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01 Jan 2006

Dearly beloved,

Today, we celebrate the 33rd Anniversary of Calvary B-P Church. Oh, what a mighty God we serve! We magnify His Holy Name for He is worthy of all praises and glory. Indeed, all these years have not been without troubles and challenges — more so in recent times. Yet we give thanks to God for having blessed us to celebrate our 33rd Anniversary. We are also glad to have Rev Philip Heng (Calvary's first pastor) minister God's Word to us today.

Theme for 2006: “*Building Strong Foundations*”

Looking ahead, the church has chosen a new theme for the year 2006 — ***Building Strong Foundations*** (Jude 20). As long as our Lord Jesus tarries in His return, His Church must continue to grow. Our Lord is not done with us yet! We are not a finished product, but are works that are in progress. There is still much growing and much building to be done in our church.

The first step to any successful building project is to make sure that the foundation is strong. The foundation of the Church is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the chief corner stone (Eph 2:20; 1 Cor 3:11). Regardless of the size of the congregation, every Bible-believing church must build upon the foundation of Christ. That means that every ministry — whether Bible Study, choir, prayer meeting, Awana Club or Lord's Day Worship — must be Christ-centred.

The church of the living God is the pillar of truth (1 Tim 3:15). The magnificence of any building is seen in its superstructure — the walls and the pillars. The importance of the foundation does not cancel out the significance of the superstructure. And as much as we have the foundation that is Christ Jesus, Paul warns us to be careful about what we build upon this foundation. There are people who build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones; there are others who settle for wood, hay, stubble.

Practically, it means that God's truth must be seen in order for its beauty to be appreciated. Truth must be even more evident in the lives of those who claim to have it in its purest state. It means that we who claim to have the truth and have declared to earnestly contend for it must first live it.

According to Jude 20-22, the beauty of this foundational truth is manifested in three ways:

Be fervent in prayer

First, we must be fervent in our prayers, interceding in the Holy Ghost. A Christian on his knees would not run too far away from God. A Christian who is busy praying would have

neither time nor desire to do the devil's mischief. A Christian who speaks with God truthfully would not speak about men falsely. So let me urge you to pray for the church, your pastor and the leaders.

Keep ourselves in the love of God

Second, truth is manifested when we keep ourselves in the love of God, looking to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are to stay close to God. A person who walks with God would not be swayed by the things of the world. A person who keeps his eyes on our Lord Jesus Christ would run the race of faith with patience. A person who keeps himself in God's love would find in Him complete satisfaction. As the hymn-writer says:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.*

Show God's love to others

Third, truth is manifested when we exercise compassion for people. The way to make a difference in the world for our Lord Jesus Christ is to demonstrate His love not just by our lips, but also by our lives. The Bible exhorts us to be "*kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another*" (Rom 12:10). "*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*" (Phil 2:3-4).

Make the year 2006 count for Christ

Do continue to pray for the church as we look forward to the challenges of tomorrow and as we rededicate ourselves each day to our Lord Jesus Christ and His work. Come to the weekly prayer meetings (Tuesdays, 8.15 pm) and pray for the church together. For those who are available in the afternoons, there's also the Agape Prayer Fellowship (Thursdays, 2.30 pm), where you can uphold one another in prayer on a more personal level.

Although today also marks the day where some Christian brethren who hold strongly to the VPP teaching have left us to start their own church (Truth B-P Church), it is also the start of a new chapter for all of us at Calvary B-P Church. Our future is in front of us, not behind us. Therefore, as we commence our journey into the year 2006, let us recommit ourselves to "*walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God*" (Col 1:10).

We thank God for those who have come forward and dedicated themselves to serve in the various ministries of the church. Perhaps some of you may be serving the Lord for the first time while others may be taking on new roles. May all of you find joy in serving Jesus and give Him your best. As God's Word says, "*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*" (I Cor 10:31).

Together, let us keep busy for the Lord and resolve to make 2006 count for Christ! The Lord bless you and keep you.

08 Jan 2006

Dearly beloved,

How are things shaping up for the New Year? Have you made your new year's resolution? If you haven't done so, why not do it now while the year has just started? Resolve to know God personally this year by having a closer walk with Him. Start and end each day in prayer. Read His Word and meditate on it. Share the good news of salvation with your colleagues, friends and loved ones. Invite them to church. Be zealous in the Lord's work and participate actively in the various church events. I pray that this will be one of your best and most fruitful years ever for the Lord!

As I shared in my message at the Year-End Service two weeks ago, we must check ourselves. Are you here today because it has become a routine for you to go to church every Sunday? Do you still have that burning passion and joy to serve God or has your service become mechanical and burdensome? Now is the time to start afresh — on a clean slate — as we reaffirm our commitment to follow God!

Christ, who dwells in us by the Holy Spirit, is at work. He lives in us and continually seeks to push off the old habits — renewing us when we confess our sins, steadying us when we falter, and strengthening us to do His will. However, to follow Christ is not easy.

Barriers to Conquer:

Have you heard of the *Christian atheist*? We know that all atheists do not believe there is a God. A “Christian atheist” believes in God but lives as though His demands and promises are not important. Here are some characteristics of a “Christian atheist.”

A: Selfishness

Although many Christians attend church regularly every Sunday, there are some who may be more concerned about their self-centered goals and advancement than about Christ and His kingdom. This type of Christian does not have time to witness for Christ. He is not interested in studying the Bible or in participating in other church activities. He is like one who would pass by the injured on the road to Jericho; unlike the “good Samaritan” who would graciously take time to help those in need.

In Proverbs 14:14, Solomon says “*The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways...*” Beloved, if you think only of yourself and forsake God in the hope of profit or pleasure, be careful lest you become a backslider.

B: Indifference

We are living in the last days. In Matthew 24:12, Jesus says, “*And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*” These words also apply to us even in this time and age. There may be some who have been serving the Lord for many years, but have grown lethargic and weary in their service. As their desire to follow Christ and their commitment to serve Him “wax cold”, they may soon contemplate taking a short break

from their service for the Lord. Well, many would reason: “This is just for a short while and, besides, there are others who can easily replace me.” Does this sound familiar? Soon, these Christians may start to skip some Sunday worship services and reduce their involvement in church activities. They may break their church appointments frequently. They may possess great talents but they simply are not dependable to do the job. Their hearts soon grow cold. As Dr Bob Jones Sr. once said, “The greatest ability is dependability.” This means that we must be dependable and continue to remain so — because God expects us to.

