him. No man is spared. Every one of us are totally depraved creatures of sin.
- 3) Thank God that out of His grace, mercy and love, He will save a people to Himself. He will redeem a people from destruction. He will restore them to everlasting fellowship with Himself.
- 4) God Himself came into the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ. He died on the cross to bear the wrath of God against our grievous sin.
- 5) He has called me to repentance and faith in Him. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation.
- 6) In Christ, we have:
  - a. The forgiveness of our sins.
  - b. The right to become God’s children, the citizens of heaven.
  - c. The privilege to walk through our earthly life, led by His Word and by His Spirit.
  - d. His constant care, love and grace over us.
  - e. The hope of eternal glory.
- 7) Christ Jesus is my Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption (1 Cor 1:30).

Now I fear no evil upon my body.

I want to learn to face this enemy of my body, CANCER, by the power of His Word and His Spirit. I want to experience the joy of His salvation. I want to share that “God’s grace is sufficient for me; for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9). I glory in the God of my salvation.

# THE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES OF THE CHURCH ORDER

>> Pastor Goh

Dear young people,

The Church Order of Dordrecht occupies a treasured and venerable place in the life of the Reformed Churches. It was adopted by the National Synod of Dordrecht in 1618-19 and therefore this makes the Church Order close to about 400 years old. The Church Order was not written in the ivory tower of theological learning, but it was written and developed organically from the life of the church. It was forged under the anvil of severe trials, troubles and great persecutions. On 1 March 2011, our Session adopted a Church Order, which was adapted from the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches that reflected the life of our Church. And, after adopting the Church Order, we are in the process of implementing it. This article is written as an introduction to the Church Order so that you will understand the principles, development, authority and value of its eighty-six articles, with the goal that the Church Order will be greatly appreciated by you and used in the life of the Church.

## **The Development of the Church Order**

We owe a great debt of gratitude to John Calvin for developing the principles of the Church Order in his writings, though he did not have a hand in formulating the articles of the Church Order. The history of the development of the Church Order of Dordrecht stretched from the 1300s to 1618-19 where it was finally adopted by the National Synod of Dordrecht. It was developed through the struggles, controversies and persecutions of the Dutch Churches. Besides John Calvin, other reformers made significant contributions to the development of the principles, namely, Ulrich Zwingli and John A Lasco, amongst others. Various synods in the continent, through their synodical decisions, developed the articles that are found in the National Synod of Dordrecht in 1618-19, namely, the Walloon Synods (1555 – 1566), the Synod of Wezel (1568), Synod of Embden (1571), Provincial Synod of Dordrecht (1574), the National Synod of Dordrecht (1578) and the Synod of Middleburg (1581).

## **What is the Church Order?**

The Church Order contains principles and regulations of church government that regulate the life of the church. It also contains regulations for the broader assemblies of the classes and synods. The Church Order is not a set of rules filled with Do's and Don'ts, nor is it a detailed rule book for every conceivable situation in the church, nor is it meant to settle arguments over fine points of interpretations. Rather, the positive purpose of the Church Order is that "all things be done decently and in order" 1 Cor. 14:40. And in order for good order to be maintained, it "is necessary that there be offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline ..." (Article 1 of the Church Order). And with that purpose in mind, the Church Order is divided into the Offices (Art. 1 to 28), of Ecclesiastical Assemblies (Art. 29 –52), of Doctrines, Sacraments, and other Ceremonies (Art. 53 to 70), and of Censure and Ecclesiastical Admonition (Art. 71 to 86).

## The Principles

The Church Order contains a set of principles of Church Government that is drawn from the pages of Holy Scriptures. First, the chief principle is that Christ is the head of the Church.

Scripture often presents the relationship between Christ and the Church in terms of the human body, where Christ is the head and the church is the various members of His body (1 Cor. 12:27), and the vine and the branches, where Christ is the vine and we are the branches (John 15:5). This means that all the life of the church must be in harmony with the will of the King.

Secondly, Christ, the office-bearer of God in the one, threefold office of Prophet, Priest and King, is pleased to rule His Church through men appointed by Him – the office bearers. Thus, the minister represents Christ in the office of prophet, the elder in the office of king, and the deacon in the office of priest.

Lastly, the Church Order of Dordrecht carefully maintains the delicate balance in Reformed Church polity between the autonomy of the local church and the necessary federation of churches. Reformed Church Polity rejects hierarchy by insisting that members of the church submit themselves unto the rule of the plurality of elders, under the headship of Christ. And on the other hand, it urges independent churches to join themselves to a federation of churches and to submit themselves to the decisions of the broader assemblies.

## The Authority of the Church Order

The Church Order is a minor confession in the Reformed Church. This does not mean that it is unimportant, but rather, its scope is limited as it sets forth principles of Church Government. Its authority in the life of the Reformed Churches is based upon the principles of God's Word. Therefore, the authority of the Church Order is a derived authority and it means that the Church Order must always be subject to the infallible teachings of the Word of God. And if there is additional light shown through the study of the Holy Scriptures, the articles in the Church Order can be revised to reflect the correct teachings of Scripture. Furthermore, for the sake of the profit of the church, the articles in the Church Order can be "altered, augmented or even diminished" (Art. 86). In short, the Church Order serves the edification of the Church and not that the Church serves the Church Order. Finally, the Church Order is authoritative for another reason: the willing consent of the churches themselves. The Churches that belong to the federation mutually agree to willingly bind themselves to abide by the Church Order. Churches that join or remain in the federation willingly agree to be bound by the Church Order so that the binding authority of the Church Order is the authority we willingly consent to give it.

## The Value for Today

### 1. The affairs in the church may be done in order and decently

God is not a God of chaos or disorder and therefore, God is glorified when the Church follows the commands of the apostle to regulate matters according to the order in 1 Cor. 14:33 "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" and verse 40, "Let all things be done decently and in order". The context of these verses is that the speaking of unknown tongues must be interpreted and are to be spoken one by one; prophecy is to be preferred to tongues-speaking, and women are to keep silence in the church and let them ask their husbands at home for it is a shame for them to speak in the church. The latter had to do with speaking authoritatively in the church – something which is only reserved for the men in the congregation. And, for the sake of good order, the Church has the office bearers: ministers, elders and deacons performing their calling faithfully. Lording over others, hierarchy and tolerating sins are removed from the church.



## **2. Preserves the unity of the church**

The basis of church unity lies not only on the 3 Forms of Unity, but also on the Church Order. All the member churches of the federation subscribe to the Church Order and agree to abide by its regulation. In this way, the practices of the member churches, though they are autonomous, are united. This unity is beautiful in the sight of God, as it is not a unity in uniformity, or sameness, but a unity in diversity. This unity is like that of a human body where it is united by a diversity of its members with hands, legs and body. This unity is maintained when member churches in the federation conform themselves to the practices of the Church Order by modifying inconsistent practices and reforming their practices to agree to the Church Order.

## **3. Regulative purposes**

The Church Order regulates the life of the church in the consistory, classis and synod. It also regulates the calling and election of minister, elder and deacon, and the theological training and examination of a theological student. The Church Order also regulates the very important aspect of church discipline in silent censure, and the several admonitions given to the sinner before he is cut off from the church. It also stipulates that member churches are obligated to seek advice before the consistory goes ahead with the extreme measure of excommunication.

## **4. It is a confession of the Church**

The Church Order is a minor confession of the Church, like the various liturgical forms: for Baptism, Lord's Supper, and the Ordination of Elders and Deacons while the major confessions are the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dordt. The Church Order confesses what the church believes on the matter of church governance and describes how the church ought to be governed. Therefore, the church order is the banner that the church unfurls as a testimony to friends and foes alike.

## **5. Connects us to the church of the past**

The Reformed Church is not an independent church, separate from the rest of the true or faithful church, but it belongs to the single stream that flows from the apostolic church. Therefore, the apostolic doctrine belongs to the Reformed Church, including its Confessional formulations in the Ecumenical Creeds like the Apostles' Creed, Nicaea Creeds, and Constantinople Creeds. The formulations from the creeds are the fruit of the doctrinal controversies that plagued the church. Let us not forget that we are the beneficiaries of the formulations of the Reformed and Presbyterian Creeds like the Second Helvetic Confession and the Westminster Confession of Faith.

