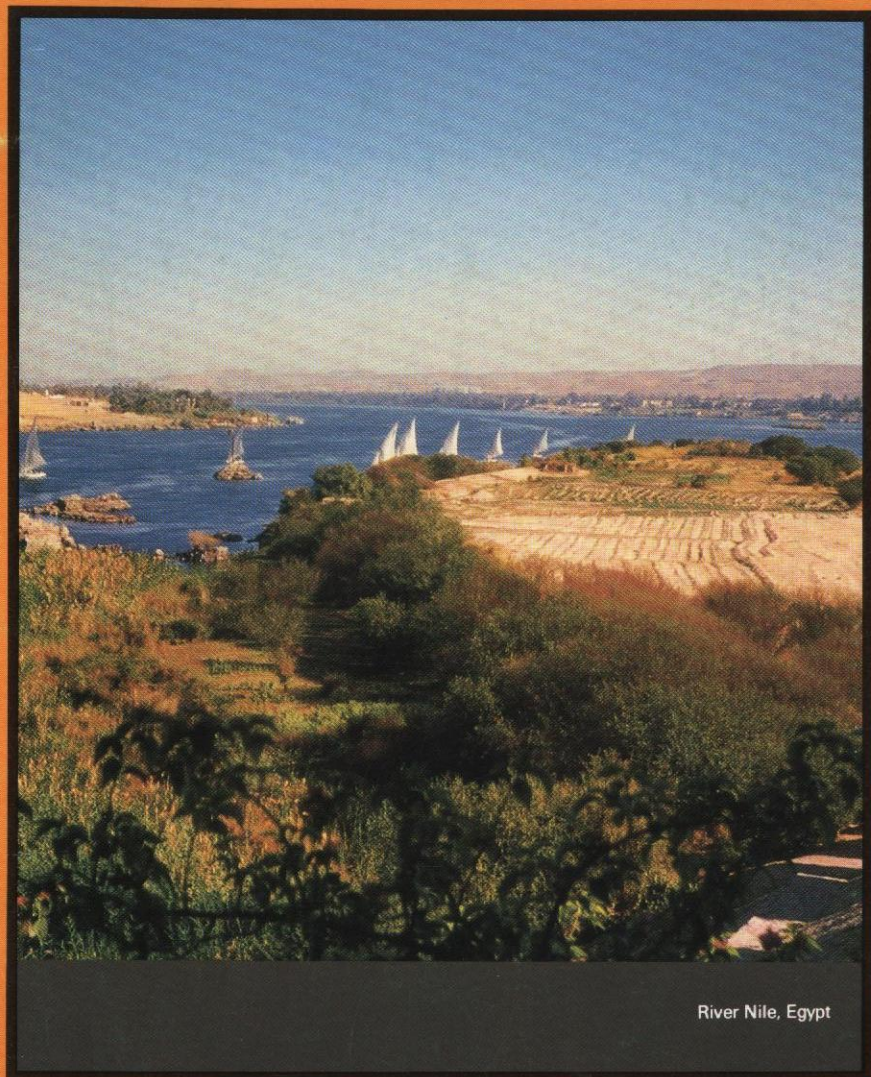


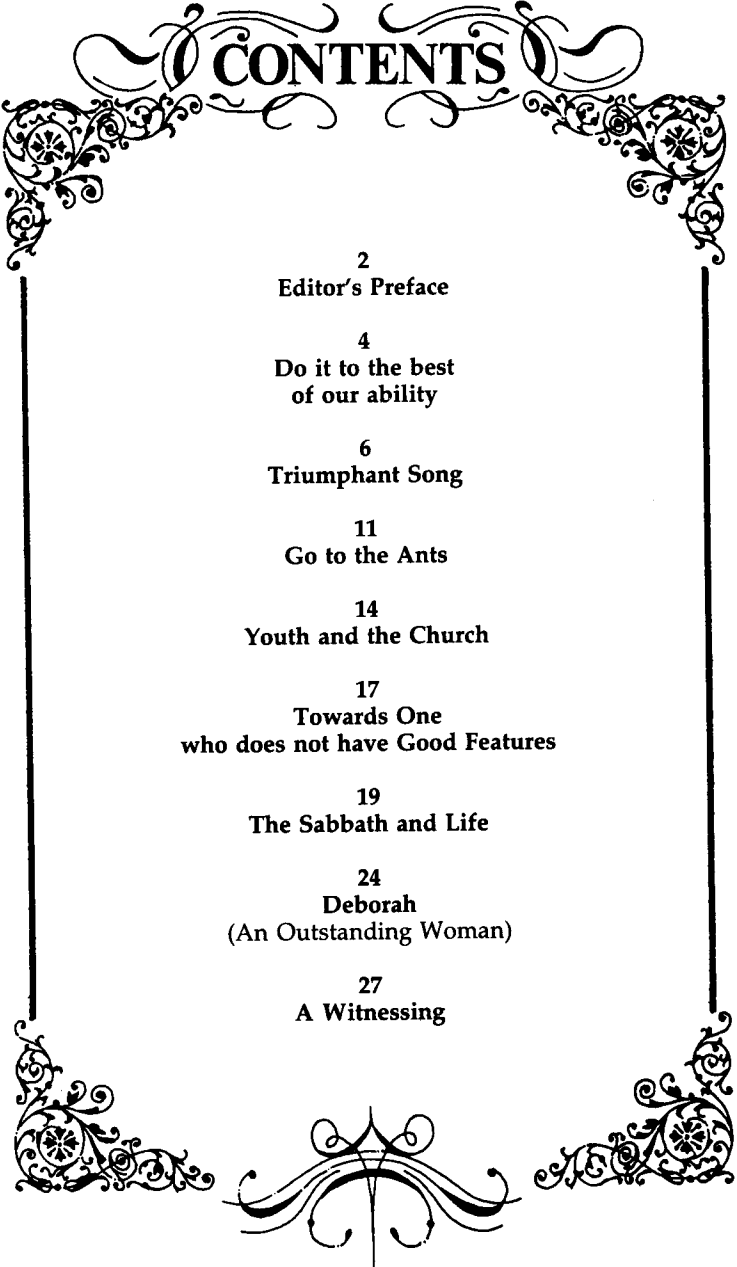
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# EDITOR'S PREFACE

In every home there are specific duties for every member of the household to do. If everyone will cooperate and will give his best effort, then, they will have a blessed home. Similarly in our church, if everyone of us will do our utmost, then our ties will be cemented firmly. Coupled with the guidance of the Holy Spirit our church will certainly grow into maturity. Then our church will be pleasing to God and a delightful place for everyone to work. Let us respond to the call in this issue "Do it to the best of our ability".

