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01 Apr 07

*"To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our
ather, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (1 Thessalonians 3:13)*

As we go through this coming week leading to Good Friday and Easter, let's reflect prayerfully and gratefully on what Christ has done for each of us — His great love and sacrifice for us sinners, so lost and unworthy. How are we living our lives in response to all that Christ has done for us? Do we give Him first place in our lives, above all else? May the words of this hymn be our prayer as we remember Christ's sacrifice for us on the old rugged cross:

King of my life I crown Thee now -

Thine shall the glory be;

Lest I forget Thy thorn-crowned brow,

Lead me to Calvary.

Lest I forget Gethsemane;

Lest I forget Thine agony;

Lest I forget Thy love for me,

Lead me to Calvary.

There will be a *Good Friday Service* this coming week on *5 April (Thurs, Mandarin) / 6 April (Fri, English) at 8.15pm*. Please make an effort to spend this special evening together as a church body. We will partake of the Lord's Supper and consider Christ's work in saving us from God's wrath. And on Sunday (8 April), there will be an *Easter Sunrise Service (6.30am) at Jurong Hill*. Do come and worship our Risen Saviour early on Easter morning! Breakfast will be provided in church for everyone right after the Sunrise Service, after which, we have our *Easter Service at 10am (English) and 4pm (Mandarin)*. These Services are good opportunities for us to invite our unchurched and unsaved family, friends and colleagues.

Withstanding temptations

The Bible tells us of persecutions faced by the Christians in Thessalonica, who were Paul's spiritual children (1 Thess 3:6-13). Concerned about their well-being, Paul sent Timothy to encourage them to be faithful in the Lord. When Timothy returned, Paul was glad to hear

the good news that the believers in Thessalonica had remained faithful. He realised that his labour among them was not in vain. Paul knew that Satan would try to discourage and defeat the Christians during trying times (1 Thess 3:1-5).

Dear friends, the moment a person becomes a Christian, Satan begins to confront him/her with opposition. He will do all that he can to draw Christians away from God. *Satan attacks Christians at their weakest spot.* He would keep on attacking until they're defeated. If a Christian is experiencing financial problems, Satan would hit hard in that area. He would discourage his/her giving to God and going to Church.

Do these thoughts sound familiar? — "It's ok, I'm just doing this once and no one will know about it." "God, I've been faithful to you. Why haven't you blessed me?" Or "I've other commitments and I've no time to serve God." Sometimes, Christians find themselves succumbing to these temptations without realising they're being tempted. Unless a believer is exceedingly strong in the faith, he/she would easily succumb to these temptations. So what can we do about this?

We must have faith in God. It keeps our feet on solid ground when the enemy attacks! 1 John 5:4 says, *"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."* We need to establish our faith in the Word of God. It's for this reason that our church has published *Daily Manna* — daily devotions for reading through the Bible — to ground our members in God's Word. We must know that no matter how mature we may be in the faith, if we're not careful, we will fall! The Bible warns us, *"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"* (1 Cor 10:12).

When the Christian succumbs to Satan's attack, God immediately chastises him/her. Hebrews 12:5b says, *"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."* The word "chasten" does not mean punishment; it's a term used to describe the education and training of a child. The Bible views the trials of Christian life as spiritual discipline that could help us mature. Sometimes, God's chastening could come through His rebukes from the Bible or through circumstances we face.

Building the Church

Paul had certain desires for his sheep at Thessalonica. His desire was that they would remain faithful to Christ in the face of Satan's opposition. When he heard that the believers were standing firm for the Lord in spite of the persecutions and that their faith was growing, he was deeply encouraged. Paul also prayed for them — *"Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith"* (1 Thess 3:10).

In 1 Thessalonians 2:9, Paul said that he laboured night and day so he could provide for himself. In so doing, no one could accuse him of using his ministry for his own profit. The point is this: Paul worked day and night, and still had time to pray for the believers. He made three prayer requests for them:

a) Their faith might mature (1 Thess 3:10b)

The Thessalonian Christians had some deficiencies and doctrinal problems. They didn't understand the Second Coming of Christ. Some also wavered in their faith. Paul prayed that what was needed in their faith would be met. We can never reach the stage of perfection, but there's always room for adjustment and growth (Phil 3:13-14)

Here at Calvary, there are many growth opportunities and tools for you to strengthen your Christian life — whether it's through fellowship groups (such as the Youth Fellowship, Calvary FOCUS Ministries and Agape Prayer Fellowship), Bible study groups, prayer meetings, church camps/retreats or resources such as our library (Christian books, tapes & DVDs) and *Daily Manna* devotional book for your personal Quiet Time with God. Make use of these opportunities by getting involved and serving together.

b) Their love might increase and abound

"And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you" (1 Thess 3:12). Times of suffering can be times of selfishness. Some may shut themselves out and remain bitter about their lives. We need to show love and concern for one another during times of trials. Christian love should be shown to "all men" including our enemies. Do you have that kind of love toward those who have wronged you? Look around you. Have you encouraged a fellow Christian brother or sister? Have you said positive things about others?

c) Their lives may be blameless before God

"To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (1 Thess 3:13). When the Lord comes, how are you going to present yourselves before God?

May you be encouraged to persevere in your service for our Lord. Don't let discouragement or worldly priorities in life set you back. We must be ready to meet our Lord anytime!

08 Apr 07

"He is not here: for He is risen, as He said..." (Matthew 28:6)

Today is a joyous occasion as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ! Praise God for the Sunrise Service this morning, where our English and Mandarin congregations gathered as a church family to worship our risen Lord — One who gave His life so freely for us on the cross of Calvary. This is a significant event for us to commemorate because the resurrection of Christ is the most important doctrine in the Scriptures. It is the heart of Christianity. It is the foundation of the Church. And it is the link that unites all believers in Christ.

Paul affirmed "*And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins*" (1 Cor 15:17). Today, we can stand boldly in God's presence because Christ, our risen Lord, has redeemed us with His precious blood. We worship the true and living God. As Christians, we believe deep in our hearts that Jesus has risen from the dead. If Christ did not rise from the dead, there would be no Church, for the Holy Spirit came to form the Church as a result of Christ's resurrection. Every true believer is a living witness to the fact that Christ has risen from the dead!

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that Christ's resurrection is vitally connected with the work of salvation in our souls and is, therefore, of paramount importance. Romans 10:9 says, "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*"

Ephesians 2 tells us in what sense Christ has risen for us.

