

The Vine Committee

Editors:

Martin Cheah

mart5003@yahoo.com

John Lee

jpblee@gmail.com

Printer:

Nick Wong

digi_ics@yahoo.com

Writers this issue:

John Lee

Seline Ng

Joyce Tan

Photos:

Martin Cheah



Sometimes we think that God has stopped talking to us but I guess He still does.

Perhaps it is because we do not listen that is why He has to shout it out. Three days prior to my transient ischaemic attack or mild stroke, in layman's terms, Debra had been talking to us over Skype, continuously about exercise. Although she is our precious, we did not seriously pay attention to these words of advice.

In my mind, it is a given that I would still be around to attend her graduation and bring her back to Singapore, to see her start her career and I retire to enjoy life. It did not occur to me that my life could be shortened drastically if I did not heed to God's warning. The word that came to me very clearly from this incident is EXERCISE. Even while in the hospital God used many people, visitors, medical staff and strangers to talk to me about Exercise.

On Saturday, 6th October, I was watching YouTube on the smartTV listening to the various versions of Waltzing Matilda sung by various artistes and feeling nostalgic. Later in the night, I was watching some videos on classical waltz music when I felt a numbness on my left cheek near the ear. It felt strange and I thought it could be a heart attack but on checking the symptoms of a heart attack in the net, I concluded that I did not have most of the symptoms described - *Uncomfortable pressure, fullness, squeezing or pain in the center of the chest lasting more than a few minutes. Pain spreading to the shoulders, neck or arms. The pain may be mild to intense. It may feel like pressure, tightness, burning, or heavy weight. It may be located in the chest, upper abdomen, neck, jaw, or inside the arms or shoulders. Chest discomfort with lightheadedness, fainting, sweating, nausea or shortness of breath. Anxiety, nervousness and/or cold, sweaty skin. Paleness or pallor. Increased or irregular heart rate.*

Feeling of impending doom. The only symptom I had in the list was a feeling of impending doom. That night when I went to bed, I remembered the children's prayer:

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
If I shall die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen

It was not a peaceful night. The next morning, Sunday, the numbness was still there and we decided to consult a doctor. The doctor fearing that with these symptoms and given my age, it could be a stroke, sent us to the hospital. I was able to check myself into the A&E at SGH and Joo See was with me throughout. After some initial tests, including a CT Scan of the brain, the doctor suspected a mild stroke but could not confirm it from the various tests. I was warded for observation.

We informed CS Kong and Rev Anthony but we tried to keep it from Debra because she had an exam on Monday. However, in the age of the world wide web, there was no stopping the news from reaching Australia. Anyway it did not affect her exam. We thank you for all your prayers because God must have heard them *"if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven."* (Matthew 18:19)

The doctor thought it best to ward me for observation until I could have the MRI which may determine the cause of the problem. However I could not have real rest in the hospital because of the activity around me and also I was not free to move around without a nurse following me. So I requested for a discharge to rest at home and return for the MRI appointment.

As I try to analyse the cause of the problem, I realize that it was probably due to three elements, lack of exercise, work stress and diet. However, it was years of lack of exercise, months of work stress and weeks of poor dietary control that may have been the cause. Logically, one should tackle the dietary problem and the work stress as the main culprits but we have to agree that most people cannot resolve work stress, Genesis 3:17b, *"through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.."*

So hopefully, exercise will give the body the resilience to handle work stress.

Finally, what can I say that I learned from this situation?

God is reminding me that we cannot choose the time.

Our time is in His hands. On the bright side, if it is not time, then we will continue to live.

God is still in control of the whole situation.

Perhaps this incident happened at the beginning of Stewardship month for a purpose. Maybe it is time to find and train our replacements. We did not know that Margaret Quek had a talent for taking care of Sunday School children until she volunteered to do so in place of Joo See that Sunday.

We must not procrastinate.

Whatever we have planned to do, we must do it before the day comes and we are unable to carry out our plans. If you had planned some day to write your personal testimony for The Vine, do it now.

We have to trust God.

All my life I stayed in hospital only 1 night when I had the accident on my finger which needed an operation. I never expected that I had to experience a CT Scan or an MRI in my life but suddenly, I had both done and also stayed in the hospital a little longer, 2 days and 1 night. Both the CT scan and MRI did not reveal any problem, so the doctor discharged me. However he left me with 6 weeks of medication. Why? Whatever is God's purpose for this experience, I just have to trust that it will be for good.



