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01 Jan 2006

" A New Beginning"

By Elder Lawrence Sim

Time flies and we have entered the New Year 2006. Looking back, it was like yesterday when we ushered in the year 2005. You may wonder why time passes so quickly. The Bible tells us in James 4:14 *"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away"*

In Luke 19:13, we read that a nobleman had 10 servants who were given one pound each, and his instruction was simple, *"Occupy till I come"*. They were given a common assignment with the same amount of money. In the end, most of them gained something except for one of the servants who gained nothing with his one pound. The nobleman was not expecting great gain from every one of the servants, but they were simply to obey his command to keep busy with that one pound till he returns. There was no promise of any reward but because of the command they received, the servants simply obeyed because they loved their master.

The nobleman is none other than Christ Himself. He has commanded us to fulfill the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. Every true and faithful child of God is to go and tell the gospel to every lost soul to rescue them from spiritual darkness. We have also been given talents, and God knows our abilities and limitations. We must not give excuses that we are unable to do this or that.

Calvary B-P Church entered a new chapter in her history in 2005. Thirty-two years ago, we started with a single congregation, and over the years with the Lord's blessings, Pandan and Tengah congregations were established. After many years, these two congregations have grown, and subsequently Calvary Pandan B-P Church was registered on 12 March 2005 and Calvary Tengah B-P Church on 6 September 2005 while we remain as Calvary B-P Church. We thank God that while we laboured together, the Lord enabled us to grow. Some have planted, some have watered and God graciously gave the increase (1 Cor 3:6).

Today, we are entering another chapter as the VPP brethren have left us to start their own church. Although we are saddened by the split, we are still worshipping the same God, and using the same Bible. For those who have left, we pray that they will continue to serve the Lord faithfully and multiply for the glory of God.

As we usher in the New Year, we ought to be even more mindful of our Lord's imminent return. The Lord has warned His disciples in Matthew 7:15, *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves"*. Signs of

His coming are ever present in this day and age in the form of wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes in divers places; hatred of fellow men, rampant iniquity, lukewarmness and coldness of hearts in believers (Matt 24:4–12).

The Lord has given to each one of us different talents, and let us use them to “*occupy till He comes*”. We pray that you will rise to the occasion and come forward to serve Him. Pray that the Lord will continue to shower His blessings upon us in the new year. May the Lord be merciful and gracious to us all! Amen.

25 Dec 2005

" The Testimony of Lazarus" (John 10)

By Su Ching Chun

Who was Lazarus?

There are two Lazarus in the books of the Gospel. The first Lazarus (John 11:1-11) lived in the town of Bethany with his two sisters, Martha and Mary. The second Lazarus (Luke 16: 19-31) was a beggar, full of sores who laid at the gate of a rich man, eating from the crumbs that fell from his table, and dogs came to lick his sores.

What were their similarities?

Of course, they were both called Lazarus but their similarities did not stop there. The Bible did not record anything that they had said; most likely they did not say anything at all. However, the testimonies they had shown earned praises from our Lord and they serve as lessons for believers, even today.

Lazarus' testimony

Jesus loved the family of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. In the three and a half years of Jesus' ministry, he was taken care of by this family on numerous occasions. The Bible did mention in several portions of the Scriptures the way Martha and Mary served the Lord, but nothing was written about their brother Lazarus. In the third year of Jesus' ministry, he arrived at Bethany again and he heard Martha and Mary telling him "*Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick*" (John 11:3). He whom Jesus lovest? This person whom the Lord loved was Lazarus. But our Lord replied "*This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby*" (John 11:4). Nonetheless, Jesus did not go straight away to visit Lazarus. When Jesus arrived at their house eventually, Lazarus had died and was laid in the grave for four days already. Martha and Mary were in deep grief and although they loved Jesus and knew that that there was nothing Jesus could not accomplish, Mary said to Jesus "*Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*" When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her, also weeping, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and He wept. Why did Jesus weep? Jesus did not cry because Lazarus was dead. Jesus wept because of the people who were crying, for these people still could not see the fact that Jesus is the Son of God who came to save them! The miracles, healings and preaching in the full three years of Jesus' ministry did not make the people realize the all important fact that their Saviour was right there with them. Thus, our Lord performed yet another miracle, this time He summoned Lazarus out from the grave (John 11:38-41). When the people saw this, many of the Jews believed in Jesus.

In John chapter 12, we see a family worship of giving thanks, a picture of Martha serving, Mary anointing the feet of Jesus, and Lazarus who was raised from the dead, sitting quietly. Lazarus did not say anything but he was a living testimony that led people to believe in Jesus. Indeed, this family had a good testimony for Jesus through their actions and it was more powerful than a thousand words spoken!

