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06 Jan 08
New Year "Consecration"
Elder Cheng Wei Nien

The year 2007 has finally left and never to return. By God's grace, we have stepped into year 2008. This year, we are thankful to God not only for having seen us through another year, but also for the thirty-five fruitful years He has given to Calvary B-P Church in Jurong. Many changes have taken place during these thirty-five years, but our Lord and His mercy and wonderful grace for us have never changed. Those lovely little babies whom we saw thirty-five years ago, at the beginning of this church, have now become responsible fathers and mothers; and those who came as fathers and mothers have become grandfathers and grandmothers. By God's grace, some may shortly even become great grandparents. We started with Rev Philip Heng as our pastor, then Rev Edward Paauwe, then Dr Tow Siang Hwa himself and finally Rev James Chan. Last year, Rev Chan stepped down and we are grateful that the Lord has sent an energetic young man, Rev Isaac Ong, to take over. Let us welcome him and consecrate ourselves to serve the Lord under his capable leadership. Calvary in Jurong needs people to consecrate themselves not just as helpers but as deacons and elders as well as fulltime students to prepare themselves for the fulltime ministry later. What is consecration? It means to devote and dedicate oneself for the use of our Lord and Saviour. Let us take the life of Abraham as our example of consecration.

He obeyed when called by the Lord. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb 11:8). The first step of consecration is to obey. There are so many things we can do for the Lord but, when called upon to do, are we willing to obey and accept our calling cheerfully and to do it faithfully? Abraham's calling was a difficult one. He was told to leave his home land and sojourn "*unto a land that I will shew thee*" (Gen 12:1). "*So Abram departed*" (Gen 12:4). We may not be called to leave our home land but to leave our comfortable life style and hobby in order to serve the Lord. Are we ready to give them up?

He left the comfort and luxury of his busy home town to follow the Lord. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country..." (Heb 11:9). Consecration always involves putting away some of the things we like to do for ourselves and even leaving our old circle of friends in order to spend time and energy to do God's assignment. It may look like going into a strange land, but it is actually a "land of promise." Often our secular lives and friends take away so much of our time and energy that we have no time even to read the Bible and to do our 'Quiet Time' with the Lord, not to mention about serving Him. Let us not forget that in consecration, we are asked to sojourn in "the land of promise" and not in the land of desolation as the world will lead us to.

He had to cast out things which are not pleasing to the Lord. Abraham discovered to his horror, that he had, in his life, a son who was born of an Egyptian maid. This was out of the will of God. In order to claim God's promise, he had to send this beloved son away. It must have been very painful for him to do so. He had no choice but to do it. Sin is the biggest hindrance to our consecration to the Lord. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear our prayers (Ps 66:18). In order to serve the Lord effectively, we must "*lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.*" To cast away something dear to us is not easy. But, if we want to serve our Lord, our almighty King, we must be prepared to cast away every sin which will hinder our service to Him.

May the Lord bless and lead us and call some of us to consecrate ourselves to serve Him as we step into the new year 2008.

13 Jan 08

Is there a safe place?

By Elder Foong Kon Yu

This could never happen to us! At one time or another, we must have said this in our lives. Though we know not what holds tomorrow, we want to control and direct how things should happen. Our wish is that each time whatever happens, it would happen the way we anticipate it to be. Whatever has happened to others could never happen to us! How often we paid for the happening in costly and humbling manner when our expectation turned out to be what we fear most.

During the time of Jeremiah, the people of Jerusalem could never have thought that their city will fall. *"The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem"* (Lam 4:12). Even the pagan adversaries of Judah, the ungodly nations round about (the kings of the earth and the inhabitants of the world) thought that Judah was safe and Jerusalem was impregnable. The Jebusites boasted that the blind and the lame could easily defend Jerusalem from David. False confidence indeed! David conquered the city by entering through the water tunnel (2 Sam 5:6-10). The Lord, it seems, had done what no one thought could be done. The strong-walled city of Jerusalem can be destroyed too. What a sobering reminder that on earth there is no safe and secure place. There is also no person who is invincible whether in the physical or spiritual realm.

