

Pastoral Letter is a weekly Bible reading material published by the Calvary Bible-Presbyterian Church (Singapore). It is freely downloadable quarterly from www.calvaryjurong.com. If you have been blessed by this ministry, do let us know at info@calvaryjurong.com.

01 Jul 07

*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”
Psalm 51:10*

Through the outreach of the Hokkien Fellowship, we rejoice at the salvation of another two friends, Mr & Mrs Soh Seng Ba — the parents of a brethren from our Mandarin Worship Service this past week. Thank God for Miss Dorothy Koh who visited with them and shared the gospel after Mrs Soh attended Hokkien Fellowship for the first time last Sunday. Praise God for the working of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. A few days ago, together with some brethren from our Mandarin Service and Hokkien Fellowship, my wife and I were at their home to support them in prayer as idols were removed. Let's continue to pray for our unsaved loved ones, classmates, colleagues, neighbours and friends, that they, too, may come to know Christ as their personal Saviour. We have a Mandarin Gospel Meeting coming up on 7 July. This would be another good opportunity to share the gospel with them.

Meanwhile, how's your Christian life at this point? Do you have that intimate relationship with God? Do you experience His love, grace and protection in your life? I pray that all of us are here today because we want to worship our Almighty God — because we love Him and want to draw nigh to Him. Even from our recent months' devotional readings in *Daily Manna* on the book of Psalms, we learn of how God's people, such as David, experienced deep intimacy with Him. David's psalms are filled with expressions of worship, praise, adoration and devotion to our Lord. For example, in Psalm 51, we read of how David's walk with God was maintained even when he was in great trouble.

Are you intimate with God?

Often times, David was surrounded by enemies who wanted to destroy him. When discouragement set in his heart, he never gave up his faith or his walk with God. In fact, his faith and walk with God enabled him to go through all the obstacles. And when experiencing deliverance, David never failed to sing his praise, love, confidence and devotion to God. In Psalm 51, we see how such a sinful man can be restored into the fellowship of God.

David, a man after God's own heart, forfeited his intimacy with God as he fell into the darkness of sin. He became an adulterer and, later, a murderer. To us, such a sudden change seems almost unbelievable, but it's possible. David's fatal fall occurred *“at the time when kings go forth to battle”* (2 Sam 11:1). He should have been leading the armies and engaging in battle. But he neglected his duty by staying at home. And, while walking on the roof of his house, David saw a very beautiful woman bathing. Instead of leaving the roof and fleeing temptation, he looked on and finally, lust filled his heart. He entertained temptation by inquiring about Bathsheba. In one fatal moment, he forfeited his most treasured intimacy with God.

Restoring our fellowship with God

When Nathan revealed his sin, David did not argue with him. He admitted and confessed his sin to God. He pleaded for forgiveness and cleansing. Read about how David cried out to God in Psalm 51. Here is a man with true repentance and confession. He truly poured out his heart, soul and spirit in his prayer. He really cried out to God with a broken-hearted prayer. He acknowledged his sins. He pleaded to God for mercy with repentance. The Lord forgave him and restored him into fellowship again.

David did not blame his sin on surrounding circumstances or on human weakness. His conscience told him that he alone was guilty before the holy God. He knew in his heart that he had sinned against God's commandments. He accepted God's verdict of his sin without complaint. He said, *"...That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest"* (Psalm 51:4b).

Plea for restoration

David pleaded for cleansing. He asked for restoration: *"Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation..."* (Psalm 51:12). David also renewed his vow to God. He wanted to teach others the good news of God's mercy — *"Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways...My tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness...and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise"* (Psalm 51:13-15).

Are you living a victorious life for Christ? Are you experiencing the joy of your salvation? Some Christians may find themselves being tempted in various situations. We may appear firm and even judgmental of certain actions, but when it comes to the test, we may not always stand up tall. We have our weaknesses. This is why it is so important to establish our intimacy with God. Friends, God's forgiveness is available to you. If you humbly come before Him in repentance, He will forgive you and restore you into His fellowship.

Search me, O God, and know my heart today;

Try me, O Saviour, know my thoughts I pray.

See if there be some wicked way in me;

Cleanse me from every sin and set me free.

- by J. Edwin Orr

08 Jul 07

Greetings in the blessed name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Seeing the sanctuary packed with God's people each Sunday, I am encouraged by the love and dedication of fellow Calvinians as we stand united, holding fast the Word of God. We rejoice with fellow Christians amongst us who professed their faith in Jesus Christ by their baptism last week at our English and Mandarin Worship Services, and others who have joined us as members of Calvary B-P Church. Praise God also for the parents of infants in our midst who have pledged to bring up their children in the fear and knowledge of God. Let's warmly welcome each of them, as well as those visiting with us, so that they may experience Christian love and warm fellowship.

Indeed, great is God's faithfulness toward us. Many of us can testify to the goodness of His love and grace in our lives. It is also heartening to hear of how many have been blessed through reading God's Word with *Daily Manna*. Last week, we received a letter from a *Daily Manna* reader testifying of how the Lord has revived her spiritually:

"I'm writing to thank you and your church for putting together *Daily Manna*. I am not a member of Calvary Bible-Presbyterian Church. I was given the *Daily Manna* (April-June 2007 issue) by Dr Liu Pak Tong. I believe he was prompted by God to give it to me on that day. Praise God, for my own spiritual life had been wavering. Reading it has brought comfort, joy and a thirst for more of God's Word in my life.

The *Daily Manna* has brought new knowledge and insight to God's Word. Before, doing quiet time was a chore. Now I look forward to my time with God. May God continue to anoint you and your team as you all work on the upcoming issues. God bless."

— a *Daily Manna* reader

Praise God for the transformation of lives for His glory! May all of you be encouraged to feast upon God's Word everyday and bear much fruit for Him. Even as we're currently reading through the Old Testament in our *Daily Manna* devotions, we're reminded of God's grace and how important it is to obey Him. Being a Christian has many challenges. Whether it's at home or at our workplace, we encounter different situations that put our faith to the test. In the Bible, we're taught that there are two types of people — those who are guilty and those who are not. You're either a Christian or you're not a Christian. We face these battles daily as we deal with our family members and others around us. We know what we're supposed to do and how we should behave as Christians, but sometimes, we're too confident of ourselves and we slip into sin.