## **6. Serves a judicial purpose**

In times of conflict in the Church, whether in terms of personal protests or doctrinal controversies, the Church Order points the way of solving conflicts by appeals to Classis and to the final appeal to Synod. In our case of CERC, since we do not have a classis and synod at this time, there is a possibility that we may seek advice from our sister church in the PRCA to make a judgment on a matter. It has been said about independent churches that they are "dead-end streets" because when there is a conflict, there is no way they can address the issues. The issues of the problems will remain unresolved and single churches or denominations may be split as a result of controversies. But, it may not prevent the dissolving of a denomination, like in the case of the ERCS, where there was a deadlock on the matter of Divorce and Remarriage.

Dear young people, I hope that you can appreciate what a great heritage you have in the Church Order. May you learn the principles of Church Government and the regulations found therein so as to apply it throughout your life in the life of the Church. May God bless each one of you.

Dear Young People,

Music, whether good or bad, has profound influences on us. Good music has good influences; bad music has bad influences.

Bad music breaks, in one way or another, laws for music God has imbedded in the creation. The laws or rules for God-pleasing music are laws of rhythm, harmony, tempo, beat, etc., all of which combine to make up good music.

Wicked music began with Jubal, whose name has been preserved in the English language in such words as jubilee, jubilation, etc., although these words have come to be used for good music, rather than bad music. This is strange, for one would never speak of rap music for example, as an expression of jubilation.

I write what I have to say in the following with the awareness that different kinds of music arise in different cultures. I am told, for example, that Chinese music is based on a 12 or 16 note “octave” rather than the traditional Western “octave” of eight notes. (In fact, the word “octave” implies eight notes before the first note is repeated an octave higher on the musical scale.) I am not acquainted with Chinese music and cannot be judge of the rightness or wrongness of eight-note octaves or 12-note octaves. I would appreciate it if some Chinese musician among you forum members would

enlighten me on this matter; although I insist that whatever may be the truth of the matter, all music, whether Oriental or Western, has to obey God’s rules for music.

Music can be either good or bad in its own right, without regard for the lyrics (the words of the stanzas). Music in itself can be either pleasing to God or distasteful to God. A symphony by a gifted musician (such as Beethoven’s “Pastoral Symphony”) is edifying and inspiring. Rock and Roll music is distasteful in the extreme and is ungodly.

How can music be corrupted? There are many ways in which music is corrupted. Music can be corrupted by disharmony, which is characteristic of most jazz. I read a book by the noted musician and conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, Leonard Bernstein, which defended jazz primarily because of its intricate movements, complex chords and original combinations of rhythm. I do not doubt that jazz can be and often is extremely complex, but whether extreme complexity makes music good is quite another question. Some (if not most) philosophical systems are very complex; but complexity does not make them right. The same is true of music. The fact remains that much of jazz is disharmony.

Music that lacks harmony is as irritating as a fingernail being scratched along a blackboard. One shivers at the sound.

Harmony belongs to God and is given to God’s people in grace. The Biblical attribute of peace, so often mentioned in Scripture and so desirable, is harmony. A peaceful home is a home where there is harmony, for everyone is in basic and fundamental agreement about doctrine and life. A disharmonious home is one where there is incessant squabbling, disagreement and argument. We are to pray earnestly and strive mightily for the peace of the church (Psalm 122, Eph. 4:1-4). Such a church is characterized by harmony. When we have peace with God (Rom. 5:1) then we and God are in perfect harmony: His thoughts are our thoughts; His will is our will; His glory is His goal and the goal of our life. Nothing is more desirable than peace with God; nothing is to be feared more disharmony between God and us.

Discordant music, therefore, arises out of a world at war with God, where there is no peace, and expresses a love for that which is at odds with God. Just as blobs of color smeared on a canvas and called art convey the idea of the chaos of sin, so does discordant music convey the lack of harmony between man and God.

Another wrong with worldly music is the lack of melody. The author whom I quoted in the last article pointed that out. Melody is primarily responsible for the theme of the music. The other notes in the chords are supportive of the melody, explain it, enrich it, give it color



and serve as a foundation on which the melody is built. I often think of a four-part choir as something like a cathedral, the theme of which is worship of God. The bass in a choir is the foundation on which all the music stands firm. The tenor is comparable to the lofty spires that read towards heaven. The alto or contralto gives the color to the chord. Even worldly musicians sometimes call the alto singer a coloratura. The soprano carries the melody and is therefore the theme of the music.

Modern music has no melody. Rock and Roll has not melody. Rap music abandons melody altogether. The result is a senseless and meaningless conglomeration of raucous sounds without meaning and significance. Its only distinguishable characteristic is a driving beat.

We must remember, however, that even such music has influence on those who listen to it. They are, by the music, taught not only the total disregard of wicked men for orderliness in life, but they are taught that life is meaningless and without purpose. Life has no goal, no delightful end, nothing to look forward to. Life is as chaotic as the music to which people listen.

Good music gives to the listener a sense of the majestic, the sublime, the glory of the God who reveals himself in all he does as God alone. It lifts one up and

directs one to things beyond himself. It soars to the skies and points us to God who is majestic beyond description.

Another wrong in music of the world is its emphasis on rhythm. Harmony means nothing. All that counts is rhythm. This is closely associated, of course, with melody, but it is distinct. The driving beat of rock, hard rock, and rap music is all that counts. There is no melody. When I am waiting for a red light and a convertible pulls up next to me with the beat of rock music at 100 decibels, it literally hits me in the pit of my stomach. Yet this is the music that draws thousands of fans and inspires in them screaming, dancing, bellowing and ecstasies of enjoyment.

Several writers who warn against rock music of all kinds, point out, correctly, that the beat of rock music is a recovery of the beat of drums among pagan peoples who perform to the beat of their drums the lewd dances of worship to their gods. In fact, many of these writers claim that pagan drumbeats, capable of driving people into a frenzy and sometimes into a hypnotic state, do so because the beat is similar to and is intended to arouse, in one who listens, the rhythms of sex. I think this is true and is the explanation for the popularity of such music, the frenzy into which the listeners fall, and the licentiousness of the dances that go on in time with the beat. It is no wonder then that the lyrics, such as they are, are all about sex, drugs, rebellion, emptiness

of life, death, murder, mayhem, etc.

But there is also wrong religious music. But we will discuss that, the Lord willing, next time.

With our love in the Lord,

Prof Hanko



>> Prof. Hanko

# MUSIC III

# How do I Know I am a True Child of God?

## Part 1

>> Pastor Ronald Hanko

I was asked to write on this subject for Saltshakers from the viewpoint of a young teen who has grown up as a second-generation Christian. The subject suggests that there are a number of young people, whose parents were converted from heathen religions, and who have been raised in these new Christian families, who struggle with the assurance of salvation.

I had not realized that there were any special challenges involved in growing up as a second-generation Christian, and that young people in such a situation might struggle with knowing that they are children of God. However, after visiting Singapore and talking to some of the young people, I know that these challenges and struggles are real.

I can only write as someone whose family has been Christian for many generations and who may not fully understand these challenges. I ask you young people, therefore, that if I've missed anything here, you write me and let me know what I've missed or not understood. I would very much like to know more of what you are going through.

Thinking about being a second-generation Christian teen, I believe I can see why there are such struggles. It seems to me that the difficulties with assurance of salvation come because of all these young people have heard their parents' experiences in being saved from unbelief and heathen worship and in becoming Christians.

Most of you have, I am sure, heard your parents and others talking about the huge change that took place in their lives, about the excitement of becoming a Christian, and even about the persecution they suffered. Since your experience is different and you haven't gone through the same things, it might seem that you are missing something.

A person might begin to think that he is a Christian only in name and because of his parents and not because of God's work in his heart. He (or she) might feel that he needs some kind of experience such as his parents had to "prove" that he is truly one of God's children, and

lacking such an experience, feel that he is probably unsaved.

It is not only second-generation Christians who feel that way. There are many in Reformed churches who think that without some kind of memorable "experience" they have no proof of their own salvation and no reason for assurance. So, this problem, though found among you, is not limited to you or to others like you.

What can we say about this? First, you young people need to know that God does not deal with all of us in the same way. There are some who are brought to salvation in the way the Apostle Paul was, suddenly and rather dramatically, but that seems to be a more unusual thing. Others are saved in the same way as Timothy who from a child knew the Holy Scriptures (II Tim. 3:15).

That second way, more common in families that have become Christian, is in many ways preferable. Someone who has become a Christian in that way has the very definite advantage of a lifetime of Christian teaching and training and knows from experience and example in home and church what it means to live as a Christian. I have met many new Christians, who for all their enthusiasm and knowledge of the truth, do not really understand what it means to be a member of the church or to be a Christian parent. They have to learn all that, but you, as second-generation Christians understand that better and have learned that already as children. I've seen that in you.