1. Before conversion — a life filled with sin

Before we were saved, we were dead. "*And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins*" (Eph 2:1). The Bible tells us that God made man in His own image. Man received more than life for his body. He received spiritual life; a life that enabled him to have fellowship with God. But despite God's warning, man — by his self-will and disobedience — broke that fellowship with God, and lost that spiritual life. Spiritually, he is dead and in need of resurrection and a new life. The fact that man is dead toward God can be traced to his trespasses and sins. In God's eyes, we're both rebels and failures! As a result, we were "dead" or alienated from the life of God before our conversion (Eph 4:18).

Ephesians 2:2 also tells us that we were enslaved to the world. The distractions and opinions of the world can sway a Christian. We are taught in Romans 12:2 — "*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed...*" We were enslaved by the devil — he always works in the hearts of people to disobey God. We were also enslaved to the flesh; this refers to our selfish desires and wicked thoughts. Some Christians may find themselves trapped in these desires. They can't get out because they're too entrenched in their sinful ways. In our fallen nature, we cannot stop committing sins. We are on the path of self-destruction.

Paul also says we were "*by nature the children of wrath, even as others*" (Eph 2:3b). Without Christ's saving grace, we're condemned and we're no better than others. Sin is an offence against the holiness of God. And if the sinner clings to his sins, he is a child of wrath and must know that he is under the judgement of God.

2. After conversion — a new-found life in Christ

But how marvellous is God's love! He has provided us with a plan of salvation. Christ has made all things new for us. He is the most compassionate, loving God and is "*rich in mercy*" (Eph 2:4). We were once dead, but now, we live because of our union with Christ. We have been made alive because of Christ's resurrection for us! Now, we're alive unto God, working for Him and growing in our spiritual life. This is the greatest transformation in our lives!

Beloved, even as we celebrate Easter today, reflect on this: Has there been any change in your life since you became a Christian? What have you done for our Lord Jesus Christ, Who suffered, bled and died to save you from your sins?

Praise the Lord that we are now creatures of the heavenly kingdom because of our union with our risen Christ. We have a new standard of values.

3. Fellowship with God

Ephesians 2:6 tells us that we're already made to sit with God in Christ — "*And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*" This means we can have fellowship with God. The heavenly places refer to a place of intimacy and revelation. It implies that now God speaks to us intimately as we read His Word. We can have a close relationship with Him.

Beloved, have you been raised with Christ? Are you currently busy serving Him with this new life He has given to you? Are you spreading the gospel to the lost souls around you — your classmates/colleagues, family members, neighbours and friends, whom Christ has specifically placed in your lives? How is your relationship with Him? Are you reading His Word daily, allowing God to speak to you? Are you obeying His Word and commandments? Are you living a life that's glorifying to God, or are you preoccupied with the cares of this world? Let's examine our hearts truthfully and make right with God today.

Christ has risen from the dead! And we must, as children of God, seek to do our very best to live a life that will bring glory and honour to our Almighty God. Amen!

15 Apr 07

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Timothy 1:12)

Praise God for the blessed time of worship we had last week at the Good Friday and Sunrise/Easter Services to commemorate Christ's death on the cross and His glorious resurrection! It was good to see so many of you. Truly, God is great and His grace is marvellous. We're so blessed to be called His children.

Praise God also for the music ministry of our Junior and Church Choirs from the English and Mandarin congregations, as well as Calvary Strings. Many of us have been much uplifted and edified through the songs that were presented in praise to our Great Saviour. We also appreciate and thank God for beloved brethren in our midst who laboured joyfully — the PA crew, ushers, interpreters, musicians, breakfast team, kitchen crew, Sunday School teachers, and many others behind the scenes. In everything, we give thanks to our Almighty God. All glory be to Him who reigns supreme!

We also rejoice in the Lord for the salvation of three precious souls at our Mandarin Gospel Rally two weeks ago. And through this gospel meeting, more than 50 new friends had the opportunity to hear the gospel. We pray that they, too, would accept Christ as their Saviour some day and experience a new life in Him.

Also, we praise God for the ministry of the AWANA Club that has brought many children in our neighbourhood and beyond to salvation and growth in the knowledge of Christ. AWANA stands for *Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed* (2 Tim 2:15) and its mission is to reach boys and girls with the gospel of Christ.

Two weeks ago, we celebrated the 16th anniversary of AWANA Club. It was a joyous time for everyone — the clubbers, leaders/helpers, and even the parents. They were treated to party snacks that were lovingly prepared by the AWANA leaders/helpers and we had a good time of fellowship. I want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to AWANA Club Commander Elder Foong Kon Yu and all our AWANA directors, leaders and helpers for their faithful service and dedication to this important ministry. Thank God for their labour of love every Saturday during the school term — leading in singing and games, sharing God's Word, preparing refreshments, guiding the clubbers in their handbooks, planning outings and gift exchanges, etc. — to make this a dynamic outreach. Without willing hands to do God's work, the AWANA Club cannot function effectively.

It's heartening to note that many of our AWANA clubbers come from non-Christian families and quite a number come from other churches. Each week, they learn about God's Word and, in the process, they learn good character values. We sow the seeds now so that the Word of God will be grounded in their hearts. Parents, if your children have not joined the AWANA Club, do encourage them to come. Don't miss out on the blessings! You'll be amazed at how God can work in your child's life through the AWANA Club.

Developing a spirit of gratitude

Christians, the fact that we're able to serve God is by His grace. 1 Timothy 1:12-17 tells us that we should have a proper attitude when serving our Lord. We should have a spirit of gratitude. Paul was thankful to God for allowing him to be His servant (1 Tim 1:12a). As we look at ourselves, we should ask: "Who are we that God should select us into His service?" When we have this spirit of humility and gratitude, we begin to see things that are true in us.

First, we recognise the source of our calling. Paul says, "*...He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry*" (1 Tim 1:12). It is the Lord who calls us — not the church or a certain spiritual leader. We are God's servants not because we are theologically trained or better than others. God alone is the Source of our calling and that eliminates any pride of achievement or human performance.

Second, the character of God makes it all possible. Two words — *grace* and *mercy* — emphasise God's character with regard to our calling into His ministry. Paul realises that he does not deserve to be a minister, and that God is holding back what he deserves to show His longsuffering.

Who was Paul? He was "*a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious*" (1 Tim 1:13). He deserved punishment. It was by God's mercy that he wasn't punished for his wrongdoing. And yet God called him to full-time service. This doesn't mean that he bore no responsibility for his persecution of the Church. Nor does it mean that ignorance is an excuse for sin. What it means is that there's a difference between a wilful sin and a sin of ignorance.