The grace of God

In the Old Testament, we see God's hand in dealing with His children and the unbelievers. For example, when the flood destroyed the entire race, only those in the Ark were saved. Sinners who had lived good moral lives along with the most degraded and depraved were drowned beneath the mighty water that swept them. There were only two classes: those in the Ark and those outside the Ark. It did not matter whether their sins were small or great. They had disobeyed God; they had refused to be warned and to enter the Ark of safety. There was no alternative. They had to choose either the Ark or death, and they had rejected the call to enter the ark. They perished not because they had committed murder, but because they had neglected the only hope of salvation offered by God. Hebrews 2:3 says, *"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...?"*

Another example is the plague involving all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. No one would think that all the firstborn of Egypt were equally depraved. Many were the finest living men of the land — statesmen, philosophers and priests. There were those who were men of society. But God said, *"...When I see the blood, I will pass over you..."* (Exo 12:13). Therefore, every house that was sprinkled with blood was passed over.

So you see, it's about obedience. Was there blood or not? Hebrews 9:22 says, *"...And without shedding of blood is no remission..."*

Accepting God's grace

Beloved, are you covered by the blood? If not, be warned: the floods of God's judgement will overtake you. The Bible says, *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all"* (Jas 2:10). God, by His grace, has offered to us salvation as a free gift in the Person of Jesus Christ. God offers us salvation as a free gift! This means that there is no price or cost involved from us — we merely receive it from the Giver.

If you're still outside Christ, do accept Him as your Lord and Saviour. Wait no longer — ask Jesus to forgive your sins today. And for those of you who have done so, may your lives shine brightly for Him wherever you go so that others may see Christ in you.

22 Jul 07

Welcome in the blessed name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We especially welcome Rev Isaac Ong and family from Vancouver B-P Church, Canada, to our midst. By God's grace, Pastor Isaac will be ministering to us through the pulpit in the coming weeks.

We also look forward to the upcoming combined **Youth Conference** — *“Challenges & Temptations Faced by Youths Today”* — on 4 Aug 07 (Sat, 3-9 pm) for the youths in our church (English & Mandarin) as well as those from Vancouver (Canada) and Galilee B-P Churches. Thank God for our Youth Fellowship led by Dn Kenny Neo in organising this timely Bible conference. This will be a good opportunity for the young people to be edified through God's Word and to build Christian friendships.

Each one of us here today must have experienced trials in our lives. Pressures at home and at work give rise to all kinds of problems resulting in turmoil in our lives. Many people in the world today seldom have peace of mind and happiness in their hearts. When bad things happen to us, our natural reaction is to ask, “Why is this happening to me? What have I done wrong?” We become perplexed when we have no immediate answers. We end up becoming bitter and angry.

No Christian is immune from trials. Perhaps you've lost a loved one, or you're facing severe financial difficulties, or perhaps you're facing persecution at home, at the workplace or at school for your faith in Christ. The Bible tells us that we, Christians, can have happiness in the midst of trials. And more than that, we can have triumph in times of trials!

Trials, though difficult, are only for a while (1 Pet 1:6). Trials are also lessons for us to learn as God matures us through them. They're a part of our living. And although they're not enjoyable or necessarily good in themselves, trials constitute a divine work for our ultimate good.

Perfecting us through trials

James tells us that God has a purpose in the trials that we experience in life. The trials we go through are God's way of perfecting our faith. They're an instrument to help us grow spiritually. It is the *“trying of your faith”* (James 1:3 - *“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience”*). In times of testing, Christians discover their own weaknesses. Peter thought that he was strong in his faith until he was tested through trials of fire — he denied the Lord three times (Luke 22:31-34, Matt 26:69-75).

Remember, it's the fiery pressure of the furnace that produces hardened steel, and the crushed flower that produces perfume. James 1:2 says, *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.”* So be joyful when you find yourselves surrounded by various trials. No one is excused from trials and temptations. God wants to perfect the faith of every believer.

The products of trials

Beloved, how's your faith like? The book of James is referred to as the epistle of faith in action and in it, James describes faith as the Christian's most precious possession. It needs to be cultivated at all costs! James 1:3 says, *"...the trying of your faith worketh patience."* Patience is a vital part of perfecting our faith. And only the testing of our faith produces patience. Patience is a virtue that builds steadfastness. The trials that God allows each of us to experience are intended to make us strong and consistent in our Christian life.

Furthermore, trials produce spiritual maturity. James 1:4 says, *"...That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."* We need patience so that we may be brought to full growth and maturity as Christians — that we may be complete. As we face the pressures and problems in life, let's not seek passive patience but rather, a positive, enthusiastic cooperation with God's purpose for our lives.

Trials also produce wisdom. James 1:5 says, *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally..."* Wisdom is the great deficiency of man and, unfortunately, it often takes severe problems in our lives to make us realise that we need divine wisdom. Sometimes, even we, Christians, tend to take matters into our own hands. We react impulsively to our problems without much thought or prayer. We fight our battles alone, without relying on God's wisdom.

In the Bible, James refers to wisdom as guidance — how we should act as we pass through life's trials. When we find ourselves in the midst of difficulties, where we lack guidance, we should ask of God. When we do not know where to turn, we must seek God's wisdom. God is the source of wisdom and He gives it to us freely. Proverbs 3:6 also says, *"...In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."* God has a plan for your life and He wants to show it to you.

Turning trials into triumphs

As we find ourselves engulfed with trials and testings, we can still rejoice! We can actually be happy because God is at work in our lives, perfecting our faith. We can be thankful to God for giving us patience and wisdom. But we must remember that without faith, we will receive nothing.

Faith is the necessary ingredient in our lives. The Bible tells us that patience and wisdom are important, but without faith, it's impossible to please God (Heb 11:6). When we're in despair, when we're surrounded by troubles, we need to look up to God for wisdom and hold on to Him in faith. James says we're to ask God for wisdom in faith, not wavering, *"for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways"* (James 1:6, 8).