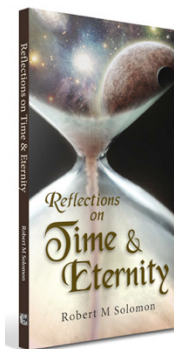
Well, I had run dry of things to write about for the last few issues of The Vine. Is this one way of getting story ideas? I hope not. It is quite embarrassing to have a nurse follow you to toilet.

Here is a verse from the English Standard Version of the Bible that I came across recently. I don't think I am quoting it out of context.

"Remove your stroke from me" (Psalm 39:10 ESV)

I cannot understand it but thank God for His grace and mercy which saw me through this incident.

Martin Cheah



Redeeming Holy Days from Pagan Lies — Hallowe'en: A short history

by Pastor Joseph Abrahamson

There is a lot of new mythology about Halloween that has been invented to claim that Halloween is a pagan holiday. It is not, and it never was a pagan holiday.

Where Did Halloween Start in the Christian Church?

In the first three centuries after Christ's resurrection, the lives of the martyrs of the Church were commemorated on the day and in the place where they were killed. There were so many who were killed because of their faith in Christ during those centuries. Throughout the Christian Church different days were set aside not only for each martyr, but a special day for all Saints.

The earliest reference to a day being dedicated to the commemoration of All the Martyrs and All Saints of the Christian Church comes from the 2nd century. The document is titled "The Martyrdom of Polycarp." Polycarp was a Christian killed because he would not deny Christ.

The document says:

Accordingly, we afterwards took up his bones, as being more precious than the most exquisite jewels, and more purified than gold, and deposited them in a fitting place, whither, being gathered together, as opportunity is allowed us, with joy and rejoicing, the Lord shall grant us to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom, both in memory of those who have already finished their course, and for the exercising and preparation of those yet to walk in their steps. (Chapter 18) [Emphasis added]

Later, a Christian Bishop named Ephraim the Syrian mentions a common All Saints' Day in 373. In 397 St. Basil of Caesarea chose a day when the churches of his bishopric would honor the memories of all Saints known, and unknown, alive or in heaven. Later, John Chrysostom mentions a common day of memorial for the Saints in 407 AD.

In the year 609 or 610 Pope Boniface IV established a date for All Saints' Day on May 13th. And later, in the early 700s AD, Pope Gregory III changed the date to November 1st. Decrees like this took some time to propagate from Rome to the more remote areas where the Church was found. But the change in date had nothing to do with any pagan practices. Pope Gregory IV extended the celebration on this day to the entire

Western Church in the early 800s. And again, the change took time as it spread from Rome.

The point is this: a common day for commemorating the Saints has been around throughout the Christian Church from very early times. And the fact that it falls on November 1st today has nothing to do with paganism.

OK, so what does this have to do with Halloween? In the Bible the day begins at sundown or evening. This is why we have Christmas Eve. Halloween is All Hallows' Eve, that is All Saints' Evening. Halloween is the beginning of All Saints' Day starting at sundown on October 31st.

These days we have "Trick or Treat," costumes sometimes too gruesome to describe: witches, goblins, werewolves, vampires, zombies, Lady Gaga; Jack-O-Lanterns, skeletons, spooky sounds, grave stones, candy and a celebration of gore and all that is un-Holy.

Many of the Christian Churches in the Reformed traditions claim that Halloween is a pagan celebration. Very often they do this by referring to Neopagan and Wiccan writings. And there are many in the Neopagan and Wiccan communities who have tried hard to claim Halloween as an ancient pagan holiday that had been stolen by the Christian Church.

Don't ever expect truth from Neopagans and Wiccans. They already live in a fantasy world created by their own fakelore. The claim is that the old folklore demonstrates where we got Halloween. But folklore does not support the Neopagan or the Wiccan claims about Halloween. Instead they depend on fakelore: invented, and fake, pretend folklore, like Pecos Bill and the song "Follow the Drinking Gourd."

The typical claims in current sources are that Halloween come from "ancient Celtic practices, Catholic and Roman religious rituals and European folk traditions." With respect to the origins of All Saints' Day these claim are false. With respect to the modern re-paganizing of Halloween, the Neopagan version of Halloween doesn't really come from ancient pagan sources. It comes from modern sources that pretend to be old but are not. These modern sources are simply fiction.

Doesn't Halloween Have Its Origins in Samhain?