You are not, therefore, missing out on something, but have something your parents had to obtain the hard way, without an example to follow, and often by trial and error. I am sure that if you ask them, they will tell you of the struggles of trying to learn to be Christian parents and to raise a Christian family without any example to follow.

You have, by God's grace, a definite advantage over someone who has just become a Christian, however suddenly and dramatically that may have happened, something that is very important for the church and for the

family and that brings stability to both. You, as second-generation Christians are the future of the church and the hope of the family.

God brings into His kingdom new believers to remind us of His wonderful salvation and to keep us appreciating it, but He also brings in those who are born in Christian homes and families to give stability to His church and to our homes. Remember that we are not only to be rooted in Christ but also to be "stablished" in Him and in the truth.

The second thing has to do with the excitement of becoming a new Christian. You need to realize that even for your parents and others who were converted from heathen religions, the Christian life is not all exciting, but is the daily routine of serving Christ in the place and calling He has given us.

That routine can become wearying and even discouraging. The Word tells all of us not to become weary in well-doing (Gal. 6:9). Here again I am sure that if you question any first-generation Christian, they will tell you that they have gone through times of doubt and difficulty such as yours, wondering where the excitement and enthusiasm had gone.

They had to learn that living the Christian life is like a journey with hills and valleys and that we are not always on the heights. To use another figure, every Christian goes through times of spiritual dryness as well as times of great spiritual blessing and fruitfulness. That is the result of our sinfulness, but it true nevertheless.

It is during such times of spiritual drought that we must know how to deal with our doubts and fears and how God gives to us the assurance of salvation. That, however, is the subject of another article, perhaps more than one. The assurance of salvation, though, is a very precious gift of God and something that we should expect from Him as His children.

# TIMOTHY: TOO YOUNG?

>> Brother Joshua D. Engelsma

“You’re too young.”

“Maybe when you get a little older.”

“Go outside and play while the adults talk.”

We have all heard these words at some time or another in our lives, have we not, young people? Most often they have come to us from our concerned and protective parents. And usually they are right. There are some things that children and young people should not know or do until they grow more mature. There are certain things that require a level of maturity and sensitivity sometimes lacking in young people. As we grow older we tire of hearing our parents tell us we are too young, but in most instances our parents are correct. They have our best interests at heart.

However, young men and young women, there is one area in particular in which we as young people are not too young. We are not too young in things pertaining to salvation. We are not too young to be active members in the church of Jesus Christ. Our Baptism Form makes abundantly clear that both young and old, gray-haired saint and newborn babe are heirs of the kingdom of heaven. “Infants,” we read, “are to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of His covenant.” In the Prayer of Thanksgiving at the end of the Form we pray, “Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise Thee that Thou hast forgiven us and our children all our sins...received us through Thy Holy Spirit as members of Thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be Thy children.” One of the many blessed truths that we as Protestant Reformed Churches maintain is that children as well as parents are members of Christ’s church and co-heirs of eternal life.

In this article and a few others to come, D.V., we will look at how God has worked mightily in the lives of young people like

ourselves. At certain times in history God has been pleased to use young men and women to preserve and build up his church. God often uses wise old men and women for such important work, but he uses young people as well. It is quite astounding to read of what these young people were able to do by the grace of God while only in their twenties. It is my hope that these articles will instil in us thankfulness for the work of God in these young people and embolden us to do the work of the Lord even at a young age.

We begin with Timothy. Timothy was the young pastor to whom the apostle Paul wrote two books of the Bible (I & II Timothy). The New Testament Scriptures tell us a bit about the background of young Timothy. We know from Acts 16:1 that Timothy’s mother was a Jew, but his father was a Greek. This verse also makes special mention of the fact that Timothy’s mother was a believer. His father was most likely not. From II Timothy 1:5 we know that Timothy’s mother’s name was Eunice and his grandmother’s name was Lois. In this verse Paul says that he is filled with joy “when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee [Timothy], which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.” Later in the same letter Paul writes that “from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures” (II Tim. 3:15). Timothy was reared in the truth by his God-fearing mother and grandmother. They taught him the Scriptures already when he was a child. God used these faithful mothers to prepare Timothy for his work in the church.

This is encouragement to you, young women. While this and subsequent articles speak of the work of God in young men, they are not intended only for the young men of the church. They are intended for you young women also. You too have a place in the church. An

important place! An absolutely crucial place! Without you there is no future for the church. You must aspire to be like Lois and Eunice. You must rear and teach the next generation of believing children. That unfeigned faith that rests within you must be imparted to the next generation. Without Eunice and Lois there can be no Timothy. And the church needs more Timothys.

We know from several passages in the two letters that Paul wrote to Timothy that, at the time of his work with Paul, Timothy was a young man. Paul addresses both letters to “my own son” (I Tim. 1:2) and “my dearly beloved son” (II Tim. 1:2). In I Timothy 4:12, Paul makes reference to Timothy’s youth. He exhorts, “Let no man despise thy youth.” A little later Paul writes, “Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren” (I Tim. 5:1). Clearly Timothy was still just a young man. How young? The Bible does not tell us. Many scholars speculate that he was between 25 and 35 years old, but these are merely educated guesses. All that we know for certain from the Word of God is that Timothy was quite young, especially for the work which he was called to perform.

For Timothy was called to do important work, work that from an earthly point of view would seem to be reserved only for older, more experienced men. But young Timothy was qualified for this work by God. We see evidence of this already when we first encounter Timothy in the Word of God. We first read of him while Paul was travelling on his second missionary journey. Soon after leaving Antioch, Paul stopped in the cities of Derbe and Lystra (in present-day Turkey) where he met young Timothy (Acts 16:1-3). Paul must have immediately recognized what an exceptional young

man he had before him. He no doubt saw the work of God in this boy's life. Here was a young man of God! Here was a young man who "was well reported of by the brethren!" Paul could not leave without this exceptional young man. "Him would Paul have to go forth with him." This young man must be used in the service of God's kingdom. And Timothy selflessly agreed. He even allowed himself to be circumcised (vs. 3) so that he might not be an offense or a hindrance to the spread of the gospel.

From this point forward Timothy was a faithful and tireless labourer under Paul. Apart from all of the places where he worked with Paul, the Scriptures tell us that Timothy went, often on his own, to many places throughout the Mediterranean establishing churches and building up the faith of the believers. He remained in Berea after Paul was forced to leave by the ungodly mobs (Acts 17:14). He was sent by Paul into Macedonia to preach the gospel among the people there (Acts 19:22). We also are told that Timothy probably went by himself to the Philippians (Phil. 2:19), to the Thessalonians (I Thess. 3:2, 6), and to the Ephesians (I Tim. 1:3). Paul, rather than going to the Corinthians himself, sent Timothy "who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ" (I Cor. 4:17). Later in the same letter Paul says that Timothy "worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do" (16:10). All this from the mouth of the great apostle Paul! What a remarkable young man Timothy must have been! Here was a twenty-something year old man travelling throughout the ancient Roman world instituting churches and preaching the gospel to the saints. God was working in him mightily, even at such a young age.

Paul was not oblivious to Timothy's age and the difficulties this might cause. In that well-known passage (I Tim. 4:12),

Paul says, "Let no man despise thy youth." Timothy's youth should not be a hindrance to the reception of the gospel. The Word preached cannot be denied because of the youthfulness of the one bringing it. Age makes no difference. The Word of God is not changed. We too must remember this, young men and women. Yes, we are young. Yes, we still have much to learn. But this does not mean that we cannot be active members of our churches. This does not exclude us from bringing God's Word to our fellow saints, even those who are older than us. While not eligible to hold a special office in the church, we do hold the office of believer, and we must faithfully carry out the duties of this office.

But we must also heed what Paul writes to Timothy in the rest of this verse. "Let no man despise thy youth; But be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Paul is making a strong contrast here. No man may despise our youth, young people, but we must not give them a reason to despise it either. We may not think, "No man may despise my youth, so I can go and do as I please." Paul is not giving Timothy or us an excuse to sin and do whatever we want. We must be an example in every aspect of our life. The call to live a godly life does not wait until we think we are ready. It does not wait until we are older and ready to settle down. It is the calling of every child of God, no matter what age. Do you want no man to despise your youth? Then be an example. Timothy was an example. Yes, he was a sinner just like you and I, but he was an example to the believers in his youth.