We also read of how the disciples' faith was put to the test when they met a great storm in the Sea of Galilee (Matt 8:23-27). When the storms of life come down upon you, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and "ask in faith" — He can sustain you.

Perhaps you're experiencing a difficult trial or are going through a time of testing right now. Don't be disheartened. Be patient, joyful and look up to God. Ask of God, and ask in faith. And remember, God is making you into the person He wants you to be. He is perfecting your faith. May you find comfort and joy in your hearts.

29 Jul 07

How good it is to dwell in the house of the Lord. Praise God for His abundant grace and mercy upon us. Redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, we have a duty to honour God through our actions, our daily living, and in our desire to serve Him.

We're reminded of the challenges faced by the Apostle Paul as he dealt with his responsibilities in his service for Christ. To Paul, serving the Lord was serious business. He was mindful of the responsibility that God had given to him and was aware of his accountability before God. He said, "*But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God...*" (2 Cor 6:4).

In other words, as God's servants, we should actively — by all means and ways — prove and show ourselves true and faithful to God. Paul was aware that God had done so much for Him and now, he was to reciprocate it. In thinking about his responsibility to our Lord, Paul was mindful of two things:

1) His motive

Paul said, "*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord...*" (2 Cor 5:11a). The fear that motivated Paul to serve was not the fear of what God might do to him if he failed. Instead, it was the fear of what he might do to God — the fear of hurting Him and disappointing Him.

Paul also knew God's desires. He took the God-given responsibility of serving Him seriously. He did his best in his service for the Lord because he wanted to do all he could to please Him. Therefore, he said, "*...we persuade men...*" (2 Cor 5:11b). He persuaded others by telling them exactly what God wanted them to know — the Gospel of Christ.

2) Christ's love

The second motivating factor was Christ's love for us. Paul said "*the love of Christ constraineth us...*" (2 Cor 5:14). Here is the love that drove Christ to the cross, a love that is concerned for the good of others and for the glory of God. Here is the love that drove Christ to give up His life for us, sinners. Paul said it is this kind of love — the love of Christ — that compels us and moves us along in our service for Him. So, Paul was not speaking about his love for Christ, but the love of Christ in him.

So, how much do you love God? Do you find it easy to do what He tells you to do or are you always trying to rationalise your actions? And when you serve our Master, do you give Him your best? Or perhaps you are not even serving Him at all? Dear friends, search your hearts today and let the Holy Spirit speak to you.

A message for the world

Christians have been entrusted with the Gospel (1 Thess 2:4 - *"But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts"*). God has placed us here on earth for one purpose: that is to represent Christ. We are to bring His message of salvation to the world. If we are true to our calling, we are to live the way Christ wants us to live — to do and say the things that are in accordance to His instructions. Souls will be saved and churches will be established.

The responsibility of God's servant

2 Corinthians 6:4 says, *"But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience..."* — that is, through great endurance. So what is the responsibility of a servant? His responsibility is to see to it that his work is done. He is not to give up or to give in. He is to finish his work. It is not easy. It needs much patience. So, Paul set this responsibility against his background; the difficulties that he had to face and endure.

Of course, Paul did not tell all these things to the public. The reason he mentioned them in his letter was to assure the Corinthians of his love for them. As a minister of the Gospel, he carried on his ministry with much patience until the Lord released him from his work.

Despite the trials, Paul was filled with joy — true joy and satisfaction. All these came from God to encourage Paul in his ministry. Likewise, God can fill your hearts with true joy and satisfaction. He will be your Comforter if you yield yourselves to Him and allow Him to direct your lives.

And when He is the Captain of your life, it will be well with you.

05 Aug 07

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Romans 8:9)

Praise God for He is the Ruler of all nature, our wonderful Redeemer and our soon-coming King! Welcome to the Lord's house. We especially welcome the new friends who have come to worship with us in recent weeks. We also warmly welcome the Vancouver B-P Church (VBPC) youths, who arrived this past week and joined our youths (English & Mandarin) at the Combined Youth Conference yesterday. Thank God for members in our midst who have shown hospitality and Christian love by assisting with the group's logistics arrangements and hosting two VBPC members. The Vancouver teens have left on a missions trip to Batam this morning to minister to the village children.

Friends, how has your week been? Have you done anything for the Lord this past week? As Christians, we should always be mindful that we are servants of God. We are His children and we must be victorious in our Christian lives. Romans 8:9 says, *"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."* That is, if you do not have the Holy Spirit, you are not saved. Do you know the Holy Spirit?

The work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation

The mission of the Holy Spirit here is to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world. How does the Holy Spirit do this work? He does it through the believers in Christ. He works in and through them to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

His first work is the work of conviction. Our Lord says that the Holy Spirit *"will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"* (John 16:8). The Holy Spirit convicts people of their sin, makes them realise that a judgement day is coming, and shows them how much they fall short of God's standard of righteousness.

Can you recall how it was like for you when you accepted our Lord Jesus into your heart? It was the Holy Spirit that pricked your heart and drew you to Jesus.

It is interesting to note that there is one sin that the Holy Spirit convicts. The sin of unbelief — of not receiving Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord — is the sin that will send people to hell (John 16:9). Only the Holy Spirit can open our eyes. He can convict us of the depth of our sin. He can convince us of the truth of the gospel. Thus the Holy Spirit is called *"the Spirit of truth"* (John 14:17). We should remember that the Holy Spirit convicts others of sin by speaking to their conscience through the Word of God and the testimony of believers.

The Holy Spirit and Christian life

Perhaps you may have such experiences in your Christian life. God may have spoken to you as you read His Word. You experience His guidance and direction in your life. Perhaps the Holy

Spirit is speaking to you this morning. Do you turn your attention elsewhere, especially if it is a topic or task that you're trying to shun?

Each believer has the assurance in knowing that the Holy Spirit dwells in us. When you believe in Christ, the Holy Spirit enters your life. Jesus says, *"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth..."* (John 14:16-17). God has given the Holy Spirit to you and He will never leave you (Gal 4:6). So it is impossible to be a Christian without possessing the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9).

