



NEW LIFE

BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

44 Salusbury Road, London NW6 6NN

Charity No. 1060655

Tel: 020 7328 0869 (Manse)

Email: newlifeplondon@yahoo.co.uk

Website: www.newlifebpc.org.uk

Preacher & Church Administrator: Mok Chee Cheong 07921 929515

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

Vol. 12 No. 34

LORD'S DAY 24 AUGUST 2008

CAN YOU EXPLAIN TO ME WHAT IS REFORMED THEOLOGY IN SIMPLE TERMS FOR ME TO UNDERSTAND?

Introduction

That is a tough question as it is a profound theological question that theologians grapple with and contended over the years. By God's grace we will need to simplify it but yet we hope not to render it too superficial as well.

In one sentence, we would say that Reformed theology is simply authentic biblical Christianity properly understood and applied by redeemed man as the Lord would have us to do. In other words, the heart of Reformed theology is "The System of Doctrine taught in Scripture" and sometimes it is properly also called the doctrines of grace by some.

Reformed Faith

The use of the phrase the 'Reformed Faith' is traceable to that branch of the 16th century reformation in Europe, particularly associated with John Calvin, Knox, Zwingli and the English puritans. Other synonymous terms include the doctrine of sovereign grace or the Calvinistic tradition, (ie as opposed to Arminianism). Covenant Theology (as opposed to Dispensationalism), and can largely be represented by the Westminster Confession of Faith (1643-1647). Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 (ie used by Reformed Baptist), the Canon of Dort (1618-19), the Helvetic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism or the Belgic Confessions as used by some of the reformed churches in Europe, Canada, Australia and America. Sometimes the acronym, TULIP (which stands for **T**otal depravity, **U**nconditional election, **L**imited or particular atonement, **I**rrresistible grace and **P**erseverance of the saints) has been used to summarize the reformed faith but there is much more to it than just that. By God's grace, we will attempt to explain it in the simplest way that we possibly can without compromising important non negotiable reformed biblical truths for the benefit of our young readers. There are 12 points given below.

1. The Sovereignty of GOD

One of the preeminent principle of The Reformed Faith teaches that the Triune...

Continued on Page 2...

God is absolutely sovereign in creation, providence and redemption and everything. The most important thing we must know about God, is that God is supreme and in absolute control of all things (Dan 4:35). He is on the throne and is above all in all His glory, Jesus Christ is fully God and truly man and is also Lord of our lives (1 Tim 3:16). Therefore God has an absolute right to everything including election of some unto everlasting life.

2. The GRACE of God

The God of the Bible is also merciful and gracious and salvation is by God's sovereign grace alone through faith in Christ alone (Ph 2:8,9) and not of works (Tit 3:5). We have nothing to offer for we are all depraved and sinners condemned except for the grace of God. We bring no merit on our own to God. However since God unconditionally loves us and accepts us through Christ, we need to be filled with indebtedness, gratitude, a sense of our unworthiness and also a sense of our calling, purpose and mission to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. We are not to live for self or the gains of this temporal world but for eternity, nor legalistically of trying to fulfill the letter of the law only but be filled with a sense of God's redeeming grace in saving us which drives us to joyful obedience, love and reverential worship of the most high God and outreach to men. (Mat 22:36-38)

3. The COVENANTS of God

The reformed tradition recognizes that God made His unconditioned and unilateral covenant with His people in the covenant of works in the Garden of Eden before the fall and the covenant of grace after it (Gen 2:15-17, 3:15). God keeps all the promises He made; to Adam, Abraham, Moses Noah, David and to save all the elect of God in the new covenant (Heb 8:13). Therefore we are to honour Him in return and be responsible and faithful beneficiaries of the manifold grace and covenant blessings of God. God's covenant guarantees His love to us unconditionally. In return we are to obey and honour God. These are covenants progressively connected and not disjointed in both the NT and Old Testament.

4. The understanding of the CHURCH

God calls His people out of sin and darkness to salvation as a royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:9) and a peculiar people (as He called the Israelites out of the bondage of Egypt) and there is a church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38). We are to worship Him, to study and obey His Word, and to engage in gospel witness and biblical evangelism. We believe in the free offer of the gospel to all men and the sovereign election of some man by God unto salvation by God (Eph 1:4). Christians should live with a keen sense of purpose and mission and live for Christ with a constant reminder of our vocation on earth and walk worthy of it. The church which comprises the elect of God is a corporate witness for God on earth and believers are to gather for corporate Worship, prayer, keeping of the 2 sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and to enhance spiritual growth of members through the understanding of the Word that is essential for every one who is saved.

