

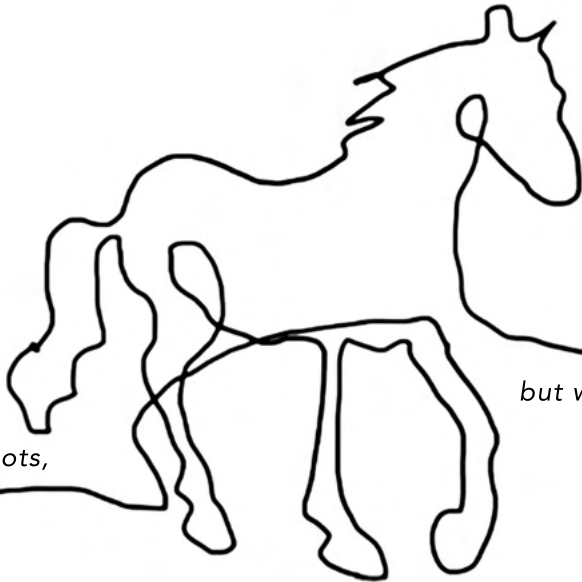
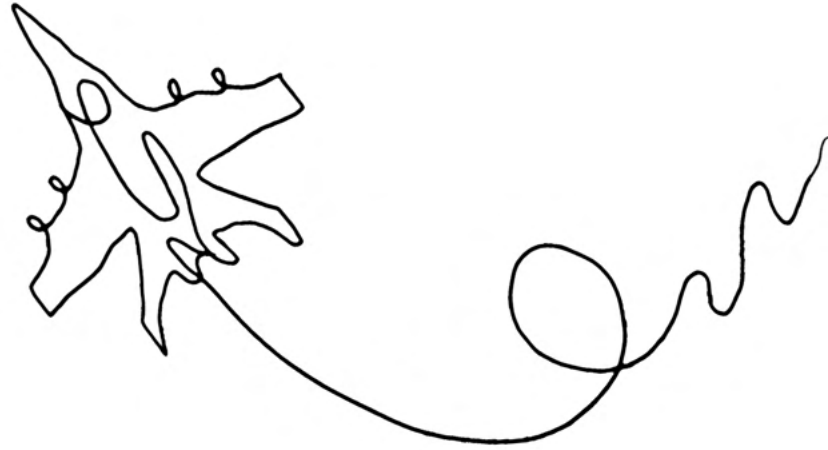
JOEL 3:16 MATT 5:16

SALT SHAKERS

Issue 71



FEB 2024



Some trust in chariots,

and some in horses:

but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

*The Singapore Airshow:
A Christian Perspective*

Reformed Missiology

*Jonah's Preaching and
Nineveh's Repentance*

Sadness

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Chairman's Note

In mid-2023, the Salt Shaker's (SS) Committee was subsumed under the Christian Literature Ministry (CLM). While SS continues to publish quarterly periodicals comprising articles on a variety of topics, CLM will also maintain its production of thematic pamphlets.

This merger has helped us to optimise resources, manpower and streamline processes. With this, we are optimistic in sustaining the work of publishing edifying Christian literature, which is our common goal. Lord willing, SS aims to release a further 3 issues through the rest of 2024.

In 2023, we also conducted a survey amongst some of our readers to gather feedback regarding SS. We have implemented some of your valuable suggestions, which you will notice in this issue. This includes a children's article which we hope to keep as a regular feature for every issue. We will also continue to maintain the "local flavour" of our magazine by engaging local authors (we are always on the lookout for more!) and including local topics (e.g. Goods and Services Tax hike, The Singapore Airshow).

In our upcoming issues, you may also look forward to interviews with 1st Generation Christians in our church, as we seek to learn of what God has done for their souls, and to archive these memories for our posterity. If you are keen to share your story, please let any one of our committee members know!

Finally, remember to pass the salt!

In Christ,
Koh Zong Jie
Chairman of CLM

Salt Shakers is a quarterly Reformed magazine published by Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore. In each issue, we strive to bring readers quality articles discussing Reformed doctrine as well as practical theology and Reformed viewpoints on recent issues.

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The Singapore Airshow: A Christian Perspective



Daniel Tang

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The Singapore Airshow is regarded as one of the largest and most significant events in the aviation and aerospace industry for the Asia-Pacific region. Organized every two years, the latest edition was held this year from February 20-25. This year's Airshow is also significant as it is the first Airshow to be held since the Covid-19 pandemic. The last two Airshows in 2020 and 2022 were held on a much smaller scale and with numerous restrictions because of the pandemic.

If you have not been to the Airshow before, let me take you on a quick virtual tour. Upon stepping through the gates, you will start by entering a large, air-conditioned exhibition hall. This hall is filled with booths from almost every big name in the aviation, aerospace, and defense industries, all with the same goal: to showcase their newest and best products. For the larger companies, their booths could be as big as your HDB flat, filled with interactive displays, model aircraft, product mock-ups, and even conference rooms.

As you exit the other end of the exhibition hall, you will immediately see one of the main highlights of the Airshow: the planes! Usually, the biggest exhibitors at the static aircraft display area are the Republic of Singapore Air Force and the United States Air Force, showcasing a variety of fighter jets, helicopters, and transport planes. There are also always several private jets on display. If you manage to catch a glimpse into one of these, you will find beautifully furnished interiors full of wood, leather, and gold. Finally, there will usually be a few large commercial aircraft like the ones we get to fly on as passengers, such as the Boeing 787 or Airbus A350.

The last highlight of every Airshow is the aerial display! Once or twice every day, a variety of fighter and commercial jets from around the world will perform for the crowds, showcasing each aircraft's unique capabilities including speed, maneuverability and formation flying.

In short, the Airshow is a platform to showcase the very best of man's inventions in the area of flight and military might. As a Christian, what should be our perspective of this Airshow?

First, we may certainly participate in such events and even enjoy them. The writer has attended a few editions for work, and some for mere interest. Watching the planes up close can be said to be wholesome entertainment for those who enjoy it. Flying has long enamored both the young and old, and the chance to witness these magnificent jets is certainly an experience of its own.