The fact is this: God has called us by His *mercy* and *grace* to serve Him. And He has given us all the abilities that are needed for His service.

All glory be to God

He is the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God; to Him be honour and glory for ever and ever (1 Tim 1:17). It's easy to claim credit or assume the blessings of our ministry are the result of our good leadership. But the basis of church growth is God's sovereignty, and not our talent. The Bible tells us that it is God who gives the increase (1 Cor 3:6-7).

Therefore, as we serve God, let's do so with a spirit of gratitude in our hearts. Let's serve Him because we want to glorify Him — not ourselves, not the church, not the people. Will you do so today?

22 Apr 07

Welcome to the Lord's house! We especially welcome the new friends and visitors in our midst. Do stay back after the Worship Service for our monthly fellowship lunch so we can get to know you better. We thank God for dedicated Christian brothers and sisters in our midst who faithfully organise the fellowship lunch so well. We appreciate their labour of love and service for the Lord in planning these fellowship meals, bringing us closer together as a church family.

I was also happy when my wife, Alice, shared that 8 children accepted Christ as their Saviour at Sunday School (English) last week. Praise God for the work that He is doing here at Calvary. Truly, all these are blessings from our Sovereign Lord! We thank God for the privilege to be a lighthouse for Him to the lost — both young and old.

As we celebrated Easter last weekend, we reflected upon the death and glorious resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Indeed, there's hope for us in Christ. It's good to remember our Lord's death on the cross and His resurrection. But what's also important for us to note is what happens after that? What has God instructed us to do?

If you read the book of Acts, you'll find that it begins with the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord was taken up from the believers into heaven, and then the message came to the Church: *"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus...shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:11). It's interesting to note that everything the Church does to the glory of God is based on the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. This helps us to understand why Luke started with the ascension of Christ. How does the ascension of Christ relate to the ministry of the Church, especially to our prayer ministry?

The Church's authority

In Matthew 28, we have a record of the ascension of Christ. The Lord Jesus was about to return to the Father. He said, *"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."* (Matt 28:18-20).

Because our Lord Jesus has gone back to heaven, the Church today has God's power or authority. Although our Lord Jesus Christ is no longer on earth He is in heaven. However, He is working today on earth through the Church. And we are members of that Church serving Him here on earth.

So, what authority do we have to tell people that if they don't have Jesus in their hearts, they're condemned? What authority do we have to tell people concerning the things of God?

Our authority comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. If Jesus were still on earth, His ministry would be limited. But because He has gone to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, you and I can reach out to the unsaved. Therefore, the Church's authority is based on the ascension of Jesus Christ.

The Church's ministry

Mark 16:19–20 says, *“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”*

Therefore, we have a message for the world: the message of the gospel — Christ died for the sins of the world, and that sinners can be saved by trusting Him as their Saviour. This is the message that the early Christians also proclaimed. Wherever they went, the Lord worked with them (Mark 16:20).

The Church's energy

In Luke 24:49 we see that the early Christians were waiting for the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church's energy — the power of the Holy Spirit — comes because of the ascension of Christ. The book of Acts begins with the disciples waiting for the Spirit to come, and they were waiting in **PRAYER**.

Acts 1 tells us that the disciples met together in prayer (v. 14). Our Lord was in heaven and the disciples were on earth. So what's the link between heaven and earth? Prayer! When a Christian prays, he is claiming the authority of Christ. When a Christian prays, he is strong in God's ministry. When a Christian prays, he is receiving divine energy!

Beloved, when was the last time you prayed for the Church? Apart from your daily petitions regarding the needs of your life and your loved ones, did you remember to pray for the Church — for her workers and ministries? We must come together to pray because when we pray, God does something in and through us! Our weekly prayer meeting is held so that fellow believers can come together to pray for the Church and those in need.

In the book of Acts, when the Church prayed, 3,000 souls were saved. When the Church prayed, God gave the believers boldness, love, power and grace. When the Church prayed, God expanded the witness of the Church. So, something happens when the Church prays!

We depend on the source of prayer to continue our work here. When our Lord returns, what will you say to Him? As you reflect on your life here on earth, have you done enough for Him? Have you done your best to serve Him? There's so much to be done. And each of us must do our part so that others will hear the good news of salvation and fellow believers' faith will be strengthened.

29 Apr 07

"Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; shew forth His salvation from day to day"(Psalm 96:2)

A very warm greeting to you on this Lord's Day! There's so much we can praise God for in our lives. Last Sunday, I was at Lentor Residence with our Mandarin brethren to baptise a 76-year old lady. Praise God for this joyous occasion, where about a dozen of her family members came to witness her baptism, and of these, only one of them is a believer. We pray that through the testimony of this elderly lady, the rest of her loved ones/children will also come to know Christ. Thank God also for our Mandarin brethren who faithfully support the Lentor ministry each Sunday, conducting the Worship Service for the residents.

Praise God also for the good attendance at last week's Gospel Sunday Worship Service (English) and for the Annual Congregational Meeting last evening, where we discussed the affairs of our church as a family.

As you may know, our church here at Calvary was formed in 1973 to be a lighthouse in Taman Jurong and the surrounding estates. We're also to be a beacon of light to those beyond our shores — to those who do not know Christ. Today, in 2007, this mission of evangelism still remains. It has not changed. This is why we're here and this is why you must do your part as members of Calvary B-P Church to fulfil the Great Commission commanded by our Lord, Jesus Christ, before He ascended into heaven.

Because of what we have

In the Bible (2 Kings 7), we read of the story of the four lepers who wanted to save a starving city by telling them where they could get food. The lepers had all they needed to keep them alive. Before, they had been starving and, by God's grace, they received food in abundance. Before, they were hopeless and discouraged, but now, they are glad and hopeful. Could they keep silent then about these good tidings they've received? In 2 Kings 7:9a, the lepers said to one another, *"...We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace..."*

"Go and tell others!" is the message that Christ has given to His Church. We have received His salvation so rich and free, and we're to share this good news with others. Sometimes, Christians can get complacent, especially when things are going well for them. They have no lack of food and aspirations in life, and they are just contented. Worshipping or even serving God each week can become routine and mechanical if we lose the focus of why we're doing what we do each week.

We serve God in our various capacities with the ultimate aim of bringing more lost souls to Christ. So, if you're a Sunday School teacher, or a helper in the AWANA Club, or a PA crew member, or helping with kitchen duty and so on, you're an encouragement to those around you. Through your service, the church can run its activities. Through your service, it can function well.