The Holy Spirit will always be in our hearts and lives; He will never leave us (John 14:16). So when a Christian sins, it grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30). This is why a Christian should be holy.

The Holy Spirit offers us guidance

The Bible tells us that our lives must be led by the Spirit (Rom 8:14). Today, we have God's Word to guide us. And the Holy Spirit speaks to us through His Word. Guidance from God comes only when we spend time reading His Word and in prayer. To neglect the Bible is one sure way not to be led by the Spirit.

God never tells us to do anything that is contrary to the principles of the Bible. We are commanded to be filled with the Spirit; that, is to allow the Spirit to live in us and to control our lives. We must yield to the Spirit and lead Christ-centred lives. We need to ask for the filling of the Holy Spirit and God will answer our prayers.

The Spirit-filled Christian is thankful at all times and under all conditions. Have you accepted Christ as your Saviour? Are you reading God's Word daily and living Spirit-filled lives? May the Lord speak to your hearts today.

12 Aug 07

Time flies! Nearly three-quarters of the year have gone by and in only a few weeks, we'll be entering the final quarter of 2007. It is timely that we pause to consider what we've accomplished over the past months with our lives. Did you achieve what you set out to do? Or are you still far behind in terms of your resolutions for the year? How is your walk with our Lord? Are you faithfully reading through the Bible with *Daily Manna*? Let us make the effort to spend our time fully and wisely to the glory of God.

The apostle Paul constantly reminds us that we must have a purpose and a plan because we may experience challenges in our service for the Lord. Christians may sometimes grow weary and there could be several reasons for this.

1) Physically tired

Have you ever felt so tired sometimes that you really have no energy left for anything? You could be feeling so physically worn-out. The prophet Elijah thought that God had abandoned him and that the world was against him. He wanted to die, not just give up serving the Lord. Elijah said, *"...It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers"* (1 Kings 19:4). His problem was physical exhaustion. However, God provided him with rest, refreshment and encouragement to go on.

2) Fruitless

Weariness may also have emotional causes. Perhaps you've been working hard serving the Lord, but have not seen lasting results. Then discouragement sets in and if still no improvement is seen, we begin to despair. In 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13, we read that some of the Thessalonian believers were growing weary because other Christians were not doing their part.

Perhaps you may have encountered such situations before, especially when working with others. It could be a difference of opinion or you may feel as if no one appreciates your hard work. But does it really matter if no one says, "Thank you for your service?" Each worker, regardless of his/her role, is important in ensuring that our church activities or programmes function well. Imagine what would happen if everyone says, "My role is just a small role. It doesn't matter. I can opt out." Soon, there would be no one left to do God's work or it may simply be shouldered by only a few faithful individuals. And soon, they may be burnt out.

3) Crisis

It could be that you're going through a difficult time of testing. Perhaps you could be experiencing problems at home or at the workplace and hence, you just do not feel right and start feeling depressed. These experiences can take an emotional toll on us and if we try to go on with an extra burden, weariness could set in.

4) Routine

In Malachi 1:13, God accused His people of merely going through the routine of worship. Although they followed the programme, they were neither spiritually nor emotionally involved with God.

Likewise, when we lose touch with God, we lose our sense of doing a vital work for Him. We must check ourselves. Always ask ourselves why we are involved in certain church ministries. What's our purpose? And once we're reminded of our spiritual goals, we can then perform our tasks with joy, even though it is the same tasks that we do every week.

Persevering in life

Winning a race requires purpose and discipline. The apostle Paul explains that the Christian life demands hard work, self-denial, and serious preparation. As Christians, we're running towards our heavenly reward. The essential disciplines of prayer, Bible study, worship and fellowship with believers equip us to run with vigour and stamina!

In Philippians 3:13-14, Paul says, *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* We're to forget the past and press on! We're also encouraged from God's Word in Galatians 6:9 *"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."*

Beloved, remember that whatever we do is for our Almighty God. *He knows the part you play — whether big or small. He sees how faithfully you serve. He sees your heart.* So don't depend on people to thank you or say nice words to you regarding your service for the Lord, because it doesn't matter. Our heavenly Father sees and cares about what we do to please Him. And that's what matters!

Let's labour together and persevere in God's work till Christ returns!

19 Aug 07

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." — Luke 14:33

Praise God for the recent Youth Conference on *"Challenges & Temptations Faced by Youths Today,"* at which some 70 youths from our English & Mandarin YF as well as Vancouver (VBPC) and Galilee B-P Churches were ministered to from God's Word by Pastor Isaac Ong. We also thank God for gathering a group of members in our midst who lent a hand by graciously and joyfully preparing a very hearty dinner for the youths and all who attended. Besides seeing our youths grow together in Christ, this event has brought about new friendships and warmer fellowship between fellow brethren.

Praise God also for the pulpit ministry of Pastor Isaac Ong over the recent weeks at our Worship Services, Adult Sunday School (Mandarin), and youth meetings. By God's providence, two VBPC members (Elder Henry and Arie) and Pastor Isaac are currently in Sri Lanka, supporting Elder Vijay in the missions work there. We wish Pastor Isaac and his family God's speed as they return to Vancouver on 25 Aug 2007.

Indeed, it's a blessing to see God's children gathered together to worship our Almighty God! We are all precious in His sight, bought by the blood of Christ. And God delights to see each of us glorifying and honouring Him with our whole being. As you sit in the pews today, do search your hearts and examine yourselves. Have you been an effective follower of Christ? Are you doing anything for our Lord?

To be a Christian is easy. One only needs to accept Christ to be his/her personal Saviour. For the Bible says, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"* (Eph 2:8-9). However, to be a follower of Christ is different.

The price of discipleship is costly. Nevertheless, its rewards are great and priceless! Our Lord Jesus never persuaded anyone to follow Him on easy terms. He challenged them with the hard facts of discipleship and wanted them to count the cost. Jesus says, *"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?... So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14:28, 33).