It is very good for one to be saved in the Lord, but it is not good enough for a righteous man to be "scarcely save". We must all aim for the crown of righteousness, a reward from God promised to everyone. So, let us all work harder, aim higher for the reward in our pilgrimage to the heavenly kingdom. So that we, too, can be like Paul and sing a "Triumphant Song" at our journey's end.

We can gain a lot of insight from nature. For example, a flower by the wayside, a bird in the backyard or an innocent looking animal may reveal inspiring teachings to us. The ant is a tiny insect yet King Solomon made an indepth study of it, and gathered much wisdom from it. Solomon advised men, especially those who are sluggard to "Go to the ant" i.e. to learn from the ants.

Youths in church are like the rising sun, a pleasing sight to everyone. Church leaders as well as youths are often reminded that youths today will become leaders tomorrow. In order to succeed, youths need to be trained and equipped. The article, "Youth and the Church" provides some guidelines in this regard.

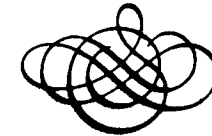
Man generally looks at the outward appearance. In ancient China, if a person wore brocaded dress he would be honoured. As followers of Christ what should our attitude be? Please read "Towards one who does not have good features".

Man is often troubled with the questions, "Where did I come from? Where am I going and what is my purpose of life?" In the article "Sabbath and Life" it relates the origin, the purpose and the future of man's life in the correct perspective.

Most of the characters mentioned in the Bible are males. If a woman is mentioned she must have been an outstanding person. In this issue we have "Deborah - an outstanding woman" for study.

The Lord Jesus said, "Signs will accompany those who believe". In this issue we have a wonderful witnessing by a believer in his student days. May glory be given to the Lord.

*Singapore  
January 1989*



# DO IT TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY

Whatever we do, do it to the best of our ability. This should be the attitude of all Christians. In the early sixties there was a popular hit called "Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better". The main aim of the song is to inspire one to excel over others. In The Great Learning of the Four Books of classical Chinese studies, the book teaches on "halt only at perfection" speaks well of this subject.

If you are a child, obey your parents in the Lord. Carry out your duty as children ought to; show your filial-piety to your parents for their love and care they have given to you. For "This is the first commandment with a promise that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth" (Eph 6:1-3). Live amicably with your brethren both in good times and in adversity so that your parents may be comforted (Ps 133:1-3; Prov 17:17).

If you are a parent, show your love and care for your children. Do not provoke your children to anger rather, bring them up according to the instruction of the Lord (Heb 12:9-10; Eph 6:4). But disciplined them while they are young, so that when they are old they will not depart from the truth (Prov 22:6).

If you are a wife, submit to your husband as if you would do to the Lord. "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church...As the church is subject to Christ, so let

wives also be subject in everything to their husbands" (Eph 5:22-24).

If you are a husband, love your wife as you would love your own body. How Christ has given Himself up for the church, husbands should also sacrifice themselves for their wives (Eph 5:25, 28).

If you are a shepherd, discharge your duties faithfully. "Tend the flock of God not by restraint but willingly...not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:1-3). If circumstance necessitated, you may even have to sacrifice your life for your flock in order to accomplish your responsibilities (Jn 10:11; Acts 20:22-24). Work together with your fellow-workers be united as one in the Lord and to propagate the gospel of Christ (Phil 1:5, 27).

If you are a believer, respect your shepherds and submit to their leadership (1 Tim 5:17; Jn 10:27). Provide them with material needs so that they will not have anxiety over their livelihood but will devote themselves to prayer and do the ministry of the word (1 Cor 9:7-14; 2 Tim 2:4; Acts 6:4). Toward your fellow-believers you should put the new commandment of the Lord into practice. Love one another even as the Lord has loved you (Jn 13:34-35; 1 Cor 12:25-27).

Finally, if we all can do the above to the best of our ability and if we would rely on the Holy Spirit then our homes will be the most blessed Christian homes; our church will be the kingdom of God – in short, a paradise on the earth.



# Triumphant Song




Paul, a servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ, had served the Lord faithfully from the day of his conversion to the time of his departure. Paul in his ministry had suffered a great deal, but in spite of all the perils, persecutions and frequent imprisonments he had kept the word of God till his dying day. That was way he was able to sing a triumphant song before he died. The triumphant song he sang is beautiful and is follows:-

"I have fought a good fight,  
I have finished my course,  
I have kept the faith:  
Henceforth here is laid up for me  
a crown of righteousness, which the Lord,  
the righteous judge, shall give me at that day..."  
(2 Tim 4:7-8)

## I Have Fought A Good Fight

The route to the heavenly kingdom is by no means a smooth one. We have to fight many spiritual battles before we can enter into the kingdom of God as the Lord Jesus has said that everyone has a cross to bear. Paul in his letter addressed to Timothy encouraged him to fight a good battle. The kind of battle Paul wanted Timothy to fight was not the ordinary battle of flesh and blood. It was against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (1 Tim 1:18; Eph 6:12).

There are numeral instances in the Bible where prominent people like Daniel and Joseph fought many great battles. However, there are some who lost theirs miserably. For instance, Lot in his spiritual warfare had lost everything including his dear wife. Samson is another example. He had not only lost his two precious eyes which were gorged out by his enemies, in the end he perished together with the Philistines among the falling rubble.

