

MARANATHA BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

10 January 2021

Combined Worship Service

"Present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28)

Address: 63 Cranwell Road, Singapore 509851

E-mail: maranatha.bpc@pacific.net.sg

Sunday School: 10 am

Sunday English / Chinese Worship Service: 10.45 am

Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8.30 pm

**Rev Colin Wong (HP : 9665 8160); Elder Daniel Tau (HP : 9761 5415);
Elder Peter Ong (HP : 9626 7045); Elder Royce Yeo (HP : 9362 3067)**

HOPE IN THE WORD OF GOD (Psalm 119:73-80, Part 1)

We are told to hope in the Word. Psalm 119:114 says, "You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word." Paul reminds us the purpose and ministry of the Word. He said that whatever that was written in the past in the Old Testament was written to teach us (Romans 15:4). You and I are to learn from the past. History teaches us valuable and precious lessons. They can motivate us, encourage us, comfort us, rebuke us, correct us and help us to look ahead in hope.

Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments (73).

Who is the Author of our being? The Psalmist knew the Author of his being. He knew who created him and he readily acknowledged him as the Maker of him – "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me." In another Psalm, he said, "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them" (Psalm 139:14-16).

Every man is as truly the work of God's hands as the first man was. Man, who was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26, 27), was a living, reasonable and immortal souls (Genesis 2:7). He was endued with knowledge, righteousness and holiness. The Law of God was written in his heart (Romans 2:14, 15). He had the power to fulfil it. He was given dominion over all creatures. And yet he was subject to fall (Romans 3:23).

God is our Creator. He takes a personal interest in us. He shows it by making us with his own hands. In the eyes of God, every one of us is fearfully and wonderfully made.

However, someone may ask, “How about defective births?” This is a tough question. There is no easy answer. But what I know is that not every defective birth is of sin (Exodus 20:5). John 9 is a good example. Jesus’ disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (2) Jesus answered them, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him” (3).

In the matter of creation, God has the prerogative. Because he is sovereign, he does whatever he pleases (Psalm 115:3). Paul reminds us in Romans 9, “But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?” (Romans 9:20, 21)

Who are we to question God? Therefore, I may conclude that every child born into this world is fearfully and wonderfully made, and is beautiful in the sight of God.

God is not only our Creator but also a Giver of understanding. Spiritual things must be understood in spiritual ways. A non-Christian can’t understand the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). A person may have a PhD in English but that does not mean that he can understand the things of God. Unless the Spirit of God works in his heart, the Word has no effect on his life. Jesus said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes” (Matthew 11:25).

The Christian has the Spirit of God in him. He is able to compare spiritual things with spiritual (1 Corinthians 2:13). The Spirit of God reveals the deep things of God to him (1 Corinthians 2:10). Therefore, the Psalmist pleaded with God to grant him understanding so that he might understand his commandments – “...give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments” (Psalm 119:18; Ephesians 1:17-20).

Many Christians told me that they do not find joy in reading the Bible because they do not understand it. My answer to them is: Did you ask God for spiritual understanding of the Word? Unless God opens your spiritual eyes, the Word will never grip you.

They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word (74).

“They that fear thee” are those who walk with God, delight in his Word and desire to do his will. The Psalmist said that they would be glad to see him. In fact, they would be glad to see each other. David said, “I am a companion of all them that fear thee” (Psalm 119:63a). How wonderful it is when Christians of the same mind come together for fellowship. There is always gladness (Psalm 133:1). The conversation is edifying and God-honouring. There are no malicious words spoken, no backbiting, no talebearing, no rumour-mongering, no lying, and no slandering.

Over the years, I had attended many international conferences. I had not only met Christians from all over the world, but I had also lived with them and co-laboured with them. We were of one mind, of one spirit and of one purpose. Our goal was to reach the world for Christ. Our fellowship was sweet and edifying. Yes, we had disagreements on certain non-essential issues but these issues did not prevent us from fellowshiping one with another or reaching the world for Christ.

