



# salt shakers

joel 3:16 matthew 5:16

Issue 21 | Jul 2013

"The psalms give expression to the entire range of human experience and emotions." **Are the Psalms Adequate for the Worship of God?** by Elder Lee

"The lines of election and reprobation cut through covenant lines." **What is Reformed** by Prof. Hanko

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## Welcome to Salt Shakers July 2013 Issue!

In the blink of an eye, we have passed the halfway mark in a year already. To some, it might be a good thing; to others, it might be a disappointing fact. One way we can look at it is: How much have I been a servant of Christ in these six months? What have we done for our Lord and Saviour? Have we been redeeming the time in service of our Lord, or were we too busy with our own "stuff" that we didn't have any "extra" time for our King this time round? Don't be discouraged by these questions, but be reminded of our calling in this life as servants of the Most High! God's Word encourages us in Hebrews 12:12-13a, "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet".

The other way we can look at six months past is that we are half a year closer to eternity! Is this a happy thought, or a sad one? Does this thought thrill you in your heart, or does it bring an uncomfortable dread? For the ungodly, each day is a chance to grab at the threads of worldly pleasure before their time runs out. In contrast, God's people live with hope every single day, because each day brings us closer to Home. God's Word encourages us in Romans 8:24-25, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Let us be glad, as we patiently wait on the Lord!

For the reasons above, it is also fitting that CERC should have our annual church camp in June, because it is a time when the church can look back and examine itself both as individuals and corporately as a church. This year's camp was held in Genting, Malaysia and Pastor Lanning was our speaker for messages on the theme of "Growing in Godliness". The four messages were titled "Godliness: An All-Consuming Goal", "Godliness: Fuelled by God's Word", "Godliness: Strengthened Through Prayer", and "Godliness: Served by Godly Fellowship". Thank God for an awesome time of spiritual refreshment and feeding on His Word, as well as the blessed experience of the communion of the saints over the four days.

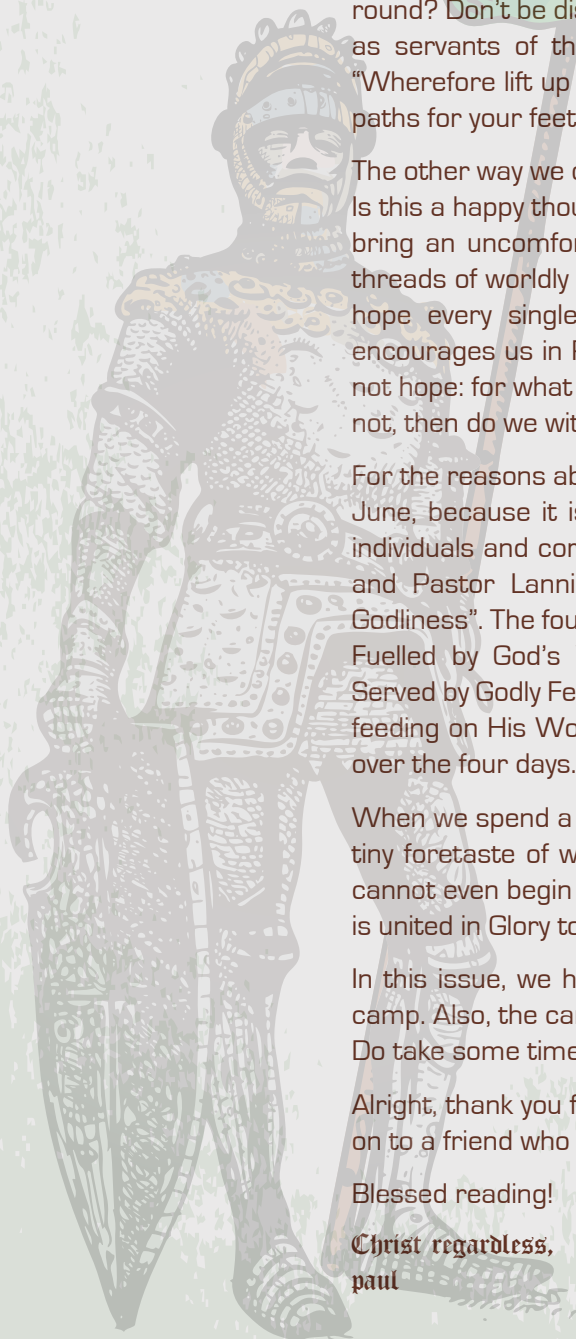
When we spend a few days living and worshipping together with God's people, we have a tiny foretaste of what Heaven would be like. What we have is indeed blessed, and one cannot even begin to imagine what it would be like one day when the whole body of Christ is united in Glory to praise our great God. Truly, eternity will not be too long!

In this issue, we have photos and dedicated articles to share with you glimpses of the camp. Also, the camp messages are available on <http://tinyurl.com/2013CampCERC>. Do take some time to listen to them and be blessed by the spiritual food that we had!

Alright, thank you for reading this editor's note, and do remember to pass this magazine on to a friend who may benefit from any of the articles!

Blessed reading!

Christ regardless,  
paul



# PSALMS 23: VERSE 2

>> Paul Liu



*Paul Liu* is a confessing young adult in CERC. He is the editor of Salt Shakers.

## Psalm 23

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

**2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.**

3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

## Introduction

Before we begin, if you are not already doing this, why not take a tiny little bit of time to memorise the second verse of this Psalm? Remember it word for word, because we love to hang on every word Shepherd says, don't we? => By the end of this series, may we have this Psalm hidden in our hearts.

In the previous article, we have seen the blessedness of following Shepherd. Following Him does not mean that this life will be free of troubles and filled with much wealth and health. In fact, very often we are led to places that we would rather not go to. Places that would strike fear in our little sheep-hearts, and cause us to quake beneath our woollen coats. Places where we feel that we cannot carry on anymore and we are lost and helpless. Then, our comfort is simply that we are following our dear Shepherd. The way we walk, is the way Home. And we belong to Shepherd who loves us so much that He would even lay down His life for us! Do we need to fear for the safety of our lives? Surely not! We can have peace no matter what is going on around us, and we can go through life with this quiet confidence that we will never, ever, be in want.

In the second verse of this Psalm, we start on a list of things that Shepherd does for us. No, wait. It's more like a glowing list of things we are proud of! Hmm, but are you sure that you sheep are supposed to be proud...? Oh yes, there is one instance that we can be proud – Jeremiah 9:23-24 says, “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the

mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgement, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.” When we understand and know the love that Shepherd has for us, in so many ways, we had better glory in it! We must first give glory to Him for saving us, and bringing us into His fold. And after that, we cannot help but boast of His continuous work of salvation in our lives! Never should we run out of things to say about our good Shepherd. This list reminds us that we never have to doubt our Saviour's care for us. Whenever others would ridicule the state we are in, we would whip out this “boast-list”, and speak proudly of the faithfulness and overwhelming love of Shepherd. Sheep tend to be forgetful... so keep this list close to your heart, refer to it often, and be comforted.

## Well Fed Sheep

“Yummy!” should be your reaction when you read this verse. Why? Because this verse first and foremost speaks about the yummy feeding we receive when we are under Shepherd's care. Lush green pastures and still waters so clear you can see yourself in it. Food so good it even feels awesome to roll and play in it! Is this true of how you view the nourishment that God provides for us?

Shepherd feeds us, most importantly, spiritually. It is so important to spiritual sheep like us to have proper



... God is faithful, who will not suffer you to  
be tempted above that ye are able...



nourishment! Our Lord Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, where Moses said, “And God humbled thee, and suffered (allowed) thee to hunger... that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.” Our spiritual feeding is so important that sometimes God even removes from us our physical food and nourishment, that we may see the state of hunger that our souls are in. Shepherd feeds us with the Truth, our Lord Jesus Christ. This Bread of Life and Living Water causes us to never hunger and thirst again in our souls! Every Sunday, each one of us must be looking forward to feed on the Truth of God’s Word as brought to us by the authority of our Shepherd. We may not sleep while feeding spiritually! Do we sleep while eating dinner? If we love the yummy truths of God’s Word, we really can’t wait till next Sunday, but will eagerly follow Shepherd each day to fill our stomachs with His Word. And, you see, when we delight in our Lord and His Word, it really isn’t unimaginable that we roll and play around in this blessed abundance of nourishment that Shepherd gives to us! We must also be aware that Shepherd also provides for us physically. “Man does not live by bread alone” also means that man does need bread to live. And our God is faithful to provide for our every physical need whenever we ask of Him, “Give us this day our daily bread.” King David says in Psalm 37:25, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” What blessed assurance that Shepherd takes care of us and we need not worry about tomorrow!

### **Sweeping us off our feet!**

There is something really beautiful about the fact that Shepherd makes us, or causes us, to lie down in restful places. It speaks two important truths; about our sheep-behaviour and Shepherd’s dealing with us through this life.

As sheep, we have this terrible tendency to trust in our four scrawny legs to hold up our bodies and their heavy woollen coats. We have endless problems, fears, and distractions to bother about that we simply cannot rest! We are easily bothered, frightened to a standstill, and live without hope in our lives. And when we do have some energy, we spend it all seeking our security and rest in the false support of our own legs. Some find respite in a larger bank account, some find security in family members, and others find relief in the worldly advice and support of friends. Oh no, but we are still unable to truly rest, and we are stuck in this awkward position of a “lost” sheep standing on a beautiful green pasture but getting more and more tired as the day passes.

What does Shepherd do? He forces us to lie down. Well, not violently of course, for we are His dear sheep. He hugs us tightly, as He pulls us down. It isn’t an easy process though, for our legs have become stiff and cramped from bearing our own weight! And as our LORD bends each to leg to remove them from supporting us, it is sometimes a most painful experience. Some may have every possession stripped off them; some may lose a family member they used to depend on; and some may lose all their friends. Even so, these necessary pains give way to comfort as we rest in Shepherd’s arms; and He gently lays us down to

rest on the green pastures that He had prepared for us and was under us all this while. What would we silly sheep do without such a loving Shepherd?

