



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. 26 No. 10

LORD’S DAY 06 MARCH 2022

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Morning Service – 11am

Afternoon Service – 3pm

Prelude

The Lord Is in His Holy Temple

Call to Worship

Psalm 136:1-3 & 26

Psalm 138:1-2, 4-5

Opening Prayer

Pr Mok Chee Cheong

Pr Mok Chee Cheong

*Opening Hymn **

RHC 44 – “We Praise Thee, O God,
Our Redeemer”

RHC 60 – “Ye Servants of God,
Your Master Proclaim”

Responsive Reading

Psalm 144

*Second Hymn **

Psalm 143 verses 1-5
(to the tune of St Agnes, RHC 231)

Scriptural Text

2 Corinthians 10:5

Jonah 1:3

Pastoral Prayer

Pr Mok Chee Cheong

Pr Mok Chee Cheong

Sermon Message

God’s Power Works Through God’s Means

Payment For Disobedience

*Closing Hymn **

RHC 46 – “A Mighty Fortress is Our God”

RHC 389 – “Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord”

Benediction/3-Fold

Pr Mok Chee Cheong

Pr Mok Chee Cheong

*Amen **

Postlude

The Lord Bless You

** 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.

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.

SHORTER CATECHISM QUESTION 105

Q: What do we pray for in the Fifth Petition?

A: In the Fifth Petition – (which is, AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS) – we pray, That God, for Christ’s sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by his grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.

Comments:

In the Fifth and Sixth Petitions we pray for the supply of our spiritual wants. We ask first for the pardon of our sins. This is promised in Scripture on the condition that we forgive others. If God, then, has enabled us to forgive all who have offended us, we may confidently trust that he will hear our own prayer for forgiveness. Sins are here called *debts*, because in sinning we become debtors to the law; and the law demands either obedience, or the penalty of disobedience.

Scriptural Reference:

Psalm 51:1, Matthew 6:14

WHY DID GOD ALLOW SIN AND THE FALL?

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid (Romans 9.14).

Introduction

How could it be that God allowed the Fall, and all the evil, disobedience and horror that was brought into the world, when our first parents fell? How was it that sin was ever permitted in the first place? Our limited, human way of reasoning soon calls into question the righteousness of God. Many unbelievers put this question up as a barricade against believing the Gospel, and seekers and young Christians are frequently troubled by it. Even mature, convinced Christians may worry about it in times of severe assaults of Satan. God, according to Scripture, is not the author of sin. He created all things and yet he is not the founder of sin. He is presented to us as light and perfection.

Definition of 'Permitted'

Why did God permit the thing that he hated and loathed? 'Permitted' is actually too weak as a word, because God is absolutely sovereign. He was not a helpless bystander, even though not the direct author of the Fall. God anticipated and foresaw it, and determined his response to it.

The church fathers (Ambrose and Augustine in particular) employed the *felix culpa* ^[1] explanation, meaning 'blessed or fortunate fault or fall', because it led to the greater good of God's glory being shown in mercy and redemption.

Before considering such explanations, we acknowledge that they do not fully tell us why God 'permitted' the entry of sin in the first place, giving just some insights. These we will consider, but without losing sight of the anchoring principle of Romans 9.14 — 'What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 'God is never the author of sin.

The beginning of rebellion

We begin by taking note of what lay behind rebellion against God. *Isaiah 14.12-14* speaks about the king of Babylon, but it undoubtedly reflects the very fall of Satan. 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer [*shining one*]...how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart...' and here follow the five evil 'I wills' which are appallingly applicable to the evil one. 'For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven [*I will be like God*], I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.'

The five 'I wills' boast autonomy and equality with God: Satan will function without God. And as Satan turned from allegiance, submission and obedience to God, through that turning, all the reverse-values or anti-values or opposite values and standards sprang into being. They came into existence as the result of the turn from God to autonomy, and they are expressed in these verses, which describe Satan's fall as effectively as that of the king of Babylon.

Originally there was only light, morally, but by turning from the source of moral light and authority, darkness came about. Contrasting, antagonistic, opposing actions, desires,

objectives, 'principles', and a demonic domain of sin and darkness, anti-morality, and negation of everything that is good and true became the environment of the devil and his angels.