His example is one which we must follow, young people. And by God's grace we are able to do so. Just like Timothy, each one of us "from a child...hast known the holy

scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:15). Timothy was not too young. Neither are we.

# A Proper Perspective on Christian Courtship

## Godliness in Courtship and The Head of the Woman

>> Aaron

### Godliness in Courtship

As God establishes His covenant friendship with His elect in Christ, He draws them closer to Himself in a spiritual bond of love. His love attracts and compels them to union with Him. He teaches them in His ways so that they know how to obey and love Him rightly. His Word instructs while His Spirit guides them along life's journey. Covenant friendship with God is thus a perpetual process of uniting one's heart, soul and mind to God until it reaches eternal perfection in glory.

Covenant courtship presents a time of growing in godliness. As two are better than one, so a good covenant partner spurs the other on to closeness with God. When God brings two believers together, they may be at different levels of spiritual maturity and thinking. God in His wisdom does this to the end that they may grow spiritually together. As a covenant couple become united in their affections for each other, they must provoke each other's affections for God. This provocation must be active in covenant courtship if it is to be God-centered. Christ must be displayed in their own words and actions so that the other is edified and motivated in his love for God.

All too often, young people are concerned only about having fun and excitement in their courtship. Their dates are nothing more than frivolous activities and worldly amusement. Their conversations revolve around the affairs of this world more than spiritual matters. They prefer the movies, sports and all kinds of worldly entertainment to studying the Word and having discussions of spiritual worth together. Little time or effort is given to delight in the things of God, His Word, their spiritual health and the affairs of the church. The couple set their affections on things on this earth rather than those of heaven. Covenant courtship ought not to be so.

In a covenant relationship, a couple's true happiness lies in their similar delight in the things of God. They are excited to understand each other's unique spiritual struggles and are deeply concerned about each other's spiritual welfare. Together they combat the lusts of the eyes and the lusts of the flesh, and battle against the pride of life by humbling themselves before God. Together they fight the good fight of faith, being convicted that they are in this world but not of it.

They are a help-meet to develop each other's spiritual character, so that the one spurs the other to grow in the fruits of the Spirit. It is an amazing truth that godly relationships are a process in which we grow in a deeper knowledge of our sinfulness and our need for Christ. Such conviction causes a covenant couple to desire godliness in their relationship. In all of their conversation, conduct and activities, they strive to please Him who calls them into an intimate covenant friendship. As they mature as believers in Christ, so will their relationship be an increasingly powerful testimony of God's love for them.

Godliness in courtship enables a couple to overcome all the troubles and differences that hinder their unity. This is because godliness implies love for God and the will to do all that He pleases. This is a love that provokes them to give Him their very best because it understands that God has given everything good. Sometimes the differences between a couple can be very significant and complicated. This is especially true because both individuals have been raised differently in their unique families. Although a couple, they still retain their individual mind and will. Sometimes differences of a spiritual nature arise and cause more complicated problems in the relationship. But when a couple's relationship is controlled by such a love for God, they will be able to love

each other sacrificially and resolve their differences. They will, as Charles Spurgeon wrote, be able to "yield in all things; but be firm where truth and holiness are concerned".

Attaining growth in godliness requires diligent effort in covenant courtship. It requires a habitual study of the Word and prayer together as a couple. As a couple grows in their knowledge of God's truth, they will be able to experience the immense joy of oneness in Christ. As God fellowships with a covenant couple, they realise that the chief purpose of their relationship is to glorify and to enjoy Him. Such is the blessedness of a godly courtship.

### The Head of the Woman

"The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man". 1 Cor 11:3

In the miracle of God's work of salvation, He promises to save families and their generations after them. As He establishes His covenant with a man and a woman in marriage, He establishes a system in which husband and wife are to live in their state of marriage. To the man, He instructs to rule over his wife in love and to lead the home in the fear of Jehovah. To the woman, He instructs to submit to her husband, obey him and guide the household. When husband and wife faithfully submit to their covenant callings, they see a beautifully harmonized system through which God saves them and their families.

The world hates this system of harmony between husband and wife because it hates God. It rebels against Him by rejecting this order that God places in marriage and in the church. The wicked world does this by promoting feminism and all sorts of notions that insist women have equal standing with men. One can see this wicked phenomenon in apostate churches today which allow women into

office. They usurp the authority that God gives to men, who alone are called to rule the church and their homes in obedience to Him.

The idea of a young man ruling over his girlfriend may not be so apparent in the early stages of their courtship when they are only getting to know each other better. Nevertheless, as they become more committed to each other in their courtship, a young man must prepare himself to lead and to rule over her as they prepare to be united in marriage. The responsibilities of being the head of the woman are not small because his headship is a reflection of Christ's Headship over the Church. His rule over her must therefore be a faithful testimony to this truth.

Covenant courtship is a process in which a young man grows in an intimate knowledge of his girlfriend. It is striking how married couples can fail to meet each other's expectations simply because they do not know each other sufficiently well. The common, frustrated expression from married individuals seems to be, "You just don't know me well enough!" Emotional and spiritual closeness begins with knowledge. The Scriptures aptly instruct husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge (1 Pet 3:7). This has important implications for covenant courtship. It teaches the young man that he must strive to know his girlfriend as much as possible so that he knows how to lead her in a way that is glorifying to God. Knowing her unique individuality, character, mindset, personality, lifestyle, temperament, habits, preferences and dislikes are essential. Christ the Bridegroom knows His bride with a perfect knowledge. That is why He can lead her in the perfect way. Godly young men reflect this beautiful truth when they diligently seek to grow in a deeper knowledge of their girlfriends to rule over them with the rule of Christ.

The process of courtship also prepares a young man to love his girlfriend adequately because of the knowledge of Christ's love for him. As he understands the truth that Christ condescended to save His people by the way of the cross, so the young man gives himself selflessly in love for his girlfriend. Quarrels and bickering are not uncommon in any relationship, but a godly young man covers himself with the cloak of humility and adorns himself with the wisdom of

Christ to resolve those differences. He learns to love her in biblical ways that will meet her expectations.

He dwells with her as the weaker vessel, seeking her welfare and caring for her needs. The Scriptures are clear that God made the woman to be the weaker sex. This is especially true from a physical and emotional viewpoint. For this reason, God so ordained the man to make up for these weaknesses by ruling over her. Together, man and woman complement and make each other complete. A man of God understands and appreciates these weaknesses, and does not criticise them harshly. He bears patiently with his help-meet despite her weaknesses, knowing that God loves him in spite of his sinfulness.

The rule of Christ renders honour unto His Bride. He honours her because she is His prized possession, chosen in all eternity to be His. For her He bled and died to redeem from corruption. As His body, He cherishes and nurtures her until the final day of their consummation. So too, a godly young man must honour his girlfriend as his help-meet. He honours her by praising her qualities, appreciating her uniqueness and defending her from all criticism, harm and danger.

As the head of the woman, it is above all else necessary for the young man to be responsible for his girlfriend's spiritual well-being. Her spiritual welfare is his responsibility. This means that he functions as her spiritual guide and counselor. He is responsible for creating and sustaining a spiritual and godly atmosphere in their relationship. Being entrusted as her head carries the heavy responsibility of ensuring that she is spiritually healthy. A spiritual relationship bears testimony to the truth that God is in and at the centre of it.

To rule well, a covenant young man must always be striving for spiritual excellence and desiring to develop his spiritual gifts. He must equip himself with the knowledge of God so that he can use that knowledge to lead his girlfriend in God's covenant ways. It is extremely deplorable that the church world today is engulfed by spiritual ignorance. Our covenant young men must be men of knowledge, men who study the Word of God diligently. They must know the doctrines of the Reformed faith by heart and be skilled at dividing the Word of truth. With sound, spiritual knowledge

they will then know how to lead their future spouses in covenant courtship.

At various points in a couple's relationship, they meet with unique problems and difficulties. Only God's Word is able to solve those problems. That is why our covenant young men and women must be thoroughly and deeply acquainted with the Word of God.

Service to God in the church should also be in the minds of young men who desire covenant courtship. God calls them to lead His church as much as He calls them to rule over their wives. The young men are the future leaders of the church. They are called to bear the offices that Christ has ordained for His Church.

True and biblical rule is always done in love for God and for the woman God places in a young man's life. A godly young man acknowledges that he is sinful, and that his rule over his girlfriend is therefore sinful. He needs the grace and wisdom of God to execute this rule in love for God and his girlfriend. While this rule is never perfect because of our sinfulness, God nevertheless is pleased to bless a young man in the way of his faith and obedience.