When we think of our salvation, we have God's joy, peace and comfort in our hearts. We have heaven with all its glory! And best of all, we have our wonderful Saviour Himself — Jesus Christ, who is the Comforter in times of sorrow, our Guide in darkness, and our Strength and Hope in death. Surely, all these blessings we experience are worth sharing about with others around us! What should we do? Should we keep this good news to ourselves?

Because of what they need

Look around you in your neighbourhood, your school, your office, at the market place, on the MRT, and you'll see so many people who do not know Christ. Think of your friends, colleagues or closer home, your family members. We've heard the "Glad Tidings" and tasted the Bread of Life. But, what about those whom God has placed in our lives for a purpose?

Here at Calvary, we have Worship Services/sermons translated in various languages on Sundays — English (10am); Hokkien (11:30am); Filipino/Bahasa Indonesia (11:30am) and Mandarin/Cantonese (4pm). We have fellowship meetings for various groups/ages as well as Gospel meetings. These are avenues for us to reach out to the unsaved.

Because there's danger if we fail

The lepers said, "...If we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us..." (2 Kings 7:9b). They did not dare to tarry. They did not dare to withhold the "Glad Tidings." If they did, some kind of punishment would come upon them. And without hesitation, they went at once to tell the others.

Beloved, the Gospel has come to us, and we're saved. But we cannot simply stand still. The secret to growth in our Christian life is activity. If we lay low and do nothing for Christ, we'll grow weaker and weaker until at last, our interest for Christ fades away. Our heart will start to grow cold as we become distracted by our other activities in life.

One of the pre-requisites for living a Christian life is service. We must work for Christ. We've been saved to serve! There are some amongst us who have loved ones in their homes who do not know Christ, and yet they're afraid to say a word to them. How about the little ones? Are we helping to sow the Gospel seed while they're young? You'll be amazed at how God can work through the lives of the children to bring even more to Christ. This is why our Children's ministry is an important area of service. Praise God for those of you who are helping out in this ministry. How about the missionaries beyond our shores? Do you pray for them?

It's not too late to tell others about Christ. And it's not too late to serve God. Will you do so today?

06 May 07

"...Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come"(Revelation 4:8)

Another week has passed. As we gather to worship our true and living God, we thank Him for His bountiful blessings upon each of us and our families. If you're experiencing difficulties or setbacks in your life, do not be disheartened. We can take comfort in knowing that our God is all powerful and all knowing. He is in control over every aspect of our lives.

God is Sovereign

We see God on His throne in Revelation 4. This should cause us to realise that the God whom we worship is a Sovereign God! It means you'll never find Him disturbed, worried or frustrated. Everything is under His control. Nothing catches Him by surprise. It also means that He does what He pleases, but He also knows that what He chooses to do is always right.

God also possesses unlimited power! The living creatures call Him "*Lord God Almighty*" (Rev 4:8). This name is used six times in Revelation. Probably no other book gives us such a clear picture of our Sovereign God as the book of Revelation. He is sovereign because He also possesses the ability to be the Creator.

Friends, do you allow God to reign sovereign in your lives, or do you carry on doing your own things your way?

God is Holy

We not only worship a Sovereign God, but also a Holy God. Because God is pure, He cannot stand sin. I John 1:5 says, "*...God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.*" No sin, no weakness and no fault of any kind can be found in Him for He is pure. This is why our Lord Jesus died on the cross — to uphold His holiness and yet to reveal His love.

We are not saved by the love of God; we are saved by the grace of God. We see the love of God in that He has paid the price for our sin in order to save us. The only One who could save us is the Lamb of God. He was "*slain from the foundation of the world*" (Rev 13:8).

God is Eternal

In Revelation 4, we also learn that God is eternal. "*...Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come*" (Rev 4:8). Unlike us, God exists forever. He has no beginning because He always was. This is something that we cannot comprehend. Our God also has no end. He is the beginning and the end (Rev 1:8). When we're in touch with God, we're in touch with eternity!

God is Faithful

“And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald” (Rev 4:3). We are told in Revelation that a rainbow surrounded the throne of God. I believe that you remember that the rainbow in Genesis 9 indicates the faithfulness and grace of God. The Lord promised He would never again destroy the earth with a flood. When we see the rainbow in the clouds, we're reminded of this promise.

However, the earth will be judged again and this time, it will be by fire. 2 Peter 3:10-12 says, *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. ... Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”*

The rainbow and the throne speak of the promise of God.

Have you been faithful to God?

Throughout the scriptures, we're reminded of God's great faithfulness. In the Old Testament, we see God's continual care for His children, Israel. Despite their unfaithfulness, He kept His promise to bless them as His people. In the New Testament, we see our Lord's faithfulness in His promises toward us. He promises that He will never leave us or forsake us (Heb 13:5). He will never allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to resist (1 Cor 10:13). When we fail, we have the assurance that *“if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).

Beloved, our Lord God is worthy of all our worship and praise. For this reason, we should not neglect to give Him the honour and glory which He rightly deserves. When we worship, we must remember that the God we serve is the Almighty God. We cannot approach Him were it not for the blood of Christ, whose sacrifice has enabled us to have eternal life with Him in heaven. Because God is faithful, He has promised all eternal blessings in heaven. And He will keep His Word.

With this realisation, let us come and worship Him in awe as the Lord of our lives!

13 May 07

Greeting in the name of our Lord! Today, we celebrate Mother's Day. Some of you may be doing something special to celebrate the occasion, giving your mother / wife a treat or gift to show your appreciation for her efforts in taking care of the family. That's good, but let's also take this time to reflect on ourselves

And as you sit in the pews on this Lord's day, there are so many unbelievers who are going about their own activities, living their own lives. The greatest contrast between unbelievers and believers in this world is seen in their lifestyles. If the Christian is to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, then his/her lifestyle must be different from that of the world. Christ said to His disciples: *"Ye are the salt of the earth...Ye are the light of the world...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matt 5:13-16).

Our Lord wants our good works to be seen by others. He challenges us to live above the average — that is, to be better than others. Jesus says, *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. ... Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"* (Matt 5:43, 44, 48).

Yes, we must strive to be different from others and to live our lives above others. The Bible tells us that these are the areas of our lives where we should live above average:

Be above-average in your work

A Christian ought to rise above the average in his work-life. A Christian ought to be more diligent, faithful, honest and conscientious in his work. He should not follow the trends of the world which seek to work below average. At the workplace, a Christian should be a shining light for Christ. This means that we should set good examples in terms of our attitudes and dealings with fellow colleagues. Being Christians, we ought to improve the quality and quantity of our work. We ought to be more diligent, faithful, honest, considerate, cooperative and helpful than those who do not know Christ. Even in the midst of office politics, we must stand firm on our Christian principles.