Being a disciple, like building a house, is no light matter. There are many factors at play and we need to consider the cost.

What's the cost of discipleship?

We need to put our love for Christ above all others — even our loved ones. Jesus says, *"If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple"* (Luke 14:26). Here, it does not mean that our Lord wants us to hate our relatives and parents; this would

contradict the 5th commandment. But it does mean that if the claims of our loved ones and the claims of Christ come into collision, then the claims of our loved ones must give way. We must choose Christ even if it displeases our loved ones. The demand and the test here for believers are great, but they are necessary. They reveal how much we really love Christ, our Saviour.

Sometimes, it could be our loved ones who are hindering our service for God. It could be a difference in opinion regarding how much time we should devote to doing God's work. Or it could be the case of a child or teenager from a non-Christian home whose parents do not like them spending "so much time" in church. Well, there are so many activities going on in our lives, and the list is never-ending! But it all boils down to our hearts. How much do we love God? How far will we go to be a disciple of Christ? Do you put Him first above all others?

To follow Christ isn't easy. The world may laugh at us or we may have to make sacrifices. However, our Lord says, *"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matt 11:28). If there are things/areas in our lives that are hindering us from following Christ, we must be willing to give them up.

Knowing the doctrines of the Bible or joining a church does not make us a disciple of Christ. Those who follow Christ must follow Him on His terms. We must love God above all others; we must take up the cross; we must forsake all our sins; and we must follow Christ for life. Anything that prevents us from following Christ must be removed. Following Christ demands our total love and commitment.

The gain of being Christ's disciple

We may lose something in this world when we become a faithful disciple of Christ, but we gain something for eternity. We may lose some friends because of our faith and practice, but we will have the favour and friendship of Christ. On earth, we may suffer because we're followers of Christ, but we have the glory and blessing in heaven.

Our Lord says to each of us, *"Follow Me."* Are you willing to follow Him to the end? May the words of this hymn be your heartfelt prayer:

O Jesus, Thou hast promised

To all who follow Thee,

That where Thou art in glory,

There shall Thy servant be.

And, Jesus, I have promised

To serve Thee to the end:

O give me grace to follow,

My Master and my Friend.

26 Aug 07

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye" (Psalm 32:8)

Do you have a purpose in life? How can we know God's will? How is it possible for us to know the mind of God? If God has a plan for our lives, how does He reveal it to us? One of the greatest joys is that we can know and do the will of our Lord. He is not only interested in our salvation; He is also interested in our whole life and what we should be.

God has a plan for your life

God, our Creator, made us — He knows our strengths, our weaknesses, our innermost longings and interests. He plans our lives to suit our own peculiar needs so that we can live our lives to the fullest. What we need to do is to follow His will. God's Word tells us: *"Delight thyself also in the Lord: and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart"* (Psalm 37:4).

So many times, we plan our lives according to our own wisdom and desires. We have a schedule for certain events in our lives — be it a choice of school, marriage partner, career change or retirement. But have we sought after God's wisdom and discovered His will for us?

God's plan is practical

In the Bible, we learn of many men of God who found God's plan for their lives. They followed the Lord.

a) For Abraham, it meant leaving the city of Ur of the Chaldees and spending the remainder of his years in tents in a foreign land (Heb 11:8-10).

b) For Moses, it meant giving up the wealth and honour that he enjoyed in Egypt and beginning a life of wandering in the wilderness (Heb 11:24-27).

c) For David, it meant leaving the sheepfold and sitting on the throne of Israel.

Yes, God is interested in each of us. In fact, He is interested in every area of our lives! Even our hairs are numbered (Matt 10:30) and He knows our sorrows (Exod 3:7). God also records our tears (Psalm 56:8). And all our thoughts, ways, and words are known to Him (Psalm 139:2-6). God also knows what we need and He cares for us (Matt 6:31-33).

So as we journey through life, God wants to be our Guide. He says, *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye"* (Psalm 32:8). Three words are used — instruct, teach and guide — to tell us how our Lord will lead us. God undertakes to do all three by saying *"I will..."*

Knowing God's will from the Bible

Our Lord guides us by His Word. Psalm 119:105 says, "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*" The Ten Commandments are clear directions from God (Exodus 20). The Great Commission, spreading the gospel of Christ everywhere, is also a clear commandment of our Lord.

Even for the unbelievers, God's will is clearly expressed in John 6:39-40. If you're a non-Christian, God generally is not interested in telling you whether you should accept a job overseas or in showing you whom you should marry. Instead, He is interested in whether or not you will believe in Jesus Christ and accept Him as your personal Saviour. God's will for you begins here. That's His will.

For Christians, God's will is also clearly expressed in Romans 12:1-2 "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*"

The unchanging principle for us is that anything that contributes to our spiritual growth in holiness is an aspect of God's will for us. Likewise, anything that hinders our spiritual growth in holiness is not His will. God is interested that we become like His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what is God's will concerning our work? Colossians 3:23 says, "*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.*" Here is the expression of God's will for our work. God wants us to do well in everything that has been assigned to us. It means we should work hard, serve Him and do our best. This also applies to our work attitude at the workplace — even if you have a difficult boss. The Bible says it is God's will that you should avoid gossiping about your boss and work as unto the Lord (Eph 6:5-6).

So, beloved, to find God's will for your lives, you must seek the Lord and read His Word daily. Put your trust in Him and know that He will lead you each step of the way.

02 Sep 07

"I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust." - Psalm 91:2

Warm greetings to all of you on this Lord's Day. Last week was a special day for the brethren at Calvary Reformed Presbyterian Chapel, Sri Lanka — a mission outreach supported by our church — as they celebrated their 8th Anniversary. Indeed, God has been faithful in sustaining them and giving them the grace to do His work. I pray that you, too, have had a fruitful week as you went about your activities and, more importantly, in the midst of your busy schedules, you've kept close to God through prayer and reading His Word. Perhaps this past week has been a challenging one for you — a week in which important decisions had to be made, whether it is about resigning from your current job and finding a new one or relocating overseas or just simply matters that affect your family.

