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3 July 2005

"Growing in Evangelism: Preach the Word"

(1 Cor 9:16; 2 Tim 4:2)

By A-P Dennis Kwok

Now the talk of the town is the Great Singapore Sale (27 May - 24 July). It is a full 8 weeks of shopping, dining, fun and entertainment for everyone, young and old, local and overseas. But we know none of these if there is no publicity at all. The organizers know exactly what 'kiasu' Singaporeans need and they strike at the right time at the right place to the right people. Now, what has that got to do with us since it has nothing good to offer our souls? Dear friends, we need to examine ourselves. How have we been publicizing the gospel that saves. Is the gospel less appealing than the Great Singapore Sale? Apparently, but the gospel gives you an everlasting result that is worth more than countless sales combined together. As Christians, we need to grow in evangelism; we must preach the Word.

Evangelism is not reserved just for the Preacher, Pastor, Elder, Deacon or Teacher, but for every serious believer in Christ to share the Word. Paul says, "*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*" Reprove is to point out errors, mistakes and wrong doctrines. This is done with the sound knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. We reprove when one is not walking rightly as he ought, according to the righteousness of God. After examining him by the Holy Scriptures and the person is found guilty, you cannot leave him alone. His sin must be rebuked. Sometimes a gentle rebuke is good enough but there are other times that a harsh rebuke is necessary, especially when one refuses to admit and repent. Reprove and rebuke are almost negative in nature though with pure motive and intention. To exhort is that positive act which restores a repentant brother.

Today, people do not like to be corrected by the truth and so they turn their ears away from the truth. Why? Because it exposes their weakness and sin; because it reveals what is in the secret chamber of their hearts. It reminds them that something is wrong with them and therefore they do not want to hear the truth anymore. They want to hear their own truth, not God's Truth. The truth that is according to their lusts, heaping to themselves teachers, having itching ears. They want something positive to join and identify with the world, not the 'sour' doctrine of separation. But God has commanded us to preach the Word! This is what our Church must do in times like these. This is the main responsibility of every faithful and true church of Jesus Christ. If ever Calvary stops preaching the Word and preach something else, run and flee from her immediately! God may call fire from heaven to consume the church! We are like a herald standing on the street corner. This is an old method that the king used to announce his message. The herald will stand at a prominent place declaring the king's message. This herald has only one responsibility. He is to announce only what the king told him to announce. He does not have the liberty to add or subtract or

to summarise or even to paraphrase the king's message. He cannot add his own personal opinions to the king's words. That is what we are called to do. Preach the Word, not preach your ideas, or preach your philosophy of life; nor preach the latest gossip about someone.

No, we are to preach the Word. As we stand before the unbelieving world, let us declare the old-fashioned gospel truth with no compromise and no apology. Consider these sayings: In a world of itching ears, Preach the Word! To a generation gone astray, Preach the Word! In times of moral crisis and perversion, Preach the Word! When people do not want to hear you, Preach the Word! When false teachers abound, Preach the Word! In good times and bad times, Preach the Word! When people listen and when people shut their ears, Preach the Word!

Every church that preaches the Word will find itself at odds with the world. Let us stand together on the Word alone because that is the only message we have. The wonderful gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the message that the world desperately needs to hear. May God help us to evangelize and preach the Word faithfully till He comes again. Amen.

10 July 2005

"Be Ye Doers and Not Hearers Only"

By Eld Cheng Wei Nien

The Bible camp is over and all of us had a wonderful time in the camp hearing the word of God. Now that we are back home, every thing seems to have gone back to 'normal' and we are back to our old routine once again. The question is: Have the messages in the camp made a difference in our lives? Some of us may have left all the messages back in the camp while others may have brought them home, only to be buried in our backyards. If this is so, we are but hearers and not doers of the Word. All the effort we put in during the camp would be in vain.

"Man shall not live by bread alone" (Matt 4:4). During the Bible camp, there was abundance of food for the bodily needs. Many of us put on weight during the camp. Good food was certainly one of the attractions of the camp but there must be something else much more important than food. *"But by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4).* The main purpose of the Bible camp was for us to hear the word of God delivered to us by the camp speakers who had spent much time preparing those messages. Have we listened to them carefully? If we have, in what way have they enriched or changed our spiritual lives?

"Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you" (Deut 6:1). The Bible camp is over but the Word of God endureth for ever (1 Peter 1:25). What we heard during the Bible camp must continue to ring in our ears and live in our hearts. The Word of God contains His commandments, statutes and judgments. It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). We must therefore not only hear it, read it but also delight in it and meditate in it day and night. Such a person will be blessed by God who is the Giver of every good and every perfect gift. Since we came back from the camp, have we meditated on those messages? Let us therefore continue our daily Bible reading even after the Bible camp.

"That ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it" (Deut 6:1). God's command to His people is not just to hear His commandments but to do them. It was very nice to hear those wonderful messages in the camp. Now that we are back home, do we put them to practice? We must therefore be doers and not hearers only. *"For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was" (Jas 1:23-24).* When we were in the camp, we were looking at the Word of God like looking into the mirror and realized how ugly we were and desired to do better. But now, after we came away from the camp, many of us straightaway forget what we saw of ourselves, and went back to our old humdrum life style again. God has a promise for us. If we want to receive His blessing, we ought to do what He commands.

"If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (Jn 8:31). Our Lord also reminded us that if we want to be His disciples, we must continue to live our lives according to His teaching. The best way to do this is to study the Bible regularly and consistently, not forgetting the prayer meetings and daily personal devotions. The purpose of the Bible camp was to make us true disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not be camp goers only but be faithful followers of Christ.

17 July 2005

"... I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight" (Isaiah 42:16)

By Eld Foong Kon Yu

Threshing is always one of the happy moments in a farmer's life. The grains have been harvested. It shows that there has been a very successful season and he is sure that he has some returns from his labour. We may not appreciate this practice as much due to our livelihood in an urban environment. However, the next time you stop by a fruit stall, imagine that the fruits were harvested by you in your own orchard. You will understand the joy of the farmer bringing in the fruits. You would sort the fruits (according to size or quality) in a well-ventilated location so that you can sort and see clearly your harvest with joy. You would be very happy just to feel and see your own fruits. In the same manner, the farmer will choose an open space (usually on higher ground) because wind is needed to separate the chaff. On the other hand, a winepress is normally located indoors at lower ground because the grapes are heavy and it would be easier to carry them downhill. Strong winds may dry some grape juice.

Yet we read of Gideon threshing his harvest in the winepress. "*...Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites*" (Jud 6:11). Gideon had to hide from the Midianites as he feared that they would rob his harvest. It was not an ideal place as there is no wind to blow away the chaff. Israel was under the Midianites then. He has lost his confidence that the God who protects and rules over Israel may not be able to help him. The Israelites did evil in the sight of God and went a whoring to worship Baal. It was at the lowest level of Gideon's life that God spoke to him through the angel of the LORD. "*And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour*" (Jud 6:12). Then we read of the questions that Gideon asked. "If God is with us then why are we under the Midianites?" Further into the chapter, Gideon asked God to wet the fleece of wool while keeping the surroundings dry, and then to do it the other way round the next day. Some may be tempted to ask God to do that which Gideon did, to strengthen their faith. God has spoken and given the complete inerrant Bible. All that we need to know is written there. We are to live in faith knowing that God is always with us. Does He remember us as He did in the past according to all that we read in the scriptures? Oh yes, God remembers! He remembers each one of us and deals with us according to His mercy.

When we are down hearted, we tend to look elsewhere. Nothing seems right in our life. Some may even wish they were dead so that they need not face the difficulties and irresolvable problems. We may even be too ashamed that the God whom we declare as merciful seems so far away. Has he forsaken us? Where is He when we need Him? We get "no answers" despite all our prayers. We go down to the winepress to do our threshing in fear of ridicule and uncertainty. We have lost confidence in ourselves and in God. It is at times like this that we fall or rise up. We have a choice. We had better choose to stay close to God, no matter what. "*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded*" (Jas 4:8). He promised that He will

not forsake us. We read that in the Bible so many times. Surely God will do what He has done for His saints in times past. *"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"* (Heb 4:16). *"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"* (Heb 13:5). *"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them"* (Isa 41:17). *"And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them"* (Isa 42:16). Rest assured that God answers every prayer. Listen to His still small voice.

24 July 2005

Are you contented ?

(1 Tim 6:6-7)

By Eld Lawrence Sim

Sometime in life we are all looking for the missing 10%, hoping to be perfect, but life is never perfect and there's no such thing as a 100% perfect life for mankind.

God wants us to obey His commandments but we are weak and we sin against God now and then. But despite our sinfulness, God still loves us and graciously waits for us to repent. If you have this quality of obedience, you would most likely be contented with what you have. *"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out"* (1 Tim 6:6-7).