### **Shepherd Knows Us Best**

Though what we go through may be difficult and uncomfortable at times, we must never forget that our dear Shepherd continues to be mindful of us. He does not deal with us forcefully and without care. In fact, His Word reminds us in so many places that we are His children! God tells us in Hebrews 12:6 that He chastens us ONLY in love. Because of this fact, it is such a comfort that Shepherd leads us beside the still waters. It isn’t some body of water that happened to be on the way to somewhere else He is going to; He specifically led us there in love because the waters there are still! Why would He do that? Well, simply because we as sheep are timid and so easily frightened! If the troubled waters scare us, we would likely rather go thirsty; and Shepherd knows this. He doesn’t force us to brave up and “just do it”, instead, He leads us to where He KNOWS we will drink deeply and where our thirsts will be quenched for our own good.

Knowing that Shepherd knows us so well brings us wonderful comfort. Along the path Home, there will be many trials and temptations. These difficulties may seem too much for us and we feel like sheep who are going to thirst to death. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that “... God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” We must never forget this merciful and loving promise that just when we feel like there is no way out,

Shepherd will show us the still waters He has led us to. This will give us strength to go through life's journey, because the One who keeps us and directs our paths knows our frame and remembers who we are to Him. =)

### Near Shepherd, all is well!

This brings us to the end of the second verse. If there is nothing you remember from the above, remember this one thing: *The one who provides for all our needs is the one who loves and knows*

*us perfectly.* Thank God for providing us with both spiritual and physical nourishment; thank God that we do not depend on ourselves! When you can no more rest on your own legs, let yourself go into Shepherd's arms as He causes you to rest in the unfailing work of salvation through the Cross. When you think that no one understands the pain you are suffering, remember that Shepherd knows your weaknesses and He will lead you to still waters.

Indeed, if we look back in history, we will be able to see how our dear Shepherd has led His dear sheep in love and faithfulness. Look a little bit nearer, and we also see the paths that we have walked by Shepherd's leading. Look a little bit closer, and you will realise He makes us lie down in green pastures and He leads us beside still waters. Do you believe this? If you do, then move along now... Shepherd is leading us on. =)

## Our Father's Handiwork: Lightning

>> Lim Yang Zhi



Lim Yang Zhi is a youth in CERC.

“In this rubric, Our Father's Handiwork, we have seen many aspects of creation, from the stars of the night to the multi-coloured rainbow after a storm. All these and many more not only display God's awesome power, but they also picture His gracious love in beautiful ways. Now, we look at another aspect of His creation: lightning and thunder. We will see that they picture both God's infinite power and marvellous love.

All of us have seen a lightning strike before, or at the very least, have heard the sound of thunder. When rain starts pouring down from above, we suddenly see a blanket of light that engulfs the skies. This blanket suddenly condenses into a crooked, white line, after which comes a mighty roar of thunder.

We all shrill upon seeing lightning and hearing thunder. And we should. The amount of power in that one strike of lightning is tremendous. A single lightning bolt can carry as much energy as 5,000,000,000 joules (this amount can easily power Singapore

up!). A single lightning bolt can also kill people. Many have died from a single strike; if not, they may survive and suffer from severe skin damage, brain damage, and other serious medical problems. Furthermore, we Singaporeans live in a country that has one of the highest rates of lightning activity in the world! Thus, on careful consideration, we actually have quite a number of opportunities to hear and witness a tiny fraction of God's power reflected all-year round – something we often take for granted.

We can only marvel at how great the power of God is. The amount of energy in a single bolt is huge, but it is still limited to a certain number. God's power, however, is not. His power has no limits at all! His power is infinite! Thus, imagine if God would have unleashed all His power, what would have happened? I can only imagine that not only the whole earth will disintegrate, but the whole universe will be destroyed, because nothing can withstand His power. We, and all creation, are finite!

“ There might be a sudden shock and a slight moment of fear when we suddenly hear the lightning roar with its thunder, but what comes after that is a reminder of the comfort which we possess.

Leaving statistics aside now, we should see how God has used lightning, or at the very least, thunder. In Exodus 9, we read that one of the ten plagues that God sent to Egypt included ‘thunder, hail, and fire’ in them, so that it destroyed all the crops and cattle of the Egyptians. There was ‘none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation’ (v. 24). Verse 24 does not indicate that there was lightning in Egypt, but it is certain that thunders were heard by everyone. Imagine how the Egyptians must have felt – terrified and trembling at every sound of thunder, hopeless because the wrath of God was upon them. Surely the Egyptians were sore afraid while seeing their crops destroyed. God’s manifestation of His power was something undesirable to the Egyptians – it was a curse to them.

But, there is more to creation than that. The lightning flash and roar of thunder are also pictures His love. You might be surprised to hear that, but it is true. Looking back at Exodus

9, we read that as the Egyptians were suffering under the terrible plague, ‘in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail’ (v. 26). Though the verse does not mention that there was no lightning or thunder in Goshen, we can safely assume that it was not present in the area along with the hail and fire.

Recall that God’s people had been suffering under the Egyptians for over 400 years. God was now delivering His people through the ten plagues and destroying the wicked Egyptians along with their riches and material possessions. But what about God’s people? What happened to them during these plagues? They were protected! God’s wrath was not upon them; rather, God’s love was upon them. His faithfulness in His Covenant was clearly pictured in the lightning that He sent to destroy the Egyptians. His people He will protect; but the wicked will He destroy. Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. The mighty sword used to judge the

wicked is also the impregnable shelter in which God’s people can flee to – that is the beauty of sovereign election.

Thus, we need not be afraid when there is a thunderstorm, or when we see lightning bolts flash in the dark and gloomy sky. There might be a sudden shock and a slight moment of fear when we suddenly hear the lightning roar with its thunder, but what comes after that is a reminder of the comfort which we possess. It reminds us that God is with us, and He is on our side.

He is our salvation – of whom shall our souls affright? May we gladly sing with the Psalmist:

*Thou art my shield and glory, Lord, my Saviour O Most High;*

*The Lord from out His holy hill, gives answer when I cry.*

*I laid me down, and rest, I waked, because the Lord sustains;*

*Tho’ many thousands compass me, unmoved my soul remains.*

## CHURCH CAMP 2013 REFLECTIONS

>> Sister Peck Wan



*Sister Peck Wan* is a member of First Evangelical Reformed Church. She had the opportunity to attend CERC’s recent annual bible camp in June 2013. It was held in Awana Genting, Malaysia.

Thank God for opening doors for me to join the camp even though the decision was made only seven days before the camp.

The messages were short and practical; reminding us to live a Godly life for bodily exercises profit little but godliness profit in all things...

It was a blessed time of fellowship. Witnessing the youth (many of whom I have known since they were only toddlers or in their pre-teens) of CERC really warms and thrills my heart. To hear of good reports and to witness their zeal and love for God in group-sharing sessions really humbled me; may ALL praise and glory be given to God for working in their hearts to be zealous and be obedient to His Word.

May the Lord continue to bless CERC and His people who are willing to live unto Him.

# Are the Psalms Adequate for the Worship of God?

>> Elder Lee Kong Wee



Lee Kong Wee is an Elder in CERC. He is the husband of Dorcas, and their family is blessed with two children.

## Introduction

What shall the church sing? What can the church sing? This is one of the most often asked, as well as controversial, question in the history of the Christian church. It is by no means an insignificant question for it touches the very life and worship of the Church from Lord's Day to Lord's Day. It concerns whether we worship God with sweet-smelling sacrifices or strange fire. Many churches today have been infected by the humanistic, self-centred, postmodern culture of the present age. Hence, the choice of music in such churches is shaped by individual preference and what "feels good". The Reformation restored congregational Psalm-singing to the church. But so far has Christendom departed from the Reformation faith that one can hardly find a Protestant church today that sings Psalms in her worship, let alone sing it primarily. The majority of churches, Protestant and evangelical churches, even Reformed and Presbyterian churches, are abandoning the Psalms for hymns and free songs in their worship services. A generation of Christians has arisen, who have not so much as heard of singing Psalms in their worship. This is sad.

## Why We Sing the Psalms

To forsake Psalm-singing is to forsake the rich and precious heritage of the Reformed faith. By God's grace alone, CERC continues to sing the Psalms in her worship services.

**Article 69** of our Church Order states : *"In the churches, only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon, the doxology 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow' and the 'Offertory song' shall be sung during worship services."*

## Decision regarding Article 69

*"Selected hymns which are in accordance with the Reformed religion, having been approved by the consistory, may be sung during the worship services on occasions referred to in Article 67."* [kw - Christmas, Good Friday, Resurrection Day, Ascension Day and Pentecost.]

From the article, it is clear that CERC sings primarily the Psalms in our worship services. This implies that we consider Psalm-singing adequate for corporate worship from Lord's Day to Lord's Day. We do not see the need to allow hymns or other free songs to occupy an equal or significant place in our congregational singing because we are convinced of the adequacy and

value of singing the Psalms primarily. 'Adequate' does not mean we deem the Psalms 'just about sufficient' for worship, giving us barely enough substance and content to praise God with. No! Rather, we judge that the Psalms, even all by themselves, provide the church with an inexhaustible store of praises with which to worship God. This does not mean we hold to 'exclusive Psalmody' or that we believe the 'regulative principle' demands that we sing only the Psalms in worship. We do not believe the Bible commands that only the Psalms be sung in worship services, any more than that It commands that congregational prayer must only be paraphrases of prayers recorded in the Bible or that preaching is limited to the use of Scriptural language. The regulative principle (that only what the Bible commands is permissible in worship) extends to the elements of worship (preaching, singing, prayer, etc must be present), but not the exact 'form' of the content of these elements. This is not to say that 'form' is unimportant and that any 'form' is permissible, but the 'form' should convey the sense of reverence and solemnity that befits the worship of an absolutely holy and righteous God. And without doubt,

“ We must maintain God-centeredness in our worship, and never allow human elements or man-centeredness to creep in. In this regard, singing the Psalms is a sturdy safeguard because the Psalms are inspired Scripture. ”

singing the Psalms creates such an atmosphere of worship.

