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07 Oct 07

*“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.”* — Colossians 3:17

Greetings in the name of our blessed Lord. It is wonderful to see like-minded believers in Christ coming each week to worship our Almighty God. We're all in God's service. When you enter the church each Lord's Day, you see fellow members of all ages and backgrounds doing their little part in getting things ready on Sunday. It could be as simple as switching on the fans in the fellowship hall or setting up the rooms in preparation for Sunday School classes, preparing the drinks or distributing lunch coupons. Each task is important. Served with love and dedication, it brings joy to believers.

In Colossians 4:10-14, we see that Paul could be an effective leader because there were various kinds of people helping him. His team was made up of three kinds of people — those who stayed, those who prayed, and those who strayed. All of them were characterised in terms of their faithfulness to Paul in his hour of special need. They were the men who stayed, except for one of them who strayed.

### ***The men who stayed***

#### 1. Aristarchus (Col 4:10a)

Aristarchus was Paul's fellow worker and fellow prisoner. He was from Macedonia and was one of Paul's travelling companions (Acts 19:29). He was willing to risk his life in the Ephesian riot for Christ's sake. He also sailed to Rome, which meant he also experienced the storm and the shipwreck with Paul and other fellow workers. Paul could not have accomplished all his work without all these help. Aristarchus stands out as one of the greatest of Paul's helpers. He did not look for an easy task. He did not run when the going got tough. He suffered with Paul and laboured with him through thick and thin. We need men like Aristarchus in our church.

#### 2. John Mark (Col 4:10b)

Mark was the author of the second gospel of the New Testament. Paul and Barnabas set out on the first missionary journey and they took John Mark with them as their assistant. But when the going got tough, he abandoned the preachers and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:5-13). Whatever the reason, he left them and returned home.

Later, when Paul and Barnabas wanted to go on a second missionary journey, Paul refused to take Mark along. As a result, Barnabas and Paul separated; Mark followed Barnabas to Crete. Years later, Paul commended Mark. By the grace of God, Mark had overcome his first failure and had become a valuable servant of God. He was even chosen by God to write the Gospel of Mark!

#### 3. Luke (Col 4:14a)

Luke was a very important man in the church. He was a Gentile, yet he was chosen by God to write the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. Luke was a physician and was dearly loved by Paul. He travelled with Paul to the mission field. Luke's presence was a great encouragement to Paul during difficult times.

Luke illustrates the ministry of friendship. Have you been such a friend to someone else in church, encouraging and helping them together in serving the Lord? Doing the Lord's work is never easy. It is so

easy to give up. It is so easy to just walk away or take the easy way out by making certain decisions that are palatable to all. But we must always do what is right and what is pleasing to God. As God's servants, we are encouraged when we see Christian brothers and sisters supporting us in prayer and rallying behind us in difficult times.

Towards the end of Paul's ministry, when everyone was gone, Paul said, "*Only Luke is with me*" (2 Tim 4:11). Luke remained with Paul till the very end.

### ***The man who prayed***

Epaphras was a founding pastor of the church in Colosse (Col 1:7-8). He had been led to Christ through Paul's ministry in Ephesus. He returned home and shared the good news with others. Epaphras was known as a man of prayer. He had a powerful ministry of prayer for the Colossian Christians and Paul.

Beloved, do you pray for our church and its leaders? Not all can teach or preach, but all can pray for one another. We should never underestimate the ministry of prayer. Praise God for those of you who make it a point to pray together at our church prayer meetings every Tuesday at 8.15pm. We pray that even more of you will come and pray together with us. The Agape Prayer Fellowship is another area that has blessed many through its prayer and care ministry for others in need. Praise God for that! You're welcome to join this prayer fellowship every Thursday at 2.30pm and be an encouragement to fellow brethren. Friends, if God has not called you to serve as a missionary, you can pray for our missionaries and pastors.

### ***The man who strayed***

Demas was only mentioned three times in Paul's letter (Col 4:14b). Demas apparently forsook Paul and never returned. His sin was that he was trapped by the things of the world. He thought that he could serve two masters.

The attractions of the world are strong and Christians can be tempted to follow the world in pursuit of all its pleasures at the expense of neglecting their personal relationship with Christ. How are you serving our Lord with the abilities that He has given to you? Are you doing anything for Him?

Let us make our lives count for Christ and be an encouragement to fellow co-workers around us.

14 Oct 07

*“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” —  
Psalm 91:1*

We take comfort in knowing that we worship an Almighty God. No matter where we are, whether in Singapore or travelling overseas, God is with us. His love and protection are upon His children.

In 1892, American Evangelist D.L. Moody travelled to Great Britain. After a year of his ministry there, he was eager to return to the United States. The ship left Southampton. After about three days of sailing the ocean, the ship grounded to a halt with a broken shaft, and before long, water began to seep in. The ship’s crew and passengers were desperate because no one was certain whether the vessel would sink or not. No one knew of any rescue ships in that area. After two days of anxiety, Moody asked for permission to hold a meeting. To his surprise, every passenger attended.

### **God is our Refuge**

Moody read Psalm 91 to the people. He encouraged them to trust in God and then prayed. Our Lord answered their prayer. The ship was rescued and towed by another vessel to the port. Psalm 91 thus became a very special and meaningful psalm to Moody.

The author of Psalm 91 had experienced desert life. In the desert, you can see for miles and a hiding place is hard to find. To the desert traveller, the sun is his fiercest foe, and a shady spot his most desired friend. God can be such a shade and military defence to us as well. Psalm 91:1 speaks of the Lord as our dwelling place. The same Hebrew word is used in Psalm 91:9, speaking of making the Lord our habitation — *“Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation.”*

One of the most interesting things about this psalm is that Satan knew it. He memorised it and used it to tempt the Lord Jesus. So, be careful. Satan knows the Bible, and he will use it for his own benefit. Sometimes, it is so easy for us to think that we can depend on our own strength. When all is smooth-going and peaceful, we may start taking things for granted. We soon forget that God is watching over us. The fact that we can live through each day is by the grace of God.

### ***An invitation***

In times of trials, the psalmist invites us to seek God. He wants us to know something about this God who can really help us. He also mentions the *“secret place,”* which is actually the *“hiding place.”* This is a picture of one finding rest, protection and nourishment in God. This is a great promise to all believers, who will make their abode in the *“secret place”* and stay there as residents. The words *“shall abide”* imply a constant and continuous dwelling, not just a temporary visitation during times of trouble. This promise is for those who take up permanent residence in the *“secret place.”*

### ***Accepting the invitation***

Such a wonderful promise should not be refused. Accordingly, the psalmist responds by accepting such a gracious invitation. He says, *“I will say of the LORD (Jehovah), He is my refuge and my fortress: my God (Elohim); in Him will I trust”* (Psalm 91:2).