All of us come into this world as a baby, and there was absolutely nothing that we brought with us, except our naked body. Through the grace of God we grow, labour and toil in studies and work; and suffer sorrows and pains in the course of our life. Human beings are sinful in nature since the beginning of mankind when God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden; but the serpent beguiled Eve to eat that which would make them wise and be like God. This resulted in the eternal curse upon mankind for disobedience. True obedience affects the inward attitude to produce the outward act. Can anyone claim that he has the perfect right attitude and true faith in God? The Bible tells us there is none except God.

In our society today, many people are not contented with what they have. They want to be like the world and many even live beyond their means to acquire what they want to have, to keep up with others, i.e. the 5c's — car, cash, condominium, credit card and club membership; and many resort to the 6th c — covetousness. Can they sustain them? Few can but many cannot. Many have to work very hard to keep up with their lifestyles but they burn out in no time — all for the sake of keeping up with others. Some are living beyond their means. Many have committed all their incomes, including their CPF in housing, stocks and shares, etc, not caring what they would have left for "rainy days" and old age. Then what would happen? With our small family and high cost of living, can the one-child or two-children family afford to support their aging parents? Most probably not! Then what would be the outcome? Depend on the state welfare which would by then become a big social problem. Most probably, and with the greying population, this will confront us in the very near future.

As children of God, are you contented with what you have or what the Lord has blessed you with? Or do you want to live like the world? The decision is yours. Be wise in your spending, and look to God for wisdom in the planning and management of your life and family.

Dear brethren, be not discouraged! If you think you are poor, look at those who are less fortunate than you, and you would probably be comforted. But, if you look at the rich and wealthy, you may be very discouraged. Look to God as He has assured us to *"be of good*

courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD" (Ps 31:24). If you are worried about your future, look to God and remember His Word which reminds us that "to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom 8:6). We should "let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" (Col 3:15).

If you are lonely and discontented, remember Hebrews 13:5 *"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee". You should "humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet 5:6-7).*

If you are still dissatisfied with your present lot, humble yourself and look to God for wisdom and direction, and remember to be honest before Him. His Word reminds us that *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt 5:6). Our heart attitude is just as important to God as our outward actions. Our attitude determines the sincerity of our actions. Be honest in your attitude and actions, and let not your heart be far from Him.*

Sincere obedience comes out of love; so what action or activity in your life needs a change to be obedient to God? Pray about it and ask God to help you. Remember God's promise to His children. *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt 7:7).*

Are you contented? May the Lord help us!

31 July 2005
Are you prepared?

By Eld Mak Kam Wak

In recent times, several acts of terror and disasters have filled our world with fear. The 9-11, the London blasts, the Egypt blast, hostage situations, and the list goes on. Closer home, we also witnessed some gruesome murders and crimes. *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* (Jer 17:9).

"..., for there is no man that sinneth not ..." (1 Kgs 8:46). Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, the problem of sin has plagued every man. The world's first murder case occurred when Adam and Eve's son, Cain killed his own brother, Abel. Cain was angry with Abel when he saw God favouring Abel's offerings to Him over his own offerings to God.

We also witnessed the sinful nature and doings of man in every period of history. We sinful man have strayed from the righteous path of God and wandered in the evil ways of our own sinful desires. *"They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one"* (Ps 14:3). Man, on our own, is never able to redeem ourselves from our sins. *"... For the wages of sin is death ..."* (Rom 6:23). The psalmist David said, *"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me"* (Ps 51:5).

Then, how are we going to escape this death penalty? Our God is a merciful God, and He does not wish to see man perish. We have two choices set in front of us, one leading to salvation and the other leading to destruction. God instituted salvation in our Lord Jesus, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (Jn 3:16).

We have believed in Jesus and are saved, but there are still many outside the door of salvation. These people are still lost in sin, walking on the path that leads to destruction. Some of them may not have heard of the Gospel. Are we going to do something to help them?

Yes, we can do something. For the Great Commission is *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mk 16:15). We can and must actively witness to those who are not saved. We can participate in the regular tracting organised by the E-Band, invite someone to our worship service or simply share the Gospel with them. We can certainly also pray for the salvation of these people.

Do not let our busy schedules become an excuse to hinder us from sharing the Gospel. Do not give ourselves excuses like "I can't speak well". We are commissioned by our Lord to preach the Gospel. We cannot disobey the command, so let us do something today. Let us endeavour to share the Gospel with someone. Are you prepared?