## I love singing the Psalms.

I love the heritage that God has given to His people. I love the truth that the two dispensations – the old and new testaments – are in reality the one covenant of grace. I love the truth that God has revealed in the Psalms that, in simplicity, we may worship God in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:24). That is why I love singing the Psalms. Even more so, I love singing the Psalms because God himself is the author and every scripture is “breathed-out” or, in other words, inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16). I love singing the Psalms because I become the instrument by which God sings through me. After all, who am I that God should reveal His truth through my mouth which by nature, overflows with vanity?

>> Tian Loong

# Why I love singing the Psalms – Psalm 46

Though much of the richness of the Psalms can be mentioned, my one principle for loving the Psalms is in the fact that God Himself sings through the Psalms through his beloved saints who are purchased by the blood of Christ. To illustrate better, let us refer to Psalm 46 or Psalter 126.

Psalm 46:10 “Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”

*Psalter 126 Stanza 5*

*Be still and know that I am God,*

*O'er all exalted high;*

*The subject nations of the earth*

*My Name shall magnify.*

Imagine if I were to write a song, and in my song, the lyrics go “Be still, and know that I am God”. You would not be mistaken to think that I committed blasphemy of the worst sort. Truly, how can a mere man write a song and claim to be God? Therefore, beyond doubt, it is certain that God himself is the author of the Psalms.

And, if claiming to be God through the composition of a song is so heinous a crime, how different is it if I were to sing it; even if the song is not mine? However, when we sing in Psalter 126, “Be still and know that I am God”, we need not fear for it was never me nor you singing in ourselves, but rather, God who sings through us.

God sings through us. Who are we, that the eternally transcendent God who is exalted above all creation and above the fairest of angels, should sing through us? I hope that we can see what a blessed gift we have been bestowed with. Not only can we, by His grace, worship Him, but we can also have Him sing through us. Who are we to represent the most high? Among the blessings of salvation, this also, did Christ merit for us; that we may be the instruments of God, even through singing.

Furthermore, God is zealous for His own glory (Isa 48:11). He knows how best to glorify Himself. He knows with what He is to be glorified with. Thus, God being the author of the Psalms would mean that the Psalms is God-centered and God-glorifying. Therefore, when we sing the Psalms, we need not worry about being off-centre, be it man-centred or otherwise. Psalm 46 declares that God

# “God is our Refuge and our Strength, Our ever present Aid”

will be glorified as it is written in verse 10, “...I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”

If we were to build up and encourage one another in the form of singing, truly, there can be nothing better than the Word of God itself. The hearers around us are built up when they hear the Word of God, though versified, through our mouths. It is no longer “God said...” but God saying, “I say...” through us, therefore take heed!

Apart from that which is mentioned, another reason why I love singing the Psalms for it makes explicit what most Christian songs lack – The destruction of the wicked. It may sound as if I am a vengeful and hateful person when the Lord commands us to love even our enemies that we may be the children of our Father which is in heaven (Matt 5:45). However, in connection with the previous point, it is not I but God who wills their

destruction for their revolt against Him. This can be seen from:

Ps 46:6,8 “The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.”

And also from the confessions:

Belgic Article 37, “...And therefore the consideration of this judgment, is justly terrible and dreadful to the wicked and ungodly, but most desirable and comfortable to the righteous and elect: because then their full deliverance shall be perfected, and there they shall receive the fruits of their labor and trouble which they have borne. Their innocence shall be known to all, and they shall see the terrible vengeance which God shall execute on the wicked, who most cruelly persecuted, oppressed and tormented them in this world; and who shall be convicted by the testimony of their own consciences, and being immortal, shall be tormented in that everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels...”

Canons of Dordt Head 2, Article 1, “God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. And his justice requires (as he hath revealed himself in his Word), that our sins committed against his infinite majesty should be punished, not only with temporal, but with eternal punishment, both in body and soul; which we cannot escape, unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God.”

The Belgic confession calls the judgement upon the wicked “most desirable and comfortable to the righteous and the elect”. The psalms repeatedly and emphatically spells out that the wicked shall be destroyed. Shall we then withhold from God what He desires to be worshipped with if He has mentioned in His appointed songbook regarding the destruction of the wicked?

Furthermore, in singing of the subduing of the wicked, we are singing of the activity of Christ in defeating His enemies as it is written in 1 Cor 15:25-27. Thus we sing:

*Psalter 126 stanza 3, “The nations raged, the kingdoms moved,*

*But when His voice was heard*

*The troubled earth was stilled to peace*

*Before His mighty word.”*

*And Stanza 4, “O come, behold what wondrous works*

*Jehovah's hand has wrought;*

*Come, see what desolation great*

*He on the earth has brought.”*

Other reasons why Psalm 46 is dear to me:

1) Psalm 46 is a great comfort to the people of God. It starts and has its recurring theme: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

This is true for the saints when this Psalm was penned and it is also true for us today. How much vexation is there to our lives? How many are those that wish for our destruction and the losing of our souls? After all, there are one-third of the angels who have fallen who wishes for the fall of the elect and the church (Rev 12). Yet, God is our refuge and our strength though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. In connection with the previous point, we see also that the destruction of the wicked is part of the help which God renders to his people and thus is of great comfort, and thus is to be sung.

2) The covenant is spoken of.

Ps 46: 4-5 “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.”

The river, which is the Spirit of Christ that dwells in the church (cf 1 Cor 12:13-14), is the manifestation of the covenant which God establishes with His people. In parallel, the next verse states, “God is in the midst of her”. Thus when we sing this psalm, we are mindful that God tabernacles with His people and being His covenant friends, He helps us which brings us back to the previous point of this psalm’s recurring theme.

In conclusion, to me, singing the Psalms is not equal to singing any other Christian song. It is the highest honor that one can render to God and the greatest privilege given to us with respect to singing the praises of God. So the next time we sing psalter 126 or any other psalter, may we by faith, see the great privilege and be more than thrilled to sing the scriptures for when we do sing, truly, God sings through us.

# P E R F E C T I N G H O L I N E S S

>> Pastor James. D. Slopsema

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“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” II Corinthians 7:1

The apostle Paul has exhorted the Corinthian saints not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. To be unequally yoked with unbelievers is to become spiritually one with them through close association and common cause. This was being done by some in the Corinthian church through mixed marriages as well as by attending the idolatrous feasts of the heathen community. Hence they are exhorted, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers”. Continuing in the same vein, the apostle exhorts the Corinthian saints to separate themselves spiritually. “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.” To this the apostle even attaches a promise. God promises to those who separate themselves from the uncleanness of this world that He will be as a Father to them, living with them and walking with them.

The apostle now brings these thoughts to a conclusion. “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” We are called to perfect holiness. The viewpoint here is that we are holy in Jesus Christ. This holiness implies separation from sin as well as consecration to the living God.

Let us investigate this holiness a little further. We live in a world corrupted by sin. This is due to the fall of mankind into sin at the beginning of history. This original sin has rendered the human race totally depraved, incapable of doing any good, inclined to all evil. We can see this evil on TV, hear it on radio, read of it in the newspaper, witness it daily as we rub elbows with the world. By reason of our natural birth we are spiritually no different from the world - corrupt, evil, abominable before God. By a great work of grace in Jesus Christ, however, God has wonderfully transformed us. He has given us a new heart to love Him and not hate Him. He has enlightened our mind so that we believe in Him and in His Son, Jesus Christ. He has softened our obstinate will so that we yield to His will instead of resisting. He has broken the stranglehold that sin had upon us so that we are free to serve God.

And so we are holy - saints of God. We have been separated by grace from the corruption of this world and are consecrated to the service of God. This holiness we must perfect, i.e., bring to completion. We must understand that although we have been made holy in Jesus Christ, we are only partially holy. As already noted, we have been delivered from the power of sin in Jesus Christ and renewed in heart, mind, soul, and strength. But this glorious transformation is not yet complete. There still remains within us much that is sinful and corrupt. The Bible calls this our flesh or sinful nature. The result of all this is that the basic direction of our life is toward God. In our deepest heart we hate sin and love God, so that daily we turn away from the evil of this world and press on in the service of our God. But there is something in us that still yearns for the corruption of this world. This evil tendency yet within us daily hinders our service of the Lord, leading us to stumble into sin again and again.

In this context the Word of God speaks of perfecting holiness. To perfect holiness is to complete holiness. One perfects holiness when he fills in that which is lacking, so that he turns from all sin and lives completely in the service of God.