We thank the psalmist for giving us such a great thought about God. Our Almighty God is the One who *possesses, provides, promises* and has the *power* to do all things. Even in times of trials, we can go to our Great God. He is our refuge and fortress, and we can trust in Him.

### ***The promise of divine protection***

Having given his own testimony of faith, the psalmist turns to challenge us individually to put our trust in God, just as he has done. God delivers us. Psalm 91:3 promises: *“Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.”*

We live in a wicked world. Satan is trying very hard to lead us astray and away from God. We never know what snares are being set for our feet to capture us, but we have God, who can deliver us from the snare of the fowler. If we trust Him, He will keep us and deliver us. God also protects us (Psalm 91:4). Whatever the danger may be, we need not fear for God will cover us. He will protect us. What He says, He will do. God is faithful to His Word.

***God’s personal assurance to us***

God speaks directly to the believer, confirming His promises — *“Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known My name”* (Psalm 91:14). There is also a promise of salvation in heaven.

These blessings are for those who love God, acknowledge His name (v14), call upon His name (v15) and seek satisfaction in what God alone can provide. Friends, do you do honour and seek after God, or are you trying to find satisfaction in the world? Only those who dwell in the secret place will receive such blessings.

21 Oct 07

*“Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee”* (Psalm 63:3)

As we come into God’s holy presence, let us search our hearts and examine ourselves. Have we honoured Him in our daily living? Have we been a good testimony for Christ in our neighbourhood, at home, at our workplace or in school? I hope that you have been faithfully reading God’s Word with *Daily Manna*. Some of you have shared how encouraged you have been by the devotional readings about David’s life in 1 & 2 Samuel not too long ago. We read about how David went through many hurdles in life just as he won major victories in battles.

Friends, there are three types of Christians in the Church. First, there are those who are Christians in name only. They seem to follow after God but they do not truly know the Lord. They are like the foolish virgins who were rejected by Christ. Then there are those who follow Christ at a distance. They are like Peter at the time when Jesus was arrested; they do not want people to know that they are Christians. And finally, there are those who follow Jesus all the way — in storm and in sunshine. They cleave to Him. They want Him intensely. They enjoy daily communion with Him.

Well, David was a man who belonged to this category of Christians. Psalm 63 is a classic expression of David’s longing for God.

### **David longed for God**

David was going through one of the most difficult periods of his life. He had been driven from the throne by Absalom. He had to flee from the city and head to the wilderness of Judea with those who remained loyal to him. He was far away from the sanctuary in Jerusalem. He was down but not out. He wrote Psalm 63 to express his love and longing for God.

What David missed most of all was God. It was not for the loss of his own palace that he mourned, or his own house, or his own throne, or even his family and treasures, but it was God and the sanctuary. He had been driven from Jerusalem, where God was present in His sanctuary, and where he worshipped God regularly and beheld His glory. So, he missed the place of prayer and worship. It tells us much about David’s spiritual life.

How about you, beloved Christians? Do you have the love of God in your heart or do you come to church as a routine activity — week after week, or even year after year? When you have to be far away from home or church due to work commitments, do you miss worshipping our Lord on Sunday and serving Him? If your heart is close to God, you would be like David — you would long for God. You would look forward to the next time when you can be in the Lord’s house again.

### **The love of God**

David says that there is something that is even better than life! Psalm 63:3 says that God’s *“lovingkindness is better than life.”* The word “lovingkindness” stresses the continuance of God’s love. David is satisfied with God. That’s why he speaks of God’s love as being *“better than life.”* God’s love is unchangeable. God’s love cannot be lost.

In Romans 8:38-39, the Apostle Paul said, *“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

In view of such greatness, isn’t it strange that some Christians spend so much time trying to find satisfaction elsewhere? They try to find satisfaction in earthly things and spend so little time seeking and enjoying fellowship with God.

## **Living for God**

There is so much to be done in the Lord's work. There are doors to be knocked and tracts to be given out. We need to evangelise to those who are outside Christ — to both the young and the old. There are deeds of kindness to be done for those in need. God uses our hands to do His work today.

In the mission fields, God's servants are calling out for help — calling for God's people to come and lend a hand. God needs all kinds of workers to do His work. David lived for God by working for Him. David lived for the Lord and waited for Him. David also walked with God. He said, "*My soul followeth hard after Thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me*" (Psalm 63:8).

Friends, how is your relationship with God today? Can we say these words, as David did? If you have been drifting further away from Him, turn around now and get right with Him today.

28 Oct 07

*“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses”*(1Timothy 6:12)

Today is Reformation Sunday, an event in Church history that we commemorate once a year. It serves as a good reminder to us on how our forefathers fought to defend the Gospel — that we are saved by faith in Christ alone because of God’s amazing grace, and not because of our works (Eph 2:8-9). Reformation is about forsaking the past and seeking a revival in our lives. It is about staying the course and doing what’s right.

### ***Our Reformation heritage***

The word “Reformation” holds much meaning to believers. Say “reformation” and we’re reminded of the 16<sup>th</sup> century era in which so many events took place. First, we think of Martin Luther, who nailed his 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg Church, challenging the whole religious system of his day.

We also think of John Calvin, a shy scholar who wanted nothing more than to be with a man of letters, reading and writing books throughout his life. He toiled day and night, sleeping only 4 hours a night, preaching daily and discharging his full pastoral duties. He also wrote many books and commentaries on almost the entire Bible! Today, many pastors use his commentaries. Among his books, *Calvin Institutes* is one of the most outstanding. He died at age 55, fully worn-out. He is another of God’s faithful servants.

We also think of John Knox, who was willing to spend years as a gallery slave because of his activities as a reformer. He spent a few weeks in his ministry in Scotland and the whole country turned to the Reformation. Almost overnight, Scotland became the Protestant nation from that day to the present.

We also think of the English martyrs. One such prominent person was William Tyndale, who defied the king by translating the Bible. He was burnt eventually in Belgium because Henry VIII sent word to the continent that he must be put to death.

These are some of the Christian heroes who are vividly remembered by believers when we think about the Reformation. Indeed, we thank God for these reformers who defended the Gospel despite the threat of death and strong opposition from the Catholic Church.

### ***The overlooked aspect of the Reformation***

The Reformation was not only about setting straight the doctrines that were formally professed by the organised Church and the order of the Church that went with them. More than clearing up superstitions and false doctrines, the Reformation also involved an overall renewal of spiritual vitality. The reformers saw themselves as pastors, evangelists as well as theologians. They saw themselves not only as spiritual cleaners — that is, getting the doctrines, church order and worship straight — but also as preachers of the Gospel, winning souls and building up believers’ spiritual lives. There were activities such as Bible study groups, prayer meetings, and fellowship for mutual encouragement.

### ***The elements in true reformation***

What would a work of divine reformation in churches today look like? The Bible records many examples of spiritual reformations. In each case, there had to be an outward aspect of putting away sin and idolatry, and the inward aspect of commitment and worshipping God.