A believer's testimony

Today, we can evangelize for the Lord in many ways. We can participate in mission trips, Gospel rallies, tracting, etc. However, do we realize that Jesus loves us as He loved Lazarus? Therefore, if we live like born again Christians, with our actions, speech and values in accordance to what pleases our Lord, we bear powerful testimonies for Christ. We will be like lamps shining for Jesus. This is the Christmas season and we see many people celebrating without understanding the true meaning of Christmas. Therefore, let us bear a living testimony for Jesus and share with them the good news that Jesus is our Saviour and urge them to come quickly to receive the Lord. May our lives shine for

Jesus! Amen.

08 Jan 2006

" Joy Cometh in the Morning"

By Elder Cheng Wei Nien

The year 2005 had passed and now we are in the year 2006. For Calvary B-P Church, the year 2005 had not been a happy one. Many unfortunate events happened, especially towards the end of the year. We claim this promise, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"* (Rom 8:28).

Most of us, have at one time or another, experienced the relief of recovery from an illness or deliverance from a difficult situation. There is a feeling of great joy when the problems are over. The same can happen to our spiritual lives and even to our church. Problems can surround us and, for a moment, they look insurmountable. But we have a God who is not only in control of every event but also loves us and will never let us fall into the deep pit of despair, if only we put our trust in Him and obey His commandment. *"O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit"* (Ps 30:3). It is not everyday that we meet problems like these. But when they come, we have a God whom we can trust and hold on to, for help.

"I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up" (Ps 30:1) The more the Lord helps us, the more we should humble ourselves before Him and magnify His bountiful mercy upon us. We should extol Him with undiluted thanksgiving and give Him all the honour, glory and praise. He is a God who always hears our prayers, like how He heard the Israelites when they cried unto Him in Egypt and came to their rescue. As we step into the new year, let us look to God and pray that He will heal all our past illnesses and give us new strength to face new challenges in order to live for Him. *"O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me"* (Ps 30:2). *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 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 4:15, 16).

"Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his" (Ps 3:4). When God comes to our rescue, we must not just sing unto Him alone. We must get the whole congregation to sing together to His praise. We must know that *"the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture"* (Ps 100:3). We must therefore *"enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name"* (Ps 100:4). We must thank Him because He has opened the new year with joy, hope and new promises. But we must look forward to a new fruitful year when we can all work together as one people and one congregation called by Him to come forward to serve Him without fainting. *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another"* (Heb 10:25). For, how can we sing unto the Lord and expect Him to bless us if there is still a lot of bickering and back biting among us?

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning (Ps 30:5). Calvary B-P Church had just gone through a very painful time, something she has never experienced before. Somehow, we have provoked God to anger by our disobedience. However, we must thank Him because “his anger endureth but a moment” (v 5) whereas, “in His favour is life” (v 5). When the Lord shows His anger it is like a dark and cold night. We can do nothing but weep in repentance. But, for the repented believer, joy will come in the morning. Then will we see the beauty of His kindness and experience the warmth of His unfailing love. Beloved, let us look to God for another blessed year and let us come together in brotherly love working joyfully, for there are yet a lot of unfinished work to be done for our Lord.

15 Jan 2006

" Trust in the LORD with all thine heart..." Proverbs 3:5

By Elder Foong Kon Yu

A very good sister in Christ gave me a painting with a distinct forked road. At the junction was the drawing of a man. The artist is conveying the idea that the man in the painting likened to the onlooker (such as me) is puzzled as to which road he should take. God set us an example by not choosing the easy way out. He could have given access to heaven to everyone. If this is so, there would be no need to shed any blood but this would cause many conflicts and controversies. In His wisdom, God chose to take the correct way and not the easy humanistic way to the solution. Our Lord Jesus chose to die on the cross to redeem us. God has given us a free will to choose too. There are two gates. We are to choose the narrow gate. It is a more difficult path to travel but the destination is everlasting life. Thanks be unto God for redemption, for the choice to enter the narrow gate. *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"* (Matt 7:13–14).

Sometimes, decisions are made more difficult as the forked road divides into more than two paths ahead. How often does this happen? The reality is that it happens for as long as we live on earth. One day in our walk on this earthly journey we would come across a crossroad clearly marked "Pleasing God" and "Trusting God". Both seem to lead to very admirable motives. Which of these two motives best reflects the basis of our relation with God? It is best described as an inner drive to please God or a desire to trust God.

As we look out we would notice that the path on "Pleasing God" is well trod. It is very natural that we would choose this path. We are determined to please God. We long so much for Him to be happy with us. This would drive us to act in accordance to His choice. Our motive is a determination to please God; we value being all God wants us to be. This is a very good intention. We try to "protect" God's name. Far from it! Our God does not need human guards or protection either for His works or whatever else. On the contrary, we need God's protection. We serve with our best capability, looking up occasionally, hoping to see a smiling face as it were, an acknowledgement of acceptance for our efforts. Soon we become tired and we notice that we lead a life that is indeed a routine cycle. We are not sure if God is still happy with us. We have a hard time to keep behaving well. Resisting sin (or not to fall into it) seems like a very heavy task.

