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**Excerpts of the Opening Message by Rev Dr Brad Gsell
International Council of Christian Churches 20th World Congress
January 22, 2020, Puerto Montt, Chile**

Beloved Brethren, it is a great joy to my heart to be here in united fellowship with all of you, from every corner of this globe, from every inhabited continent — Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and North and South America — as we begin this 20th World Congress of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC). The theme of this Congress is taken from the Apostle John's First Epistle, which has as its overarching theme that **"God is love."**

And thus, we as believers in the 21st century can join in saying with the Apostle John, with all confidence and gratitude in our hearts, as recorded in 1 John 4:16: *"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love."*

In 1 John 4:10, the theme verse chosen for this Congress, we read, and I will begin with verse 9: *"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*

John tells us, "If you want to know what love is, here it is! I am about to tell you! God, the Father determined, from all eternity, to send His only begotten Son, His beloved Son, into the world to die on the cross that we who were dead in trespasses and sins, might have everlasting life and "live through Him"!



This was not just some mere sentiment on the part of God. As we read in verse 9, God **"MANIFESTED"** His love toward us." God's love was so genuine, so overwhelming, so sincere, that He **GAVE**, He **SACRIFICED**, that which was most precious and dear to Him — His only begotten Son.

Often when we read John 3:16, probably the most well known verse in all of the Bible, we think of the end of the verse — about receiving everlasting life. How very precious that is to us. However, we must not forget that "God so loved the world, that **HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON...."**

This is the very definition of love — God sacrificing that which was of most value, of highest cost, of greatest love, so that sinners could drink of the water of life freely and be saved from eternal damnation.

Why Was God "Pleased"

Some have questioned, if this was supposed to be such a great sacrifice of God, why Isaiah 53:10 tells us: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

Make no mistake about it. God took no delight in the mere fact that His Son was going to suffer and die. This was His Beloved Son! We would have a hard time reconciling Psalm 145:17 with a God who took delight in torture and death for its own sake. This verse tells us: "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."

God's delight was in the fact that His Son was the only one who could pay the penalty for sin. The only one

who could “satisfy divine justice,” and the only one who could “reconcile us” to Himself. The end of Isaiah 53:10 says: “and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.” His “pleasure” was the salvation of sinners, and this could only be brought about (to “prosper,” if you will), by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

If God Loved Us, Why Was Christ’s Sacrifice Necessary?

Some have also asked why Christ’s sacrifice was even necessary if God already loved us. In our day, many have a very shallow view of God, and thus they do not understand the nature of His love and salvation. In Isaiah 45:21, God Himself tells us: “*there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour.*” Fully interwoven with God’s love for sinners is His holiness and justice.

The Prophet Habakkuk, in the first chapter of his book, verse 13 instructs that this God, who cannot look upon iniquity, declares His wrath on all unrighteousness.

God’s Wrath

The idea of a God of Wrath is foreign to the thinking of many today. Some are angered at the very thought. They excuse all kinds of sin by saying such things as: “The God I believe in is a God of Love.” Their statement is very true, but their understanding of it is tragically flawed.

Sadly, many pulpits today likewise speak profusely of God’s love, yet fail to present the wrath of this just God of perfect righteousness.

Brethren, the Biblical doctrine of hell, the place of fire, and burning, weeping and gnashing of teeth, where there is no rest, where there is outer darkness and separation forever from this holy God, is consistently found throughout the entire Bible.



Brethren, preach the “**whole counsel of God**”! Do not shy away from teaching that which has such a prominent place in God’s Word. In the 1700s, one of the most famous sermons of all time was preached by the Rev. Jonathan Edwards in New England, in the United States. It was entitled: “*Sinners, in the Hands of an Angry God,*” taken from Hebrews 10:31: “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*” By the end of the sermon, the people were so convicted of their sins that they were clinging to the pillars in the church building and many were gloriously saved.

However, by the time the ICC was formed in 1948, many in the World Council of Churches no longer believed the Bible and denied its teaching as it related to God’s wrath and Christ’s atonement.

Just one example, of many, was a leader in the apostate World Council of Churches. Bishop Oxnam wrote a book entitled *Preaching in a Revolutionary Age*. In it, he wrote that we should have “justifiable repugnance” at the teaching of God’s wrath and punishment in the Bible, and he countenanced a reference to the God of the Bible as a “dirty bully.” Oxnam continued: “We have long since rejected a conception of reconciliation associated historically with the idea of a Deity that is loathsome. God, for us, cannot be thought of as an angry, awful avenging Being who because of Adam’s sins must have His Shylockian pound of flesh,” a reference to Shakespeare. This was an attack at the very heart of the Gospel.

