

The Vine Committee

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Martin Luther once said, "A gospel that does not deal with the issues of the day is not the gospel at all."

It was reported that when the roof of a newly opened shopping centre collapsed, the shoppers were just stand-

ing around taking photos and laughing. Do you think it is strange? Jesus predicted this in Matthew 24:38-39, "*people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away.*"

Apparently, these days it is not safe to go to shopping centres. More than 60 people were killed in a mall in Kenya. Death happens to everyone, even Christians. Read some other news stories below:

Dr. Graham Stuart Staines was an Australian Christian missionary who along with his two sons Philip (aged 10) and Timothy (aged 6) were burnt to death by a gang while sleeping in his station wagon at Manoharpur village in Keonjhar district in Odisha, India on January 22, 1999. The 1999 Chamoli earthquake occurred on 29 March 1999 in the Chamoli district in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (now in Uttarakhand). The earthquake was the strongest to hit the foothills of the Himalayas in more than ninety years . A day before the supercyclone slammed Orissa on October 29, 1999, the government had sounded a 'routine' alert based on IMD reports. Residents of coastal villages, no stranger to cyclones, had not taken it seriously.

A pair of suicide bombers blew themselves up amid hundreds of worshippers at a historic church in northwestern Pakistan on Sunday 22 September 2013, killing 78 people. A powerful earthquake rattled southern Pakistan at 7:29 a.m. Tuesday 24 September 2013. The earthquake was preliminarily given a magnitude of 7.4 but was later adjusted to a magnitude 7.7.

I am not sure if any of the stories above have any relationship with each other, other than that they happened in the same country. Christians get killed and other people get killed, nobody escapes death. *“Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,”* Hebrews 9:27

We will all die but are we ready to face judgment? *“Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”* Hebrews 9:28 I asked a colleague what he thought about the afterlife. He said that he did not think about it at all. He is still young. However, when he gets older, he may think about it. When you look back at the life you have lived and consider that there is a judgment waiting, what would you change? Would you still struggle in the rat race or would you go meditate on a mountain? Would you stop stepping on people on your way up the ladder of success and instead become a philanthropist? If you were a philanderer would you change to be a pious person?

Clearly, we have to change (repent) and do good but good works do not save us. For instance if you keep missing Sunday service, how do you make up for it? Can you attend more than 52 Sunday services a year if you have missed some already? In most cases, you cannot undo the evil done. If you have killed someone, you cannot bring him back to life. The Good News is that Christ Jesus died to pay for your sins. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9, ESV).

So what are the issues of the day? If you read the newspapers, its all about typhoons, earthquakes, volcanoes erupting, climate changes, wars and violence. *“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.”* Nothing new, it was all mentioned 2000 years ago in Matthew 24:6-8. So what are we to do? *“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”* (Matthew 24:12-14)

We are to stand firm to the end and preach the Gospel to the whole world. I hope you realize that it means we are to stand firm on the Word of God, not standing firmly within the church such that we do not go out to share the Gospel.

Martin Cheah

ALL HAVE SINNED AND COME SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD

In 2009, a Buddhist monk who was the CEO of Renci Hospital was found guilty of misappropriating Renci's funds. He was just a fallible human, notwithstanding his outstanding contributions to Singapore for which he was recognized with a Public Service Medal in 1996.

You may also recall the case of a senior Catholic priest in Singapore who was sentenced to years in jail for the thefts of church funds amounting to millions of dollars.

This year, more than 30 Thai monks were defrocked for illegal drug use. What a scandal to hit the Buddhist priesthood! Presently, a head monk of a temple in Singapore is being sued for the return of US\$1m over an alleged joint casino business that did not see the light of day.

As I write, a controversial spiritual guru has been arrested on a rape charge in a north-western Indian state.

Cases of clergy abuse of authority within the Roman Catholic Church and also among Jewish rabbis are a lot for us to read on Internet news and for righteous people to be overwhelmed with indignation. A website¹ declares that a "long list of Jewish child molester rabbis gets no media coverage and Jewish homosexual pedophiles are undisturbed," with the following quotations from Scripture:

God's enemies and not His chosen people.