The Apostle Paul made a special appeal to both workers and bosses to do their best in Colossians 3:22-25, 4:17. To the workers, he said that they are to work hard, not just when the boss is watching, but at all times. *"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men"* (Col 3:23). To the employers, he said they ought to be honest and just. They are to be considerate toward their employees at all times, remembering that God is their Master (Col 4:1).

So every Christian should look at his profession as to the Lord. Our Christian testimonies should shine among men. How are you faring? Do you find yourself in situations where your Christian testimony is challenged? Perhaps someone has provoked you or you may feel that

you have been treated unfairly at the workplace. Take comfort in knowing that God is with us, and we need to do our best at work so that others may see Christ in us.

Be above-average in your morals

If we want to serve the Lord, our lifestyles must be different from others. In today's world, morals have changed as people lead more permissive lifestyles. The world's slogan is this: "Since everybody's doing it, it's ok to do it." But God wants us to be different and to live a life above the average standard. He wants us to live a pure life if we are to serve Him. It's not easy to live a pure and holy life in the midst of a sinful and corrupt world. However, God is faithful and He provides the power. He enables us to lead a life of purity.

In the Bible, there are certain passages that tell us the areas in our lives where we are to be pure:

1) We're to be pure in Spirit

(2 Cor 7:1 "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.")

2) We're to be pure in the body

(1 Thess 4:3-5 "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication...")

3) We're to be pure in our thoughts

(2 Cor 10:4-5 "...Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ...")

4) We're to be pure in speech

(Eph 4:29 "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.")

5) We're to be pure in our dealings with others

(Eph 4:25-28 "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath...")

Yes, we must live above others. Matthew 5:16 says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Be above-average in your marriage

To those of you who are married, we must rise above the average in our marriage. In fact, the Bible places great emphasis on family life. Paul says that we must select elders and deacons who know how to rule their families and children (1 Tim 3:4, 5, 12). If a leader can't take care of his family, how can he take care of the church?

Couples should improve on the following to build a good marriage:

1. Continue to build up your relationship together by being loving, caring and patient.
2. Communicate well with each other.
3. Resolve conflicts constructively.

How about you? You may say, "I'm just average. How can I live above average?" Ask the Lord to help you — He is our strength! When we walk close to Him in prayer and in reading His Word, He gives us strength and guidance.

God will lift us up above the average.

20 May 07

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42)

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As you sit in your pews this morning, how many of you actually know the person sitting next to you or in front of you? Do you make the effort to smile and greet the person? Some of us may need more time to warm up to someone while others open up easily. Whatever our differences, we have one thing in common: we're all worshipping the true and living God. The Bible teaches us that believers should unite together as one in the Spirit.

In Acts 2:42, we learn of the 3,000 converts on the day of Pentecost — after being baptised and joined in Christian fellowship. Acts 2:42 says, "*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*"

Here, at Calvary, we've specially provided for various fellowship groups to cater to the needs of our members. For example, we have the AWANA Club for our children, Youth Fellowship, FOCUS Ministries (English), Agape Prayer Fellowship, various Bible Study groups, Maids' Fellowship and Hokkien Fellowship. Likewise, our Mandarin congregation also has various junior, youth and adult fellowship groups so that members of all ages can grow together in Christ. Are you presently participating in any of these activities? If yes, praise the Lord! If not, what's hindering you?

Loving one another

Having fellowship with one another shows that we fear God (Acts 2:43a). God loves us with sacrificial love. He wants us to show love to others as how He has shown His love to us. Our Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*" (John 13:34-35).

The disciples did what their Master said — "*And all that believed were together, and had all things common*" (Acts 2:44). Their relationship was warm. In every church, there are all kinds of Christians. Some may think that it's enough just to worship God on Sundays and they would leave hurriedly after the Worship Service. Others may be withdrawn and seldom talk. But God wants us to have the kind of fellowship with our fellow Christian brothers and sisters that will strengthen our faith.

What all of us need is the love and affection of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Through Christian fellowship, we can learn to love one another and achieve our togetherness in Christ — as a unified body.

Caring for one another

True fellowship also involves caring. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he compared individual believers to parts of the human body and expressed his desire. He said, "*That*

there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor 12:25-26).

Caring also includes activities like praying for one another, visiting the lonely, ministering to the sick and comforting the bereaved, just like our Agape Prayer Fellowship and visitation ministries seek to do. Some of you may have benefited from the love and care showered by members of our church here at Calvary in times of distress or sadness. You feel supported in prayer and encouraged. You are not alone. Through prayer and practical ways of showing our love and care for fellow brethren, we help to lessen the burdens of others and increase their joy. You, too, can experience such joy in Christian fellowship as the believers in Acts 2 did!

Communicating

True fellowship also involves the verbal communication of spiritual truth. We hear the Word of God. We study the Word of God. We share the Word of God. Through such activities, believers can grow in the Lord. We can learn to apply biblical teachings into our daily lives. This is why we have groups such as the Adult Sunday School, FOCUS Ministries and Bible Study. The early Christians did it. *"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship" (Acts 2:42).*

We need each other

The Lord says, *"It is not good that the man should be alone..." (Gen 2:18)*. This saying extends far beyond the need for a marriage help meet. We need Christian friends that will help us in our Christian growth. The Lord Jesus says, *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt 18:20)*. We also should not forsake *"the assembling of ourselves together..." (Heb 10:25)*.

We should continue to have fellowship with believers. In so doing, we grow in Christ and encourage others to grow. Attending church activities takes effort, but it takes a willing heart and a disciplined spirit to do what is pleasing to God. We may be bogged down by our "other priorities" in life and we have little time left for ourselves. But we need to ask ourselves these questions: Have we put God first in our lives? Do we strive to do what's pleasing to Him? If you would like to know more about joining a fellowship group or getting involved in a church ministry, do approach any of our Session members or the Church Office staff and we'll be happy to tell you more.

May you experience the joy of growing together in God's family!

27 May 07

"And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut 6:5)

Our Family Bible Camp is fast approaching! Praise the Lord that some of you managed to apply for leave after some deliberation and adjustments to your work schedules. We thank God that so many of you have signed up! There's much we can look forward to at our Bible Camp. The camp committee members are hard at work planning all the details and logistics — we thank God for each one of them and for their cheerful service. This camp is a different camp; it's a church camp. It provides the wonderful opportunity for us to come together as a church family from our English and Mandarin congregations. We can look forward to spending quiet moments with our awesome God, drawing strength from His Holy Word, and enjoying warm fellowship with our fellow brethren.