Pride, unbelief, lust and the lie brought down first Satan, and then Adam and Eve when man in response to Satan's temptation wanted to be like God. As our first parents turned to disobedience, the anti-values sprang into being in man's world – disorder, pride, lust, hatred, deceit, violence, self-love, self-seeking and self-service. None of these things were in the world before. Satan had found them, but they were not in the world until Adam and Eve fell.

The mind of God

Why did God permit it? First, we need to condition our minds with some cautions. *Isaiah 55.8-9* tells us, 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. 'His wisdom is too high and too deep for us. There are matters that defy adequate human explanation.

In *2 Thessalonians 2* the apostle Paul refers to iniquity and evil as 'the mystery of iniquity'. It is not possible to view Satan's operational plan, and it is not possible on earth to know all the reasons why God allowed the Fall.

In *1 Corinthians 13.12* Paul writes ' –For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.'

There is a time coming when we will have the intellect and spirituality to be shown even more than we are taught by the Scriptures now. We shall know as much as God desires us to know, and we shall be capable of absorbing the information.

2 Corinthians 5.6-8 reads ' –Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. ' The implication is that there is substantially more to be known and tasted when faith gives way to sight.

Another caution in *Romans 11* helps us to frame a right attitude as we think about these matters. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? '(*Romans 11.33-34.*)

Reason #1

Turning from cautions to answers, in *Romans 9.22-23* we are given a substantial clue, but probably only a small part of the reason why God allowed sin and the Fall. 'What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared?'

This verse has Pharaoh and the Israelites in view, but it is intended to justify God's predestinating ways. We may reason from it, if there were no Fall, there could be no demonstration and exercise of the wrath of God, or of his mercy and love. If there had never been a Fall, and God had created Heaven populated with a perfect people, there would be a whole dimension of God and his attributes that would never be exercised or displayed. We would never see his power to redeem, his power to rescue from tragedy, and his power to

save, deliver and transform. Without the Fall we would never have seen the patience of God, enduring with long-suffering the disobedience of rebellious men.

He is a God of truth. Think of the vast area of truth that would never be seen or known had the Fall not been permitted. It was not known in the Garden of Eden what horrors lay in seeking autonomy from God.

God is truth; the Eternal Reality who does everything in truth and as an expression or demonstration of all that is true. 'What is truth?' demanded Pilate, scornfully. In the eternal glory the whole truth will shine forth, including the realisation that there is no alternative to the holy, triune God, and nothing to compare with his ways and works. It will be eternally clear that autonomy is doomed and godlessness is disastrous.

Eve, in the Garden of Eden, could be brought by Satan to suspect that God was withholding something precious from her; that there was a better alternative for her than loyalty to her God. Such thoughts of dissatisfaction, disobedience and rebellion can never be thought in Heaven, because the history of rebellion and redemption will be engraved in every redeemed heart, and reality and truth will reign. There God will be most fully revealed, and we will see '—his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he' (*Deuteronomy 32.4*).

He is 'the God of truth' (*Isaiah 65.16*), just as Christ is 'the way, the truth, and the life' (*John 14.6*), and truth will be universally understood, embraced and loved in the glorious hereafter. In Heaven we will not be uninformed, naive or unaware in any sense. This gives us a partial insight into why God allowed the Fall.

Reason #2

Because of the Fall, it was necessary for Christ to descend from Heaven, come down into our world and take our place. The Creator came to suffer dreadful humiliation; the perfect One took sin for us and was punished in our stead. Because of the Fall, we really do know the love of God and exactly how far God would go to redeem his people. We would never know this if there had been no Fall.

Reason #3

Without a Fall and redemption, Heaven would be peopled by those who in great measure would be robots without clear understanding. Even angels depend on man's redemption to admire the mercy of God. In those circumstances we could certainly love him for ever, but we would not know gratitude or indebtedness in infinite measure. Neither would we have ever seen the perfections of God against the backdrop of sin, having only known perfection and righteousness. But when the redeemed are in the eternal glory, God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, will be appreciated in fullest glory.

