



REFORMATION NOW



RISEN WITH CHRIST

<p>OT STUDIES</p> <p>WISDOM AND INTEGRITY</p>	<p>NT STUDIES</p> <p>MERCY SEAT: RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE KISS EACH OTHER</p>	<p>CHRISTIAN LIFE</p> <p>PRIVATE WORSHIP</p>
<p>CHILDREN'S SECTION</p> <p>SHORTER CATECHISM QUESTION 19</p>	<p>THEOLOGY</p> <p>DIVINE IMMUTABILITY</p>	<p>CHURCH HISTORY</p> <p>THE RELEVANCE AND IMPERATIVES OF A CONTINUING REFORMATION</p>

FEATURES



- 6** THE RELEVANCE AND IMPERATIVES OF A CONTINUING REFORMATION **JACK SIN**
- 2** RISEN WITH CHRIST
JOHN RAKSHITH PRABHAKAR

- 30** SEVEN MARKS OF A GROWING CHRISTIAN
GEORGE SKARIAH
- 20** PRIVATE WORSHIP
JOHN RAKSHITH PRABHAKAR

- 25** DIVINE IMMUTABILITY: THE UNCHANGEABLE GOD OF OUR FAITH
CHRISTOPHER POSHIN DAVID
- 35** TESTIMONY AND WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
THOMAS BROOKS

INTO THE BIBLE | OT & NT STUDIES

- 10** WISDOM AND INTEGRITY (Studies from the Book of PROVERBS)
GEORGE SKARIAH
- 14** MERCY SEAT: Righteousness and Peace Kiss Each Other (HEBREWS 9:1-14)
GEORGE SKARIAH

THE GOSPEL

- 40** WHO DO YOU THINK JESUS IS? **GEORGE SKARIAH**

SHORTER CATECHISM

CHILDREN'S SECTION

- 28** WHAT IS THE MISERY OF THE ESTATE WHEREINTO MAN FELL?
KELLEY BETH PRABHAKAR



Reformation Now magazine is made available free of charge. For any voluntary contributions, kindly contact us at icrcbangalore@gmail.com for details.

PUBLISHER COVENANT B-P CHURCH, BANGALORE EDITOR GEORGE SKARIAH

EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE, PROGRAM MANAGER & COVER DESIGN PRANEETH FRANKLIN

© 2019 REFORMATION NOW. The articles may be freely used for non-commercial purposes, so long as they are quoted verbatim and the writer as well as the source is identified and acknowledged. All Bible verses are quoted from the King James Version.

Softcopy (PDF) of this magazine is available at: www.facebook.com/refnow | www.reformationnow.org

POSTMASTER: Send in your change of address to icrcbangalore@gmail.com

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reformation Now readers,

This year has been a transitional year for the ministry of the *Reformation Now* publications, which happened quite unexpectedly. Hence, we could not publish the magazine in the regular format of three issues for a year as we have announced earlier, but only as a single special volume. However, from next year onwards, we plan to carry on with the regular format. Some of you have subscribed to the magazine for the whole year by paying the subscription amount for all the 3 issues, and we would carry forward the balance amount toward next year's subscription. We apologize for the inconvenience caused.

For this special edition, we have two articles covering theology. For the biblical study, we continue with the studies from the books of Proverbs and Hebrews. For church history, the importance of continuing Reformation has been discussed. Two articles are added for the Christian living section, dealing with Christian growth and private worship. Other regular sections are continued as usual.

We are also happy to announce the availability of the *Reformation Now* magazine online. We have set up the Reformation Now website: www.reformationnow.org to

make the magazine available to a wider public. You may also be able to access some of the earlier volumes of the magazine online.

We beseech your continuous prayer and support for the ministry of the *Reformation Now* publications. By God's sovereign will and gracious providence, with this special edition, we could complete 7 years of this publication, faithfully proclaiming the true gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The enemy of the gospel tries to destroy the work of God from within and without the church of Jesus Christ. Regardless, we need to carry on the good work the Lord has called us to do, so that we take the vision and the burden the Lord has placed in our hearts forward, and we are evermore committed to the same by "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

Joyfully and fervently serving the Lord, and for His glory alone,

George Skariah,

Pastor, Covenant B-P Church (Reformed), Bangalore.



RISEN with CHRIST

John Rakshith Prabhakar

Perhaps the most essential doctrine that has supplied life to Christianity throughout world history is that of Christ's resurrection. This at least was Paul's view: "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). The resurrection of Christ is not merely a day of annual celebration in the Christian calendar. We celebrate it daily because the hope of the entire world stands or falls with the reality of Christ's resurrection. In this article, we will not look at the evidence for Christ's resurrection. (For this we can turn to 1 Corinthians 15:1-9 for a start.) However, assuming the reality of Christ's resurrection, we will first look at what our Lord's resurrection means. Secondly, we will explore what His resurrection means for His people – both in the present time and in the future – before drawing to a close by way of relevance for our lives today.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

"He is not here: for he is risen" (Matthew 28:6). So the angel encouraged Christ's disciples on the day of his resurrection. Let us look at what Christ's resurrection means in itself. Firstly, Christ's resurrection is His justification. The apostle Paul says, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). In His resurrection, Christ was "justified in the Spirit." Paul is likely borrowing his language of justification from Isaiah 50:8, "He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me?" In this suffering servant

song, Isaiah is speaking of the coming Messiah who will be declared by God as righteous (= justified). This declaration is that His suffering was not for His own sins but for the sins of God's people. In due time, God the Son came into this world and suffered in our humanity, not for His own sins but for those who are His. His personal innocence has been declared by God before the world by raising Him up from the dead. When earth's courts have accounted Him the worst of sinners, heaven's courtroom has declared Christ personally righteous and thus denouncing humanity's judgement of Christ. Christ's resurrection from the dead is the proof of His innocence. It serves as evidence for Christ's justification.

Secondly, Christ's resurrection (= justification) renders Him an apt judge for the world. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). Judgement is coming. God has appointed someone to be an agent of His righteous judgement. This agent is the God-man Jesus Christ. The reason he is the "ordained" agent of God is because he is the only righteous man who is righteous on his own account. And, as we have seen, the proof of His personal righteousness is in His resurrection. So on the day of judgement, God has "given assurance to all men" that Christ will judge with a "God-quality righteousness".

What then is the relationship of Christ's resurrection to His people?

OUR RESURRECTION

The apostle Paul answers, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Corinthians 15:21-23). Paul answers our question by pointing out two effects of Christ's resurrection on His people. Firstly, Paul proclaims mankind's only hope of life from the doom of death. Adam, man's first representative, through his disobedience brought death upon us all. However, Christ, man's second representative, through his perfect obedience unto death purchased life for

His people. Christ's resurrection was not only in reference to His universal declaration of His innocence, but it was also a universal declaration of His people's acquittal because Christ has borne their judgement.

The second effect that Paul points out is: "Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Corinthians 15:23). The apostle Paul uses agricultural language here to illustrate the relationship of Christ's resurrection to the believer. Just as the first harvest of mangoes closely resembles the full harvest, so Christ's resurrection closely resembles our resurrection. Christ's resurrection is the prototype of our resurrection that is to take place "at Christ's coming". Just as, when Christ died His soul was in heaven until His bodily resurrection on Easter (Luke 23:43), after believers die their souls will be "present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8) as their bodies await their bodily resurrection at Christ's coming. So, if we were to ask Paul the question, "Paul, what will the believers' resurrection look like?" His answer will be, "Like Christ's resurrection." And, this is precisely what he says in Philippians 3:21, "[Christ] shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." This is certainly a future hope that believers await with eager expectation. It would be wrong to conclude, however, that resurrection is entirely a future expectation. It is to this that we now turn our focus.

PRESENT OR FUTURE RESURRECTION

Written over 400 years ago, the Heidelberg Catechism recognises a tension in the life of the

believer. “How does Christ’s resurrection benefit us? First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, so that he might make us share in the righteousness he obtained for us by his death. Second, by his power we too are already raised to a new life. Third, Christ’s resurrection is a sure pledge to us of our blessed resurrection.” In other words, first, as we have seen earlier, through Christ’s perfect obedience His own personal righteousness has been given to His people who do not possess it on their own. Second, in His resurrection we have been resurrected. And thirdly, we will be resurrected. It is the second and third statements that point to the tension. So is our resurrection a present or a future reality? The answer to this question is truly amazing! It is a future reality that believers presently enjoy! As we have earlier seen, Christ is God’s righteous agent of judgement on the day of judgement. On that day, those who have trusted in Christ’s righteous work will be justified, i.e., declared righteous. However, this future reality has been pushed back in time to the present such that Paul says we are today “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). In other words, God’s last day verdict of Christ’s people is a present-day reality by His grace because we trust in God’s only promise and provision of salvation, namely Christ.

Focusing on our future resurrection, Westminster Shorter Catechism question 38 says: “What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection? At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God, to all eternity.” The Westminster divines have rightly gathered in

one statement Scripture’s record of the believers’ end-time joys. However, these are also our present joys. Because we will be raised up in glory, believers are already risen with Christ (Ephesians 2:6). Because we will be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the Day of Judgment (= justified), believers have been justified by grace through faith in Christ (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:8). God’s end-time verdict has been made a present-day joy for the believer. It is so real that Paul says that we are risen with Christ and already seated with Him in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1). In His sovereign mercy, God has made our eternal reward for our present enjoyment. He has made our inheritance available to us already.

We must now address one more important question before we conclude. Although all the future benefits of our salvation have been made available to us now, we don’t fully enjoy it because we still live in a world wrought with sin, sorrow, sickness and death. How can believers today be confident that we will one day fully enjoy all of Christ’s benefits? Paul answers, we have been “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:13-14). Why must the Spirit as the down payment of our inheritance be of confidence to us? “If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Romans 8:11). One of the main reasons why believers have been given the Holy Spirit is so that believers can be confident of our future resurrection. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee that Christ the victor’s spoils – upon defeating both His and our

enemy – is truly ours to enjoy. He Himself is the down payment of the eternal inheritance which, though partially enjoyed today, we will one day fully enjoy for all eternity. If the Father and the Son have given us the Holy Spirit because the Triune God loves us, we can be “confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 2:13).

CONCLUSION

How must Christ’s resurrection (and ours) affect the way we live today? Firstly, the resurrection of Christ calls us to trust in Christ and his perfect work. “[Jesus] was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25). The resurrection means that only Christ is the sure way we can be confident that God can accept us as righteous in his sight. Secondly, the resurrection affects our ongoing sanctification. The gift of eternal life is not just a future reality. It is rather a present experience because it is a future reality. The way to enjoy more of this eternal life is by killing sin and living unto righteousness. The more we enjoy the free gift of life, the more we will grow in our hatred of sin, the more we will kill sin, and the cycle repeats. Often times our vision of residing sin in our lives can choke out our hope of life and make us disobedient to Christ’s call to obey him in holiness (John 14:15). In such times, we must recall God’s investment in our lives by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit to make us more like Jesus (Romans 8:29; Philippians 1:6). Because Christ has died for our sins and lives for the glory of the Triune God, we must consider ourselves dead to sin and offer the members of our body and our faculties as

instruments of righteousness in the name of Christ to the glory of the Triune God (Romans 6:8-14; 1 Corinthians 10:31). Christ is risen, and so have we.

The Resurrection of Christ is the Most Joyful Event that ever Came to Pass!