You may sometimes find yourselves simply too busy with your daily commitments — your schedules are packed and your 'to-do' list seems endless. In such situations, you may even find it a challenge to read God's Word. Well, no matter what your situation is and no matter how busy you may be, do remember to always seek the Lord. Put Him first in your life. Know the scriptures and the will of God, and you'll not allow seeds of discord, discouragement and defeat to ruin your Christian life.

What's the message we must proclaim?

One of the most important things that we must do is to share the Gospel with others and to lead souls to Christ. Isaiah 53 tells us that Christ came to die for our sins (v1, 5 & 6). Christ, our Saviour, died willingly. He died submissively (v12). Christ's ultimate purpose was to pay the price of sin's debt for all who would trust Him.

Even long-time Christians need to be reminded of the Gospel of Christ and His gift of salvation to all who believe in Him. It's easy to be complacent and take our salvation for granted. It is by God's grace that we've been saved and now, we must share this good news with others. Have you done so, dear friends?

What does God offer?

Isaiah 55:1 says, "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters...*" This invitation is extended to all! Isaiah 55:1b - "*... come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*" We've to work hard to have food on our tables, but this only meets our physical needs. What God offers us is beyond our physical needs. He offers His Son to save us. If you have Christ in the centre of your life, you have all these things. He will supply all your needs for your soul.

Perhaps some of you are searching for answers to your problems and frustrations in your life but you can't seem to find them. All of us want to experience peace and happiness in our lives. I'm sure none of us wants to feel depressed or defeated all the time. Beloved, come to

Christ for He says, *"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full"* (John 15:11).

Joy comes from a consistent relationship with Christ. If we keep close to Him and walk with Him daily, He will keep us up, no matter what our circumstances may be. Dear friends, what is it that you need? If it's love that you want to experience, Jesus says, *"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you"* (John 15:12). Is it wisdom that you need? Come to Christ for the Bible says, *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God..."* (James 1:5). Or is it companionship that you long for? Come to Christ for He says, *"...Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen"* (Matt 28:20).

Come and receive God's offer

This is why we must seek our Lord and yearn for His forgiveness (Isa 55:6). We must call upon His name while there is the opportunity to do so; we mustn't delay! The day of salvation will not last forever and when it has passed, it will be too late to call upon God for mercy. If you have unsaved loved ones, think of them; think of their salvation. Have you brought them to Christ? Have you shared with them the Gospel?

As for believers, we're commanded to *"...seek those things which are above..."* (Col 3:1). We mustn't be caught up with worldly distractions and lose sight of "things above." Do you sometimes find yourselves thinking only of earthly goals? Do spiritual thoughts fill your minds? Do you have this burning desire to serve God and lead a life that's honouring to Him? Our actions and decisions should reflect heavenly priorities. Jesus says, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matt 6:33).

Are you setting your priorities right? Seek the Lord today and love Him with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might (Deut 6:5).

03 Jun 07

"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" - Psalm 27:1

Greetings in the blessed name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Thank you for your prayers during our recent travel to Canada. My wife, Alice, and I have been praying for the various ministries at Calvary, and also for you – our fellow brethren in the church family – that your joy in the Lord may be full as you grow in Him. We praise God for a blessed time of fellowship with the brethren at Vancouver B-P Church (VBPC), where I ministered from the pulpit for two Sundays. We had a restful time and are grateful for the warm hospitality shown to us by the VBPC members. It was also a joy for us to meet with fellow Calvinians on vacation, brother Chuan Yu, Karen and the children, who worshipped at VBPC last week. It's good to be back.

I pray that you've been keeping up with your Bible-reading with *Daily Manna*. As someone once said, "A well-read Bible is the sign of a well-fed soul." It's never too late to start reading the Bible daily. Begin your day meditating on God's Word. No matter how busy or difficult your week has been, let's remember God's goodness towards each of us and honour Him. He is always faithful and guides us along the way.

Perhaps some of you may be facing certain challenges or crises in your life. I pray, too, that you will look beyond the circumstances that you're in and look up to our Lord Almighty, our Heavenly Father, Who is in control of everything.

In the scriptures, we're reminded of how David did not let fear cripple him. He was the king of Israel. He had killed Goliath of the Philistines. He had led Israel to great heights in prosperity. While he had accomplished all that, he also had to overcome many of the fears that surrounded him. For those of you who have been following the *DAILY MANNA* Bible-reading programme, you would have read about the experiences of David and how he cried out to our Lord in times of sadness and danger. For example, in Psalm 27, David gave us an inside look at how he dealt with fear in his life.

Do you have fears in your life? It could be concerns regarding your children's education, finding a life partner, job security, health issues, and so on. Some of you might even be fearful of your bosses at the workplace. Perhaps you spend sleepless nights worrying about how you would get by each day. Fear makes our world smaller. When it attacks in a particular area of our lives, we tend to pull back and retreat, rather than meet it head-on.

The declaration of trust

As you can see in Psalm 27, there are two contrasting parts: In Psalm 27:1-6, David expresses his confidence and trust in the Lord. Verse 1 says, "*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*" In the second section (Psa 27:7-14), the mood changes from the path of faith to the path of fear. In these verses, we find a prayer for strength, as David admits his weakness and his need to depend on the Lord. He concludes with a reminder to wait on the Lord (Psa 27:14

- *"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord"*).

Dealing with fear

David looks through his life of intimidation by King Saul. It was a terrible experience! Saul's army was out to get him. The enemies really pursued him and he had no place to hide. Even his parents could not protect him and had turned their backs on him (v10). The circumstances in David's life are enough to cause anyone to tremble and be afraid. What could David do?

He says, "The Lord is my light and my salvation (1 Sam 23:26,27); the Lord is the strength of my life (Psa 27:1)...in this will I be confident (Psa 27:3)." Despite all the fear and intimidation from Saul and rejection from his family, David was able to feel secure because he put his trust in the Lord.

In Psalm 27:4-6, David portrays his fellowship with God. It's like living in the dwelling place of God. Though he could not be there literally, his heart, soul and mind were there with the Lord. David says, *"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple."*

Prayer for support

In Psalm 27:7-9, David expresses his feelings of fear and desperation in prayer. You see, there's no half-heartedness in his petitions. He isn't thinking about other options to solve his problems. His words possess a boldness and fervency of one who isn't afraid to put his trust in God. He has full confidence in the Lord. In Psalm 27:7-13, we see his absolute faith in God:

- *"Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies."* (v11)
- *"Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty."* (v12)
- *"...I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."* (v13)

David recognised that there was nothing he could do to solve this problem with Saul. He could only turn to the Lord and *"wait on the Lord"* (v14).