When we see these incredible machines that man invented, we must look to God and give Him the glory. It is by no mere chance that man gained the knowledge to make these airplanes. Certainly, we can name the famous men that pioneered the knowledge of flight, such as the Wright brothers, the first men to successfully build and fly an airplane, or William Boeing, founder of the Boeing Company, which today still makes some of the most popular airplanes that we fly on. But we must never think that it was man's own capabilities or cleverness that brought forth these airplanes. God, in his divine will and wisdom, placed in man that ability to discover the knowledge of flight.

In fact, much of the technology of flight is derived from God's creation! Look at the wings of an eagle as it soars in the sky. Now compare it to the wings of a jetliner. Do you see the similarities? Or how about the streamlined body of a Great White Shark, allowing it to cut through the water with speed. Now look at the fuselage of an airplane. Do you see the similarities? After thousands of years, man has only figured out how to copy what God made perfectly from the first day of creation.

Secondly, we must put our trust in God alone, and not in the machines that man has made. This thought pertains more to the military hardware that you would see on display at the Airshow: fighter jets, bombers, helicopters, and other associated military technology. In a world of uncertainty, where wars and rumors of wars seem to keep occurring, it is easy for us to find peace in the strength of our country's military might. Indeed, at the Airshow you would see plenty of fighting equipment being showcased, not only from our Air Force but also from our allies such as the United States. It would be easy for us to say, we are safe from our enemies, because look at all the top-notch technology that our Air Force has; we never need to fear our enemies! Moreover, we have powerful friends with equally powerful warplanes that will come to our aid should anything happen.

We must put our trust in God alone, and not in the machines that man has made.



We must not fall into that temptation, to boast in the horses and chariots (Psa. 20:7) that we have today. God alone is sovereign over all things. God alone controls whether we are at peace or at war. And if we are at war, He alone determines the outcome. Remember that David only used one stone to kill Goliath. It is not about how strong our air forces are. If God be for us, no one can be against us (Rom. 8:31).

Finally, let us not be tempted by earthly wealth and treasures. As you take a peek into the posh cabins of the private jets on display, you will probably see wood-grained interiors, thick carpets and plush leather chairs. Maybe even a golden toilet! Again, riches and earthly comforts are not sinful in themselves. We are all stewards of God's gifts on this earth, and God is sometimes pleased to even bless us

with abundance. We must, however, not let ourselves be blinded by earthly things. Remember what Jesus said, that "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19:24). These earthly riches are but with us for a time, and afterward gone. We cannot take them into eternity. If God is pleased to give us earthly riches, we must use them wisely and in service of His kingdom.

If you attended the Airshow this year, may this article help you to ponder and consider the things you have seen (and heard!) there. If you missed the Airshow, and this article has piqued your interest, come and see the next one in 2026. As you bring your binoculars along to watch the planes, don't forget your lenses of Scripture!

God's Saving Will in the New Testament (5)



Rev. Angus Stewart

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The Will of the Holy Spirit

After considering the saving will of the Holy Trinity, which is carried into effect by the will and work of our Saviour Jesus Christ, we now come to the Holy Spirit, who is sent forth by God through His Son. The Bible speaks explicitly of the Spirit's will in connection with the doctrines of Scripture (bibliology), salvation (soteriology) and the church (ecclesiology).

Turning to the first of these subjects, II Peter 1:19-21 asserts,

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation [or origin]. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Here the source of God's verbal revelation, both oral (21) and written (19, 20), is attributed to the "will" not "of man" but of the Spirit (21). Through the ages, God has used His Word, both spoken and penned, as a means to realize His will in saving (II Tim. 3:15), illumining (Ps. 119:130) and sanctifying (John 17:17) His elect.

The Holy Spirit is not only the blessed personal origin of the Scriptures but also, second, of regeneration, the first element in the application of our salvation. As we have seen earlier, the new birth is ascribed in Holy Writ to the will of God (John 1:13; James 1:18) and the will of Christ (John 5:21). Now we note that the Father's will is effected through the Son's will and the Spirit's will: "The wind bloweth where it listeth [or

wants or desires or wishes], and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). It is worth noting that, in all the Bible, it is especially the Gospel According to John that deals with regeneration in terms of the will—not "the will of man," but the will of God (1:13), the will of the Spirit (3:8) and the will of Christ (5:21), to cite the texts in the order of their occurrence.

Third, the Bible refers to the Spirit's will in connection with ecclesiology, and specifically the spiritual "gifts" (I Cor. 12:4), "administrations" (5) and "operations" (6) that are wrought by God (6) through the Lord Jesus (5) and by the Holy Spirit (4), in and for the church (7). After listing various first-century charismata (8-10), the apostle Paul adds, "all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will" (11). The sovereign will of the Spirit in distributing gifts to the members of the church can be paralleled with the sovereign will of God in assigning roles to believers in the church: "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (18). Remember that ecclesiology is God's saving will regarding His elect corporately, just as soteriology is His saving will regarding His elect individually.

The Will of Man

The object of the saving will of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost is the predestinated, who partake of the same total depravity as the rest of our fallen race, as the apostle laments, "among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3). With such evil wills, it is

no wonder that the ungodly “are taken captive” by the devil “at his will” (II Tim. 2:26).

The scoffers who mock at Christ’s second coming do not want to know the truth of the world’s creation and the global flood:

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (II Pet. 3:5-7).

The perverse will of fallen man does not desire to believe in Jesus, as He said, “ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40). Given that unregenerate man does not wish or want or will or desire to come to Christ, salvation is not, and cannot be, by man’s will (Rom. 9:16). Since salvation is not only deliverance from sin, Satan and hell, but also deliverance to covenant fellowship with God, so that we love and serve Him, our salvation must include the renewal of our wills.

First, God regenerates each of those whom He has chosen and redeemed, so that we thirst for Jesus Christ and His salvation, such that “whosoever will” takes “the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). Second, the saving will of God, Christ and the Spirit transforms our evil wills, so that we want and desire to please Him, as Paul explains, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Our heavenly Father “infuses new qualities into the will, which, though heretofore dead, He quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, He renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions” (Canons III/IV:11).

Our Lord Jesus speaks of believers doing or obeying God’s preceptive will (which indicates what He commands, and so what He approves of and delights in, as conformable to His righteousness):

For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother (Mark 3:35).

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself (John 7:17).

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10).