King David planned for the security of himself and he made sure that his son Solomon was well protected (1 Chron 26-27). There were another 12 divisions of 24,000 men appointed to serve as royal bodyguards for one month in the year. This protection was of great importance because the king was the Lord's anointed and was entitled to the nation's loyalty. We can use all the human protection on our properties or on our lives. It may be so strong that no human can come near the defence line. The enemy of temptation is our very own flesh. We can never stand on our own to fight sin. Self defence against sin is no defence without God. We will definitely lose. Sin does not have respect for any person. To Satan, there is no wall (except that built by our God) as he can penetrate and bring temptations right to our face. Thank God that He is our Protector day and night. When we surrender ourselves to the Lord, He will guard us and guide us to avoid temptations.

There are those who know the word of God well and perceive that they are safe. I have a friend who can quote from the Bible in conversations and arguments (especially to rebuke Christians) but she does not believe that the way to heaven is through Jesus. She just cannot accept that we have only to believe and we will be saved. Surprisingly, there are many Christians who, despite knowing God's Word well, do not follow the instructions and commandments written therein. There are those who are attending church and are in many avenues of service. They feel safe to be together with other believers. They are saved only if they accept Jesus as their personal Saviour.

In our greying society, we are caught in making the golden nest for retirement. We spent lots of effort to build up the reserve thinking that when we get old, we will have safety. An example is the narration of the rich man who thought that the most important thing in his life was to eat and be merry from his hard labour. Luke 12:18-20 *"And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"* It is necessary to have a safety net but our security does not depend on it. However, God said that his soul is required of him. Many poor people still live up to a ripe old age and by God's grace if they are Christians they go to heaven where there is real security and safety. Luke 12:24 *"Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which*

neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?"

Thank God that He provided a safe place for us, and that place is Heaven.

20 Jan 08

For unto everyone that hath shall be given

By Elder Su Ching Chun

“For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath” (Matt 25:29).

Jesus often used parables in His teachings to illustrate His point. The parables often touched on how a believer should live a godly life and how one should strive to grow in the Truth. It is very much like a child entering school to be taught a wide variety of subjects, taking years to go through elementary school, secondary school and finally tertiary institutions. Only at the end of his training can he be armed with the knowledge to start contributing to the society. Likewise, a believer must go through similar stages of spiritual learning after receiving Christ to be steadfast on God’s words and to serve the Lord effectively.

Seek more and receive more

Jesus used familiar things in His parables to illustrate the unfamiliar. He used everyday objects and happenings to explain spiritual truths. In Matthew 13, Jesus told seven parables on sowing. These parables allow believers to seek the truth and receive the truth in great abundance.

Pastor Isaac spoke about “moving forward, not moving in circles” during his message on the first Lord’s Day this year. To reiterate his message, believers must strive to move forward and towards the destination. We must not get comfortable in our comfort zones and become stagnant in our spiritual lives. The pastor asked: “If a twenty-year believer has a spiritual maturity like that of a two-year old child, would the pastors not be very worried?” Our Lord is not afraid of believers seeking more from Him for Jesus said *“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance” (Matt 13:12).*

Use your talents more and receive more

The Lord gives everyone talents, some receiving five, some two while others one. Each person must then use his given talent to serve the Lord according to what he has received. During the investiture, members came on stage to affirm their will to serve the Lord in their ministry. Some are old, some are young but all came with one mind: to serve the Lord with all their might. It does not matter in which areas we serve and there is no service too insignificant to our Lord. What matters is the heart with which we serve the Lord. If we serve with gladness and with all our hearts, then the Lord is pleased with our services. *“For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance” (Matt 25:29).* Likewise, when we serve more, the Lord uses us more and we shall be pleasing servants unto the Lord.

The Lord will make good His promises but believers who try to take an easy way out must beware. If we try to get away being a lazy Christian, doing the barest minimum on spiritual growth and service, we will be like the lazy servant who buried the money in the ground. The Bible tells us *“but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath” (Matt 25:29).* Would you want to be caught in such a situation? Therefore, let us move forward!

May the Lord bless and help us!