C: Lack of spiritual enthusiasm

In Revelation 2:4, the Lord says, “*Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*” When Christians lose their first love for Christ, they lose their joy of serving. It is truly encouraging to see new Christians actively serving the Lord with joy. You can see the joy of the Lord in their faces. Yet it is also sad to see this enthusiasm fading away with time when they allow their love for Christ to grow cold.

Let us take up the cross daily

Although following the Lord isn’t always easy, we can look to Him for strength to overcome the obstacles and barriers along the way. However, we must first be willing to take up His cross. Luke 9:23 says, “*...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*”

What does it mean to take up the cross? Some see this as suffering, a reflection of Jesus’ agony at Calvary. That was the cross of Jesus and it was God’s will for Him. For us, the cross is a symbol of Christ’s suffering and His full commitment to the Father’s will (Luke 22:42 & Hebrews 10:9). Our cross is to do as Jesus has done — and that is to obey and to do the will of our Heavenly Father.

Each day, our minds must be focused on following His will. Psalm 27:14 says, “*Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.*”

God invites us to have a personal relationship with Him! As we draw near to God, He encourages and enables us to follow His will along life’s winding journey. God provides the power we need to live triumphantly for Him. He is able to break down every barrier. These are His promises to those who faithfully follow the Lord Jesus in obedience. And this is what we should strive to achieve in the year 2006.

So, focus your heart on the cross at Calvary. It is the message of God’s grace, love and salvation for you! Discover for yourself how God can transform your life and make you an effective channel of blessing to others this year!

15 Jan 2006

Dearly beloved,

Praise God for the wonderful 33rd Anniversary cum Dedication Service two weeks ago!

It was encouraging to see so many of you. Indeed, the Lord is good to us. I was very much heartened when some families told me that for the first time, they — both parents and children — have come forward to serve the Lord together. They spoke with joy and enthusiasm! Thank God for these families and for each of you who have dedicated your time and talents to the Lord's work.

Doing the Lord's work is never easy. I recall my early days in 1967, when I worked with the Hakka community in Kelapa Sawit. Not knowing the dialect, God still managed to use my wife and I in ministering to the people. Living conditions then were bad. For the first time, we had to learn to draw water from the well to drink and bathe. On one occasion, we even found a dead rat in the well!

And then in Thailand, besides sleeping in a haunted house, I had to deal with thugs who had sent an army load of soldiers to interrogate me and search for evidences that I had been training the villagers to be communists. These were false allegations that were used as means to disrupt the Lord's work. The physical and psychological discomforts then were daunting. But thank God for His providential care as He faithfully protected me and sent friends who saw to my every need along the way.

What about you? What is your story? Living a Christian life is not easy. Paul constantly reminds us that we must have a purpose and a plan because times will be difficult and Satan will attack us. We must persevere in our Christian walk and service.

Why do we grow weary?

1) Physically Tired

Sometimes Christians grow weary because they are physically tired and exhausted. For example, in the Bible, we read about how Elijah thought that God had abandoned him and that the world was against him. He wanted to die and just give up serving the Lord (1 Kings 19:4). His problem was physical exhaustion (1 Kings 18) but God provided Elijah with rest, refreshment and encouragement to go on.

2) Fruitless Efforts

Weariness can also have emotional causes. Perhaps you have worked hard in a particular area of ministry but have not seen any lasting results. Discouragement sets in, and if there is no improvement, we begin to despair. Some Thessalonian believers were growing weary because other Christians were not doing their part (2 Thess 3:10-13). When it seems that you are the only person who cares, it is easy to grow weary in well doing.

3) Crisis

It may be that you are going through a time of trial. Perhaps you are facing serious relationship problems with your spouse or children. Perhaps you are frustrated with some difficult colleagues at the workplace. Yet there could also be some of you who are worried about your health problems, financial needs and so on. These life experiences can take an emotional toll on any of us and once it accumulates, it is easy for us to feel weary and sink into depression.

4) Routine

There are also spiritual causes for weariness in well-doing. In Malachi 1:13, God accused His people of merely going through the routine of worship. They followed the programme but they were neither spiritually nor emotionally involved with God. This can happen to any of us too. When we lose touch with God, we lose the sense of doing a vital work for Him.

Now, examine the state of your quiet time to see if something other than the Lord Jesus occupies the throne of your life.

Persevering in our Christian walk

As Christians we are running toward our heavenly reward. We're just passing through this temporal world. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 reminds us to run to get the prize; we must run straight to the goal and not be distracted. Winning a race requires purpose and discipline. In Philippians 3:13-14, we are told to forget the past and look ahead, pressing on toward the mark. Paul explains that the Christian life takes hard work, self-denial and serious preparation. The essential disciplines of prayer, Bible study, worship and fellowship with believers equip us to run with vigour and stamina!

Let us remember that what we do is for God. And since we are doing "*the work of the Lord*" (1 Cor 15:58), He is responsible for the results. He sees how faithfully you serve. Nothing we do is overlooked by Him. So even if no one seems to notice your service, take heart that your Heavenly Father does see and care.

Finally, let me encourage you with these words: "... *your labour is not in vain in the Lord*" (1 Cor 15:58) and "*let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*" (Gal 6:9).

Remember: As long as our service is for the Lord and for His glory, God will bless what we do. He will strengthen us and there will be a rich harvest!

22 Jan 2006

Dearly beloved,

Greetings in the blessed name of our Lord! Last Saturday (14 Jan), my wife and I were so happy to see so many of you at the cottage meeting that we hosted. We had such an enjoyable time of singing and getting to know one another better. Thank God for the fruitful time of brainstorming, and thank you for sharing your thoughts. I am looking forward to our journey ahead together!

Thank God also for all of you who have been worshipping with us at Calvary. It is truly an encouragement and joy to see the church packed with His people, young and old, coming with one heart to worship and serve our Almighty God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, *“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”*

Surely, we want to do all things to the glory of God. He is the greatest Person in the universe! And He deserves our greatest and highest respect. We want to do our best to glorify Him.

Serving God or Man?

Everything done for the glory of man eventually fades and falls, but what is done for the glory of God will last. In your service for Him, have you ever encountered instances where you cannot get along with another Christian brother or sister, perhaps due to a clash of personalities or opinions?

Well, for some people, conflicts may arise, leading to misunderstandings and distrust. And this soon blinds us from our main objective, which is to serve God. Soon, we get caught up with personal grudges and bitter feelings. And eventually, we may even stop serving altogether and leave the church just to get away from these people. All these hinder us from effectively serving God and glorifying His name. And when we go to a new church, we may encounter similar experiences and the cycle repeats itself. This is very sad indeed!