In the Bible, we read that Joshua addressed the people of Israel (Josh 24). At the end of his life, he called the people together and challenged them. He said to them, *“Ye cannot serve the LORD: for He is an holy God...”* (Josh 24:19). The people insisted that they would serve the Lord, so they made a covenant or a

promise to God (Josh 24:25). Here, we see that there is a forsaking of idols and a commitment of service to God.

There was also a reformation under King Asa of Judah, who heard the prophecy of Azariah the prophet (2 Chron 15). He took courage and recovered all the idols from the land of Judah and the hills of Ephraim. He repaired the altar of the Lord. In other words, he put the worship of God in good order (2 Chron 15:8). And that was not all. Asa also gathered the people together and they committed themselves to the Lord (2 Chron 15:12). They were sincere in their dedication and commitment to God. They sincerely sought the Lord with all their heart and all their soul. Thus they found the Lord and the Lord blessed them.

Beloved, even as we remember the Reformation today, let's examine our hearts and see if there is any sin in our lives that we should forsake. Keep that devotion and commitment to our Almighty God burning in you and experience the love and peace that He has promised you. Let us *"fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses"* (1 Tim 6:12). May God help us! Amen.

04 Nov 07

*“For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.”*  
(Proverbs 2:6)

I pray that you are doing well and enjoying the fullness of the Lord in every area of your lives. It is so encouraging to see many of God’s children serving Him fervently and showing love and concern to fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. That’s what our church family should be. Let’s continue to uphold one another in prayer.

We praise our Great Jehovah for working in and through us here at Calvary B-P Church. Praise God for the effective ministry of Jurong Calvary Kindergarten (JCK) under the able leadership of its principal, Mrs Patricia Lin. At its recent Graduation Concert on 26 Oct 07, the JCK students presented a delightful Christmas musical with the gospel message to a large audience comprising many unsaved parents. The event was graced by Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Minister for Education, who was impressed with the achievements of the kindergarten. Indeed, we thank the Lord for establishing the work at JCK. All glory be to God! Today, our kindergarten continues to be an effective witness for Christ through its quality Christian-based pre-school education. And it is our prayer that through this ministry, more children and parents would come to know Christ as their personal Saviour.

Are you faithfully walking close to our Lord and growing in His Word? I pray that you are glorifying God in every area of your lives, in every decision that you make. Asking God for wisdom is so important to us, Christians. How would we know what to do in difficult situations? How should we deal with life’s twists and turns? Even in situations such as choosing a suitable school, career or life partner, how do we make wise decisions?

The process of making a decision is seldom easy. Often times, there are no easy solutions. It could be a case where there are so many options and we simply do not know which direction to go. We need to depend on God for wisdom and be willing to do what’s right in His sight.

### ***Biblical wisdom***

In the Scriptures, we find wisdom applied to the extension of knowledge and it relates to everyday activities. The Bible presents knowledge as the basic truth and wisdom as that truth in action. Several illustrations where knowledge and wisdom appear in the same context can be found in the Bible.

Proverbs 1:7 – *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*

Proverbs 2:6 – *“For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.”*

In the Bible, a person who could perform well in his particular area of skill such as a hunter or a craftsman was called a wise man. When Moses wanted to construct a tabernacle, he selected several wise men. The Spirit of God filled them and with this came wisdom, understanding and knowledge. The Hebrew word for “wisdom” here refers to a God-given ability. It’s the skill that’s designed to serve God in the work of the sanctuary. With this wisdom, they completed the work of the Tabernacle.

Today, God gives us wisdom to equip and enable us to live as we ought to live. With this wisdom, He helps us in our businesses, our schools, our homes and our personal relationships with others. We need wisdom in our daily living and in our work for the Lord.

### ***Where can we get wisdom?***

Before we try to obtain wisdom, it's best to determine where it can be found. Job asked, "*But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?*" (Job 28:12). Finally, Job said that only God knows where man can get wisdom. Only God knows because He can see everything in the earth and everything under heaven (Job 28:23-24). He is Omniscient — He knows all things. He is Omnipotent — He has the power and ability to work out His plan according to His will. Proverbs 2:6 says *God is the Giver of wisdom.*

### ***How can we obtain wisdom?***

The Bible tells us: "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom*" (Prov 1:7; 9:10 & Job 28:28a).

*The first thing to get is knowledge and the first thing to learn is to fear the Lord.* This does not mean we should be afraid to come to the Lord. The word "fear" actually means "respect" and "reverence." In fact, the first step is to trust and reverence the Lord. We are to come before God in reverence because of who He is and what He does. In other words, we are to come before Him in worshipful submission. We are to bow our knees before Him.

James 1:5 says, "*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.*" We must sense a need for wisdom. When we are deficient in this area, we realise our need, then we are to ask from God. The promise here is that God will supply us with an abundant degree of wisdom.

### ***The rewards of wisdom***

With wisdom, there is happiness. Proverbs 3:13 says, "*Happy is the man that findeth wisdom...*" It is something that cannot be bought with gold. No matter how rich you may be or how accomplished you are in your career, if you do not depend on God for wisdom, you will never be truly happy. Solomon was a wise man. He asked the Lord for wisdom and the Lord also gave him long life, riches and peace. Proverbs 3:24 also says that the rewards of a wise man include a good night's sleep.

Beloved, have you asked our Lord for wisdom?

11 Nov 07

*“For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you”*(John 13:15)

It is always so good to see fellow brethren coming together as one united body, worshipping our Almighty God. As you sit in the pews, do you know the people around you? When was the last time you greeted the person behind or in front of you and showed concern? As Christians, we must care one for another. Caring Christians love one another and it is God who puts this love within their hearts. It is the Holy Spirit who works in them as they yield to Him.

Loving one another is not a matter of words only but it is also a matter of deeds. An evidence of Christian love is our willingness to “wash one another’s feet.” John 13:1-7 tells us what Jesus did, what Jesus is doing now and what Jesus wants us to do.

### ***What did Jesus do?***

Jesus humbled himself. John 13 is an illustration of Philippians 2:5-8. Our Lord Jesus Christ, though He is God, did not count being equal with God as something to be held on to selfishly. Instead, He emptied Himself and made Himself of no reputation. He humbled himself and became obedient even unto death on the cross.

John 13 is an illustration of what happened when our Lord Jesus came to earth. He was born as a baby not in a palace but in a manger. He grew up in a carpenter’s home. He became God’s suffering servant. He was to be respected of men and to be betrayed by His own disciple. He was to be nailed on the cross.