7 August 2005
Caught by Surprise!

By A-P Dennis Kwok

It was a Friday night that caught Yumin and I by surprise. After picking her up from her client's place at Orchard, we headed toward Eng Hee and Chew Ling's home in Punggol for dinner. After reaching their place, Yumin visited the toilet and came out with a worried expression. She whispered to me, saying, "There is bleeding". I knew what she meant. Without having dinner, the four of us hopped into the car and went to see her gynaecologist. It was found that her cervix has dilated about 4 cm. We got a shock when we were told that the baby should be coming any time. But she was only in her 29th week pregnancy. There was no time to be wasted. Yumin was immediately admitted into the KK hospital to get ready for premature delivery. She was wheeled into the delivery ward for observation. She was not allowed to consume any food although she was hungry. Since I can eat, I took a quick bite of Big Mac with Eng Hee and Chew Ling outside the ward. After eating and praying with them, I hurried into the delivery ward to be with her. In the ward, the doctor told us that they will try their best to delay the premature birth. Together Yumin and I prayed and pleaded God's mercy for both mother and child.

Through the night, nothing happened except a few minor contractions shown on the reading although Yumin did not feel any pain at all. She was transferred to a normal ward the next day for further tests and observation. Again nothing happened until Sunday when a senior doctor found out on the reading that there were regular contractions. Yumin described her pain just like she wanted to pass motion but unable to. She was wheeled to the delivery suite again. Over there, she began to experience increasing pain. The midwife attending to Yumin was very encouraging and advised her to start learning how to breathe. We also turned to some pregnancy books to get ourselves prepared since we have only attended one session of the antenatal class.

In the afternoon, the doctor came again and told us that they are still trying to delay the birth. Her drip dosage was increased to minimize the contraction. She was also given two jabs on her thighs, each in 12 hours, to strengthen the baby's lungs in case he comes out prematurely. The jabs will take 24 hours to take effect fully. The first jab was given at 2 pm on Sunday. So we prayed to God that the baby will not come out before 2 pm the next day. As time clicked away, Yumin began to feel more intense contractions. The midwife advised me to motivate her to breathe deeply each time she experienced a contraction. We began to pray more frequently in-between the contractions. Prayer indeed helps to calm her down and trust more in the Lord. We received many SMS containing words of encouragement and Bible verses to remind us that the Lord is still faithful and gracious to His children. We thank God for His special strength and prayer support from one another.

The next morning on Monday, the doctor came again and found out that her cervix has dilated to 10 cm. Yumin's labour pain and contractions became more and more intense. But there was still some time to 2 pm. In-between her contractions, we earnestly prayed to the Lord for His mercy. As her water bag has not burst, the doctor said we still can wait for a

little while more. At about 1.55 pm, the water bag burst by itself. The midwife immediately called for the doctors, pediatricians and nurses. Within the space of 5 minutes, they all arrived. At 2 pm sharp, Yumin was asked to start pushing. I had to support her back and head and helped to 'push' as well. It was a terrifying moment for me but I had no time to feel anything. I just had to do what I can and prayed that the Lord be merciful to both mother and baby. The doctor also kept asking me to take a look at the baby's head which is nearly out. However I did not, I just wanted to concentrate on helping Yumin to keep pushing. 15 minutes later Yumin gave her final push and the baby was finally out. The room was silent for a while, then we heard a soft and weak cry from the baby. My heart nearly stopped. I couldn't wait to thank God for answering all our prayers. God is truly in control of everything. I held tightly to Yumin's hands and together we gave thanks to God while the doctor and nurses did the necessary clean up.

Baby Ernest weighed only 1.55 kg and 41 cm long. He stayed in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) for one day. Since he needs no breathing assistance, he was transferred to Special Care Nursery (SCN) to gain more weight. While Yumin is busy now nursing herself back to health and expressing more milk each day, I am the breast milk deliverer and camera man to record daily growth of baby Ernest. Indeed, God has been good to us and we are thankful to our parents, relatives and friends who have been showering us with gifts and baby stuff. We covet your prayers for Baby Ernest that he will gain more weight and develop normally and healthily, and also that we will be godly parents to him. All praise and glory be to God. Amen.