The command to glorify God causes us to examine our ministry for the Lord. We can examine ourselves by asking three questions about our activities in the church.

1) Check yourself

This question helps us to examine our motives. If we are going to serve God, we have to do it with a right motive. Motives can be a cloudy area. Many people are not clear of their motives for doing things. Sometimes, we think our motives are pure but they may not really be so.

a) King David took a census of his people. His motive was pride — he wanted to glorify himself, not God. God sent a plague and killed 70,000 men (2 Sam 24).

b) Ananias and Sapphira sold some land and gave a gift to the church (Acts 5:1-11). They pretended to give the entire proceeds to the church, when in fact, they kept some for themselves. The reason: greed. They wanted to be like Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37). So we must be sincere in all that we do.

What is your motive for serving God? Is it because it is something which you have been doing all these years and you should just carry on? Or is it because you have been approached so many times to serve and you feel you should just serve? Or is it because it is simply the right thing to do?

If you serve God with the right motive, you will experience God's goodness and blessings regardless of the obstacles you face along the way; joy and happiness will radiate from your face and inwardly, you feel at peace with God.

2) How godly are our methods?

Our methods also come under scrutiny when we desire to glorify God. We must not do "good things" for God using wrong methods.

Take Moses for example. When Israel needed water, God instructed Moses to speak to a rock and water would be provided (Num 20:8). Moses was angry with the people and hit the rock instead of speaking to it. His action did not glorify God.

God's work must be done God's way. Christians should adopt sound business practices but they must not serve God like how they run a business in the secular world. However, that does not mean that we should be sloppy in our service for the Lord!

Doing the Lord's work is serious business. We must be mindful that the Lord expects the *best* from us. This is the standard He has set for us. So we must be responsible and dependable when executing our duties. We must recognize that all of us have different work styles and, sometimes, we may not agree with each other's methods. We must then pause and ask for God's wisdom. We must try to work together as a team to achieve a common objective — to glorify His name and win more souls.

Our focus should be on serving God and pleasing Him only. So do not be disheartened if you encounter difficult situations along the way. We are all co-labourers for the Lord. So whether you are the superintendent of the Junior Worship or an usher leader, we must all find a way to work together — to edify one another and build upon our strengths and talents (Heb 10:24).

3) What are we trying to achieve?

John wrote about Diotrephes (3 John 9-10). He was not concerned with God's glory. He was pre-occupied by the pursuit of personal power. His words and actions caused problems in the church.

How about our respective areas of service? Are we clear about our objectives? Are we working hard to extend God's kingdom and win more souls through our ministry here at

Calvary? Are we seeking to strengthen our relationship with fellow Christian brothers and sisters and grow in God's Word?

Ask yourself these three questions and pray that the Lord will speak to you and touch your hearts. God bless you as you labour for Him!

29 Jan 2006

First of all, I want to wish all of you a blessed Chinese New Year! Today is the first day of the Lunar New Year and I am happy that you have made it a point to be here at the Worship Service this morning.

During this festive season, many of us, young and old, will be busy visiting our relatives and friends. To some non-believers, this would perhaps be a time for them to offer prayers to their idols and wish for peace, happiness, prosperity, longevity, etc. Others would perhaps place the “Fu” sign upside-down at home with the hope that bountiful blessings would fall on them in the New Year.

But the Bible tells us that our Heavenly Father is the Giver of *all* blessings. James 1:17 says, “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights...*” How about you? As children of the only true and living God, have you acknowledged our Heavenly Father as the Giver of all good things? Do you have the peace of God in your hearts?

God desires us to have peaceful hearts

God wants us to have peace. He says “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matt 11:28). Why does God desire for us to have peace?

a) A peaceful heart glorifies God

Worry, confusion, unrest — these do not glorify Him. A peaceful heart testifies to the presence and power of God. But sometimes, we do not have the peace that God desires us to have. In times of trouble and strife, when we do not testify to this fact that Christ is our Saviour and Deliverer, we do not glorify Him. God wants us to have peace in our hearts to serve and glorify Him.

b) A peaceful heart helps others

The anxious, worrying Christian hurts other people. He hurts the faith of those who know him. Now, some people are professional worriers. We hear them grumble day and night, telling people of their troubles. They do not know the root of their problems. They worry about almost everything! God does not want us to be professional worriers. He wants us to have peace in our hearts so that we can help others.

c) A peaceful heart is good for your spiritual life

Trusting in Christ, having faith in God and resting upon His Holy Word will help you through life’s trials. Look at the life of David. He had many problems. But David kept trusting the Lord. When you read the Psalm of David, you will find him returning to God whenever he had problems. Psalm 23 is a good example. “*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*”

Disturbances in life

Disturbances are part and parcel of life. But why do troubles come to us? They come to us because of foolishness and sin. We may bring it upon ourselves. The Bible says that

“...*whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*” (Gal 6:7). We are responsible for our actions.

Troubles may also be due to God’s chastening. The Bible says, “*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*” (Heb 12:6). God may allow us to be chastened to slow us down and to cause us to think and return to Him. Chastening is not pleasant but it is necessary for us.

But, not all suffering is due to the chastening of God. We may be drifting further from God without even realizing it. We get pre-occupied with our work/family schedules and neglect to spend time with God. When things are going well, we may neglect to acknowledge our dependence on Him. And God sometimes uses disturbances to awaken us.

Don’t be afraid to suffer. Disturbances may drive us closer to Him. We can still trust God and have faith in Him in the hour of darkness.

Directions for peace

God is the Giver of peace. The Lord says, “*My peace I give unto you...*” (John 14:27). Unto who? Unto His believers, His followers! But we must come to Him with our problems and claim His promises. This is what we often fail to do. We look to people and ourselves instead of trusting in God. The trouble with us is that we often look to others when Jesus tells us, “*Come unto Me.*” He is the expert. He is the One who has the answers to all our problems in life! Men may fail us, but Jesus never fails. He is unchangeable.

We must also not forget His Word. The Lord Jesus says, “*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*” (Jn 14:27). The Apostle Paul had a thorn in his flesh. He went to God and prayed about it. The answer was “no”. And he went about praying about it. God said “no” again. The third time, he prayed about the same problem. All three times, the Lord said, “I am not taking your thorn away.” But God assured him: “*My grace is sufficient for thee*” (2 Cor 12:9).

How about you? This Chinese New Year, even as the world seeks for peace and blessings through means that are futile, will you ask your Heavenly Father to give you the peace that only He can give? If your heart is still heavy laden, give this year a fresh start by committing your troubles to God. Remember, He is the Giver of all good gifts. Seek Him now.