27 Jan 08
Covenant of the rainbow
By Elder Su Ching Chun

The opening statement God made in the Bible states "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*" (Gen 1:1). God created all things which are good in His eyes, and every creation is a testament to God's greatness. When we admire the things in nature, we will gasp in awe of God's wonderful creations. One of God's creations is the rainbow, and we shall discuss this symbol of God's covenant to His children.

A Continuing Covenant

After the flood, God made a covenant with Noah and his sons (Gen 9). This covenant God made with them was not restricted to Noah and his sons only but was meant for all generations thereafter. That covenant is still effective today and did not lapse for any moment in time. Every time we read of books of the generation in the Bible, either in the Old or the New Testament, many feel that it is very boring. However, we will observe that God presented the covenant through Jesus Christ by His birth. On the other hand, we realize that agreements between human beings are often limited in effect, subjected to unfulfilled or abandoned promises. God makes his covenant with Noah, and this covenant is still effective today for all His children through all the ages.

Covenant with a Sign

God made the covenant with Noah and gave a rainbow as a sign of proof (Gen 9:13). When God makes a covenant with man, He made sure that there is no ambiguity and the rainbow provided a clear sign. Therefore, if we experience troubles in our lives or feel that God is far away from us, look at the rainbow! It is a sign of God's covenant with us and we will know that God is always with us and is always close to us.

God remembers His Covenant

Genesis tells us that God remembers His covenant (Gen 9:14-15). Indeed, God remembers His covenant every moment and never fades with time. God is not bound by time and space; therefore He remembers Noah and definitely will remember us who are generations after. Human beings are forgetful creatures, easily forgetting promises we make to others or letting memory fade after some time. God never forgets His children; He is with us at all times.

Dear friends, a rainbow often appears after the rain. It signifies that the rain has passed and good weather has come with the sun starting to shine. The next time you see a rainbow, why not pause for a moment and ponder about God's goodness? It will bring great joy and comfort as we think about God's covenant made with man.

03 Feb 08

The rat and the evil days

By Elder Cheng Wei Nien

The Lunar New Year is once again at our door step. The Golden Pig has brought us nothing except that when it goes the year goes with it. Now comes the year of the rat. What we should treasure is not those Zodiac animals but the precious time which God has given to each and every one of us. There is a Chinese saying: “*一寸光阴一寸金，寸金难买寸光阴*” which means “Every inch of time is an inch of gold; an inch of gold cannot buy an inch of time”. There is also another saying: “Time and tide waits for no man.” The pig is a slow and sluggish animal; the rat, on the other hand is quick and agile. So, the superstitious Chinese believes that the rat may bring them rapid wealth. One thing is sure and that is the amount of time God gives to each one of us is set and cannot be stretched. The days of our lives are also fixed. Therefore, we must ask God to “*teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*” (Ps 90:12). Let’s see what the Bible teaches us.

“Walk circumspectly.” This means that we must “*not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*” (Eph 5:17). Unlike the rat which spends its life-time in darkness fulfilling the desires of the flesh, eating and drinking, we are children of Light and therefore must spend our time wisely, understanding the will of God for us. Another Chinese saying is this: “*一年之计在于春*” which means “The planning of the year starts in spring.” It is therefore time for us to ask the Lord to show us what His will is for us and to teach us how to use our time wisely according to His plan. We must catch hold of the time because every moment of idling is every moment lost for ever. For this year it is important to plan how much time we will spend in Bible study, how much time for prayer and how much time to serve the Lord in His house. Besides these, we must also plan how to take care of our own needs and the needs of our families. If we don’t, the devil will plan for us. TV programmes, SMS chit-chatting, cinema, sexy magazine, worldly music and dances, alcohol and pubs, casinos, etc. are all there ready for us to “enjoy.” If we are not careful, we will find ourselves in the hands of the devil.

“Redeeming the time.” Time is the most precious gift from God to everyone of us. It is given to us freely. Everyday we are given 24 hours and every year 365 days. We can make use of it to do many things. When we do it correctly, we can glorify God and benefit ourselves. If we use it wrongly, we sin against God and ruin our own lives. We should not be like the rat whose life consists of nothing except sleeping during the day and coming out to steal food to eat during the night. Our time is a gift from God and we have many things to do during this short period of our lives. If we let it go by it will never come back and we owe it to God. If we cannot use our time profitably for our souls and idle around, the devil will come and “help” us out. He will eventually guide us to the way of destruction. That’s why the Bible says: “*redeeming the time, because the days are evil*” (Eph 5:16).