Spiritual battles must be fought with God on our side before we can overcome our enemies. At the battle of Rephidim, Moses told Joshua to choose his men to go out to war against the Amalekites. Moses would stand on top of the hill with the rod of God in his hand. So Joshua fought the Amalekites while Moses, Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill. During the battle, when Moses held up his hands Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hands, the Amalekites prevailed. But Moses' hands soon became heavy; and they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur each one supported Moses by his side. Then Moses' hands were steady until the going down of the sun. Joshua managed to kill the Amalekites with the help of God.

Preaching the gospel is a form of spiritual warfare. The Lord Jesus before His ministry had already fought three victorious battles. After the Lord had fasted for forty days He became hungry. Then the devil tempted Him and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread." And Jesus answer him, saying, "It is written, 'That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'" And the devil, taking Him up into an high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." And Jesus answered and said unto him, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.'" And he brought Him to Jerusalem, and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto Him, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from



hence: For it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee: And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.'" And Jesus answering said unto him, "It is said, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'" And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season" (Lk 4:2-13).

To those who preach, Paul quoting from the scriptures said, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!" (Rom 10:15).

### **I Have Finished The Course**

The second line of Paul's triumphant song is "I have finished the course". This means everyone who has undergone baptism there remains a course for him to complete. To some this course may be a long and uneven one; to others it may be short and smooth. Whatever the course may be, one has to complete it. Baptism is but the first step of salvation. After baptism we still have to strive for spiritual advancement and to seek the help of the Holy Spirit, lest we should fall into temptation. Though our sins are forgiven after the baptism yet our body is still susceptible to sin. Paul was fully aware of this. In his second epistle to the Corinthians he said, "I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor 9:27).

We must always press forward in our pilgrimage to the heavenly kingdom. The Lord Jesus said that no one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. Paul understood this soon after he was called by God. He had set Jesus Christ as his goal to be achieved. In his letter to all the saints at Philippi, he said, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:12-14). Peter is another fine example. He had followed the Lord until his death. During the

Lord's ministry many people followed Him because of food. When the Lord did not perform any more miracle of providing them with food, one after another left Him. Then Jesus said to the twelve disciples, "Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life". (Jn 6:68). Moses is yet another good example who had served the Lord God faithfully till he died. Moses said to his people before they entered into the promised land, "I am a hundred and twenty years old this day; I am no longer able to go out and come in. The Lord has said to me, 'You shall not go over this Jordan'" (Deut 31:1-2). So Moses had served the Lord faithfully till he died.

However, in the course of our journey to the heavenly kingdom we may be weary at times. For this reason we need the Holy Spirit and the truth to strengthen us. Prophet Elijah experienced spiritual low ebb after a day's run being pursued by Jezebel's men. He requested God to take away his life for he was no better than his forefathers. Then he lay under a juniper tree and fell asleep. But God sent an angel to him with bread and water and woke him up to eat and drink. After eating and drinking he was strengthened and he continued to run for forty days and forty nights until he arrived at Horeb, the Mount of God (1 Kings 19:1-7). Similarly, we need the help of the Holy Spirit and the truth to complete our course.

### **I Have Kept The Faith**

It is a fact that it is not easy to set up a business, but it is even more difficult to run one successfully after having it set up. This is also true of preaching. Very often we find that it is so difficult to preach to a person and after he is baptized we find that it is even more difficult for him to preserve his faith. God has foreseen this human weakness and so He spoke to Elder John in the Isle of Patmos telling him to hold fast to what he had, so that no one might seize his crown (Rev 3:11).

One way to preserve our faith is to let the word of Christ dwell richly in us as Paul had encouraged the Colossians to do (Col 3:16). If we have the word of God in us we can resist trials

and temptations as the Lord did against Satan. The author of the letter to the Hebrews exhorts us to pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. The author exhorts further that we should not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some, but to encourage one another, and all the more knowing that the day of the second coming of the Lord is drawing nearer.

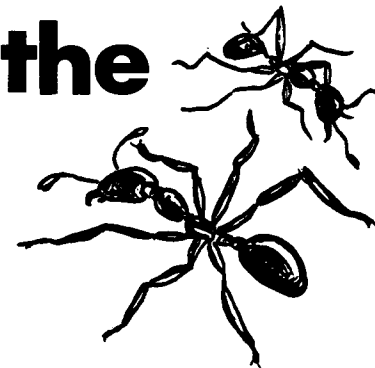
The next thing we can do is to be patient as advised by James: "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and the late rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand" (Jas 5:7-8). Job was put to the greatest trial. He had lost everything including his precious children within a day. Yet he held on to God and was able to preserve his faith. In the end God blessed him doubly (Job 42:10).

We must be strong in the Lord and take up the whole armour of God to resist any temptation and also to hold fast to what we have till the Lord comes again.

Paul is certain that a crown of righteousness will be laid up for him after he had fought a good fight, finished the course and kept the faith. We too, can obtain the crown of righteousness from the Lord if we can be as faithful as Paul: to fight a good fight, to finish the course and to keep the faith to the end. Then we too shall be able to sing a triumphant song like Paul when our life is over. Should we not think seriously about it?



# Go to the ANTS



King Solomon in his book of wisdom advised the sluggard: "Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise" (Prov 6:6).

The world is becoming more and more wicked. Even some of our fellow brethren are rather arrogant, self-conceited and complacent. Some allow their spirituality to drift away. King Solomon's proverb may well serve as an antidote to declining spirituality.

Generally there are three kinds of believers in the church today. They are the industrious, the sluggard and the lukewarm.

The hard working believers will never flag in their zeal but will always grow in the Spirit. They are ready to serve the Lord at all times. When attending church service they would listen to the words of God attentively. They are not only listeners but are doers as well. In some ways they are like Paul, ready to sacrifice themselves because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus. They are cautious in deeds. They would make the most of their time trying to understand the will of God. They are filled with the Holy Spirit and are always cheerful. They are very pleasant to work with. They sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thankfulness in their hearts to glorify God. This kind of believers, we call them "men of wisdom" and men who fear God.