We must understand that holiness will not be perfected in this sense until we reach heavenly glory. For as long as we live on earth below, we will be plagued with our sinful nature which will render our holy living far from perfect. Nevertheless, we must daily strive for the perfect holiness that we will enjoy one day in heavenly glory. Daily we must strive to put away the sins that so easily beset us, so that more and more our lives are consecrated to the service of the God of our salvation.

In this sense the Word of God speaks of perfecting holiness. This must be the concern of every true child of God.

Perfecting holiness requires that we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. This is evident from the main exhortation of God before us: "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness". Obviously we perfect holiness only when we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

By the flesh is meant, not our sinful flesh, but our physical flesh, our body. The term "spirit" in the Scriptures is often used interchangeably with the term "soul," as it is here. The spirit or soul is comprised of our mind, will, and emotions. With the flesh and spirit we have the whole being of man. We have corrupted our flesh and spirit with sin. We do this when we use them as instruments to sin. By our evil thoughts, desires, and feelings we corrupt our spirit, rendering it spiritually filthy. With our evil words and actions we corrupt our physical flesh. The Word of God calls us to cleanse ourselves of all this filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

We cleanse ourselves when we rid our lives of the sins that corrupt us before God. This spiritual cleansing involves cleaning up our lives by turning away from the sins that defile us. It implies that we cease using our flesh and spirit as instruments to sin and use them instead as instruments to serve God. This is done, of course, not in our own strength, but only in the power of the blood of Jesus Christ. Christ's blood alone washes away our sins. Consequently, he who will cleanse himself of the filthiness of the flesh and spirit must daily fall to his knees in prayer to seek from the hand of God the cleansing power of the cross. In this way of cleansing ourselves we also perfect holiness.

"Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness."

The fear of God is set before us as the motive to do this. The work of cleansing ourselves from all spiritual filthiness and thus perfecting holiness is not ultimately our work but God's work in us. However, when God cleanses us He deals with us not as robots but as the thinking, willing creatures He has made us to be. Hence, He motivates us so that we desire to be cleansed. He places within us such a desire for holy living that we daily flee to the cross to find the power of Christ's blood to cleanse ourselves. That which God uses to motivate us is the fear of Him.

"Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

By "the fear of God" is not meant the dread of God. Sometimes the Bible speaks of fear in the sense of dread. Many are well filled with this kind of fear of God, for they have trampled underfoot God's will. They despise God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Unless they repent, they will fall one day into the hands of an angry God. However, it is not fear in this sense - fear of judgment. Nor must we ever be motivated (or try to motivate our children) to be holy by this kind of fear. Most often the Bible speaks of the fear of God in the sense of deep reverence for and loving adoration of God. This fear fills the heart of every child of God who has tasted the salvation of God in Jesus Christ. To fear God requires that you have come to the true knowledge of your sin. You are a miserable sinner, worthy of God's judgment, without any means of turning away God's wrath, hopelessly lost. But now, God has come to you in your desperate situation with His free salvation. To your great delight, He has freely forgiven you all your sins in Jesus Christ. He embraces you, He cares for you. He has reserved a place for you in heaven! Those who have tasted these great mercies of God can only be filled with deep awe and reverence for God. They are overwhelmed with loving adoration. They fear God!

It is this fear that motivates every true saint to live a holy life in the service of God. Moved by that holy zeal they fall to their knees in prayer to find the cleansing power of the cross of their Savior, Jesus Christ.

"Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Another incentive to do so is the promises of God. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness . . . perfecting holiness."

The apostle has set before the saints of the church wonderful promises. God will be their Father. As their Father He will receive them, He will live in them and dwell in them. What beautiful promises these are! They speak of God's fellowship with His people. This fellowship is the true joy of man. This promised fellowship can be realized only in the way of holiness. The apostle has already made that very clear. It was only in connection with the call to spiritual separation from the world that the apostle spoke of God receiving and living with them as a father does with his children. God Himself is a holy God. He cannot receive anyone who is not holy as He is holy. He certainly will not live with those who trample His holy things under their feet. These promises of God's fellowship with those who are holy, are set before us as incentives to perfect holiness.

Already now we, as saints of God, enjoy this promised fellowship. This fellowship is the joy of our lives. However, this fellowship is marred by our sins, as we daily defile ourselves before God. How much richer this fellowship becomes as we more and more learn to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

# Exhortation to the **FAMILIES**

>> Matthias Poi

Dear readers,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It brings me great delight to be able to write to you all, in the hope that you may be encouraged to carry on waging this spiritual battle we have been called to.

In searching for an appropriate topic, I heard a sermon on a topic that I found to be highly relevant to both old and young. Specifically to the children, what issue could be more pertinent to us than the fifth commandment (Ex 20:12)? How important is this command that we, as God's people, so often treat flippantly? How does it affect parents?

"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy giveth thee." Exodus 20:12

To begin, the word 'honour' is used here to mean an attribution of high esteem. We must first acknowledge that our parents' authority is God-given, and submit to it, and in doing so, honour God. The Word of God tells us that obedience to our parents is 'right' (Eph 6:1) and 'well-pleasing unto the Lord' (Col 3:20). We find great and humbling examples of biblical honouring of parents in King Solomon, who arose and bowed himself to his mother (1 King 2:19) and also in our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who made provision for His mother while on the cross (John 19:25-27).

The bible warns us against dishonouring our parents. So serious is this sin, that it lists some examples such as smiting, cursing and mocking (Exodus 21:15,17, Deut 21:18-21, Proverbs 30:17, Matthew 15:4) as being punishable by death. This list is by no means exhaustive, but I need not spell everything out. We know we sin when we argue with or disobey our parents etc. Even for grown up children who have themselves become parents, do you find yourself squabbling with the in-laws? Do you care for your elderly parent(s) who raised you from birth, or do you leave them to others to care for in an aged care facility? Scripture also warns us against deceitfulness in interpreting scripture according to culture. Some have said that because of a tradition (Mark 7:9-13), they need not care for their parents anymore. They put tradition above God's Word, thinking that the former effectively nullifies the latter. Woe betide those who do not heed God's warnings, for their 'lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness' (Proverbs 20:20).

Having identified our responsibilities as children, let us now look at the responsibilities of the parents. Eph 6:1-4 reiterates the fifth commandment, but with an additional clause, denoted by the use of the conjunction 'and' in the beginning of verse 4. Vitaly,

“Honour  
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Exodus  
20:12

honouring of parents is linked with fathers not provoking their children to wrath but bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Eph 6:1-4 thus instructs the nuclear family.

To understand the importance of this truth, we must look at the account in Deut 6. Verse 2 points to the fifth commandment, and also tells us that the commandments were to be passed on to their son and their son's son. In other words, there is to be a generational transfer of information. What is this information? Parents are to 'teach [the children] diligently' about the law in every facet of life (Deut 6:6-9) and explain to them the reason for keeping the commandments (verses 20-25) when they question its meaning.

The implications then for parents are serious. Fathers, YOU are responsible for raising your children in the 'nurture and admonition of the Lord' (Eph 6:4)! Not the world's education system, not a child-carer, neither the Sunday school teachers nor youth workers. Reading from Ps 78:5-8, we see that the law was given to the fathers to be passed on to further generations, that they (future generations) might set their hope in God and keep His commandments. To allow ungodly, worldly influences to shape their child's heart is tantamount to treason against God!

Furthermore, parents cannot teach God's Law if they themselves have not built up God's truth in their lives (Deut 6:5-6). Parents are the stewards put in place by God to pass on godly characters. Having laid out the examples, we now see that the honouring of parents is a vehicle that God has put in place for the generational transfer of God-fearing and God-honouring character. Just as one generation learnt from their parents' holiness, righteousness and a fear of God, they would similarly order their lives to be emulated by their children.

Last but not least, with the warnings of Scripture come the blessings too. When we honour our parents, it will be well with us (Eph 6:3) and we are rewarded with as long a life on this earth as God sees good for us (Ex 20:12, Eph 6:3). It will be 'an ornament of grace unto [our] head' (Proverbs 1:8-9), a sight of great price to God. Notice also in Proverbs 1:8, that the blessing presupposes the godly character of the parents, in that the child is to 'hear the instruction of [the] father, and forsake not the law of [the] mother'.