I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and [I know] the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are NOT, but [are] (Idumeans) the synagogue of Satan.

King of kings' Bible - Revelation 2:9

Know a tree by the fruit it bears.

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither [can] a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into The Fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Matthew 7:16-20

1

<http://iamthewitness.com/listeners/Jewish.child.molesters.that.are.never.on.the.NEWS-WHY.htm>

It is impossible to list all cases that happen to fill a thick book. Whether it is about a pastor in Singapore who had to cheat to save a few dollars of petrol money, or about Kong Hee and his entourage of alleged corrupt associates who are now facing charges of huge fraud, or about Muslim terrorist leaders who have no qualms taking innocent lives with their deviant agenda, or about scandals and betrayals involving other religious leaders who normally preach from their moral high grounds, it is “sweet-smelling” news for outsiders because it means a striking opportunity for them to launch their derisive hisses and jeers.

Atheists tend to decry religions. Yet, “Atheism is the position that affirms the non-existence of God. It proposes positive disbelief rather than mere suspension of belief.”² If religions are established movements propagating the beliefs of their adherents, atheism is also a belief for which there exist its own movements around the world with their own preaching on ethics and morality. For example, the New Atheist Movement³ calls itself a morally motivated group of people who can also be morally offended – i.e., “*morally* angry and indignant, over the impositions of religious privilege that closets and shames atheists and other dissenters.”

It is right for the religious to respect all people, including the so-called non-religious who nevertheless have their own beliefs. Isn't it right, not just for the sake of reciprocity but also for the sake of honesty to their own beliefs, that the non-religious who hiss and jeer should respect the equal rights of their targets to be “morally angry and indignant” over the impositions of the atheists’ privilege of “freedom without god” that shames religious and other dissenters?

Buddhists charged in court – Christians charged in court – Hindus charged in court – Jews charged in court – Muslims charged in court – ... Do you read news titles like “Atheists charged in court”? Surely atheists can't be saints! Whether they are community leaders, educators in schools, law professionals, government leaders or atheism campaigners, they are not immune to wrongdoings and are bound by their own preaching of morality that are little different from the preaching of religions on such things as about not stealing, not committing sexual offences and not disrespecting others.

² Rowe, WL. “Atheism”, in Craig. E Routledge, Ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, New York, 1998.

³ <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/camelswithhammers/2012/02/new-atheism-is-a-moral-movement/>

“Judging other people is such a natural and reflex phenomenon that even when somebody advises everybody not to judge anybody, actually he never realised that he has already judged that people judge others” – Anuj Somany

This is absolutely true of both God-believers and atheists. What then is the difference between them?

One thing is for sure – There is no difference between God-believers and non-believers in the fact that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. As far as hypocrisy is concerned, hypocrisy as a sin, atheists who preach their own moral rules do not lose out to others. Obviously, Christians themselves also can benefit from a good dose of introspection with the help of a few hundred Bible references, including these: Matt 7:5, Luke 12:2 and Gal 6:3.

Is the hypocrisy of non-believers (especially glaringly brazen in “lawless” social media) not encompassed by the absolute truth in Matt 7:5, Luke 12:2 and Gal 6:3?

A key difference between a religious moralist and an atheist moralist is that the former believes in objective moral facts laid down in Scripture whereas the latter believes in subjective moral facts that are based on his feelings. According to The World Factbook 2010⁴, non-religious people comprise less than 10% of the world population and less than a quarter of them are atheists. Interestingly, every religion (including non-theistic religions like Confucianism and Taoism) has an absolute moral standard and not a free-wheeling one based on fluctuating human moods and feelings. Isn't it utterly significant that the belief in the validity of an absolute moral code covers the vast majority of the world's population and that atheists form a miniscule minority of this population?

To be a little specific, Christians believe in the futility of chasing after materialism and that there is future consequence for sin. Likewise, other religions; such as Buddhism (to cite just an example).