14 August 2005 The Hearts of Men

By Elder Cheng Wei Nien

The world today is not a safe place to live in. Terrorists can strike at any time and any place. Out of the blue, you can be blown to pieces if you happen to be at the wrong place, Singapore not excluded. We just celebrated our National Day a few days ago. Everybody enjoyed the National Parade and celebration. We can proudly say that ours is a peaceful, prosperous and relatively advanced country. We have an efficient, strict and uncorrupt government. It is a country that many people envy. However, no one can say that we are safe and calamity will not take us by surprise any time. We still have to be very sober and vigilant because our days are evil. No place is safe unless we are in the loving arms of God. Without God, men's hearts are wicked and evil. What are the hearts of natural men like?

Without God, men's hearts are selfish. Most of the troubles of this world come from the selfishness of hearts. Every man cares for himself rather than for others. This is especially so in these last days. The Bible says: *"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy"* (2 Tim 3:2). Selfishness will lead to jealousy and jealousy to strife and strife to fights and conflicts. Believers should be different. We should *"look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others"* (Phil 2:4) as well as *"bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ"* (Gal 6:2).

Without God, men's hearts are wicked. Since the fall of Adam, sin came into the world and man began to kill one another. Because God respected Abel's offering and not Cain's, he rose up and killed his brother Abel (Gen 4:8). During Noah's time, *"God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; ...for the earth is filled with violence through them"* (Gen 6:12-13). While our Lord was on earth, He did a lot of kind deeds and saved many people. Yet, those people plotted to kill Him. That was why our Lord rebuked them saying: *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning"* (Jn 8:44). Without Christ, men are lost and wicked but with Christ we shall have the light of life (Jn 8:12).

Without God, men's hearts are burdened. Today's society brings a lot of stress to our lives. To bring up our children and to have a 'comfortable life' we have to work till there are sweats in our faces (Gen 3:19). Instead of trusting in God, men seek their own solutions by taking to drinking, smoking, dancing, even going to night clubs and casinos. They end up in more trouble and stress than ever before. Often, men, because of their pride and greed, struggle and undermine one another. These result in strife and fights and more sadness rather than joy. The Bible says: *"But godliness with contentment is great gain. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content"* (1 Tim 6:6, 8). Hear what our Lord Jesus said: *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matt 11:28).

Without God, men's hearts are foolish. The biggest fault of men's heart is their ignorance of God. They said in their hearts that there is no God but God looks down from heaven upon

the children of men (Ps.53:1, 2). Because they denied the existence of God, they think that they can do anything they like. They can accumulate all the wealth, power and glory they want and so they say to themselves: "*Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry*" (Lk 12:19). But our Lord says to such a person: "*Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*" (Lk 12:20). Let us therefore not be such a fool. The Psalmist says: "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction*" (Prov 1:7).

21 August 2005
Who am I?

By Elder Foong Kon Yu

What would you consider as good service in a restaurant? It would probably be one that serves your needs and pays attention to minute details. Your award of a credit would be proportional to the crowd. You will be impressed if your needs are taken care of in a crowded restaurant. Now imagine in a crowd of 6 billion people (estimate of the world population) your individual needs and attention to the finest details are met, how would you assess the service? This idea of how good a God who tends to us in this populated world was the theme of King David's public prayer. This is recorded for us in 1 Chronicles. What a prayer!

David had all the money and means to build the house of God but the honour was given to Solomon. King David made a thanksgiving offering with a remarkable prayer. Look at his opening statement. "*Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all*" (1 Chron 29:11).

David the great king praised God's name and thanked Him for all the blessings. In human terms, God is very busy. He has to govern the universe, the weather, all things around us, both unseen and seen, the animals and yet He has time for us. He knows our every need down to the finest details that we may not even know (do you know in detail how your own body works?). Yet He has time to hear our prayers. Some may pray for rain while another may pray for sunshine. We can never comprehend how anyone can hear countless prayer requests and yet answers each one!

David acknowledged that our finite mind can never fathom the Almighty God. This prompted him to ask in gratitude. "*Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee*" (1 Chron 29:13-14).

Of all the people of the world, God blessed David with gifts and spiritual understanding. There is nothing that we can claim to be our own. God gave us everything — our body, intellect, material blessings and all that we have. David rightly prayed that we should offer willingly our all as they are God's. However He deems it good to let us use the talents and resources placed at our disposal. If we honestly reflect upon this we have no complaints about what portion or lot we have or how much we are doing for the Lord.