This resurrection of Christ is the most joyful event that ever came to pass; because hereby Christ rested from the great and difficult work of purchasing redemption, and received God’s testimony, that it was finished. The death of Christ was the greatest and most wonderful event that ever came to pass; but that has a great deal in it that is sorrowful. But by the resurrection of Christ, that sorrow is turned into joy. The Head of the church, in that great event, enters on the possession of eternal life; and the whole church is, as it were, begotten again to a lively hope, 1 Pet. i. 3. Weeping had continued for a night, but now joy cometh in the morning. This is the day of his reigning, as the head of the church, and all the church reigns with him. This day was worthy to be commemorated with the greatest joy... It is further to be observed, that the day of the gospel most properly begins with the resurrection of Christ. Till Christ rose from the dead, the Old-Testament dispensation remained: but now it ceases, all being fulfilled that was shadowed forth in the typical ordinances of that dispensation. Here most properly is the end of the Old-Testament night; and Christ rising from the grave with joy and glory, was like the sun rising after a long night of darkness, appearing in joyful light to enlighten the world. Now that joyful dispensation begins, that glorious dispensation, of which the prophets testified so much. Now the gospel-sun is risen in his glory, and with healing in his wings, that those who fear God’s name, may go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

– Jonathan Edwards

The Relevance and Imperative of a Continuing Reformation Today

Jack Sin

There are significant developments in Christendom these few decades. Over the past years, we have seen Protestants making greater concessions to go back to Rome in the growing ecclesiastical compromise and religious pluralism of our times. There is a strong prevailing disposition in the liberal and neo-evangelical community to give up, or at least to minimise, the major doctrinal differences between Protestant Churches and that of Rome. There is either a lack of understanding of the gravity of the matter, or a deliberate and calculated betrayal of the Protestant faith. In the 502th year of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation, we need to ask the crucial basic question and answer it.

THE NECESSITY OF SPIRITUAL REFORMS AND CHANGE

Why the need for the Reformation? Why was there a Reformation in the first place? One of the reasons was the rediscovery of the attractiveness of the pure gospel. After the Renaissance (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries), the minds of the people in Europe were open to the exploration of the arts, literature, and ancient culture. People in Europe began to question the teachings and practices of the established church. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, the humanist scholar, did the Church a great favour by producing his Greek New Testament in 1516 (previously, only Latin versions were available). Men like Thomas Bilney, John Rogers, Latimer Ridley, Martin Luther and others read the New Testament in its

original language first-hand, and began to discover for themselves the spiritual vitality and beauty that was lacking in the medieval Church. They could not contain their spiritual excitement in rediscovering the watershed doctrine of justification by faith alone. It gave meaning, purpose and life to the Church, and the revival spread throughout Europe. Is this prized heritage something to be jettisoned overnight? We need to pray for wisdom and discernment, and not barter the truth for 'peace', to the detriment of the church in these hazardous times.

A falling away today, in our religious movements, have affected many that some seek and accept a defective philosophy or worship self and manmade gods with a 'good life and the works of our hands', while some teach that we

are ourselves gods or even the wealth and health gospel have adversely affected many. The teaching, which came through the Reformation, stands apart as radically different from the rest. It proclaims faith in Christ alone and Him crucified as the all-sufficient basis for salvation, thus restoring New Testament Christianity. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." As Jesus says in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

The dark Middle Ages were times of theological declension in the church. The practice of Indulgences, masses, ceremonies, rosaries, works, the veneration of saints, and the worship of relics, reigned supreme in the hearts of the ordinary people in the Church for 1,000 years. The clergy of the Middle Ages were blind spiritual guides, and their unmarried monks were often guilty of moral evil, corruption, and gluttony. The people were starved spiritually and frustrated in their souls. As Isaiah said, they waited for light (Isaiah 59:9). The Waldenses (led by Peter Waldo), Jerome of Prague and John Huss provided that light in the pre-Reformation days of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but were mercilessly persecuted and martyred. But the sovereign Lord had predestined a time of great spiritual revival. John Wycliffe, a pre-Reformer of the fourteenth century, translated the Bible from Latin to English and the Lollards brought them to the countryside and laid the seed for change. The way of salvation and faith was revealed to many as William Tyndale brought it further with his historic translation from the Greek and Hebrew to English and the word spread rapidly.

The Reformation broke that yoke of bondage and delivered men from a work-for-your-salvation religion, restoring the doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ alone (Romans 1:17; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRIESTLY ROLE OF THE BELIEVERS

The Reformation changed the role of the clergy. Luther, convicted of his sin and justified by faith alone, called himself a pastor, not a priest, because the Bible teaches the universal priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:9). For example, he refused to hear auricular confession for he proclaimed every child of God a true priest before God and preached directly from the Bible and introduced congregational reading and singing during Sabbath worship. After more than 1,000 years 'priests' became redundant in the Church, for those who know Christ Jesus personally have direct access to the throne of grace and need no intermediaries. Every man is to pray directly to his God because Christ Jesus is our only Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). Luther, Calvin and others married and started Christian families. Children were catechised in the homes and churches and they were brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord. Celibacy was a burden the Lord never meant his servants to bear (1 Timothy 3:1-5). The late medieval era became a period of explosion of knowledge in the Arts and Languages during the Renaissance and there was great interest in the understanding of the doctrines of Christianity. People flocked to Wittenberg to hear Luther, to Geneva to hear Calvin teach, and to Zurich to hear Zwingli preached the truth. Similarly, John Knox was used of God to bring the needed revival and

Reformation to Scotland. The attraction of indulgences, sanctioned by the Pontiff then, to raise money for the rebuilding of St Peter's Church in Rome, faded. Enlightened people began to realise that forgiveness is rich and free in Christ Jesus alone, and not a commodity that can be bought in the 'spiritual' marketplace. The financial corruption and spiritual deception of the medieval Church was exposed and it would be finally over.

THE PLACE OF SCRIPTURE IN THE REVIVAL OF HEARTS

One of the contributions of the Reformation was the rediscovery of the enormous wealth of the Holy Scripture that was kept away from the people and to have it read and savoured by the common people in their own languages. Calvin encouraged universal learning of the Word in Geneva, and soon John Knox of Scotland and others came from afar to study under Calvin. With the invention of the printing press by Johann Guttenberg in 1454-1455 (a divine provision), literature could be duplicated quickly and disseminated all over Europe. Exegetical works, commentaries and biblical theological textbooks like Calvin's *Institutes*, flooded Europe. These relieved the people of erroneous and heretical preaching and practices. The Reformers' motto was 'Back to the Scriptures', and this dramatically influenced all aspects of Western thought, especially the work of the Puritans in England. The Reformation was one of the most life-shaping and life-changing movements in modern history. The biblical illiteracy of the common people, that had darkened minds for so many centuries, was finally over. Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge:

because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." That curse was in large part removed by the Protestant Reformation. When the Bible was translated into German, English, French and Spanish and other languages it enlightened hearts and minds to the glorious truths of salvation and of God. Today there are more than 2,000 languages and dialects which has part or whole of the Bible translated. The Church regained its true sense of spiritual direction through the inspired Word of God now in the hands of the people. It rediscovered the real dynamics of the early Church in expository preaching of the truths of the very Word of God, the proper observance and meaning of the two Sacraments, true biblical Sabbath worship, corporate prayer and the confession of sins to God and not men and what constitutes true evangelical repentance. It was almost a second Pentecost, a revival initiated by the Holy Spirit.

THE KNOWLEDGE BASED CHRISTIAN

The Reformation brought home the importance of Christian Education to Europe. In medieval times, only the priests and the royalty were educated. Now, all true believers need to understand their new-found faith. The Bible was given to them in their own vernacular languages, and they can read it, relish it and apply it. The knowledge based Christian is our answer in this treacherous and deceptive ecclesiastical world of the last days. We need to know, understand and to apply relevant Scripture and to propagate it to others for ignorance is not bliss. We need informed faithful men for such a time as this in the great

falling away of the Church in the Ecumenical movement, New Age Movement, man centred Psychology, the compromised gospel in the Alpha Course and other outlandish spiritual phenomena. Today's Reformed churches need to continue to propagate the pure gospel, and fervently and faithfully contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints (Jude 3; 2 Thessalonians 2:15).

CONCLUSION

Why was there a need for the Reformation in the 16th century and even today? Because there was a lost gospel and a lost Bible to be re-discovered in all its fulness because the Church had veered from the straight and narrow way. So relevant to our present day churches, the principles of the Reformation gives us biblical bearings, landmarks and pertinent lessons with which to address the issues and problems of our own times. Let us make full use of the inspiration and resources of the past, be enthused and zealously affected again for the continuance and the conservation of true religion according to the pure gospel of Jesus Christ.

Why was Reformation necessary?

The church is always in need of reform. Even in the New Testament, we see Jesus rebuking Peter, and we see Paul correcting the Corinthians. Since Christians are always sinners, the church will always need reform. The question for us, however, is when does the need become an absolute necessity?

The great Reformers of the sixteenth century concluded that reform was urgent and necessary in their day. In pursuing reform for the church, they rejected two extremes. On the one hand, they rejected those who insisted that the church was essentially sound and needed no fundamental changes. On the other hand, they rejected those who believed that they could create a perfect church in every detail. The church needed fundamental reform, but it would also always need to be reforming itself. The Reformers reached these conclusions from their study of the Bible.

In 1543, the Reformer of Strasbourg, Martin Bucer, asked John Calvin to write a defense of the Reformation for presentation to Emperor Charles V at the imperial diet set to meet at Speyer in 1544. . . . Calvin rose to the challenge and wrote one of his best works, "The Necessity of Reforming the Church." . . . He rejects the contention that the Reformers were guilty of "rash and impious innovation." Rather, he insists that "God raised up Luther and others" to preserve "the truth of our religion." Calvin saw that the foundations of Christianity were threatened and that only biblical truth would renew the church.

As we look at the church in our day, we may well conclude that reformation is needed—indeed, is necessary—in many of the areas about which Calvin was so concerned. Only the Word and Spirit of God will ultimately reform the church. But we should pray and work faithfully that such reform will come in our time.

— Robert Godfrey

WISDOM and INTEGRITY

Studies from the Book of Proverbs



roverbs

George Skariah

Integrity constitutes true Christian character, which should be seen in every faithful believer of the Lord Jesus Christ. Job, a righteous man who lived during the patriarchal period in the Bible, declared his integrity before his God in Job 31:6, “Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity.” The Psalmist says in Psalms 25:21, “Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.” King Solomon of Israel was very vocal about integrity, who wrote, “The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them” (Proverbs 11:3). Again, he says, “The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him” (Proverbs 20:7). Integrity calls for honesty or uprightness in Christian behavior. It is the true obedience or practice of God’s Word, not only when Christians are in the company of other fellow believers or in the church on Sundays, but even when they are all alone, all through the days of the week, when they are in their workplace or marketplace, or even when they are at home.

Sadly, integrity is a rare commodity in the Christian church today. In majority of the churches today, the church life is characterised by hypocrisy, dishonesty, duplicity, and corruption, which are all opposites of integrity. True integrity is essential for a close and deeper relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. As we are all sinful beings and live in a sinful world, we have an imperfect integrity. Perfect integrity is found only in Jesus Christ, and through Him we aim for true integrity. It is imperative that when Christians call themselves the followers of Christ, their character and behavior should reflect Him. In this study we want to understand what true integrity is and how crucial it is for our daily walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.

DEFINITION OF INTEGRITY

The word “integrity” comes from the Latin “*integritas*”, meaning “completeness” or “purity.” The word integrity is related to the mathematical term integer, which is a reference to a whole number. Dictionaries define integrity in the following way: steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code, the state of being unimpaired, or the quality or condition of being whole or undivided. In the Old Testament, the word “integrity” means “the condition of being without blemish, completeness, perfection, sincerity, soundness, uprightness, wholeness.” In the New Testament, the word means “honesty and adherence to a pattern of good works.”