As we step out of David's world back to our world, let's not forget to bring with us some practical advice given by David concerning fear. Admit that you have fears. Tell them to our Lord. Commit all your fears and anxieties to Him, as David did. Our Saviour says, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matt 11:28). Don't allow your fears to settle in your hearts. As you release them, resist them. Once you've

committed them to the Lord, don't open the door to let them come in. And don't let those fears chase you away from the solid ground of God's protection.

Heed David's advice: *"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord"* (Psa 27:14).

10 Jun 07

That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death (Philippians 3:10)

Welcome to the Lord's house! Today, we especially welcome Rev Dr Tim Okman Ki of Hope B-P Church, Adelaide, Australia, who will be ministering to us from God's Word in the coming weeks and at our Family Bible Camp. Praise the Lord that Rev Tim is able to join us again this year and this time, our Mandarin brethren can also look forward to hearing God's Word from him at the camp. We look forward to a blessed time together.

After a week of labour and activities, it's good to give thanks to God for it is He who has granted us sustenance and strength in all that we do. We have the comfort in knowing that we worship an almighty God. We must all seek to live a life that is pleasing to Him — through our thoughts and our actions.

The highest goal for a Christian is to know Christ better and deeper. This is why we organise our Family Bible Camp each year. In line with our church theme for the year — *"Grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet 3:18) — we want to study and meditate on God's Word as a church family.

Philippians 3:10 says, *"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."* Paul wanted to know more about Christ. He wanted to know more about Christ's power. He wanted to know of Christ's passion.

A better knowledge of Christ's Person

Paul felt that the greatest thing that had happened to him was to know Christ. He had changed his life from being a persecutor to becoming a preacher of Christ. Paul wasn't just a Pharisee; he was a zealous Pharisee. His zeal was seen in the fact that he was a persecutor of the Church. He was so zealous for the Law that he killed those who disagreed. But, the day came when Paul met the Lord Jesus Christ on the Damascus road and his life changed instantly.

Paul came to know Christ and accepted Him to be His own personal Saviour. He changed his values in life. All those religious achievements and Jewish heritage were to him great treasures in the past. But now, all of those things were nothing when compared to what he had in Christ. He says, *"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ"* (Phil 3:7).

Do you know Christ personally?

What's your Christian experience? It may have happened years ago but those are precious memories that will stay with us a lifetime. We must remember our first love for Christ and continue to serve Him with zeal and passion. Even as the years go by, the love of Christ still burns in our hearts. Paul was not contented with simply becoming a Christian. He wanted to

know Christ better. He says, "*That I may know Him...*" (Phil 3:10). The word "know" isn't just intellectual knowledge of certain facts; it is the personal experience of being a Christian. For Paul, it was to experience Christ personally in his daily life. In other words, he wanted to enter into the deepest and most intimate relationship with Christ.

How about you, my friends? Do you have such a desire? The more you know Christ personally, the more you will trust Him and walk with Him. Our actions — in terms of how we deal with others, our problems, our life events — will show how much we know about Christ and our love for Him.

A better knowledge of Christ's power

Paul's desire did not stop merely with the knowledge of Christ. He also wished to know "*the power of His resurrection*" (Phil 3:10). Here, Paul speaks of experience. He wanted to experience His power. Paul knew that it would be impossible to live a holy life if he depended on his own natural power. He longed for deliverance from such defeat through the power of the resurrection of Christ. This refers to God's power! Paul knew that this power would overcome sin and death.

The power of Christ is an amazing reality! Many Christians have come to know it and have testified about it. I'm sure some of you may have experienced certain events in your lives where you've seen God working mightily and in mysterious ways. His faithfulness, power and grace were upon you and you knew this in your heart. You saw His hand working in your life and your loved ones.

Now, looking back and reflecting on what God has done for you, are you living a victorious Christian life? Are you serving Him fervently? Do you still make time for Him? When times are good, do you remember to give to the Lord's work? Ask God to give you the power of Christ's resurrection as you live a holy life before Him.

A better knowledge of Christ's passion

What Paul also wished to know about Christ was "*the fellowship of His sufferings*" (Phil 3:10). Paul knew that "*...all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" (2 Tim 3:12). Persecutions need not be tragic; they can in fact draw you closer to Christ. However, with it comes total obedience and full submission. Hence, Paul says, "*being made conformable unto His death.*"

As we look forward to a blessed time of studying God's Word and enjoying warm fellowship together at our Family Bible Camp this coming week, let's prepare our hearts to seek our Lord and draw closer to Him. May God grant us grace and strength to live a victorious Christian life. Amen!

17 Jun 07

Greetings in the precious Name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. We thank the Lord for establishing the work at Evangel B-P Church, Malaysia, under the care of Eld (Dr) Lim Yew Cheng. My family and I are delighted to be ministering to the brethren there this morning.

We praise God also for our Family Bible Camp at Awana Genting Highlands this past week. About 365 campers ascended 3,000 feet above sea level to the highlands and spent the week studying God's Word, drawing close to Him, and enjoying a blessed time of fellowship as a church family. We are grateful to God for making this camp possible and for His faithful servants who have ministered to us from His Word. We also appreciate very much the labour of love put in by our Christian brothers and sisters in the Camp Committee led by Dn James How and Dn Thomas Goh. Praise God for the well-organised camp. Truly, the Lord is good!

I pray that you'll continue to seek the Lord each day. Indeed, it's so easy for us to slip into our daily routine and be filled with our other priorities. Sometimes, we may find ourselves swarmed by our other activities that we have little time left for God. Our Family Bible Camp has provided the perfect opportunity for God's people to focus on His Word and to examine their spiritual lives. As your pastor, it has always been my desire to see the church grow in the knowledge of God's Word. It is always heartening to see believers being transformed towards Christ-likeness and showing Christian love to one another.

We are reminded in 1 Corinthians 4:8-10 of Paul's dealings with his church members. He was their spiritual father and was therefore responsible for their spiritual welfare. Paul reminded them of the important ministries he had with them. The Corinthians were Paul's spiritual children in the faith. On his second missionary journey, Paul went to Corinth and preached the gospel in the synagogue. Some of the Jews believed, but the rest forced him to leave the synagogue. So, he started to meet in the home of Justus (Acts 18:7), next to the synagogue. Many people came to believe in Christ. So, the Corinthians were Paul's beloved children in the faith.