Reason #4

Here is one further aspect of the Fall and redemption. If there had been no Fall, God's children (created in glory) would not be entirely free, for they would not be there by choice. This is highly important, for Heaven is ultimately the home of the free. 'The truth,' said Christ, 'shall make you free.' Free from the ceremonial law, yes, and from condemnation and bondage to sin, but also free in the widest possible sense.

Even the created world shall be 'delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God' (*Romans 8.21*). Without a Fall, however, there would not be true freedom in glory.

In salvation, the Holy Spirit enables us to see our state and condition, inclining our minds to believe and making us willing, but all in such a way that we freely and longingly trust and embrace Christ, 'for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure' (*Philippians 2.13*). It is God's irresistible work, yet we are caused to willingly and freely choose. We had no freedom before the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, when we came to Christ and bowed the knee to him we gave our lives to him, saying in effect, 'Lord, take me, and take away my freedom to fall. Bind me to thee, hold and secure me, so that I cannot do so.' The inhabitants of Heaven have voluntarily handed over their imagined freedom to God. If we had been created in Heaven with no Fall and no redemption, that would not be the case. Those in Heaven will be there for ever *willingly*, having voluntarily surrendered freedom to God.

Conclusion

Romans 9.22-23 gives us a view of some of these things, as being a part of the reason for the Fall. We repeat the quotation. 'What if God, willing to shew his wrath [*his attributes*], and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?'

We must think of the revealing and demonstrating of God's attributes and glory, especially his justice, mercy, and love. We must think of God as truth, and of how all of his attributes need to be seen and known. We must think of his intrinsic liberty, and how this must be reflected in the experience of all his redeemed people through the everlasting ages.

The sense of it all is that the Fall ultimately reveals God's full glory, manifests all his infinite attributes, enlightens and inspires the redeemed for ever, clothes them with true freedom, shows that there is no alternative to the King of kings, and that outside him lies only opposite values and disaster.

These thoughts do not provide the whole answer to the question of why God allowed sin, but they assist our trust, and may help us to accept that there are 'secret things' that 'belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever' (*Deuteronomy 29.29*).

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. '

[¹] Incorporated from early times into the Catholic liturgy for Easter.

adapted and edited from Pastor Peter Masters, Article of Metropolitan Tabernacle, London

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON

Our Lord's Day activities begins with the **Pre-Worship Prayer Meeting** at **10:15 am** followed by the **Worship Services** at **11.00 am and 3.00 pm**. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dear Worshippers, with the legal Covid restrictions lifted on 24th Feb 2022, both Worship Services will be held in the Church Premises.

Please continue to use face coverings in the church out of consideration for all worshippers and as per government advice.

For those unable to attend Church in person, we will continue to stream our services online.

If you require the link to our online zoom services or have any queries, please call the church manse, or email us at [admin 'at' newlifebpc.org.uk](mailto:admin@newlifebpc.org.uk).

Tithes & Offerings – There will be an offering box at the entrance to the Church Sanctuary for you to place your offerings in.

Worship Service Collections - Last Sunday: £782.00,
Church Maintenance Fund: £110.00

Church Maintenance Fund
Total: £8,500.50

MEMORY VERSE

Last Week

“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”

2 Corinthians 7:10

This Week

“Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.”

Nehemiah 9:6

Next Week

“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”

2 Corinthians 9:8

Pre-cautions for Worship Services held at the church premises:

With the lifting of the legal Covid restrictions on 24th Feb 2022, we will be following the precautions listed below until further notice:

- No offering collection during the worship service. Offerings can still be made at the offering box when entering or exiting the church.
- Temperature measurements will still be taken for every worshipper and visitor. We must urge those who feel unwell with Covid symptoms not to come to services until tested.
- During worship services, please continue to sit with your own households.
- We strongly recommend face coverings to be worn in the church out of consideration for all worshippers and as per government advise. For young children under the age of 11, the use of face covering is optional. Please bring your own face covering.
- From 6th Mar onwards, access to non-essential areas of the church (e.g. the Fellowship Hall and kitchen) will be made available. Please bring your own lunch as Fellowship Lunch is still suspended. Drinks will be provided.

To join our online services or for more information, please visit the church website (www.newlifebpc.org.uk) or call the church manse (020 73280869).

With the Lord's blessing,

John Poh & Jonathan Kim,
Task Force Members