Now, from the outset, we must be clear that we are not saying the *Psalter* we use is inspired just as the book of Psalms is. The Psalter is a work of uninspired men, who re-arranged and para-phrased the words of the Psalms to make them suitable for singing. Such versifications of the Psalms are not perfect. In fact, some versifications (words and tunes) really do appear that they can be improved. Nevertheless, apart from these few exceptions, the version of the Psalter we use is a faithful versification of the Psalms, and we can sing the psalter numbers with the confidence that we sing the truths contained in the Psalms.

With regards to the question of why we count the Psalms adequate and sing them primarily in our congregational worship services, I offer 4 reasons:

In the **first** place, the book of Psalms is the **only divinely inspired songbook** of the Church. God has given His church, in all ages, only one inspired songbook – the Psalms. It is striking to me that God did not give His people another songbook, even with the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ in the New Testament era. This surely ought to cause us to consider seriously the value of singing the Psalms. Are the Psalms “out-dated” in the New Testament age simply because they belong to the Old Testament Scriptures? Do we consider the Old Testament Scriptures to be any less important or a “lesser Word” than the New Testament Scriptures? Surely not! To me, the fact that God gave only one divinely inspired songbook to the Church implies (even if it does not conclusively establish the command) that the Psalms ought to have an abiding and central place in the worship of the church of Jesus Christ throughout all ages. The Psalms has been the songbook of the OT Church and throughout the NT age since Jesus’

days, to the Church Fathers, all through the Middle Ages, during the Reformation and Post-Reformation eras, and into the modern era. The Psalms simply continued to be sung in the Church from the time of the OT right into the NT age and they were never deemed to be inadequate for her worship and praise. It was only in the mid-18th century that hymns began to be introduced into the Church and by the beginning of the twentieth century, the church had lost the voice through which it had expressed its sung praise for more than 1800 years. Together with the loss of this voice, the Church also began to lose its grip on the grand and glorious doctrines of grace re-discovered during the Reformation. Today, with majority of churches singing hymns and free songs, the God-exalting and man-abasing doctrines of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, on the basis of Christ’s merits alone are virtually unknown and unheard of in modern day Christendom.

This brings us to the **second** reason why we sing the Psalms primarily – the Psalms are eminently **God-centred and theologically sound**. This is simply because they are divinely inspired. As it is true of all Scriptures, the focus of the Psalms is God, not man. The Scriptures exalt God and abase man. The same cannot be said of the entire body of hymns. Now, there are good, doctrinally sound and edifying hymns that one can sing heartily. But, they are in the minority. A great number of hymns and contemporary worship songs are man-centred and Arminian, not to mention often sentimental. They focus very much on the individual’s feelings, and experience of salvation and relationship with God. But in congregational worship, our focus is **NOT** ourselves. We are not to be lost in our own ‘spiritual cloud-nine’ without being conscious of the fact that we are worshipping Jehovah God as His **people**. The congregation is

not just a mass of individuals who happen to gather together in the same place at the same time to sing the same song and hear the same speaker, each with an individual agenda, and each seeking a personal blessing. We are a **body**, gathered to enjoy covenantal fellowship and engage in covenantal dialogue with **our** God. The very word ‘**congregation**’ implies a **corporate** identity. If there’s any ‘individual’ that deserves any attention or focus during congregational worship, it is God alone! We must maintain God-centeredness in our worship, and never allow human elements or man-centeredness to creep in. In this regard, singing the Psalms is a sturdy safeguard because the Psalms are inspired Scriptures. Even where the Psalmist speaks of his personal struggles in times of afflictions and harassments by his enemies, the ultimate focus is God’s sovereignty and glory, not his own deliverance and ease.

Furthermore, singing the Psalms is a strong antidote against singing heresy into the church. The great Synod of Dort in 1618-1619, because of controversy in the Dutch Reformed churches over the introduction of hymns into congregational worship, included a specific article the Church Order (Article 69) on what to sing in the church to re-establish and maintain the principle of Psalm-singing. Part of the reason was because of the fact the Remonstrants were using hymns to teach and spread their Arminian theology. In the Secession of 1834, the faithful ministers who spoke against hymns did so for the same reason that they were used to smuggle Arminianism into the Dutch churches. We must guard against the same today. If man and man’s word, not God and God’s Word, is the centre and focus of our singing (as well as our preaching and prayer), it would only be a matter of time before our church becomes unfaithful and depart from the Reformed faith. It is no coincidence that in the history of



“



Hence the Psalms are adequate as a vehicle of praise for the NT church, for the Spirit of Christ enables her to see Christ clearly revealed in the Psalms, such that she can sing with the spirit, and sing with the understanding [1 Cor 14:15].



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the Church, every return to biblical Christianity has been marked by a corresponding return to congregational Psalm-singing in the church. It is also the testimony of history that hymns, when introduced into the church, very soon drove out the primary place of the Psalms in worship; and the cautious introduction of good hymns initially was soon followed by the introduction of corrupt hymns which led the church on the pathway towards apostasy. Although the adoption of false doctrine is not a necessary consequence of the introduction of hymns into congregational singing, it is certainly a repeated pattern in the history of the Church.

In the **third** place, we count the Psalms adequate and sing them primarily in our congregational worship service because the **central theme of the Psalms is Jesus Christ**. Just as the theme of every book in the Bible (whether in the Old or New Testament), as well as the Scriptures taken in its entirety, is Jesus Christ, the theme of the book of **Psalms** is centrally **Christ**. In **Luke 24:44**, Jesus Himself told the eleven disciples in one of His resurrection appearances, *“These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in*

*the Psalms, concerning me”*. (By the way, the book of Psalms is the most quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament.) It has been persuasively argued, by those who believe the necessity of introducing hymns into the worship services, that the NT church needs ‘NT language’ to express herself in her singing. With the advent of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of His Spirit at Pentecost, it is argued that the church needs new vocabulary to sing the themes of Jesus Christ and His works, of the victory of Christ over sin and death, of His resurrection and ascension, etc. This is worth pondering over and not to be brushed aside too quickly. For indeed, as the people of God living in the NT age, we have the clearer light of the NT Scriptures. Do not NT Christians need a new ‘musical language’ to express the clearer light of the NT revelation concerning Jesus Christ? Are the Psalms, belonging to the OT, really adequate? My response is: Why then did God not give His church another songbook in the NT? It seems to me the reason is because all the cardinal truths concerning Jesus Christ are already contained in the Psalms, notwithstanding in seed form. We must not think that simply because the Psalms are found in the old dispensation that they are somehow deficient when it comes to revealing

Jesus Christ. It is true that in the OT, Christ and the gospel are revealed in types and shadows. OT prophets and saints behold Christ from a distance as it were. Nevertheless, the Psalms, although belonging to the OT Scriptures, contain all the truths with regards to Jesus Christ that are revealed more explicitly in the NT. The Psalms speak of all the works of Jesus Christ – his birth, suffering, death, burial, resurrection, ascension (Psalms 2, 8, 16, 22, 23, 24, 40, 41, 45, 68, 69, 87, 89, 102, 110, 118). Other than the Psalms, there are also many passages in the OT where we have descriptions of Jesus Christ and His saving work, which are crystal clear to us as NT believers when we read them (e.g. Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 7, 53, 61, Micah 5). For the full truths are contained already in the OT, only now to be revealed in clearer light in the NT. The apostles, with NT eyes and understanding, could quote the Psalms (and other OT Scriptures) in their writings and show Christ revealed therein. We can sing of Jesus Christ in the Psalms with NT understanding. There is no mistaking what the Psalm or OT passage is referring to. And this is so because of the organic unity of the Scriptures, both OT and NT Scriptures. Essentially, the entire Scriptures are one – they have one theme, they reveal One Person, they draw the portrait of one Man - Jesus Christ. Therefore, with the Spirit of the ascended Christ dwelling in our hearts now, we can read and sing the biblical truths regarding Christ and His works contained in the Psalms with equally clear understanding as when we sing another song with so-called ‘NT lyrics’ describing these truths. Perhaps sometimes in words not as plain and explicit as NT language, but nevertheless, it does not and ought not to detract one bit from the clarity of the truths expressed.

Hence the Psalms are adequate as a vehicle of praise for the NT church, for the Spirit of Christ enables her to see

Christ clearly revealed in the Psalms, such that she can sing with the spirit, and sing with the understanding (1 Cor 14:15). The Spirit does not teach new doctrines concerning Christ. The doctrines remain unchanging. But It leads the NT child of God into deeper, richer and fuller understanding of the truths contained in the Psalms concerning Christ.

In the **fourth and final** place, God has inspired the Psalms to be a spiritual biography of the child of God. The Psalms give expression to the entire range of human experience and emotions. This is a unique character of the Psalms that make them especially suited to be the songbook of the church. The Church father Athanasius (300-343 A.D.) calls the Psalms "a mirror of the soul" and "a book that includes the whole life of man, all conditions of the mind and all movements of thought." John Calvin described the Psalms as

*"an anatomy of all the parts of the soul"*, since every experience, every emotion, all the heights and depths, all the joys and sorrows, all the mysteries of human life, are contained in them. Hymns do not possess such a characteristic as their words and moods reflect the time and age in which they were written. The Psalms on the other hand have a timeless quality that resonates with the people of God in every age.

As such, the people of God in all ages, being indwelt by the one same Spirit who had inspired the Psalms, find in the very words of the Psalms an echo of the cries of their own souls. As they sing the Psalms, they can say "Yes, this is *my* sin, this is *my* hope, this is *my* experience". They can identify with the Psalmist in the depths of their souls. We can take the words of the Psalmist upon our very own lips and pour out our hearts to our God in prayer and praise.

### Conclusion

We count the Psalms to be adequate for worship and sing them primarily in our worship services for the above reasons. Indeed, the Psalms have pride of place in our congregational singing. There is a place for singing good hymns in various aspects of the organic life of the church, such as Bible studies, in youth meetings, prayer meetings and camps. But we must be discerning and select only hymns with sound doctrine. We must safeguard against singing heresy into the church.

God has given His church the rich and precious heritage of singing the Psalms in her worship. Let us treasure this heritage and pass it on to our children, and children's children. May the Lord bless our church and families, and preserve His truth among us by the way of singing the Psalms.