Someone has defined integrity in the following way, “Integrity is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles, moral uprightness. It is generally a personal choice to hold oneself to consistent moral and ethical standards.”

A man, who has a heart of integrity, does what he does because he is what he is. In other words, integrity embodies the sum total of his being and his actions. He always remains the same, in public or private, whether he goes through relatively calm situations or great pressure. In other words, he does not pretend to be something that he is not. No discrepancy exists between his public and private life. This means, a person of integrity has nothing to hide or nothing to fear. A man of integrity is sincere, with a single-hearted devotion. At the same time, integrity does not mean sinlessness as there is none perfect in the world, except the Lord Jesus Christ. When a man of integrity realises his mistakes, he comes to the Lord Jesus Christ with humility and a repentant heart, and asks for mercy and forgiveness.

The opposite of integrity is dishonesty, hypocrisy, and doublemindedness. James 1:8 says, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” Such a person does not uphold moral principles and swings to both directions, having no stand of himself. He moves around according to the situations, changes his words according to his convenience, and works only for his own personal benefits. He exploits situations and persons around. Whereas, a man of integrity ties his heart and hands together, and serves the Lord accordingly. His heart loves the Lord and his hands are busy for Him. The psalmist says of king David of Israel in Psalm 78:72, “So he fed them according to the

integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.” David, being the king of Israel, was a true shepherd who loved God and served his people faithfully.

WISDOM AND INTEGRITY

Integrity and wisdom are intertwined. The fear of the Lord, according to the wisdom literature in the Bible (the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon), is true wisdom. Proverbs 16:6 says, “by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.” A man who fears the Lord lives a life of integrity and he is truly a wise man.

The root of integrity is a person’s relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). Integrity comes to a man through his unyielding dependence on Christ, his intimate trust in Him, humble repentance, and holy desire. This was King David’s experience as he writes in Psalms 26:1-3, “Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.” In the previous Psalm, David says, “Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.”

A man of integrity follows the Lord Jesus Christ closely. He will be true to his word and actions. Integrity is the true character of a regenerated heart. This means that if a person is truly convinced that Jesus has forgiven his sins and given him a new life through His life on this earth and finally His death on the Cross, he would be ever more committed to a life of integrity. Proverbs 20:7 says “The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed

after him.” The just man is the one whose sins have been forgiven by Christ and he has been declared by Christ as righteous. He has been clothed with the righteousness of Christ (Isaiah 61:10). As a result, he would be empowered by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God to live righteously. The Lord called the people of Judah in the Old Testament, whom He promised a restoration of their lands and lives, saying, “These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD” (Zechariah 8:16-17). This is integrity, the representation of Christ and His character! We call ourselves Christians and are unable to do this, making ourselves hypocrites, the very opposite of integrity. The Pharisees of Jesus’ days were known for such behavior, which Jesus condemned with very strong words.

God’s Word, the written wisdom of God, especially in the wisdom literature, gives many precious instructions on wisdom and integrity. The psalmist says in Psalms 15:1-3, “LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor.” (Read also Psalm 24:3-4.) No man can stand before the Lord and serve Him unless he walks before God with a heart of integrity. This means God will not accept the service of an unrighteous man. The psalmist further states in Psalms 25:21, “Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.”

This does not mean man has his own inherent integrity and righteousness; it is imputed by Christ. Once saved, man needs to walk in Christ’s righteousness by obeying His precepts. Like the Book of Psalms, the Book of Proverbs also instructs Christians on wisdom and integrity. Proverbs 10:8-9 says, “The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall. He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.” The wise are ever ready to receive the commandments. They are the ones who walk uprightly. Their steps are secured. Further, Proverbs 11:3 says, “The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.” Proverbs 28:18 adds, “Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.”

EXAMPLES OF INTEGRITY

There are many examples of integrity in the Bible and some names stand out. They are Job, Samuel, David, and Paul. The Book of Job opens with the great statement about the man Job, “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). When Job was afflicted by God severely as a test of his faith in God, his wife ridiculed him for his faith and told him to curse God and die. Job responded to her with the following words, “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips” (Job 2:10). Job’s entire life was a description of integrity, as he said, “My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go:



my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live” (Job 27:6).

Samuel, one of the great prophets of the Old Testament, is another example of integrity. Following are the words of Samuel that reflect his honesty as a servant of God, “Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? And I will restore it you” (1 Samuel 12:3). David, another example of integrity from the Old Testament, encouraged his son Solomon to be a man of sincerity, “And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever” (1 Chronicles 28:9). Later, in his thanksgiving prayer to God, he added, “I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee” (1 Chronicles 29:17).

The Apostle Paul, from the New Testament, is a great example of integrity. Paul, while returning from his third missionary journey, during his final address to the Ephesian elders, told them that his heart’s burden was to serve the Lord with all humility of mind and a faithful heart (Acts 20:17-35). Later, while in Jerusalem, when he was caught by the Jews and brought

before the council for preaching the gospel, he defended himself saying, “I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1), and later when he was brought before Felix, the Roman procurator, he added, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16).

CONCLUSION

When the world searches for men of capability, God looks for men of integrity to fulfill His most holy plan for His church on earth. Robert Murray McCheyne, a Scottish pastor writes, “It is not great talents God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.” Therefore he calls, “Take heed to thyself. Your own soul is your first and greatest care. . . . Keep a clear conscience through the blood of the Lamb. Keep up close communion with God. Study likeness to Him in all things. Read the Bible for your own growth first, then for your people.” This is a special call to all the students of God’s Word and pastors of God’s people. Integrity has been a major concern in the church today. The Lord looks for faithful men to preserve the purity of His church. Such was the call from Paul to Timothy, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). Will you be that man?



MERCY SEAT:**Righteousness and Peace Kiss Each Other** *ebrews*

Hebrews 9:1-14

George Skariah

For the author of Hebrews, the focus in chapters 9-10 is the high priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, particularly, His atoning death on the cross and the shedding of His blood for the forgiveness of sin. In order to present this, the author begins by explaining the system of the Old Testament tabernacle (also known as the temple), which was a figure or a pattern for Christ's atoning work on the cross (9:9). The author, having spent so much time explaining various items of the Old Testament system, such as Moses and the Law of God, and the Aaronic priestly system and relating their significance to the New Testament system, finally in chapters 9-10 comes to the crux of the matter, namely, the blood sacrifice. The blood sacrifice took center stage in the function of the tabernacle. A sinner had to come to the tabernacle with an animal to be sacrificed by the priest and the blood of the animal was sprinkled around the altar as a picture of forgiveness of sin. Then, once in a year, the high priest entered into the most holy place of the tabernacle (the holy of holies) with the blood of the animal to sprinkle upon the Ark of the Covenant, which has the mercy seat. The key to this ritualistic function was found in Hebrews 9:22, "without shedding of blood is no remission."

The most important place in the tabernacle was the holy of holies and the most important items in the holy of holies were the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat. What was the significance of these items, and how did these things relate to the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ? How much were the people of the Old Testament able to understand their significance? What was the role of the Holy Spirit in it? What is its relationship with salvation in the New Testament? These are some of the pertinent questions that are

answered in chapter 9 and we need to consider them.

BACKGROUND

In the Old Testament, there was the tabernacle or temple, which was the center of Israel's spirituality and existence as a nation. It signified the very presence of God in the midst of His people (the word "tabernacle" means a place of dwelling, hence, God dwelling in His people's midst). The pattern for building the tabernacle was given directly by God to Moses, mentioned in the book of Exodus. Initially, it was a

temporary moving structure, which Israel had to carry along with them while they were travelling from place to place during the wilderness journey. Later, when Israel settled down in the Land of Promise, and became a nation, it was King Solomon who finally built the temple in Jerusalem.

The Old Testament tabernacle was a picture or a shadow of Christ and the heavenly ministry, pointing to what Christ's life and work would bring to the church spiritually (Hebrews 8:1-5). Hebrews chapter 9 explains that the old tabernacle would exist only until Christ's work on earth, and thereafter He would enter into the tabernacle in heaven (verses 1-10). Christ, having accomplished His work of redemption on the cross, would enter into the heavenly tabernacle with His own blood, to be presented unto the Father as a propitiation (satisfaction) for the forgiveness of sin (verses 11-14).

OLD TESTAMENT TABERNACLE AND ITS ITEMS (VERSES 1-5)

The Old Testament tabernacle was an "earthly sanctuary." It refers to the geographical location of the building. Having received the pattern of the sanctuary from God, Moses had to motivate Israelites to construct the Tabernacle. They brought their materials as gifts and offerings to the Lord. Then God gave spiritual wisdom to Bezalel and Oholiab to do the intricate work of making the various parts of the tabernacle and its furnishings (Exodus 35-36). After the construction, it was dedicated to God (Exodus 40), and the glory of God moved into the sanctuary. But even then, it was still an earthly building, constructed by men out of earthly materials.

The author listed the various furnishings of the tabernacle from verses 2-5 and each of these carried a spiritual meaning. They were "patterns of things in the heavens" (verse 23), pointing to the greater spiritual significance they were communicating. The tabernacle had an outer court. The actual sanctuary consisted of the holy place and the holy of holies which had altogether 5 items, namely, the candle stick (golden lampstand), the table of showbread, the altar of incense, the veil, and the Ark of the Covenant. In the outer court, there were two more things, the altar of sacrifice, and the laver. The altar of sacrifice in the outer court was the place where animal sacrifice was performed. It was placed so significantly at the entrance of the tabernacle itself to communicate to us that Christ's sacrifice on the cross opens the gate of our entrance into the presence of God (John 1:29; Revelation 13:8; Isaiah 53:3-6; Romans 4:25). The second item, the laver, was used by the priest to wash himself before entering into the holy place for performing his religious responsibilities. In the Old Testament, only the priests were allowed to go to the laver and wash themselves. But in the New Testament, we believers are called the royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). Those who are justified at the altar of sacrifice are sanctified at the laver. The water in the laver typified our cleansing through the written Word of God, the Bible, and the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

In the holy place stood the seven-branched golden lampstand. Since there were no windows in the tabernacle, the lampstand provided the necessary light for the priests' ministry in the holy place. The nation of Israel was supposed to be a light to the nations. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world (John 8:12) and we believers are to



shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:14-15). It is important to note that the lamp in the tabernacle was kept perpetually burning (Exodus 27:20-21) as priests filled it daily with pure olive oil.

The table of showbread contained 12 loaves of bread, which the priests collected from each tribe of Israel, altogether adding up to 12 of them. On each Sabbath, the priests would remove the old loaves and put fresh loaves on the table; and the old loaves would be eaten by the priests inside the sanctuary itself. It speaks to us of our offering unto the Lord, and Jesus as the Bread of Life (John 6) given for the spiritual sustenance of His people.

The altar of incense was meant to burn the sweet perfumes in the sanctuary to fill it with the sweet aroma. The sweet smelling incense was a beautiful picture of Christ in all His perfection and grace before God and mankind. Likewise, Christians are called “a sweet savor” to God and the world (2 Corinthians 2:14-16). It also signifies our prayers offered unto God. Each morning and evening a priest burned incense on this altar. David suggests that it is a picture of prayer ascending to God (Psalm 141:2). On the Day of Atonement, the high priest used coals from this altar to burn incense before the mercy seat within the veil (Leviticus 16:12-14). The veil formed the doorway between the two rooms of the sanctuary, and this is the second veil as the first veil gave entrance into the holy place.

