**22nd November – Paul Hallam**

**Prayer**

Lord we thank You that although we cannot meet together we are still joined together, because we are all joined to you. As we pray, worship and meditate,

may we sense Your presence, and really feel unity in You. Amen.

**Hymn MP 506**

O Lord my God! when I in awesome wonder

consider all the works Thy hand hath made.

I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,

Thy power throughout the universe displayed;

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,*

*How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,*

*How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander

and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees

when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,

and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze;

*Then sings my soul*....

And when I think that God His Son not sparing,

sent him to die - I scarce can take it in,

that on the cross my burden gladly bearing,

He bled and died to take away my sin:

*Then sings my soul*....

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation

and take me home - what joy shall fill my heart!

Then shall I bow in humble adoration,

and there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!

*Then sings my soul*....

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**Reading Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-24**

**Meditation**

As the government restrictions continue I increasingly hear of statements like, “I don’t want anyone telling me what I must do or must not do.” We fought a war so that we might have freedom, and after long campaigning parliament extended this freedom over the whole population. When such infringements of personal liberties are carried out by dictatorial regimes in other parts of the world we condemn them as evil. However, there is a profound difference between our government and that of a dictator. The aim of the dictator is his self promotion and the suppression or even destruction of his competitors. The purpose of our government is the protection and wellbeing of the people. Their plans may not be perfect, but their intention is good.

In the bible reading Adam and Eve were content to follow God’s instructions until Satan comes and stirs up a resentment of God’s rule. He says, “God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God knowing good and evil.” In other words, God is a dictator, who wants to keep you down. Disobedience will give you equality with God.

What is the reality? Is God a dictator who wants to keep mankind down in order to promote His own supremacy? God is supreme, not because He keeps others down, but because He is the creator of all things. He is eternal, without beginning or end, and relies on no one for His supremacy, and so He has the right to expect our obedience.

Adam’s disobedience changed everything. God didn’t need to tell him about his sin. He had a guilty conscience. He knew he was a sinner and his warm fellowship with God was replaced by shame and fear. He felt his nakedness, but this was more than a nakedness of the body, there was a deeper uncleanness of the soul. He wanted to hide himself from God, and then pass the blame on to Eve. Sin spoils our relationship with God.

If we were to describe sin we would, perhaps, think of crimes, and hurtful or selfish behaviour, but Adam didn’t do anything that would hurt another person. He disregarded and challenged the sovereignty of God. However it shows itself, this is the fundamental sin. Here are some ways in which this can be seen in lives today.

1. To just ignore God, then He has no part in our life.
2. To accept a false god, this may be one worshipped by others.
3. To use the name of the true God, who may be imagined in a way that suits the taste of the worshipper. But, God is as His Word describes Him. Anything else is idolatry.
4. I find myself thinking less of God’s requirements for my behaviour, and more about how God can solve problems, mine and other peoples. God becomes just an emergency service, who is at my service.

A good conclusion to our thoughts is in 1 John 1:8-9:

‘If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.’ That is as ineffective as the fig leaf. ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.’ God’s effective solution is though the blood of His Son who took the punishment for our sin. Perhaps the garments of skin given by God to Adam and Eve are symbolic of Christ’s sacrifice.

**Hymn MP 582**

Rock of ages, cleft for me,

let me hide myself in Thee;

let the water and the blood,

from Thy riven side which flowed,

be of sin the double cure,

cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Not the labour of my hands

can fulfil Thy law's demands;

could my zeal no respite know,

could my tears for ever flow,

all for sin could not atone;

Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,

simply to Thy cross I cling;

naked, come to Thee for dress,

helpless, look to Thee for grace;

foul, I to the fountain fly;

wash me, Saviour, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,

when mine eyes shall close in death,

when I soar through tracts unknown,

see Thee on Thy judgement throne;

Rock of ages, cleft for me,

let me hide myself in Thee.

Augustus Montague Toplady (1740- 78) CCLI 150801

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father help us to acknowledge in our thinking and our living that You have the right to be the ruler of our lives. Help us to honest with You so that, with true confession we may receive Your cleansing through Christ, in who’s name we pray. Amen.