Neopagans and Wiccans like to claim that the source of Halloween is the Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced Sow-in). There are three basic

problems with their claim. The celebration of All Saints' Day didn't originate in Ireland or any other area populated by Celts or their descendants. None of the days on which All Saints' Day was celebrated had anything to do with any Celtic holiday. The celebration of All Saints' Day in Celtic regions is documented to be older than the documented celebration of Samhain.

So let us look at each of these three claims:

In order for the Neopagan and Wiccan claim that Samhain is the origin of Halloween to be true, then Halloween and All Saints' Day should have started in Celtic areas. But we've already seen that All Saints' Day was celebrated in Syria as early as 373 A.D, in Caesarea in 397 A.D., and in Constantinople (under Chrysostom—modern Istanbul) by 407 A.D. All Saints' Day, and Halloween didn't start in the Celtic countries. But it did take some time for the declarations of Rome to reach distant Celtic areas like Ireland.

In order for the Neopagan and Wiccan claim that Samhain is the origin of Halloween to be true the particular day chosen should have some significance to the Celts and Samhain. But here we run into some serious problems. According to the best sources, Samhain was a Lunar festival of harvest. That means that the day of Samhain can vary up to a month in difference from any Solar year day. Compare, for example, the wide variety of days upon which Easter can take place. When sources claim that Samhain was October 31 to November 1 in the modern Solar Calendar they are being dishonest and disingenuous. They are intending to deceive the reader. Due to the differences between lunar and solar dates, on the average Samhain would take place exactly on October 31st only once in about every 30 years. When the reader adds into this the fact that the Western Calendar changed over from the Julian to the Gregorian at different times in different places, the reader can better understand how artificial the Neopagan and Wiccan claims are about Samhain. The Christian Church didn't get Halloween/All Saints' Day from the pagans, the pagans are trying to claim that Christians stole from them. But the Neopagans and Wiccans cannot even get their calendars straight. And they are hoping that the reader doesn't notice how weak and embarrassing their claim is.

In order for the Neopagan and Wiccan claim that Samhain is the origin of Halloween to be true Samhain they should be able to prove that Samhain is older than All Saints' Day. But, in fact, the opposite is true. We have a manuscript from 843 A.D. where the Irish Christian Bishop Óengus of Tallaght wrote about the celebration of All Saints' Day. It was celebrated in

the Spring of the year at that time and in that place. The Decree of Pope Gregory IV had still not reached Ireland so that All Saints' Day should be celebrated November 1st. But the earliest-ever-mention of Samhain in Irish folklore doesn't come until the 10th Century (Ronald Hutton's 1996 book *Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*). There is no mention of Samhain outside of Ireland until centuries later.

These, then, are the facts.

Samhain comes from the 10th Century A.D. and is a newer invention. All Saints' day is older than Samhain. All Saints' Day came from the practice of honoring the Christian Martyrs in Israel, Turkey, and Syria as early as the 2nd Century and later. All Saints' Day and therefore Halloween originated outside the Celtic sphere of influence and had nothing to do with what the Neopagan and Wiccan claims are about its origin.

In fact, the newer holiday, called Samhain, was a Lunar holiday. This means that it could be celebrated on any of 30 or so days in Autumn of a given year depending on when the harvest moon was recognized in Ireland. And very, very rarely did this moon happen on October 31st. This simple truth cannot be emphasized enough.

Any book or website or article that claims that the ancient Celts celebrated Samhain on October 31 is perpetrating a lie. Modern Neopagans and Wiccans invented their own calendar through the 1970s and 1980s and they chose Oct. 31 to be the day for Samhain. It was a move on their part to put forward the false claim that Halloween started in paganism.

Why Would the Non-Christians Want to Undermine This Holiday?

All Saints' Eve (Halloween) and All Saints' Day have a special place in the commemoration of the Christian Church because of the Reformation. It was on October 31st, Halloween, that Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the door of the church at Wittenberg, Germany. It was on that date he chose to challenge the corruption in the official church about the notion that salvation in Christ could be bought with money or works. All Saints are saved by Grace, through Faith, revealed by God's Word in Christ.

Halloween, October 31st is Reformation Day. On October 31, 1517 the Church of Christ began to return to the authority of Scripture alone over the traditions and will of man. It was the day that the Church began to return to salvation by Faith in Christ alone over the works of human will and deeds prescribed by humans. The day that the Church began to return to

salvation by Grace alone, rather than the effort of the individual or that individual's reliance upon the efforts of the saints who had gone before him. It was the day that the Church returned to reliance upon Christ alone and not upon self.