Then we look at the other road "Trusting God". We walk along this narrow, less travelled route. It is less heroic because it seems like we are playing a passive role. In comparison, "pleasing" seems more like an active role. We need more effort. This has been our perception, is it not? Oblivious to many of us, "trusting" means living by His grace. We are to be humble to acknowledge that we are unable to please God unless we live by His grace. The first step to please God is to trust Him. *"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble"* (1 Pet 5:5).

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding”
(Prov 3:5).

Trusting God means letting Him take control of our lives. It also means standing with God, with our sins in front of us. Here we let God work together with us. Our effort to do our best comes from the strength that God gives us and guides us. This seems like abstract stuff. Let me illustrate three examples. Firstly, in the book of Genesis (chapter 4), Cain tried very hard to please God. He did so on his own terms, not God’s. Cain was upset and very disappointed when God was displeased with his offering. Secondly, in the book of 1 Samuel (chapter 13), Saul offered sacrifices to the Lord. This was not his job and it was told specifically to him that this was to be done by the prophet Samuel. Saul was trying to do things his way, to please God. Then in chapter 15, Saul was told to destroy the Amalekites. He was to totally destroy the people and all the animals. However, Saul spared the king of the Amalekites and took the animals back. Saul reasoned that he would please God by giving the people their due share and besides, he had more to offer as sacrifices to the Lord. This obviously did not please God. These were not in accordance with what God told Saul to do. *“And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams”* (1 Sam 15:22).

Beloved, let us trust in the Lord. The next time we come to a road junction, let’s commit this choice to God and let him direct us to make His choice, although it is very tempting to choose the easy way similar to that of the flow of water. *“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”* (Prov 3:6).

22 Jan 2006

" The True Light"

By Mr Yang De Gang

“That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:9, 14).

If you ask any experienced ship captain which piece of equipment is most important to him, chances are he will say: compass for navigating while out at sea, and lighthouse for guidance while entering the harbour. To the layman, the light on top of the lighthouse does not mean much, but to ships it can be a matter of life and death. Likewise, Christians need the true Light from God while navigating in the darkness of the world. *“That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9).* The true Light is Jesus and is clearly described in the Gospel of John.

1. This Light is the Light of Life. *“In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (Jn 1:4).* Jesus is the Light of Life as light and life are joined as one. How so? In nature, plants draw on light to grow, flowers bloom under the sunshine. So when Jesus shines upon us, our spiritual lives bloom. We thank God for this Light as we need it to live. Therefore, let us take in the Light in abundance so that we grow in spirit for the Lord!

2. This Light is the Light of guidance. *“... I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Jn 8:12).* The light of Christ leads man out of darkness. Yes, there are good things in the world but it is nonetheless still in darkness. We witness and experience the influences from the forces of darkness everyday. Thank God, the Light of Christ shines ahead, leading His sheep by His example, guiding us and delivering us out of darkness into light.

3. This Light is the Light of Testimony. *“He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light” (Jn 5:35).* John the Baptist was a light of testimony for Jesus. In other words, he shone for Jesus. *“The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe” (Jn 1:7).* *“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house” (Matt 5:14–15).* Every Christian must shine for Jesus, and when the world sees our light, the name of God can be glorified. Jesus also expects us to shine so that we *“giveth light unto all that are in the house”*. This is not an easy task as we have to try our best to do it daily. Indeed, sometimes our bad habits or bad temper can easily break out at home. We tend to be too relaxed at home and our light dims when our guard is down. Nevertheless, let us endeavour to be a shining light of testimony, both outside and at home, for the glory of God.

It is difficult to know the theory and also to put it into practice. It is, however, a task that requires tremendous efforts to live it out. We pray that the Lord will be merciful upon us

even as we live and give out the true Light in our daily lives to be a living testimony for our Lord.

29 Jan 2006

" Martha's Service" Luke 10:39-42, John 12:1-8

By Elder Su Ching Chun

During Jesus' ministry, He stayed with a family in Bethany whenever he came to Jerusalem. This family had two sisters, Martha and Mary and their younger brother Lazarus. We have already discussed how Mary anointed Jesus, and the testimony of Lazarus in two separate articles. This time, we shall look at Martha's service.

1. Martha's Attitude at the Beginning of her Service (Luke 10:38-42)

Jesus loved this family and the family also loved to serve Him. Martha, Mary and Lazarus welcomed Jesus into their home and saw to His physical needs. We read from the portion of the Scriptures in Luke that when Jesus was there, Martha was "*cumbered about much serving*" and said to Jesus, "*Dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me*". In her eagerness to serve Jesus with her best, knowing the hardship He suffered during His travels, we can only imagine how Martha was working in overdrive. At this time, Martha realized that Mary was not helping out but instead was listening to the Lord at His feet! At that moment, Martha felt angry and complained to Jesus, asking Him to bid Mary to help out so that it is fair. When we serve, do we have Martha's attitude? Many a time! Indeed there are many things to be done in Church and often times there is a lack of manpower. When these tasks seem to fall only on your shoulders, do you start complaining to the Lord? Do we ask the Lord: "Why we are the only ones doing the job while others seem to be having an easy time?" (It is the best if everyone serves together).