### ***What is Jesus doing now?***

John 13 tells us what Jesus is doing now. He is keeping His own people clean. There is an important distinction between being “washed” all over (bathed) and simply having your feet washed in John 13:10. In the New Testament, the people had to worry about the problem of soiled feet. Many of them did not wear shoes, and those who did wore simple sandals. The streets were not paved and the people got their feet dirty. When guests came to one’s home, they would leave their sandals at the door, and then someone — the host or a servant — would wash the guests’ feet. This was an important part of hospitality.

When Christ saves us, we are washed all over. But as we walk through life in this sinful world, our feet get dirty. It is important for us to come to the Lord and let Him cleanse us. This is not the once-and-for-all working of salvation; it is that daily, moment-by-moment cleansing of sanctification that makes us more like Christ.

John 13 is an illustration of 1John 1:9 – *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* So, if you have been saved but you have ended up in some kind of sin, you do not need to be saved all over again. You have been washed by Christ’s precious blood but you do need to have your “feet” cleansed. This is done by sincerely confessing that sin to our Lord Jesus Christ in repentance.

### ***What does Jesus want us to do?***

Jesus wants us to follow His example. We’re to do as He has done. He has given us an example of humility, of putting Himself at the feet of others to serve them. So what does it mean to wash one another’s feet? It means that we need to humble ourselves before one another, to minister to one another, to take the place of a servant. Can you imagine God humbling Himself before sinful men and washing their feet? Jesus says, *“...I have given you an example...”* (John 13:15) — an example of putting others on a higher level than yourself.

Beloved, do we have that spirit of humility when we serve God? Is there any task that is too low that we cannot do? How do we view our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ? Do we treat them differently, according to their social status or accomplishments? When you are with others, does the love of God flow through you so that you refresh others? Or do you dry people out?

Humility comes when we realise that God has given us everything. We do not want to pretend. We do not want to act as though we are important. Everything has been put into our hands through Jesus Christ. We do not have to fight for anything. When we realise this great truth, we can reach out, take up a towel and serve others. We refresh others.

But some people simply have a hard time serving others. They can't do anything for anyone else. Our Lord says that if we want to experience holiness and happiness, then practise humility. When there is humility of heart, there is holiness of life. And when you combine the two, you have happiness.

Jesus tells us, *"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them"* (John 13:17). May we be challenged to lead a life of humility that is glorifying to God!

18 Nov 07

*“O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever”*  
(Psalm 136:1)

Today marks another milestone for the Hokkien Fellowship as 3 new believers have decided to profess their faith in Christ by their baptism today. One of them is Dn Kenny's mother, who has given up ancestral worship to follow our Lord Jesus, while the other two are from the Jurong community and came to know Christ through the Hokkien Fellowship. Their baptisms will be conducted at the Hokkien Fellowship at 11:30 am today (after the Worship Service). Do encourage them with your presence and read about their testimonies in today's bulletin. Since this outreach began, a new class has been formed and is held fortnightly to teach some 18 illiterate participants who desire to learn to read God's Word. Praise God for these precious souls. It's not too late to share the gospel with your Hokkien / Teochew-speaking loved ones. Invite them to the Hokkien Fellowship.

We've come to the close of our 16<sup>th</sup> AWANA Club year this month. Many of you, for years, have worked tirelessly to get us to this point. I would like to thank and show appreciation to our AWANA Club Commander (Eld Foong Kon Yu) as well as the Cubbies / Sparks / Flame directors, leaders and helpers for their faithful service in the Lord. Your love and dedication toward this vital children's ministry each week have touched many young lives and sowed the gospel seed in their hearts. I thank God for each one of you and for your roles in making AWANA Club a dynamic children's ministry in our church.

Praise God that AWANA Club has continued to reach out to children of all ages, especially unchurched children who have previously never heard the gospel. In case you do not know, AWANA Club offers a wholesome programme that promotes character development in children through Christian growth. Since running it at our church for the past 16 years, AWANA Club continues to impact children's lives as they seek to know our Saviour and grow to love Him more.

Such nurturing is especially needful these days, when children are exposed to so much temptations and when moral standards are declining. Even Christian children need to know and be reminded of what God has to say about all of this. *Christian parents, we need to instil in our children a love for God's Word while they're young.* Proverbs 22:6 says, *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”* To all parents with young children and pre-teens, now is the time to train up your children — not simply to be successful in the world — but more importantly, to have a love for God above all else! This is a serious responsibility which God has committed to you, along with your little bundle of joy.

We look forward to a brand new and exciting year in 2008 when AWANA Club returns with a revamp! Do continue to pray for our AWANA directors/leaders who are hard at work these school holidays to make the necessary preparations. We look forward to welcoming your children to the AWANA Club on 12 January 2008 (Sat).

With the holidays now here, some of you may have made plans for a vacation with your family/friends. I pray that our Lord will keep you safe during this holiday period. Remember to bring along your copy of *Daily Manna* and read God's Word faithfully. Even while taking a break, may you also remember our missions outreaches overseas, and do visit them if you're in the area. They would be encouraged by your presence.

I'm also encouraged to know that some of our members have been volunteering their time and service for our Lord on the missions field, lending a hand to missionaries/church workers in neighbouring countries. This December, we thank God for sisters Ginny Soh, Lena Piong and Anne Tan who will be conducting a Daily Vacation Bible School for the children at the missions outreach in Sri Lanka. Let's pray for them and Eld Vijay, that God would continue to use them to extend His kingdom.

Missions is always an important part of our work here at Calvary. The call to missions can be found in Acts 13:1-12. The church began in Jerusalem, and then spread to the other cities, including Samaria, Damascus, Caesarea and Antioch in Syria. From Antioch, Paul and his co-workers brought the gospel throughout the then known world. In Acts 13, we see Antioch, not Jerusalem, sending out missionaries to foreign lands. How did this begin?

### ***The call of Barnabas and Saul to missionary service***

Instead of having one man designated as a pastor, this church had a few leaders in charge of the work. Luke listed 5 different men who were ministering in the church. Barnabas was mentioned first because he was the oldest in the faith or in the service for Christ. Then there was Simeon, who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen and Saul. These men were the serving “prophets and teachers” in the local church. The prophets helped to lay the foundation for the Church as they proclaimed the Word of God. The teachers helped to ground the converts in the doctrines of the faith (2 Tim 2:2). We need both preachers and teachers in the Church.

In our overseas missions, we are always in need of preachers and staff workers — people who are committed to doing the Lord’s work. It is not easy for one to uproot his family, leave familiar surroundings, and move to a foreign place. It must be God’s calling. And only God can sustain us and grant us the strength that we need to do His work.

### ***Their activities***

It was as they ministered unto the Lord and fasted that His Spirit spoke to them. This is significant as people today are confused and uncertain about the circumstances in which God leads them to Him. They think that they must isolate themselves in order to hear God’s calling, but God does not often call people in this manner. Usually, His call comes when we are busy for the Lord, just as these men were. We do not know exactly how the Holy Spirit spoke to these men. They had a deep conviction of the Lord’s calling. They did not tell the Church what that work was. We find out about this only later on, when we read about the work they did. However, the Spirit had spoken to these men and had laid on them a deep concern to reach out to the lost world.