It should not be surprising that Satan and the World have gone to such extremes to defile Halloween with anything that would distract Christians and the unbelievers from Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, Sola Gratia and Solus Christus (Scripture Alone, Faith Alone, Grace Alone, and Christ Alone).

So what is older? All Saints' Day or Trick or Treating?

Halloween, Reformation Day, All Saints' Day is a very special day of the year for the Christian Church. We commemorate all saints past, present, and future with the confession that we cannot save ourselves with our own works, no price we could ever pay would be good enough. But Christ has paid for the whole world. And all believers in Christ, and these are the Saints, will be raised on the last day to eternal life.

Reclaiming Halloween means knowing where it comes from, why the day was established, and the historical significance it holds for the Christian Church. Satan and the world are always willing to undermine and steal anything that is of value to the confession of the truth of Scripture. Let us not fall prey to the lies.

Halloween Traditions:

In this world some traditions have become the mainstay of Halloween. They have been claimed by the Neopagans and Wiccans as evidence that Christianity is a fraud and newcomer that has replaced the "Older" so-called "Truth". But they lie.

The Haunted House started in the early 1970s as a way to keep kids entertained on Halloween. So which is older, All Saints Day starting in the 2nd Century or Haunted Houses starting in the 1970s?

Jack o'Lanterns are an American invention from the mid 1800s. It was in 1837 that the term "Jack o' Lantern" first appeared as a term for a carved vegetable lantern. But which is older? All Saints' Day or the Jack O'Lantern?

Wearing costumes on Halloween is first known in Scotland in 1895 and in the United States in 1911. The earliest use of the words "trick or treat" is from 1927 in the United States. In the early 20th Century there were thousands of postcards made with Halloween themes, but none of them showed "trick or treating" until the 1930s.

PRAISE THE LORD. MY BROTHER IS SAVED!

All praise and glory to our gracious and mighty God, who has lovingly extended my elder brother, Chuan Ann's life.

On 8th October 2012, around 11 am, my brother had a heart failure and collapsed at NKF upon entering the premises before he could have his dialysis. Fortunately, he was at NKF where there are professional nurses to administer emergency treatment on him and had him rushed to A&E of NUH by ambulance within the shortest time.

They were unable to reach his wife on her handphone. If he had collapsed at home or half-way to NKF, he would be dead.

This brother of mine has many medical conditions and recently his health is deteriorating and I have been praying for his salvation and God's protection and healing on him. Therefore, throughout the whole episode, God was definitely with him and God's love and mercy upon him was evident.

At the precise moment of his heart attack, a nurse from SGH called me and asked, "How's Ng Chuan Ann? I can't get him on his handphone as he didn't answer. He was supposed to dress his amputation wound last Thursday but he didn't turn up, can you ask him to come tomorrow?" That call triggered my mum and I to start calling for my brother on his handphone.

When I tried calling my brother on his handphone to relay the message and could not get him, I called my mum to pass him the message as he usually goes over to her place for dinner after his dialysis on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. My mum told me that he just called her awhile ago and told her that he was feeling uncomfortable and will not go over to her place for dinner that day.

When my mum probed further, he told her not to ask. Both my mum and I kept calling him and sms him but there was no response. This was very unusual and has never happened before. My mum started to get anxious.

Around 7 pm, my mum called and told me there was still no response from him. I suggested that she go to his house and check. If he is not at home,

something might have happened to him. Upon finding that he was not at home, she panicked and asked me to go to NKF to check.

It was at NKF that we were told my brother had a heart attack and collapsed around 11am. The nurse told me that his heart had stopped and there was no pulse and despite doing CPR on him and the paramedics also tried shocking him twice while rushing him to NUH, they failed to revive him.

I quickly called NUH to enquire about him and was told that he was in critical condition in ICU and the doctor asked us to be prepared for the worst as they had tried defibrillating his heart twice and had done a stent for him to clear the blockage but he still has not responded.

We were told that he had two serious blockages in his heart and one side of the heart muscles was dead. When we rushed to the ICU, we were devastated to see him hooked on to so many machines and there were three pipes in his mouth. I immediately prayed for God's mercy to sustain and revive him and claimed on God's power to restore his heart and clear all blockages as he needs God's salvation. I read bible verses and sang Christian songs to him to assure him of God's love for him and God's power, urging him to call out in his spirit to Jesus to help him. I assured my mum that God loves him and will revive him, only Jesus has the power to revive him.