The sluggard, on the other hand, thinks that he can stand firm in his faith. He has no urge whatsoever to improve his spirituality. But Paul exhorted such people to take heed lest they should fall. The rich fool in the parable thinks that with all the wealth he had gathered he could rest on his laurels. But the Lord said to him, "Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared whose will they be?" Those who get rich overnight would associate with friends of the world. They would drink and indulge in the lust of the flesh. They will not endure sound teaching but have itching ears. They will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. Outwardly they appear religious but within them they deny the power of God. These are the foolish believers. We should avoid associating with them.

The lukewarm are those whose faith and works are neither cold nor hot. They are sitting on the fence. On the one hand they want to serve Christ, but on the other hand they also want to serve mammon. They look for the kingdom of God and they also love the world (Mt 6:24; 1 Jn 2:15-16). To these people, the scriptures has this to say: "I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth" (Rev 3:15-16). The lukewarm believers are contemptible in the eyes of God. They shall be condemned if they do not repent. To the sluggard King Solomon advised them to learn from the ants and they shall be inspired to become wise. Given time and with the help of the Holy Spirit they should be able to lift up their spirituality. Then they will be motivated to be more industrious and attain maturity.

The Bible teaches us to go to the ants and consider their ways and we shall be wise. The ways the ants act tell vividly of the wisdom, the glory and the beautiful will of God over His wonderful creation.

The Bible states that the ants are without any chief, officer or ruler, they prepare their food in summer, and gather their sustenance in harvest. Though they are in large number and

without a leader, they can live harmoniously. They do not strive but instead they help each other. They are not selfish and they are ready to share their food when they find any. Everyone is expected to do his best. They do not take a day off for recreation but are forever busy preparing for rainy days. Indeed, they are the exemplary, industrious workers. Therefore, the sluggard should go to the ants and observe their ways so that they may be reminded of the perilous times ahead and that they may not falter in the course of their journey to the heavenly kingdom.

To enter the kingdom of God we must emulate the five wise virgins who prepared themselves with lamps and also equipped themselves with oil in their vessels. At mid-night then the bridegroom came, the five virgins went out to meet the bridegroom. Because the five wise virgins had equipped themselves they went in with the bridegroom and sat at table with him (Mt 25:1-10).

Believers should cooperate with each other and work together to serve the Lord. They should not let the house of God go unattended (Hag 1:9). On the contrary, they must organize themselves to prepare it for the coming of Christ. Though the harvest is plentiful yet labourers are few. The sluggard should wake up from their slumber or else poverty would creep on them. This will not only bring about hardship to them, they will also burden the church (Mt 9:37; Prov 6:9-11; Lk 13:6-9).





# YOUTH AND THE CHURCH

The future of a country or a family depends very much upon its youths. This also applies to a church. Youths have great influence on the future of a church.

Youths are the strength of the church. During the time of Moses, God instructed him to select men who were above twenty years of age; men who were strong and capable for war. The total number selected was 603,550. They were the guards of the nation of Israel who fought against the stronghold of the enemies (Num 1:3, 46). Similarly, youths of today should also strive to be the soldiers of God, strong and formidable, to engage in spiritual warfare (2 Tim 2:3).

Youths are teachers to children. Elect of the Old Testament times appointed teachers to instruct their children of the laws of God (Rom 2:20). The church has set up religious education classes to teach the truth to the young. The most suitable teachers are the youths.

Youths are the successors of the church. Moses not only served the Lord, he trained up Joshua to be his successor (Ex 33:11; Num 27:15-20). In order to bring about a steady growth in the church, the leaders must train up youths in the church (cf Mk 3:14,15).

Youths should be conscious of their commission. Moses was brought up and educated in the palace. Later he forsook his position, wealth and enjoyment and chose to suffer with the Israelites in order to deliver them from the clutches of Pharaoh (Heb 11:24-26). Esther was an orphan. Yet God made her the Queen of Persia. She was not conscious of her commission until

she was reminded by Mordecai that the existence of her people was at stake because Haman, the prime minister wanted to annihilate the entire race. On learning the terrible news she fasted for three days after which she risked her life by petitioning the king to save her own people. Ultimately she succeeded in saving her people from the plot of Haman (Esth 3:12-4:17; 9:1-5).

The driving force that moves one to serve the Lord is the realization of God's will and commission. Youths of the True Jesus Church must understand the commission of the church to revive the apostolic church and to preach the gospel of salvation to all parts of the world (Amos 9:11; Col 1:25-28; Mt 24:14). Everyone should sacrifice and to live for Christ (cf 1 Cor 9:16-17; Rom 14:7-8).

Youths need to be equipped. Having zeal alone will not qualify one for the ministry. One needs to undergo spiritual training (cf 2 Tim 2:21; Eccl 10:10).

Study the truth. Joshua learned the laws of God from Moses (Josh 1:7-8; 11:15). Timothy received the truth from Paul (2 Tim 3:14; 1:13; 2:9-10). One who does not know the truth is unworthy to be a leader in the church (Mt 15:14; Hos 4:6).

Learning to work. Elisha followed Elijah, the twelve apostles learned from Jesus and Timothy learned from Paul (1 Kings 19:21; Mk 3:14-15; Acts 16:2-3).

God made full use of Moses and Elisha because they had moulded themselves to be humble and pure vessels of God (Num 12:3; 2 Kings 4:9). To have God working with us two things must not be lacking: humility and obedience. The Lord told His disciples to learn from Him for He was gentle and lowly (Mt 11:29). Paul also told Christians to be humble and to be submissive (Phil 2:1-8).

