



NEW LIFE BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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“For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:9)

Vol. 17 No. 38

LORD’S DAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2013

ORDER OF WORSHIP

	<i>Morning Service – 11am</i>	<i>Evening Service – 4pm</i>
<i>Prelude</i>	<i>The Lord Is in His Holy Temple</i>	
<i>Call to Worship</i>	Psalm 95:6-7a	Psalm 105:1-4
<i>Opening Hymn *</i>	RHC 2 – “O Worship the King”	RHC 5 – “Command Thy Blessing From Above”
<i>Opening Prayer *</i>	John Poh	John Poh
<i>Gloria Patri *</i>	<i>Glory Be to the Father</i>	
<i>Responsive Reading</i>	Psalm 36	---
<i>Second Hymn *</i>	<i>Psalm 36</i> <i>verses 1-7</i> (to the tune of Vox Dilecti, RHC 298)	---
<i>Announcements & Memory Verse</i>	John Poh	John Poh
<i>Tithes & Offerings & Doxology *</i>	RHC 313 – “O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go” <i>verses 1-4</i>	---
<i>Scriptural Text</i>	1 Timothy 3	Song of Solomon 2
<i>Pastoral Prayer</i>	Rev Colin Wong	Rev Colin Wong
<i>Sermon Message</i>	<i>The Great Mystery of Godliness</i> Dr David Allen	<i>The Rose of Sharon</i> Dr David Allen
<i>Closing Hymn *</i>	RHC 427 – “All For Jesus”	RHC 420 – “I Surrender All”
<i>Benediction/3-Fold Amen *</i>	Rev Colin Wong	Rev Colin Wong
<i>Postlude</i>	<i>The Lord Bless You</i>	

* Congregation Stands

THE LORD IS IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE

The Lord is in His holy temple,
The Lord is in His holy temple:
Let all the earth keep silence,
Let all the earth keep silence before Him -
Keep silence, keep silence before Him. Amen.

DOXOLOGY

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heav’nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.

THE LORD BLESS YOU

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord lift His countenance upon you,
and give you peace, and give you peace;
The Lord make His face to shine upon you,
And be gracious unto you, be gracious,
The Lord be gracious, gracious unto you. Amen.

Church Theme 2013 – “Understand and know God” – Jeremiah 9:24

My Dear Reader,

I FELT MY HEART STRANGELY WARMED

John Wesley was the son of a clergyman of the Church of England. He was educated at Charterhouse School and Oxford University. While at University, he and some fellow students committed themselves to study the Bible diligently, pray together fervently and visit the poor, the sick and prisoners regularly.

In the 1730's he and his brother Charles sailed to the young American colony of Georgia. That venture turned out a disaster. He would look back on that time as one when he was driven by a legalistic approach to the Christian faith. Everything had to be done properly and in order. The needs and feelings of people took a rather second place to right doctrine. There wasn't much love in it. He wrote later, *"I went to America to convert the Indians but who should convert me?"* He saw himself as an utter failure. And that led him to search for a deeper faith.

In his journal, he wrote on 24 May 1738, *"In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, "This cannot be faith; for where is thy joy?" Then was I taught that peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation; but that, as to the transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth, them according to the counsels of His own will. After my return home, I was much buffeted with temptations, but I cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes, and He "sent me help from his holy place." And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror"* (Journal of John Wesley).

From his own journal, we have a glimpse of John Wesley's life. He was a very religious man. He would not miss reading his Bible, praying to the Lord and doing good works. But according to him, he was not converted because of his legalistic approach to the Christian faith. Yes, he might have a good knowledge of the Bible, but he did not know whether he was saved or not because he did not have the assurance that Christ had taken away his sins and saved him from the law of sin and death.

Does it surprise you? Jesus said to Nicodemus, a man of the Pharisees and a leader of the Jews, *"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again"* (John 3:7). What Jesus meant is this. Belonging to a religious organization does not make a man a Christian. John said that a man does not become a child of God by being born into a Christian family, nor does he become one by his own decision, nor does he become one by his Christian friend's persuasion, but he becomes one by the sovereign working of God in his heart. He is born of God (John 1:13; 3:8).