Continued on Page 3...

5. The calling of a CHRISTIAN

We are to be set apart or sanctified (after being justified) for God and consecrated unto him and not conformed to the world (Rom 12:1-2) but be salt and light in this fallen society. The workplace is not a necessary evil but a opportunity to shine for Christ where we are. It is part of what it means to be a follower of Christ where as salt and light, we are to do our work (Mat 5:16) and extend His kingdom by His sovereign enabling grace and will to His glory, remembering that we are strangers and pilgrims in this present world (1 Pet 2:11, Heb 11:13).

6. The KINGDOM of God

Christ is Lord and God now; the kingdom of God (same as the kingdom of heaven) is both now and future. There is no postponed kingdom as erroneously understood by some. All Christians ought to wait patiently and expectantly for the imminent second coming of Christ (Tit 2:13-15) who will then judge the world and bring us in His everlasting kingdom. The BPC is premillennial (ie Christ will come and reign for a 1000 years on earth according to Rev 20: 1-7 while some reformed churches are amillennial and others are even postmillennial). We are to engage in holy living, eagerly waiting, and active engagement in gospel witness (evangelism and preaching for Him). We do not sit idle or indifferent about His second return but to be vigilant and diligent witnesses and share Christ with others and live a life of holiness. (Matt 24:14, 1 Pet 1:16, 2 Pet 3:10-14)

7. The proper understanding of the LAW

The Old Testament moral law of God (not the civil or ceremonial) is not abrogated and is still binding and is a meaningful rule for Christian discipleship. There is no contradiction between God's law and His love for us for the former lead us to the latter. God saves His people first through His effectual calling then enables His people to love Him through obeying His law. We are not saved through obeying the law; rather, after we are saved, we are enabled and expected to obey God's law willingly with the enablement of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16). The Ten Commandments are not abrogated but absolutely needful and still relevant today. (Exo 20:1-17)

8. The WORK of the Holy SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Blessed Trinity (1 John 5:7) indwells in believers in both the New Testament and Old Testament (1 Cor 6:19-20) and guides (John 15:26) and is active in both the OT and NT, and He inspired man to write the Bible (2 Tim 3:16-17, 2 Pet 1:20-21). All Spiritual experiences are to be interpreted in the context of the Bible and not the other way round. When we are truly filled with the Spirit, we will be thankful and praise God fearfully and there are no ecstatic speaking of tongues and with the completion of the canon, supernatural healing by man or prophetic utterances have ceased (Eph 5:18-21, 1 Cor 13:8).

9. The WORD and WORSHIP of God

The 66 books of the word of God is inspired, perspicuous, inerrant, authoritative and sufficient and we can fully trust in it. Biblical exposition, teaching and application of the word should be the Primary content of worship, and the word of God should...

Continued on Page 4...

occupy a prominent place in reverential worship services which is to be done in spirit and in truth and not in a contemporary, charismatic or ecstatic manner. Music and other elements of worship are meaningful. However the expository preaching of the Word on the Lord's day is primary and is to be the centre of biblically regulated worship in spirit and in truth and in the beauty of holiness with the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. (Col 3:16, John 4:22-25, 1 Chr 16:29)

10. The nature of MAN

All man are born in sin and are totally depraved and left to our selves, we cannot save our selves nor will we seek God (Rom 3:10-12). Absolute belief in God of the Bible and repentance of sins is essential to conversion (becoming a Christian). Christ is the only one who can save us from our depravity and sins (Act 4:12) and we are to respond with conviction in the confession and Repentance of sins, and turning to the Christ for pardon who died the cross asking for mercies and grace (and believing in) forgiveness through Christ's vicarious death and not on dependent on our self righteousness or the works of man (Tit 3:5).

11. The Particular and Vicarious Work of Christ at Calvary

Christ's death on the cross on behalf of His people is particular in that it is designed to save His people from their sins (Mat 1:21) although it is potentially able to save the world if He wills. Christ's death is efficient for the elect though potentially, it is sufficient for all as Augustine had well said. We must preach / teach the gospel of salvation from Scripture to non-Christians, to the saving of souls (Mat 28:18-20, Acts 1:8) acknowledging God's sovereignty in this matter and over ourselves.