05 Feb 2006

Dearly beloved,

Greetings in the blessed name of our Lord Jesus Christ! I trust that you are doing well and enjoying the fullness of the Lord in every area of your life. As God's children, what a privilege we have in coming to His throne of grace freely! God cares about every detail of our lives and He wants us to put Him in the centre of it all. What blessed assurance we can have in knowing that our Heavenly Father hears us whenever we call upon Him.

This brings to mind a familiar hymn which we sing from time to time:

*Ere you left your room this morning,
Did you think to pray?
In the name of Christ, our Saviour,
Did you ask for loving favour,
As a shield today?
O, how praying rests the weary!
Prayer will change the night to day;
So when life seems dark and dreary,*

Don't forget to pray.

My friends, when was the last time you prayed earnestly before the Lord? Do you only pray on Sundays or before meals? There are some Christians who pray only when they are in trouble; when times are good, they conveniently forget about God and go about their daily activities. Let us not be like that.

The Bible tells us that we are to “*pray without ceasing*” (1 Thess 5:17) and that “*men ought always to pray, and not to faint*” (Luke 18:1). We should seize every opportunity to pray — whether waiting for the bus, having our lunch-break at work or even when we experience a sleepless night! Yes, God hears us when we call upon Him.

Pray, pray and pray

Prayer is telling our Heavenly Father all our needs. Since we are all needy creatures, prayer is a MUST for everyone. And if you're going to pray, there must be a relationship between God and you. Sin breaks our fellowship with God and defiles our lives. Sin defeats prayer. The Psalmist says: “*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me*” (Psa 66:18). So each time you pray, check that you are not harbouring any sin in your heart.

On the other hand, if you cease to pray, it is a sin. Samuel said: “*...God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you...*” (1 Sam 12:23).

John Wesley was a man of prayer. One day, he said to his friend, “If you will pray for five minutes aloud and let me listen to you pray, I will give you my beautiful horse.” Having heard that, his friend started praying. He prayed earnestly. He prayed hard. He

prayed aloud. Wesley listened to it all. And all of a sudden, after two minutes, the man stopped. He said, "Will you give me the saddle too?" That ended his concentrated prayer.

Clearly, God wants us to pray. He wants to answer our prayers. He wants us to keep on praying and to concentrate on doing so. We cannot live a Christian life without prayer.

Supporting others through prayer

As we pray, we mustn't go to Him only with our needs and expect Him to accede to all our prayer requests. We must also learn to thank God for His grace and to pray for others. James 5:16 says: "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*"

Do you also pray for fellow brethren and friends in need? Even the church needs your prayer support.

Prayer is a pillar of strength for the church! Without prayer, our church will be ineffective in our work for the Lord; we will not experience God's goodness and blessings. Do remember our church in your personal prayers during the week. I also encourage you to share in the Lord's work by attending the **weekly prayer meetings** every Tuesday at 8.15 pm. Let's unite our hearts in prayer for God's blessings on our church and His people.

Agape Prayer Fellowship — Interceding for one another

The Lord Jesus tells us in Luke 11:9: "...*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*" So let's keep on praying.

We thank God for another vital prayer ministry — the **Agape Prayer Fellowship**, which was set up in July 2004 — to bear one another's burdens through prayer, sharing and visitation. And many have experienced God's power through prayer! Thank God that after a year of earnest prayer, a member is now able to feed himself. An infant had her tubes removed and can now feed naturally. I'm sure those of you who have been attending the Agape meetings regularly can testify to the warm fellowship that you enjoy. Through this ministry, some members have also learned to pray more boldly. *Prayer Buddies* are encouraged to pray for others throughout the week. If you're able, join the Agape meetings every Thursday at 2.30 pm and be uplifted!

As Dns Mrs Patricia Lin from the Agape Prayer Fellowship shared: "When the church is stirred up in prayer, evident changes will be seen. Changes for the better will take place. *Spiritually*, we are healed because we bear no more grudges. *Mentally*, our minds are at peace; we have asked God to heal our hurt. *Physically*, we look better; we no longer look so angry."

My dear friends, what would the Lord think of you when He sees your prayer life? Do you pray for His wisdom and guidance in every aspect of your life — in your career, in your future plans, in the choices that you make? If not, ask God to cleanse you and recharge your life right now with the power of prayer!

12 Feb 2006

Dearly beloved,

Lately, there's been much talk in the world about Valentine's Day. With this much-celebrated occasion fast approaching, retailers are fast to cash in on "romantic" couples searching for modern expressions of love. The world sees Valentine's Day as a day of love, celebrated especially by couples. How about us, Christians? How should we view relationships? Whether you're married, planning to get married or single and still searching, what is God's instruction and plan for you?

Relationships can be challenging

Couples, whether married or not, face all kinds of challenges. It is like treading a path that has many unexpected turns and bends. In my years of counselling, I've seen couples who begin well in the early years, but falter along the way due to reasons ranging from mistrust and adultery to a fiery temper and differences in financial management...the list goes on. And sometimes, it could be as minor as different bathroom habits or forgetting to replenish household items that can spark off an intense argument, leading to a strained relationship.

In Ephesians 5, Paul highlights the importance of Spirit-controlled families. Having Christ in the centre of our lives is the key to happy, fulfilling relationships. When couples try to solve problems on their own, sometimes even engaging the help of non-Christian counsellors, they are still left with emptiness in their hearts — because they have not yielded to God's commands.

To be "filled with the Spirit" is a *deliberate* choice. When a Christian is filled with the Spirit, he can fully experience the goodness and blessings of God in all his relationships.

Building Spirit-filled relationships

To be filled with the Spirit means to turn away from any known sin. Is there any sin in you that is affecting your relationship with your spouse or partner? Have you been totally honest and sincere to each other? Are you hiding some dark secrets?

If we harbour any sin, we must quickly turn away from it and submit ourselves to God's Word. Colossians 3:16a says "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...*"

We must yield to the Holy Spirit. This means we must let God's Word speak to us and obey it. When we live Spirit-filled lives, these qualities will be seen in us:

a) Joyfulness

This reminds us of the fruit of the Spirit — "joy" (Gal 5:22 — "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law*"). Joyful Christians are full of praises for the Lord, "*singing and making melody*" in their hearts to Him (Eph 5:19b).

b) Thankfulness

Spirit-filled Christians remain in close contact with God even when things go wrong. They have thankful hearts – “*Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Eph 5:20). When we have a thankful heart, we’ll always praise God in every circumstance. Even when times are trying, can you still sing praises and thank the Lord?

c) Submissiveness

When we are under the control of the Holy Spirit, self is removed from the centre of our lives. We are able to look at others through the eyes of Jesus, resulting in a willingness to submit to one another. Ephesians 5:21 says, “*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*”

Challenge to wives

In Ephesians 5:22-24, Paul highlights the role of a Spirit-filled wife. “*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*” Likewise, Paul tells the husbands to love their wives because this is something husbands sometimes have difficulty doing. A Spirit-filled husband will truly love his wife with sacrificial love.