The holy of holies contained the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat, symbolising the presence of God. The ark contained three significant objects from Israel’s history: a golden pot containing manna, Aaron’s rod that

budded, and the Ten Commandments. On top of the ark was the mercy seat. On the Day of Atonement the high priest entered with the blood of the animal, sprinkled on the mercy seat to cover the tablets of Law within the ark. It signifies that God did not look at the broken law; He saw the blood. Christ is our “mercy seat” (propitiation in 1 John 2:2; 4:4; Romans 3:25). But His blood did not just cover sin; it took away sin. Over the mercy seat were the two cherubim, angelic creatures, stretching forth their wings, covering the mercy seat. This symbolised the glory of God, the outward manifestation of the being of God. The significance of this place was that it was the appointed place where God promised to meet and commune with His people (Exodus 25:22). High Priestly Ministry at the Holy of Holies of the Old Tabernacle (verses 6-10)

The main focus of the holy of holies (the second tabernacle or the second part of the tabernacle) was the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat, and the yearly high priestly ministry there. The holy of holies was a picture of God’s mercy and righteousness meeting together, and that is what salvation was for God’s people. The psalmist says in Psalms 85:9, “Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.” And immediately the psalmist adds, “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psalms 85:10). It was on the cross of Calvary that it happened and the holy of holies was a picture of the same!

The holy of holies was a place of holiness as it symbolised the presence of the thrice holy God. Hence, no ordinary person could ever enter into the holy of holies, except the high priest, that too once in a year, after offering a sacrifice



for his own sin. A holy God, who is absolute in His righteousness, will never ignore sin. At the same time, the mercy seat had another emphasis that it was the seat of mercy and forgiveness. The word “mercy seat” originally means a place of propitiation. The word “propitiation” has the idea of satisfying the righteous demands of a holy God, making it possible for the removal of sin that stands between God and mankind. Hence, the high priest, once in a year, had to enter into the holy of holies with the blood of animals, to sprinkle on the mercy seat (9:7). It reminded the Israelites that blood was required for the forgiveness of the broken Law, for which an innocent animal was to be killed. When the animal blood was sprinkled upon the mercy seat, which typified the divine throne of holiness and righteousness, it was transformed from a throne of judgment to a throne of grace and mercy. This means, the mercy seat was a place where righteousness and peace have kissed each other, and it beautifully prefigured what Jesus would do on the cross. Jesus Christ is the Mercy Seat and He is so by virtue of the propitiation which He offered to God (I John 2:2; 4:10).

Before we go any further, one more thing has to be understood which the author of Hebrews mentions in verse 8 in relation to the old tabernacle and the sacrificial system. The question is: Did the Old Testament people understand the limitation of their ritualistic practices? Did they understand that real forgiveness would not come to them if they only put their faith in the rituals and just in the blood of the bulls and goats? In other words, how were the Old Testament people saved? Were they saved by their works, that is to say, by their rituals? Or by placing their trust in the

fulfillment of the promises which the rituals were focusing on?

In verse 8 we are told that the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament would tell the worshiper that the blood of bulls and goats would not actually save them, but were only symbolic of something greater and perfect to come (verses 9-10). In other words, like in the New Testament, in the Old Testament too, the Holy Spirit was the agent of regeneration, working in the hearts of the believers and telling them that it was through the blood of Christ that actual salvation would come. And by faith they accepted it and believed in the coming Messiah (verse 15). Their spiritual experience came through their faith in the coming Messiah. In other words, Christ's death on the cross reaches to both sides of the Testaments. This is the reason why we, the New Testament believers, are the spiritual children of Abraham. As Abraham believed in God and God counted him righteous, we, though not physically related to him, are the spiritual children of Abraham because we are saved the same way Abraham was saved.

CHRIST'S HIGH PRIESTLY MINISTRY AT THE HEAVENLY TABERNACLE (VERSES 11-14)

The Lord Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament system pointed to. Therefore, the author of Hebrews, having presented to us the Old Testament tabernacle and the mercy seat, now comes to Christ and portrays Him as the true Mercy Seat and the high priest and the sacrifice. The author now says in verse 11 that through Christ the high priest, we have good things to come, by a



greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands. The earthly tabernacle is gone, but now it is the heavenly tabernacle. In other words, in the Lord Jesus Christ, the actual and perfect thing has come as He is the realisation of all that the people of God anticipated. As a result, Christ can bring the believing sinner to spiritual perfection through the application of His redemptive work. From now on until chapter 10:18, the author will present to us the spiritual significance of Christ's sacrificial death and the shedding of His blood on the cross.

In verse 12 we are told that Christ is the Mercy Seat, that is, Christ is the propitiation. This means Christ is the one who satisfied the righteous demand of the Most Holy God because sin needs to be punished. This could be done only by the shedding of blood, as without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness (verse 22). This is because "the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11). The animal blood could not permanently take away sin as it was only a pre-figurement of the good and perfect thing to come, referring to God's eternal Son, Jesus Christ. For this purpose, God's Son, the very God Himself, had to become Man as He had no blood within His divine nature to shed, as God is a spirit. Hence, Christ took upon Himself the form of a Man (incarnation) and came into the world and lived a perfect obedient life to prove Himself that He is truly the Son of God, and also to meet the righteous demands of the Law of God, as life has been offered originally through the obedience of the commandments of God (Leviticus 18:5; Romans 4:4-5; Galatians 3:12). And finally, Christ, in order to meet the justice of God and satisfy His wrath for man's disobedience, shed His own blood on the cross.

At the cross we see Christ, the Mercy Seat, in two ways: on the one hand, Christ, the most holy, righteous, and just God, is ever able to fulfill all the demands of the Law of God, and, on the other hand, He is the merciful Savior, who became a propitiation as He satisfied the righteous demands of a holy God. Because of man's breaking of the commandments of God (disobedience) the wrath of God was kindled. God wanted somebody to obey the commandments so that righteousness and life will be established and also someone to pay the penalty for man's disobedience. This was only possible through a God-Man, Christ Jesus. Through the death of Christ, two things happened: He became a curse on behalf of us, and divine justice was fulfilled.

A W Pink explains this in the following manner: "The Mercy-seat, which formed God's throne in Israel, then, directs our thoughts to the governmental aspect of the Atonement. Not only is it true that Christ died for sinners, but it is equally true—though in a different sense—that He died for God: He died in the stead of His sinful people, He died on behalf of the thrice holy God. Christ lived and died to make it possible for God to take hell-deserving sinners into fellowship with Himself, and that, consistently with His holiness and justice. He died to vindicate the character of God before all the intelligences of the universe. He died so that God's throne might be established: "justice and judgment are the habitation (or "base") of Thy throne" (Psalm 89:14). God's throne is settled in Christ, because all the claims of God's righteousness have been settled by Christ. The Antitype of this is most gloriously brought before us in Revelation 5:6: "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne... stood a Lamb as



it had been slain"!! God's love, grace, and mercy were manifested at Calvary as nowhere else; equally so were His holiness, justice and righteousness. For this reason, then, the Mercy-seat was made solely of pure gold—the Divine glory displayed. Propitiation has been made, and God points all to His Son, the Propitiatory, as the proof of it; just as the Mercy-seat with the blood sprinkled thereon attested that propitiation had been typically accomplished." This redemptive work of Christ has brought the following benefits to a believing sinner: (1) it obtained eternal redemption for a sinner (verse 12); (2) the Holy Spirit, being the agent of regeneration, applies Christ's redemptive work into a sinner's life (verse 14a); (3) the blood of Christ, when applied into a sinner's life by the work of His Spirit, purges his conscience from dead works (verse 14b); and (4) a sinner is able to serve the living God (verse 14c).

CONCLUSION

We should be thankful to God for the mercy seat, without which there is no covering of sin. With the mercy seat at the tabernacle, the Law was covered and the breaking of it and the condemnation it pronounced was taken care of. Jesus' blood on the cross does the same for a believing sinner. There is nothing we can do for our salvation, but Jesus has done all for us, and we simply cling on to His mercy. A W Pink writes, "The truth is that God has entirely set aside ourselves, and acted for Himself in saving us. God's glory, and our salvation are indissolubly linked together. Accordingly we ought not only to enjoy the assurance of our eternal security, but also enter into a deeper communion with God's revealed thoughts concerning the power of Christ's blood in

relation to His Throne in Heaven! It is this which the Mercy-seat or Propitiatory particularly and so blessedly typifies."

If we do not abide in prayer, we will abide in temptation. Let this be one aspect of our daily intercession: 'God, preserve my soul, and keep my heart and all its ways so that I will not be entangled.' When this is true in our lives, a passing temptation will not overcome us. We will remain free while others lie in bondage.

Let no man think to kill sin with few, easy, or gentle strokes. He who hath once smitten a serpent, if he follow not on his blow until it be slain, may repent that ever he began the quarrel. And so he who undertakes to deal with sin, and pursues it not constantly to the death.

A minister may fill his pews, his communion roll, the mouths of the public, but what that minister is on his knees in secret before God Almighty, that he is and no more.

See in the meantime that your faith brings forth obedience, and God in due time will cause it to bring forth peace.

How can we possibly believe the promises concerning Heaven, immortality, and glory, when we do not believe the promises concerning our present life? And how can we be trusted when we say we believe these promises but make no effort to experience them ourselves? It is just here that men deceive themselves. It is not that they do not want the Gospel privileges of joy, peace and assurance, but they are not prepared to repent of their evil attitudes and careless life-styles. Some have even attempted to reconcile these things and ruined their souls. But without the diligent exercise of the grace of obedience, we shall never enjoy the graces of joy, peace and assurance.

—John Owen



Private Worship

John Rakshith Prabhakar

Due to living in the age of easy access to the internet, Christians are not lacking in resources for spiritual help. Often, however, like a child in a chocolate shop feels overwhelmed by the options before him instead of simply choosing the chocolate that he enjoys the most, Christians today can feel overwhelmed with the sheer volume of spiritual resources available. When it comes to our private worship in particular, we can lose sight of the joy that God means to bring to us through simple means due to not knowing where to begin. In this article, firstly, we will explore what private worship is. Secondly, I will list some principles that could help us in our private worship. Thirdly, I will list some practical helps that could be useful in our private worship. Fourthly, and finally, we will tackle three common struggles that hinder our enjoyment of private worship.

PRIVATE WORSHIP: WHAT IT IS

Private worship goes by many terms. It is referred to as “devotional time,” “secret worship,” and, most commonly, “quiet time.” All of these terms refer to an aspect of the believers’ time alone with their Triune God. For the purpose of simplicity, we will refer to it as “private worship” (just as the terms “public worship” and “family worship” simply describe what they are referring to). Our Lord Jesus, during His earthly ministry, was a great example of personal piety. He would regularly wander off to a quiet place to be alone with His Father in heaven, “And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone” (Matthew 14:23). This verse

points out two essential aspects to our private worship.

Firstly, it is time alone with God. The marked difference of private worship from family or public worship is that it is an individual’s time alone. Jesus says, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:6). It is private worship. Secondly, and more importantly, it is time alone with God. This time is not just alone time for recovering from an energy drain (particularly for introverts). It is a personal time with our Maker and Saviour. It is private worship. These together constitute this specific means of grace God has given.

PRINCIPLES OF PRIVATE WORSHIP

Having explored what private worship is, the following are some principles to help ensure that we have a consistent private worship.

Fix a Time

“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, [Jesus] went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35). Find a time of the day where you will potentially be least distracted. It has been common experience throughout history that mornings are the least distracted portion of the day. However, some of our work schedules require us to be working until morning, and the lack of energy that follows can often make mornings least conducive for private worship. There is nothing inherently auspicious about the mornings (Romans 14:5). The principle from Mark 1:35 is this: Pick a time of your choosing when you will potentially have the most energy and be least distracted for private worship.