Can we see that God's commands are not meant to constrict us, but rather are for our own good? In His infinite wisdom, God has put in place commands to be the framework for our lives. History has proven that deviation from this leads only to enslavement to the devil – a downward spiral that will lead to hell apart from God's mercy and grace. Let us honour God in honouring our parents. Even after their death, perhaps the best way to honour them is not to just adorn their graves with flowers, but to continue following their godly example, that God may be well pleased. Parents, look to God for strength to be godly role models. Ultimately, children will follow what their parents do and not merely what they say. Be wary lest in your sham faith, you propagate a stubborn and rebellious generation (Ps 78:8).

Children, if you have failed in your duties to honour your parents, seek their forgiveness and God's, and start anew. Likewise parents, if you have fallen short of your God-given duties, seek your children's and God's forgiveness, and start afresh. Repent, seek restitution, and go to God for help. It is only in God's strength that we can honour Him in worship and in the keeping of His commandments.

“Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.” -Ps 119:34-35

May God grant us an understanding of His glorious Word that we may keep it with joy and so treasure it all the days of our lives.

*Love In Christ,  
Matthias Poi*

&gt;&gt; Brother Ishu Mahtani

# Letters to a *young believer*

## God's Sovereignty in Hell

**QN:**

Dear Prof,

Greetings in His precious Name. Prof, I read in Psalm 139:8, a verse which speaks of God being present, even in hell. Is God also going to be present in hell and have sovereign rule in hell as well?

Thank you.

**ANS:**

Dear brother,

The answer to your question is this.

First, it is possible that the reference here is to the grave and the state of the dead. The OT uses the word sheol, which means either the place of everlasting punishment or the place of the dead: that is, the place of everlasting suffering, or the grave and the state of the soul existing without the body (either in heaven or in hell). That is the word used in Ps.139:8. The NT uses two words: hades which is the place of the dead and the so-called intermediate state, and gehenna, which is hell, the place of everlasting punishment.

If the meaning is hell itself, then the text reminds us that God is present even in hell. He is not present with His favor and love, but with His anger and wrath. He is present because by His providence He upholds the wicked and gives them their existence all the days of their life and on into hell, where they are everlastingly tormented. If the meaning is "the place of the dead," then the idea is that death itself is God's punishment for sin and that even in that disembodied state, God still upholds us and gives us our existence. This is true of the wicked and the righteous.

I think that probably the latter meaning is the meaning in Psalm 139:8.

*Greetings and blessings, Prof*

**QN:**

Dear Prof,

Do you think there are some parts of the KJV which stand to be corrected? Would those corrections enable us to better understand the Word? Which translations would you recommend me to read, so that I am able to have a better understanding?

Thank you.

**ANS:**

Dear brother,

There are only a very few places where the translators of the KJV could have done a better job, in my opinion. But these places are not only very few in number, they are places where the difference in translation makes no difference of any significance in the meaning, and surely does not touch on a doctrinal truth.

I was asked to speak on Bible translations a while ago and I made an extensive study of the KJV as compared to other versions, along with a detailed study of how the translators of the KJV actually worked. I was completely persuaded that the KJV is far and away the most accurate translation, that it is written in a timeless English that is still understandable today (apart from a few words, the meaning of which can be found in any good dictionary and in many Bibles), is the easiest by far to memorize, and is written in a magnificent rhythm that gives it a lasting beauty, dignity and sanctity. The whole project borders on the miraculous. You can read of it yourself in a pamphlet that I wrote on the subject and which is available on the PRC website. There is a book entitled "God's Secretaries" which is very much a book worth reading.

If you want another translation that you could use, I would suggest you take a look at the Revised Standard Bible. The trouble is that people cannot judge the accuracy of a translation, and that is why I insist that the KJV is the most accurate of any translation in existence. The proliferation of translations is doing untold harm to the church. No one knows any more what the Word of God says, because the translations differ so much.

*Greetings and blessings, Prof*

## Is the KJV Bible Infallible?

# 24th Church Anniversary Thanksgiving

>> Marcus Boon



Time flies. Most of my memories of my life in church as a little kid have long since faded away over the years. Yep! I was born and raised in my church (CERC) and I am very grateful for that. ('Born' as in I attended church since I was a baby, definitely not 'coming out of my mother's womb') As such, I have the privilege of receiving the benefits of my spiritual mother, CERC, when I was young. I am very thankful to God for the faithful preaching of God's word every Sunday throughout our church history. We are all constantly being nourished and strengthened in our faith by this means of grace in which we all need and in which God commands. 2 Timothy 4:2 says "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." And in Hebrews 4:12, we find, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The word of God is powerful. It pierces into our hearts.

Although I cannot recall much of the time when I was a child as my brain was still undergoing serious development, some memories are hard to forget, no

matter how much you want to, especially embarrassing moments. At that time, during my childhood days, our church was located at Tessensohn Road. I remember once, after a birthday celebration, we were asked to pass down cut-up pieces of cake. I spotted a huge strawberry in a slice of cake and could not resist a few nibbles. Feeling timid and not knowing what to do next after an adult told me to pass it down, I followed and passed it down. Suddenly, a girl cried out, "How come there are so many marks on my strawberry!" I kept quiet, but my face turned red.

I guess, without realizing it then, this embarrassing moment has become a pleasant memory where I laugh and think to myself: I could have done better. In a way, God was teaching me a little lesson about greed, bravery, and honesty.

We can all see God's guiding hand at some points in our lives, and feel God's presence in one way or another. Especially so in CERC, where we worship God, adore Him, sing praises to Him and where He alone is glorified. I am thankful to God for our pastors, elders, deacons and Sunday school teachers who look after God's people, both spiritually and physically, and ensure that the sound doctrine of God's Word, which is our

reformed faith, is carefully and boldly taught. One example is the comforting truth of God's Sovereignty, where God is in absolute control over all things and that everything will work together for our good even though we may not understand why we must go through a certain pain or difficulty. Matthew 10:29-30 says, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." And in the well known verse, Romans 8:28, we read, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

I am also thankful for everyone in the church - visitors, members, children and friends alike. I am thankful for their love towards one another in Christ, their prayers for one another and their forgiving of one another. I am thankful for their zeal in serving God in CERC and in the various ministries. It is because of God's sovereign love and grace for us that we are able to do all these and more.



# ENDEAVOURING to FELLOWSHIP in the LIGHT

>> Brother Andrew Tan



Dear fellow CERC Saints,

Even as we rejoice in another CERC anniversary, I am constrained by the love of God and for CERC to write a bit more soberly and with an increased measure of gravity regarding the present state of our fellowship. Why now and especially for a Salt Shakers issue that celebrates our church anniversary, you may wonder? Well, apart from offering praises and thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father for preserving CERC thus far, I believe that we must also take stock of where we are – spiritually, that is; so that we may know how and what to commit to the Lord in prayer, plan to move forward for His sake, and further the cause of the Gospel.

I would like to refer us to God's Word in 1 John 1 and the article's key text in verses 6 and 7 – “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” The focus of this writing is – Endeavouring to fellowship in the Light: Are we doing it rightly before God? (Biblical references drawn from 1 John)”

When we fellowship in Christ, we do it ‘in the light’ – as sinners saved by

grace. To further expand the meaning of ‘fellowship’, it must cover all manner of life including our dealings and relationships (1 John: 1-4). These latter aspects are what I hope to draw members' attention to. Surely, all of us know that fellowship is not confined to only church lunch or a CK/CKS barbeque dinner, and the like (even if there is an exhortation or devotion included in the programme). Fellowship must also happen in the course of doing the Lord's Work together and in counselling and building up of the personal Christian walks of our family members as well as fellow saints, all in the fear of the Lord.

If we agree on this, then allow me to express a concern – that is, if we are not sober and watchful at this point in time of our church building (which I believe is at a high point), we may gravitate towards a lackadaisical attitude of the heart in how we come together to serve our Lord God. As a church, we may unwittingly allow those ‘Me, Myself and I’ worldly inclinations and indifference to fester in our hearts, so much so that we may not even realise that spiritual darkness has set in for some time already, even as the light in us dim ever so subtly.

Let me elaborate by relating an activity that we do together every Lord's Day

– participate in the lunch-fellowship ‘ritual’. If we fellowship in the light, having lunch with fellow saints should not be a problem. Am I right? When we begin to queue, we will want to esteem fellow saints higher than ourselves. When we are served food by fellow saints, we are thankful to God for them to have the heart to serve us, and therefore we humbly accept what is served. When we take the food to the table, we are even at ease when we lunch with saints whom we usually are ‘most uncomfortable to be with’. At the slightest opportunity, we may even want to help him clear his plate and cutleries after the meal.