Throughout the night, my mum kept calling on Jesus to be merciful to my brother and prayed for him even though she has not fully turned to God though she had prayed to receive Him as Saviour many years ago.



The next day, we continue to pray, sing and read Bible verses to him. At around 1.30 pm, Deacon Peter came to visit him, we again prayed, sang and read Bible verses to him. Around 2.30 pm, we saw his toes wriggle and the nurse who was monitoring his condition via the computer outside the ICU came in to inform us that our praying and talking to him had caused him to respond and she told us to continue to do it. Thereafter, his heart, pulse rate and blood pressure became stabilized and he became semi-conscious.

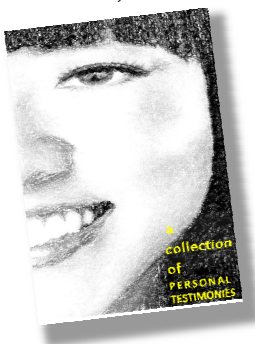
By God's grace, he regained consciousness on 11th October 2012 and on the evening of 12th October 2012 he was off all machines and tubes. He was out of ICU and transferred to the Normal ward on 14th October 2012.

On 18th October 2012, he prayed to receive Christ. All glory, praise and honour to our Almighty God who is powerful and good all the time. Indeed He is in control. Heartfelt thanks to our brothers and sisters in JCC for praying for my brother.

God bless.

Seline Ng

On 21st October, the Multi Media Ministry was distributing a limited edition booklet, "a collection of Personal Testimonies". Did you receive a copy? If you did, then please add your personal testimony to this collection by sending it to the Editor of The Vine.



Your story may be as dramatic as Paul's or as simple as Matthew's but it will still be your unique story. Even if you received Christ at a rally together with thousands of others, it is still unique because we want to know how you came to be at that rally in the first place.

Even if you did not manage to get a copy of this booklet, we urge you to share your personal testimony of God's grace to you with all of us. May God be praised!

Martin Cheah

...I Remembered How I Became a Christian...

I have been so busy with work, studies and mending my health when my routine was rocked by an email from Martin Cheah to write something about why I became a Christian. Then, I remembered my hands were rusty in writing and I have uncompleted articles sitting in the folders of my laptop for quite a while.

The timing was apt as I glanced through my previous articles. I sat at the bedside, thinking of how and why I decided to become a Christian. Memories started to unfold as there was more to the article shared in “The Vine” many months back. Thus, it is not a sheer coincidence if you find portions of this article familiar as it breeds more details to the turning point of my life when I said “YES” to Jesus.

No life, No God. Know life, Know God. Pastor Andrew Thinagaran

I was a staunch Taoist and Buddhist in an Anglican School. In retrospect, I never understood how I could be a Taoist and Buddhist at the same time! Nevertheless, the story goes like this.

It was not my first choice of Secondary School after PSLE. Like many other young girls my age, entering a girls’ school was more popular. I had wanted Tanjong Katong Girls’ Secondary School which was obviously my first choice as I was residing near Marine Parade then. On hindsight, it was a blessing for me that I did not get my first choice of a school.

As a young girl who was brought up in a strict and protective family, it was natural that I took after the family’s religious ways and paid respects to our ancestors. It was at Anglican High that I got to know Jesus and Christianity. There was compulsory worship assembly every Wednesday. I knew Jesus then and did not take much notice until that night.

I had the weirdest experience. I recalled the effort in trying to get up but I could not. The pressure was so great and my mind was racing for help. No other names called, worked. Then, I shouted “JESUS, please help me!” Finally, I could breathe from the choking experience I had in my sleep. I woke up in cold perspiration. It was all over. I was left bewildered and scared wondering what had really happened.

Most importantly, the Name of Jesus worked. Released from the grip of fear and the unknown, I started wondering why it had happened and about Jesus?

The next afternoon, I went to All Saints' church. I sat in church with no answers but my mind was filled with questions after the frightful night. I began my journey to find out more about Jesus.

I related my experience to a fellow classmate who is a Christian. She shared with me about Jesus Christ. I was not convinced and she persuaded me to visit a family church in Bedok.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)

It was after sessions of questioning, debate and deliberate contentions that I finally took a decision to become a Christian. Soon I was baptized. The journey was not easy as I learnt more about Jesus. My life at home became chaotic when my parents found out that I was attending church.