The World Council of Churches today has gone much further than even these men, having supplanted the true gospel of Jesus Christ with a false gospel of “social justice.” The current General Secretary of the WCC, a little over a year ago said that he found the common Biblical understanding of Revelation 21:5, “Behold I [Christ] make all things new” to be “archaic.” He says the WCC has “turn[ed] ... toward a more modern approach to the world ... and urging the churches to focus more on the enormous challenges of THIS world.”

To make himself perfectly clear, the WCC General Secretary further ridicules those who focus on what he calls “pie in the sky bye and bye,” and cautions his hearers not to be “too focused on the life after this one.”

When it comes to “turning,” we must ask what they have turned FROM. Proverbs 4:20-21, 27 says: “*My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.... Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.*” This is the

message of the ICCC!

In bold contrast to the WCC, the ICCC holds unswervingly to the true Biblical Gospel. The Apostle Paul, the greatest missionary of all time, tells us in Acts 26:18 This is the Gospel, the true Gospel, the Biblical Gospel, that the ICCC and its churches declare to the world!

We as Bible-believing Christians in the 21st century, must fully recognize that God's holiness, justice and wrath are at the very foundation of the true Biblical Gospel — the Good News — of Jesus Christ.

Man's Plight

In considering God's wrath, we will now turn to the state of man since the Fall under Adam.

The Prophet Isaiah, in r 59,:2, of his book tells us clearly where this places all mankind in relation to God: *"But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear."*

Sinful men always try to do things in their own power to win God's favor — if they recognize Him at all. But, Titus 3:5 tells us: **"NOT by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."**

The Prophet Jeremiah likewise tells us, in simple terms: **"You cannot save yourself"**! What here is called nitre was a substance found in the Middle East which, when mixed with other ingredients, made a great soap or cleansing agent.

When I was growing up, I remember my grandmother taking lard and other animal fats and mixing it with a perhaps somewhat similar substance called lye. She cooked it on the stove. When it cooled and hardened, she cut bars of soap out of it. That is what they used to wash their clothes, take their baths, and so forth. If you were unfortunate enough to get poison ivy, rubbing some lye soap on it would dry it right up!

Here Jeremiah says that you can take the best soap known to man, the best good works you can produce, and yet that stubborn stain of sin on your soul will not be diminished in the least in the eyes of a holy God.

God's Love Manifested

Yet, in the midst of all the gloom of man's fallen state, and having the just wrath and curse of God upon him, as we read in Romans 5:8: ".and, Romans 6:23: ."



This love of God was not some sort of permissiveness. It was not God winking at our sin and ignoring it. That is the message we often hear in churches today. No, Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:21: " that the righteousness of Christ did not simply commute our sentence, like when someone is shown clemency and let out of jail before completing his time. A person who is not made to serve his jail sentence is still just as guilty of their crime as before.

But when God justifies a lost sinner, He accepts and views him as righteous, only for the righteousness of Jesus Christ, [which the Bible tells us is] imputed to us, and received by faith alone. You are now a "new creature. Old things are passed away, and all things have become new."

Our God is a God of great mercy, longsuffering, compassion and redemption. Even in the Old Testament we see God's wonderful plan of redemption through Jesus Christ.

In our theme verse for this Congress, 1 John 4:10, the big word "propitiation" is used. It is very similar in the Spanish and Portuguese Bibles. Some newer translations have sought to use simpler words, such as "sacrifice," in its place. And indeed Christ's work on the cross was a sacrifice. But, in this verse, giving the very definition of love, we also see God's wrath. "Propitiation" carries with it the idea that Christ's atonement placated the wrath of a holy God and made us righteous in His sight.

Christ, as our great High Priest, paid the sacrifice for sin — once for all. (Hebrews 7:26-)

We have already referred to Psalm 145:17 twice before in this message: *"The Lord is righteous in all his*

ways, and holy in all his works

Immediately after verse 17, about God's holiness,

Vs 21 has it that Brethren, may we all give praise to God throughout our days that God loved us and gave His Son, our Great High Priest, to die on the cross as the spotless sacrifice for our sins, "once for all," that we might become the very "sons of God."

Our Responsibility to Love God and Our Brothers

For those who have been washed in the precious Blood of Christ, the Apostle John makes quite clear that our salvation is just the beginning of our walk with Christ. When we are redeemed by Christ we are no longer "dead in trespasses in sin." We are no longer at enmity with God. God's Spirit works within us as we become more and more like Christ and die more and more unto sin.

When I was a child, we sang a chorus which sums up rather simply what happens to the man or woman, boy or girl, who is regenerated by the Spirit of God. The chorus states: "Things I loved before have passed away, things I love far more have come to stay!" And John teaches us, in his first Epistle, many things which we will love, and things we will not love, if we are a true child of God. As new creatures, our hearts' desire will radically change to love that which is holy and which God loves.