“Not as fools.” Who are the fools? They are those who do not use their time wisely and let it pass by unprofitably. They are like the rat who only care for food and fun and nothing else. Today, people of the world are better educated and technically very advanced and yet they live without a definite destination. All they work hard for is for their physical needs in this life. They know not or care not for the eternity to come. Their attitude is “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”, not knowing that there is a judgment awaiting every one. Our Lord told us of a “rich fool” who says to himself: “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him. Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” (Lk 12:19-20). So let us not be fools of the day.

“But as wise.” Who is the wise? The Bible says: “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding*” (Prov 9:10). The wise is the one who seeks the blessing of God all his life and the Bible says: “*Blessed is the man that walketh not in*

the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night' (Ps 1:1-2). One year has gone and another year has come. Let us spend our time wisely and seek the blessing of God.

Wishing you all **a Time Redeeming and a Blessed Chinese New Year.**

10 Feb 08

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous (1 Peter 3:8)

by Elder foong Kon Yu

Each of us is entitled to our own opinions. God created each of us differently and we have diverse experiences and background. However some insist that others follow their way of thinking and even their way of doing things. God in His sovereignty knew this would happen; in that no two humans can agree a hundred percent. For this reason Adam was asked to name all the animals before God created Eve. While we cannot agree with another party a hundred percent of the time, we can accomplish much when we complement each other (God created Eve as a help meet). This help meet is to give Adam a co-worker and someone whom he could communicate with. They also needed to encourage one another in order to live in harmony.

There is a hierarchy and organisation in our society. In the country, we have the political leaders, in the church we have spiritual leaders. In consistency with the Bible, Peter compares believers to sheep which are gentle animals. He then calls Christians to practise gentleness in all areas of life. Home is where love and warmth is supposed to be. In the country there is law and order. To have a harmonious home, there must be peace through law and order as instructed by God through His Word. Wives are to submit themselves to their husbands (win your unsaved husband with true spiritual beauty). Husbands are to love their wives.

Encouragement is a strong signal to show our love and submission. You may be surprised how much mileage you can get through your kind words and deeds. There is a story told about a successful entrepreneur. She was raised by an adopted grandmother in a small town. She felt miserable as she did not have parents to cheer her along like the others. During school sports day, she was disheartened and decided to put in little effort just to complete the 100-meter run. Her adopted grandmother needed to work for a living and would most likely be absent from the school. Before the race began, she saw her grandmother with a carton box. She was excited at the presence of her only next of kin. She went over to ask as to why there is carton box to which grandma replied: "How else would we carry your awards home?" Knowing that the closest person to her has such faith, she put in all her effort for the races. She indeed won a few awards. It is quite difficult to carry on without knowing who has faith in us. We soon are worn out. We need to encourage our church leaders by bringing in the carton box.

In the church we are to show one another love and courtesy. Pray that we will surrender our will to the Lord and ask Him to help us obey His Word. Difficult it may be to show love outside our homes and our church, we are still to show love in the world. They say Christians read the Bible while others read Christians through their behaviour. Anybody can suffer for doing wrong but Christians must learn to suffer for doing what is right. Jesus has shown us so many examples to follow. *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit"* (1 Peter 3:18). As a result Christ suffered for doing what was right, we live freely for doing wrong (sin).

Jesus did not get any encouragement. He was alone at the most trying time. Thanks be unto God, He never leaves us alone. He tells us over again that we should have faith in Him. He will be with us until the end. Then there are crowns awaiting those who are diligent and faithful. God has already placed these crowns in carton boxes. 1 Peter 2:18-25. We are to be a gentle witness in this violent world. It is a testimony for the glory of God.

17 Feb 08

Unto everyone which hath shall be given (2)

By Elder Su Ching Chun

In the article last month, we discussed two of the blessings unto which God has promised to believers. The first is that the more we seek His truth, the more we shall receive. The second is that the more we use the talents that God has given us, the more we shall receive from Him. Today, we shall discuss two other blessings which God will abundantly give to those who have and seek them.

