

Feltham Evangelical Church (Newsletter May 2007)

A Bible-based church making known the Christian Faith

Calendar

w/c 29th April

29th 9.30.a.m Lord's Supper
29th 11.00.a.m A Osgood
1st 5.45.p.m. Lighthouse
2nd 7.30.p.m Prayer / Bible Study
3rd 7.30.p.m. Church Members Meeting (AGM)
4th 9.30.a.m Coffee Morning

w/c 6th May

6th 9.30.a.m Lord's Supper
6th 11.00.a.m P Mead (refreshments afterwards)
8th 5.45.p.m. Lighthouse
9th 7.30.p.m. Prayer / Bible Study
11th 9.30.a.m. Coffee Morning
12th 10.00.a.m. Leaflet Distribution
12th 7.00.p.m. Feltham Bible Focus; B Allenby
(subject; *Witness at Work*)

w/c 13th May

13th 9.30.a.m Lord's Supper

13th 11.00.a.m B Allenby
13th 1.p.m. Lunch
13th 2.p.m. B Allenby
15th 5.45.p.m Lighthouse
16th 7.30.p.m Prayer / Bible Study
18th 9.30.a.m Coffee Morning

w/c 20th May

20th 9.30.a.m Prayer and Praise
20th 11.00.a.m P Venables (Lord's Supper)
22nd 5.45.p.m.Lighthouse
23rd 7.30.p.m Prayer / Report (E John)
25th 9.30.a.m Coffee Morning

w/c 27th May

27th 9.30.a.m Lord's Supper
27th 11.00.a.m P Venables
28th 9.00.a.m. Church Outing (see notes below)
30th 7.30.p.m Prayer / Bible Study
1st (June) 9.30.a.m Coffee Morning

News

Philip Venables had to undergo emergency surgery to remove his appendix on April 12th. This occurred whilst he and the family were visiting his mother. Accordingly he had to spend a time in Macclesfield District General Hospital. He is making steady progress as he recuperates. Pray that God might use this experience to refresh Philip for the service of God here in Feltham.

Michael Loosley has had to be admitted into hospital once again in April.

James Phillips is due to undergo an operation on his knee on May 14th.

Notes

A Fellowship Lunch is set for May 13th, Brian Allenby who is Director of the Christians in Work organization is due to be with us over this weekend, please come and join in this time together. The lunch is on a bring-and-share basis.

Feltham Bible Focus On the previous evening, May 12th Mr Allenby will be speaking the subject of our witness for the LORD in our work circumstances. This is the fifth of our Feltham Bible Focus meetings and it has been our privilege, thus far, to be able to hear God's word and enjoy fellowship with other Christians.

Church Members Annual General Meeting (AGM) has had to be delayed due to Philip's operation. The meeting is now set for the evening of May 3rd. Pray the LORD'S blessing on this time of fellowship for the church members.

Church Outing The outing this year, has now been re-scheduled and is planned for May 28th and the destination is set to be Woodside Animal Farm and Leisure Park near Luton. The admission cost is per person aged 2 to 14 is £3.00 and 15 and overs is £4.00 for entrance to the Park. We plan to travel by mini-bus. Voluntary contributions towards travel expenses will be welcomed according to each person's discretion.

Spiritual Notes Where do our problems come from?

It is surely true that as believers in the LORD Jesus we are not exempt from the general problems of life. Difficult relationships, health problems, financial problems, unemployment, wayward children are all experienced by God's people. When we have problems we often comment that Satan is tempting us or that this is a real test from the LORD. This leads us to ponder upon the origin of our problems. How we can know if something is resulting from the tempting of the evil one or the testing of the LORD? Where do our problems come from?

Biblical illustrations

The incident which above all others displays the workings of Satan to tempt a man to sin and disobey God is the temptation of our LORD Jesus. Clearly the temptings experienced by our LORD in that wilderness scene were from Satan. Mark says **he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan** (Mark 1:13a). However, it is interesting to see that Matthew says **then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil** (Matt.4:1). Notice then that God had a purpose. Jesus did not just happen to end up in the wilderness and coincidentally Satan was there to tempt Him. Rather, the Holy Spirit of God sent Him there so that He could be tempted. We can say carefully that in the wilderness, by using the

agency of Satan, the Father tested the Son to prove to all in heaven and on earth that this Jesus is conqueror of all; even Satan. Jesus resisted the devil and God was glorified thereby.