Wives are to assume a subordinate role in the home. It is not a matter of inequality, for God made everyone equal. It is a matter of management. When a wife accepts the proposal to marry, she thereby accepts the headship of her husband. She submits to her husband as the head of the house because God has appointed him to be the head of her home, just as Christ is the Head of the Church. A wife respects her husband’s leadership.

Challenge to husbands

Paul’s challenge to Christian husbands is to love their wives. Husbands are to make it a habit to love their wives. When was the last time you said “thank you” to your wife for looking after the family? Have you started taking things for granted?

In my nearly 40 years of marriage, I have always made it a point to thank my wife after each meal. We must show our appreciation and gratitude through our actions and words. Simple acts of kindness, such as giving your wife a good massage or simply serving her a glass of water, can do wonders to a relationship.

For couples who have been married for decades, there is a tendency to slip into complacency. Sometimes, we could be distracted by our children, our career, the Internet, or our hobbies that we soon begin to neglect the needs of our spouses.

The root of marital problems today is the failure of husbands to love their wives enough to meet their needs. When a husband really loves his wife, he will speak the language of sacrifice and self-giving. He will show his love through actions to meet his wife’s needs. He will help her to discover and grow her talents.

Husbands, do you know your wife well enough? Do you spend time talking to her? What are her strengths? What are her fears?

Let this Valentine's Day be a time to appreciate the spouse whom God has placed in your life. Take time to reflect on your relationship. If you have not been living a Spirit-filled life, seek the Lord for strength and wisdom. Confess your sins, submit to His will and ask Him to bless your relationship.

19 Feb 2006

Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”(Psalm 103:1)

Dearly beloved,

Welcome to the Lord’s house! Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. What joy we have to know that our Heavenly Father is “*merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy*” (Ps 103:8). This is a wonderful assurance to all believers, for in life, we are faced with ups and downs.

Sometimes, we’ve to fight battles with no solution in sight, with no allies by our side. But despite this, we’re responsible for our actions and reactions. We may feel drained and weary. Nonetheless, it is comforting to know that our loving Saviour knows the different situations and challenges that we face everyday!

However, if our hearts are cold towards God, we’ll feel alone and defeated when troubles beset us. During such trying times, do we pause and ask ourselves if we’ve been faithful to God? Have we been faithful in obeying His commandments? Have we caused hurt to others – intentionally or unintentionally – by our words, thoughts or actions?

Are you hurting?

The book of Lamentations speaks about sorrows and sufferings more than any book in the Bible. The prophet Jeremiah wrote this book when the nation was in great trouble. History tells us that a terrible event took place in 586 BC. The city of Jerusalem had been destroyed and the people were taken into captivity in Babylon.

Jeremiah’s heart was broken as he saw the temple destroyed. He was sorrowful because of Israel’s unfaithfulness. Jeremiah said, “*For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water...*” (Lam 1:16).

Jeremiah wept because he knew that Israel’s plight could have been avoided if the people had listened to him and repented. They had refused to heed his warning and continued worshipping other gods. Lamentations 3:22-24 says: “*It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.*” God is dependable! We can trust His words and His promises for He is “*the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him...*” (Deut 7:9). So if you’re hurting right now, come to the Lord in total obedience and submission.

God chastens when we disobey

How is God faithful to His people? He is faithful in chastening us when we disobey. Throughout the Old Testament, the Lord sent prophets to warn and rebuke His people for their disobedience. Each time, His people refused to listen and persisted in their sin. And because the Lord is faithful, He has to punish them.

God gives us many opportunities to repent but oftentimes, we're simply too set in our own ways to take heed. We often become too attached to our unfaithful ways to let go. And when a fellow Christian brother or sister offers spiritual advice, we feel offended. Well, God's Word tells us that He chastens those whom He loves. Therefore, we must not despise His chastening nor be despondent when God rebukes us (Heb 12:5-6).

The Lord knows that we need guidelines, so He gives us His Word to follow. And when we disobey God's instructions, He disciplines us to bring us back to the right track. It is comforting to know that although God chastens us when we disobey, He also promises us that His chastening will not consume us. His objective of chastening us is to teach us, so we must be thankful to Him.

God understands what you're going through

God is faithful. He never changes. He always keeps His promises. Hebrews 2:17-18 gives us a picture of His care for us. The Lord Jesus knows what it's like to be a helpless baby, a growing child, and an immature adolescent. He knows what it's like to be weary, hungry and thirsty. He knows what it's like to be despised and rejected, to be lied to and falsely accused. He also experienced physical suffering and death. Yet He remained without sin. The Lord Jesus is our High Priest who understands our trials, our fears, our disappointments and our needs in life (Heb 4:15).

Perhaps you may be bitter about some situation at the workplace that isn't working out the way you want. Perhaps you may be dealing with some tough problems in your family. Perhaps you could be at your wits' end about some difficult financial situation. Or perhaps there are some tough decisions that you've to make. Whatever our situations and trials, the Lord understands and sympathises with us. He is in heaven interceding for us. But what are we to do?

We are to come before the Lord with humble hearts and confess our sins. God is "*faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9). No, this is not the time for cover-ups or excuses for succumbing to temptation. This is the time for forgiveness and reconciliation. We need to confess our sins to God and admit that we are wrong.

Let us search our hearts right now and come humbly before God's "*throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*" (Heb 4:16). May the Lord bless you richly.

26 Feb 2006

Dearly beloved,

Welcome to the Lord's house! We especially welcome the new friends and visitors who have come to worship with us recently. Do stay for lunch fellowship after the Worship Service in the fellowship hall so that we can get to know you better.

By now, you would have noticed the theme for this year – *“Building Strong Foundations”* – displayed at the back of the sanctuary. We are already halfway through the series of messages expounding on our church Constitution. I pray that you have been blessed by the messages and, more importantly, developed a clearer understanding of what we believe – the very same doctrines that we believed in since Calvary B-P Church was founded in 1973.