### ***Sending out missionaries***

When the Church knew that God had called these men to special service, the people “*fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them,*” and “*sent them away*” (Acts 13:3). When they went, they took a young man, John Mark, along with them. Mark helped the missionaries in every way possible. It was an official ceremony of the Church, setting aside two of their best men to a specific work by prayer and laying of hands.

So Barnabas and Saul went out as missionaries of the Antioch Church. The Church was responsible for supporting them and praying for them. As they went, they had the full confidence that the whole Church was behind them. That is the Church at work!

There are two extreme views that must be avoided. The first is the tendency to individualism, by which a Christian claims direct personal guidance by the Spirit without any reference to the Church. The second is the tendency to institutionalism, by which all decision-making is done by the Church without any reference to the Spirit. Here, we see that Barnabas and Saul were sent forth by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:4a). They were sent by the Holy Spirit through the Church.

Beloved, it is our responsibility, especially as Church leaders, to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. It is the Church’s responsibility to send and support the missionaries. Are you supporting and praying for our missions work? Each of us must do our part. If you’ve never visited the missions field, why not join us on one of our trips to lend a hand and see how the Lord can use you?

25 Nov 07

*“Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD”* (Psalm 113:1)

Welcome to the Lord’s house this blessed Sunday. We especially welcome the new friends in our midst who have come to worship with us in recent weeks. Let us extend our hand of friendship and fellowship to those we meet in church — even if it’s someone you’ve seen around for months, but have never spoken to at all. Let’s grow together in Christ — rejoicing together, encouraging and caring for one another — as His servants.

You may recall reading in the Bible that when Paul and his team were at Philippi, there was a young woman who was under the control of an evil spirit. Because of strange things that she said, her masters obtained much gain. But this woman somehow recognised that Paul and Silas were servants of God. She followed them around, telling everybody in a loud voice, *“...These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation”* (Acts 16:17).

This is very significant. In spite of the woman’s condition, she did actually speak the truth. The evil spirit which possessed her testified to the fact that Paul and Silas were servants of God who were engaged in spreading the way of salvation.

### ***God uses men, not angels, as His servants***

The first thing we learn from here is that God uses men, not angels, as His servants. Note what she said: *“These men are the servants of the most high God.”* The emphasis is on *“men.”* It is men like Paul, Silas and Luke (and women, too), whom the Lord uses for the extension of His Kingdom, and for the salvation of souls.

God has chosen us and saved us. His plan is that through us, the whole world shall be evangelised. The angels cannot do this job most effectively because they have not experienced the wonderful grace of God in salvation. The Lord’s plan and purpose is that you and I, who have been redeemed by His precious blood, may lead our loved ones, friends and neighbours — all those within our reach — to know Him as their Lord and Saviour.

### ***A great privilege and responsibility***

We are reminded of our high calling and the responsibility that comes with it. *“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God”* (2 Cor 5:20). In other words, we are representatives of our Almighty King in a foreign land, because this is what an ambassador is. We’re here in this world — a foreign land — and we’re to represent Christ. Have you ever thought of this when you return to your homes and loved ones — that God has placed you there to represent Christ so that He may speak His Word through your lives and manifest His life in your body and through your actions.

Are you conscious about your Christian testimony? Do your actions demonstrate your love and devotion to Christ our Saviour? God has a plan and purpose for you in your life.

### ***The servant’s task is to show people God’s way of salvation***

The woman in Acts 16 was right when she spoke about God’s way of salvation. She did not say “a way of salvation” or “some way of salvation.” She said, *“the way of salvation.”* Jesus says in John 14:6, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me”* (John 14:6).

Our job then is to show men and women the way of salvation. To do this effectively, it means three things:

***1. We must find the needy soul.***

Before we can preach the gospel effectively, we must know to whom we can preach. Whether it is reaching out to young children or adults, do we know where they are? Are we making the effort to reach out to them?

***2. We must speak the authentic Word.***

Can you take your Bible and explain God's way of salvation to someone? This was what Paul and Silas did all the time. Wherever they travelled and at whatever the time of the day/night, they told others the good news of salvation in Christ. How about us, dear friends? The truth is that many are often slow to speak the authentic Word. We often keep silent when we should be speaking.

***3. We must lead a consistent life.***

We're to demonstrate the power of the gospel in our lives. The young woman in Acts 16 declared that these servants of God (Paul and Silas) showed them the way of salvation. They proclaimed the truth with their lips and lived it out in their lives.

Beloved, our lives must be right before the testimony of our lips can ever be effective. The year 2007 is coming to an end soon. Let us cherish our time here on earth by living a life that is God-glorifying and according to His will.

02 Dec 07

*“Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee: let such as love Thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified”* (Psalm 40:16)

Today is a joyous occasion for us here at Calvary as we witness the baptism and reaffirmation of faith of friends and children in our midst. Praise God for their decisions to profess their faith in Jesus Christ at our Worship Services (English & Mandarin), as well as for others who have come to join us as members of Calvary BP Church. This will also be a significant milestone for them in their spiritual walk with God as they pledge their love and commitment to Him. Let’s warmly welcome each of them into our church family.

As members of Calvary, we must care for the church. This is our church — we’re all part of this big family regardless of the language that we speak. We must stay united and focused on serving God fervently because this is what He wants us to do. Each of you can be an active, contributing and caring member by supporting our various church ministries and our leaders in prayer — that the Lord will bless and multiply the fruits of our labour, that His name will be magnified and exalted above all. Let us be active Christians, busy serving our Lord Jesus Christ and ministering to those around us.

Each of us can play an important role in building up our church. The apostle Paul in Acts 20:17-38 gives us some guidelines in this area. Here, Paul addressed the elders of Ephesus as well as the believers, hoping they would fulfil their ministry in his absence.

### ***Serve with humility***

*“Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations...”* (Acts 20:19). We need to examine ourselves and ask: *Who are we really serving? Man or God?* Paul was careful to let the people know that his motives for the ministry were spiritual and not for selfish gain. Paul was *“serving the Lord.”* He was not interested in making money. He said, *“I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel”* (Acts 20:33). He was not interested in enjoying an easy life. He worked with his hands to support himself and others. He never compromised his loyalty in serving God. He served God *“with all humility”* (Acts 20:19).

There are some who tend to pick and choose what they want to do rather than do what is really needful and necessary. Sometimes, the task is difficult and there are Christians who just do not want to be inconvenienced. They want to serve God with minimal disruptions to their routine. If you think about it, most of us spend a majority of our time doing other things such as earning a living, going to school/classes, and attending to our loved ones and our personal needs. So at the end of the day/week, how much time then is left for God? When we serve our Almighty God and Creator, we must realise that it is serious business. We are to serve with all our hearts and give Him our very best.