Let us take a step back and examine our own situation. Have we neglected the more important thing to listen to Jesus' words just like what Mary did, because of our heavy workload? While serving the Lord is good and important, it must not take the place of the most important thing: to listen to Jesus' words! Let's see how Jesus replied Martha. "*Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things*". Jesus did not chide her but He gently corrected her attitude towards service. Similarly, we may be burdened by loads of work in Church. However, we must have the correct attitude and never neglect our spiritual growth. The key is to draw close to the Lord and serve with willing hearts. We should also encourage and pray for one another.

2. The Change in Martha's Attitude (John 12:1-8)

Before Jesus went into Jerusalem for the last time, He dropped by the family in Bethany. During the family worship, we read that "*Martha served*". She prepared food as what she always did. Indeed, Martha had a gift in seeing to the physical needs of people. However, gone was the quick temper we saw previously and this time round she served quietly. We see an obvious maturity in Martha's attitude towards serving.

Martha set a wonderful testimony for all of us. Serving the Lord is not to gain praises from people; neither is it to uplift our status. Even if the load is heavy and workers few, we should pray for strength and not grumble. Grumbling will not help us finish the work but will hinder us instead. We should also humbly receive corrections if need be, so that

our spiritual lives can grow. Let me end with a little story. A mother hen laid an egg. She began making a lot of noise as if she was afraid that people did not know that she had produced an egg. Isn't laying eggs the natural responsibility of hens? On the other hand, a female turtle lays many eggs and returns to the sea quietly. Such is the service of a matured Christian. Therefore, let us all serve the Lord fervently, faithfully and with maturity. Amen!

05 Feb 2006

" The Year of the Dog"

By Elder Cheng Wei Nien

The year of the chicken is now over. The big rooster has stepped down and now it is the dog's turn. The rooster had failed miserably. Instead of bringing prosperity, it brought with it the bird flu which had brought death to some people in the world, and fear of a possible global pandemic to human beings, if the virus succeeds in mutating to one that is able to spread from human to human. For the chickens, it has caused millions of birds of its own kind (chickens) to be culled and perished in the hands of the fearful health officers. Now that the dog has 'taken over', will things become better? Of course, superstitious people will pray that the dog will turn the fortune around. However, scientists warn us that the worst is yet to come. We should take heed of what our Lord has told us in Matthew 24:7 *"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places."* We have not forgotten the SARS two years ago. It was only a mini foretaste of what is to come. Now, let's see what the Bible says about the dog.

"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision" (Phil 3:2). Dogs are known to be loyal domestic animals. They can be friendly and even lovable to their own masters. However, when it comes to strangers they can be very dangerous. The Bible regards the dogs as evil workers who are loyal to their master, the devil. They represent the mediums, witches, fortune tellers, etc. and of course, the modernists of our time. Our Lord regards them as wolves who come not to protect but *"to steal and to kill"* (Jn 10:10). Sometimes they, not the real dogs, but the false teachers even come as our friends to mislead us. Our Lord warned us: *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves"* (Matt 7:15).

Dogs are animals without souls. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, the dogs were friends of Lazarus. They ate under the rich man's table and licked Lazarus's sores (Lk 16:19-21). One day both the rich man and Lazarus died. Lazarus went to heaven and the rich man went to hell. There was no mention of the dogs. They were neither in heaven nor in hell because they had no soul in them. Spiritually speaking, they are worthless creatures. Today they live, tomorrow they disappear into nothing. We are different from dogs. We have a soul in us which are precious to the Lord who came to this world to save us, but not the dogs. We must therefore treasure our souls. Make sure that one day, when we depart from this world we will go to heaven and not to hell. We must not treat ourselves as dogs and live like dogs because we have an eternal destination which the dogs do not have. The question is: Are you destined for heaven or hell? Today, you better be sure.

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs" (Matt 7:6). Although dogs may be kept as pets by some people or used as 'watch dogs' by others, they are nevertheless just animals. They have no celestial value. We must therefore not give them zodiac respects as if they can determine our destination, like the superstitious heathens do. We are children of God saved by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Eternal life in heaven is a special

gift of God given only to His children who believe in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not given to dogs. Our Lord said, "*It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs*" (Matt 15:26). No one can receive this eternal life unless he receives Jesus as his personal Saviour and become a child of God. If you are still a non-believer, why not come and believe in Jesus this Chinese New year and receive the gift of eternal life?

Dogs are unclean animals in nature. One may scrub a dog with shampoo and spray it with perfume and keep it in a beautiful kennel. Nonetheless, inwardly, it is unclean in nature. The Bible put the dog in the same category as the pig. You may clean it up nicely but when you let it go, it will go back to its dirty habits again. "*But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire*" (2 Pet 2:22). "*As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly*" (Prov 26:11). So is a believer who has been cleansed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ but goes back to live in sin again. Such a believer is no better than a dog or a pig!