Are you familiar with this Golden Rule: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets”? (Luke 7:12)

Now look at what others teach:

- **"One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts." (African proverb)**
- “Lay not on any soul a load that you would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself.” (Baha'i)

⁴ a reference resource produced by the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States

- “Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.” (Buddhism)
- 子貢問曰：“有一言而可以終身行之者乎”？子曰：“其恕乎！己所不欲、勿施於人。”
Zi Gong [a disciple] asked: "Is there any one word that could guide a person throughout life?"
The Master replied: "How about 'reciprocity'! Never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself. (Confucianism)
- "One should not behave towards others in a way which is disagreeable to oneself. This is the essence of morality. All other activities are due to selfish desire." (Hinduism)
- "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Leviticus 19:18, Judaism)
- "We obtain salvation by loving our fellow man and God" (Sikhism).
- “If you do not wish to be mistreated by others, do not mistreat anyone yourself” (Zoroastrianism).

Despite the harmony of teachings on the Golden Rule, how many people actually abide by it? Does this mean the Golden Rule should be junked, and the religions are unfit on that basis? **Even the non-religious, as exemplified by the African proverb above, subscribe to the Golden Rule**, but they (the non-religious people) do frequently fall short in living it out. Does it mean that even the non-religious people in their boundless enthusiasm against the hypocrisy of the religious people are shooting themselves in the foot? If we reject all the teachings (of the religious and non-religious people) simply because of human hopelessness to abide by them, then the human race is indeed hopeless.

INDEED, all the scandals that stare us in the face almost on a daily basis globally are proof of the universal nature of sin. It is universal both in place and in time (with shocking and scandalous human stories recorded in the Bible too). All this is absolute in affirming the validity of what the Bible teaches that:

- All have sinned. (Rom 3:23)
- We are justified by grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Rom 3:24)
- We receive Christ by faith (Rom 3:25)
- We are made righteous in Christ; in ourselves, we are not righteous. (Rom 3:26; 2 Cor 5:21)
- Therefore, we have nothing to boast. (Rom 3:27)

Unbelievers like to mock sinners; ironically, they themselves are also sinners. Some tell us that Christians believe in Christ and preach righteousness but yet are sinners, so they (the unbelievers) as sinners have no need to believe in Christ and be hypocrites preaching righteousness. We do not have to be upset. We tell them that recognizing ourselves as sinners is the very reason why we believe in Christ, to accept His grace by our faith, and preach the righteousness of God in Him rather than preach our own

righteousness because the human race is totally without righteousness of its own, a fact bountifully evident in the world and thus proving the TRUTH that the Bible carries. Hence, we cannot and do not boast like those who enjoy the freedom to boast their righteousness with the freedom to wallow in the mud of sin without being encumbered by any moral absolutes.

The events happening around us may be discomfoting and disconcerting, and fodder for antagonists of religions to scoff at us. In actuality, they may just be unpalatable-looking but nourishing provender to toughen our spiritual body as we become convinced of the TRUTH of God’s Word as contained in the Bible. **We have nothing to boast, but humility to confess our sinful nature and to acknowledge that our sinful nature is all the more reason for us to need “the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” (Rom 3:24)**

While we do not condone the wrongdoings of others, we can still spare prayerful commiseration for those who are facing trouble due to sin, with the hope that they will pass through the storm and become better persons. This is what we would like others to treat us were we ourselves to be in predicaments whether out of our own follies or otherwise. It certainly would be an affront to the Golden Rule if we are quick to pour scorn that we do not welcome on ourselves as sinners without doubt.



JOHN LEE

HIP HOP CG – time off for Bishop’s installation & ice cream!

It was a rather impromptu suggestion that our HIP HOP cell arranged to attend the installation service of Bishop Terry Kee together, since we did not have any cell meeting that Saturday.

This was a good suggestion by Peh Ping to support our very own Bishop on his second term as Bishop of LCS, who also used to pastor Jurong Christian Church many years back.

The installation service was a solemn but joyous occasion, graced by a few overseas Lutheran Bishops and representatives from other local denominations. God impressed upon my heart that we need to pray for Bishop as he heads the Lutheran Church in Singapore, and also to pray for unity within LCS.