Learn to trust the Lord. We have to rely on the Spirit of God to accomplish His task (Zech 4:6). David was able to overcome Goliath and Paul endure sufferings because they entrusted

everything to God. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight" (1 Sam 17:34-37, 45-49; Phil 4:11-13; Prov 3:5-6). The church should ensure that every youth has a role to play. It should enlist youths into working committees. However, training must be given before they are to perform their duties. Youths who are humble, faithful and conscientious should be gradually entrusted with more important tasks so that they may take up weightier responsibilities in future (Ex 18:13-27; Num 27:20).

Generally, youths have the enthusiasm but because of their inexperience, they tend to puff up. They also lack spiritual nurture and so they err in their speech, attitude, conduct and also in their work. Leaders of the church should treat them as babes. Accept them and forgive them. Teach them with love and truthfulness so that they may have a chance to correct themselves. Remember! To accommodate a person is to gain a person. Barnabas received Saul when others dared not. Eventually Barnabas gained Saul. Barnabas had compassion on Mark and accepted Mark when Paul could not accommodate. Later he gained Mark. He had given these two a chance. Later both Paul and Mark did mighty works of God (Acts 9:26-27; 11:25,26; 15:36-39).

Finally, pray for them. When Joshua and the Israelites were fighting against the Amalekites, Moses went up to a hilltop and prayed for them (Ex 17:8-13). When youths are given work to do, leaders of the church should not stand aside to find occasion to criticize or rebuke them for their errors. Instead, they should thank God for giving such youths to the church. Furthermore, they should ask God to increase their strength so that they may bring glory to the name of the Lord (1 Sam 12:23; 2 Cor 1:11).



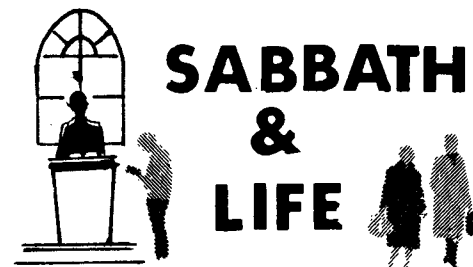
## **Towards One Who Does Not Have Good Features**

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgement" (Jn 7:24). The Jews were longing for the (Messiah). But when the Lord Jesus Christ came they spurned him. The Lord Jesus was of a simple family and he was not of comely appearance. The Jews had thus deprived themselves of the grace of salvation which was prepared for them ever since the creation of the world.

People generally judge others on their outward appearance. They would befriend those who are good looking and ignore those who are not. Elder James has this say : "My brethren, have not the faith our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, sit down here in a good place; and say to the poor Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool : Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" (Jas 2:1-4). Paul has this to say, "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh : yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Cor 5:16).

Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks into the heart. We should pursue perfect spirituality. Knowing that we men are created after the image of God (Gen 1:26), we

should therefore regain the lost image of God in us by showing justice, purity, love, mercy. Bear the yoke of God and learn the kind of gentleness and meekness that God has shown to us. We would never be able to manifest the image of God in us if we continue to associate ourselves with the world and fail to consecrate ourselves to Him. Finally, may the Spirit of God guide us so that we may have the insight to appreciate the good points of a person who does not have good looks.



*By T. L. Shee*

All of God's laws are applicable to daily practical living. The eternal principles embodied in the Decalogue govern every aspect of our lives just like the physical laws that govern the universe. In each of these instances, non-conformity upsets the equilibrium and generates chaos. On a very real sense therefore, ignoring God's law means destruction, just like a person who ignores the law of gravity plunges to his own death.

In all save one of the Ten Commandments, this truth can be grasped rather easily. Most people however fail to comprehend the positive and negative implications of the fourth commandment with regard to this. Nevertheless, the Sabbath commandment is so intricately connected to our lives that the unenlightened mind lose out in nearly all aspects of life itself.

The four questions of life have been said to be :

- 1) Who am I?
- 2) Where did I come from?
- 3) What am I doing?
- 4) Where am I going?

The Bible deals adequately with each of these issues, but the Sabbath Day has been ordained as a beautiful emblem of God's answer to these perplexing questions.

### **Identity Crisis**

The average man has no accurate knowledge of who he is. Socrates, reacting to this general ignorance urged, "Man, know

thyself". Dag Hammarskjöld remarked, "The longest journey, the journey inward". Man, given to adventure, has explored extensively into space, science, Mathematics, but has failed miserably to play the Columbus of his own life and disowned himself.

The consequence of such an identity crisis is appalling. The genius of all creation, after all the tedious lessons learnt throughout history, concludes finally, that his lineage is from the apes.

To such a folly, the Bible authoritatively assests, "The Sabbath was made for MAN"<sup>1</sup>. The Christian knows who he is, and each time he keeps the Sabbath, he knows that he keeps it because he is a man – created in the image of God<sup>2</sup>, from the very beginning.

Israelites under bondage in Egypt were deprived of human dignity. The taskmasters' whip hardly distinguished between man and beast. But once liberated, the Sabbath became an integral part of their lives, distinguishing man from their former animal-like existence.

In enjoying the privileged rest-day after six working days, the Christian finds room for freedom and individuality, having extricated himself from the ranks of those who slog like robots and machines, designed for maximum up-time. While animals and machine continue their ceaseless toil, the man rests.

### Human Origin

The Sabbath points to the creation. Mankind was told to "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy"<sup>3</sup> because "in six days God God made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day: wherefore God blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."<sup>4</sup> It is therefore a strong testimony to the origin of man. While the world would have us believe that the universe came into being by itself and that life resulted from blind chance, we profess our faith through solemn

observance of the weekly Sabbath, a celebration of God's creative power as declared in the Scriptures.

The reminder that the day offers is comforting – that man is "fearfully and wonderfully made"<sup>5</sup> and no product of blind chance. If it was so, then human life is cheap, purposeless and meaningless. Since there was no particular reason in the first place that I came into being, then there is no particular reason for my continued existence. If I just happened to exist, then it does not really matter if I just happen to cease to exist. On the other hand, if we have been created by an all-wise God, then He must have a plan for our lives, and we must have a purpose for living.