Here we see the confidence of the Psalmist in the Word of God – “...because I have hoped in thy word.”

He has not found it in vain to put his confidence in the Word. The Word has not failed him nor has he been disappointed in his expectations from it. He found satisfaction in it and most of all, by keeping it, it bears much fruit.

Do you have confidence in the Word? Has God's Word disappointed you?

I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me (75).

Here is a declaration of the Psalmist. He not only knew by intuition but also knew by experience that God's judgments were always right. He said in Psalm 51:4, "You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just" (NLT). When God speaks, he is always right; when he judges, he is always impartial – fair, just and without favouritism (Acts 10:34). Therefore, when he judges, there is no re-trial.

Hebrews reminds us, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you" (Hebrews 12:6, NLT). The Psalmist was right to say that out of his faithfulness, God had disciplined him. A faithful father exercises discipline on his wayward children. Our God is not like Eli who did not restrain his children from sin (1 Samuel 3:13). When he deems it necessary (as what Peter put it – "if need be," 1 Peter 1:6), he will exercise discipline on us.

Let us learn to submit ourselves to the Lord's discipline, for it is good for us. Being a covenant child, David did not mind the rod of God. In fact, he said that it was good for him that he had been disciplined so that he might learn God's Word (71).

Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant (76).

While the Psalmist did not ask God to remove the rod of discipline, he did plead for comfort under it. In the midst of chastisement, God does comfort his children. Habakkuk 1:2 says, "In wrath remember mercy." Lamentations 3:31-33 says, "For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, Yet He will show compassion According to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, Nor grieve the children of men." Comfort comes primarily from reading God's faithful saying – "...according to thy word unto thy servant" (2 Corinthians 12:9). It also comes from the presence of family members, relatives and friends (2 Corinthians 7:5-7).

How can I show comfort to others? I find home or hospital visitation can bring comfort and encouragement to needy brethren. I find writing a letter or sending a text message or giving a phone call can lift up a weary soul (Proverbs 25:25). A sister was quite down in the hospital. While lying on the bed and wondering what could happen to her, God sent a sparrow to comfort her. A sparrow flew into her room. Her immediate thought was Matthew 6:26: "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" Immediately, her heart was lifted up and her countenance began to brighten up. God knows how to show mercy and comfort to his children.

Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight (77).

Here is an earnest petition of the Psalmist. Before he pleaded with God for mercy to forgive his sins (Psalm 51:1). He also sought God for mercy to comfort him in his sufferings (Psalm 119:76). Now he

pleaded with God for mercy to live.

Interestingly, many Christians seek God for mercy to forgive their sins and comfort them of their sufferings, but not many Christians seek God for mercy to live. What if God were to chasten us like the way he chastened Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5? Jeremiah said, “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness” (Lamentation 3:22, 23). We need God’s mercy to live. We are at his mercy. Moses said, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Romans 9:15).

How often do we pray, “O Lord, thank you for another day you have added into my life!” If it is not of the Lord’s mercy, you and I may have perished long ago. We need to remember that our times are in the hand of God (Psalm 31:15).

As long as God showed his mercy to the Psalmist in order that he might live, he would delight in his Word. As long as we have breath in us, we will spend time reading and meditating on the Word. Psalm 150: 6 says, “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!” Likewise, let every one of us who has breath read, meditate and delight in the Word. Praise God for life! Amen.

Pastor Colin Wong

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2 January 2021
Pastoral visitation led by
Rev Colin Wong to the home of
brother Hum Kee Hong and his
mother with Mr and Mrs Seow
Zhi Fa.

Theme for the Quarter :
FREE IN CHRIST
(An Exposition on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians)

Rev Colin Wong speaking at the Combined Service on
Faith in God That Counts (Genesis 12:1-7, 15:1-21)
Interpreter : Brother Seow Zhi Fa