This is our *Heidelberg Catechism’s* fine exposition of the third petition of the Lord’s prayer:

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven; that is, grant

In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you

that we and all men may renounce our own will, and without murmuring obey Thy will, which is only good; that so every one may attend to and perform the duties of his station and calling as willingly and faithfully as the angels do in heaven (A. 124).

In other words, being renewed by God’s effectual saving will, we will to, and do, pray that He would strengthen our wills more and more, so that we not will to sin but will to do His will.

Since the following two verses from I Thessalonians speak of God’s will for His elect, ransomed and adopted children, whom He will “save ... to the uttermost” (Heb. 7:25), they not only express His moral approbation of our gratitude and holiness, respectively but also His omnipotent desire and irresistible grace to effect them in us in this life (progressively) and the next (perfectly):

In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you (5:18).

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification (4:3).

Scripture presents the painful struggle between the flesh and the spirit or between the old man and the new man in terms of the believer’s will in Galatians 5:17: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

A longer passage on the interior battle involving our wills is found in Romans 7:14-25:

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the



body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

The saving will of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit not only renews our wills, so that we desire to obey God's preceptive will and actually perform good (though imperfect) works, but God's saving will is also personalized for each and every believer in that it includes the length of his or her life, all his or her journeys and all his or her deeds:

... ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that (James 4:15).

[Paul] bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will (Acts 18:21).

I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will (I Cor. 4:19).

The Bible specifically states that the sufferings of Christ's faithful saints in their bodies and souls are included in God's all-comprehensive will concerning us: "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (I Pet. 3:17).

The truth of Jehovah's saving will is to be fully proclaimed by faithful preachers who imitate Paul, who confessed, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). What about the manner in which a pastor is to bring God's truth, including to those who resist it? He

is to be gracious in communicating God's will to sinners, knowing that their will is enslaved to Satan's will:

... the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will (II Tim. 2:24-26).

All the desires and intentions of the sovereign God are always realized in time (Ps. 115:3; 135:6), including His gracious will to have mercy, which flows from His eternal election, and His righteous will to punish, which issues from His unconditional reprobation (Eph. 1:1-14; Rom. 9:6-24). Preachers (and all Christians), unlike God, are not simple, unchangeable, omniscient and omnipotent, but are weak creatures of time. Thus it is right and proper for us, like the apostle Paul, to desire, pray for and seek the salvation of our neighbours, submitting always to God's sovereign saving will:

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. 9:1-3). Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved (Rom. 10:1; cf. Acts 26:29).

Salvation is of the LORD (7): Jonah's Preaching and Nineveh's Repentance (Jonah 3)



Pastor Marcus Wee

Pastor Marcus Wee is a minister of CERC

The theme of the book of Jonah is "Salvation is of the LORD". This reality is most clearly seen in Jonah 3, in the preaching of Jonah and the repentance of the Ninevites. For the mercy of God is seen in bringing to the Ninevites the gospel, that great power of God unto salvation, and in working in the Ninevites the grace of repentance, unbelieving Gentiles though they were.

God's Call

We read in Jonah 3:1-2: "And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

The word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time. Thank God that He is the God of 'second chances', that He does not cast His people off, even after we sin in rebellion against Him, just as Jonah had done! Instead, He brings us to repentance and restores us to service in His kingdom. Jonah obeyed God's call to preach to Nineveh. The first time, Jonah had risen in disobedience to God, fleeing to Tarshish, in the very opposite direction of Nineveh. This second time, Jonah rose to obey God. v. 3a: "So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD."

Such is the obedience that God requires of us, fellow children of God. Not to do what we think is right in our own

eyes and then justify our actions by appealing to the authority of our feelings: 'I feel that this is God's will for me'; but rather, acting "according to the word of the LORD", obeying God's will for us, first of all as it is revealed in the principles of Scripture.

Jonah's Preaching

Jonah preached the word of the LORD in Nineveh. The city of Nineveh was the capital of the nation Assyria, the up-and-coming world power that would soon destroy Israel and scatter her in captivity, some 60 years later. Nineveh was such a great city that it took one a full three days' journey to get from one end to the other (v. 3b).

v. 4: "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The content of Jonah's preaching was primarily of judgement. God had commanded Jonah the first time to "cry against it [Nineveh]; for their wickedness is come up before me" (1:2b).

The wickedness of Nineveh is described in the book of Nahum, which begins with the words "The burden of Nineveh", indicating that Nahum's prophecy was for the Ninevites, some years after Jonah preached to Nineveh. Nineveh's wickedness is decried, for example, in Nahum 3:1: "Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not".

And so Jonah preached judgement, primarily. This great city had greatly angered God, and He would utterly destroy it in His wrath. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown".

But the content of Jonah's preaching, though primarily of judgement, also included mercy. Likely, Jonah preached more than the 8 words that we have recorded for us in v. 4. He would have given the reason for this judgement, the wickedness of the Ninevites. He would have warned that unless they repent, they would be destroyed. Why else did Jonah, and God through him, speak of "forty days" and not immediate destruction, except to give them space to repent? Jonah preached not only judgement but also mercy.

Nineveh's Repentance

And the result was that Nineveh repented. V. 5: "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them." The king of Nineveh himself repented and proclaimed a fast (vv. 5-9), such that all the inhabitants of the city fasted and clothed themselves with sackcloth.

**Salvation is of the LORD,
who works repentance and
faith through the preaching
of the gospel.**

Repentance is an inward change of mind and heart that leads to an external transformation of life. Repentance is first of all inward, involving a change of mind. Whereas one previously walked in sin, thinking sin to be good and loving it, one now sees sin for what it is: evil rebellion against God. One now is sorrowful for one's sin and hates it. One turns from it, not only in one's mind and heart but also in one's life. Repentance is accompanied by "fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:8). The inward change translates into a radical outward transformation. Such repentance is possible only by the irresistible grace of God, working that change of mind and heart in a sinner and turning the sinner back to God.

The question is, was the repentance of the Ninevites a true repentance, involving not just an external change of behaviour, but first proceeding from a Spirit-worked change of mind and heart? To add force to the question, how is it possible that this generation of Ninevites truly repented, if the nation of Assyria would rise against Israel and destroy her, only a few generations later?