### Purpose

What then, is the purpose of living? Man's purposes are often near-sighted. His life revolves around himself and his family, with his entire efforts consummating in this life. As such, his purposes perish the day he dies, leaving at most, descendants to publish an empty name.

During the dusk of his human life, Solomon, who had everything he wanted in the here and now, concluded, that earthly life is vain, and said, "Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man."<sup>6</sup> Isaiah the prophet tells us the everlasting benefits of this:

"This saith Jehovah, Keep ye justice and do righteousness; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness is to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that holdeth it fast; that keepeth the Sabbath from profaning it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil..... neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For this saith Jehovah of the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and hold fast my covenant: Unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial and an

everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.....  
everyone that keepeth the Sabbath from profaning it  
and holdeth fast my covenant; even them will I  
bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful  
in my house of prayer.”<sup>7</sup>

With this many limitations, man’s plans stand to be frustrated, but the Sabbath reminds the Christian that he can rise above his frustrations, like the Sabbath-keeping eunuch who need not say that he is a dry tree, and claim everlasting promises and joy in the presence of God. His purposes are far-sighted, leaving the tumultuous here and now, and anchored at a fairer shore, for “we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.”<sup>8</sup>

The purpose of this life is therefore, to acquaint oneself with God, thereby good shall come unto us,<sup>9</sup> for what does God require of us , but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God?<sup>10</sup>

### Future

What a contrast exists between Christian belief and the hopeless philosophies of the world! To most people, mankind faces an uncertain future. To the individual the stark reality of death is shrouded in mystery. Yet evasion does not prevent reality from occurring, and the wisest move is to be prepared. But before that one must know what the future holds.

The Christian knows, prepares himself, and eagerly awaits a Grand Sabbath, for each week, as he enters the earthly Sabbath hours, he hears the resounding assurance within his soul, “There remaineth therefore a Sabbath for the people of God.”<sup>11</sup>

### Conclusion

The Sabbath is a jewel in the treasury of God’s word. It is profitable for teaching and for instruction in righteousness.<sup>12</sup> For teaching, because it helps in the recognition of himself, his

origin, his purpose and his future – without which he could never ever dream of solving his own problems. For instructions in righteousness, because in keeping the day holy, he learns not to profane his God, and becomes more attuned to spirituality, having to constantly discern between the secular and the divine.

### Reference

1. Mark 2:27
2. Gen 1:27
3. Ex 20:8
4. Ex 20:11
5. Ps 139:14
6. Eccl 12:13
7. Is 56:1-7
8. 2 Cor 4:18
9. Job 22:21
10. Micah 6:8
11. Heb 4:9
12. 2 Tim 3:16



# DEBORAH

## AN OUTSTANDING WOMAN



“And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time” (Judg 4:4)

In the book of Judges, all the judges appointed by God were men. Deborah was the only woman who became both prophetess and judge. Being a spiritual leader at that time, she must have possessed some excellent qualities which are worthy of our emulation.

### I. Spiritual wisdom

1. Judging the people (Judg 4:5) : Her ability to judge proves that she could discern between good and bad. To do this she, like Moses, must have equipped herself with the truth (Heb 5:14) and developed a high level of spirituality (Ex 18:16).

2. Singing praises to God (Judg 5:1) : Being able to compose songs shows that Deborah was full of talent. More valuable than her talent was her wisdom to use her talent in composing and singing praises to God (Prov 9:10). We should strive to learn the truth (Lk 10:42) and pursue wisdom (Jas 1:5) in order that we can discern between right and wrong, good and evil (Phil 1:9-10; Col 1:9).

### II. Spiritual power

1. Encouraging Barak (Judg 4:6-7) : With the encouragement

from Deborah, Barak led the people into a victorious war with Jabin, the king of Canaan.

2. Excelling over Barak : If Barak were to be listed as one of the great heroes of faith (Heb 11:32), Deborah was a greater heroine. Barak had intended to withdraw, but with the assurance from Deborah that God would be with him (Judg 4:8-9), he eventually went ahead and accomplished a great task! This shows the unusual strength of Deborah's great faith which generated power (Mk 9:23).

Faith is power. Therefore women should imitate Deborah in encouraging their husbands so that they may progress in zeal, strength and courage. Wives of preachers ought to reinforce their husbands' determination to fight in the frontline by encouraging them and taking away their worries in order that they can battle with added dedication and courage.

### III. Spiritual virtue

1. Being humble (Judg 5:12) : Even after a victorious battle and while composing and singing praises to God, Deborah reminded herself to be alert. She was neither proud nor complacent for she truly understood that “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (Jas 4:6)

2. Giving glory to God (Judg 4:14; 5:3) : Deborah gave all glory to God. She did not fight personally in the battle at river Kishon probably because she did not want to take over the leadership which should be Barak's (Judg 4:14-15). If this was so, she was indeed humble; keeping a low profile as a woman should and accepting man's authority over woman (1 Tim 2:10-11).

Women ought to be subject to the Lord and be submissive to their husbands in all ways, even though their husbands may not be as good as they (Eph 5:24). This was the adornment of the holy women of old (1 Pet 3:3-5).

“Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised” (Prov 31:30). Women have often



been praised for the work they have done. The women mentioned in the bible should not, therefore, be forgotten. It is hoped that our sisters will continue in Deborah's footsteps and enhance their virtues. While women must not be proud and dominate men, men on the other hand must not despise women. Together they should exhort one another in fighting the spiritual battle.



In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ I bear testimony of His grace.

King David in Psalm 103:2 reminded his soul to bless the Lord and not to forget all his benefits. Today we too have received much of God's benefits, blessings and grace. Hence this Psalm should also be our Psalm. I would share an incident whereby had it not been for the Lord's protection, I would not have this opportunity to write this.

It was June 1984 and I had just completed my summer school in the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Madison is the capital of Wisconsin and it is also a University town. Being a university town, during vacation, the town is virtually dead.