Let's resolve to be faithful to our Lord till He returns. Amen!

12 Feb 2006

" The True Vine"

By Mr Yang De Gang

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:1-5).

Jesus was addressing the people living under the Law who did not have true life in them saying, *"I am the vine, ye are the branches"*. What a precious parable! We see three types of branches: branches that bear no fruit (15:2a), branches that bring forth fruit (15:2b) and branches that bring forth much fruit (15:5). When the branches are joined to the vine, there are four kinds of interaction among them.

1. The Interaction of Ability (15:5-6): When we are away from the Lord, we cannot bear fruit. Only branches attached to the vine have the ability to bear fruit. We also know that the ability to bear fruit lies within the vine, not in the branches. Hence a believer attached to the Lord draws life from the true vine to produce fruit. This fruit we produce in turn is our gift to Him. How sweet and wonderful this interaction of ability to bear fruit for the Lord!

2. The Interaction of the Word (15:7): Jesus is the Word and our "will" represents a longing for it. The longing for the words of our Lord manifests itself as a prayer to "ask". When the Lord sends down the Word into our hearts, it works within us to love His words even more. This interaction of the Word in us can only be achieved when the branches are attached to the vine!

3. The Interaction of Love (15:9-12): This portion of the scriptures exhorts us to abide in the Lord Jesus, and He abides in us. When the branch is on the vine, the life of the vine is in the branch. *"Abideth in"* represents an interaction; what exactly is this interaction of love? In chapter 13, we see that the sacrifice of our Lord on the cross is His love for us. This is the ultimate price for Jesus to pay for sinners like us. We reciprocate such love for us. We love Jesus our Lord. In Chapter 10 and 15, we see the love to abide by the ways of our Lord Jesus.

4. The Interaction of Joy (15:11): The joy of Jesus flows into us and we receive this joy. When Jesus was rejected during His ministry in preaching the Gospel, He *"rejoiced in spirit"* and prayed to God (Luke 10:21). Jesus remained joyful in difficult situations and now He gives us this same joy too. We can remain joyful in every situation: in good times and bad times, in times of abundance and also in times of want. This joy remains forever in all regenerated believers!

Let us examine ourselves today to see the state of our relationship with the Lord. Are we bearing fruit? Can we bring forth much fruit? Are we interacting with God in ability, in His Word, in love and in joy? May the Lord help us!

19 Feb 2006

" Keep Me as the apple of the eye" Psalm 17:8

By Elder Foong Kon Yu

Now that the festive season is over, we need to drag ourselves back to the "real world". What is the difference you may ask? Festive season is a period when we all put aside our daily chores and try to forget the woes of everyday life. As a child I always wished that this festive mood would never end. As an adult I wished for that too. Alas, it is only a wish that would not come true though we punctuate our calendar with festivals. While we are in celebration our thoughts are not far from the worldly cares and other unending worries crowd our minds. Unending worries? Is there such a thing? Yes, we are filled to the brim with worries. Why unending? In this endless vicious cycle, before one problem is resolved, another crops up. There are the challenges we have in our life, in work, in our family and even in our health (some may even be worried about how long more they can live and wonder if this is the last festive season they would go through). We are all stressed out!

Thank God for making sleep a time to put things away from our minds. Sleep is not something that we should or can take for granted. To those who cannot sleep the night seems very long and is a big burden. Sleep, rather the inability to do so becomes a big worry in itself. Next time you awake, be grateful. "... *for so he giveth his beloved sleep*" (Ps 127:2). Unless the Lord allows us to wake up we may sleep but we will never wake up. "... *and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts*" (Jer 51:57). Sleep is but a temporary rest. It is not a long term solution to pop pills to simulate. Some may even wish that they never get up again to face this cruel and unfriendly sorrow-filled world (their perception of this world which makes them desire this wish of perpetual sleep). We had better know where we will go after death before we have this wish. Only Jesus can take us to the heavenly rest in paradise through His redemption. Be sure you have confessed Jesus as your Saviour.

Each morning when we wake up we are to face the reality of life again. "*When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*" (Deut 20:1). In our daily battle we need to face our enemies (our worries, problems, difficulties, etc.) We enlarge them so big that we liken them to horses and chariots. The enemies overwhelm us and we are outnumbered as it were. Just when we thought that we are helpless, God reminds us that we are not alone. If you have Christ with you, you are never alone (Read Psalm 139). Having brought us out of darkness and the bondage of sin, the Lord will not leave us alone to defend ourselves. As we approach the enemies, our hearts beat faster but the Lord assures us and tells us that we should not be afraid. "*And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them*" (Deut 20:3).

