

MARANATHA BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

21 March 2021

English Worship Service

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

Address: 63 Cranwell Road, Singapore 509851

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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);
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GOD'S WORD IS WONDERFUL (Psalm 119:129-136)

Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them (129).

Here is a wonderful testimony of the Psalmist. He exclaimed, "Thy testimonies are wonderful." God's Word is full of marvels. No wonder he pleaded with God to open his spiritual eyes to behold wonderful things out of his Word (18).

"Thy testimonies are wonderful" usually ascribes to God's wonderful redeeming acts. However, his law also contains matters just as wonderful (27). His Word reveals the wonderfulness of God's works in the history of the world. The parting of the Red Sea, the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah in their old age, Jesus' miracles or God's wonderful doings in and through us, all these are his marvellous works. No wonder the Psalmist exclaimed in Psalm 9:1, "I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works."

The Psalmist did not only admire God's wonderful works but he also made every effort to obey and practice all that God required, not reluctantly, but willingly. The more the Psalmist wondered, the more he obeyed.

One of the reasons why many Christians are not obeying and keeping God's Word is that his Word has become dull and uninterested to them. His testimonies are no longer exciting and wonderful. Just like the words of the women to the disciples who saw the resurrected Jesus at the tomb, "And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them" (Luke 24:11).

The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple (130).

Why did the Psalmist make every effort to keep God's Word? The answer is found in this verse – The unfolding of the Word gives light and understanding. Here is the reason why God's Word is so wonderful. The Word gives light. That is to say, it provides direction, guidance or enlightenment. God's Word is like a lamp or a candle to our feet and a light to our path (105). Having the Word as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path helps us to walk confidently in this dark world. The Word also gives understanding.

Understanding of what? Understanding of life's issues or circumstances.

When a Christian is armed with the Word, he sees and understands life's tough issues. He sees them the way God sees them. He understands them from God's point of view. And therefore, he is able to make decisions (even tough ones) that are according to the teaching of God's Word.

Furthermore, this "understanding" is given to "the simple" (Matthew 11:25). The proud and arrogant are not interested in God's enlightenment and understanding on life's issues. They rely on their own wisdom which is earthly, sensual and devilish (James 3:15).

I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments (131).

Because the Word gives light and understanding on life's issues, the Psalmist longed (i.e., eagerly desired) for God's commandments all the more. Here lies the secret to a victorious, triumphant Christian life. Why Christians lack victory over Satan? Why Christians lack peace of God? Why Christians stumble all the time? I believe the answer to it is the lack of biblical knowledge. In the same Psalm, he said, "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (165). Hosea gives the reason why the people of God were running wild. He said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6).

The expression "I opened my mouth, and panted" is interesting. One commentator thinks this expression may refer to either of the three things. First, eager hearers open their mouths that they may hear the better, sound entering by the mouth very much aiding us in hearing. Second, the thirsty open the mouth for drink that they may receive every drop. And third, the hungry open the mouth for food, as even the young bird does in its nest.

The whole point here is this: The Psalmist is giving us a description of an eager, keen hearer. And he mentioned two characteristics of a keen hearer – he longs and pants for God's Word. The Hebrew word "pant" means "to gasp, pant after or snuff up." Figuratively speaking, it carries the idea of thirsting for one's blood (from actions of animals). That was the attitude of the Psalmist. Is this also our attitude? (Job 23:12)

James said, "Let every man be swift to hear" (James 1:19). If you really believe God is the Author of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21), then you need to pay close attention all the more to the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word.

Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name (132).

The Psalmist was not naïve or ignorant of the dealing of the Lord. He knew how he operates. He knew that those who love God's name, that is, him and his Word, will not be forgotten. God will look upon them and show them his mercy, especially in times of need. If I were to paraphrase this verse, I will do it something like this: "Lord, I know you take note of those who love your name and your Word. When they are in trouble, you never fail to shower your mercy upon them. Likewise, may you do the same to me." God's eyes are upon us who love his name. He will shower his mercy upon us in times of crisis.

Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me (133).

Here is the answer to a victorious and triumphant Christian life. The Psalmist asked God to order, direct or establish his footsteps according to the Word and deliver him from the power of sin. The latter part of the verse is like Jesus' prayer for his disciples – "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13a).

The reason Christians sin against God is because their lives are not established in the Word. They may know the Word, but they are not practicing it. Therefore, they do not have the spiritual strength to fight and overcome the power of sin (James 2:22-25). In Christian living, we need to learn this: “Let me have no governor but God; let the throne of my heart be filled by him and none other” (Adam Clarke). In your daily life, who is in control?

Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts (134).

Here is a prayer of the Psalmist. He pleaded with God for a quiet and peaceable life, a life free of human harassment so that he would not be restrained from keeping God’s Word. God has commanded us to keep his Word diligently (4). Therefore, let us not allow anything to hinder us from keeping God’s Word.

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes (135).

Here is another prayer of the Psalmist. Though he was king (some commentators believe David was the author of this Psalm), he did not come to God as king but a servant. He humbled himself before the throne of God. This time he asked God’s face to shine upon him. That is to say, he asked God for divine favour. He did not ask him for silver and gold.

Why did he ask God for divine favour? The answer is found in the latter part of the verse – so that he might be further instructed by his Word – “...and teach me thy statutes.” You and I need to do the same. We need to plead with God to shine his face upon us in order to illuminate us further in the Word.

Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law (136).

The above verses expressed the Psalmist’s love for the Word. Here he wept and lamented for those who despised and disobeyed God’s Word. The word “rivers” indicates much more than an occasional tear. John Roger, a prominent puritan translated the first part of the verse in this way, “Mine eyes gush out with water.” Peter tells us that Lot could not live in Sodom without having his righteous soul vexed from day to day (2 Peter 2:18).

Here is a good test of real Christianity. When God’s Word is violated, how would you feel? When Christians deliberately go against the teaching of the Word, how would you feel? Do you feel sad? Or do you feel otherwise?

God’s Word is wonderful! Let us love it, cherish it and treasure it. Above all, let us practice it. Amen.

Pastor Colin Wong

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

Elder Daniel Tau speaking at the English Service on
Tarry Ye Here and Watch with Me
(Matthew 26:36-41).