There is little doubt that the repentance of the Ninevites is true repentance. First, we are told in v. 5, "the people of Nineveh believed God". That came first: believing, or true faith. God gave them the gift of faith! Everything else that they did proceeded out of that faith.

The decree of the king also specified what his subjects must do, as a fruit of true repentance: "yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands" (v. 8b). Theirs was not a mere sorrow or self-pity for the consequences of their sin; theirs was a resolve to turn from sin, concretely, which resolve, as we considered earlier, proceeded from true faith.

Moreover, the king states in his royal decree, v. 9: "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" This is not a statement of blind hope but of faith in God. This echoes God's call to repentance in Joel 2:13-14, in the hope of God's mercy and compassion: "And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?" It speaks of a resolve to turn from sin, regardless of whether God would avert physical destruction on the city.

God's response to Nineveh's repentance shows that it was genuine. V. 10: "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." Lord willing, we will consider in the next article what it means that "God repented". But we are told here that God Himself recognised that the Ninevites turned from their wicked way! Surely theirs was a genuine repentance.



Finally, it is the Ninevites' repentance that extols the truth that "salvation is of the LORD". God is sovereign in salvation; He saves whom He wils. He saves even heathen Gentiles, in a show of power and mercy that is humanly impossible. During a time when the people of God was limited primarily to Israel, and when Israel was apostate in their worship of the golden calves, such that Jonah as God's prophet had to be sent out of Israel as a judgement on Israel, even during such a time, an entire city of heathen Ninevites was saved (not head for head, of course)! Salvation is indeed of the LORD.

And in this true repentance of the Ninevites, we see that the preaching of God is indeed the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth (Rom. 1:16, 1 Cor. 1:18). Even a preaching which had as its message primarily judgement

("Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown"). Let us believe this, by faith. Let us not think that the preaching must have such and such earthly criterion before it is palatable enough for someone to understand. Let us not shy away from inviting our unbelieving acquaintances to church to hear the preaching, knowing that it is the power of God unto salvation. God used a message primarily of judgement to turn heathen Ninevites to Himself, in a time when salvation was limited primarily to the Jews. He can use the preaching of the gospel for the salvation of unbelieving Gentiles. You and I are a case in point, and we pray the same for our yet-unbelieving loved ones.

Salvation is of the LORD, who works repentance and faith through the preaching of the gospel.

Our Rejection of Conditions (5): Conditional Grammar in the Bible



Rev. Martyn McGeown

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In an earlier blog post I wrote that at its most basic, a condition reflects a relationship of necessity between two or more things. In English, we often express such a relationship of necessity with words such as "only if," "provided that," "except that," "without," "only after," "always before," and the like. In this blog post, I want to look at conditional grammar in God's Word. Although the Bible never uses the word "condition" or "prerequisite," it contains conditional sentences, that is, grammatical constructions with words such as "if," "unless," "except," etc. Every seminarian remembers learning about different kinds of conditional sentences in Greek grammar class: first, second, third, and fourth-class conditions.

Some conditional sentences use "if clauses" (the technical term is protasis) to state a fact. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above" (Col. 3:1) could be rendered "Since you are risen with Christ" because the "if clause" expresses what is true. Other first-class conditions affirm something to be true, but only for the sake of argument: "If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised" (1 Cor. 15:16). If, for the sake of granting the premise of the adversary with whom the apostle is arguing, the dead do not rise (and they do), then, it logically follows, if the argument is correct (and it is not), that Christ also did not rise from the dead (but he did).

Those are, however, not conditions proper, and are uncontroversial. There are many other examples of "if clauses" in the Bible which are more difficult to interpret. But, remember, conditional grammar does not make a condition! Let us look at a few examples.

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love" (John 15:10a). If that were an actual condition—and it is not—it would mean, "Your abiding in my love depends upon, or is contingent upon, your keeping of my commandments." "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14-15). If that were an actual condition—and it is not—it would mean, "My Father's forgiveness of your sins depends upon, or is contingent upon, your pardoning of other men's sins." "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13). If that were an actual condition—and it is not—it would mean, "Your living and not dying depends upon, or is contingent upon, your mortifying the deeds of the body." "To present you holy, unblameable and unproveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:22b-23a). If that were an actual condition—and it is not—it would mean, "Your being presented holy, unblameable, and unproveable in his sight depends upon, or is contingent upon, your persevering in, and not departing from, the gospel." Multitudes of other examples could be added, but these suffice to prove the point.

The explanation of such passages is not to deny them, to say that keeping Christ's commandments, forgiving the neighbor, mortifying the flesh, and persevering in the truth of the gospel are not necessary—they are necessary—but to understand the relationship between these



if you believe, repent, obey, walk in the light, are fruitful in good works, and persevere in faith and godliness, you show yourself to be one of God's children exactly because God has worked such saving graces in you

activities and the blessing of God described in the passages cited earlier, namely, abiding in Christ's love, enjoying the forgiveness of sins, possessing life, and being presented holy, unblameable, and unproveable in his sight.

Let the reader remember that a conditional expresses a relationship of necessity between two or more things. Christ means what he says: keeping his commandments is necessary; forgiving the neighbor is necessary; mortifying the flesh is necessary; persevering in the truth is necessary. One who does not keep God's commandments (but who lives impenitently in his sins all his days), one who refuses to forgive (but who harbors bitter resentment in his heart all his days), one who refuses to mortify the flesh (but who indulges his lusts to the full all his days), and one who does not persevere in the truth of the gospel (but who apostatizes from the truth and never returns) will not be saved—he will perish. That's a necessity!

First, the language of "if clauses" (or conditional grammar) does not express a conditional relationship, that is, God's giving you that depends upon, or is contingent upon, your doing this. God is not waiting for us to perform a certain activity before he gives us a certain blessing so that God cannot act until we first act. To illustrate, Jesus is not waiting for us to keep his commandments before he allows us to experience his love; God is not waiting for us to repent before he forgives our sins; God is not waiting for us to forgive our neighbor before he forgives us; God is not waiting for us to believe before he grants us the blessing of justification; God is not waiting for us to mortify our sins before he gives us life. A god who waits for us to do something, instead of working the willing and the doing in us by the power of the Spirit (Phil. 2:12-13), is not sovereign. However, God works in such a way that we become active, so that in our experience our activity, which God works in us by his grace and Holy Spirit, precedes God's gift. God is eternal, so that he is not affected by the progression of time or bound by time, but is infinitely exalted over time, which is but a creature. We, however, are time-bound, limited creatures: we experience and enjoy our salvation in a certain, God-ordained, temporal sequence, and God deals with us as with children. To express the God-ordained sequence in a way that is meaningful to us, God speaks to us in conditional grammar. For example, to encourage us, he promises, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh [his sins] shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13b). We

do not over-analyze his words, asking ourselves, "If I confess my sins, does that mean that God has first worked repentance in my heart?" (He has, but that is not the main point of the text). Nor do we say, "I have mercy already, even if I do not repent." Nor do we say, "If God wants me to repent and have mercy, I will wait for him to act." Instead, we repent, encouraged by this incentive: "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy."