# WHAT IS REFORMED?

>> Prof. Hanko



Prof. Hanko is a retired professor of the Protestant Reformed Theological School. His present work consists of ad hoc preaching in the denomination and writing for periodicals such as Salt Shakers. He also writes in a forum for young people and is working on new books. He has visited Singapore on many occasions and is like a grandfather to all the youths here.

In our discussion of what it means to be Reformed, we must insist that the Biblical and confessional doctrine of the Covenant stands at the very heart of the Reformed faith. That Biblical and confessional doctrine of the Covenant has been held by the church, beginning with the great reformer, John Calvin. It was recognised, especially on the continent of Europe, as crucial for the development of the Reformed faith. Covenant theology was recognized as Reformed theology and the two became synonymous terms.

From the very beginning of Reformed theology with John Calvin, theologians that dealt with the doctrine of the

Covenant and most continental theologians maintained these basic doctrines. It is true that some did not, but they were in the minority. The true line of Covenant theology held to the following truths:

- God triune is in Himself a Covenant God.
- He has chosen to reveal His own Covenant life through Christ.
- Christ is the Head of the Covenant, and the Covenant is established with all those who are elect in Christ. Election, therefore, determines who are in the covenant and who are not.
- The Covenant is established and

maintained by God through Christ and his work of atonement and redemption. It is, therefore, an unconditional covenant.

- That Covenant is established with believers and their spiritual seed.

- Elect children of believers are, as a general rule, brought into the Covenant at birth, or even prior to birth – as was the case with Jeremiah and John the Baptist (Jer. 1:5, Luke 1:39-44). Baptism does not bring children into the Covenant, for baptism is a sign and seal that they **are** already in the Covenant. They are to be baptized, says the Heidelberg Catechism, because “they, as well as the adult, are included in the Covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian church, and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant” (Q&A 74). (See also Acts 2:39 and Mark 10: 13-16: “He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them”).

It is this last point that I wish to discuss in this article.



The truth of Scripture that God saves His people in the line of generations has several implications, both negative and positive, on which we must be clear.

1. The truth that God saves believers and their seed does not mean that Reformed Churches teach what is called “presumptive regeneration.” The doctrine teaches that we must “presuppose” that all the children of believers are regenerated. Dr. Abraham Kuyper taught this erroneous doctrine, but never in the history of the Reformed churches have many held to it, and it is not a

doctrine of our confessions. Those who deny that God regenerates elect children in infancy charge Reformed believers with teaching presumptive regeneration, but this is slander.

2. The truth that God saves His elect people in the line of generations does not mean that God does not save on the mission field. On the mission field and by the witness and evangelism of the church, God brings individuals into the church. But the rule of Scripture, generally speaking, is that God saves households, that is, families (Acts 16:31: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, **and thy house.**”; 1Cor. 1:16 “I baptized also the **household** of Stephanas”). The rule of Scripture is that God saves families. Nevertheless, God saves individuals also – as is proved by the fact that God has brought into the CERC many young people through the witness of young people who are members of CERC. But even then, we must remember that, although God sometimes saves individuals, God saves generations, for they that are brought into the church as individuals marry and bring forth Covenant children.

3. Believing parents may and must consider their children as Covenant children and must treat them as such. Those who hold to a conditional covenant cannot and do not do this. They look at their children as unconverted and unregenerated children who are the objects of mission work in the home, the school and the church. Covenant parents do not and will not make their children the objects of mission work, but consider them as saints, washed in the blood of Christ, elect from all eternity, and destined to be in glory as a part of the church. They are God’s people who, like all God’s people, must be taught the truth and instructed in the ways of God’s Covenant. “...thy children like olive plants round about thy table... Yea, thou shalt see thy children’s children,

“ Christ is the Head of the Covenant, and the Covenant is established with all those who are elect in Christ. Election, therefore, determines who are in the covenant and who are not.”

and peace upon Israel.” (Psalm 128). “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD : and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.” (Psalm 127).

All these truths can be illustrated by a couple of figures.

One is the figure of a large river such as the Mississippi River in our country. It runs from close to our northern boundary with Canada through the heartland of the country and empties into the Gulf of Mexico on the South border. It is called the Mississippi River. Even though it is called the Mississippi River, other rivers flow into it, such as the Missouri River and the Ohio River. If we can picture in our minds that this idea of the Mississippi River is like God’s Covenant, it will help us understand how God works in His Covenant.

The historical working out of the covenant of God is like the river bed of the Mississippi river bed. Through it flows the water that is the picture of the members of God’s covenant. The rivers that flow into the Mississippi River are new believers and their generations

who are brought into the Covenant by the mission work of the church. But when they are brought into the river of the Covenant and become a part of God's covenant people, they lose their original identity as unbelievers, just as the Missouri River is no longer the Missouri River, when it becomes a part of the Mississippi River.

It is also true however, that not all the water in the Mississippi River reaches the Gulf of Mexico. A lot is lost. Much is evaporated by the sun. Some is pumped out for irrigation of the farms. A lot of it is splashed on to the land and absorbed into the soil. And there is a certain amount of water that is caught in eddies and whirlpools along the side of the river and never reaches its destination. These are the wicked and reprobate who do not belong to the covenant because they are not elect, but who live within the historical manifestation of the Covenant for a time. They are born in a covenant home, are baptised, and are instructed by the home and church, perhaps attend a Christian School and associate with true Covenant children. But they are not really in the Covenant and the blessings of the Covenant never belong to them. But as long as they stay within the Covenant home, church and school they are called Covenant children – just as the water that is drawn out of the Mississippi River is called the Mississippi River as long as it flows within the banks of the river.

Another figure is that of a wheat field that has wheat growing in it. Suppose a man from a large city would come to

the farmer with a wheat field and want to see the field. But when the farmer would take this man to the field and show him the field, the man who knew nothing about farming might see many weeds in the field and might say to the farmer, "This is not a wheat field; it is a weed field. Or, at best, a wheat and weed field." The farmer would respond and say, "No, you are wrong. This is a wheat field. It is true it has thorns and thistles in it, but my purpose is to grow wheat and I call the field by my purpose in ploughing it, planting seed in it, irrigating it and fertilising it. The water I give it makes the weeds grow too, that is true. And when I fertilize it, I know that the weeds get some fertilizer too. But when I harvest the wheat I will separate the wheat from the weeds and burn the weeds."

So it is in God's Covenant. God calls the Covenant His Covenant because His purpose is to save His elect. There are wicked in that historical manifestation of the Covenant, and they receive the sunshine and water of a Christian home, a Reformed church, and the sacrament of baptism, although they are not truly of the covenant – just like thorns and thistles are not truly of the wheat field. But all these blessings are meant for the elect only as water and fertiliser are meant for the wheat. It is true that all the attention and work of the farmer towards his wheat makes the wicked seed of the covenant grow too and manifest themselves as wicked. But this too is God's purpose and the two are separated in the judgment day.

The Bible uses this figure a lot. Jesus uses it in the parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew 13:24-30, 37-43. The figure is also found in Hebrews 6:1-8 and -n Isaiah 55:10-11. A concrete case of it is found in the birth of the twins Esau and Jacob. Both were brought up in the same Covenant line. Both were taught the same truths of God's covenant. Both participated in family worship. But, as God said to Rebekah before they were born, "The elder shall serve the younger." And God through Malachi interprets this to mean, "Yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau" (Mal. 1:2-3). Paul picks this statement in Malachi up in Romans 9:13. In Romans 9:13, Paul is explaining what he said in Romans 9:6: "For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel." In other words, the fact that not all those who belong to Israel are true Israel is because God loves some and hates others; that is God is sovereign in both election and reprobation. The lines of election and reprobation cut through Covenant lines.

This doctrine of election and reprobation is the first point of Calvinism, and when this great doctrine of unconditional election is applied to the Covenant, the result is that God saves His people in the line of generations, although not all the children of believers are saved.

This great truth of the Reformed faith has been of great benefit to the church of Christ and has resulted in a very godly and Covenantal way of life. We will talk of some of those benefits in our next instalment.

“

.... the fact that not all those who belong to Israel are true Israel is because God loves some and hates others; that is God is sovereign in both election and reprobation.

”

# Parents' Role in Teaching the Catechism

>> Bro. Lee Meng Hsien

*Lee Meng Hsien* is a confessing member in CERC and a father of two.

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Parents experience God's love for them firsthand when they teach children the Bible truth.

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Children must know GOD is the main reason why parents catechise their children. Thanks be to God, He has inspired capable men to pen the Shorter Catechism for the purpose of instructing children. This compilation of questions and answers in very systematic steps enable parents to teach and children to learn of and know God in both broad and deep ways.

For us, knowing God must begin with knowing one's sins. Our sin of disobedience to God in Adam has separated us from Him. His command to Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was simple to follow. Unfortunately, both failed this miserably and so they sinned against God. God had to punish them because God had been grievously offended. The only appropriate punishment they rightly deserved was death. Yet, God was merciful.

Now, God's command is simply this, "... ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them" Lev 26:3. The noun "ye" refers to every living creature of God, the creator, regardless of his religious belief, nationality, age and sex. Everyone

is required to follow and obey God's commandment.

Before we take that large step of saying we want to catechise our children, we must first need to take the small step of declaring to God that we are serious about wanting to be godly parents, and are committed to bringing our children in the way of the LORD. This is done by way of infant baptism.

So, what is infant baptism? In our shallow understanding of the matter, infant baptism is a sign and seal that the infant is a Covenant child; and as such, the parents make a public declaration or oath to the almighty God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and witnessed by the whole congregation of the Church, that they will work responsibly, diligently, faithfully, and wholeheartedly to direct their children's hearts God-ward. At the same time, they also earnestly covet the prayer and support of the church to assist and provide all that is necessary to fulfil that promise. In short, the business of infant baptism is a serious one, and parents must responsibly commit and carry out, faithfully and joyously, the promises made therein for the sake of the children's salvation and for the glory of God.

Unlike what the Roman Catholics believe, infant baptism neither guarantees children safe passages to heaven, provides a surety to eternal salvation, nor brings any protection against spiritual harm.