12. The Nature of God's Redemption

We are chosen by God unconditionally before the foundation of the world unto salvation (Eph 1:4) and then called by Him both internally and externally. We will respond effectually as the Spirit of God regenerates us and once saved, we will never lose our salvation. We are not the initiator of our own salvation but it is all of God's sovereign grace that we are saved (Rom 8:29-35, Eph 2:8-9) and our righteousness is like filthy rags before God (Isa 64:6).

There is to be the endurance and perseverance of the saints to the very end of life for all who are truly saved by the Lord. (Jude 23, 24)

Conclusion

There may be other themes that some reformed pastors / theologians may add or elaborate further but generally these are the basics. Being in a reformed church like the BPC, one should know the fundamentals of the reformed faith although other reformed churches may have different emphases or distinctives (ie eschatology, church polity). Hope this is not too complicated and is helpful to you and others in a simple yet comprehensive manner.

*Rev Jack Sin
Maranatha B-P Church, S'pore*

(read Lorraine Boettner on "What is the Reformed Faith?", William Ames on "The Marrow of Theology" or John Calvin, "Institutes of the Christian Religion" for a deeper understanding of the reformed doctrines of grace)

FAMILY WORSHIP AT THE HOME OF YETTA LEIBOWITZ (13 AUG 2008)



FAMILY WORSHIP AT THE HOME OF JOEY & MELISSA SEOW (16 AUG 2008)



WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON
CHURCH THEME: WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR
AND TREMBLING. (Philippians 2:12)

Our worship services begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm.**

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

Worship Services			WELCOME
Morning	<i>Today: 24/08/2008</i>	<i>Next Week: 31/08/2008</i>	We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day.
<i>Chairman:</i>	Jonathan Kim	John Poh	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Pr Mok Chee Cheong	Pr Mark Chen	<p style="text-align: center;">NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library: For those who have borrowed books/materials from the library, kindly ensure that you return them through Yetta. • Pray for Journey Mercies: Sophia & Grace (Jul-Sep, Singapore), Rachel (Singapore & China), Constance (Aug/Sep, US), Daniel & Maureen & Anthony & Helen (Aug/Sep, Malaysia & Singapore), Mok & Carol (Aug/Sep, Israel & Singapore). • Pray for those who are sick: Susan Leibowitz (cancer), Josh's grandma (stroke), Hazel (wrist injury). • Those serving on the Lord's Day for both morning and evening worship services: Please gather behind the pulpit area at 10.30am for prayer. • Sabbath School: Leaflets are placed on the book table to encourage children of ages 6-12 to attend Sunday School. Please feel free to distribute those leaflets to any child, especially yours, who may be interested in joining in. Please note that class will be held at the Library after the morning worship service. • Book Table: Please feel free to browse the book table for materials that are of interest to you, especially some new books that have just been displayed. Please note that materials without price tags are free.
<i>Message:</i>	Giving to Build God's House	Believers Can Have Warped Perspectives Too	
<i>Text:</i>	1 Chronicles 29:1-19	Ruth 1:19-22	
<i>Organist:</i>	Mark	Hubert	
Evening			
<i>Chairman:</i>	Pr Mark Chen	Jonathan Kim	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Pr Mok Chee Cheong	Pr Mark Chen	
<i>Message:</i>	Beware of the Hidden Sin of Self-Righteousness	Squandering on Jesus	
<i>Text:</i>	Luke 13:10-17	Matthew 26:6-13	
<i>Pianist:</i>	Joy	Joy	
Other Duties			
	<i>Today: 24/08/2008</i>	<i>Next Week: 31/08/2008</i>	
<i>Ushers</i>	Josiah / Sharon	Jonathan / Evelyn	
<i>Sunday Sch:</i>	Carol	Hui Min	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Volunteers	Volunteers	
<i>Washing-up:</i>	Volunteers	Volunteers	
<i>Bible Study:</i>	No Bible Study	No Bible Study	
Appointments of the Week			
Fri 30 Aug	7.30pm	Young Adults Fellowship: No Meeting	
Sat 31 Aug	4.00pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Pr Mark Chen	
Last Week's Worship Service Collections			
Offering: £260.85		Lunch: £30.14	
Memory Verse			
<i>Last Week (August 08 Wk 3): Psalm 139:16</i>			
Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.			
<i>This Week (August 08 Wk 4): Psalm 139:17</i>			
How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!			