Set a Duration of Time

The question of “how long” can often feel burdensome. “After all, isn’t God worth more time than we can give him?” Yes, of course! However, God has also given us responsibilities to attend to, families to take care of, and bodies that need our care. Having said this, time with the Lord takes time. The question of how long is informed by the elements of and the tools used in private worship – like the length of portion read and the number of things to pray for. Ordinarily, it is better to overestimate the time it takes to do private worship so that it allows us the mental space to not be thinking of anything else but worship. For example, if bible reading and prayer usually takes 20 minutes,

plan to set aside 30 minutes. The principle here is this: Set a length of time where you are not rushed to do what you have planned, while at the same time that is not so long that you might finish way too early (and potentially feel unnecessarily guilty for not occupying the entire time that was planned for private worship).

Allot Space

In order to spend time with the Father, Jesus finds a solitary place (Mark 1:35), the mountain (Matthew 14:23), or more frequently the wilderness (Luke 5:16). What is a sacred space for private worship? God often uses common things for sacred purposes. For example, consider the Lord’s Supper where our Lord uses common elements such as bread and wine for the sacred purpose of pointing us back to the cross and pointing us forward to the time when He will eat with His people again. More closely to our topic, Jesus uses the wilderness and the mountain as solitary places for private worship with His Father. Apart from unusual circumstances like travel that could hinder routine, Jesus teaches us to find a common spot in your home, local park, or coffee shop and to dedicate it for your regular practice private worship. What may be a common space for everyone, like Jesus’s wilderness or mountain, is your special place to be with the Father. Like with time, there is nothing auspicious of any space in the world. The principle then is this: Find a place for your regular time with God.

ELEMENTS OF PRIVATE WORSHIP

Having examined some biblical principles that can govern our private worship, let us look at what our time must be occupied with doing. The following are three vital elements for our



private worship in no particular order of importance.

Read

This, of course, refers to Bible reading. Select a portion of Scripture of the Old and/or the New Testament. Select a portion that would allow for some reflection and prayer based on the passage(s) read. Ligonier ministries recommends some of the best reading plans each year. (You can access them at <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/bible-reading-plans/>). There are also other tools that can aid our private worship. Books can be a tremendous resource in understanding Scripture. For example, *Daily Readings for your Spiritual Journey* by J. I. Packer starts with a verse from Scripture with a short reflection that can aid our prayer. Another method is a little book that can be read with Scripture. For example, a short section from *A Little Book on the Christian Life* by John Calvin can be read in less than two minutes and can easily be an addition to Bible reading. All said, nothing but the Bible is God's means of communicating with his people. As such it must be a part of our private worship, whether it is a verse and a reflection passage or an entire chapter. Read the Bible.

Pray

The second important element of private worship is prayer. This is modelled for us by Jesus himself as we have seen earlier. If Bible reading is God communicating with us, prayer is us communicating with God. A commonly-used, simple acronym for the different aspects of prayer is ACTS for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. What is adoration? Heidelberg Catechism 117 answers, "First, we must from the heart call upon the one

true God only, who has revealed himself in his Word..." What is confession? The Catechism continues, "Second, we must thoroughly know our need and misery, so that we may humble ourselves before God."

What is thanksgiving? "The Catechism continues further. "Third, we must rest on this firm foundation that, although we do not deserve it, God will certainly hear our prayer for the sake of Christ our Lord, as he has promised us in his Word." What is Supplication? Westminster Shorter Catechism 183-84 says, "We are to pray for the whole church of Christ upon earth; for magistrates, and ministers; for ourselves, our brethren, yea, our enemies; and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter; but not for the dead, nor for those that are known to have sinned the sin unto death." And "We are to pray for all things tending to the glory of God, the welfare of the church, our own or others' good; but not for anything that is unlawful." Such prayer can naturally flow from our reading. Reflecting on the portion read, we can think of attributes of God for which He is to be adored, sins that need our confession, thanksgiving for the cross of Christ and the costly forgiveness Christ has earned for us, and requests to God for all manner of things. Pray simply-worded, biblically-rich, well-rounded prayers.

Sing

Perhaps one of the most underestimated elements of any Christian worship is singing. Singing just one song as part of our regular private worship can enrich our worship experience. Sing biblically-informed songs. Sing hymns that the church of Christ has sung for centuries. A welcome inclusion in our private worship is the singing of psalms. The



Westminster Directory of Public Worship encourages us thus, “It is the duty of Christians to praise God publicly, by singing of psalms together in the congregation, and also privately in the family. In singing of psalms, the voice is to be tenably and gravely ordered; but the chief care must be to sing with understanding, and with grace in the heart, making melody unto the Lord.” Singing the psalms are particularly enjoyable if your private worship includes the psalms for Bible reading. A tool that can help singing the psalms is <http://psalms.seedbed.com/>. They have the complete psalter with multiple tunes for each psalm. But whatever method you choose, by all means, sing.

Having discussed what private worship is, three biblical principles for private worship, and three elements of private worship, let us now focus briefly on three hurdles that come in the way of consistent private worship.

THREE HURDLES TO PRIVATE WORSHIP

Firstly, Christians often cite busyness as a reason for lack of consistency or, sometimes, absence of private worship. If our Lord with His busyness of ministry and discipling His followers, not to mention His task of obedience unto death (Philippians 2), could make time to be with His Father, so can we make the time to be with our Father. However, often Christians can allot an impractical amount of time. And this can lead to forsaking the time altogether which in turn can lead to discouragement. Choose a feasible amount of time.

Secondly, Christians can tend to feel guilty about not having consistent private worship. A word of encouragement: all manner of worship

– private, family, and public – is at God’s invitation. It is not an invitation to make God happy by giving Him the time that He’s asking you for. It is rather an invitation to come and rest in the safe knowledge of who He is to us – our Father. An invitation to marvel at the work of Christ in reconciling us to this Father. It is an invitation to receive comfort from our God. God commands us to worship. His command, however, is not to add worth and value to who He is. It is rather for us to receive great joy in seeing His worth and dignity.

Thirdly, this sense of guilt can result in compromising family worship time and, occasionally, public worship – “If I haven’t had personal time with God, what’s the point of pretending to worship with others?” Or, so we might feel. This, however, is not Jesus’s view of worship. Jesus’s view of worship is, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). It is not as though the Son of God is not present when we are alone. As God, He is everywhere (Jeremiah 23:23-24). It is rather that Jesus has promised a special presence when two or three are gathered in His name. This means that, even when we haven’t been able to have consistent private worship, Jesus wants us to prefer family worship and public worship to private worship.

CONCLUSION

Private worship is a Christian’s time with the lover of his soul. Because God has so loved the world and has given us His Son, we give ourselves to Him in all that we are. Because the Son has loved us so much that He emptied Himself of His divine prerogatives to make us



His own, His people make the honour and glory of Christ their prerogative. Because the Spirit has promised to be our dearest comforter even in times of our sin, He deserves our confession and praise for God's patience toward His people. Private worship is another avenue to be lost in the love of God. So let us be found worshipping God, with the local church, with our families, but also privately.



India Reformed Biblical Seminary (IRBS)

Announces the first batch of classes in 2020 July

IRBS

Certificate in Theology

This is a basic theology course for everyone. This program has been designed particularly for those who want to take the first step of serving the Lord as a lay person or a servant of the Lord. Pastors desiring to be refreshed themselves may also apply.

Design of the Program: 30 credit hours are offered for this program and each credit hour requires minimum 16 class hours of learning, totaling 480 hours of classes. Focuses will be given to theology (8 credits), biblical studies (11 credits), church history (3 credits), missions and evangelism, pastoral care and counselling, and family matters (8 credits). Courses are offered both in English and Kannada mediums. Classes will be offered on Saturdays and holiday seasons.

Classes will be held at IRBS campus on Sarjapur Road, Bangalore.

For more details and application procedure,
Contact: Tel. 9590 7373 52, 9845 79 4495
Email: irbsbangalore@gmail.com

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



GEORGE SKARIAH is an ordained minister and Pastor of Covenant Bible-Presbyterian Church (A Reformed Church in Bangalore). He is a graduate of Far Eastern Bible College, Singapore, and was a teaching faculty at Jubilee Memorial Bible College, Chennai.

JACK SIN is the Pastor of Sovereign Hope Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore. He is the author of several books and also a regular contributor of *The Reformer and Evangelical Times*, UK.

CHRISTOPHER POSHIN DAVID is an ordained minister of the gospel with the Presbyterian Church in India - Reformed (PCI-R). He is a graduate of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Dehradun, and serves on the staff at Bangalore Presbyterian Church.

JOHN RAKSHITH PRABHAKAR is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church and a graduate of Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, USA.

THOMAS BROOKS (1608-1680) Was an English Puritan minister. He entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in 1625. Brooks was ordained as a preacher of the gospel in 1640 and became a chaplain to the parliamentary fleet. A fellow minister said of Brooks: "He had a body of divinity in his head and the power of it in his heart."

KELLEY BETH PRABHAKAR is the wife of Pastor John Rakshith Prabhakar and a theological student at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson MS, USA



DIVINE IMMUTABILITY: THE UNCHANGEABLE GOD OF OUR FAITH

U N C H A N G I N G

Christopher Poshin David

Heraclitus, the ancient Greek Philosopher, is attributed to have first penned down the famous adage, “the only thing constant is change.” That ancient phrase best seems to describe the modern world where life moves at an increasingly rapid pace with the whole world interconnected. A new model of iPhone released every year reminds us of the reality that things change very quickly. However in the midst of the constant flux of the modern world, the Bible reminds us that there is a reality that never changes – God Himself.

THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

This attribute of the changelessness of God is called the immutability of God and it is one that has been consistently confessed in the historic creeds of the faith. The Westminster Shorter Catechism in question 4 defines God simply as “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.” However sadly, today it remains as one of the oft ignored unique attributes of God with numerous theologians such as Clark Pinnock, Jürgen Moltmann, Robert Jenson and others attacking it.

DEFINING IMMUTABILITY

Louis Berkhof, a Reformed Systematic theologian, defines immutability as “that perfection of God by which He is devoid of all change, not only in His Being, but also in His purposes and promises.” (*Systematic Theology*,

58). In other words, God as a self-existing, self-sufficient, and infinite being is incapable of any change in His essential being. By virtue of the changelessness in His very being, the eternal God exhibits a steadfast character that is simply not susceptible to variation and thereby remains always faithful. Thus God is unchanging in His being, desires and purposes.

BIBLICAL AFFIRMATIONS OF IMMUTABILITY

The Bible clearly teaches immutability of God in Malachi 3:6, where God declares, “I the LORD do not change.” It can also be seen in the following verses: Numbers 23:19; I Samuel 15:29; Psalm 102:26-28; Isaiah 46:9-11; Ezekiel 24:14; Hebrews 1:12, 6:17-18, 13:8; James 1:17.

In fact God’s self-revealed name to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:14) – YHWH, translated ‘I am what I am’ or ‘I will be what I will be,’ points to the steadfastness of God’s being whereby He is unable to change and be

anything else less than what He is. Ultimately this name was the source of confidence for Moses as he faced the Pharaoh and for the children of Israel as they wandered through the wilderness. In the face of constant change and an uncertain future, God's unchanging being and character was Israel's comfort and strength. Passages such as II Samuel 7:28; Psalm 19:9; 119:86; Daniel 4:37; John 17:3, 17; Ephesians 1:13, speak about the trustworthiness of God's Word and His promises implicitly affirm God's immutability. The surety of someone's word or promise does not reside upon the words themselves or even in the content, but ultimately upon the character and being of the person who said them. This is the very reason why God swears an oath upon Himself (Genesis 22:16; Hebrews 6:13).

ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE

On several occasions Scripture speaks of God changing His mind and will, often utilising language of emotions such as God regretting (Genesis 6:6), being moved to pity (Judges 2:18), grieving (I Samuel 15:35), and relenting from a course of action (Exodus 32:14; II Samuel 24:16; Jonah 3:10). Such texts openly speak of change in God's disposition, and His divine will and seems to suggest that God is mutable and capable of change. For many modern theologians this disproves the traditional understanding of immutability.