Therefore, as parents of newborn babies, they must know from the

onset that they have this utterly heavy responsibility of teaching their children God's wonderful truth; the truth of sin and their dire need of the Saviour Jesus Christ. Until the children become mature and independent adults, parents must work diligently and conscientiously with them in order to entrench God's truth deep down in their hearts for the sake of their souls. Since children have no knowledge of God and are not capable of discerning and understanding the word of the LORD, parents need to catechise them in the knowledge of God. Because of Adam's sins, sin entered into the world (Rom 5:12). God does not spare any person from the curse except when He shows mercy towards him. Every child's heart has already been soaked in the abundant filth, terror and darkness of this world. Satan, the prince of darkness, is always hunting for young feeble minds, as well as minds ready to commit sins, to infiltrate and to destroy. There is no way a child can deliver himself from the claws of death. It is impossible for him to escape from the cursed world without any divine intervention from God. That is why all parents must make it known to their children that they are born sinners in need of repentance, in need of the LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Almost all parents by instinctive nature, whether rich or poor, educated or not, want the best for their children. They will shower them with lots of love, gifts and material comforts that money can buy, sometimes to the extent of spoiling them. If they do not

take heed of the warning from Isaiah 47:8-9, all will be taken away from them.

Because we love our children very much, we want the best for them and are always earnest and concerned for their spiritual and physical health. However, we are not giving the best of the best to our children if we wilfully neglect Christian education and if we do not teach them the knowledge and fear of God. It would be too foolish of us to think that all is well when we only provide material comforts for our children and neglect the most fundamental need of all: their need for God.

The idea of God's existence is not a concept devised by the carnal wisdom of men. Why should men invent a being called God and then become subservient to this divine power? We must acknowledge that God is not an invention of Man; He really exists, long before time, long before Adam and Eve, or the creation of the whole universe.

Genesis 1 describes for us the creations of God. Every plant, animal, and even the air we breathe in is the handiwork of God. If parents firmly believe this to be true, then they must teach it to their children, in order that they may know the reason for their existence and show their gratitude to Him who creates everything. Therefore, their need to know God is important, and parents owe a duty to God to reveal Him to them. Parents who fail to catechise their children are committing an abominable act of rebellion against God, who in His precepts, has commanded that they teach their children the knowledge of God, and the fear of Him.

Parents experience God's love for them firsthand when they teach children the Bible truth. When parents catechise their children, they become benefactors as well in the love of God. They benefit when the Holy Spirit guides them in the teaching and helps them understand the true knowledge.

When we have experienced the true

and undivided love of God and the willing sacrifice of His precious Son, the LORD Jesus Christ on the cross, we cannot help but bow down with bended knees to seek Him and worship Him, both gratefully and humbly.

Abraham and King David are great examples of giants of faith who demonstrate their trust and love for God. God in His great mercy and grace shows them His faithfulness by promising to bless them for many generations to come. If we firmly believe we belong to this heritage, then we must keep our hearts close to His, and hear the sounds of the heartbeat of God.

As parents, we ought to know how much God loves His little children and how He desires that they come to Him and fellowship with Him, "that He may incline our hearts unto Him, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments,..." 1Ki 8:58. So, we ought to do what is right before God and our children if we love God and them. We ought to bring our children to God, and bring them to fellowship with Him, teaching them what is right and proper in the worship of Him.

For these reasons, my wife and I want to show our thankfulness to God and are determined to apply the same steps of faith our forefathers have shown to us by catechising our daughters, Jemima and Cassia, without fail and all for the sake of their souls. We do not want them to turn astray and forsake the worship of God. Since our daughters were young, we felt it our calling to catechise them. The window of opportunity for teaching them is small and albeit short. If we as parents do not seize this precious time with them when their hearts are the most teachable, we may not have that window open to us in the future, and we are responsible if they become lost in sin. May the LORD forbid that this should happen.

While we endeavoured to teach them as regularly as we could, we

had our struggles too. Change of routines was constantly the challenge we faced during their growing up years. We continually had to adapt to various demands of our work and their school, sometimes to the extent of compromising on our devotional sessions. These struggles were real and present in our family. We could only pray to God for ourselves and our children, that He might be merciful to us and forgive our sins.

When we repent and confess our sins to God, He is faithful and merciful to forgive. Christ as our mediator imputes to us His righteousness so that we are no longer sinful before our Holy God, but righteous. God is so willing to forgive us our sins that He uses His precious begotten Son's blood to cleanse us of all our unrighteousness. More than this, God shines His light onto our darkest sins and snatches us away from Satan (Acts 26:18). Therefore in return, we must show our gratitude and thankfulness to Him by obeying all that He commands us to do.

Today, we are both thankful and grateful to God that we can continue to devote time to Him by reading a portion of the Scriptures daily and committing our trust for everyday needs to Him in prayer.

As parents, we may not be accurate in expressing theology. As we are imperfect humans full of iniquities and finite in wisdom and knowledge, we can only seek help from God (and this we must do) to direct our children where the Holy Spirit leads. If the outcome of their spiritual maturity is not something God is pleased with, we can only express the pains of our human hearts. It is possible that having given the best catechism to our children, all they get is head-knowledge of God, and not deep, genuine affection and love for God. Even then, may we be humble to accept God's will, having done our part as His unworthy servants. May our great Jehovah help us!

# Why I Love Singing the Psalms: Psalm 16

>> Phoebe Ow

*Phoebe Ow* is a youth in CERC.

I love singing Psalter 27 because it gives a whole summary of our spiritual life as God's children and speaks of what blessings we receive from our Father in heaven. It also depicts the confidence that we should have towards our God.

Stanza.1 *O God, preserve me, for in Thee Alone my trust has stood;*

*My soul has said, Thou art my Lord,  
My chief and only good.*

In this verse, we ask for God's grace to preserve us unto Him in our daily lives. This is because of the temptations that we face every day from the devil, our own flesh, and the world. In this Psalm, David reminds us to look towards our Father in our struggles. Our minds, hearts, and souls should be filled with the Lord our God. Especially in times of need, we must learn to seek help, strength, and refuge from our God as He is the one who wills all these things to happen. Therefore, we cry out to our Lord who is our only good.

Stanza. 2 *I love thy saints, who fear Thy Name*

*And walk as in thy sight;*

*They are the excellent of earth,  
In them is my delight.*

The second stanza talks about the saints - our fellow brothers and sisters in the church. David talks of our walk with fellow saints in Christ and how they are our company and family in this sinful world. We are constantly called to remember that our relationship with

the world is not founded on the Truth and we can never find true happiness and contentment with them. But rather, it is only in the company of our dearly beloved saints that we can find true fellowship.

They are the ones who would help us through our trials and give us guidance and comfort in times of need. Whenever we feel weary, our brothers and sisters would be there to encourage us, to pull us back on our feet to continue in our battle against our sins. Thus, in them we can definitely find joy and delight, as they are also God's people.

Stanza. 3 *Their sorrows shall be multiplied  
Who worship aught but thee;*

*I share not in their offerings,  
Nor join their company.*

In the third stanza, David talks about the heathen and the ungodly. He talks about those who do not worship the Lord alone but rather other gods and religions. Other gods can also be things in our daily life which we do not realise. For example, playing of video games. Once we put something above God, it becomes idol worship. Because of their idol worship, which breaks the first commandment - "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" - their sorrows will be multiplied as God's wrath is upon them. David also reminds us not to join in or partake with the ungodly in their idol worship. This is because we are called to serve and worship the one and only true and living God. By joining in with the heathen or even being in their company, we might be drawn away from God without even realising it.

Stanza 4. *The Lord is my inheritance,  
The Lord alone remains*

*The fullness of my cup of bliss;  
The lord my lot maintains.*

In the fourth stanza, David talks of the inheritance God's people alone receive, which is the Lord Himself. In this context, our Lord is our inheritance as we have fellowship and communion with Him, being in His Covenant. By being in this relationship with Him, we inherit His sovereign grace, mercy and love towards us. He is our comfort, joy, and happiness. Second, we also inherit heaven, our future home. God is also the inheritance of the saints there, who never fail to glorify Him. Soon, we shall be in their company.

We must learn to embrace that as our inheritance; because being totally depraved creatures, we are always tempted to take this world as our home. We are prone to take the things and earthly possessions of this life as our treasures.

With our full cup of bliss, which the Lord so willingly provides for us, we are constantly reminded of the gracious forgiveness of our sins. Also, we need not constantly worry about the difficulties we face as our Lord is omnipresent, and He never leaves us alone.

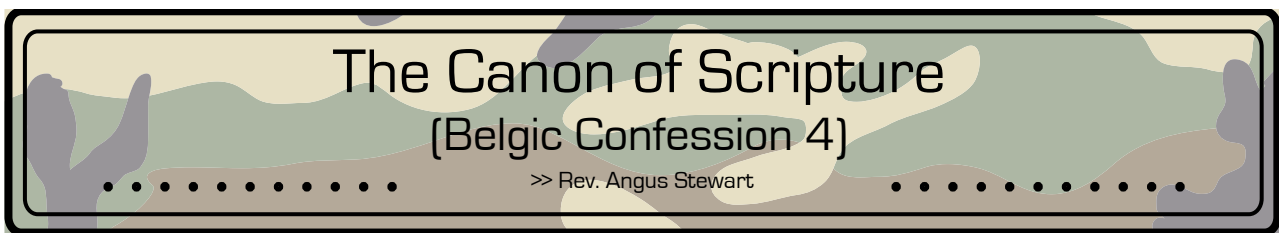
Stanza 5: *The lines are fallen unto me  
In places large and fair;*

*A goodly heritage is mine,  
Marked out with gracious care.*

In this stanza, David talks of the benefits and gifts we receive from our Father. Because we are His people and His portion, we have a good heritage marked out by our Father with His tender love and care for us. The Lord also sets for us a path to walk for our own good.