God allowed the Israelites to roam in the wilderness for forty years due to their disobedience. Are we better than those Israelites? The majority of our population is stiff necked who refused to believe in God's word and His teachings. Some are hostile towards Christianity or use their own interpretation to adulterate the Bible. What is taught in our school is evolution which is anti God. What did God do? He blesses us with forty years of

prosperity, peace and happiness as a nation. As we look back can we not see the mercy and grace of God? What is your response to His goodness? Is anything that you are doing too much? If God were to deal with us according to our sins, we will be gone forever! *"He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him"* (Ps 103:10-11).

This is my response. By His grace and mercy, I am blessed, so teach me Lord to respond that I will have fellowship with Thee in gratitude and love. He answers my prayer requests no matter how small. Who am I that He deems fit to bless and extend grace with mercy. I am but one of the six billion people on the face of this planet. I do not even try or attempt to find out how He does it all but I simply trust Him and accept that He is the Almighty God. Crowded as it may be, the "service" from God is beyond comparison. What is my service level for Him? I will try my best asking Him to give me strength and wisdom to perform as I am sure He loves me more than enough to do that. He is my God!

28 August 2005

**The women who anointed Jesus with ointment
(Matt 26:6-13; Luke 7:36-50)**

By Elder Su Ching Chun

We have all read about the accounts in the Gospels of how two women came before Jesus and anointed Him with ointment. Their actions reflected their gratitude and love for Jesus as He extended His love, grace and mercy to them. Jesus praised them for their "*good work*".

Who exactly were these two women?

The first woman is called Mary, and the incident took place in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper (Matthew 26:6-7). During the meal, she went to Jesus with an alabaster box of very precious ointment and poured it on His head. Mary had a sister Martha and a brother Lazarus. She and her siblings supported Jesus during His ministry in preaching the Gospel.

The name of the second woman who anointed Jesus is not mentioned in the Bible. The Scripture tells us that she was a sinful woman (Luke 7:36-38). The incident took place in the house of a Pharisee named Simon, also during a meal. This sinful woman came with an alabaster box of ointment to anoint Jesus when she heard He was there.

What is the purpose of anointing a person with ointment?

1. During the Old Testament, the kings, prophets and priests were anointed.
2. It was a sign of respect.
3. Anointing sick people with ointments which have medicinal effects, to heal them
4. For the purpose of burial.

What was the motivation for these two women to anoint Jesus?

Mary anointed Jesus not just because Jesus brought her brother Lazarus back from death, but she clearly knew that Jesus was the Messiah. Mary loved Jesus, listened to His teachings and remembered what He had taught. Now that Jesus was about to go to the cross, Mary put her love for Jesus into action, and anointed Him with the precious ointment. The disciples saw and were displeased with such waste for they felt that the ointment could be sold, and the money better used to help the poor. But Jesus explained that Mary did it for His burial and "*wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her*" (Matt 26:13).

We are all given a 'jar of ointment' which are the talents we have received from our Lord. Have we poured out all its contents to serve God and to glorify Him? Indeed, we have to make a commitment to do so in order to please God, and to show our reciprocation for the grace of our salvation.

The sinful woman, on the other hand, knew she had sinned, and came to Jesus with hope for forgiveness. She came with a repentant heart, washed Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped it with her hair and anointed Him with the ointment. Jesus took compassion on her and forgave her sins. "*And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace*" (Lk 7:50). We can almost picture the joy and peace the woman experienced after her sins were forgiven!

The love and mercy of our Lord is higher than the mountain and deeper than the sea. We are sinners and yet received the grace of salvation. We did nothing to earn this salvation. It's purely by God's merciful grace we are saved. Therefore, let us not be like the Pharisees, putting faith and obedience in Jesus below that of abiding by the Law. Let us draw a lesson from the two women who anointed Jesus. May God help us!

4 Sep 2005

Calvary Combine Games Day

By AP Dennis Kwok

It was a beautiful and sunny morning on 9 August 2005 which is also our nation's 40th birthday. More than 300 Calvarians with their family members and friends gathered at West Coast Park for the Calvary Combined Games Day. The objective set for this special event is to enhance Christian fellowship for both young and old Calvarians through games, fun and relaxation. Achieving this objective might not be possible if God did not bless us with good weather. We thank God for answering our prayers.

The day began with praise and worship to the Lord for His goodness and beautiful creation, followed by an opening prayer by our pastor, Rev James Chan. The air was not just fresh but filled with excitement and life. The game I/Cs were all ready to begin. The large crowd was divided into 6 teams with their respective colour representations. Not every one joined in the games. Some opted to relax, sit around and catch up with one another.