Being rooted in the Word of God is so important; it allows God to speak to us, drawing us closer to Him as He guides us through every facet of our life. Psalm 119:105 teaches us that we need the Word of God all the time – in all circumstances and changes that we encounter in life. *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”*

God's Word is the most wonderful gift and providence from God to guide us along life's road. But, how well do you know the Scriptures? Do you come prepared every Sunday to receive God's Word?

God's Word as our Guide

God controls our lives and guides us daily. As Psalm 48:14 says, *“For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.”* He guides us in this life so we do not have to be afraid. The journey we are travelling is not an easy one. He wants us to keep to the path that He has planned for us. *“Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory”* (Psalm 73:24).

The Bible has the answers to how we should respond and behave in various situations. God's Word provides general and particular examples for us to learn and apply in our daily lives. When we read the Bible, we see how Jesus handled difficult situations. We see Him responding in love to words of hate and accusation. We see Him staying calm in the midst of turmoil. And we see Him sacrificing His life for the people who spat at Him. The answers are all in the Scriptures. All we have to do is to know the teachings well and to hide God's Word in our hearts so that it guides our thoughts and actions. This is how we show our love to God.

All of us have experienced times when we feel blue and our spirits are down. We may be faced with countless problems. Sometimes, we just turn to our close friends for advice and comfort. We seek their wisdom in dealing with life's challenges. But these are man-made solutions. We may feel good for a while, but we soon experience emptiness and loneliness all over again. 1 Peter 5:8 says, *“...The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”* We must be sober, watchful and prepared to meet his

every attack. We must give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to speak to us through God's Word and point out our sins as well as shortcomings. Then we should confess our sins and seek God's forgiveness and guidance.

The Bible helps us grow

So what happens to us when we feed upon God's Word? First, we begin to grow. Peter says, "*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby*" (1 Peter 2:2). The Bible teaches us about life – to help us develop a lifestyle that reflects the life of Christ.

In this church, we firmly believe in the importance of studying God's Word. This is why we have formed Bible Study groups, where like-minded Christians can gather to strengthen one another's faith. During our Sunday Service, we also set aside time to memorise Scripture verses. Our AWANA Club programme for children also has a strong curriculum in Scripture memory so that our children, too, can *build strong foundations* in their young lives with God's truth.

The simple truth is this: God has given His Word to us so that we can enjoy its spiritual riches and receive blessings in our lives.

As we come to worship our Almighty God week after week, let our church theme for the year – *Building Strong Foundations* – resonate in our minds. Let it remind us that we should stay rooted in the Word of God and not yield to temptation. The Bible is God's Word to you. So believe it, claim its promises and obey its commands.

05 Mar 06

“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name.” – Psalm 100:4

Dearly beloved,

It is a privilege for us to come into the Lord’s house each Sunday to worship Him. I’ve been blessed by the melodious songs of praise and adoration rendered by our various choirs and groups in recent weeks. From our little ones, who are still learning to read, to the parents in our midst and even the golden-age grandparents from the Hokkien Fellowship – what a joy it is to see Christians of all ages singing praises to our Great Redeemer!

Indeed, the various choirs and groups have spent precious time and effort preparing the song items with the aim of glorifying God and encouraging His people. And many of us in the congregation have been encouraged and blessed by the meaningful songs. Christians, God desires our praise. He is pleased when we come to worship Him with thankful hearts that bless His name. In Psalm 33, we read about how it is important for Christians to praise the Lord.

Praise God regardless of circumstances

“Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright” (Ps 33:1). To rejoice means to have joy, which is one of the great Christian virtues. Joy comes from God and dwells in those who have the Holy Spirit in them.

Although many Christians experience ups and downs in life, they can still rejoice. The Apostle Paul exhorted the Philippians: *“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil 4:4).* During this time, Paul was in prison and yet he was still joyful. His life of joy was not controlled by the circumstances around him; he was controlled by the Holy Spirit. Paul’s letter to the Philippians showed his attitude towards all circumstances. He prayed with joy. He rejoiced in his imprisonment because this had helped him to spread the gospel. He rejoiced because of his confidence in returning to Philippi.

Yes, Christians can still rejoice in the face of adversity! We praise God because of what He is and what He has done for us (Psalm 33:4-7). God has given us the Bible – the Word of God – and it tells us about His works. When we look at God’s promises and remember His faithfulness, we have every reason to praise Him and thank Him. Our God is a great God. He created the heavens (Genesis 1) and He controls the sea by the power of His Word (Mark 4:39). We worship a mighty God who deserves all praise, glory and honour!

Singing and making melody in our hearts

The Psalmist exhorts us to praise and sing unto the Lord Almighty. Psalm 33:2-3 says, *“Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto Him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto Him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise.”*

Praise surpasses itself in singing. Every time where there is revival in the church, there is much singing of praises to the Lord! Is revival happening in our church today? Are our hearts filled with gladness as we lift up our voices, singing praises to Him?

The Christians in the early church sang psalms and later, they wrote their own hymns. The individual Christian, filled with the Spirit, will desire to sing praises to God. As His children, we will always be able to give thanks. That's because in everything that goes on in our lives, we will find the blessings of God's guidance; His faithfulness in supplying all our needs; and His strength as we witness for Christ (Acts 1:8).

Dear friends, how about you? Are you "*singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*" (Eph 5:19)? As we enter the Lord's house each week, let our hearts be filled with praise and adoration for our Great Redeemer! May we echo the words of this majestic hymn and glorify God's Holy name, for He alone is worthy to be praised!

*The Lord is King!
Lift up, lift up thy voice –
Sing His praise, sing His praise!
All heav'n and earth before Him now rejoice –
Sing His praise, sing His praise!
From world to world the joy shall ring,
For He alone is God and King;
From sky to sky His banners fling –
Sing His praise, sing His praise!*

12 Mar 06

“Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.” – Psalm 33:8

Dearly beloved,

It is a privilege for us to come into the Lord’s house each Sunday to worship Him. I’ve been blessed by the melodious songs of praise and adoration rendered by our various choirs and groups in recent weeks. From our little ones, who are still learning to read, to the parents in our midst and even the golden-age grandparents from the Hokkien Fellowship – what a joy it is to see Christians of all ages singing praises to our Great Redeemer!

Indeed, the various choirs and groups have spent precious time and effort preparing the song items with the aim of glorifying God and encouraging His people. And many of us in the congregation have been encouraged and blessed by the meaningful songs. Christians, God desires our praise. He is pleased when we come to worship Him with thankful hearts that bless His name. In Psalm 33, we read about how it is important for Christians to praise the Lord.