Whenever we share the Gospel with someone and have the joy of leading him/her to faith in Christ, we become a "spiritual parent" to that person. We are to help the person grow spiritually — to read and study the Bible, pray, witness and have fellowship with other believers. This is why we also need to look beyond our church to help overseas mission outreaches that need to be guided and nurtured. It's our duty to help fellow Christians grow in the faith. God has commanded us to pray for the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest (Matt 9:38).

The fruit of the harvest is entirely in the hands of God. He has called us to be His co-labourers in His field. Paul was God's instrument in being the "spiritual father" of the Christians in Corinth. Paul says, *"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers"* (1 Cor 4:15a).

An example to the family

Paul says, "*Be ye followers of me*" (1 Cor 4:16). As a spiritual father, Paul set an example for his spiritual children. When we disciple others outside our families, they often see us only in ideal situations, where it's easy to act spiritually. At home, our children see us in all types of moods, in all situations and actions. They know if we're living a life that's pleasing to God.

When Paul pastored the church in Corinth, he set the example before them in love, devotion to Christ, sacrifice and service. He was able to say, "*Be ye followers of me*" (1 Cor 4:18) and in 1 Corinthians 11:1, he said, "*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*" Paul was a good example because He was following the greatest Example of all, Jesus Christ.

Paul sent Timothy to the Corinthians to remind them of the doctrines and practices that he taught them for 18 months (Acts 18:11). They had been thoroughly grounded in the Word. Timothy's duty was to follow-up on what the Apostle Paul had done; to disciple the Corinthians to be Christ-like. Paul taught the same truths "*everywhere in every church.*" He did not teach one standard for one church and a different standard for another church. He taught them the same doctrines and principles wherever he went.

Paul was faithful to discipline the family

There are times when spiritual fathers, like natural fathers, have to discipline their children. When a Christian slips into wrong doctrine or wrong behaviour, he needs correction. He needs to be told in love and with firmness. Some of the Corinthians not only had slipped in sin, but they were "*puffed up*" (1 Cor 4:18). They were like hot-air balloons floating high in the sky to display their colours for people to see. They were so arrogant that they thought Paul would not confront them. So we see that the church had a serious problem with pride and self-will.

It is not easy to be a minister of Christ. God's servants also face challenges in their ministries. They need our love, respect, obedience and prayer support. This is also a good lesson for parents to be good examples to their children — to guide them and to be rooted in the Word of God. Let's pray that we will have the humility and grace to do what the Lord wants us to do.

24 Jun 07

"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness..." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Thank God for His bountiful blessings and for bringing us back safely to His house again. We thank Him for His grace in sustaining us throughout the week. We also praise God for the salvation of 3 precious souls at our recent Family Bible Camp at AWANA, Genting Highlands. Truly, the Lord is good and how marvellous is His love! Each of us can do our part to speak a word for Christ. Many of our acquaintances, colleagues, classmates, friends, and even family members, whom God has placed in our lives, need to hear the gospel. They need to know of their need to be saved. They need to see Christ in us. As we journey on our road of life, let's seek to be salt and light to those around us and make a difference. Let's continue to encourage one another to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Friends, I pray that you hide God's Word in your hearts and make it a point to read it daily. It'll make a wonderful difference in your life as you draw strength and receive guidance from His Word. For those of you who have been faithfully following the *Daily Manna* Bible-reading programme, I trust that you've been much blessed and encouraged by the rich lessons you've learned. It's never too late to start reading the Bible together. The next issue of *Daily Manna* (Jul-Sep 07) is ready, so be sure to get your copy today.

This year has gone by so quickly for our church. It has been a very fruitful year of blessings packed with many church activities and opportunities to grow in Christ. We also thank God for new friends and families who have come to worship with us. Looking back, I thank God for many of you who have come together to labour for Christ as a church family, even at our recent Family Bible Camp. Much work has gone into getting us started right this year, and it takes the dedication of many of you in our midst to make all this happen. I appreciate each one's efforts in helping our church family grow spiritually. May the Lord find us faithful in our service for His glory.

We're all made differently. Some of us may be more resilient while others may not be ready to handle the trials that come our way. We know what it's like to feel weak and vulnerable. We're human and we have our weaknesses. Being sinful, we fail to live up to God's expectations. Pressure wears on us. Anxiety gives us ulcer. Criticism offends us. Disease scares us. Death haunts us.

Yet, it's our weakness that opens the door for us to receive strength from God. Paul is one fine example.

Paul's testimony of his weakness

In 2 Corinthians 11:23-30, we learn of Paul's weakness and its effects on his spiritual growth. Paul reveals the things that have led to his spiritual growth:

We read of his imprisonments, beatings, near death (2 Cor 11:23). Five times he received lashes from the Jews (v.24); three times he was beaten with rods; and once, he was stoned

(v.25a). He suffered shipwrecks and met all kinds of danger (v.26). He suffered hunger and thirst etc. (v.27). In spite of these sufferings, he had to take care of the church (v.28).

Paul was a humble man. He did not boast about the churches he founded. Instead, he boasted about his weaknesses. He mentioned that *"a thorn in the flesh"* humbled him. He learned that being weak opened the door for God's power to be released and brought fulfilment in his life.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, *"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."*

Paul stressed that because of his willingness to admit his weakness, God was able to make him strong.

Looking to God for strength and deliverance

Have you ever been discouraged in your spiritual life at some point in your life? It could be that things did not turn out the way you had planned or that you were stuck in a troubling situation where no solution was in sight. You might have felt perplexed, not knowing what to do. The Bible has given us many examples of great men of faith who survived trials in life and emerged victorious.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). There may be times when you feel pushed or pressed into a corner — there is no escape. During those times, God can be our refuge and strength. Remember: God is our strength. In other words, He helps us. When we find ourselves too weak to carry our burdens or problems, look up to Him — He will help us. If you're overwhelmed with any problems in your life right now, take refuge in the Lord. He will enable you to continue with renewed strength and confidence.

God says to us in Psalm 46:10: *"Be still, and know that I am God..."* He wants us to take our hands off and let Him be God in our lives. If we leave God out of the picture, everything is going to fall apart! But if we let Him be God in our lives, He will be exalted (Psalm 46:10b - *"...I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth"*).

So, dear friends, lay aside your cares and let God be the King of your lives.

Loving in Christ,
Pastor James Chan

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