The apostle Paul was obedient to God. He served with humility. He served from his heart. He said that he did not consider his life as dear to himself so that he might finish his course with joy (Acts 20:24). Paul not only served God with humility, he also served with “many tears and temptations.” You may be wondering, why did Paul weep? Paul wept over false teachers. He prayed that believers would take heed and beware of false teachers. He wept over the carnal Christians. He wept for the lost souls, especially those of his brethren and kinsmen.

Beloved, do you have the same concern for fellow brethren in our church family as well as unsaved loved ones? Are you doing anything to bring them to Christ? Do you pray for them? Paul served God with a heart full of concern for the lost ones. He served with many tears.

Paul also served with many trials. He was moved from one courtroom to another, defending himself against false accusations. His service for our Lord involved great sacrifices. We need more people to be involved in our Lord’s service.

### *Teach*

Paul also taught the Word of God. It was his duty to bring the message of God to meet the needs of the people. Paul did not simply teach his favourite topic but he declared the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). God wants each of us to grow in our walk with Him. We must set aside time each day to read and meditate on God's Word.

In Ephesians 4, Paul tells us that we should equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Just like Paul, here at Calvary, we are looking for new leaders to be trained and to take over the leadership when the time is right. In other words, we must be prepared to pass on the torch to the next generation.

### *Testify*

Paul was a tireless testifier. Everywhere he went, he testified for Christ. Paul was truly a faithful witness — both through his deeds and his words. He was a light of the world and salt of the earth. He was not happy in simply being a pastor; he was also a missionary. He fed the flock as well as reached out to the lost. He maintained a balance in his ministry.

As a church, we are sometimes too contented and cosy in keeping to ourselves that we forget the visitors and others in our midst. As a result, we are like stagnant water without any outlet and fresh water coming in. Let's make the effort to get to know those around us in church — whether familiar or new faces. Extend your hand of friendship and fellowship to those you meet in church — even if it's someone you've seen around for months, but have never spoken to at all. Rejoicing together, encouraging and caring for one another, growing together in the Lord — this is what being a church family is about.

God also has a special task for you. He has given you talents and opportunities to serve Him. Are you faithfully doing so? Have you been testifying for our Lord? *If you're serious about serving God, He is serious about using you.* Let us fight the good fight and finish our race with firm resolution. Do not give up. Persevere and experience God's blessings in your lives today!

09 Dec 07

This year has gone by so quickly for our church. It has been a very fruitful year of blessings packed with many church events and activities. By God's grace and mercy, our church has remained steadfast for His glory. Praise God for the growth of our English and Mandarin congregations. The trials and challenges that we experienced as a church have taught us what it means to stay united. Surely, many of you can testify to God's blessings and faithfulness in your lives this year.

As you may know, for years, we've been praying for God to send a suitable pastor to shepherd our flock when I step down as pastor this year-end. While attempts were made to groom some potential individuals for this role over the past years, the Lord revealed His will to be otherwise. Nonetheless, praise God that in spite of the challenges that tested us as a church in recent years, God meant it all for good (Gen 50:20). We truly thank God for His timely providence of a new pastor, Rev Isaac Ong of Vancouver B-P Church, to shepherd God's people here at Calvary. Previously our church deacon in the 90s who subsequently answered the Lord's call to full-time ministry, Pastor Isaac has preached and ministered to us over the past years during his visits to Singapore. Do pray for him and his family as they prepare to relocate back to Singapore on 30 Dec 2007, and let us welcome them with warm Christian fellowship.

In only a few weeks, our church will be celebrating her 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Praise God that since Calvary was founded in 1973, He has used our church here as a lighthouse to many lost souls in Jurong and beyond. Thank God also for active church members who have been serving joyfully in various areas, ensuring that the needs of our church and the Lord's work are met. Indeed, we can look back today and marvel at God's goodness toward us. What a mighty God we serve!

Let us also look ahead. We must not be complacent, especially when things are going well. As with the reality of life, there are still challenges ahead to be overcome and we must stand united. We must be prepared to tackle them when they arise. We should be moved to press on in the Lord's work, not only by God's power but also by our love for Him and for lost souls.

### ***Do you really love Christ?***

Love is the greatest motive in the world. If we truly love Christ, we should want to obey Him. Today, we have a variety of platforms through which we can share the gospel with the unsaved and strengthen the faith of fellow believers. Whether Gospel rallies, Bible Study classes, fellowship meetings, Bible camps and the AWANA Club for children — are you maximising these growth opportunities to ensure you are growing spiritually and to nurture your children in the fear of the Lord? God has given each of us talents to serve Him and to accomplish His work in this present age. Are we using them effectively?

*We cannot stand still in our Christian life.* We either go forward or slide backward. This is also true of churches today. Our church must move on. Each of us ought to be witnesses. We ought to proclaim Christ. We cannot stand still like figurines in a museum for others to admire. 1 Peter 2:9 says, “...*Ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*” In other words, we should proclaim God's wonderful character.

### ***How can we move on?***

*We must have leadership with a vision of mission and spiritual vitality.* The pastor cannot do all the work of the church. Neither can he get the job done if the church leaders do not work alongside. We need praying leaders. We need leaders with a concern for lost souls. We need leaders who are devoted to doing our Lord's work. We need to ask God to visit us and to do something different in our ministry.

Isaiah had this burden in his heart when he prayed: “*Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence*” (Isa 64:1). Isaiah asked God to intervene in the affairs of Israel, to destroy all the barriers and to judge the world.

*We must major on the Word of God, teaching and preaching the Word and obeying it.* We need to impact God's Word in the lives of believers.

*We must not be afraid of change.* Someone has said that the seven last words of the church are: “But we've always done it this way!” The early Christians were not afraid of change. They changed the day of worship from Sabbath to the first day of the week. They moved from city to city without complaining, carrying the gospel with them. They adjusted the local church organisation and ministry to meet their own situations. Like the mighty army, they advanced throughout the whole Roman Empire. They obeyed orders, accepted changes, maintained unity, and defeated the enemy.

Beloved, how fast are you moving in your spiritual life? Do you have time for God or are you busy with other pursuits in life? Repent of sinful failures, and get back on the spiritual growth track. Let's finish well this year, individually and as a church. In fact, *let us finish our lives well!* We do not know how much time each of us has left on this earth. I pray that you will seek God's guidance in your life — ask what you can do for Him with this life that He has given to you.

16 Dec07

*“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” – Acts 20:21*

We're fast approaching the end of this calendar year and a new one awaits us in the coming weeks. It has been a very fruitful year of blessings packed with many church events and activities. I thank God for those of you who have served faithfully in the various ministries and supported the church in many ways. Praise God for your faithfulness to Christ in your attendance, giving, praying, and using of your talents. God is at work here on our corner, and I trust we will see more of His work in the year to come.