But, if we are not in the light, we let our guard down. Our carnal mind may get the better of our spiritual heart and it dims that light. We will begin to consider “What's for lunch?” rather than staying focussed on the prayer meeting, fellowship meeting, or CI class that we are still in the midst of, and which precedes lunch.

At the risk of unintentionally offending some, let me suggest these other possibilities that our hearts may be dangerously inclined toward. When we are not in the light, we may even consider “jumping queue” or asking someone to queue for our own meal, just to avoid

# “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7

queuing like every other saint would be doing! When we are not inclined to fellowship in the manner that Christ would want us to, we would have already decided whom we would not sit with, let alone engage in Christian conversation. When we begin to consider ourselves above other saints who have been on duty preparing, serving and washing up after lunch, we may even knowingly leave an empty cup or cutlery unattended on the table as we leave our lunch table.

When we read 1 John, we will begin to be convicted in our hearts that in everything that we do together to further the cause of Christ (and not just fellowshiping over a Sunday lunch), we cannot but want to ‘shine’ for Him and His Church; or otherwise, we would grow dim and deteriorate into spiritual darkness and deceit. We will not want to be indifferent towards any saint. By which time, we may have grieved the Holy Spirit, stumbled and even wounded our fellow saints. This in turn breeds mistrust, betrayal, and as it is written in 1 John – lies and hypocrisy. While I pray and hope that each one of us, including myself, will not regress to that, I am also burdened to want to express a word of caution now. It is not my intention to ‘pour cold water’ during our celebrations. On the contrary, I pray that we do not even become ‘lukewarm’.

By walking in the light, we are always conscious that being in our flesh, we are no better than the other fellow saints. Therefore, we will want to endeavour to humbly acknowledge and accept the other saint, no matter how unseemly that brother may appear to us. As we are in the light, we will constantly strive to avoid ‘taking cover’ and instead move away from those dark corners that deny God and His saints when they seek us out to do His Will.

When we walk in the light, that light will shine forth and drive away the darkness in our hearts, so much so that those excuses of the need to attend to a chore or to attend to some work in office or church, may just give way to really doing

what is right before God and His people. This shining forth may well include bonding in the most unearthy hour or dealing with a difficult issue a fellow saint has been facing for some time already.

Essentially, even as we receive hard (yet truthful) biblical doctrines through the preaching of the Word and from the many bible study sessions, devotions, etc., a heart that is in the light must also want to deal with all saints (regardless of spiritual maturity and character) to edify them. You will want to build him up to the next level of Christ-likeness. That heart of light will also be confident and fearless in engaging fellow saints on difficult issues; be they church or family matters. Be careful – as those who merely profess to be in the light, may do the former (only hearers of the Word) but will have neither the conviction nor even the inclination to do the other! I write this not of my own opinion or values, but of the Lord’s.

I urge us to heed God’s Word with gravity and consider 1 John 2: 8-11: “Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.”

So, dear fellow CERC saints, let us be reminded, that we do not unwittingly allow darkness (and therefore hypocrisy and lies) to dim that light in our hearts. The consequence can be disastrous to us, our loved ones and His church. Let us therefore remain watchful and continue to deal with one another only in His truth, His counsel and His love – never ours or each other’s. Let us dwell in His mercies and grace, knowing that we are always as much a sinner (saved by grace) as other fellow saints. Hence, this truth must surely convict us to show Christian

charity and compassion. Just as we are called to love God with all our heart, mind and soul, we are to make every effort to ‘reach out’ to our fellow saints, instead of remaining (or worse, walking) in the dark.

In walking in the light, we cannot help but want to ‘shine’ for Him through sharing of our personal testimonies – both blessings and admonishments from the Lord. When we shine forth, we are delightfully constrained by His love to want to engage others and show Christ’s love to our family and fellow saints. When we fear the Lord, we are persuaded by the Holy Spirit and His Word to want to take a step lower and slower in order to serve and learn from the other ‘sinner-saint’.

In so doing, opportunities will abound and doors will be opened for us to submit to one another in His love. In so doing, we truly fulfil the law of Christ. If anyone fears that he may be taken advantage of (or lose out), let us look no further than Christ as the one to emulate: allowing Himself to be disadvantaged, cheated and betrayed – just to do His Father’s Will. Yet, Christ has prevailed and fulfilled the Gospel for us.

In closing, I wish each and every saint in CERC a very blessed anniversary, and that we may continue to be blessed richly, preserved for yet another year by His mercies and grace, and loved dearly by our Heavenly Father. As we celebrate our church anniversary, let us fellowship and reach out to one another; even as we are promised in His Word that our joy will be full. That fullness of joy, in turn, will no doubt cause us to draw even closer to each other in the bond of love that only Christ, His Son, can give.



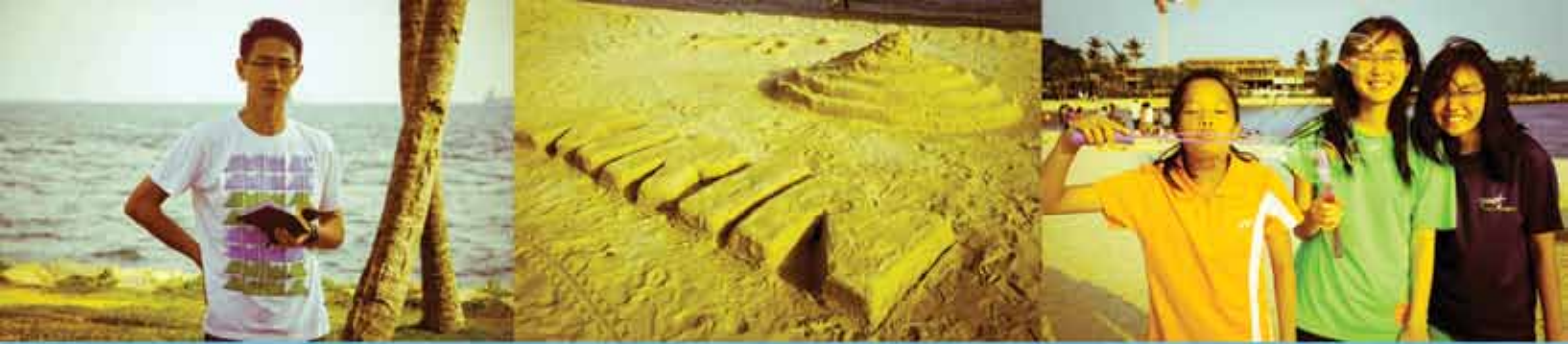


## Thanksgiving

As CERC celebrates her 24th anniversary, we have indeed much to praise and thank our great and mighty God.

- 1 We thank Him for entrusting CERC with the **Reformed Truth**. We firmly believe that God is the Sovereign One of the universe. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He continues to fulfil His decree in heaven and in earth according to the counsel of His own will.
  - 2 We thank Him that He is the **God of our salvation**. He redeems a chosen people out of many nations, by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We, who were dead in sins and trespasses, through Christ have the seed of eternal life within us.
  - 3 We pray that God will preserve **His Church**, as a true, faithful and holy bride, in the midst of a present evil world, which rages against her. She fights the battle of faith, not by power nor by might, but by the power of the Holy Spirit.
  - 4 We pray that God will raise up and strengthen **godly leaders** of His church to be faithful to His Word. To be willing, at all costs, to contend for the Truth against the rising darkness of this world.
  - 5 We pray for **fathers and mothers**, that they would be led by the power of His Word and His Spirit to lovingly labour for the maintenance and sustenance of godly families and to nurture their young ones in the fear, love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - 6 We pray for the **young** in the church that they will earnestly feed on the pure milk of God's Word, be willing to take up the cross and follow Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.
  - 7 We pray for the **adults** in the church, that we may live and walk in godliness in all aspects of our life. To be godly examples to the flock of our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - 8 We thank God for His **Great and Wonderful Promises** that He will be with us always even unto the end of the world (Matt 28:20). He will be our Guide for ever and ever even unto our death (Ps 48:14). He is our Comfort and Strength under all circumstances of life.
  - 9 We thank God for the assurance of His everlasting **LOVE** upon us, His faithful church. He calls us to love Him even as He first loves us. He that has God's commandments and keeps them truly loves God, and God will also manifest Himself to us (Jn 14:21).
  - 10 We thank God for the **HOPE** of eternal life, purchased by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Upon our death or at His coming, we shall inherit heaven's glory and continue in the sweet fellowship with our everlasting and eternal God.
- O death! Where is thy sting? We are reconciled to God by Christ through His Spirit. Glory be unto His Holy Name.





## Outing at Sentosa



## Sports Day



### 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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