Bearing More Fruits of the Spirit (Luke 19:11-26)

Jesus told the parable of the nobleman "*who called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.*" In this parable, Jesus described Himself to be this nobleman going into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom, and that He would return. This parable, at first sight, seems similar to the other parable Jesus told in which three servants were given varying amounts of talent according to their abilities; the first was given five talents, the second two, and the last servant was given one talent (Matt 25:14-36).

However, there is a difference in the two parables. The latter illustrates how we can serve God with different talents and abilities and be rewarded at the end. In the parable for our consideration, the servants were each given one pound. The first servant gained ten pounds, and the second gained another five pounds. Today, God gives us each one pound, which some have taken to refer to the Holy Spirit. Every believer has the gift of the Holy Spirit, and we are asked to bear fruits. In Galatians, we study that there is one fruit of the Spirit but having nine characteristics. All believers, with the Holy Spirit, must bear the fruit and bear them bountifully. "*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*" (Gal 5:22-23).

Shining Brightly in the Truth (Luke 8:16-18)

"*No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.*" Light allows us to see with clarity so that we do not stumble and fall. If light is covered, it cannot shine forth and thus loses its effectiveness. In this parable, our Lord teaches us that we must shine brightly for our Saviour. Our lives must radiate with such godliness so that people around us can see the love of Christ through our actions. Let your life radiate with love and wisdom and glorify God.

Likewise, when we diligently read and faithfully obey the Scriptures, we will understand the truth more and shine brighter in the truth. The Lord says "*Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have*" (Luke 8:18). May the Holy Spirit help us to listen, and listen well!

24 Mar 08
The Blessing of the Lord
(Proverbs 10:22)
By Pr Wu Tien Te

During the lunar New Year, Chinese greet each other with words of blessing, wishing each other prosperity, health and happiness. God wants to bless us, His children, bountifully from above too. There are many portions of the Scriptures telling us how bountiful are God's blessings and today we shall study it from Proverbs 10:22.

Blessings from God

A saying goes: Blessed are those who have peace. However, the world we live in today is filled with unfortunate news of every kind each day. It makes one wonder if there really is peace; and if there is, who can enjoy it? As children of God, how can we face such a world? Proverbs 10:22 says: *The blessing of the LORD.* True blessing is not of man but from God Himself and our God is the true and living God (Jer 10:10). Likewise, true peace must come from God. Jesus said *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"* (John 14:27). To enjoy the true blessings of peace, Jesus said *"Abide in me"* (John 15).

Bountiful Life

One may assume that if one abides in the Lord, his life shall be rich and smooth sailing, but is that the case? Do you know of some one who is very rich but is dissatisfied with life? Or someone who is poor and is obsessed with striking it rich one day? Obviously these people are not happy. Sadly, there are believers who are also caught up in similar circumstances. Of course, there is nothing wrong in working hard for a better living, but the point here is: *"The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich."* Every good gift comes from God; hence we must submit ourselves unto the Lord and learn to accept what God has bestowed on us. It could be plenty or it could be scarce, but take heed to the Lord's exhortation: *"Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"* (Luke 12:15).

No Sorrow

"The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it" (Prov 10:22). The rich man frets over the security of his wealth. The poor man is anxious about his needs. Both the rich and the poor worry. A person may worry about his life, or the future. But the blessing of the Lord adds no sorrow. The Bible tells us not to be worried (Matt 6:25-34). It does not mean that we do not plan for the future, but it does mean that we stop worrying, and losing appetite and sleep over a problem.

Dear brethren, if we believe in the true and living God, we shall have no worries. Remember Paul said *"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."* (Phil 4:12). The lesson we learn from the apostle Paul is to simply trust in the Lord, believe in Him and commit our lives unto Him. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help us to remember the true source of our blessings.