It is good to be back in the house of the Lord again. I pray that all of us are here today because we want to worship Him; because we fear and adore Him. Last week, I shared with you from Psalm 33 – about how we should praise God with our voices because He is our Almighty God and Creator. Psalm 33:8-19 also tells us that we should fear the Lord. *“Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him”* (v8).

Let us ponder on these personal questions and answer them truthfully in our hearts: Are you living exemplary Christian lives at home and at your workplace or school? Do your colleagues or classmates know that you’re a Christian? Can they tell from your conduct? Have you been a good Christian model to your children? Do you manifest the fruit of the Spirit (*“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”* – Gal 5:22) in your thoughts and actions?

These are pertinent questions for all of us, Christians. In these days, where stress, hectic schedules and rising expectations can make our lives seem like a “pressure cooker”, it’s easy for us to tarnish our Christian testimony simply by our wrong choice of words or actions. We are to be shining lights for our Lord wherever we go. And this simply means we must fear the Lord.

You may ask, “Why should we fear the Lord?” Here are four reasons:

1) He is our Creator

“For He spake, and it was done: He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psa 33:9). The message is simple: Our God is a great and powerful God. He created us and everything under the heavens! John 1:3 says, *“All things were made by Him; and without Him was*

not any thing made that was made.” Yes, we are surrounded by His creation. All things – in heaven, in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers – were created by God and for His glory. We must honour and fear God, our Creator.

2) He is faithful to His Word

Psalm 33 tells us that “*the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations*” (v11). What God has planned will stand forever and no one can change that! Not even the most powerful person on earth or the circumstances that we’re in! And the assuring news to us is this: God’s plan is to bless all those who trust in Him (v12). So, take heart and realise that we come to the Lord’s house to worship the only true and living God – One who is faithful and who is very much involved in our lives today, as He was in the days of Moses and the apostles.

3) He knows all things

From heaven, God knows all that is going on in this world. He sees through our hearts. He knows our thoughts and motives – “*...He beholdeth all the sons of men...He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth...He considereth all their works*” (Psa 33:13-15). This means that we cannot hide anything from the Lord. His knowledge of us is perfect. He understands all about us. He knows our ups and downs; our joys and our sorrows. The God whom we worship is omniscient. He is wise and gracious. We should stand in awe of Him and fear Him for He is a great God.

However, there are some Christians who think they can easily hide secret thoughts in their minds; they think it is a safe hiding place. They allow their minds to roam freely as they think, imagine or fantasize about all kinds of things – thoughts of revenge, lust, hatred, jealousy and greed.

The truth is this: You cannot keep any secrets from God no matter how hard you try to hide them. Take heed. Numbers 32:23 says, “*...Be sure your sin will find you out.*” We are to be mindful of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst; we must fear and respect God by keeping our thoughts and actions pure and holy – “*...Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you...?*” (1 Cor 6:19).

4) He is the only Saviour

The psalmist also reminds us that the Lord is watching over His own people – “*Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy*” (Psa 33:18). He will save those who fear Him in their time of need and distress (v16-19). Therefore, we must fear Him. The people of Israel knew the Lord and they trusted in Him. They experienced His love and goodness. And they testified: “*Our soul waiteth for the Lord: He is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name*” (Psa 33:20-21).

Dear friends, even right now, God’s eye is “*upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy.*” Is your personal worship in church this morning God-centered? Have

you come before Him today with prepared hearts – hearts filled with adoration and praise for your Creator and Redeemer?

May our hearts echo the words of the psalmist: “*Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in Thee*” (Psa 33:21). We must claim this promise and rest in the assurance that just as we fear God, we know that He will see to our every need and protect us because we belong to Him!

Beloved, God wants us to fear Him and to love Him. Doing so helps us to achieve the Christ-centered life that is expected of every believer. He wants everyone to know about His love. To love and to fear God also means we have to tell others about Christ so that more can come to know Him as their Saviour and worship Him!

May you experience God’s abundant blessings and peace in your lives as you fear and honour Him.

19 Mar 06

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” – Hebrews 10:24-25

Dearly beloved,

Time flies and we’re fast approaching the end of the first quarter. Praise God for sustaining and blessing us through the various ministries and activities at Calvary B-P Church. It is a joy to see our church busy with various programmes and outreaches. 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, as well as for those of you who have come forward to give of your time and talents for the Lord. Let us continue to uphold one another in our daily prayers.

Calvary FOCUS Ministries

Praise God also for the start of a new initiative, Calvary FOCUS Ministries, which was launched last Saturday. **FOCUS** stands for *“Followers Of Christ United in Service.”* Calvary FOCUS Ministries is for the whole church. It is our desire to build strong, godly families, which are the foundation of a strong church. Led by Elder Lawrence Sim and a team of church members from various walks of life, this outreach aims to meet your needs with the following objectives:

- To help – families with problems
- To educate – address practical issues faced by Christians today
- To strengthen – build-up bonds/fellowship
- To counsel – those in trouble
- To care – home visits and encouragement

While some of the programmes planned may suit all ages, others may target specific groups (e.g. young parents, retirees, families, working adults, married couples, etc.). In other words, Calvary FOCUS Ministries is for you. It is my prayer that you will actively involve yourselves in this new ministry, benefit from it, and grow together as *“Followers Of Christ United in Service.”*

God cares about our lives

Living in this uncertain world, where retrenchments and financial crises do happen, it is not surprising that even Christians do sometimes worry about their jobs or whether they can provide for the family. Some may worry that the property market would decline further while others wonder when the next financial crisis would set in. There is nothing wrong in wanting to provide for our families, in making sure that we make ends meet and in making provisions so that our children can enjoy quality of life.

In fact, we should be responsible for the needs of our family. It is the right thing to do. In Matthew 6:19-34, God is concerned with how we live our lives in this world — our

ambitions, the use of money, possessions, food and clothing. He is concerned with all areas of our lives — be it private, public, religious or secular. We cannot separate these areas into water-tight compartments. Our main guiding principle is this: As Christians, in everything we do, we are to do it according to God's will.

Choose your treasure

In Matthew 6:32, the Lord says “*your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*” But He also tells us to be different from the people of the world. We cannot sit on the fence. We must choose between the two – “*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal*” (Matt 6:19-20).

So, what is Jesus saying when He tells us not to lay up treasures for ourselves on earth? There is no ban on possessions in themselves. The Bible never forbids the ownership of private property. We can own properties. There is nothing wrong with planning for the future and taking sensible steps for our own financial security. Similarly, there is nothing wrong in saving for a “rainy day.” In fact, many of us have probably bought various types of insurance policies for our loved ones, ensuring that they are well protected during times of illnesses or mishaps. And when we travel, many of us probably never fail to buy travel insurance.