Do continue to pray for our church leadership and for all who are involved in the many ministries here at Calvary. Pray for the Lord of the harvest to send more labourers to do His work. Please also make an extra effort this month to invite people to church, so that they may hear of the salvation that Jesus offers by faith. I look forward to seeing each of you at our upcoming services and events.

**(a) *Carols Alive!*** (22 Dec, Sat, 5.30pm / English)

Enjoy warm Christian fellowship over Christmas dinner and be uplifted by the carols, testimonies and special items by our Bible Study/fellowship groups. Snr. Pastor Dr Tow will be exhorting us from God's Word.

**(b) *Christmas Praise Service*** (24 Dec, Mon, 7.30pm / English)

Let's unite our hearts in praise to our Saviour during this season of joy! Come and honour Him with your time and with grateful hearts.

**(c) *Christmas Gospel Praise Service & Dinner*** (25 Dec, Tue, 4pm / Mandarin)

This is a good opportunity to invite your unsaved friends and loved ones to hear the gospel. Our prayer is that they will discover the true meaning of Christmas and experience God's peace in their lives. Do stay back after the Service for Christmas dinner fellowship.

**(d) *Year End Service*** (31 Dec, Mon, 8.15pm / English & Mandarin)

As we count down to the remaining hours of 2007, let's seek the Lord together and acknowledge His sovereignty in our lives. Thank Him for His faithfulness and grace upon you this past year and ask Him for wisdom, strength and courage to face the new year 2008.

**(e) 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Thanksgiving Service & Dinner – “*In the Way of our Saviour*”** (5 Jan 08, Sat / English & Mandarin)

Come together as a church family and praise our Almighty God for His faithfulness and blessings upon Calvary B-P Church these past 35 years! Anniversary Praise Service at 4pm in church, followed by Thanksgiving Dinner at 6.30pm, Harbour City (PSA Building). Please read the bulletin for details.

Will you commit to praying fervently for our upcoming services? Will you pray that God would direct you to someone to invite to church? Will you pray that God would speak powerfully through the preaching of His Word, and that sinners would be converted? I trust that you will join me in doing so. Let's keep our eyes fixed on Christ, our Risen Lord and our soon-coming King.

Let us use our time well this month. Shopping is not more important than worship, nor can it be a substitute for assembling with other believers. We make what is important to us known by the priority we give them. Evaluate your priorities. Would family members see our relationship with Christ as the most important of

our relationships? Does our character reflect the character of Christ, the One whose image we are to bear? Is it obvious that we love God, His people, and lost souls? Brothers and sisters, examine yourselves this month. Repent of sinful failures, and get back on the spiritual growth track.

### ***Repentance and faith***

If we do not understand what the Bible teaches about repentance, we will not understand what salvation really is. In a way, it may surprise you to know that repentance itself will not save you, yet you cannot be saved without it! Merely repenting of one's sin does not guarantee a person entry into heaven.

We read about Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey in Acts 20. Actually, he went to many places and encountered many experiences that were not recorded. Dr Luke, who wrote the book of Acts, focused on a few incidents that were of relevance and importance. Among them was Paul's invitation to the Ephesian elders when he arrived at Miletus. Paul did not go to Ephesus at this time but he invited the elders to come down to the port of Miletus.

When the elders arrived and met Paul, he mentioned that everywhere he went, he preached to the people – both Jews and Greeks – “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). A person must give the Lord Jesus Christ proper place in his/her life.

### ***The necessity of repentance***

The Bible teaches that “all have sinned” (Rom 3:23) and “there is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom 3:10). Sin is destructive. It has destroyed our relationship with God and as a consequence, it has disturbed our relationship with fellow men and even within ourselves. Sin will destroy everything that is good, noble and holy in our lives. When we sin, we violate God's law; we incur the penalty of sin, which is death and destruction (Rom 6:23). Therefore, the first step toward deliverance from sin is repentance. If we do not repent, there is no victory over sin, no freedom from sin and guilt. Sin will haunt us, hound us, and never leave us alone unless we repent.

We have only one inevitable choice – and that is to repent, or perish. No man can be saved without repentance. The Bible teaches us that man has to repent before he can be saved.

### ***The nature of repentance***

The Biblical word “repentance” means “to change” or “to turn.” It is a word of power and action. It is a word that signifies a complete change of mind and conduct in the individual. When the Bible calls us to repent of our sins, it means that we should turn away from sin and return to God by faith in Christ Jesus. Many Christians tend to lose sight of what it really means to repent from their sins. They think that repentance is simply to say “sorry” or “I am sorry for doing that!” and they continually live just as they lived before. To be sorry is not enough in repentance.

So many times, we become so routine in asking the Lord for forgiveness in our prayers without realising what it truly means to repent. Even the conviction of sin is not enough. That may sound strange to some of you. I know of some who were deeply convicted of their sins such that they could not eat or sleep, and yet they were not converted. They did not truly repent. When everything was over, they started to sin again.

### ***Repentance and faith involve the mind, heart and will***

This kind of repentance is not something we can accomplish by ourselves or it would merely be an effort to turn over a new leaf and to do better. True repentance is a gift of God's grace – “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18). Repentance is the gift of God's grace that transforms the heart, mind and will.

Have you repented from all of your sins? Do you have the peace of God in your heart? Paul says, “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...*” (Col 3:17). Our Lord demands that we surrender 100% of our lives. And when you have done that, He will reward you a thousand-fold!

Let us examine our lives, repent of our sinful ways and draw nigh to God. May God grant you the strength to live victoriously for Him!

23 Dec 07

*“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” — James 1:17*

Blessed Christmas to you! This season is a special time when we remember the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. God became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have found hope because Christ has paid the price for our sins. Though perfect and blameless, He was willing to suffer and die on the cross so that we, unworthy sinners, can live eternally. This is a wonderful truth – a truth we must share with others while there is still time and opportunity to do so.

As the year 2007 soon comes to a close, I wonder how this past year has been for you. Did you manage to accomplish what you set out to do? Time is very precious; second by second it vanishes, never to be recovered. We all have the same amount of it; everyday has 24 hours for everyone. Have you spent your time well for the Lord?

I pray that you have been faithfully reading the Bible with *Daily Manna* everyday and growing in Christ. I believe that as we focus on God by taking the time to read His Word, to pray, and to meet together, we will be drawn closer and closer to Him. Our relationship with the Father will grow stronger. He will be even more glorified in our lives.

Circumstances around us may change, but God’s love and compassion for us never change. No matter what our joys, blessings, trials and experiences have been this past year, we must praise and thank the Lord. Because in all this, we can take comfort in the knowledge that our God is sovereign. His purposes are being fulfilled on a moment by moment basis for His glory and our good. David, in Psalm 30, teaches us to give thanks – always!