02 Mar 08

Seek those things which are above

By Elder Cheng Wei Nien

Time marches on. Very quickly, two months of the new year have gone! Two or three years ago, there was a downturn of the country's economy and the markets were weak. Many people were out of jobs and many had their salaries slashed. Every one complained of their hardship. Last year, there was an upturn of the economy and the markets were active again. But there came an inflation and prices of many commodities skyrocketed. Once again, people complained. Fortunately, there was a bumper crop in the government treasury and big 'hongbaos' were doled out to every citizen. For the time being some are contented. Life is like a windmill, turning and rotating unceasingly. For one moment it is up and the next it is down. How many such cycles can one see in his or her life time? It is soon cut off and we fly away (Ps 90:10). All our richness and prosperity are only temporary. What we should look for is something that will last for eternity. Let us turn to the Bible and learn from it — Colossians 3:1-2.

“If ye then be risen with Christ.” Why did the apostle Paul lay down the conditional, “if you then be risen with Christ”? Obviously, there were some believers who have risen with Christ but are still living in their old carnal conditions. By “risen” Paul did not mean the bodily resurrection at Christ's second return but rather the changed life of every believer who is in Christ. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor 5:17). “And you hath He quickened (risen), who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). Believers must examine ourselves often, especially at the beginning of the year. Christ has died for us and redeemed us. Have we truly risen with Him? Have we put to death our old way of life and rise up to a new and consecrated life with Christ? For a carnal man, no matter how much wealth he has assembled in this world and how much he has enjoyed it, he will never be contented and is always grudging. For us believers, the Bible teaches: “For the love of money is the root of all evil” (1Tim 6:10) and “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim 6:6).

“Seek those things which are above.” If we are truly risen with Christ, the things that we seek after must never be things on earth “where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal” (Matt 6:19). It must be things above. Our Lord said: “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things” (Matt 6:31-32). This does not mean that we should not work for our living, or enjoy ourselves on earth. We know that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jas 1:17). As we look up to our heavenly Father, He will send down all the blessings that we need. What does it mean by looking up to our heavenly Father? It means our daily devotion, our prayer life, our Bible study and our service to Him. We have our earthly responsibilities such as our studies, work, health, children and family to look after. We must do them well to the glory of God the Father. But, at the same time, we must not neglect our Sunday worship, daily Bible study as well as prayer meetings.

“Where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” What do we know about things above? For one thing we are very sure of and that is Christ is sitting on the right hand of God the Father, where He is praying for us; hearing our prayers, receiving our prayers and petitions. He is also our propitiator between God the Father and us. He has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us. He helps us to defeat the temptations of the devil. He is the author and finisher of our faith (Heb 12:2). Are we looking up at Him or are we still looking at those things which will soon vanish away?

“Set your affection on things above.” Let us therefore seek those things that are of eternal value and set our affection on these things. There are still ten months left of the year. What have

you planned to do for the Lord? Our Lord said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt 6:21). Where do you put your treasure and on what do you set affections? On those things above or things on earth? The Lord bless you all.

09 Mar 08

"I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you"

(Isaiah 46:4)

By Elder Foong Kon Yu

Broadly speaking, there are only two religions in the world. There is one whose believers subscribe in the fact that God created man (and readily acknowledge this in their hearts) and another whose believers subscribe to that man created god (whom even the devotees themselves deny). This contest between the power of idols and the power of the living God is a recurring theme throughout our Bible. The most dramatic illustration is the account of Elijah and the prophets of Baal recorded in 1 Kings 18. Here we know that the priests of Baal called and cried upon their gods in vain to come down, while the God (our God) of Elijah consumed the offering with fire despite the whole altar being wet and overflowing with water. Aaron too had a golden calf which was impressive in its luxury but it was totally ineffective (Exod 32). The heathens carried their idols when they went to war. Other than adding weight on the already tired soldiers, the idols could do nothing. Sadly, some Christians carry these idols too.

People love to make gods in their own image because they are convenient (at first it seemed to be) but ultimately they become a burden. For a few years in my life I was wearing an image of a dead person. He was supposed to be a well known priest with a very long name which I cannot pronounce and I have no idea who he actually was. It was a burden to me in that I had to put this pendant into my mouth each time I go to the toilet and had to take care of it by placing in a "clean place" when I take a bath. When walking in darkness, I had to sing aloud to rid my fear. The prophet Isaiah points out that man-made gods, which literally have to be carried about, cannot support those who worship them. "*They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity*" (Isaiah 46:2). God is never a burden. He sustains us and promises to carry us. "*And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you*" (Isaiah 46:4).