Second, the language of "if clauses" (or conditional grammar) serves to identify the recipients of the blessings of salvation. It is one thing to say, "God promises salvation to the elect," which is undoubtedly true, but who are the elect: how can they be identified? Scripture identifies the elect as those who believe, repent, obey, walk in the light, are fruitful in good works, and persevere in faith and godliness. If you believe, you can be confident that you are one of the elect; if you repent, you can be sure that you are saved; if you walk in the light, you know sweet fellowship with the holy God; if you keep Christ's commandments, you abide in his love. And if you do not do these things, you will not enjoy the promised blessings. How! "conditions" all you want, but God does not change his word!

Quite simply, if you believe, repent, obey, walk in the light, are fruitful in good works, and persevere in faith and godliness, you show yourself to be one of God's children exactly because God has worked such saving graces in you—you believe, you repent, you walk in the light, you keep God's commandments not by your freewill, but by God's grace given to you in regeneration and sanctification. If God has given you the gift of faith, that faith will not remain hidden, but it will bear fruit. If, on the other hand, you remain unbelieving, impenitent, disobedient, and fruitless, you have no reason to apply the description of believers to yourself.

Third, the language of "if clauses" (or conditional grammar) serves to motivate or warn the hearer or the reader. When we read or hear, "By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain" (1 Cor. 15:2) and "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23a), we are encouraged to keep the gospel in memory, we are exhorted to continue in the faith and we are warned against being moved away from the hope of the gospel, which encouragements, exhortation, and warnings are God's means of preserving us, and without which God is not pleased to preserve us. At the same time, God uses such warnings, which the carnal and profane despise, to harden the reprobate in their sins and to leave them without excuse. "And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments" (Canons V:14). If we omit such exhortations and warnings—even the use of conditional grammar, when the text warrants



it, which conditional grammar (although without the doctrine of conditions) should not simply be explained away but pointedly applied—we presume to “tempt God,” who “[confers grace] by means of admonitions” (Canons 3-4:17).

George M. Ophoff, another of the fathers of the Protestant Reformed Churches, gives a helpful explanation of conditional grammar. He writes, “The sole function and purpose of *im* [the Hebrew word for ‘if’—MMcG] in these connections is to establish conceptionally before the minds of the people of Israel the certain connection between obedience and blessing on the one hand, and disobedience and cursing, destruction on the other” (George M. Ophoff, “The ‘If’ Sentences In Deuteronomy,” *Standard Bearer*, volume 25, issue 18 [June 25, 1949], 423, Ophoff’s italics). Ophoff makes some interesting remarks. He writes, mimicking in a somewhat mocking tone the god of conditions: “However eager I am to do thee well my blessing thee is contingent on thy arbitrary and capricious willingness to originate faith and obedience in thee. Thy will is sovereign. Before it I must bow! This is again a terrible theology, isn’t it?” (ibid, 423, my italics). Ah, but what if God originates faith and obedience in his people: would the relationship between faith and obedience and the blessing of God still be conditional? Ophoff explains: “[The function of ‘if’] is to establish conceptionally connection between the faith of God’s people, their obedience and contrition of heart on the one hand and their life and salvation on the other as a connection of such a character that the two—faith and salvation—always go hand in hand with God the author of both. Mark you, with God the author of both. For, certainly, the idea is not that these callers upon the name of the Lord, these seekers after God, these wicked who forsake their abominations and turn to the Lord, do so in their capacity of sinners dead in trespasses and sins; and that they live and are saved as a result of their taking these action in the sense that they originate them. To the contrary, the fact of their seeking is the evidence that they have life in them abiding and are saved; and of this life their seeking is the fruit” (ibid, 425, my italics).

God says to the elect sinner, “If you believe,” and works faith in him so that he believes and is justified, while the reprobate who hears the same word (and implied command) does not believe because God does not grant him the gift of faith, so that he is not justified. Christ warns the elect sinner, “Ex-

Nothing is conditional, nothing is contingent, because God is sovereign. What God promises, he gives. What God requires, he bestows.

cept ye repent,” and he works repentance in him so that he repents and is saved, while the reprobate who hears the same word does not repent because God does not grant him the gift of repentance so that he perishes. Faith and repentance are not only activities of men (they are), but they are first and foremost gifts of God, so that (to use that language of Ophoff) he originates them. “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Phil. 1:29). When God gives us to believe, we believe. When God gives us to repent, we repent. It is that simple and that beautiful.

There is an inseparable connection between faith and justification, between repentance and the forgiveness of sins, but that connection is not that one is a condition for the other, that is, that one depends upon, or is contingent upon, the other.

Consider 1 Peter 3:20: “Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” The apostle writes that God’s longsuffering “waited.” That means that God could not send the flood until the ark was finished, which does not suggest that the coming of the floodwaters depended upon, or was contingent upon, Noah’s completion of the ark. Rather, it means this: God had eternally decreed that Event A (Noah’s construction of the ark) must precede Event B (the sending of the flood) and that without Event A (Noah’s construction of the ark) Event B (the sending of the flood) would not occur. So in that sense, God’s longsuffering waited. But God did not—and he never does—wait passively. If God decreed that Noah should construct the ark, God also worked in Noah the will to construct the ark and the actual construction of the ark, so that Noah constructed the ark according to God’s eternal decree. Similarly, God has decreed that faith shall precede justification as the means of justification; that repentance shall precede the forgiveness of sins so that the impenitent sinner does not enjoy the pardon of sins; that prayer is how we receive God’s grace and Holy Spirit; and, therefore, God works faith, repentance, prayer, and all other gifts and graces in the hearts of his people at the time that he has appointed.