As a young Christian, I spent my time in the Youth Ministry, acted as the Treasurer for the collection of tithes, helped with the tea breaks and preparation of the Communion, visited church members in need, went for Bible studies, supported the Children's class. I learnt to pray and the Name of Jesus gave me peace. There was peace in Jesus.

"Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way." (2 Thessalonians 3:16)

The time spent in Church affected my parents' expectations for me. They were worried that I was joining a cult group. In that year, besides hopes of their daughter passing the Secondary Three examinations, I had to sit for my GCE O Levels Second Language Chinese paper. Family ties strained as I was faced with life changes as a teenager, grappling with examinations and upset parents.

I became quiet and withdrawn. I passed my GCE O Levels and moved on to College. I managed to further my studies and met good Christian friends. We studied and prayed together.

Then, I was visiting churches to find answers. I had better relations at home but my parents had not accepted my decision to be a Christian. I continued with bible studies at my bible study teacher's place nearby with my ex-classmates. The bible study sessions were pivotal in helping me deal with challenges through learning and sharing of God's Word and love.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort." (2 Corinthians 1:3)

After graduation, I started work in a Quasi-government organization. My work life as a young executive began. It was an exciting start to socializing and networking. I had the chance to travel for work, training and leisure on complimentary tickets every year.

I realized that Jesus played an important part in keeping my path straight in the sight of temptations such as materialism, power, recognition and having more money. The exposure to different types of people and situations were an eye-opener for me.

You know, jobs came and went. The people I met, left. I was still having my moments with God. Thankfully, I was still attending Bible study and singing in a choir at a huge Church in Dhoby Gaut.

These are my initial years of Christian life. Now?

"We know and rely on the love of God that has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him?" (1 John 4:16)

For me, knowing Jesus and being a Christian were the best decisions that I have made. It is a love relationship that Jesus is always there no matter what happens.

It is 'I' who sometimes forget Jesus. It is 'I' that sometimes regret that I should have more faith. It is Jesus who always remembers that I am precious because of His Grace.

"Love never fails." (1 Corinthians 13:8)

Life experiences came and went. I am in a different phase now (at least that's how I feel). Jesus is always close whether I am angry, happy or sad.

It is like how you know when someone loves you and really cares for you. You know, don't you?

Yes, I need to complete my work and assignment and hold on to more sleep as much as I can. But, do you know that this article is completed instead! Love finds a way and the interruption to my routine was a good reminder that Jesus was and will always be my first Love.

That's how I became a Christian. What's your story?

JOYCE TAN



EATING TOGETHER

Whether it is a meeting or a celebration, eating together is one of the most common activities of JCC. After all, the communion service is a



remembrance of the Last Supper. Jesus attended a number of dinners and he himself provided dinner for large crowds on two occasions. The early Christians ate together daily in Act 2:46.



So come 22nd December 2012, the Outreach Committee is organizing a sit down meal at the nearby Fairway Country Club. Eating is a Christian activity. Don't just come for Prayer Meetings; CG Meetings, Discipleship Education or Worship Services, come also for this Christmas Outreach Meal.

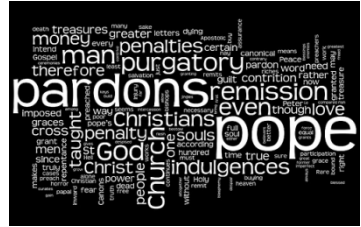


Martin Cheah



The Protestant Reformation

If there were no Martin Luther, would there have been the Protestant Reformation as we know it? While Martin Luther's 95 theses posted on the door of a church in Wittenberg in 1517 spurred the setting right of the wrongs committed by the Roman Catholic Church then, he was capably joined by Ulrich Zwingli (a Swiss pastor and theological scholar) who in 1518 also started to advocate reforming the Catholic Church in Switzerland.