The games were very well-organized and competitive. Although the Red team emerged the champion, every team should be applauded for their unity and cohesiveness demonstrated in every game. The most memorable game of all is the tug-of-war. This game required not just power and great strength but also good coordination and team cheering. Thank God that there are no twisted arms or broken legs, except for some light abrasions on the palms. The children had their fun as well in kite-making. Some of them actually managed to fly their kites on the spot.

Just minutes to the end of the last telematch, the sky suddenly turned dark and a huge downpour set in. Most of us managed to squeeze into the big tent, and some others sought shelter under the trees. The rain came at the right time for us to take our lunch as well. It was truly an experience to fellowship with one another under such circumstance. How sweet and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity regardless of the 'storm' outside. Thank God for the rain!

The day ended after the prize presentation and a closing prayer to thank God for the fruitful Games day we had. Some stayed behind for more fellowship and ball games while the rest followed the bus back to church.

God willing, we hope to organize another one next year. It is our prayer that those who missed the blessing will join us the next time. *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"* (Heb 10:25). Amen.

11 Sep 2005

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God

By Eld Cheng Wei Nien

The church is the body of Christ and every believer is a member of that body. If the body is to grow and be healthy, every member must work together. *"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another"* (Rom 12:4-5). For all members to work together harmoniously and effectively, humility towards one another is very important. Without this, the church will never be able to function properly. Contrarily, *"by pride cometh contention"* (Prov 13:10) and *"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall"* (Prov 16:18). The apostle Peter was worried about the peace and unity of the church when he wrote to the *"elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father"* (1 Pet 1:2).

The Humility of the Elders. The Elders are to *"feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind"* (1 Pet 5:2). Feeding the flock does not mean only feeding them with the Word of God but also taking care of their spiritual needs and being compassionate to their weakness. To have oversight does not mean only to exercise strict control over the flock, but more importantly, to help and encourage them when they are confronted with problems or when they have gone astray. To do all these, the Elders themselves must be humble and have a caring spirit; *"neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples (examples) to the flock"* (1 Pet 5:3).

The humility of the younger people. The apostle Peter was quite aware that the younger generation could be more educated and more knowledgeable, as in our generation today, but he has good advice for them. *"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder"* (1 Pet 5:5). Not prepared to submit may result in strife and contention within the church. In the end, the work of the Lord will suffer and His Name not glorified. All the wonderful knowledge that the young have learnt will not be put to proper use for the Lord and it may even create confusion in the minds of many. Therefore, if we want to serve the Lord well, we must *"be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility"* (1 Pet 5:5).

Why is humility so important? It is important because *"God resisteth the proud"* (1 Pet 5:5). The opposite of humility is pride and pride is an abomination to God. Why was the fallen angel, who was *"full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty"* (Ezek 28:12) cast down from heaven? Because he was full of pride and ambition. The Lord said to him: *"Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground..."* (Ezek 28:17). It was a great pity that such a bright and capable angel be cast down from heaven. Similarly, it will be a great pity if some bright and capable young men and women among us cannot be mightily used by our Lord because of their pride and haughtiness.

Will the humble ever be exalted? Yes, but not by his or her timing; rather by God's own timing, "*that He may exalt you in due time*" (1 Pet 5:6). Too often, young people are too hasty to apply their knowledge, sometimes with good intentions, but they end up with difficulties and caused others and themselves to stumble. Consider great men of faith like Joseph, Moses and David. They had learnt their lessons of humility and had waited upon the Lord for long periods of time before they were exalted to high positions and were mightily used by God. So, let us learn to humble ourselves likewise, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us and use us in His own time. Remember, "*He careth for you*" even if nobody else does.

18 Sep 2005
For self or for God?

By Eld Foong Kon Yu

When the Israelites returned to Jerusalem from captivity, their first priority was to rebuild the tabernacle. Starting with great enthusiasm, the interest soon fizzled out. Some went to build their own homes or to attend to their own business at the expense of the resources to rebuild God's house. They have forgotten the original motive for the return. This prompted the prophet Zechariah to ask in Chapter 1:5 "*Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?*" The point of the prophet is this: the time we have is extremely short for both prophets and the fathers. It may have seemed as if the prophets would be around forever, for so it appeared in what many regarded as a constant haranguing from them. Look, how fleeting life is! We do not live forever here on earth. If there is so little time in which to do anything for the glory of God, how important it is that we should do so now while we still have life and breath.