We had a good dinner fellowship with one another and with other JCC members who were present at the installation service. We also had a good time catching up with Pastor Jim Lee and Michelle. It was also a time for me to briefly catch up with the other pastors and also LCS Administrator, Winnie whom I met only once. The day seemed to be a time of catching up with old friends, starting from an ex-JCC member Lydia Neo whom we bumped into at Lakeside MRT to another ex-JCC member Amy who is now worshipping at LCOR.

After the sumptuous dinner, (they served soft shell crabs, among other delicacies), we headed to Island Creamery at Serene Centre for more dessert – take away ice cream to Botanical Gardens for a short stroll. This was an opportunity to show our cell member Frodo, who is from Hong Kong, some places around that area.

I think our CG hardly had any in-between meeting besides the usual CG Bible study. We hope this is just the beginning of other in-between meetings to come.

OUR TAIWAN TRIP

By Freddie & Lissa Low

GOD is Sovereign and truly in control of all things.

On our recent holiday trip to Taiwan (Aug 2013), we saw that God is Sovereign and in control of all things. We chose to visit Taiwan partly to visit my elder brother and family. Two years ago my sisters planned for a big gathering in Taiwan but we could not join the trip then as Freddie and I were leading a mission team to Cambodia.

The early part of our itinerary went smoothly. My brother met us at Taoyuan airport and drove us back to his home in Taichung where we stayed a night in the Sun Moon Lake area.

Our original plan was to go up to Alisan, a mountain resort where Freddie booked a two-night stay. However, a few days before we left Singapore, Freddie decided to cancel the hotel reservation in Alisan and rebooked a hotel reservation in Hualien instead. I believed the Holy Spirit had prompted him to change plan.

When we were travelling to Hualien (instead of Alisan), we heard news on television that Alisan Mountain was badly affected by a typhoon. There were landslides and the local people were evacuated to safety centers. Transportation was suspended. Some tourists were reported to have been stranded in the mountain resort. Thank God for our change of plan.

At Hualien, we hired a taxi to visit the Taroko Gorge. The weather was good and the taxi driver suggested that we could try a 40-minute walking trail in the mountain following the markers. We did as suggested and realized that there were only two of us until towards the end of the walk



when we met a few others. It was a good but a bit scary experience because the trail was littered with fallen rocks and steep gorges lay just at the edge of it. There were warning signs of dangerous snakes to look out for. Reaching a section of the trail, we had to go through a short pitch-dark tunnel. Thank God we emerged safe and sound.

At the end of 5 hours at Taroko Gorge, we were tired and decided to go for lunch. We invited the taxi driver Miss Wu to join us. Seeing us give thanks for the food, she told us she was a new Christian, and had accepted the Lord just last year. She shared that after accepting Christ, her life is peaceful, she feels being loved and her outlook of life changed. She is more self-assured and joyful. Praise God for a new sister in Christ.



After our lunch the weather in Taroko Gorge had turned for the worse. It was the typhoon Trami from Philippines reaching North-Eastern Taiwan. On that day we were supposed to leave Hualian for Taipei. We were told that all transports in North, Central and Eastern Taiwan were officially suspended, which included air, rail and road. Offices and schools were declared closed as there were flooding, landslides and strong winds. We had to extend our stay in Hualian for another day.

Finally we managed to secure railways tickets to Taipei on the following day. Trami typhoon had left for China when we went to Taipei where we stayed for 3 days.

Thank God for His protection throughout the trip. We believed God was in full control behind the scenes without us realizing it. Back home in Singapore, upon reflection, we realized that God was really good to us and protected us all the way. All glory be to God!



A BUDANCE CELL RETREAT at Johor Palm Resort Golf & Country Club

(31ST AUG - 1ST SEP)

Thanks to Uncle Roy, I had an interesting golf lesson at the Malaysian Palm Resort where I joined my parents and the uncles and aunties of the Abundance Cell Group for a happy retreat.

It was nice to have my good friends – Ken, Kieran, Caleb, Jayden & Jerome – around too.