It can be said that all the protestant churches today, notwithstanding their denominational distinctives, shared the underpinning in history by the separation from the Roman Catholic Theology whereby the Lutheran Theology was established on the following bedrock of five solas propounded by Luther:

- sola scriptura (Scripture alone) – The Bible is the only inspired and authoritative Word of God. The Scripture itself is infallible, but human interpretations are subject to error. The best interpretation of Scripture is Scripture itself; in simple terms, a clear-cut part of Scripture illuminates the truth in a more abstruse part. This is distinct from the application of the Pope's authority (for example) or the sanction of church tradition.
- sola fide (faith alone) – Intellectual debates or philosophical arguments may open our minds somewhat (perhaps to the fact that Man is so hopelessly inadequate to fathom the depths of the physical and spiritual universe by the application of thought and knowledge), but ultimately at the point of accepting the Gospel, we do so by faith in surrender, in humility with nothing to boast that we have contributed anything to deserve our salvation. Certainly, Man cannot propose contribution of money to the church by way of buying indulgences (for example) to claim a right to salvation.
- sola gratia (grace alone) – Scripture tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We have all committed offences, so unless we are pardoned, we cannot go away scot free. Without the grace of God, by what merit could we earn the salvation? By works?

- solus Christus (through Christ alone) – John 3:16 and John 14:6 make this abundantly clear.
- soli Deo gloria (glory to God alone) – Heb. 12:2 says that Jesus is the perfecter of faith. Rom. 12:3 says that God has given to each a measure of faith. Rom. 10:17 says that faith comes from hearing and hearing through the Word of Christ. 2 Cor. 10:15 tells us that faith can grow. Martin Luther in dealing with the topic “Justification By Faith” correctly expounded that faith is a gift from God. (See also Eph. 2:8b) Isn’t it clear that God did everything, including the atonement by the blood of His Son and the granting of the faith through which we can unmeritoriously claim the gift of salvation offered by His grace? Doesn’t it naturally follow that God takes all glory alone? As Isaiah 42:8 tells us, God will not share His glory.

There may be a misperception by some that the five solas are five things for us to extract meaning by looking at each independently. Doing so may lead to the misplaced perception of contradictions and illogicality. The word “alone” for each sola is not an adjective to separate one sola from the other solas; rather, it is to express the exclusiveness and sacredness of each requirement for salvation independent of extra-biblical considerations introduced by Church leaders. (In the context of the Reformation, Luther was protesting against the Pope for the wrong teachings of the Roman Catholic Church that gave importance to traditions and indulgences.)

As Lutherans, we believe that we are saved by faith alone (not cerebral ratiocination) through grace alone (not on account of faith-and-works) in Christ alone (only one path to salvation) to the glory of God alone (not given to human laurels) and all this that we believe is founded on the authority of Scripture alone (not on Scripture plus extraneous contributions of wisdom by human instructors or teachers). Thus, it can be seen that the five solas are actually one single creed that is a solid spiritual truth. This forms the crux of Lutheran Theology (with JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE as the central tenet) that is hard to assail. It would

The Shocking Truth:

In 1517, the Pope needed money to repair the church of St. Peter's in Rome. To obtain the money, he sold indulgences, or "tickets to heaven", for the project. In response to this, Martin Luther wrote the 95 Theses, which were 95 arguments against indulgences using the Bible as evidence, and he nailed them to the church door. This event began the Reformation, an era in which people tried to reform, or change for the better, the church.



require tremendous effort for anyone to strike at it as against a single rock; non-believers find it easier (or convenient) to look at the five solas of Lutheran Theology as five discrete stones for rapping.

Actually, the five solas of Lutheran Theology is Protestant Theology. It is not Roman Catholic Theology. The vast majority of Protestant churches (in the mainstream) agree on the five solas. Even though there are distinctives (on various matters) that tell apart the Christians of different denominational persuasions, there is fundamental unity on these essentials for salvation. Even any illusory (I emphasize “illusory”; i.e., not real) pilling on the surfaces of the five stones will seem inconsequential if we perceive the stones as fused into a single hard Gospel rock that cannot be trivialized.



This month, we celebrate the 495th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. As Lutherans, with “Luther” in the name of “The Lutheran Church”, we cannot help not to be reminded of our Lutheran history – its significance to our consciousness of the five solas in our embrace of the Gospel. Yet, it is not merely a Lutheran history but principally a Protestant history that our non-Lutheran brothers and sisters who share a common faith in Christ may also find worthy to contemplate the significance of Christians having set right the “works righteousness” error of Rome, with thanks to the two theological giants (Luther and Zwingli) among various others for their convictions to, and illumination of, the Gospel truth.