While Scripture does employ such language, the question arises if it is to be taken literally or as a metaphorical literary device? God is often spoken about in the Bible as having a face (Leviticus 20:6; Numbers 6:25), eyes (Psalm 34:15), hands (Exodus 7:5; Psalm 89:10), etc. However God is Spirit and does not consist of

these corporeal elements. It is us, humans who possess such fleshly attributes. Such attribution of human qualities to describe God is analogical language and called anthropomorphism. The Bible by using anthropomorphisms strives to convey the reality of a transcendental being so that its readers might better comprehend the incomprehensible. Language that denotes God changing is merely anthropomorphic. This is seen in I Samuel 15, where God in verse 11 says that he regrets making Saul King. However in verse 29, God says, that "the glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret." The only resolution of this apparent contradiction is that the former is an anthropomorphic use of language and that God truly is beyond any change.

THEOLOGICAL AFFIRMATIONS OF IMMUTABILITY

The doctrine of divine immutability is not only at the core of all theology and impacts numerous doctrines, but itself is the logical conclusion of other doctrines.

The Aseity of God: Herman Bavinck comments that "a natural implication of God's aseity is his immutability." (*Reformed Dogmatics*, 153.) Divine aseity refers to God's independence whereby he is a self-sufficient, self-existing divine. In other words, "all that God is, he is of himself." Thus God is not dependent nor can be acted upon by any other thing or being. The independence of God will be tarnished if he is changed, for that would mean that God ceases to be independent and open to change by externalities.

The Perfection of God: God is the ultimate perfection by virtue of His being and that entails



that He be also immutable. A change in God's being implies that God is able to progress to a higher stage of improvement or depreciate to a lower stage. Either way, the change would completely reduce His absolute perfection and destroy the very being of God. The eminent medieval theologian, Thomas Aquinas made this argument famous saying God was *actus purus* (pure act) and thus devoid of any potentialities. Simply put this means that "God has no potential that is not already fully realised. God cannot be more infinite, loving or holy tomorrow than today." (Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 235.) Thus unlike us, God is free from all growth and decay, all sense of improvements and deteriorations, and any and all change.

THE CENTRALITY OF IMMUTABILITY

The immutability of God is a core doctrine and to deny it would be to deny numerous doctrines. Some of these are that the omniscience of God will be denied, for a God who is infinite in His knowledge cannot progress to a further state of knowledge through further learning, or new experiences or a lesser state of knowledge by forgetfulness. Likewise it would mean we would also deny eternity since change implies time and if God was susceptible to change then He would be within the constraints of time. Denial of immutability would also put God's character of being loving, faithful, true, etc. under question as these qualities can change either in quality or in their very essence. This would further cast doubt on the veracity of God's word, His covenants and all His promises. In other words, if immutability is denied, our very Christian faith would stand upon sinking sand for foundation and will fail.

THE DOCTRINE OF IMMUTABILITY AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Since God is ever unchanging, we know that God is true and dependable. We know that His Word and promises will endure, and that He may be relied upon wholly in all circumstances. We know that His covenant will stand, and sooner will heaven and earth pass away before God's Word fails (Matthew 24:35).

Divine immutability also assures us of our salvation and, along with Paul, we may confess, "for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me (II Timothy 1:12)." God's love for His people binds Himself eternally to them such that there is no sin or trial great enough to separate one from God's love (Romans 8:35-39). The surety that God's love towards His elect will never vary and that He will be forever faithful despite our unfaithfulness (II Timothy 2:13) is the ground of the assurance of our salvation and offers true freedom from fear of rejection and condemnation.

Finally in this world of constant change, where trials, temptations, and evil assails the children of God, there is a rock which is never changing to which we may hold firm. There is an eternal and unchanging hope in this fleeting world, that the immutable God of eternity will Himself be our God. The Anglican Priest and Hymnodist, Henry Lyte in his famous hymn "Abide with Me" wrote:

*Change and decay in all around I see –
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.*

May the unchanging God of Israel, abide with us.





TIME TO LEARN

The Westminster Shorter Catechism

Kelley Bath Prebhakar

Q19

What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?

A

All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

Genesis 3:8,24; John 3:36; Galatians 3:10; Genesis 3:16-19; Ezekiel 18:4; Matthew 25:41,46

This question has some big words, but this is what it asks us: When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden and fell into sin, just how bad did everything become for them and for all of us? The answer to this question tells us three ways that things became very bad for us after we fell into sin with Adam and Eve.

The first reason it is bad is that when Adam and Eve sinned we “lost communion with God.” Just think about this: Before Adam and Eve sinned, they were enjoying a perfect friendship with God. They actually walked and talked with Him! Imagine the person you are the most happy to spend time with. Now multiply that happiness by a million! This is how wonderful it was that Adam and Eve were friends of God! He loved them so much, and they loved Him. But, when Adam and Eve turned away from God and disobeyed Him, they became scared to see God! When they heard God coming, they ran away from Him instead of running to Him like they would have before. Also, because of their sin, God had to send them out of the garden they shared with Him. They lost this wonderful relationship they had enjoyed with God. Because of this, every man and woman is born separated from friendship with God.

The second reason this is bad is that we are now under God’s “wrath and curse.” This means that God is very angry at us. Often when we get angry it is because of our sin, maybe because we didn’t get our way about something. But for God to be angry at us for our sin is actually the right thing for Him to do. He is so perfect, and we turned away from Him and went our own way instead. He made us and loved us, and we said, “No! I’m going to do what I want, not what you say is good for me!” Because of this, we are not only separated from God, but we are under a curse where we are God’s enemies.

The third reason this is bad is that our sin has brought some terrible consequences. A consequence is something bad that happens because of something wrong we have done. One consequence is that our life on earth will have many sad parts to it. Before sin, everything was good. Now, we see bad things happening around us, but we also see sin inside our own heart. We get into arguments with our siblings, our friends move away, we get angry and jealous of people we are close to. The second consequence is that every person will die one day. It is hard to know that every person we love will die one day, that even we will die one day. This is also because of our sin. The last consequence is that



TIME TO LEARN

The Westminster Shorter Catechism
Kelley Beth Prebhakar



because of our sin, we actually deserve to be punished by God forever in a place called Hell. This is what should happen to all of us because we turned away from a God who is so good, who loves us so much.

As we can see, things are really bad! This is very hard for us to think about! But, we have to hear the bad news so that we can really love the good news! As we will see next time, God has always had a plan. He has made a way to bring us back to him through taking the punishment we deserve. A way for us to be friends with him again. A way for us to no longer be his enemies but his children! A way for us to have joy even in this hard life, to know that when we die we will be with Jesus, and to know we will be with him always in a place even better than the garden of Eden! Come back next time to hear more about this amazing news

Complete and memorise this verse :-

"So he _____ out the _____; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming _____ which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of _____." Genesis 3:34

"and he that believeth not the _____-shall not see _____; but the wrath of _____ abideth on him." John 3:36b

"the _____ that sinneth, it shall _____." Ezekiel 18:4b



Seven Marks of a Growing Christian

George Skariah

Every true Christian should have a deep desire to grow in his spiritual life that he would be closer to his Lord every day. In fact, God has created us that we may experience fellowship with God. It is sin that keeps us away from experiencing the closeness with God. We thank God for Jesus Christ that through Him we are able to live a life acceptable to God. However, one needs to understand that we still need to battle with the sin problem. As long as we live in the sinful flesh, we will never be able to be as close to God as we ought to be or desire to be. The reason for this is the influence of the sinful flesh. In other words, our sin remains as a barrier to the full and complete fellowship with God, which will only be realized once we reach the presence of God in glory. This is the reason Paul says in Philippians 3:12-14, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

This leads us to the understanding that every Christian should do his utmost to battle sin and live a holy life, that is, in the words of Paul, pressing toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God. Living a holy life is a Christian calling—a Christian should progress in sanctification. Christians are called to be saints. Paul addresses the believers in Rome, “To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints” (Romans 1:7). Similarly, to the Corinthians, he says, “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified

in Christ Jesus, called to be saints” (1 Corinthians 1:2).

How do we then keep ourselves holy unto God and press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God? In this article, we want to discuss seven marks or characteristics of healthy Christian living:

A REPENTANT HEART

Firstly, a growing Christian should have a repentant heart. What is true repentance? The

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A 87 explains, “Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.” For an unbeliever, when he comes to believe in Christ, repentance is his first experience. Thereafter, once he has committed his life unto the obedience of Christ, he needs to repent for his sins daily as he is constantly under the influence of sin. It is through constant repentance that Christians maintain a strong relationship with God. A true Christian should daily cry out unto God for mercy and forgiveness. His repentance should not be mechanical, meaning, doing it without any seriousness of sin, or without a sincere commitment to turn away from sin. Genuine repentance comes out of godly sorrow as the Apostle Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 7:9-10, “Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”

DELIGHTING IN GOD’S WORD

Secondly, a growing Christian needs to regularly read, study, understand, and apply God’s Word into his life. God’s Word is the divine cure for a sin-affected and an emotionally broken heart. The sinful flesh, with all its lustful temptations, needs to be always under check by the transforming power of God’s Word. This can only happen when his mind is daily renewed and hearts are refreshed

by the systematic handling of the Word of God. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 12:2, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” God’s Word is the means by which our minds are renewed as we rightly understand the Word, and our hearts transformed as we rightly apply the Word.

The Bible is the voice of God for us today and it is fully sufficient to make a Christian transformed to the image of Christ. Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:14-17, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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, throughly furnished unto all good works.” The “Holy Scriptures” in verse 15 refers to the Old Testament Scriptures, which Timothy was taught by his mother and grandmother (1:5). According to Paul, the Scriptures are not only profitable for salvation (verse 15), but also for sanctification and Christian growth as well. What Christians need for faith, doctrine, and practice are the Word of God. When God’s Word renews our minds and transforms our hearts, we are perfect or mature, and we are equipped for Christian service. Therefore, systematic study of God’s Word is paramount in the life of a Christian, at a Christian home, and in the church. Children need to be taught of the Word when they are as early as two years of age. Teens and youth need



to be guided in the Word of God. God-honoring worship, Bible studies, and Christian service should be the priorities of Christian homes and churches. Parents should take initiative for a Bible reading plan at home, family worship, attending Bible studies, and other opportunities the church provides that the family members can use to grow in the Word and be closer to God.

PRAYERFUL DEPENDENCE ON GOD

The third thing required for a growing Christian is his prayer life. 2 Chronicles 7:14 reminds a Christian the necessity of prayer, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” Prayer is the breath of every Christian and is indispensable for keeping Christians close to the Lord, for receiving the Lord’s mercy and forgiveness every day. Our prayerful dependence on God grants unto us enormous peace that helps us not to be unnecessarily alarmed by the demands of this world and our sinful flesh. The Apostle Paul reminds the Philippian Christians, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

Prayer enables a child of God to be closer to Him. In other words, prayer is the expression of our relationship with God. By prayer we humbly communicate, worship, and sincerely seek God’s face and favor, knowing that He

hears us, and will respond, though not always in a manner we desire. Prayer strengthens our bond with God. Prayer keeps us humble before God as we acknowledge that we are ever dependent on Him. Prayer reminds us that we are not in control of our situations, but it is God who is in control.