After checking into our hotel, our master golf teacher, Uncle Roy, wasted no time to educate us on the basics of golfing. “Be focused and steady,” he spoke with confidence in his voice. So the golf clinic commenced with us picking up tips on how to pat, chip and tee off.

After the golf clinic, some of us went swimming. I enjoyed snacking on some potato chips before heading for a sumptuous JB-style dinner.

We also had enjoyable bowling games, with so much fun challenging the uncles and aunties on the bowling scores.

An exciting Saturday ended quickly. Bedtime seemed to arrive too soon.

The next morning, we gathered at the room of Uncle Soon Eong and Auntie Ewe Ewe for Sunday worship. We worshipped God with songs, Bible reading and an easily digestible message from Uncle Soon Eong.

We sang with rejoicing:

*Thank you, thank You Jesus.
Thank you, thank You Jesus.
Thank You, Thank You Jesus
from my heart.*

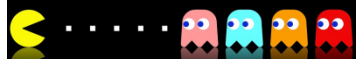
JIAN JIANG

*(Younger son of James Koh
& Ethel)*



FROM BONDAGE TO RELEASE

I remember the time when my PC used the Intel 80386 chip. It was fast, at least faster than its predecessor 80286. One game I was addicted to was Pacman. It was fun to see the Pacman gobbling up the dots while avoiding the ghosts, and to climb the levels of difficulty as the game advanced. Thankfully, my addiction was mild; and as the computer chip advanced to 80486 and Pentium, the version of the Pacman game I had was no longer playable as the characters moved at lightning speed and the Pacman died an instant death each time the game was switched on; thus my addiction faded out.



So I know what addiction is like from a bit of experience, when the mind is taken over by an unseen force. You have a constant urge to do something (in my example, play a game), and you seem to have limited mental means to pull yourself away. Nowadays, computer games come in a greater variety and increasing excitement grades. Battle games like Mortal Kombat, puzzle games like Candy Crush, strategy games like Sins of a Solar Empire ... – the menu list is impressive. Unfortunately, there is no game called “Strategy Combat against Lethal Sin of Addiction” that is educational and useful to give players a controlled dosage of recreation from time to time while helping them to recognize the danger of harmful bondage.

In a Straits Times forum letter, a mother complained about parents “experiencing highly tense relationships with their children over laptop usage and teachers having problems with students using the devices for entertainment and social networking during classroom hours” – no thanks to the ubiquity of compulsory laptop ownership by our students.

Yes, both adults and children have seen in themselves costly addictions to Candy Crush. Look around you whenever you are on public transport and you will not miss seeing the busy fingers on mobile devices. A little recreation to overcome boredom is alright. It is also good for elderly folks to play some games to keep their minds active. However, when it becomes a psychological bondage we can’t break free, it becomes no less evil as addictions to alcohol, narcotics, gambling, spending on credit cards and other harmful habits. The world is filled

II. From Bondage to Release

- A. Endless Struggle**
- B. Unseen Decider**
- C. Practice Release**

with lurking traps, and for those who are trapped, it can become an endless struggle to gain release.

“From Bondage to Release” was the 2nd of a three-part series that Mr Lim Geok Seng, our speaker at the Leaders’ Retreat at YWCA (August 2013) delivered with power to convince us of the danger of sinful bondage we frequently face. He defines bondage as a form of slavery or involuntary servitude, when the victim is subjected to some external control. It is not confined to known vices, but extends to whatever “that entraps and limits our normal, physical, emotional, social and spiritual welfare and progress.” Paul expresses this in Romans 7:19, “For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.”

How many of us can identify with moments of bondage in our life? Hopefully, they were just brief moments and not deeply entrenched, and that we were able to get on top of them in good time before lasting damage set in. When we are in some kind of bondage, knowing what we should do but lacking the ability to do them, we become adversely affected in our ability to pray, worship, read the Bible, obey God and love others. We are facing an ongoing war with the world, the devil and the flesh.