Well, all of us have our own set of challenges. Some of the decisions we make are practical while others are theoretical. Some are thrust on us from without, others are brought about by ourselves. Some are of little consequences while others are far-reaching in importance. For those of you who have been reading the Bible with *Daily Manna*, you will recall that we read of such an example in the book of Ruth.

Running away from problems

In Ruth 1, we read that Naomi and her family made the wrong decisions. As a result, they encountered more problems. During the dark days of the Judges, there was no outstanding leader who could unite the nation. As a result, everyone did his/her own things according to his/her wishes. There was a famine and Elimelech with his family decided to migrate to the land of Moab for a short period of time. They compared their lives in Bethlehem with life in Moab and they thought that a foreign country was better.

In Bethlehem, they saw famine, hunger and suffering while in Moab, it was a land of plenty. So they looked at the situation from a human point of view and decided to leave. But from God's point of view, that decision was wrong for various reasons. First, Moab was a heathen land. The Moabites worshipped false gods. The people led sinful lives. Elimelech and his family went to the wrong place and depended on the enemy, rather than God, for survival.

Have we been in such situations before, where we think that perhaps there are greener pastures over the other side? Did we really stop to pray and sincerely seek God's will? Sometimes, we're so convinced about our own logic and reasoning that we fail to trust and depend on our Almighty God to direct our decisions. And soon, we find ourselves in situations so unpleasant that we wish we hadn't made that decision.

God as your compass

Deuteronomy 28 says that famines were a disciplinary measure from God. God promised to send harvest, rain and sunshine — all the people needed to do was to trust and obey God.

I nstead of going to another country, they should have run to God, confess their sins and ask for forgiveness.

Whenever we encounter problems in life, our first reaction should not be to run away from them, because sometimes, we end up with even greater problems as a result. We read that when Elimelech and his family went to Moab, everything started to fall apart. Moab became a cemetery for Naomi's husband and her two sons. Instead of having hope, Naomi was helpless. The lesson to learn: It never pays to go against God's will. We must surrender ourselves to Him if we want His blessings.

God may have called upon you to do certain things for Him. Have you heeded His call or do you say, "Wait, Lord?" If we want to receive blessings from God and experience Him in our lives, we must yield to His will.

The consequences of our actions

So what happens when you find yourselves in difficult circumstances? Compare the three widows — Naomi, Orpah and Ruth. You can choose to cover up as Naomi did; she tried to get rid of her daughters-in-law to cover up her sin. You can choose to give up as Orpah did. Or you can choose to stand up as Ruth did — in trusting the Lord.

Ruth gave a wonderful testimony of her love and faith in God. She said to Naomi, "...For whither thou goest, I will go..." In other words, Ruth was saying, "Naomi, I have decided to follow you, no matter what." Ruth knew that with Naomi, there would be hardship. It is amazing to see how Ruth overcame the obstacles. She experienced more sorrows in a short period than most people could bear. Yet she remained faithful to God.

Today, we are under all kinds of pressure. The temptations around us are great and it is so easy to fail in our spiritual walk with the Lord. But God says, "No! Don't go back. No matter how difficult the situation is, no matter how fiercely the storm may be blowing — Don't go back! Stand up and trust Me!"

Under the care of my God, the Almighty,

Safe in the secret place of the Most High!

He is my Refuge, the Lord is my Fortress,

Him I am trusting when trouble is nigh.

Under His wings, under His wings,

Safe in the refuge hide thee;

Trusting His truth and faithfulness,

No evil can betide thee.

Will you trust our blessed Lord today?

09 Sep 07

"And He is the Head of the body, the Church; Who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow! Praise Him for He is the Ruler of all nature, our wonderful Redeemer and our soon-coming King. As God's children, it is our privilege to come before Him in worship and adoration.

As I recall the many challenges as well as blessings that we have experienced together as a church over the past 34 years, I am amazed at how God has faithfully led us each step of the way. Praise God for the various church ministries in which many of you are joyfully serving and supporting. Indeed, we can only look back and marvel at God's providence upon our church. Today, we especially rejoice at the 33rd Anniversary of our Mandarin congregation. Praise God for His faithfulness and blessings upon our Mandarin brethren all these years. May the Lord continue to use us for His glory here at Calvary B-P Church.

In a few months' time (5 Jan 2008), we will be celebrating our church's 35th Anniversary with a Thanksgiving Service, followed by a special dinner celebration. Let's rejoice together as a church family on this special occasion. Dinner registrations are now open every Sunday in the Fellowship Hall. Do sign up early to allow easy planning by the Anniversary Committee.

Our God is sovereign

Colossians 1:18 says, *"And He is the Head of the body, the Church: Who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence."* Christ is the Head of the Church (Eph. 5:23). He rules the Church. If anyone asks who is in charge of Calvary B-P Church, we say, "The Lord Jesus Christ." This church does not belong to a certain individual. Just as the head directs and controls all the activities of the human body, so Christ, the Head of the Church, directs and controls all the activities of the Church. He lives His life through us, believers, the members of His body.

In Revelation 1:12-15, we see Christ moving among candlesticks, which represent His Church. He moves around to inspect His Church and to remove all the impurity from His Church. The New Testament teaches that Christ rules His Church through a plurality of godly men or elders. Here, at Calvary B-P Church, we have the pastors and the elders.

Our goal is to do what Christ wants us to do. And we know most of what He wants us to do because it is written in the Bible. Where the Holy Scripture is silent about certain issues, then we have to discern the mind of God prayerfully, thoughtfully and patiently. As a pastor, my duty is to teach you what the Bible says. In 1 John 2:20, we learn that we can draw on the Holy Spirit for knowledge.

God's Church

So what is our Lord's work for His Church? Hebrews 13:20 tells us three things which Christ has done for His Church:

1) His Name

God takes the initiative to bring peace to mankind. In Hebrews 13:20, God is called "*the God of peace.*" He had to do something to reconcile man to Himself, to bring peace again. So God sent Jesus to be our Saviour and our Peacemaker.