Prayer gives us victory over the devil’s ploys. The Lord says to His disciples in Gethsemane, “watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matthew 26:41). Every Christian is in a battle with the devil as Ephesians 6:12 says that through prayer we can be strong in the battle against the devil. When Paul explains the importance of Christians, in their spiritual war against Satan, wearing the spiritual armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-17), he concludes in verse 18, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” Grammatically, there is a link between “stand” in verse 14 and “praying” in verse 18. This means without prayer God’s armor is inadequate to achieve victory. Prayer is so indispensable in the daily battle a Christian wages against the devil that through prayer he is strengthened to overcome his archenemy (Isaiah 40:28-31).

RELYING ON THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Fourthly, relying on the blessed providence of God is the confidence of a mature Christian. A true Christian is a confident Christian, knowing that God is in charge of his life.

God’s children should understand one important truth, that is, nothing happens in their lives by chance (some call it luck or fate), but everything by the sovereign and



providential hand of God. Charles Hodge, a noted Reformed theologian, writes, “God’s works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions” (*Systematic Theology*, 1:575). The Word of God explicitly teaches this doctrine and says, “By him all things consist” (Colossians 1:17); “He upholdeth all things by the word of his power” (Hebrews 1:3); and “In him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). God is the Supreme Being who is in absolute control of our lives. He does all things for our own good, even some seemingly unpleasant things such as sickness, suffering, things not happening according to our plans, etc. This was Apostle Paul’s confidence when he wrote to the Roman Christians, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

FELLOWSHIPING WITH SAINTS

The fifth important mark of a growing Christian is Christian fellowship. Christians are not to be alone in their own islands, but to be with fellow brethren, worshiping God and serving Him together. This reminds us of the importance of the Lord’s Day (Sabbath Day) worship, which Christians cannot neglect. In Hebrews 10:24–25, the author of Hebrews says, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” In this passage, Christians are strongly exhorted by the Apostle to consider one another to stir up to love and to good works (verse 24). This

happens when they gather together as an assembly (verse 25). In verse 25 two Greek participles are used, one in the negative (“not forsaking the assembling”), and the other in the positive (“but exhorting one another”). The important reason for Christians to assemble together is for the reciprocal encouragement, strengthening, and stirring up that they can gain from one another (Colossians 3:12–17). One commentator explains, “The assembling of the believers is often an outward indication of the inner condition. If a man’s faith will not get him to church, it is doubtful if it will get him to heaven. Further, the importance of assembling is both subjective and objective. It benefits the individual with spiritual stability and growth. It benefits objectively by its positive effect on others. . . . The purpose for the assembling is for participation in worship and fellowship and with one another. Attendance is necessary.”

For this, Christians need to be members of a God-honoring, Bible-believing, and established church. Church is the fellowship of the “called out ones.” It is in the church that Christians gather together for worship; it is in the church where the sacraments are administered; it is in the church that Christians exercise their spiritual gifts for the edification of the body of Christ; and it is in the church that true Christian fellowship takes place. It is in the church that we sing together, pray together and pray for one another, study God’s Word together, serve together and help each other, encourage one another, forgive each other, and care for one another. This is true Christian fellowship. This was the example of the early church in the Book of Acts, “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . . And they,

continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:42-47).

GIVING JOYFULLY

Sixthly, it is the responsibility of a faithful Christian to give joyfully for the ministry of the church as the church ministry depends on Christians’ giving. A Christian, who is matured in his relationship with His Lord, will give to the Lord through tithes and offerings with a joyful heart. Christians should give unto the Lord because they owe all things to Him—He is the Creator; He is the Lord of all things (Psalm 24:1). He created us in His own image and gave us this beautiful life. Even in our sinfulness, His love found us and has given us eternal life, having forgiven our sins. All that we possess today, whether spiritual or physical, are by the mercies of the Lord. We have received all the blessings freely, and therefore we should freely give (Matthew 10:8; 1 Timothy 6:6-8). Our giving should not be done grudgingly or reluctantly, but cheerfully as the Apostle Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians (2 Corinthians 9:6-9).

COMMITTED TO CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Finally, a mature Christian is a serving Christian. When he serves God, he is actually worshipping the Lord. In other words, true worship is service. Our bodies are for spiritual service or for spiritual worship as the Apostle Paul mentions in Romans 12:1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,

acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” The word “service” (*latreia* in Greek) is a term used for the function of priests in the temple. Christians need to consecrate their bodies (ie, their lives) as a living sacrifice to God that they would be committed to faithfully serving Him in a holy, acceptable manner. This is “reasonable” (*logikos* in Greek, means, “pertaining to reason, rational, spiritual”). Our service to God is legitimate because who we are and what we are today as Christians are by the mercies of God. This means our service is a respectful homage to God for all that He has done for our lives. This is true worship and true spirituality.

Every Christian in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is blessed with spiritual gifts, and these gifts are for the service in the church, not for his or her personal benefits (1 Corinthians 12). It is therefore our responsibility to identify our God-given gifts and use it in the church for the edification of the saints of God. Only then does our worship become meaningful and acceptable to God.

CONCLUSION

There is no short cut to heaven, and there is no short cut to be a faithful and victorious Christian. The Lord has prepared the path for us and we need to patiently and diligently walk therein. May we humble ourselves before God, and accept our own struggles and challenges to be faithful Christians, and be closer to the Lord for His will and ways for our lives! Let us press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!



Testimony and Witness of the Holy Spirit

Thomas Brooks

A well-grounded assurance sometimes springs from the testimony and witness of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit sometimes witnesses to a believer's spirit that he is born of God, that he is beloved of God, that he has union and communion with God, and that he shall reign forever with God. The Spirit Himself witnesses not only the gifts and graces of the Spirit, but the Spirit Himself witnesses together with our own spirit, that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16). Sometimes the saints (believers) have these two witnesses: (our spirit and the Holy Spirit) joining their testimonies together to confirm and establish them in these blessed and glorious truths, that they are the sons of God and heirs of glory; and this is their honour as well as their comfort. 1 Corinthians 2:12 says, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" that is, that we may know our election, vocation (calling as Christians), justification, sanctification, and glorification. A man may receive many things that are freely given of God, and yet not know them till the Spirit comes and makes them known to the soul.

Question: How shall we know the whispering of the Holy Spirit from the hissing of the old serpent (that is, the devil)? How shall we know the report, the witness, and testimony of the Spirit of Christ, from that report, witness, and testimony that the old serpent deludes and deceives many by, in these days wherein he mostly appears in his angelical robes?

Answer: You may know the whispering of the Spirit from the hissing of the old serpent, and so on, by these following things, which I desire that you would seriously consider, as you tender the peace and settlement, the satisfaction, consolation, and salvation of your own souls.

First, the Spirit of Christ does not witness by any outward voice, as God did from heaven of Christ (Matthew 2:17); nor by an angel, as to the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:30-34); but by an inward, secret, glorious, and unspeakable way he bids believers be of good cheer, their sins are forgiven them, as Christ said to the palsied man in the Gospel (Matthew 9:2). And this truth is to be solemnly minded against poor deceived and deluded souls in these days, that would make the world believe that they have had such and such glorious things made known by an outward, audible voice from heaven. It is much to be feared that they never found the inward, the sweet, the secret, the

powerful testimony and report of the Spirit of Christ, that boast, and brag, and rest so much upon an outward testimony. In 1 Kings 19:11-13, you read of a great strong wind that rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks: but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind there was an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire there was a still small voice, and the Lord spoke to Elijah in that still small voice. Ah, Christians! the Spirit of the Lord makes not a noise, but he comes in a still small voice, as I may say, and makes a soft and secret report to the soul, that it is beloved, that it is pardoned, and that it shall be forever glorified.

Secondly, the testimony and witness of the Spirit of Christ is only gained and enjoyed in holy and heavenly ways. The Spirit of the Lord is a Holy Spirit, and He cannot, and he will not make any report of the love of the Father to the soul other than a way of holiness. Verily, all those glorious reports that many boast they have met with in sinful ways, in wretched and ungodly ways, are from the hissing of the old serpent, and not from the whisperings of the Spirit of grace. I think it is little less than blasphemy for any to affirm, that the blessed Spirit of Christ does make reports of the love and favour of God to persons walking in ways of wickedness and baseness.

Thirdly, the testimony and witness of the Spirit of Christ, is a clear, a full, a satisfying testimony and witness (John 14:17; 1 John 3:24). The soul sits down under the home-reports of the Spirit, and says, "Lord, it is enough," the soul being full, sits down and sweetly sings it out: "My beloved is mine, and I am his. I am my well-

beloved's, and his desire is towards me" (Song of Solomon 2:16, 7:10). "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot" (Psalm 16:5). "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psalm 73:25). "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:8). "Make haste, my beloved" (Song of Solomon 8:14). Such power, majesty, and glory, attends the glorious testimony of the Spirit of Christ, as it scatters all clouds, as it resolves all doubts, as it answers all objections, as it silences the wrangling soul, and so on. If the testimony of the Spirit of Christ were not a full, satisfying testimony, it could never fill the soul with such joy as is 'unspeakable and full of glory,' and with 'such peace that passes understanding;' if the testimony were not satisfactory, the soul would still be under fears and doubts, the heart would still be wrangling and quarrelling like, "I may perish, and I may be undone, I may have the door of mercy shut against me." If you bring news to a condemned person that the king hath pardoned him, and that he will receive him to favour, and confer such and such dignity upon him, yet this does not quiet him nor satisfy him, till he knows it is the king's act, till he is satisfied in that, he cannot say it is enough, he cannot be cheerful, and he cannot be delightful. But when he is satisfied that it is the king's act, that the king has certainly done this and that too for him, then he is satisfied, and then sighing and mourning flies away, and then he rejoices with joy unspeakable. Likewise, it is with a believing soul under the testimony and witness of the spirit of Christ.

Fourthly, though the Spirit be a witnessing Spirit, yet He does not always witness to

believers their adoption, their interest in Christ, and other benefits. There is a mighty difference between the working of the Spirit and the witness of the Spirit. There are oftentimes many glorious and efficacious works of the Spirit, as faith, love, repentance, holiness, etc., where there is not the witness of the Spirit. David at that very time had the Spirit, and many sweet workings of the Spirit in him and upon him, when he had by sin lost the witness and testimony of the Spirit. Though the Spirit of the Lord be a witnessing and a sealing Spirit, yet He does not always witness and seal up the love and favour of the Father to believers' souls, as you may see by the scriptures, and as the experience of many precious Christians can abundantly evidence. All believers do not see alike need of this testimony, they do not all alike prize this testimony, they do not all alike observe it and improve it; and therefore, it is no wonder if the Spirit be a witnessing Spirit to some and not to others. You do but gratify Satan and wrong your own souls, when you argue that certainly you have not the Spirit, because he is not a witnessing and a sealing Spirit to your souls. Though it be the office of the Spirit to witness, yet it is not his office always to witness to believers their happiness and blessedness. The Spirit may act one way and in one room of the soul, when He does not act in another. Sometimes the Spirit works upon the understanding, sometimes upon the will, sometimes upon the affections, sometimes upon faith, sometimes upon fear, sometimes upon love, sometimes upon humility, and so on. Our hearts are the Spirit's harps. If a man should always touch one string in an instrument, he should never play various tunes, he should never make pleasant music; no more

would the Spirit, if He should be always at doing one thing in the soul. Therefore, he acts variously. Sometimes he will show himself a quickening Spirit, sometimes an enlightening Spirit, sometimes a rejoicing Spirit, sometimes a sealing Spirit, and always a supporting Spirit, and so on.