False religion will always be costly and without any final benefit. It is tragic that so many people give generously to their idols but are deaf and blind to the real needs of the people. The generosity of the people oftentimes puts us Christians to shame. Some Christians take God for granted and since there is no requirement to take care of Him (of which He does not need, and which we cannot anyway), they live their own lives the way they like it to be. The genuine Christian gives and lives to serve a living God who cares for people in their needs.

Remember that God is our Creator. God is committed to us because He made us, a statement of particular value to those who, in the light of the New Testament, are born-again believers. Here too is the great "I AM" in Isaiah 46:4 (read the verse again, above). This reminds us of the revelation of Moses and taken up by Jesus in the gospels.

The God of creation is also the God of providence. He is not only the God of nature but the God of history and has proved Himself in the lives of His people Israel and to all Christians. He holds kings and nations in His hands. God's historic action brings great assurance to His people. Our faith is firmly based in the historic truth of life, death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God offers salvation and deliverance to the Israelites in time past. Today He offers salvation and deliverance to all who believe. He has shown us in history that "He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows". The God who spoke all these words to the Israelites is still speaking to us. He is the God who cared enough for us to send his son to Calvary for a purpose; to die for sinners. This is the heart of the gospel. We are not called to "keep it up" but He is committed to keep us up. This is a comforting assurance of each believer. In comparison then, idolatry is utterly sinful and foolish. Should not our choice be obvious? What is yours?

16 Mar 08
One Pound (Luke 19:11-26)
By Elder Su Ching Cheng

Last month, I shared in my article on bearing more fruits of the Holy Spirit. A certain nobleman went into a far country and gave his ten servants each one pound before he left. The nobleman's message to his servants was simple: Occupy till I come. When the nobleman returned, he enquired about the much each servant had gained by trading. There are some who take the view that this one pound of money represents the Holy Spirit who indwells the believer, seeing that all the servants have one pound each, and that all believers are indwelt by the same Spirit.

There are others who hold the view that the pound refers to the gift that has been given to the believer. All believers are given the gift – “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10). All believers will receive one pound of which, by the grace of God and through the power of the Holy Spirit, used the gift to minister to others. It also means that by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, every believer must endeavour to live a sanctified life, growing in the Spirit to become a mature Christian.

When the Lord returns, we as His servants must be answerable to Him, giving an account of how we occupied during His absence. If we are found faithful, the Lord shall bless us bountifully. This reward, of course, must be earned through sustained efforts of prayer, preparation and action.

We are saved by grace through faith; and this salvation is the gift of God which is sufficient for all people. We as believers are commanded to “*go ye therefore, and teach all nations*” (Matt 28:19), spreading the Gospel to those who are still outside the door of salvation till the Lord returns. We have to obey this command to occupy till our Lord comes. The Lord does not expect each of us to all return a profit of ten pounds, but we are all to occupy faithfully to the best of our talents and abilities. After many years as a believer, are we still like infants drinking milk and unable to take in solid food? This is not unlike the servant, described in the scripture who returned his one pound which he “*have kept laid up in a napkin*”. At the very least, this servant could have deposited his one pound and earned some interests from it. Little wonder this servant was reprimanded by the master.

Our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished this salvation for us, and whosoever believes in Him is saved. Let us examine ourselves. Should we not all work hard to gain ten pounds or five pounds to repay our Lord for His gift? The Lord will surely grant us strength sufficient to accomplish the work we need to do. As such, let us all occupy ourselves faithfully. Do not remain spiritually stagnant.

23 Mar 08

He is not here (Matthew 28:6)

By Preacher Wu Tien Te

Today is Easter Sunday, an event celebrated across the globe. On this day, all of God's children gather to remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Both the Chinese and English congregations had attended the Sunrise Service this morning. On a special occasion as this, the congregation, through the singing of hymns and messages by our pastor, was reminded of the message brought to the women by the angels, "He is not here..." (Matt 28:6).