Hold on there! Is it possible? We face the enemies (all these irresolvable problems that stress us to the limit), we are to stay calm and not tremble? Oh, my knees are already

knocking each other. I am shaking all over. I am fearful unto death. How do I keep the peace within me? If you surrender yourself unto the Lord and call upon Him, He will fight for you. *“In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me”* (Ps 86:7). God goes with us all the time when we are in battle (or when we are not in battle). He fights for us. Why? Because He is there to save us. He promised that He would not forsake us. *“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee”* (Deut 31:6). What have we done to deserve such attention and assurance? Is there anything at all? Sorry, there is none! It is by God’s grace that He does all these for us. He loves us even before we knew the meaning of love (stop wondering but rather examine our own hearts and see how we respond to God’s love). How comforting is the Lord’s Word! *“For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you”* (Deut 20:4). *“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Rom 8:31). *“Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings”* (Psalm 17:8). *“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness”* (Ps 17:15).

26 Feb 2006
"True Freedom"
Pr Yang De Gang

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (Jn 8:31–32, 36).

With calls for human rights rising each day, people in this modern day seek freedom. Many are calling for freedom in everything we do — freedom of speech, freedom of press, academic freedom, freedom in communication and freedom of marriage, etc. However, what is true freedom and how does one attain it? Freedom is like a train moving on its rails; once it derails, the train is immobilized. A person driving a car must obey traffic rules which dictate that he stops at red lights. If one disobeys such rules, serious accidents may happen which will result in the loss of freedom because he has to spend time in the hospital. John 8:31–36 illustrates true freedom and the principles of getting true freedom.

1. Freedom Under the Truth

Jesus spoke about freedom by knowing the truth. This is because freedom is bound by the truth, and things that are not in line with the truth are wrong. Therefore, truth is like a railway on which we abide by and out comes true freedom. Hence, let us strive to walk in the truth, do what the Lord pleases us to do and we shall enjoy true freedom. The Lord says that *“I am the way, the truth, and the life”* (Jn 14:6). Truth is our guidance and it shall give us true freedom.

2. Freedom by Love

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” (Gal 5:13). This is not an excuse to indulge in the desires of the flesh, but to serve one another by love. By love, we have true freedom as love delivers us out of hatred, for hate has consumed many people. Hitler killed 6 million Jews out of hate and we can continue to cite countless examples how terrible hatred had made people. However, when we let the love of the cross undo our hatred, we enter into true freedom.

3. Freedom by Being Righteous

“As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.” (1 Pet 2:16). We cannot be free by engaging in maliciousness or evil doing. We cannot lead a double life of a righteous outer cover while the inside is full of untold filth. Therefore, let us all be righteous in the sight of God, both inside and outside of us, and we shall enjoy true freedom in righteousness.

4. Freedom by Doing All Things that Glorify God

“...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). We should not do things that do not glorify God. We can apply this principle in our daily living to enjoy true freedom. Also, *“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.”* (1 Cor 10:23). In all the things that we do, we

have to consider the consequences because as believers, we do not live for ourselves. We do all things to glorify God!

The principles mentioned above are basic guidelines to help us. We have entered into true freedom by salvation and this is the kind of freedom in Christ. The tide of the world shall not change us if we abide by the Word of God and we shall emerge victorious against Satan. Let us walk in the path that the Lord has drawn for us — the road of true freedom that leads to victory and eternal glory.

05 Mar 2006

"Serve the Lord with Gladness"

Elder Cheng Wei Nien

The happy festive season is over. First, it was Christmas; then came New Year followed by Chinese New Year. Now, the 'Chap-Goh-Meh' is also over and every one is back to the daily routine. For the children, it is back to school. For some, it may be a new school, new class and new teacher. For those who have passed out from schools, they may be in a new junior college, polytechnic or university. For some Singapore young men, it may be the start of National Service. Whatever it is, it is time to settle down and get on with the work that is ahead of us for the rest of the year. For those of us in Singapore, we have been presented an exciting budget of the year, in which, the Prime Minister promised something for every citizen. It looks like the prospect for the year is going to be good. On the other hand, news of murder are reported almost everyday in our newspapers and the threat of the bird flu looms over our heads. Around us, earthquakes, mud slides, terrorists' activities as well as demonstration and riots are happening right before our very eyes. What do these things tell us?

"The heart (of man) is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9). This is nothing new because even in Noah's time, *"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"* (Gen 6:5). Ever since Adam and Eve sinned, sin came into the world and all of us are living in a sinful world. Because of our sins, natural calamities also follow wherever we are. We need to come back to our Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him only do we have peace because He came to bring peace to our lives. He 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"* (Jn 14:27). The year is just beginning and all of us have plans as to how to make the year a happy and successful one. It is important that we put God first in all our plans and He will see us through all our difficulties. Many a time we run into trouble because we leave Him out of our plans. Plan to come to worship Him every Sunday and serve wherever you can. You will find that God's blessings will be on you and your family.