Religiosity is not genuine Christianity. What is religiosity? Religiosity is characterized by excessive involvement in religious activities. It usually entails extreme zeal and affection outside and beyond the norms of one's faith or beliefs. Oftentimes, it reflects one's individual beliefs more than those of the religious organization itself. The word should never be a characteristic of a follower of Jesus Christ. Whenever a Christian takes his/her eyes off a personal relationship with Jesus, religiosity can be the result. Generally speaking, it is easier to observe the regulations, rituals and traditions of a religious organization than to maintain a passionate relationship with the Lord.

In one sense, religiosity is like legalism. Jesus said it well in Mark 7:6-9, "*This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.*" Legalism kills. It binds people's conscience and it puts God into our system of thinking, and it takes away that strangely warmed feeling from us.

Sadly, some churches are experiencing spiritual declension, not because of some blatant sin, but because of chains of legalism imposed upon them which God never intended (John 8:32). Legalists do not think biblically. Their theology is like a brick wall. Every brick has to fit well. If one of them crumbles, the entire wall falls. Furthermore, legalistic people don't even realize that they are being fooled and robbed of grace. The sooner they are delivered from such terrible bondage the better.

Religiosity should be avoided. We are saved to know God, worship God and serve God (John 17:3). We are not saved to follow certain religious practices, rituals and traditions of a religious organization. We do not serve God in order to "earn" His love or to be seen and admired by Christians and non-Christians. We serve God because we love Him and are grateful for the wonderful salvation He has provided. Having said that, I think religious practice, ritual and tradition are not the problem because tradition, for instance, can be good and it can be bad (Matthew 15:2, 3, 6; Mark 7:3, 5, 8, 9, 13; Galatians 1:14; Colossians 2:8; 1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6), but the attitude behind the religious practice is the problem.

Religiosity is Satan's best strategy. He does not mind people reading the Bible, praying to God and doing His bidding as long as the god of this world (Satan) can blind their minds and keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The New Testament has a couple of good examples of people who were pious, devout and extremely religious in their practices. First and foremost, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort in Caesarea named Cornelius. He was a pious man. He feared God with his family. He prayed to God always. He donated much of his money to the needs of the people (i.e. he did charitable works), and yet he was not a Christian at all until Peter who was led by the Holy Spirit went and spoke to him and his family about the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 10). Second, a woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira.

One day, Paul went out of the city to the riverside where he and his co-labourers thought there would be a place where Jews gathered for prayer. They sat down and began to talk to the women who gathered there. One of those who heard him was Lydia, a dealer of purple cloth from Thyatira. She was a worshipper of God but she did not know the Lord personally. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying. As a result, she was gloriously saved. She was baptized and her family members also (Acts 16:11-15).

Dear New Lifer, are you like Cornelius of Caesarea or Lydia of Thyatira? Perhaps, you have been attending church for years but you have never experienced the grace of God in being born again. Like John Wesley who thought that he was saved from his childhood, some of us may need to hear the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ again, which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16).

Although John Wesley went very reluctantly to a society in Aldersgate Street that evening, God was gracious enough to use that meeting to save him by the reading of Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. As a result, he was able to pen these indelible words to express his inner feeling in his journal, *"I felt my heart strangely warmed."* Every born again Christian has a certain inner feeling when he/she first met Jesus. I remember that unspeakable, inexpressible joy within me when I first put my faith in Jesus to save me from sin, misery and eternal hell. Later, I got to know it was the joy of salvation (Luke 15:7, 10; Acts 3:8).

Truly, it is my fervent prayer for you to have the full assurance that Jesus has taken away your sins and saved you from the law of sin and death (Romans 7:24, 25), and be able to say passionately, *"I felt my heart strangely warmed too."* Amen.

"And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32)

Lovingly in Christ,

Pastor Colin