Nothing is conditional, nothing is contingent, because God is sovereign. What God promises, he gives. What God requires, he bestows. Therefore, nothing ever depends on man. Beautiful, unconditional, wholly gracious theology, believed, taught, preached, and confessed in the Protestant Reformed Churches and her sisters!

Depression (2)



Matthias Wee

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How should a Christian view treatment for depression?

Just as a person seeks treatment for bodily ailments, so should a person who suffers from depression seek appropriate treatment for ailments of the mind. I deliberately use the word “should”, because the first step of seeking help is often the most difficult. There may be mixed reasons - fear of stigma, anxiety, lack of energy, or pride. Many patients with depression wait until they are in crisis before seeking help, particularly those who are doing so for the first time. Some are practically dragged into the clinic by concerned loved ones, while others initially consult for physical symptoms such as insomnia or fatigue, with other depressive symptoms subsequently being revealed.

Therefore, the advice is - seek help early! It may not necessarily be from a trained professional, but a person who is feeling down should speak to someone whom they can trust or confide in as a first port of call.

Broadly, treatment for depression can be divided into 2 areas: pharmacological (with medications) and non-pharmacological. Antidepressants work by targeting the abnormal functioning of neurotransmitters, which in a complex way affect the brain’s chemistry. Non-pharmacological treatment comprises psychotherapy, counselling or supportive care such as regular exercise and relaxation techniques.

Antidepressants, though more readily accepted in recent years, draw some unfair strong criticism. They are not to be used only “as a last resort”, but work independently of or synergistically with other treatments. Medications are a means that God has provided to relieve the troubled mind, and should be viewed as such. Contrary to what some may think, antidepressants are not addictive, and while some may have side effects, these often improve over time. Sometimes the side effects are even desirable, such as a sedating type that helps those who have insomnia, or a more activa-

Helping a person going through depression is not restricted to professionals or their pastors and elders. As fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, we are called to bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2).

ting type that benefits those who lack energy. The medications take time to reach full effectiveness, up to six to twelve weeks. Sometimes switching is necessary, and this can be a real test of patience for both the patient and physician. I have had patients who respond poorly to not one, but two types of antidepressants, and after pushing through together on a third or combination of two, respond beautifully.

In my opinion, while not every person with depression requires antidepressants from the get-go, all should receive psychotherapy and/or counselling. This is because the negative thought patterns and false generalizations (and many others) in depression, which result in negative emotions and feelings, need to be recognized and gently re-directed. A biblical example of false generalization is Jacob’s declaration that because Joseph was dead and Simeon held hostage in Egypt, Benjamin would likewise be taken from him - “all these things are against me” (Genesis 42:36b). A valued member of the family and church may view his own life as worthless because of a distorted view of himself. A loving wife and mother may feel grossly inadequate and guilty because she can only focus on what she has not been able to do, but not the things she has done. Learning to identify and correct these unhelpful thought patterns is important, and good psychologists and counsellors can help guide a person through.

While there is yield in seeing a secular psychologist, I would encourage all Christians with depression to seek help from their pastors and elders. They watch over the spiritual well-being of the flock; and because of the effect depression has on a person’s spiritual life, spiritual “treatment” should accompany the physical. The depressed person needs to be assured time and time again that the sadness and emptiness he feels is not God’s abandonment of him, but his inability to see through the fog of darkness. He needs to be reminded that God’s love for him is not conditioned upon the strength of his faith, but bought by Christ’s blood and secured in the promises of the immutable God. If there are sins resulting from the consequences of depression, they need to be addressed as well.

How can I help a person who is depressed?

Helping a person going through depression is not restricted to professionals or their pastors and elders. As fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, we are called to bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2).

The first step to help is to listen. The importance of this



cannot be overstated; the tendency is to listen for a little while, pick out a few statements that require correction, unload some advice, and be on our way. In healthcare, this is called the “righting reflex”, where a healthcare worker dishes out advice to a patient about what they should do for their health, without taking the time to explore their ideas and motivations. Listening is far harder. It requires time and patience. It requires love and attention; in our hectic lives, it is difficult to fit in. Nevertheless, we are called to do so.

Listening is also active. Ask open questions like “tell me more”, clarify or summarize “what do you mean by...?”, or ask reflection questions like “why do you think...?” Remember that the answers must first come from the person himself or herself. Through active listening, we can understand the struggles of the depressed person, and identify areas to help or address. It is a privilege to be the confidant, as such sharing is often very personal. Bear in mind that not everyone who is depressed may be in the state to share or be willing to do so; but oftentimes, listening and being present with them is a good first step. It may even be all that is necessary.

By listening, we can identify areas that need attention. It could be the trigger for depression, such as a physical, emotional or spiritual stressor. It could be the impact of depression, such as withdrawal from fellowship, and inability to focus on prayer and bible reading. It could be predisposing or perpetuating unhealthy thought patterns that catastrophize negative experiences. It could even be an emergency that requires urgent medical attention such as active thoughts or plans of suicide.

Next comes action. A word of caution here - resist the “righting reflex” to prescribe what we think are solutions, but sensitively work with the person to identify what to address. However, at times a person can be so depressed that he or she is unable to make any suggestions. If so, the person helping could make suggestions on a single aspect to focus on. It is not possible to list all the areas, but some broad categories are:

Work on the trigger(s) or cause(s): to identify and either work towards acceptance and submission to God’s will for events beyond our control or prayerfully make changes to address those which may be within.

Work on the impact: how has it affected a person physically or spiritually? For example, spending 15 minutes a day reading the Bible or praying with a person who struggles to do so, simple companionship, providing a meal or encouraging a regular routine or sleep habits. This area is one that any person can help in, as it is immensely practical.

Work on identifying false thought patterns that predispose to or perpetuate depression: talk through feelings and the process of how and why they reach there, or if there are alternative ways to perceive things. Point them to the Word of God.

Doing the above requires time, patience and love for the brother or sister. One may need to repeat the same process again and again, and experience rebuffs or advice that is not taken. There may seem little to no progress. Sometimes it may seem like the negativity is transferred to the person helping, and they too feel weighed down. However, bear in mind that helping in one’s capacity is synergistic with biblical counselling, and seeking professional help; therefore, the burden on the individual who is helping is not only theirs to bear.