The World

1 John 2:16 says, “For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world.” Here, the world does not refer to the physical, but the system of operation that excludes God. The world system that opposes God is expressed in its values, pleasures, pastimes and aspirations.

We are also told in Galatians 5:16-17 not to gratify the desires of the flesh, for the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. Our sensual appetite needs to be kept under control lest “after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” (James 1:15)

The desires of the eyes start with a passion for materialism, then they move from passion to possession that we can ill afford to have, resulting in a costly outcome. This is exemplified in the Achan Syndrome of “I see it, I want it, I take it!”

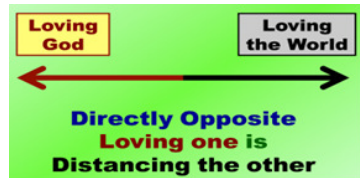
In the story from Joshua 7, Israel had just been blessed with a great victory over Jericho and was on its way to conquer the city of Ai. Alas, a fatal affliction set in. While Joshua was preparing for the battle of Ai, Achan let the desires of his eyes lead him into sin against God. His eyes saw “in the plunder a beautiful robe from

Babylonia, 200 shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels,” his materialistic passion got hold of him and this coveting for what he should not have moved him to surreptitiously take possession of the valuables, hiding them in the ground inside his tent. (Joshua 7:20-21). The desires of the eyes did not only cause the Israelites to be collectively punished by God (with the 36 lives lost) but also resulted in Achan being punished with death before God turned from His fierce anger. (Joshua 7:24-27)

The Achan Syndrome highlights the principle of progression from a passion for materialism to unrighteous possession. Achan might have thought he could hide his ill-gotten loot from everybody else by burying it in the sand, but he could never hide his sin from God.

Just like the Achan Syndrome, the “pride of life” – hankering after pretenses of importance like status symbols, control and power – often lead one to a claim to good things which he does not possess.

The desire to do something, to have something and to be something apart from the will of God is sin. We are told in 1 John 2:15, “Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”



The way to overcome the world is the command “Do not love the world”. We have to choose our love – either to love God or to love the world. We cannot love both. Like what the graphic shows, loving God and loving the world are directly opposite each other. The closer we draw ourselves towards loving God, then the farther we would be from loving the world.

The Devil

“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8) The devil is the father of lies (John 8:44); he distorts truth. He is the accuser (Revelation 12:10); he casts doubts on God’s goodness and control. We easily become the devil’s breakfast when we resent authority, are proud, seek praise, doubt God’s care, distrust God’s control and are self-focused.

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7)

It is impossible to resist the devil depending on our own strength and authority, because the desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit are two forces locked in lifelong conflict. (Galatians 5:17) The flesh is not removed or reformed at regeneration; it remains active and hostile; it cannot submit to God. The Christian life is therefore a life of conflict, an unending struggle with the flesh, the old sin nature. A potent player in this conflict is a Universal Force – the Law of Sin and Death – which is in full operation controlling the world regardless!



How would this 500,000-kg giant able to overcome gravity and fly up?

The speaker, Mr Lim, illustrates a significant point using the law of gravity and the law of aerodynamics. The law of gravity is exerting its force at all times in all places quietly and surely. The hefty airplane can only overcome the force of gravity by a higher law of greater force – the law of aerodynamics. In the airplane, we are

free to move about; but the moment we step out of the plane, we are subjected to gravity again. Where that greater law is not in operation, the law of gravity would again exert its power. Similarly, it is with the Law of Sin exerting its force at all times in all places quietly but surely. To overcome the force of sin, we need a higher law, a greater force – the Law of Christ.

“For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:2)

When in Christ, we are freed from the Law of Sin, resulting in peace and joy. Outside of Christ, we are ruled by the force of sin, resulting in failure and sorrow.

“But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” (Romans 6:17-18)

**Everybody is
In One Kingdom
or the Other**

**Domain
of Sin and
Darkness**

**Kingdom
of Jesus
Christ**

We have a choice to be whose slaves: Be slaves of sin or be slaves of righteousness.

If we choose to obey sin, it will result in death; if we obey God, it will result in righteousness.