In conclusion, whether we are youths or adults, we all tend to forget to give glory to our Saviour Jesus Christ because of the old man of sin in us. We make excuses when we do not have time for God. We tend to give in to the temptations of this world, forgetting what our Saviour commands us to do. Therefore, Psalter 27 is a reminder of this applicatory Psalm and what we ought to do as Christians – to walk in the godly path which the Lord has commanded us and to praise the Lord forever more.

“ It also depicts to us the confidence that we should have towards our God. ”



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### **Belgic Confession 4: Canonical Books of the Holy Scriptures**

*We believe that the Holy Scriptures are contained in two books, namely, the Old and New Testaments, which are canonical, against which nothing can be alleged. These are thus named in the church of God.*

The books of the Old Testament are: the five books of Moses, namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers,

Deuteronomy; the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the two books of Samuel, the two of the Kings, two books of the Chronicles, commonly called Paralipomenon, the first of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther; Job, the Psalms of David, the three books of Solomon, namely, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs; the four great prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; and the twelve lesser prophets, namely: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Those of the New Testament are the four evangelists, namely: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts of the Apostles; the fourteen epistles of the apostle Paul, namely: one to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, one to the Galatians, one to the Ephesians, one to the Philippians, one to the Colossians, two to the Thessalonians, two to Timothy, one to Titus, one to Philemon, and one to the Hebrews;

the seven epistles of the other apostles, namely, one of James, two of Peter, three of John, one of Jude; and the Revelation of the apostle John.

#### Introduction

We could summarize the first four articles of the Belgic Confession in terms of numbers. Belgic Confession 1 teaches especially that God is one in Being. Belgic Confession 2 explains the two means by which we know Him (general and special revelation). Belgic Confession 3 states that the second means of knowing God (special, verbal revelation) was given in two forms: the spoken Word and the written Word (the Bible). Belgic Confession 4 specifies that the second of these (the written Word) comes in two books, the Old Testament and New Testament.

There is a word in the first paragraph of Belgic Confession 4 which needs some explaining. The idea of the word “canonical” is that of a straight rod or standard. The 66 books of the Old and



New Testaments are the standard for our faith and practice, our doctrine and lifestyle, because they are God's holy and inspired Word.

A clause in paragraph one also needs some comment: "against which nothing can be alleged." This means that no charges of error can be made against the sacred Scriptures, in either the Old Testament or the New Testament, in any of the 66 biblical books or anything in the 66 books (John 10:35).

Historically, many wicked allegations have been made against the God-breathed Scriptures. Marcion, a second-century heretic whom Prof. Hanks calls the "first Bible critic", dismissed all of the Old Testament and most of the New Testament canon, only retaining Luke and ten of Paul's epistles (and not the apostle's three pastoral letters). Castellio, a sixteenth-century opponent of Calvin, wrongly viewed the Song of Solomon as an erotic love poem. Even the great Martin Luther erroneously called James a "right strawy epistle." The German Reformer did not see much of Christ or any of his beloved doctrine of justification by faith alone in this letter. He was wrong on this but thankfully he was not followed in this error by the Lutheran churches.

### Old Testament Books

Now we turn to the list of the Old Testament books in paragraph two of Belgic Confession 4. First, did you notice that one of the 39 books is not explicitly mentioned? Which one? Lamentations, for it is included with Jeremiah.

Second, which Old Testament books are given the strangest name? Paralipomenon. I & II Chronicles may have been "commonly called" Paralipomenon in the sixteenth century, but they are certainly not commonly called such now! Paralipomenon is from the Greek meaning "left over," and it is used because I & II Chronicles contain supplementary information on the kings of Judah not found in I Samuel to II Kings.

Third, which Old Testament book is listed as a "first" without a second being mentioned? The "first of Ezra," for Nehemiah is a sort of second Ezra.

Fourth, the listing of "the Psalms of David" is not a denial that Asaph (Ps. 73-83), Heman (Ps. 88), Ethan (Ps. 89), Moses (Ps. 90), etc., wrote some of the Psalms. Belgic Confession 4 names the Book of Psalms after the man who penned at least half of them. To this day, we also speak of the Psalms of David as short hand for the book containing all the 150 Psalms, though not all were written by him.

Fifth, "the four great prophets" (or major prophets) and "the twelve lesser prophets" (or minor prophets) refer merely to their length without making an evaluation of the quality of the books.

### New Testament Books

Just one comment on paragraph three on the New Testament books: the Belgic Confession attributes Hebrews to Paul (as do, e.g., the Eastern church, John Owen, Albert Barnes and A. W. Pink). However, Luther reckoned Hebrews was penned by Apollos, and Calvin wrote this about the Belgic Confession and its attribution of Hebrews to Paul:

In your confessional statement, we have not noticed anything which does not agree with the holy oracles of God and the orthodox faith. Therefore, we willingly approve the summary of the doctrine contained in it. However, we would wish the letter to the Hebrews was not attributed to Paul, for we are convinced by strong arguments that the author is someone else.

God's Word does not state the human penman of Hebrews. Whether Paul wrote this epistle is not a confessional issue. As Reformed Christians, we believe the doctrines taught in the articles of our Belgic Confession, and the doctrine here is that of the canonicity of Hebrews.

### Order of Books

The believer should know the 66 books of the Holy Scriptures in their biblical order so that he can find things in the Bible when reading it on his own, in family devotions, at church services, at Bible studies and while witnessing, etc. This is also something believers should teach their children. Moreover, Covenant children should be taught the order of the books of the Bible in catechism classes and in Christian schools. There are also songs listing the 66 biblical books in order as an aid to memorization.

The 39 Old Testament books can be subdivided into five categories of five or twelve. The law or Pentateuch or five books of Moses are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The twelve books of history are Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, I & II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. The five books of poetry or wisdom are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. The five major prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel. The twelve minor prophets are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

The 27 books of the New Testament consist of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), one work on the history of the early church (Acts), Paul's nine epistles to churches (Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and I & II Thessalonians), Paul's four epistles to individuals (I & II Timothy, Titus and Philemon), eight catholic or general epistles (Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, I, II & III John and Jude) and one apocalypse (Revelation).

Personally, I think that the order of our canon is superb, though I could suggest two small improvements (though, given the weight of tradition, there is no possibility of their being adopted by any Bible publisher). First, in the

Old Testament, the first nine minor prophets might be better arranged according to their subject: Hosea and Amos (Northern Kingdom); Jonah and Nahum (Assyria); Joel, Micah, Habakkuk and Zephaniah (Southern Kingdom); Obadiah (Edom). Second, in the New Testament, Jude might be better placed after II Peter and before I John, for Jude is like II Peter and this arrangement would mean that the last four books of the New Testament would all be written by John (I, II & III John and Revelation).

### Application

What are we to do with the canon of Scripture? First, we must read and meditate upon it with love, joy and delight, as Psalm 119 repeatedly inculcates (Ps. 119:16, 24, 35, 47-48, 54, 70, 72, 77, 92, 97, 103, 111, 113, 127, 129, 140, 159, 162-163, 167, 174). We should read it from cover to cover and for all it is worth. We should read it believingly, devoutly and prayerfully: "Open thou mine eyes,

that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps. 119:18). We must teach and encourage our children likewise to read the whole Word of God, so far as they are able (II Tim. 3:15). Remember our Saviour's intercessory prayer: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Second, we must preach it. Our churches must preach (and believe and obey) the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) regarding both doctrine and life. This involves preaching from all the Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament, all the 66 books and from the various types of literature, such as law and history; poetry and prophecy; gospels, epistles and apocalypse.

Why? "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16-17). The Apostle's words are a solemn injunction to every Christian

minister: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:1-2). Paul specifies one particularly fearful motivation: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3-4). May we and our churches study, confess, submit to and obey all the canonical Scriptures!

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the idea of the biblical "canon"?
2. List the 66 biblical books in order.
3. Why is reading and preaching the whole Bible important?

## A BRIEF REPORT OF SYNOD 2013

>> Elder Wee Gim Theng



*Wee Gim Theng* is an Elder in CERC. He is the husband of Patricia and their family is blessed with 4 children.

I was sent by CERC Session as a delegate to Synod 2013 which was held from 10th to 14th June 2013 at Hudsonville PRC, USA. As a delegate from a sister Church, I was accorded an advisory role at the Synod. This meant that I could speak on issues tabled at the Synod but had no voting rights.

It was a good experience for me to be able to attend Synod 2013. It gave me a good idea of the inner workings of Synod. I was able to witness how Synod treated each item with due diligence and sensitivity.

Synod 2013 started off on the night of 10th June with a pre-Synodical service. Reverend Steven Key, the president of Synod 2012, preached a sermon on Psalm 133 to remind us to celebrate and give thanks to God for the unity God has given the PRCA churches as evidenced by the items in the agenda of Synod 2013.

Reverend Ronald van Overloop and Reverend James Laning were voted as President and Vice-President respectively by the Synod with Reverend Douglas Kuiper and Reverend Garry Eriks as the First and Second Clerks respectively. They carried out their respective duties very well.

11th to 13th June mornings were used to examine the only seminarian, Erik Guichelaar who hails from Wingham PRC in Canada. Erik's sermon was unanimously approved by Synod. We are thankful to God for sustaining Erik through the oral examinations on the Introduction to Dogmatic, the six Loci (Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology), Church History, Church Polity, OT History, NT History and Practica. A graduation ceremony was held on the night of 13 June and Erik was declared as a candidate of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, eligible for call on or after 13th July 2013.

The rest of the time was spent deliberating on matters pertaining to Domestic Missions, Theological Studies Committee, Foreign Mission Committee, Contact Committee, Board of Trustees, Treasurer's Report and Financial Statements etc. For details, please refer to the Acts of Synod 2013. A highlight of Synod was the admitting of nine men, one of whom is our brother Aaron Lim, into PRC seminary in August 2013. We are deeply thankful to God for such a provision.

I was given an opportunity to bring greetings from CERC. On behalf of our Church, I expressed our appreciation to the PRCA for approving/calling Reverend Andrew Lanning and his family to serve as Minister-On-Loan, and the care and concern shown through the Church visitation in March 2013. Appreciation to the Theological Studies Committee was also expressed for recommending Aaron Lim to study in the Seminary. I also gave an account of the developments of CERC in the year 2012 and the challenge we faced with the Government's new ruling on the use of Industrial property which CERC is using.