JOHN LEE



Answers to
last issue's
SUDOKU

S	L	E	A	O	D	G	V	U
V	A	G	E	U	S	D	L	O
D	O	U	V	G	L	S	E	A
L	V	S	D	A	E	O	U	G
U	E	O	S	V	G	A	D	L
A	G	D	O	L	U	V	S	E
E	S	L	G	D	A	U	O	V
G	U	V	L	S	O	E	A	D
O	D	A	U	E	V	L	G	S

Modified Sudoku

Complete the remaining cells with the letters A, B, E, L, I, J, S, U, V

Each row, each column and each 3 × 3 grid that you complete must not have any repeat letter.

Can you find the hidden message about Jesus?

E				A				U
				S				
				V				
V	J	I	U	I	S	A	B	S
			S	B	J			
			L	I	V			
				J				
				U				
J				L				I

Jeff and Selia

With thanks for God's bountiful blessings, Jeff & Selia warmly invited their friends and relatives to witness their Holy Matrimony at Jurong Christian Church on 13th October.

It was truly a lovely occasion as Rev. Chung delivered the exhortation with a lovely gift to the newlyweds – a Chinese love poem that he specially composed for the loving pair:

谢谢神恩佑爱侣 (xiè xiè shén ēn yòu ài lǚ)
心心相印映情深 (xīn xīn xiāng yìn yìng qíng shēn)
弦动华年琴声和 (xián dòng huá nián qín shēng huò/hé)
张口樱桃瑟音谐 (zhāng kǒu yīng táo sè yīn xié)
梦入姻亲郎君至 (mèng rù yīn qīn láng jūn zhì)
云现倩影丽人来 (yún xiàn qiàn yǐng lí rén lái)

For the benefit of those who do not understand Chinese, here is a plausible translation:

Thank God for His grace that covers the lovers
Whose hearts beat as one their deep love shines
Their beautiful years touch off a sweet melody from the zither
Those cherry lips tempt out the music harmony from the harp
In a nuptial dream the noble groom arrives
And the image of a dazzling bride floats in on a cloud

I didn't know that we had a poet in our midst to come out with such a romantic piece to celebrate the joining of this man (Jeff) and this woman (Selia) in Holy Matrimony in the presence of God. The most-eligible man on this occasion (Jeff) took as his wife the most passionate woman (Selia) who pleasantly surprised the witnesses as she sang flawlessly the Mandarin number 我愿意 (I'm Willing) with her sweet musical voice as her way of saying "I DO" to the man who also promised to God in the presence of all witnesses to love and take care of her forever. I think the song was a 1994 runaway hit by Chinese singer/songwriter 王菲 (Faye Wong).

It was a joyful occasion for Jeff and Selia. It was an occasion for friends and relatives to extend their congratulations and best wishes to this pair of 鸳鸯 ("Mandarin Ducks" – affectionate couple) as they joined hands and hearts in perfect faith in Christ Jesus.

JOHN LEE



Seven Prayer Tips to Quickly Improve Your Prayer Life

By John C Arnold

If your prayer life has become routine and lifeless or you struggle with consistency, try implementing some of the prayer tips below.

1. Schedule your prayer time.

People schedule what is important to them. You can pray anywhere and anytime, but you may need to schedule time to keep prayer from being squeezed to the margin of life or completely out of life.

2. Pray out loud. I used to struggle with my mind wandering during prayer. That struggle ended for me when I began verbalizing prayers. I found that I could sustain my attention much longer by verbalizing my pray

3. Pray on Paper. Writing your prayers will physically engage you in prayer in similar way to praying out loud. Writing your prayers not only helps you maintain focus, but the process of writing is very clarifying. If you are not sure where to start, try writing a letter to God. "Dear God,...."

4. Use a Devotional Guide. Using a prayer guide prompts you to pray for things you normally wouldn't.

5. Pray with someone. Small prayer groups can be particularly powerful experiences. Be sure to spend most of your time praying. Some prayer groups lapse into discussion and fail to spend significant time praying. Some groups passively resist moving into prayer by spending a long time gathering prayer requests from one another.

6. Keep a prayer list. Do you ever forget to pray for people until you see them again? A prayer list helps you remember. A prayer list also aids you in watching for how God responds. Noting God's response hones your spiritual awareness.

7. Be sure to listen. One-sided conversation with someone who can't shut-up do not build relationship. Do not be that way with God. Take time in your prayers to listen. Still your mind. Ask questions and then be attentive to the thoughts, images, and memories that come to mind.

You don't need to do all of these at once. One or two prayer tips periodically interspersed in your prayer life can prevent you from just going through the motions. The key is to stay very intentional in your prayer life so you don't fall into a rut.