### ***Having a grateful heart***

Gratitude is like the flowers in the garden which must be watered, cultivated, loved and protected. Our Lord Jesus experienced ingratitude when He was on earth. The children of Israel had been waiting for the Messiah to come. Then when the Messiah came, they did not receive Him (John 1:11). They did not receive Him at His birth. They said there was no room for Him in the inn (Luke 2:7).

On one occasion, Jesus was passing through Samaria. Then 10 lepers came to Him and asked for mercy. Jesus told them, “Go shew yourselves unto the priests” (Luke 17:14). As they went, they were cleansed. One of the lepers, seeing that he was healed, returned to Jesus and fell at His feet, and gave Him thanks. Luke tells us that he was a Samaritan (Luke 17:16). The Lord Jesus asked, “*Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?*” (Luke 17:17).

This is a serious matter. Let us examine ourselves humbly and honestly. Many of us are like the nine lepers. We’re more ready to pray and ask God for what we do not have than to thank Him for what we have.

Friends, have you taken the time to give thanks to God? How have you thanked Him? It is the thankful spirit that God loves and delights to honour. David had this thankful spirit. He wrote many psalms of praise and thanksgiving. Psalm 30 is a psalm and song at the dedication of the house of David. The temple had been built when David wrote this psalm.

### ***Praising our Almighty God***

David was grateful to God and praised Him for deliverance. He had many enemies. He had to face many valleys of sorrow and death, but the Lord was merciful to him. David said, “*I will extol thee, O Lord...*” (Psalm 30:1). He remembered God’s goodness; here were some things that God had done for Him:

1. *"...Thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me"* (Psalm 30:1). The Lord had delivered David from great danger in battles.
2. *"...Thou hast healed me"* (Psalm 30:2). Perhaps the Lord had healed David of a serious illness. God is the best physician, even for our frail bodies.
3. *"Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness"* (Psalm 30:11). David thanked God for transforming his life from sadness into joy. Like David, we have been lifted from the pit of hell, from the darkness of sin, and from the bondage of doubt and despair into everlasting joy.

### ***Bearing a good testimony***

*"And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved"* – this was David's testimony (Psalm 30:6). He found out that prosperity did not guarantee security. When God was displeased, He turned His face from him and suddenly David realised his foolishness. God sent a dreadful plague that killed 70,000 men in one day. David was troubled because so many people had died because of his sin. He cried unto the Lord, *"Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me: Lord, be Thou my helper"* (Psalm 30:10).

David lived a God-centred life. When he was in danger, God delivered him. When he was ill, God healed him. Now God allowed him to face trouble, and David sought His help. David believed that God would not let him fall.

We may not experience the same tremendous challenges that David faced but we, too, have our own struggles in life to deal with. The question is this: Are you thankful to God in all things? As you ponder on this, remember that *"every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"* (James 1:17). It means that every good gift we receive comes from God.

Like David, let us strive to live GOD-centred lives and give Him thanks in all things.

30 Dec 07

*“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.” – Proverbs 3:5-6*

We are down to the remaining hours of the year 2007 and I thank God for bringing many of you safely back from your travels during this vacation period. We warmly welcome the new friends and visitors who have come to worship with us in recent weeks, and today, we especially welcome Pastor Isaac Ong and his family, Rebecca and Anna-Joy, who have returned from Canada to be in our midst.

With grateful hearts, my wife, Alice and I would like to thank our Almighty God for sustaining and using us for His purpose during these past 35 years of our full-time ministry here at Calvary B-P Church. Reflecting on all the joys, challenges, trials and blessings that we have experienced together as a church all this while, our wonderful God is to be praised for His faithfulness in preserving and strengthening us. The elders are hard at work, giving oversight and direction to the ministries. The deacons / deaconesses are also hard at work developing and carrying out the ministries. I am thankful for these men and women who serve in the Session.

I also thank God for many of you who have given of your time and talents by serving Him in our various church ministries and other areas – whether in the teaching ministry, music ministry, arranging the tables, helping in the children’s work, ushering, operating the PA equipment, preparing fellowship meals, cleaning up, organising church events, and more. It takes the dedication of many of you in our midst to make all this happen. I appreciate each one’s efforts and sacrifices in helping our church family grow spiritually and in unity.

As you know, I will be stepping down as Pastor of Calvary B-P Church at the end of 2007 to make way for a younger, experienced pastor to shepherd the flock and lead our church to greater heights in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. I thank God for answering my prayer in His own good time. After much prayer and with the support of our Session, Pastor Isaac Ong of Vancouver B-P Church has responded our church’s need for a new pastor and heeded God’s calling. Praise the Lord!

I believe that Pastor Isaac is the best person whom the Lord has given to us for the pastoral leadership. First, having grown up at Calvary from his days as a youth, he is familiar amongst many of our members and knows the ministries of our church very well. Second, he is experienced in the pastoral ministry. With God’s enabling as well as the cooperation and support of our church, he would be able to lead God’s flock here at Calvary to further spiritual growth. It is my prayer that each of you would unite together with Pastor Isaac in one accord for the furtherance of the gospel and “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:14).

Since the announcement of my stepping down, I have been praying and seeking our Lord’s guidance concerning my ministry. Lord willing, I will continue to be involved in the *Daily Manna* ministry till end 2008. I have also been requested by some of our B-P churches to help in their preaching ministry.

As you know, I have always been involved with the missions work in Thailand. Some 30 years ago, the Lord called me to help the China Evangelistic Mission (CEM) and I was able to contribute in a small way to its training programme. Today, the CEM is greatly used by God in many parts of the world. However, the retirement age for missionaries at CEM is 60, but I am 66 going on to 67. Nonetheless, I have been praying for God’s direction that if He wants to use me in Thailand, He will open the way and I will submit to His will accordingly. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, *“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”*

In October 2007, I received an invitation from the Field Director (Thailand) of CEM requesting me to help in the training programme – particularly to train the pastors and preachers of their Chinese churches in Thailand. While most of their workers have been trained in Bible schools in Thailand, they lack pastoral experience and I was requested to train them in this aspect. I have accepted this invitation as from the Lord

and thank Him for answering my prayer for an opportunity to serve Him with my remaining years in the missions field while I still have some strength left. God willing, I will be leaving on 7 Jan 08 and returning on 8 Feb 08. Your valuable prayer support will be much coveted and appreciated.

Finally, in my heartfelt closing letter to you – especially beloved members of Calvary who have served Christ alongside with Alice and I all these years – we thank our Heavenly Father for you. Thank you for the times when you've encouraged us in the ministry and been a blessing in our lives. Thank you for the love and kindness which you have shown to us and our family. We would like to wish each of you a blessed and joyous New Year 2008. May you continue to labour zealously till the return of our Soon-Coming King!

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised! Amen!

---The End---