One should also be equipped to help, and this comes through reading books and materials about mental health, Christian counselling and biblical psychology. Also, as with many things, the more times we practise a skill, the better we get - so seek opportunities to reach out to others who need help. For those who have previously experienced depression, or who have learnt to cope with it, they are in a unique position to understand and help a fellow sufferer.

Conclusion

In this article, I have written at length about depression, discussed biblical perspectives, how a Christian should view depression and its treatment, as well as some practical suggestions as to how fellow brothers and sisters in Christ can help one who suffers from depression. It is far from adequate to address the topic in its entirety, but I hope that it provides some perspective for readers to understand this complex disease of the fallen mind.

Reformed Missiology



Rev. Emmanuel Singh

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“And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”
Romans 10:15

Many of us have swallowed the contemporary idea that the

gospel is internal, not external; it is personal, not institutional. The gospel is all about a “personal relationship” with Jesus but has nothing to do with the institutional organic life of the Church. Even membership with local churches has become a matter of personal choice, rather than an integral part of the gospel. Jesus wants my heart, not my church

membership. The idea of Mission and Gospel has been misunderstood by many professing Christians and Churches today.

The Mission is to Go and preach the Gospel. Through the preaching of the gospel, God gathers his sheep from the uttermost end of the earth. How can people hear the gospel if there is no sending? Through the local church, God sends missionaries to preach the Gospel in the Mission fields like Kolkata and the rest of the world.

Mission in Eternity Past:

The Mission is not a human idea or invention to promote an enterprise or set up our empire on Earth. The Christian Mission is rooted in God's sovereign Election. God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3-5). Mission means to send out. By sending Christ to redeem us from our sins truly we could see that God's mission begins in eternity past. David Livingstone (Missionary to Africa) said that God had only one son and He was a Missionary. Christ was indeed sent from heaven to earth for God's Mission to deliver us from sin and to take us to His Father's Mansion.

Mission in the Old Testament:

Mission in the Old Testament is primarily concentrated on God's chosen people, often referred to as His nation, Israel. God's purpose was to call them to His worship within a world that had largely embraced idolatrous practices. The Gospel is both the command to repent from sin and the promise in the line of Covenant. In the Old Testament, the mission of God's covenant of grace unfolded. Within this covenant, Israel, the nation descending from Abraham, played a crucial role as God's chosen people (Genesis 12:3). God identified Israel as His "son" in Exodus 4:22-23. While in Egypt, God called His "son" out from the false worship of other gods (Joshua 24:14) to worship Him as the one true God (Exodus 4:22-23; 5:1-2). This transformation was emphasized right after the Exodus when God led the Israelites to Mount Sinai. God called them to worship Him. This began with the revelation of the Ten Commandments, followed by instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle. At Sinai, God restored the act of worship within His people, Israel, reaffirming their special relationship with Him.

Mission in the Old Testament was chiefly realized through the consecration of Israel as God's nation within the covenant of grace at Mount Sinai. They were tasked with being a holy nation and a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:3-6). Implicit in this role was the responsibility to lead the world in the worship of God. However, it is noteworthy that, with the construction of God's temple in Jerusalem, Israel's primary function was not to purposefully venture out to other nations to promote God's worship. Instead, their mission was centred on being God's worshipping people on Mount Zion, leading by example. This lack of proactive "sending" aligns

with the root of the word "mission" (from Latin, *Missio*), which implies a specific act of being sent. Jonah's story stands out as a unique case in which someone was indeed "sent" to urge a foreign nation to repent of their idolatrous worship. This exception underscores the prevailing inward, centripetal orientation of mission in the Old Testament. While the Old Testament did incorporate foreigners into Israel's worshipping community, such as Joseph's wife, Asenath; Rahab and Ruth; Naaman and the widow of Zarephath; and the Queen of Sheba, there was no discernible active "missionary movement" directed towards other nations as a deliberate endeavour.

Mission in the New Testament:

Mission in the New Testament found its turning point (from centripetal to centrifugal) in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of God's promised Son (Lord Jesus Christ). At the birth of Jesus, Simeon declared the dawn of salvation for both the Jewish people and the Gentiles (Luke 2:27-32). In the early stages of his ministry, Jesus foreshadowed this inclusive approach through his interactions with individuals like Nicodemus (a Jew), a Samaritan woman, and various Gentiles (John 3-4).

However, it's essential to note that, before his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus primarily directed his ministry toward the people of Israel. When commissioning his disciples for the mission, he instructed them to avoid contact with Gentiles and Samaritans, instead focusing on the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5). In another instance, when approached by a Canaanite woman in the region of Tyre and Sidon (beyond the boundaries of the Promised Land), who sought his help in casting out a demon from her daughter, Jesus reiterated that his mission was specifically to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24).

But through his death and resurrection, Jesus changed the mission from being centripetal to centrifugal. He paralleled his mission to that of the Father, sending his disciples as he was sent (John 20:21). He said that all power is given unto him in heaven and on earth, and sent his disciples, giving them the task of making disciples among the nations (Matthew 28:18-20). He delivered his "Great Commission" on a mountain, just like the nation of Israel received the Tablet (Ten Commandments) on the mountain.

Mission beyond the Apostolic Era:

The ascension of Jesus into heaven and the outpouring of His Spirit marked the inception of the apostles in their role as witnesses for Jesus. Their mission began in Jerusalem and expanded to Judaea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). The apostles were equipped for this work in two crucial stages: first, the apostolic group was reinstated to twelve apostles with the selec-



tion of Matthias (Acts 1:26). Then, the apostles experienced the presence of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2,). The gospel began to spread beyond Jerusalem, initially into Judaea and Samaria, and later to distant regions (Acts 13:46–48). Although the Book of Acts concludes in Rome with the Apostle Paul teaching about the kingdom of God, the mission of Christ persists. The Church of Christ remains on its mission, extending the call to the nations across the world, encouraging them to turn away from the worship of idols and embrace the worship of the one true God.