An empty Grave

Indeed, our Saviour Jesus Christ went through much hardships, died on the cross and was buried. People thought that was the end, and we can imagine how lost and depressed His disciples and followers were. A few woman followers of Jesus came to look at His grave. We all know that a graveyard is a place for the dead, and there is no resurrection at a place like this. However, they met with a miracle, and the angel answered them, "He is not here..." (Matt 28:6). The women could not believe it. How is it possible that their beloved Jesus is no longer there? Indeed, our Lord Jesus Christ is no longer there, because He had triumphed over the sting of death, and the grave can no longer hold over Him. This is a testimony to the world that our Saviour's grave is an empty one! Evidence has shown that the leaders of other religions are still in their graves, but the records of the Bible show that our Lord Jesus Christ who was in the grave was no longer there. This is something which brings great joy to the hearts of all Christians.

HIS words will be fulfilled

"... for he is risen, as he said." When our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, He had stressed repeatedly to His disciples that He must "go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matt 16:21, 17:23, 20:19). Although Jesus was to die in the hands of others and be buried in the grave, He is no longer there and had been resurrected. He is now sitting on the right hand side of our Heavenly Father. Another thing we can be sure is that HIS words will be fulfilled, exactly according to what He had said. Moreover, the prophecies in the Old Testament that refer to our Lord Jesus Christ, and all prophecies regarding His resurrection have been fulfilled (Luke 24:44-46). Conversely, if what He had said was not fulfilled and the resurrection had not taken place, our faith would have been in vain and we would be miserable and hopeless men on earth (1 Cor 15:17-19). We, as children of God, await with great hope the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He shall come again, as He had told us before, and it will be fulfilled in the near future.

Dear reader, let's not remember His resurrection only on this day alone. Are we to remember His resurrection only because of the festive mood of the day? Will we still believe that He has risen after Easter Sunday? Let's remember dearly what the angels answered the women, "He is not here..." Similarly, this phrase should speak to all believers in Christ with the same conviction, even today.

30 Mar 08

When you are "stung" in church

By Dn Jeffrey Soh

You have heard it time and time again: People go to church seeking to find God, looking for answers to deal with their issues and struggles in their lives only for someone to come along and say something insensitive, or look at them like they're second class. The next thing you know, they leave the church more broken, bruised and battered than before they came in, never to be seen again. Another soul lost, and no one seems to care. It's back to business as usual.

You may have experienced it time and time again. You come into a fellowship to serve and to help build the kingdom however you can, only to be slandered as one who serves with selfish motives. You offer the use of God-given abilities to contribute to the ministries of the Church, only to be snubbed by some — a few handful murmurers, grumblers and complainers, who seem to feel "led of God" to criticize and castigate everyone and everything around them. You felt the joy of serving leaving you. You wonder where is Christ in Christianity.

No one has, nor could they EVER take Christ out of Christianity. The Christ of Christianity would never have engaged in practices like you have just read. In Matthew 9, we do not see our Lord Jesus looking down at the less desirable. Instead, we see Him sitting and eating with them, sharing His time and compassion with them. In verses 10-13, when asked by the Scribes and Pharisees why He did this, His response was that only the spiritually sick needed a doctor, and that He came with mercy to offer salvation through repentance. Our Lord Jesus sets for us the example to follow, and as God's people, we too must be like Christ, and be Christ-like in our dealings with people.

So, what do you do when you become the target of being hurt in Church?

First of all, forgive the person(s) responsible. It doesn't matter if they initiate the process or not. They may not realize what they have done. Perhaps, they may not even know if they had done it. So instead of harbouring a hurt, you free yourself of the bitterness, and forgive.

Secondly, pray for them. The best of man is at best still a man. Christians are not perfect, but are "Men at Work" and "Works in Progress." Some have been Christians for a long time, but that does not mean that they are spiritually mature. So instead of telling each other off, tell it to Jesus. What we all have in common, and what we need in common is prayers.

Thirdly, continue to serve God, however you are doing it. No matter what it is, do it as unto the Lord, not unto men. People have a tendency to put people on a high platform one day, only to cut it out from under them the next. And everyone has an opinion about what is, or is not, good enough. God knows what you are doing, why you are doing it, and rewards you according to your labour (1 Cor 3:8). As long as your focus is on Him, do what is right according to His Word, and if your motive is pure, He will accept your meagre labour and multiply it for His glory.

---The End---