

# 克利夫蘭華人教會

## Cleveland Chinese Christian Church

474 Trebisky Road, Richmond Heights, OH 44143 (216) 531-2499  
3224 Payne Ave., Cleveland, OH 44114 (216) 621-1412

Pastoral Letter, January, 2017

---

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the English worship services, we have begun this year considering our priorities for 2017 through our study of Isaiah 6. There we saw God used Isaiah and Judah's trial to draw Isaiah into a deeper revelation of His glory. As we examined his experience, we saw how the revelation of God's glory led Isaiah to repentance and the pursuit of holiness, and a commission to serve God for His good purposes. From this, we outlined three priorities for us to pursue in the coming year, both in our personal lives and together as a church:

Straining Godward—A Life and Church Captivated by God

Living Heavenward—A Life and Church Devoted to God

Reaching Outward—A Life and Church Reaching Souls for God

Through this year, we will try to keep these priorities before us that we may bear much fruit for God's kingdom and enjoy the grace of God through a life of holiness.

This month we will turn our attention to the second of these priorities – Living Heavenward. By this I mean pursuing a life of holiness—a life devoted to God—by turning from living for the things of this world and living for the treasures of the next. God Himself has set us apart for holy purposes and eternal treasures and joy. Thus, a life of holiness is not a life of legalistic obedience to a list of commands, but a life of pursuing the truly satisfying pleasures of living in the presence of God. This is the life God offers us in Christ.

One of the books I have been reading recently is *Josiah's Reformation* by Richard Sibbes. Sibbes (1577-1635) was a Puritan pastor who came to be affectionately known as the 'heavenly doctor' for he had a gift of helping his people to get below the level of superficial religion and let the Word of God work graciously upon the heart. In this particular book, Sibbes is considering how we may have a tender and humble heart before God as he meditates on 2 Chronicles 34:26-27:

But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard his words against this place and its inhabitants, and you have humbled yourself before me and have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the LORD.

There is much food for the soul in his little book, but as we consider pursuing a life devoted to God, perhaps the steps Sibbes outlines for strengthening our souls to hate sin would be a helpful place for us to start. He is speaking about how we may humble ourselves before God ("true humiliation") so that sin and our love for the world may be broken, and that God may hear us.

- 1) *Consider the ugliness of sin*, how opposite and distasteful it is to the Almighty... There is not the least sin but is committed against an infinite majesty, yea, a good God, to whom we owe ourselves and all that we have, who waits for you to turn to Him and live forever...
- 2) *Grow in the love of God*. The more we delight in Him, the more we shall hate whatsoever is contrary to Him.
- 3) To strengthen our indignation against sin, we should *drive our affections another way, and set them upon the right object...* We must set our soul to the glory of the Giver [of love] by loving what He loves and hating what He hates...
- 4) *True humiliation proceeds from faith* and the faithful humble themselves at the threat of judgment and not merely when their sins are found out and temporal judgments come upon them. This because they fear God Himself, and not merely God's judgment.
- 5) *True humiliation is joined with hope* to raise up our souls with some comfort; thus, we are humbled, but not desperate... True humiliation carries us to God...
- 6) *The child of God is humbled because he has sinned against God, and not because God's judgment is on him*, while the hypocrite is sorrowful for the judgment, but not for the sin.
- 7) *True humiliation is thorough*. The children of God are diligent to search out and turn from their sin before God, and are not merely concerned with comforting their mind with a show of humility.

A heavenward life, a life that is devoted to God for His good and gracious purposes, will be serious about rooting out sin. May God help us to examine our own hearts by the holy Word of God, and be truly humbled, yes, even humiliated, by our sin, that we may be turned to resting in His mercy and grace through Jesus Christ.

Praying for a heavenward life with you,

PASTOR HOUSE