Men's hearts are covetous in nature. *"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous..."* (2 Tim 3:2). A lot of problems in this world comes from men's covetousness. They never seem to have enough and henceforth create problems with their fellowmen in order to gain more. Wars break out and murders committed, demonstrations and riots take place, all because men love their own selves and want to have more in order to satisfy their own lusts. To achieve this, they are prepared to defame, to fight, to rob or even to kill. Our Lord taught us: *"Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away"* (Matt 5:42). The Scripture teaches us: *"But godliness with contentment is great gain...And having food and raiment let us be therewith content"* (1 Tim 6:6-8). The secret to peace is not fight but contentment. Sometimes we fight and strive among ourselves, even within our own church, not for material gain but for self glorification. How sad! We are children of the Almighty God and what we want should not be what the world can give but what our

heavenly Father will give. So, the year is marching on; very soon the end of another year will be here. Let us look forward to the year with great hope and anticipation of great blessings from our heavenly Father. But let us put Him first in our lives.

“Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing” (Ps 100:2) The world may be in turmoil but we have the joy in serving our Father in heaven from whom comes *“every good gift and every perfect gift”* (Jas 1:17). No doubt, if you are a student, you have to study hard; if you are parents, you have to earn and take care of your family. Our heavenly Father knows all our needs. *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matt 6:33). So, let us serve the Lord with gladness. Come to church early with your heart prepared every Sunday. Serve Him wherever and whenever you can, willingly and cheerfully. He will bless you abundantly. Amen!

12 Mar 2006

"Lessons from stones and rocks-1"

Elder Foong Kon Yu

Stones and rocks are something that we take as symbols of strength and stability. They are very widely used as boundary markers, in making tools and building materials. Cement, which is so commonly used, is a derivative of stones. The Scripture mentions stones and rocks close to five hundred times.

Lesson 1: Obedience

The most fascinating fact that impressed me is that by God's command, rocks could emit water for the thirsty Israelites in the wilderness. This happened twice. Human wise saying has it that you cannot squeeze water out of a stone. Once Moses was asked to strike a rock, which he did. Exodus 17:6 "*Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.*" In another instance, Moses was asked to speak to the rock but he struck it twice instead. Numbers 20:8 "*Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.*" Numbers 20:11 "*And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.*" This act of disobedience caused Moses dearly in that he was not allowed into the Promised Land. Numbers 20:12 "*And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.*" This is a lesson on obedience. We realize that Moses was angry with his people and not with God when he struck the rock, but for God, there is no excuse. We simply do what He commands. There would be blessing for obedience and punishment for disobedience. "But God, they are people who have done worse things than Moses. Why cannot you overlook this sin by Moses?", you may ask. God forgave Moses but since he was a leader and given much power, he was to set a good example. Luke 12:48 "*But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*" Leaders, take heed!

Lesson 2: Gratitude

Would anyone use a stone as a pillow? I would not but Jacob did just that! Genesis 28:11 "*... because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.*" Jacob was on his way to Haran. He was also running away from Esau whom he cheated. There was nothing in the wilderness. Not one soul was in sight! Jacob must be home sick. How would you feel leaving home for the first time and in total darkness in the wilderness? Like you and I, it was obvious that Jacob was extremely scared. Uncertainty surrounded this strange stopover. The stone pillow must have been comforting. In the middle of the night, God gave him a dream and promised Jacob that his descendants would be innumerable like the dust. God also

promised that He would always be with Jacob. Genesis 28:14 *“And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth.”* Genesis 28:15 *“And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.”* This has really turned the misery of Jacob into joy. He did not take God’s blessing for granted but rather he set up stones so that he can remember the place. Genesis 28:18 *“And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.”* He called that place Bethel. Jacob was sure that one day God would populate that place with his descendants. He already knew that God has abundance and if He can bless Jacob’s descendants in such great numbers, this God must have an infinite resource. Yes, He is infinite. God lacks nothing. Nevertheless, Jacob pledged to give ten percent to God. This is a lesson in gratitude. God is in no need of any materialistic thing that Jacob has to offer (Psalm 50). However, it pleases God that Jacob repays through his heart as an expression of gratitude. Genesis 28:22 *“And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.”*

Lesson 3: Deliverance

Goliath threatened the Israelites and challenged them. There was no one to match this giant from Philistine. He shouted words of abuse until the Israelites trembled. Often our problems appear as giants. They are likened to Goliath who challenges us. We ought to learn from David. What he had were five stones and a sling when he went to meet the challenger. 1 Samuel 17:45-46 *“Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee.”* Notice that though God could have just wiped out Goliath with a simple stroke, He allowed David to take the victory. David went in the name of the Lord. To the world, this is folly but God was able to direct the deadly shot of a single stone. 1 Corinthians 1:27 *“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.”* God could do wonderful things like that in days of old; He can do wonderful things today too. We may be small compared to our gigantic problems. For as long as we lay our problems before the Lord, He leads us through though we have only a small stone. We put in our best effort (it may seem small in proportion to the problem) and God will deliver us with His strength. Zechariah 4:6 *“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”*

19 Mar 2006
"Lazarus The Beggar"
Luke 16:19-31

We discussed the other Lazarus, who was Martha and Mary's brother, in the previous encouragement pages. Today, we shall consider the story of Lazarus the beggar and draw some lessons from it.