2) His Blood

Hebrews 9:22 says that "*...without shedding of blood is no remission.*" Sin is a serious matter in the sight of God. Forgiveness is costly. Because it is costly, God never takes it lightly. We can experience forgiveness by faith, accepting Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

3) His Resurrection

Hebrews 13:20 says, "*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus...*" This verse tells us about the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Christ is the greatest affirmation of God the Father's approval of the work of salvation done by Christ.

Isaiah 53:6 also says, "*All we like sheep have gone astray...*" So if we are like sheep, we need a Shepherd; and we have one – the Lord Jesus Christ. As the Great Shepherd, He protects His sheep. He gives us the power to do what He wants us to do.

God is the Sanctifier

Believers, Christ is working in you (Heb. 13:21). The Church is not perfect. It has spots and wrinkles. It needs constant cleansing, and the Word of God is the cleansing agent. As the Church is nourished by the Word, these wrinkles ought to disappear. Like a beautiful bride, the Church ought to be clean and ready for His coming. One day, the Church will be presented as a glorious Church in heaven at the coming of Christ (Jude 24).

While we live our days on this earth, let us stay focused on doing the Lord's work – serving Him faithfully and sharing the gospel to lost souls. Are you ready for His coming?

16 Sep 07

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." - Psalm 90:12

Praise God for sustaining and blessing us through the various ministries at Calvary B-P Church. It is a joy to see our church busy with various programmes and outreaches. About two weeks ago, we organised two nights of Gospel Rally (Mandarin). Praise God that 5 people accepted Christ into their hearts while several other new friends heard the gospel.

Last Thursday afternoon, my wife and I were delighted to host more than 30 members and friends at our first Agape Prayer Retreat, where we were encouraged from God's Word in Matthew 11:28 - *"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* We had a blessed time of praising our Lord together and ministering to one another through testimonies and prayer. Thank God for the wonderful time of fellowship we enjoyed.

Of late, we've heard in the news of young and fit persons who suddenly suffered fatal heart attacks while participating in sports activities. Then there are also cases of accidents on our roads everyday — whether it's a young boy being knocked down by a bus or motorists who did not survive the impact of a fatal collision. Anything can happen to us on an ordinary day, when we're going about our routine activities. Of course, we often pray for God's blessings and protection upon us and our families, for we know that He is in control of all things and nothing in our lives happens by chance. But on a deeper level, have you thought about whether you're ready to meet our Lord if He calls you?

How is your walk with God? Are you hiding His Word in your heart and letting others see Jesus in you? Time flies and we'll soon be one year closer to the end of our earthly pilgrimage. Sometimes, Christians can be so busy with their daily schedules — occupied with earthly concerns and needs — that they neglect putting God above all else.

Time is short. Time is passing. Time is irrevocable when gone. We are to be accountable for our time.

The brevity of time

To us, life seems long when we measure it in years, but when compared to eternity, life is but a vapour. *"...For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away"* (James 4:14b). We're like batteries. No matter which brand we use, we'll one day lose our power. We count our years at each birthday, but God tells us to number our days (Psalm 90:12). After all, we live a day at a time, and these days rush by so quickly.

The Lord has always laid upon my heart to serve Him in the missions field. As I look back, I thank God for His faithfulness in leading and sustaining me through my past 40 years of full-time ministry. My desire to serve Him in the missions field has not changed. There's so much to be done to spread the gospel and help believers to grow in their faith. It is easy to

settle down in our comfort zone but God has commissioned us to extend His kingdom and bring more souls to Him before He returns. And we know that His coming is certain and fast approaching with each passing day.

The uncertainty of life

I do not know how long I will live, but one thing is certain: While I am fit and able, I must go where the need is — to where God calls me. For you, the frailty of life may be a morbid topic that you don't usually want to discuss, but it is real. It is something we must all face regardless of our age. Life is uncertain. We do not know when we have to say goodbye to our loved ones.

But, life is not uncertain to God. Only when we are in His will can we be confident of tomorrow, for we know that He is leading us. God has given us his precepts, principles, and promises to guide us in every area of our lives. Knowing and obeying the Word of God is the surest way to success (Josh 1:8, Psalm 1:3).

God holds tomorrow in His hands

God is eternal. He holds tomorrow in His hands. He has planned for us a future so glorious that our minds cannot comprehend it now. He has prepared a beautiful place for us in which to dwell (Rev 21:3-4). God knows our strengths and weaknesses, our anger and fears, our burdens and blessings. We should live every day as if it were our last day. If today were to be your last day, you would want to make sure that every hour, every minute is well-spent.

While we are on this earth, we must seek and do God's will. Now is the time. Don't procrastinate. Today is the time to get right with God if you have been drifting from Him. Today is the time to re-examine and re-organise your priorities if you have been neglecting your personal relationship with Christ. You do not know what will happen tomorrow or next week. So cherish your family and loved ones.

Read God's Word faithfully. Here at Calvary, we've specially prepared *Daily Manna* to guide you in reading through the Bible meaningfully together as a church. It is a joy to hear many sharing how they have been learning much through this Bible-reading programme. Some of our teens have also made it a point to read God's Word with *Daily Manna* before starting on their homework each day. If you've not been doing your Quiet Time, start today. Limited copies of *Daily Manna* are still available at the back of the Sanctuary.

Beloved, serve God fervently so that you can look back and know that you have done your best for Him. May the Lord help us!

23 Sep 07

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" - Matthew 26:41

God is holy and we praise His matchless name for He is worthy! How good it is to dwell in the house of our Lord. We labour during the week, rushing to meet our deadlines and attending to family matters at the same time. Yet as we manage our personal lives, we need to also ensure we manage our spiritual lives well. Do you make the effort to spend time alone with God despite your busy schedules? We need to arm ourselves with the Word of God as we face our battles each day. I pray that you are faithfully reading God's Word daily. Praise God for the completion of the new issue of *Daily Manna (Oct-Dec 07)*. Be sure to get your copy today.

Let's unite and encourage one another in reading through the Bible. Show God that you love Him through your words and deeds. Be a shining light for Him wherever you go and receive the bountiful blessings He has promised you.