Apart from the government offices in Capital Square, life in the University comes almost to a halt. Like everyone else, a couple of my friends (one of whom Chang Wui Ming from Sabah) and myself made plans to go away from Madison, to leave our books and studies behind, as soon as summer school was over. We decided, even before summer school began, that for the coming break (interim between summer school and spring semester) go to one of America's most beautiful national parks the Yellowstone National Park.

As soon as summer school was over, together with five of my friends, we packed ourselves into two cars and headed westward towards Montana to Yellowstone National Park. Apart from the many wonders of nature, Yellowstone is

renowned for its unpredictable weather. However, since it was almost end of summer, we did not equip ourselves with winter clothing. The thickest clothing we brought along was our spring jacket (slightly thicker than a windbreaker).

The journey to Yellowstone took us almost two days. However, because of the excitement of experiencing the beauty of the park, the long and arduous drive was quite bearable. To break the monotony of driving, we stopped over at Mount Rushmore to have our picture taken with four of the most popular American ex-presidents whose faces were carved on one side of the mountain.

We arrived at the east entrance of Yellowstone National Park just before noon. The weather was fine and the sun was shining brightly as though to welcome us. After paying the entrance fee and taking some photographs at the entrance, we proceeded on to the center of Yellowstone Park where we could get lodging and food. Much to our surprise, after driving about an hour onwards, we were met with a downpour of snow. Yes, it was snowing at the end of summer! Yellowstone lived up to its reputation of having a very unpredictable weather. The green and lush surroundings that greeted us earlier was now a rare sight. The trees were now covered with fresh white snow and disappointment was slowly creeping into our excited and enthusiastic hearts. We finally arrived at Central Yellowstone to be met with other surprises. The snow apparently did not fall in Central Yellowstone. It was bright and sunny, typical of any American summer day. After enquiring several hotels, we realized that there was no more accommodation available for us and was told to go to a nearby town for there were motels there. As we were rather tired, we went to only one tourist attraction before heading to Jacksonhole in Montana to look for a resting place. Jacksonhole is a town just outside the west entrance of Yellowstone Park. Thank God we managed to get a motel room and retired for the night.

Early next morning, because we wanted to cover all the attractions of Yellowstone, the six of us got up very early and headed back to the National Park. The weather that morning

seemed to tell us that we had come at the wrong time of the year. It was snowing again. We decided to pull over and seek refuge in the comfort of a warm restaurant and at the same time have our breakfast. Having consumed all the food our stomach could take, we waited patiently for the downpour of snow to cease. As the hour went by, disappointment and frustration became more eminent. We don't need to travel almost two days just to hang around in a restaurant watching the snow falling from the sky. There are many fine restaurants in Wisconsin and the snow there is just as white as in Yellowstone. Why? Why can't we have a fine weather? Isn't it summer time? Just then, a weather update was being announced in the radio. The weatherman indicated that the downpour would probably stop at noon time. Given the unpredictable nature of the weather in Yellowstone, this was the best the weatherman could offer. A tint of hope came back to us. We decided that we will stay for lunch and hopefully by then the snowing will cease. As lunch time approached, there was still no sign to indicate that the downpour would come to an end. Just as we had thought, the snow kept pouring. We then contacted a near-by police station to ascertain when this white precipitation will end. We were informed that it will happen in a couple of hours. In a couple of hours? It will be mid afternoon by then. That was the last straw. We had a meeting and a consensus was reached. As soon as the downpour ceased, we will drive back. We do not want to waste another day waiting in a restaurant.

It was about 3 p.m. when the snow stopped. We packed ourselves into the car and headed for Wisconsin. There were many ways we could take to return but the shortest route was to cut across Yellowstone National Park and leave by the north entrance.

It was not my turn to drive so I took the corner back seat of the car. The journey to the north entrance was a lonely one as far as we were concern. After travelling for about two hours, we actually did not meet another car. We only had the bison (American buffalo) and deer as companions. Along certain strips, the deer galloped along side our vehicle. Though we realized this fact early, it did occur to us as something strange.

We just drove on and on. The journey to the north entrance was also a winding one and we had to drive across a mountain range. As we were travelling along the winding stretch, I felt very sick because I had motion illness. Forgetting about the mountain scenery, I decided to close my eyes and try to sleep. Very soon it was dark but we still have not met another car.

The car then came to a stop and I was rudely awoken by a loud discussion. We have arrived at a fork road and there was a road sign showing "Road Close". At that fork junction, there was also a couple of wooden cabins which seemed deserted. The discussion was to determine which road was closed because the road sign was placed between the fork roads. After much deliberation, it was decided that the road sign was meant for the right road and so we continued our journey taking the left road which had a gradient of almost 45 degrees. As I was not feeling too well, I did not participate in the decision making. About 200 meters away from the fork junction, the road took a 90 degrees turn. As our car took the bend, the vehicle seemed to lose its power and when we were about 50 meters from the bend, the car stalled. With confidence, my friend turned the ignition key again, but there was only a clicking sound. The battery was dead! A brilliant idea came to our minds; push start the car. One by one except the driver, we came out of the car only to find out that we were standing on ice. A couple of us slipped and fell while others managed to hang on to the car. The weather was very cold and the wind was blowing so fiercely. We had no choice but to return to the car. Our brilliant idea was not that brilliant after all! Even if the road was not covered with a film of ice, how are we to push the car forward as the gradient was 45 degrees. Let the car move backwards and engage the reverse gear? It was too dangerous. This road was along the mountain side. To the left of the road was a cliff and to the right was the mountain side. The elevation we were at was about 10,000 feet.