This life and the next; heaven or hell? This is a serious question. People often console themselves into thinking that all that matter is the enjoyment in this life because nobody knows what happens in the next. Since nobody can say for sure, why bother to be worried over the unknown? However, if nobody is sure of what happens after death, why bother with funeral rites? Especially for idol worshippers, why bother to bring in the priests to chant for the dead, burn paper money, houses, cars and even credit cards for them to "use" after death? This only shows that people know that death is not the end of the road, and there is more after that for the soul. And if death is indeed the end of all things, there is really no point in being a good person, or to do good deeds or even to be poor! However, the Bible tells us otherwise, and in Luke 16:19–31 we see where two different persons, the rich man and Lazarus the beggar, went after they died.

Is it true that rich people cannot go to heaven? Or why is it that the beggar deserved to go? This may prove a little difficult for some who first read the story. Jesus told this story of Lazarus the beggar who was laid at the rich man's gate, desiring a little of the crumbs from his table. But we see that the rich man was clearly lacking in compassion. Although he was rich and had sumptuous food laid on his table, he did not even have a bit of compassion on the beggar to feed him. The rich man was rich in worldly possessions but tremendously poor inside of him. What he did (or did not do) was against the teachings of the Law, which was to show compassion and humility, and to obey God. It's a pity that the rich man coveted only the enjoyment in this life and disobeyed God. So when the two men reached the end of their journey on earth, Lazarus enjoyed his next life in Abraham's bosom while the rich man suffered in hell.

Who can go to heaven then? The reason why Lazarus went to heaven was not because he had suffered previously, but because he obeyed God. The rich man went to hell not because he was rich and enjoyed his life, but because he did not obey God. There is judgment after death, and the suffering after death can be truly felt as shown by the suffering felt by the rich man. Likewise, he was also worried for his family members who were still not saved, but it was too late!

Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" (John 14:6). Two paths lay ahead of us, one to heaven and the other to hell. Believe in Jesus and go to heaven. Believe not and go to hell. Simple as it is, beware that the door to salvation can close any time as we await Jesus' Second Coming. Therefore, come and believe in Jesus when the door of salvation is still open or the regret may be too great to bear. Nobody can say they have not heard about Jesus because the Gospel is documented in the Bible and well spread to all during Christmas, in the form of tracts, on the Christian

radio station, during Gospel rallies and many other ways. So, let us all receive the Gospel with humility today. Seek, obey and spread the Gospel to all.

26 Mar 2006

"The True Saviour"

Pr Yang De Gang

“And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world” (John 4:39–42).

In the Gospel of John, the phrase “true” or “indeed” was used in context thirty times. Likewise, the phrase “Verily, Verily” was also used thirty times. “Testimony” or “testified” was used forty two times. In essence, these phrases have a similar meaning, i.e. testimonies are true, and they are the Truth given unto us by God Himself. This is the message of the Gospel of John. Jesus is the true Saviour, and we can testify this truth from the bottom of our hearts and also believe in Him. Do we still hold such faith in our Saviour today? Let us re-examine the proof of Christ being our only true Saviour.

1. Through the testimony of others

“And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified...”. How did the people realise that Jesus was the Saviour? Through the change of the sinful Samaritan woman who had five husbands! She transformed into a new person after receiving the Lord and hence came forth to testify for Jesus. People saw her change, her transition from a sinful person to that of a regenerated and repentant new person. They thought about the teachings of Jesus and reached the conclusion: Yes, Jesus is truly the Saviour!

We know that the founder of the Salvation Army was William Booth. He was a person who took a serious view of evangelism. He had a band, and every band member must fulfill a requirement. Every band member must be a believer, who was changed into a new person after receiving Jesus and one of them must share a testimony each time they performed. Many were blessed by their testimonies and many received Jesus by looking at their amazing transformations.

2. Through His own testimony

“And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.” Jesus’ testimony stretches back to the prophecies in the Old Testament to the fulfillment of those prophecies, His impeccable behaviour as a man, His kind ways, His mercy, His preaching, His teachings, the miracles He performed and everything about Him. We see that Jesus is a testimony all on His own! His salvation was finally completed on the cross at Calvary, to save every soul who believes in Him.

Some of us may be experiencing a slide in our spiritual lives. We should quickly arrest the slide and consider again the proof of our salvation. We look upon Jesus, reaffirming Him as our One and Only Saviour, and look at our own testimony for Him. We should be

steadfast in our faith, and endeavour to be good testimonies for Him. We have a true and living Saviour — Jesus, and He will guide us through all situations.

---The End---