We learn then from the wilderness temptations of our LORD that in the problems of life God and Satan are both active. Satan is working to make us sin by turning us against God and His standards whilst God is working to increase our faith by leading us to trust Him in the hard issues of life. This is the heart of the teaching we can glean from the experiences of Job. Satan was set on making Job curse God (see Job 2:5). Yet at the same time the LORD was specifically allowing Satan to “hit” Job so that the blamelessness of Job would be proven to all by Job's continual trust in God. We might say that, God “won out” through Job retaining his trust in God. And in the end this man of faith was richly blessed (see Job 42).

A further very interesting example of how we see God and Satan at work in the circumstances of life is found when David decides to number the nation of Israel. 2 Sam. 24:1 indicates that the LORD moved David to number the nation so as to judge His people. Whilst the parallel account in 1 Chron. states that **Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel** (1 Chron. 21:1). And so we ask the question: who was responsible for moving David to call the census? To which we answer both Satan and God were.

But who is in charge?

We conclude then that in the difficulties / problems of life, God and Satan are both at work, but with diametrically opposed agendas. Satan wants us to curse God, God wants us to trust Himself. The danger though, at this point is that we conclude that life operates amidst uncertainty about whether God or Satan will triumph. Such “dualist” teaching is wrong and completely mis-represents the Bible's teaching. What we can say is that the circumstances of life always have two levels to them. There is the immediate and the ultimate. God is always ultimate. Our folly, Satan's schemings the decisions of others may all contribute to the immediate cause of our circumstances. However, behind the immediate there is always the ultimate and God is always working for the good of His people (see Rom. 8:28).

This leads us to assure our faith with the assertion that GOD IS IN CONTROL. He is not in a battle with the devil to work out who will triumph. He is the victor. The resurrection of our LORD Jesus is the most glorious example of this. Wicked men, inspired of Satan, drove Him to His death, but this was all according to God's plan (see Acts 2:23). And God raised Him up and in so doing rendered the evil one powerless in the matter of death (see Acts 2:24 and Heb. 2:14-15). God is both triumphant and in control.

Of all the biblical writers it is Isaiah who brings out the glory of our “ultimate” God who is triumphant and in control. To read Isaiah 45 and 46 is to get a flavour of the supreme authority of our God. Is. 45:7, for example, says: **I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.'**

What can we learn?

But how do we work these things out in the day to day reality of life? Some theological understanding is found in James 1:12-14. v12 indicates that trusting God through the testings of life will lead to blessing in the form of the crown of life. This blessing probably cross references back to 1:2-3: **my brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.** On the other hand defying God and following temptation leads to sin which, in turn, leads to catastrophe; death. The critical issue then is not to sit around wondering where did this or that come from, but rather we should actively respond to the issues presented to us in life with faith in God.

Let us look at a practical example. A difficulty arises between yourself and another Christian in the church. How are you going to respond. The way of Satan through temptation is to say *“I'll never speak to that person again; I hate them!”* This is to fall into Satan's trap; he has led you away, there is division in the church and he gloats. Rather we should come before God in prayer, seek to implement God's standards in His Word (Matt. 18:16-20 for example) and then through appropriate talking through the issue with the other person seek to restore the relationship. This is the way of faith. It is the way to get the blessing, the crown of life, from the testing.

It has been said that the tough matters of life either make you to be sweeter or more bitter. If we respond by faith and stick close by our God through the trial then there is greater godliness. Whereas if we turn against God and fall into the temptation that Satan has set then we become hardened against God.

The key issue then when troubles assail us is not deducing where they come from. Rather it is being wise as to how we respond. The spiritual health of our souls is at stake. The same trouble sweetens one, under God, and embitters another, under Satan. Which way will you go?