All in all, it was good for CERC to participate in the Synod 2013. It not only gives us a better understanding of how our sister Church handles matters and issues, it is also a good means to strengthen our sisterly relationship. May God be pleased to bless the good ties we have for many years to come, for His glory and the furtherance of His Kingdom. Amen.

The whole Synod in session





Elder Wee addressing Synod



Prof. Gritters giving the commencement address

**Book Review:**  
**“The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers”**  
 >> Ezra Tan



Ezra Tan is a confessing young adult in CERC.

“The covenant of God is not a relatively minor and secondary aspect of God’s truth, much less a passing theological fad. Rather, it is one of the most prominent, most important doctrines of Holy Scripture, if not that grand reality which is the very heart of the whole biblical revelation.” David J. Engelsma.

The Bible is made up of the Old Testament and New Testament. The word testament means covenant. The Old Testament is the history of God’s Covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12) and his seed while the New Testament is the work of Jesus Christ perfecting the new Covenant (Hebrews 13:20).

The aim of this book is to defend the Reformed truths against heresy as well as to put forth the gospel of sovereign grace especially regarding the place of children in the Covenant. The book also shows that the doctrine of the Covenant is “biblical, confessional, and traditionally Reformed”.

There are many chapters in this book that are essential for a Reformed believer. Some are:

- 1) *“Little Vipers” or Children of God*
- 2) *The Destable Error of the (Ana)baptists*
- 3) *The Error of a Conditional Covenant*

In the chapter of “The Netherlands Reformed Objection”, there is an interesting debate on how we are to view Covenant children. The rebuttal of “we may not view our children as saved before they reveal biblical evidences of salvation” gives a Reformed parent the comfort and peace of the Covenant promises. The Heidelberg Catechism in Question 74 regarding baptism teaches us that “children, as well as the

adult, are included in the covenant and church of God”.

This book is especially recommended for Reformed believers, both young and old. This book will strengthen our understanding of the Reformed teachings and expose the errors of Arminian and Baptist teachings, etc. Reformed parents will also benefit greatly as this book gives them a thorough understanding of how to raise their children in the fear of the Lord.

“ So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. Romans 9:16 ”

Here is a link to the book: [http://www.prca.org/pamphlets/pamphlet\\_51.html](http://www.prca.org/pamphlets/pamphlet_51.html)

# Prayer & Thanksgiving

“Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.” (Psalm 28: 6 & 7)

- 1) Thank God for the faithful preaching of His Word through Pastor Lanning. May the whole congregation continue to grow in faith and be filled with the knowledge of God’s word in all wisdom and understanding.
- 2) The church camp has been a great blessing to us. We thank God for the sweet fellowship amongst His people and His Word. Pray that we may practise all that we had heard and learnt by His grace; as doers of His Word and not hearers only. (James 1: 22)
- 3) We thank God for the church leaders who serve the LORD sacrificially for God’s glory. May God grant them steadfastness, strength and wisdom to carry out their duties faithfully.
- 4) The Lord’s blessings are always upon our families and we are so thankful to God. We pray that husbands will love their wives; wives be submissive to their husbands and children be obedient to their parents. That all be done for the glory of God.
- 5) The LORD is our Provider – Jehovah Jireh. May God help us to submit to Him in every aspect of our lives and to remember to be patient in adversity and be thankful in prosperity. (LD 10, Qn 8)
- 6) Remember to pray for the poor, lonely, sick and those suffering from sorrows that they may find peace, love and comfort in Christ alone. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb 4: 15 & 16)
- 7) We pray for the young people in CERC that they may always be guarded by God’s Word and be led by the Holy Spirit to do all things for the kingdom of God and His glory.
- 8) We remember especially the young men serving the National Service: Boaz, Daniel, Ezra, Elias, Ivan, Joshua, Lee Yang and Zachary, that they will find refuge and strength in God and trust the Lord to carry them through all the trainings. There is nothing too difficult for God to do for them in times of difficulties and needs. “For with God nothing shall be impossible.” (Luke 1:37)
- 9) For the students in our midst, we commit them to God that they will study diligently and be responsible in their calling to show themselves approved unto the Lord and glorify Him. (2 Tim 2: 15)
- 10) Pray for every individual member of CERC that we may walk worthy of the Lord, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.
- 11) We also pray for opportunities and boldness to be faithful witnesses for Jesus Christ. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Rom 1: 16)
- 12) Pray that God may continue to help our church increase and abound in love one toward another. May He also stablish our hearts unblameable in holiness before God at the coming of Jesus Christ. (1 Thes 3:12 & 13)

# SERVING GOD THROUGH NATIONAL SERVICE

>> Bro. Andrew Tan



*Andrew Tan* is a member of CERC. He currently serves in the Christian Literature Ministry.

I have been asked by the Salt Shakers Committee to share some spiritual lessons that our beloved young Christian men can apply as they go through (or prepare to go through) the two-year stint that every male Singaporean must ‘give’ to their country. This stint is commonly known as “National Service” (NS).

NS is really two years of ‘suffering’ for most of us male Singaporeans; although our commanders and trainers would call it ‘whipping us into shape’ – for the defence of our nation, of course. This has been so since the first batch of recruits were enlisted in 1967.

We belong to the State for two years. We are not our own, nor our parents’, but the nation’s. It is compulsory that every Singaporean’s son (who is medically fit) must serve at least two years in the Armed Forces or in one of the other uniformed organisations – the Home Team (Police) or the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF); depending on where one is assigned to. Some may be assigned to combat (frontline) roles, while some may be close to senior commanders (as their drivers, personal assistants, etc.).

Many will find the going tough; yet, some will somehow manage to ‘sail through’ their 2-year stint. Some may be ‘marked’ by their commanders, while others may be their superiors’ ‘blue-eyed boy’ (favoured) for a host of reasons. Yet, some of us might have wondered why it is always the other guy being favoured and that ‘it will never be me’. During operations, training exercises, routine unit administrative work, or even “R&R” (rest and recreation with fellow servicemen) periods, the temptation to compromise is usually just around the corner. There may even be occasions when it is easier to take the short cut or simply to give up. Sins of the flesh among us and our fellow soldiers to mistrust, betray, etc. are ‘aplenty’ and to be expected. If not, at the very least, I would believe that some would contemplate criticising the government that it is a complete waste of time doing NS. No one is spared, and almost everyone has wished at some point in time during their NS stint that they need not go through it and entertained thoughts of “if only NS was not compulsory”.

Most fathers in our church who have gone through NS can attest to the fact that we did struggle, and even suffered. We had our fair share of sadistic instructors, trainers and unreasonable superiors; as some of us might have perceived them then. On the other hand, we have also become worldly-wise from lessons and experiences drawn from our NS stint. We have made life-long friends and received compassion and support from others.

I quote from a local author: “National

Service (NS) has come a long way since its beginning. It has been an integral part of Singapore’s defence, providing peace and prosperity for the nation for more than 30 years. Apart from fulfilling military requirements, National Service has also played an important role in nation building. By bringing young Singaporeans from diverse backgrounds together, it helps to forge unity and cohesion among Singaporeans.” I reckon most of us who have served NS would agree with him; as with most Singaporeans.

But what about us who are Reformed Christians in CERC? Is there more to it than the above-mentioned? Dearly beloved, there is. We must go through NS as “Soldiers of, and for, Christ”. What do I mean?

Let us consider God’s Word in 2Timothy 1:7-14:

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I

# “ Heads up and press on guys – always for Christ’s sake. ”

am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.”

The Apostle Paul has set the example for us. I would greatly encourage us to consider his example when we respond to the nation’s call to give two years of our life for the defence of our nation. Let me list 3 aspects of the Apostle’s example for us:

- First, we are not to be ashamed of our Christian testimony;
- Second, we are called according to His purpose and grace and hence, our mission and calling in NS;
- Lastly, we are reminded that we are already equipped; not only by the written Word, but more importantly by His WORD: as we are in Christ, and He in us, by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

## Our Testimony

Indeed, we are not to be ashamed of our Christian testimony as we are convicted that God has laid out this earthly pilgrimage for each one of us to go through – be it spiritual struggles, sufferings, or even death. Though we are in this carnal body, we are supremely confident that we will prevail no matter how many times we fall or are ridiculed for being weak-minded and incompetent in meeting the standards and expectations of those who have authority over us. We must overcome the feeling of worthlessness. We must

not begin to “crawl to our corner” when we are singled out as the ‘odd-ball’ in a group of servicemen that we have been assigned to operate or train with in extremely risky field situations.

The key has always been God’s testimony that is sure and clearly established – way, way over ours. 1 Cor 1:6 and 2:1 – “Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you...”; “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.”

Beloved soldiers-in-Christ, in Him we have perfect peace in our hearts, are courageous and crystal clear in our mission on earth, and are ever heavenly-minded. All these attributes of the Christian soldier make our yoke light in the two years that we are bonded to the earthly mission of defending our nation.

It is also clear that we must always be prepared to be partakers of the afflictions of the Gospel according to our Heavenly Father. Our Christian testimony must already overcome spiritual struggles and challenges; much less physical, psychological and mentally challenging ones.

As Christian soldiers, we must know that our spiritual enemy, the devil and his hordes, had already lost the war a long time ago. Is there any fear left for the physical enemies of our land on this earth, and even as we are fighting a mere pitch battle through NS?

Let me repeat God’s Word for us: “(2Ti 1:7) For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (2Ti 1:8) Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.”

## Our Mission

Because of our Christian testimony, the mission and calling is not to do NS only, but to declare the Gospel of

Christ as we go through NS. By our word and deed, we must shine forth and impress our peers and those who are in authority that we are in Christ. How then do we declare the Gospel of Christ? Apart from telling others who and what Christ has done for us, we also manifest the Christian soldier in us by the ‘fruits of the Spirit’; and that includes acknowledging to those around us that we are weak in our flesh. Yet, we remain confident and courageous in the face of difficulties and adversity (by the grace of God) – even unto physical death!