Doing our duty in the church is not all that the Lord commanded. Even though our prior duty to God is presumed, our duty to our neighbours is set forth as a test of the genuineness of our commitment to God. The gospel is addressed first and foremost to individuals but the gospel surely has social implications or it would not be the powerful Word of God that Scripture portrays it to be. "*Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart*" (Zech 7:9-10). We know very well that the Lord Jesus commanded that we love our neighbours as ourselves. Instead, we carry the worldly mentality of 'dog eat dog' into the church. As it was during the time of Zechariah, it is happening in our time too. "*But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear*" (Zech 7:11). We shrugged our shoulders too, right? We pretend that if our little world is fine, we care less what happens to the others. Worse still, some have malice in their hearts. Take heed of God's word. "*... and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart*" (Zech 7:10). God is truth (Exo 34:6). He expects no less than the truth from His people in their daily dealings with one another (Ps 15:2; Eph 4:25). Corruption in the courts corrupts God's purpose in the world. Keep your hearts pure by not indulging in the vindictiveness or hatred against our neighbours. Once the inner disposition gives way, every conceivable act of violence and sin against our neighbours is possible. (Matt 15:19).

The Israelites tried to appear holy by fasting. Clearly, ritual in and of itself can be, and in this case was little more than empty formalism that satisfied only the people's selfish interests. It is a false notion that abstaining from food (or depriving ourselves from anything else) to mourn over God's past acts of judgment are necessarily meritorious. It is possible to use fasting and mourning as a way of calling attention to ourselves instead of to God. True fasting and mourning are outward signs of genuine inward grief and a decision to repent of sin. Self imposed religious acts, not prescribed in Scripture, are merely self-glorifying. They are expressions of our pre-occupations with ourselves and our own

importance. "... *did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?*" (Zech 7:5-6). God's antidote for such egocentrism is this: "*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*" (1 Cor 10:31). What is your answer and what is your priority?

25 Sep 2005
The labour that is not in vain
(Col 1:25-29)

By John Loo

The world labours on. We work to live or do we live to work? The maxim is that if you do not work you do not eat. The world esteems a man by the work he does. The work may be in a congenial and comfortable setting of an air-conditioned office or in a hot and dusty environment with the blazing sun beating down one's neck. Like it or not, we are all called to labour. The haunting thought that had plagued men through the ages was that whatever they had laboured for, they knew that their labour was in vain. Looking through history, we read of builders of great empires subjecting billions of insignificant and impoverished people to labour for them that they might establish their posterity, yet they had all laboured but in vain!

The great and wise king Solomon epitomised all of these and he came to a conclusion, surmising that all labour under the sun is vanity (Ecc 1:2-3).

Paul reminded the believers in Colosse of their allegiance to Christ and of their glorious hope that they had in Him. Having put their trust in Christ, the believers were to manifest Him in their lives.

In verses 25-27, Paul counted his labour for Christ as a labour of joy. The Lord Jesus Christ, our supreme example, gave up heaven's glory to come to this sinful world, suffered humility and shame on our behalf. He finally gave His life for us so that we may spend eternity with Him in heaven. Paul spoke of his responsibility and his calling as a minister of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the believers. While not all were called to be a minister like Paul, nevertheless all believers are called to testify for the Lord Jesus Christ and to share with others this hope that we as believers have in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

In verse 28, Paul spoke of the arduous task of a minister and that it entailed preaching, warning, and teaching every man in all the wisdom of God, and that the whole exercise was to culminate in the believer's maturity in his or her faith in Christ Jesus. Indeed, it was no small task that was entrusted to Paul, and likewise to all faithful ministers of the Word of God. Paul was in fact speaking of a work that perished not. The effective presentation of the Gospel includes both warning and teaching. We need to warn people that without Christ they are doomed to eternal separation from God. We also need to teach that salvation is available through faith in Christ.

This soul-saving work is not in vain because it is the preaching of the Gospel unto salvation in Christ. The Word that was spoken will accomplish its purpose according to God's will and purpose. We are called to this labour sometimes as sowers while other times as reapers. *"And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their*

labours" (John 4:37-38). However, all are labourers with God because He is the One who gives the increase. When opportunity avails we are to speak a word for Christ.

A preacher's work is not in vain because he labours "*not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed*" (John 6:27). The Christian's labour is indeed honourable for we are called to be "*labourers together with God*" (1 Cor 3:9a). This labour is not in vain because we have the power of God's Spirit working in us (Col 1:29).

Do you long to hear the sweet voice of the Lord as He beckons, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matt 11:28). Amen.

---The End---