Fear suddenly befall the six of us. What are we to do? Should we just wait and hope a vehicle will pass this way or should we make our way back to the fork junction by foot? Perhaps there were people staying in the wooden cabins who could assist us. Though we knew no one will probably pass the location we

were at, we decided to remain in the car for the night and go back to the fork junction the next morning. The weather was too cold and the road was very slippery. For us to make our own way to the cabins further down that night would probably be too dangerous. The wind that night was particularly strong and the next thought that struck our minds was, will our car be blown down the cliff. With this thought haunting us, we decided that we should manoeuvre our vehicle to the side of the mountain and secure the wheels by using rocks to jam them no matter how difficult it will be. In this way, the chances of the vehicle being blown away will be greatly reduced. With much bruises (as a result of the many slips and falls) and difficulty, thank God we finally managed to move the vehicle against the embankment of the mountain. As the hour passed, negative thoughts became wild. Will we pass through the night without being frozen because the thickest clothing that we had was only our spring jacket. We have heard reports of people found frozen to death in their vehicles. Will we be the next ones? How will our parents feel when they realize that their children were frozen to death on a closed road in Yellowstone Park? What if there was no one staying in those seemingly deserted wooden cabins? Even if we managed to pass through the night, we may not be able to sustain ourselves until this stretch of road leading to the north entrance is opened. The only food and drinks we had was a package of peanuts and a few cans of soda. Conversation in the car slowly died down as each one was absorbed in his own thoughts. At that moment, the fear that I had was just as real as the rest. However, I had this inner peace because I knew God will protect Wui Ming and myself. With this assurance, I joined the rest to catch some sleep. The weather was so cold that night that we had to sleep close to each other and curled ourselves up to keep our body temperature high.

The next morning, as soon as day broke, everyone woke up. Thank God we did not freeze to death. The next thing we had to do was to determine whether there was anyone staying in the wooden cabins. If there was our predicament will be over. Together with one of my friends, we made our way to the fork junction. The film of ice on the road was still there making our

movement very difficult. In fact, as we stepped out of the car, both of us had a great fall. Foot by foot we slowly made our way down. As we approached the cabins, we saw a sign which read "Rangers Station". The thankfulness I had within my heart on seeing this sign was undescrivable. It must have been the providence of God. With this sign, all my fears were arrested. Though the cabins looked deserted, we were very sure that someone must be around. True enough, at the loud knocking of the door, a man opened the door and asked what we wanted. On hearing that our car was stalled, he informed us to return to our vehicle and wait for him to come at about 8 a.m. On hearing this we were overjoyed because our predicament will soon be over. We then made our way back to the car and informed the rest of our findings.

We waited in the car for about one and the half hours before the rangers arrived. The rangers came in two big trucks whose wheels were as tall as our car. The wheels were chained so that it could move along the icy road. One of the trucks parked alongside our vehicle so that the ranger could jump-start our car using the truck's battery. As soon as our car started, the ranger wanted us to give a helping hand to manoeuvre the vehicle to the center of the road. As Wui Ming was the youngest among the six of us, I suggested that he takes the steering wheel while the rest did the pushing. Some of my friends disagreed saying that it was better for me to take the wheel as Wui Ming did not know how to drive then. Without any hesitation, I took over the wheel from Wui Ming. As my friends came out of the car, all of them again slipped and fell. With the help of the rangers, our car was moved to the center of the road. I could still remember how some of my friends fell face down as they pushed the car because their sneaker shoes just could not grip the icy surface.

When the car was in the center of the road, the chief ranger came over to the driver's side window and said, "Okay kid, you are all on your own!" At first I did not know what he meant but as he and my friends moved away from the vehicle, I came to understand what he meant. He wanted me to let the car slide down the slope until I reached the fork junction. It was a real surprise to me. I thought they would tow our car down, instead

I was told to do a stunt. Recalling the incident, I can't blame the ranger. The wheels of our car were not snow wheels and we did not have any chain to increase the road holding of the car. It was too dangerous to tow the vehicle with one of the trucks because if our vehicle would to fall off the cliff, the truck will also be pulled along. The only option was to have the car slide down the slope and I happened to be behind the wheel.

As the vehicle started to slide backwards, my thought were completely lost. Things were happening too fast. My palms were wet with perspiration and my heart was beating profusely. At that moment, instead of entrusting everything to the Lord, thought of James Bond movies come to my mind. If the vehicle were to fall off from the cliff, I will jump out of it just like the way Bond used to do. Thank God, before this thought became too wild, I realized that this was not possible. American cars are left-hand drive. If I would jump out of the vehicle from driver's side door, I will only be jumping into thin air and eventually landing myself in the dark ravine down below. To jump from the passenger side was also not possible because I would not have sufficient time to move over, open the door and jump out. With all the various options exhausted, I had no choice but to entrust everything to the Lord.

I could hear the rangers shouting to me not to apply the brake but again and again I had to press the brakes because the vehicle was sliding too fast. Whenever I applied the brakes, the car started to skid and when it skidded, I again applied the brakes hoping to control the car. It was really a trying moment. I was confused and literally overcome by fear. To control a sliding car was tough enough for me but this time I had to control a backward sliding car. I had to steer it backwards down a 45 degrees slope and round a 90 degrees bend.

From behind the steering wheel, I could see the expressions on the faces of my friends. Their expressions were similar to those who attend a funeral. It was as though they will never see me again. It was as though they were attending my funeral.

When the vehicle was about to negotiate the 90 degrees bend, one of my friends jumped into the car to give me moral support. As I was overcome by fear, I did not actually realize he was there with me until we reached the fork junction.

I can vividly recall that I only made one short prayer to God and that was, "God please help me!"

With that prayer, I finally managed to let the car slide backwards all the way to the fork junction which was about 250 meters down a slope. How amazing was that one short prayer. Though I only turned to Him after all my other opinions were exhausted, my prayer was still heard. I really thank God for protecting and saving my life. If it was not for His grace and mercy, I would not have this opportunity to testify for Him. If it was not for Him, my parents would have been very sad.

Brothers and sisters, our God is a merciful and loving God. If we are met with any adverse situation, please remember He's there. Reach out to Him and do not rely on your own insight.

May His name be praised and glorified.

By Kim Jong Seng  
1988, Singapore.