The Mission is Ongoing Now Till Christ Returns:

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Matthew 24:14

The Church called out of the world is the Church that goes into the world with the gospel. Gospel power is Christ’s power. Christ’s authority is exercised in and through his Church (Ephesians 1:15–23)

By sending Missionaries to the mission field, we declare

Christ’s return on earth because the kingdom of God is at hand; by preaching the Gospel, on one hand, we preach God’s everlasting salvation to the elect, and on the other God’s sovereign wrath on all disobedient reprobate.

We see Calvin’s mission focus in a couple of passages from the Institutes. He urged that in prayer we should “daily desire that God gather churches unto himself from all parts of the earth; that he spread and increase them in number” (Institutes 3.20.42). As we pray, “Your kingdom come,” we are asking “that God may gather churches to himself from all quarters of the world, may extend and increase their numbers, enrich them with his gifts, establish due order among them” (Institutes 3.20.41).

The primary calling of the Church is to worship God, which will last forever but the mission will cease when Christ returns. A faithful church is always a missiological ecclesia. Let God’s Mission be the psalm of our heart “Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.” Psalm 96:3

Sadness



Jemima Lee

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Sadness is real

You must have felt sadness before because it happens to everyone. Your reason for being sad might be different for you compared to your friends, depending on situations led by God’s providence. Sadness is the pain you feel when something hurtful happens. It will show on your face, often causing you to cry and making you look and feel tired.

The Bible explains different kinds of sadness which you may have felt before. Do you know that the book of Lamentations is all about the prophet Jeremiah grieving over the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of God’s people? The Psalms also often show the sadness of the Psalmists.

Here are some examples:

- a . A heavy heart (69:20);
- b . Being in a deep, dark and big hole (40:2);
- c . Staying awake at night crying (6:6);
- d . A long period of being sad (13:2);
- e . The feeling that God is far from you (42:9; 77:7-9);
- f . Feeling weak (31:9-10).

Sadness is real, painful, and a common experience for every child of God.

Where did Sadness come from?

The first two chapters of Genesis showed that God’s creation was perfect and there was no sadness. God created Adam and Eve perfect. They had covenant friendship and fellowship with God. Adam and Eve talked with God daily – there was nothing to be sad about! But when Adam and Eve fell into sin, God cursed the entire creation (Genesis 3:16-17). Sin and death entered the world. So did sadness. Sadness is our God-given response to the terrible consequences of sin. We will continue to feel sadness on earth But, God has given us Christ who has saved us from sin so that we will no longer feel sadness when we go to heaven. What makes us sad?

Sadness is usually caused by loss –the loss of your loved one or a close friend. You may also feel sad when you are sick. Our sins will also cause us to be sad, knowing that we have made God very angry.

Is it a sin to be sad?

If sadness is because of our sins, is it sinful to be sad? We know that God is in control of all things, so am I sinning if I

am sad about situations that God has put me in? Not at all! The more important thing is to know how to deal with your sadness.

Do not be like wicked King Ahab who became sad and miserable when he coveted Naboth's vineyard but could not have it (1 Kings 21). Queen Jezebel who did not want to see King Ahab sad anymore, murdered Naboth so that the vineyard could be stolen for King Ahab. King Ahab's inability to control his sadness led to much sin and wickedness! Satan can use our sadness to make us sin against God. We must be careful and guard against Satan's temptations. We can be comforted that Jesus understands our sadness because He felt it himself. He was not only fully God, but He was also fully human. He felt deep sadness when His friend Lazarus died (John 11:33). Jesus wept when he saw Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha grieving over the death of their brother. Jesus understands the ugliness of death and the pain of His people and in His love, He raised Lazarus from the dead. We can then be assured that Jesus will deliver us from our sadness, just as He raised Lazarus from the dead. Here are some ways to handle sadness in a God-glorifying manner:

a) Be near to God through prayer. Talk to God about your sadness through prayer. Even when you are feeling down and it is difficult to pray, do not be scared because Christ will help us to pray (Hebrews 7:25).

b) Remember that God is always in control of our lives. We might not understand why God gives us difficulties which bring us so much sadness. But God gently reminds us that His ways and thoughts are always higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9).

c) Rely on your faithful Saviour Jesus Christ who has died for your sins.

d) Talking to your fellow church friends or family about your sadness can help you. God calls us to share one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). We can also show love to our friends who are going through a difficult time by being there for them and providing them with a listening ear.

Comfort

The next time you experience sadness, always remember that your sadness will not last forever because you have Jesus as your Saviour who has saved you from your sins! He has already carried all your burdens and grief at the Cross! So when you are sad, look to Christ and sing with the Psalmist: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." (Psalms 42:11).

WORD SEARCH

F	U	T	C	P	E	V	A	H	S	M	L	A	S	P
A	D	G	I	N	R	M	D	E	T	Y	I	P	Q	E
C	A	F	H	K	C	O	M	F	O	R	T	L	N	V
Y	F	A	U	O	T	R	V	B	K	C	U	H	D	N
L	A	M	E	N	T	A	T	I	O	N	S	J	O	S
M	B	C	V	C	E	R	T	N	D	G	F	U	A	I
G	E	O	T	U	R	C	S	K	W	E	R	D	I	P
B	A	V	R	H	W	E	V	M	L	T	N	E	F	O
N	U	E	G	E	Q	T	D	L	Y	E	A	C	X	W
G	R	N	C	U	G	N	O	W	S	G	R	I	E	F
U	I	A	E	T	O	W	D	S	A	V	I	O	U	R
P	J	N	O	D	S	J	T	A	L	R	T	E	A	Q
L	C	T	T	H	T	S	F	O	R	D	K	P	F	A
E	G	R	I	N	D	S	H	I	A	I	T	C	U	B
R	A	P	F	R	I	E	N	D	S	H	I	P	O	N

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|-------------|------------|--------------|
| Psalms | Sadness | Fellowship |
| Consequence | Grief | Lamentations |
| Providence | Covenant | Saviour |
| Comfort | Friendship | |

COVENANT LIFE IN PICTURES



The Covenant Keepers with Pastor Josiah Tan at their youth retreat in December



Laser tag outing at Pasir Ris Park



On the final night of the retreat, they had a baking competition, hotpot dinner, and games



One of the three classes at Vacation Bible School, which was also held in December



The children enjoying a special outing during their dinosaur-themed VBS



Happy with their terrariums which they worked on throughout VBS :)