Fifthly, the testimony and witness of the Spirit is a sure testimony, a sure witness. The Spirit is truth itself; He is the great searcher of the deep things of God. The Spirit of the Lord is the discoverer, the confuter, and destroyer of all false spirits. The Spirit is above all possibility of being deceived, He is omnipotent, He is omniscient, He is omnipresent, He is one of the cabinet-council of heaven; He lies and lives in the bosom of the Father, He can call them all by name upon whom the Father hath set his heart, and therefore His testimony must needs be true. It is a surer testimony than if a man should hear a voice from heaven pronouncing him to be happy and blessed. You may safely and securely lay the weight of your souls upon this testimony; it never has and it never will deceive any who has leaned upon it. This testimony will be a rock that will bear up a soul, when other false testimonies will be but 'a reed of Egypt,' that will deceive the soul, that will undo the soul; as I am afraid many in this deluding age have found by sad experience.

Sixthly, the testimony of God's Spirit is always accompanied with the testimony of our own. These may be distinguished, but they can never be separated. When the Spirit of God gives witness for a man, his own spirit does not give witness against him. As face answers to face, so does the witness of a believer's spirit answer to the witness of the Spirit of Christ. Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit witnesseth together with our

spirits that we are the sons of God.” Now, if our own consciences do not testify first, that we are sons and heirs, the Spirit doth not testify; for the Spirit bears witness together with our spirits. St John is very express, “But if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. But if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things” (1 John 3:21, 20). And again in 1 John 5: 8-12, “There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one.” The Spirit witnesses eminently and efficiently, but water and blood materially, and our spirits and reason instrumentally. By the Spirit we may understand the Holy Ghost, by whose strength we lay hold on Christ and all his benefits. By water we may understand our regeneration, our sanctification; and by blood we may understand the blood and righteousness of Christ, that is imputed and applied by faith to us. “And these three agree in one,” that is, they do all three of one accord testify the same thing.

Seventhly, the witness of the Spirit is ever according to the Word. There is a sweet harmony between the inward and the outward testimony, between the Spirit of God and the Word of God. The Scriptures were all written by the Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21); and therefore the Spirit cannot contradict Himself. He cannot give any testimony contrary to the testimony of the word. It is blasphemy to make the testimony of the Spirit to contradict the testimony of the word. The Spirit has revealed his whole mind in the word, and he will not give a contrary testimony to what he has given in the Word. The Word says, “They that are born again, that are new creatures, that believe and repent, shall be saved. But you are born again, you are a new creature, you believe and repent; therefore you

shalt be saved.” The Spirit never sets loose where the Word binds, the Spirit never justifies where the Word condemns, the Spirit never approves where the Word disapproves, the Spirit never blesses where the Word curses. In the Old Testament all revelations were to be examined by the Word (Deuteronomy 13:1-4). “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light (or no morning) in them” (Isaiah 8:20). John 16:13 says, “when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.” Here the Holy Ghost is brought in as some messenger or ambassador who only relates things faithfully according to that he has in charge. Such as look and lean upon the hissing of the old serpent, may have a testimony that they are happy, against the testimony of the word; but wherever the Spirit of Christ gives in his testimony, it is still according to the Word. There is article for article, clause for clause, covenant for covenant, Word for Word; so does the testimony of the Spirit exactly answer to the testimony of the word.

Eighthly, it is a holy witness, a holy testimony. It is formally holy, it is originally holy, it is effectually holy. Nothing makes the heart more in the love, study, practice, and growth of holiness, than the glorious testimony of the Holy Spirit; and the clearer and fuller the testimony is, the more holy and gracious it will make the soul. Nothing puts such golden engagements upon the soul to holiness, as the Spirit sealing a man up to the day of redemption, as the Spirit speaking and sealing peace, love, and pardon to the soul. Nothing makes a man more careful to please Christ, more



fearful to offend Christ, more studious to exalt Christ, and more circumspect to walk with Christ, than this testimony of the Spirit of Christ. Verily, that is not the blessed whispering of Christ's Spirit, but the hissing of the old serpent, that makes men bold with sin, that makes men daily with sin, that makes man a servant to sin, that breeds a contempt of ordinances, a neglect of holy duties, a carelessness in walking with God. And from those hissings of the old serpent, O Lord, deliver my soul, and the souls of all your servants who put their trust in you.

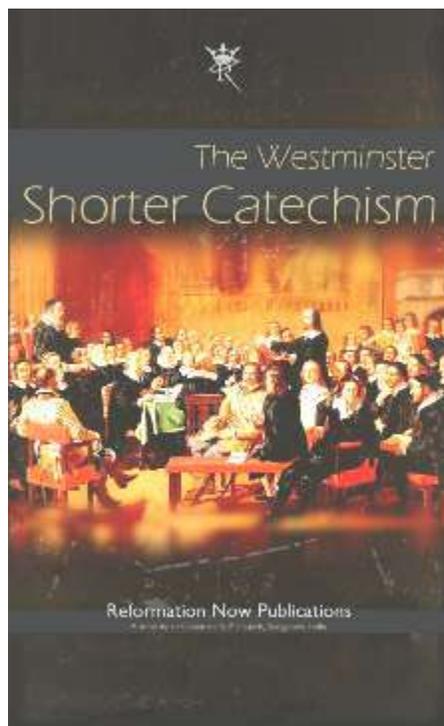
Ninthly and lastly, assurance is a jewel, a pearl of that price, that God only bestows upon renewed hearts. The Holy Spirit never sets his seal upon any, but upon those that Christ hath first printed his image upon. God gives to none the white stone (Revelation 2:17), but to those from whom he hath taken the heart of stone (compare Ezekiel 36:25-27). Christ never tells a man that his name is written in the book of life, till he hath breathed into him spiritual life (Luke 10:20). Christ never says, Son, be of good cheer, thy sin is pardoned, till he hath first said, be thou healed, be thou cleansed (Luke 5:18-20). Christ never gives a man a new name, that is better than the names of sons and daughters, till he hath made them new creatures (Isaiah 56:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17). Of slaves Christ first makes us sons, before we cry Abba, Father (Romans 8:15). Of enemies, he first makes us friends, before he will make us of his court or counsel (Ephesians 2:13-20). Christ will never hang a pearl in a swine's snout, nor put new wine into old bottles, nor his royal robes upon a leprous back, nor his golden chain about a dead man's neck, nor his glistening crown upon a traitor's head. The Spirit never sets his seal upon any, but upon

those that Christ hath first set as a seal upon his heart (Ephesians 1:13). The Spirit only bears witness to such as hate sin as Christ hates it, and that love righteousness as Christ loves it, that hate sin more than hell, and that love truth more than life. A soul sealed by the Spirit will pull out right eyes, and cut off right hands, for Christ such souls will part with a Benjamin, and offer up an Isaac, for Christ. And this is to be seriously minded against those deceived and deluded souls, that remain yet in their blood, and that wallow in their sins, and yet boast and brag of the seal and of the witness and testimony of the Spirit.

THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Now available in English

Get your free copy. Address is available on inside of magazine's back cover.



Who Do You Think Jesus Is?

“Who do you think Jesus is?” This is a very pertinent question, every man should answer. How a person answers this question would determine eternity for that person, that means, whether he possess eternal life or not. The Lord Jesus Christ, in Matthew 16, while preparing His disciples for the reality of His crucifixion, asked them, “But whom say ye that I am?”

The people in general were very much in confusion about Jesus. We read in John 10:19-21, “There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?” Many among the people thought that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead. Some even thought that He was Elijah. Some others identified Jesus with Jeremiah.

But then, Jesus wanted to hear directly from the mouth of His disciples about their understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ, hence this question. In the original construction, enormous stress is placed on “but . . . ye.” This personal pronoun, the second person plural, stands at the beginning of the question. And then, it is included as an element in the verb as well. This emphasis communicates that salvation is a personal matter. People around us might have their own personal opinion about Jesus Christ. But what matters to us personally is our own understanding of His person and work.

For this question, Peter had an incredible answer—“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” For Peter, “the Christ” means the long awaited Anointed One of Israel, the One who as Mediator was set apart by the Father and anointed with the Holy Spirit, to be the Prophet, Priest, and King of His people. He is also “the Son of the Living God” which means Jesus is, was, and always will be the Son of the living God, the true God Himself.

It is important to understand that a right confession of who Jesus is is basic to one’s salvation. The Apostle Paul records in Romans 10:9-10, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Jesus Christ is the God’s anointed Savior of the world. Without Him, there is no Savior and there is no salvation. The LORD declares in Isaiah 43:11, “I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.” Through His obedient life on the earth and His final sacrificial death on the Cross and resurrection from the grave, He won victory for a sinner. He delivered us from the slavery of sin and gave eternal life. We need to personally experience Him in our lives as our personal Lord and Savior by coming to Him, acknowledging our sin and needing His forgiveness. We need to repent of our sins and trust in His mercy and grace. May the Lord help us!

COVENANT B-P CHURCH

A Reformed, Presbyterian, Church in Bangalore

Covenant BPC exists "For the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:9). We stand for the faithful preaching and teaching of God's Word through "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15) and to establish a true witness for the Gospel of Jesus Christ in India, in the spirit of the 16th century Protestant Reformation movement.

OUR FOUR-FOLD PURPOSE

1. TO PROCLAIM THE SALVATION OF THE LORD THROUGH FAITHFUL PREACHING AND TEACHING OF GOD'S HOLY WORD (ISAIAH 61:1-2; 2 TIMOTHY 4:2)
2. TO PROMOTE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP AND BUILD-UP A COVENANT COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS WHO WOULD DEDICATE THEIR HEARTS UNTO THE LORD TO FEAR HIM AND FOLLOW HIM (DEUTERONOMY 5:29)
3. TO PROTECT THE MOST HOLY FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS (JUDE 3)
4. TO PROVIDE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL CARE TO THE PEOPLE AROUND (MATTHEW 9:35)

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

SUNDAY

08:30 AM KANNADA WORSHIP SERVICE

09:30 AM SUNDAY CLASS FOR ALL

10:30 AM ENGLISH WORSHIP SERVICE

WEDNESDAY

06:30 PM MID-WEEK PRAYER SERVICE

FRIDAY

08:00 PM NEIGHBOURHOOD BIBLE STUDY

SATURDAY

06:00 PM KANNADA COTTAGE MEETING 1st Sat

04:00 PM ENGLISH BIBLE STUDY 2nd Sat

04:00 PM PASTORAL VISITATION 3rd Sat

04:00 PM ENGLISH COTTAGE MEETING 4th Sat



101-102 Daady's Nest, Doddakannahalli, Sarjapur Main Road, Bangalore - 560035, India

Tel: +91 98 4579 4495 / +91 95 9073 7352 | Web: www.covenantbpci.com | Email: icrbangalore@gmail.com

INDIA REFORMED BIBLICAL SEMINARY



IRBS

STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL
PHILIPPIANS 1:27

Today there is a great urgency to prepare a generation to preserve the purity of the gospel and to practice and proclaim it faithfully. Hence, we, the contributors and editors of *Reformation Now*, under the umbrella of Covenant B-P Church, Bangalore, launch the new initiative through IRBS:

- *To proclaim and defend the old time gospel of the Prophets, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of His Apostles (Romans 1:1-5, 14-17; Galatians 3:6-16; Hebrews 1:1-2).*
- *To expose the false gospels being propagated today (Galatians 1:6-9; Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:20-22; Jeremiah 23:16, 25-32; Matthew 7:15-23; 24:4-5, 24; 2 Peter 2:1-3).*
- *To prepare a generation to rightly divide the word of truth, and to declare the whole counsel of God (2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 20:27; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).*
- *To identify the faithful men, who are the called of God, to faithfully pass on the torch of God (2 Timothy 1:12-14; 2:1-4; Galatians 2:5).*
- *To take the pure gospel far and wide to establish biblically sound Christian churches and gospel ministries (2 Timothy 4:1-5; Matthew 28:18-20).*

For more details on the courses offered, refer to page 24.

IRBS | Bangalore