1. John tells us that **we are to love God.** When God loved us, we were vile, guilty sinners who hated God. But now, we love God because He has taken us out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of His dear Son!
2. **We are to love and obey God and His Word:** "*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous*" (1Jn 5:3).
3. **We must love truth and hate error.** Those who give a shallow, single-faceted view of God's love need to read the beginning of 1 John 4. The Bible-believing Christian has a fervent and real love for the souls of men in every religion, but we know that God says there is a narrow way that leads to life eternal, and that there are "false prophets," who are on the broad road leading to destruction. We are to "speak the truth in love," yet we disobey God if we do not recognize "false prophets," and that we are to keenly discern that which is truth and that which is error.
4. **We are to be separate from the world.** Back in chapter 2, verse 15, teaches this is personal separation from that which is carnal and fleeting, unto a true love for the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word.
5. **We are to love one another.** Chapter 4:7,8 tells us to do so

Some have criticized the ICCC over the decades for believing too much in the Biblical doctrine of separation, but here in the book of 1 John we see that in displaying God's love there are times when we are to join and fellowship with other faithful believers, such as we are doing this week at this 20th World Congress. Yet, there are also times when we are to separate both ecclesiastically as well as in personal separation from the world.

I believe that the ICCC is one of the grandest displays of those who stand together for truth, love God, love God's Word, and love one another. We are here from every corner of this planet, yet we have one glorious Saviour who loved us and gave Himself for us. May we seek every day of our lives to be faithful to Him!

Brethren, let us feast upon the Word of God. May 1 John 1:7 be in our hearts: "." May we find a great outpouring of love for our Saviour and for one another, and may we be encouraged to go back to our homes ready to be good and faithful servants of Jesus Christ till our Lord calls us home or until He returns in the clouds for His saints, with power and great glory.



Rev Dr Brad Gsell
President, ICCC

Sharing by Yue Kam Weng
Sovereign Hope Fellowship: Biblical Precepts of Practical Evangelism
(22 Feb 2020)

Although it was during the Covid-19 health crisis, thank God for 11 brethren in Christ who came to the Sovereign Hope Fellowship meeting on 22 Feb 2020, which is held on every 4th Saturday of the month. We had temperature screening to ensure we were not running a fever before our meeting commenced. After the singing of hymns and opening prayer, I led the group in a brain-teaser game on “*How to move 6 frogs on a Single Wooden Bridge*”. In less than 15 minutes, sister Eileen found the solution! Thank God for wisdom and a blessed time of interaction!



Rev Peter Goh was the speaker on the topic of “Biblical Precepts of Practical Evangelism” from Matt 28:18-20 which says,

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.



We should always pray for the salvation of our loved ones and friends. We need to understand God’s expectations from the Bible to go out and preach the Gospel, to bring the good news to those who are not saved. This is an urgent mission. It is like a beggar telling another where to find food. It is also like having escaped from a blazing house and urgently seeking help and telling others to get out of danger. We need to be witnesses that Christ died on the cross to save us from our sins, to be compassionate and really care for souls, and to testify of our own salvation so that others will see and

know that we are Christians. Finally, the speaker encouraged us to go on to fulfil the Lord’s Great Commission.

After the meaningful group discussions, Pastor Jack summarized with the 4 Points on The ABCD of Sharing the Gospel:

- **A**cknowledge that you are a sinner who cannot meet God's holy standards
- **B**elieve in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour
- **C**onfess and repent of your sins
- **D**edicate and commit your life to worship and seek the Lord.



The meeting ended with a sumptuous refreshment fellowship and some joyful photo taking!
Glory be to the Lord!

With grateful thanks to God,
Kam Weng



(Note: The next SHF meeting will be held on Sat 28 Mar 2020, 3pm in church on the topic "**Coping with Stress -God's Way**" by Eld Jeffrey Cheong of Gospel Light BPC.)

Memory Verse

Joshua 10:25 And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.

Announcements

1. Rev Jack Sin speaks today on “Valuable Lessons for the Day of Battle” (Joshua 10:1-24)
2. Rev Jack Sin speaks next Sunday on “Caleb: The Gray-haired Conqueror” (Joshua 14:1-15)
3. The church website is sovereignhopebpc.org
4. Sunday messages are recorded on video format available on the church website.
5. Rev Philip Heng is the speaker of the church camp from 10-13 June and it will be held in Pulai Springs Resort. The camp forms are available from the front counter of the church and Dns Choo Siang and Yue Kay.



Pray for Michael as he adjusts to the new prosthetic leg.



Pray for the good health & strength of Eld Khoo Peng Kiat and Eld Joshua Lim who have ministered or visited SHBPC



The solemnisation of the wedding of Dylan and Alice Chan on 21 Feb 2020 by Pastor Jack in JB, Malaysia