So Jesus said to the Jews who

had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

See the progression:

1. “believed” – Believing is just the beginning, not the end.
2. “abide in my word” – Abiding is the evidence of effectual faith.
3. “will know the truth” – Knowing the truth is the result of abiding in His Word, not intellectual assent but personal intimate realization.
4. “truth will set you free” – This is the truth embraced, acted on and proven, free from sin’s grip and Satan’s blinding power.

Living by Truth is a way for us to practise our release from bondage to sin. The other requirement is to Live by the Son, for: “The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:35-36)

“The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.” (John 5:22) So the Son is the final judge. The key is our personal relationship with this Final Judge. If He sets you free, there are no forces that could defy Him. The Christian life is not just about believing in Him, but more about loving Him!

What kind of bondage do we in JCC commonly deal with?

The Christian life is a life of constant conflict. What kind of spiritual, physical, emotional and social struggle do you personally face?

How does the law of the Spirit of life set you free from the law of sin and death?
How do you live by the Truth and by the Son?
Hard questions to meditate on!

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Mr Lim Geok Seng for making available his PowerPoint slides that enabled valuable recall of his message to us. The content of this article is composed with input from the slides.

JOHN LEE



EVANGELISM FOR THE ORDINARY CHURCH

by *Steve R. Bierly*

Pastor of Cobblestone Church in Schenectady, New York.

A few years ago while candidating, I looked at a number of profiles sent to me by congregations searching for a pastor. One question my denomination asks churches to answer on such profiles is, "Name two or three specific things you have done to evangelize your area in the past year."

My heart sank. It seemed few congregations were excited and intentional about reaching their world for Jesus Christ.

I eventually found a congregation that said it was ready to evangelize, but I was in for a shock. The first year I pastored Cobblestone, I conducted a two-day evangelism seminar. Only three people attended.

But as I got to know the people of Cobblestone, I discovered they were willing, even eager, to do evangelism. It just wasn't the sort of evangelism I originally had in mind.

Redefine "target group"

I found out the people of Cobblestone had a target audience in mind. They were concerned about friends, co-workers, and family members who didn't know the Lord. As long as we kept asking, "How can we reach those close to us with the gospel?" evangelism took place and unchurched people began joining Cobblestone.

Stop using the E-word

For many, evangelism is what Billy Graham does when he preaches to stadiums full of seekers and thousands come forward. Nobody in my congregation felt he or she could do that. To others, evangelism meant intruding into the lives of total strangers by handing out tracts at the mall or calling door-to-door or phoning a list of names. Nobody wanted to do that.

A year after my ill-fated evangelism seminar, I decided to try again. I offered an evening on "How to Explain Christianity to Your Friends." It seems the folks at Cobblestone are willing to be trained in evangelism—as long as we don't call it that.

Set a climate for sharing

When I presented proposals for seeker-sensitive services, the response was, "Why can't the unchurched just accept us as we are? When we first came to this church, it took us a while to feel comfortable, but we stuck it out. They can, too!"

Even though we don't have a seeker service, I'm careful not to use theological jargon in my sermons. If I use terms unfamiliar to non-Christians, I define them. My illustrations are drawn from tv, movies, sports, and pop music.

I also wrote a little booklet explaining the basic truths of the faith in language easily understood by the people living in our area. These booklets are placed at strategic locations in our building.

Rather than telling shy, introverted people who don't have a great deal of biblical knowledge or theological training to lead their loved ones to Christ, I urge my congregation to invite their friends to become part of Cobblestone Church, where they can meet Christ. Our members invite friends not only to our Sunday morning services, but also to our social events.

Members of Cobblestone feel comfortable inviting others to our services because they know their friends will get something out of it. And I have had to replenish our supply of booklets quite often.

Work to reduce conflict

Visitors can sense when something's not right. If they do, rarely will they come back.

My early teaching at Cobblestone stressed the church as a fellowship where love, acceptance, forgiveness, and patience are practiced. When arguments broke out at board meetings, I reminded everyone that this wasn't the way the church conducted business. As a result, the atmosphere has greatly improved; visitors almost always characterize us as a "warm, friendly congregation." I came to see that time spent working on reducing tension is really time spent on church growth.