If we cannot bear the weight of the ‘full pack’ after a 48-hour route march or shoot straight after running a good 5 km, there is nothing shameful to concede to our fellow soldiers or defer to our commanders or instructors. Yet, when we are able to achieve or even exceed the expected standards of those in authority, be the first to give our Heavenly Father all the praise and glory. We must always pray and hope that by our testimony, we may achieve our mission of reflecting Christ in us.

What about our posturing and demeanour?

Our posturing ought to be that of a soldier that always submits, perseveres, is ready to ‘suffer’ and still be able to manifest our Christian charity to those around us. This will not be the most difficult part in our antithetical lives in this world. Why so, you may ask. A Christian soldier serving NS is really but a small part of soldiering through our God-ordained mission on earth. We are not to think that it is an especially difficult or even impossible mission, but one that is light and joyous. Consider this – 2 NS years is but a mere fraction of our “three-score and ten” years on this earth.

Is it not true that in 1 Peter 4:12-19, we are constantly exhorted: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: (1Pe 4:13) But rejoice, inasmuch

as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. (1Pe 4:14) If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. (1Pe 4:15) But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. (1Pe 4:16) Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. (1Pe 4:17) For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? (1Pe 4:18) And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? (1Pe 4:19) Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

### **Our Equipping – We are in Christ, always clinging unto Him**

When we are compulsorily enlisted into the National Service, we may echo God's Word: "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor 6:20). Because it is God who chose us unto Himself, we "know" Him and are therefore always clinging unto Him.

We are by default 'equipped' in Him – spiritual shield, armour and the lot. So, when we begin to enlist into NS, we must be spiritually prepared to realise that it is a given to 'suffer' as soldiers of Christ; and that the overall mission is to "soldier on, for Christ alone". Come what may, know this – God has already ordained your path throughout your NS liability period. Therefore, nothing at all should surprise us or cause us to fear.

If the youthfulness in us causes us to be naïve, you are equipped with the Holy Spirit that will preserve your

ways, and overcome your enemies. You do not even need to be anxious over the next day's training programme or mission. If our ignorance causes us to be clueless, God's Word will remind us to rely totally on Him to lead us as we begin each day of field operation or training. There is no weight of worry or trouble in our hearts; we begin each day knowing every concern is taken care of.

If you are offended or judged for His sake (which will happen), be assured that our Lord God will vindicate you. So let us not entertain the slightest thought of who did it to you and why; much less bear a grudge that will always cause a 'spiritual rift' against the Spirit in you.

### **Submitting to Authority**

Let me conclude this article by exhorting us to remain steadfast in clinging unto God. We do this by submitting (and not otherwise) to those who have authority over us (except those whose instructions are unlawful). Do not deviate nor falter in your mission to testify as a Christian soldier. In Rom 13: 1-7, we are reminded:

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to

whom fear; honour to whom honour."

The other passage in the Bible that is also well worth committing to our heart is found in 1 Peter 2: 13-16: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

Know therefore that our Heavenly Father (through the authorities) has enlisted us to serve. Cling to this truth, no matter what, even as you go through the NS years. Do not be disillusioned that it is the world that has called us, and so it does not have the power or authority over us. Yet, it is also very difficult to fulfil our NS obligations without falling short spiritually because of our flesh. No one is spared. During NS, it is as if life is compressed into a mere 2 years and 'all of life' literally throws everything it has at us. You may even be overwhelmed, within a short span of two years, by fellow NS men of different personalities, walks of life, belief systems, situations in life (especially "life and death" ones) and many more. Furthermore, being "all 18 years old" and being a "tank filled with testosterone", one is put together with many other 'testosterone-filled tanks'. This is a sure recipe for some really exciting and life-changing experiences.

So, beloved, you are servant-soldiers first to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and then to our beloved nation called "Singapura" (the Lion City, in the Malay language) – though you are 'bonded' for two years, you are the Lord's freeman even before you enlist! (1 Cor 7:21-24). While the NS stint may make the soldier out of you, I pray that Christ will continue to bring out the Christian soldier in you! Heads up and press on guys – always for Christ's sake.



# NATIONAL SERVICE TESTIMONIES

>> SS Special Interview

*In line with the previous article written by Brother Andrew Tan, Salt Shakers interviewed a few members of CERC about their experiences in the Singapore Army, Navy, and Police Force.*

Elder Lee Kong Wee - Enlisted 1993, Combat Engineer

**Q. Could you give a brief description of what you did during NS?**

**A.** As a combat engineer, I did supporting work such as building structures (mainly bridges) to facilitate the advancement of army infantry. To be more specific, I was in a chemical defence unit where we were taught how to decontaminate an area in the event of chemical warfare.

**Q. What were some of the challenges you faced while serving NS? (whether spiritual or physical)**

**A.** When I entered army, I had just been attending church for a year. The main challenge was maintaining a Christian testimony in an environment which is markedly non-Christian and ungodly. However, on the upside, I had a lot of free time to read the Bible and other Christian books during my NS.

**Q. Is there any particular verse that helped you through your time serving NS?**

**A.** I can't really remember any particular verse from that time. However, most of the verses which stand out to me are those which describe Christians as soldiers of Christ. One verse that I often share with the guys currently going through NS is 2 Timothy 2:3 "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Christ." It is a reminder that Christians have to endure hardness as soldiers of Christ. This verse is also particularly relatable for the guys in NS as they not only have to face with physical challenges but spiritual challenges as well.

**Q. Do you have any words of encouragement for the brothers currently serving NS?**

**A.** The two years of NS can be a tough period and it may be very rigorous and mentally draining; but always remember that serving NS is ultimately a calling from God. Spend the two years well as God's calling for a young man. Instead of viewing those two years as a waste of time, use that time to learn how to be a good soldier of and a good testimony for Christ.

Deacon Tang Yoon Chuan - Enlisted 1985, Platoon Commander

**Q. Could you give a brief description of what you did during NS?**

**A.** I served the army for 6 years, as I signed on. From 1985-1986, I was an infantry officer – part of the Officer Cadet School. My role was to train section leader corporals and to lead the infantry.

**Q. What were some of the challenges you faced while serving NS? (Whether spiritual or physical)**

**A.** When I was in NS, I was not yet a Christian. The challenges I faced while serving NS were both mental and physical. It was mentally draining as they would

train us to think even when we were completely exhausted. The physical aspect was that we didn't have enough time to rest resulting in us being stressed physically.

**Q. Do you have any words of encouragement for the brothers currently serving NS?**

**A.** Obey those in authority over you no matter whether you like it or not, because it pleases God to place them in authority over you. Also, for those brothers who still think that ORD (Operationally Ready Date) never seems to come, persevere. Everything will come to an end.

Ishu Mahtani - Enlisted 1981, NCO Course Lance Corporal,  
Navy Clerk

**Q. Could you give a brief description of what you did during NS?**

**A.** I was initially a NCO course lance corporal but I got injured and ended up becoming a clerk. As a clerk, I did administrative stuff like updating the leave of recruits.

**Q. What were some of the challenges you faced while serving NS? (Whether spiritual or physical)**

**A.** I wasn't a Christian yet when I was in NS. One of the challenges I faced was having to wear the uniform which was very uncomfortable and hot. Also, being in the navy as a clerk, I had to take the boat to an island called Pulau Brani every day. If I missed the boat, I had to take a small boat which cost \$0.50 cents per person then. Furthermore, when there was low tide, we had to climb up this ladder to shore which was very strenuous at times.

**Q. Do you have any words of encouragement for the brothers currently serving NS?**

**A.** Ephesians 4:1 "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,"

Be careful not to fall into certain ungodly threats, such as gambling with carom. Also, as a clerk, I encountered people wanting me to help them cover up their leave. As Christians, we should be careful not to fall into temptation and lie.

Robert Lee

Robert Lee - SADC (Singapore Air Defence Command)

**Q. Could you give a brief description of what you did during NS?**

**A.** I started out in the air force as an SADC (Singapore Air Demand Command) personnel. Basically, I worked as a signaller whose job is to send out messages to the different air bases to inform them of any army activity that was coming up.

**Q. What were some of the challenges you faced while serving NS? (Whether spiritual or physical)**

**A.** When I was serving NS, I was not yet a Christian. NS was challenging for me because at that time, the Singapore army just started not long ago. As such, everything was being tried out and experimented on us. It was also very physically demanding and they had extremely stringent regulations.

**Q. Do you have any words of encouragement for the brothers currently serving NS?**

**A.** NS is good training for guys to learn to work together and look out for one another because if one is late, the whole platoon will also get punished. Be prayerful



when you are in the army and be careful not to be misled as there are a lot of bad influences in the army (such as taking God's name in vain).

Tan Ah Moi - Police Officer

**Q. Could you give a brief description of what you do in the police force?**

**A.** As a police officer, I did a great variety of work: catching criminals, administrative work, investigation, and community policing in a neighbourhood police post. To be specific, I infiltrated gambling dens, conducted raids, and arrested people who peddled drugs. I currently work as a counsellor.

**Q. What were some of the spiritual challenges you faced while working as a police officer?**

**A.** First of all, there was shift work which prevented me from attending church activities at times and this caused me to miss fellowship with fellow saints greatly. Second, there was much temptation to miss church especially after working a night shift. I often had to eat sour plums to keep myself awake during service!

**Q. Do you have any words of encouragement for the brothers currently serving NS?**

**A.** NS period is definitely difficult and you can get easily influenced. So, remember to stand for the Lord. Try to attend church activities as much as possible as these are opportunities for you to be fed with God's Word and to have godly fellowship. Most of all, remember that God is always there to provide for us and do not be afraid to make known to others that you are a Christian and share your beliefs as this will spur you on to be a good testimony.

Tan Ah Moi



Elder Lee

Ishu Mahtani

Deacon Tang





Chinese Program for the Elderly during Church Camp



Games during CK Retreat



Games at Labour Day Church Outing



Group Discussion during Church Camp



Message by Aaron during CKS Retreat



Group Picture from Church Camp

### Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church

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

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

Time of Worship  
Morning Service:  
9:30am to 11:00am  
Afternoon Service:  
2:00pm to 3:00pm

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