The Bible praises the ant for storing in summer the food that it needs in winter (Prov 6:6). The Bible also declares that the believer who makes no provision for his family is worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim 5:8). So we see that having possessions, making provisions for the future, and enjoying the good things given to us by God are not included in the ban of earthly treasure storage.

What does God forbid?

What God forbids is the *selfish* accumulation of goods for oneself. He says “*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth...*” In short, Jesus forbids extravagant living. He forbids people to be hard-hearted, who have no feelings towards those in need. Such people only care for themselves. God also warns us to “*take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*” (Luke 12:15). A person who covets may end up like a miser who hoards or a materialist who just wants more.

What about you? God has blessed you with all the things you need in life. Do you make it a point to support the ministries of Christ with your time, money, talent and prayers? Do you find it hard to part with your money? Even when times are bad, do you just stop giving?

God tells us that “*it is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35). Your giving could be in the form of supporting missionaries or contributing towards our work in this church. And remember, all good gifts come from God (James 1:17). The promotion that you received, the joy of seeing your children grow up, the relief of having a roof over

your head, or even the good health and strength that you enjoy — all these should not be taken for granted. Some of you may not have all of these but God has blessed you in so many other ways. Some may not be rich but they are happy. Others may be struggling financially but they have a wonderful, supportive family who will stick together through thick and thin. Our circumstances may be different but we share the same faith and worship the same God.

Stop worrying

So, what does it mean to “*lay up treasures in heaven?*” It means to develop a Christ-like character and engage in activities with eternal values in view. This means occupying our thoughts and actions with activities like evangelising, helping out at the AWANA Club or Sunday School, singing in the choir, serving God with whatever abilities we have (arranging chairs, decorating the notice board, preparing drinks, folding the bulletins, etc.), attending Bible study classes, and praying for one another — or any other thing that pleases and glorifies Him!

Dearly beloved, we must put God first and let Him rule over all areas of our lives — home, marriage, family, profession, money, time and talents. Matthew 6:33 says, “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*”

Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. We cannot glorify God if we are constantly filled with doubts about His ability to take care of us. In other words, we cannot enjoy Him forever if we are constantly worrying. If we worry, we are not trusting; and if we trust, we are not worrying. So keep seeking God’s kingdom, and as you do, He will continually provide for your needs. Claim His promise today, “*casting all your care upon Him; for he careth for you*” (1 Pet 5:7).

26 Mar 06

“...Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.” – Mark 10:14

Dear beloved,

Praise God for the 25 children who received the Lord as their Saviour at the Watermelon Fest that was held last Saturday. Many of the children who came were from the nearby housing estates. It was a joyous morning — the church came alive with all the watermelon-themed decorations and games. Even the “watermelon” snacks and quizzes thrilled the children.

As this event was planned, I was encouraged to learn that our office staff had, on their own accord, gone out to the neighbourhood to distribute the flyers to children. Some had also spent many hours in the kitchen preparing special snacks to go with the watermelon theme. To all the event leaders and helpers who had given of their precious time and talents towards this evangelistic event, I thank the Lord for each of you and for your labour of love. Whether you were involved in decorating the place, leading the games, setting up equipments, preparing snacks or counselling the children, etc., the part you played made this evangelistic event possible. May the Lord continue to give you much joy as you serve Him faithfully. It is our prayer that these children will continue to join us at the Awana Club and Sunday School.

This recent evangelistic event also reminds us that we are all ambassadors for Christ — *“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). We should all be good witnesses for Him.

If you recall the early days, our church started off in the early 1970s with the children’s ministry. To reach out to the neighbourhood children, we ran tuition and Sunday School classes in the Taman Jurong estate. These children continued to join us when our church was eventually set up. From there, the Lord blessed our work and the numbers increased.

Today, the children’s ministry continues to be an important evangelistic channel in our church. We must never underestimate the power and influence of reaching out to the unsaved children. And this is just a start. From the children’s ministry, we have seen how unsaved parents can also be given the opportunity to hear the Word of God and be saved. A church that does not witness or reach out to lost souls will soon be a dead church. Witnessing is vital to a church if it wants to grow.

Witnessing — Every Christian’s Responsibility

1 Peter 2:9 says, *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”*

To *shew forth praises* means to tell others how we came to believe in Jesus as our personal Saviour. The most common error that Christians make is to rely solely on people who are in the fulltime ministry, such as pastors, preachers and missionaries, to do witnessing.

The early church regarded witnessing as *each individual's responsibility* and, as a result, the church grew and multiplied. How about us?

In Ezekiel 33:8-9, God told Ezekiel about the wickedness of the people and that it was his responsibility to warn them about the punishment they would face if they did not turn from their ways; failure to warn them would result in him being held accountable. Furthermore, James 4:17 says: "*Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*" Our blessing of receiving salvation makes us responsible to share it with others. *To do nothing is to sin.* God commands that we should evangelise (Matt 28:18-20). The Great Commission is mentioned five times in the New Testament — once in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and once in Acts 1. The Lord Jesus had already done His part by making salvation possible for those who believe in Him. It is now our responsibility to tell others the Good News!

Let's get busy

In our church, we have many channels of evangelism. These include the Hokkien Fellowship, where members can bring their unsaved parents and loved ones to church; the Awana Club, where unchurched children can hear the gospel and grow in the knowledge of Christ; Gospel Sundays (4th week), where we can invite unsaved friends to hear the good news, and so on. Our fellow brethren from the Mandarin Service are also active in reaching out to the old folks at Lentor Residence. We have also extended our work overseas with the setting up of new churches and outreaches. So, there are many opportunities for each of us to witness for the Lord and share the gospel.

God has given us the authority to witness. He promises to be with us as we go forth and spread the good news to the lost! While we serve and worship our Almighty God each week, let us not forget our heavy responsibility as *ambassadors for Christ*. Whether at our workplace, in school or at home, all of us who have received the Lord as our Saviour are ambassadors for Him to the unsaved world; we cannot escape from being one. Consider this: *Those around you only see the Gospel by how you live it. What are they seeing today?*

You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day,

By deeds that you do, by words that you say.

Men read what you write, whether faithless or true.

Say, what is the gospel according to you?

Let us resolve to be good ambassadors for Christ so that the world may see Christ in us

Yours lovingly in Christ,

Rev James Chan, Pastor

---The End---