Get people to pray

Will God really cause a church to grow just because people ask him to—even if that church does not have an aggressive evangelism program? At Cobblestone, he has. We continually get visitors who say, "We just felt that it was finally time to check out church and for some reason we were drawn here."

Although pastors often hear "Everything depends on leadership," in reality, "Everything depends on God." If you can get some of your people to pray seriously and faithfully for growth, you've done a lot!

Almost half the original article had been chopped off but I hope it still makes good reading. Read it full here:
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/articles/evangelism/le-713-713043.html>. – The Editor

A FAMILY TRIP TO BANGKOK

The November and December months are usually the holiday season. Some of us in JCC are starting our holiday season early, in September. My family is no exception.

It was a rare blue-moon occasion that the whole family (comprising myself, Peggy, Benedict, Ian and Shawn) was able to have an overseas holiday together. We scooted off on discounted flights to Bangkok, courtesy of Scoot Airlines. Four of us set off on 23rd September while Benedict joined us the next day.



It was a free-and-easy holiday, with a bit of “scootitude”. We had two big rooms, one with a king-size bed and the other with two spacious single beds, in the new 4-star Centara Watergate Pavilion Hotel for 3 nights in the renowned Pratunam area of Bangkok and within a few minutes’ walk to Platinum Fashion Mall and Central World Shopping Complex. During our shopping walk, we would pass by rows of roadside stalls and shops selling a great variety of stuffs at cheap prices.

It was not just the usual tourist shopping that we had. On one afternoon, we even went marketing buying crabs, meat and vegetables for a warm home-cooked dinner capably prepared by my nephew who is studying in Bangkok.



On the penultimate day, we visited Amway Thailand and then travelled out of Bangkok to the outskirts of the capital where we had one night of free stay at a big kampong-style wooden bungalow which had a kitchen, a huge hall and two air-conditioned bedrooms, each with an attached bathroom. The whole place is a countryside resort called Sampran Riverside and, indeed, our

bungalow was just beside a serene river. We had a nice dinner hosted by the friend who generously provided us the accommodation at the bungalow which, by my estimate, would likely cost a pricey few hundred Singdollars. We even had a complimentary buffet breakfast for four of us (Ian having left for Singapore a day earlier).

After a satisfying buffet breakfast, Benedict and Shawn went for a swim. (In the swimming pool, not the river.☺) Then all of us toured the resort’s “Living The Thai Culture” Art & Craft Workshops – comprising silk processing, umbrella painting, Thai music and dance, traditional weaving, pottery, Thai kitchen, garland making, fruit carving, rice farming, bamboo dancing, herbal pavilion, Muay Thai and traditional Thai costumes. These workshops were demonstration set-ups within an enclosed area. During our visit, there were several groups of Thai school children on excursion there too, led by their school teachers.



Thank God that the weather was fine where we travelled although there was news of flood in Thailand that had some of our relatives in Singapore concerned. God blessed us with journey mercy to and fro for this enjoyable family trip.

JOHN LEE



Installation of Bishop Terry Kee

Saturday, 28th September 2013 at Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
(Hebrews 13:20-21)



A JOYFUL CELEBRATION - my Birthday Dinner with my CG Members

September 28, 2013 – The Taman Jurong CG gathered for a traditional Chinese dinner to celebrate my birthday. This was my first time celebrating my birthday with the CG and it was a joyous experience for me. *“This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?”* (Ecclesiastes 2:24-25)

The food and the fellowship were great moments but my best memory was when my CG sang the birthday song for me. I felt genuine fellowship amongst the members.



Instead of heading home after dinner, some members suggested we head to the Marina Barrage for a night stroll. I got some nice night shots to keep this memory forever.



“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1)

Nick Wong



*Bro Nick hardly writes for **The Vine** but if he does put pen to paper it is from his heart.*

Here I find a brother who shares his joy with the rest of the body.

If you have such uplifting moments please share it with the rest.

The Editor