Even Christians can fall into temptations along the way if they do not heed God's Word. They may be strong believers in the beginning, but as worldly distractions creep into their lives, their interest in spiritual things may start to wane. Soon, they fall into temptation and drift far away from God. While some do return to church eventually, others remain cold in their faith.

The apostle James mentioned about temptation in James 1:3-17. He said, *"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him"* (v.12). The Lord Jesus told his disciples: *"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation..."* (Matt 26:41).

The subtlety of temptation

Since the fall of Adam, mankind has been tempted to submit to evil. Like the rain, temptation comes to the just and unjust alike. Whether you're a church leader or an old-time Christian, everyone is subject to temptation. The Bible gives us many examples of people who took their eyes off Christ and submitted to temptation.

Most of us are familiar with David's experience. He slew the Philistine giant and enjoyed God's blessings as he reigned over Israel in great splendour. But later, his life was marred with the guilt of adultery and murder. In another example, Solomon knelt on the hillside of Gibeah and asked God for wisdom. Yet later in his life, he gave in to foreign women and heathen deities.

When the apostle Peter was told that he would betray Christ, he strongly declared that he would rather die than do such a terrible thing. And just a short while later, he denied knowing the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible warns us, *“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”* (1 Cor 10:12). Beloved, temptation may strike at any moment — even when we feel strongest. And yet temptation is an opportunity for us to draw nearer to God.

Don't blame God

James says, *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man”* (James 1:13). The Bible tells us that God is the Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). God is all goodness. He is all perfection. James continues by saying that every good gift *“is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”*

Friends, count your blessings today — whatever God has bestowed upon you. You may not be materially rich, but God may have blessed you in other ways. He has given you peace and happiness in your heart. He may have showered your family with spiritual blessings and your children are following His ways, but do not be complacent lest we fall into temptation and everything starts to fall apart.

We must be responsible for our own actions. When bad things happen, it could be the result of our own doing. Don't blame God for everything unpleasant that happens to you. It's so easy to blame our environment and heredity, but in a sense, that's blaming God for our failure. Make no mistake: God never tempts any man with evil (James 1:13). God hates sin and He cannot stand to look upon it.

We are all sinners. *“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed”* (James 1:14). That's why Christians may also be tempted to cheat, lie, steal or even commit adultery. The problem of sin lies within us. Temptation is the invitation to do wrong. Sin is the voluntary action of doing wrong. It is not sinful to be tempted but it is sinful to yield to temptation.

A way out

To be victorious, we must first submit our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why God sent Jesus to this world to die for you. He loves you and wants to save you from the punishment of sin. To the believer: God has given us the privilege of prayer in overcoming temptation. If you need wisdom, ask God (James 1:5 - *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him”*). If you need help in overcoming your weakness, ask God. If you need deliverance from the power of temptation, ask God.

Apply the Word of God in your lives! Keep close to God and He will guide you in your Christian walk with Him. Every temptation, whatever the source, is a test of your faith. How well do you know the scriptures? How much do you love God? The way to victory is to look to God in faith.

30 Sep 07

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" — James 1:19

Praise God for His goodness and blessings upon His people. What joy we have to know that our Heavenly Father is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy! This is a wonderful assurance to all believers for, in life, we are faced with ups and downs.

James 1:19 says, *"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."* It's easy to get angry when things don't go our way. We get agitated and impatient. God's Word tells us that when a person is converted, he gains a new outlook and comes to know some things he never knew before. Paul told the Corinthian Christians that they have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:14-16). The mind of Christ, which dwells in Christians, will lead them to develop an attitude that is pleasing to God.

The Bible offers us practical suggestions in the book of James.

Be swift to hear

Are you a good listener? Do you know what it means to be a good listener? Have you encountered situations where the other party just doesn't seem to get your point? It could be a difference in opinion or a complaint about something. For some, their ears are closed to the gospel of Christ and they refuse to listen.

Romans 10:17 says, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* Just as the servant is quick to hear the master's voice and the mother, her baby's softest cry, so people should be quick to hear what God has to say about salvation. As they hear the Word of God, the Holy Spirit enables them to realise their sinful nature. Then they see their need of the Saviour who offers to save them; they are convicted by what they hear.

How about you, dear friends? As you listen to God's Word being preached each Sunday, are you really listening? Do you listen attentively?

Be slow to speak

We must also be slow to speak. Do the words from your mouth edify our Lord? James is not saying that we're to speak at a slow pace — rather, we should not speak hastily. King Solomon has this advice for us: *"Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles"* (Prov 21:23). Too often, we argue with people on God's Word. There are those who go all out to criticise and falsely accuse others. Critical tongues have closed church doors. Careless tongues have broken the hearts and homes of many of God's servants. James 3:8 warns us that the untamed tongue is *"an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."*

Be slow to wrath

Anger inflames words that are spoken in haste. And the more one talks, the angrier he becomes. Soon, things may escalate and the situation gets ugly. The apostle James said that if we truly practise the Word of God in our lives, we must possess a quick ear, a cautious tongue and a calm temper.

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Prov 16:32). Someone once commented, "It's not so bad if I lose my temper and it's all over in a minute" but this person's wife replied, "Yes, and in that minute, how much have you destroyed in the family?" The Bible teaches us that *"a soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger"* (Prov 15:1).

A man of wrath does not practise the righteousness of Christ. Proverbs 29:22 says, *"An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression."* When a person gets angry, he loses something valuable — it confuses his judgement and causes unhappiness. It spoils his love for other people.

As believers in Christ, let us practise what God's Word teaches. Our Lord Jesus tells us in John 14:15, *"If ye love me, keep My commandments."* Are you keeping God's commandments? It's not too late to show Christian love to others. Be gracious — just as how God has been gracious towards us.

Tell the sweet story of Christ and His love,

Tell of His power to forgive;

Others will trust Him if only you prove

True, every moment you live.

Make me a blessing,

Make me a blessing,

Out of my life may Jesus shine;

Make me a blessing, O Saviour, I pray,

Make me a blessing to someone today.

Loving in Christ,
Pastor James Chan

---The End---