

MANNA

ISSUE 71

What Does God Require of You?



**What the Lord Requires of You • What the Lord Delights In
• From Hearing of God to Seeing Him**

“The goal of Manna is to inspire believers to live an active faith through mutual encouragement and the study of biblical truths.”

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What Does God Require of You?

Editorial

by K.C. Tsai

With what shall I come before God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, or with calves a year old? Will He be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil? O man, He has shown you what is good and what He requires of you: to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

- Micah

God's abundant grace naturally motivates man to seek His pleasure and approval; with some form of offering or, at least, with a reciprocal gesture of gratitude. However, our God is the Creator of the universe who does not need anything. He gives to men life, breath, and all things. What can man ever present to Him?

With this understanding, the Israelites during Prophet Micah's time questioned: what can we offer to please God by whom all things are made? How about sacrificing thousands of rams or offering ten thousand rivers of oil? Their questions seem to suggest that God is difficult to please and that He would not even be contented with such a plethora of sacrifices—as if God would demand something beyond what they could afford. In response, God told them that they had been shown what is good and what He required of them: to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with Him.

It is not about what we can contribute to God's riches, since He lacks nothing. What He requires of us is simple—to be a person after His heart. It is more about ourselves than what we can do for Him.

Today, we support the church's work with monetary offerings and by serving with our talents. But does God delight in our service? Are these offerings and services all that He requires of us? The Bible repeatedly reminds us that it is not the scope of our service that pleases God, but the way we present ourselves to Him before rendering a service. God has enough of burnt offerings of rams and oil. If we do not offer ourselves as a living sacrifice and walk humbly with God, our service will be nothing more than the trampling of His courts, which is detestable to Him (Isa 1:11–15).

Through interactions with His people, God has shown us what is good in His eyes. Through His law and the narratives of ancient saints, we are informed of what to do and what not to do. What He requires of us is to act accordingly, making the right choices in life. And this is to live justly.

The Psalmist proclaims that “[r]ighteousness and justice are the foundation of God's throne; [m]ercy and truth go before His face” (Ps 89:14). Justice and mercy are two attributes of God, and He wants His servants to imitate Him.

This is easier said than done. To find favor in God's eyes requires lifelong learning. The theme articles in this issue discuss how we can learn to fear and love God and respond to His requirements. May the Holy Spirit enlighten and guide us to walk humbly in His way to perfection.

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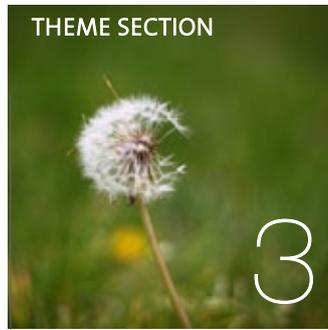
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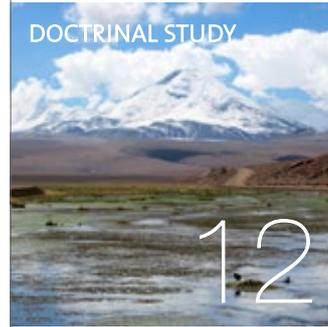
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What Does God Require of You?



What the Lord Requires of You

Based on a sermon by Nathanael Chin—Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

Parents naturally have certain expectations towards their children. Today, we have become the children of God and He is our heavenly Father. Hence, He has specific expectations towards us.

During creation, God created Adam and Eve, and placed them in the Garden of Eden. God gave them the following instruction, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen 2:17).

This was God’s requirement of the first man, Adam. Unfortunately, Adam and his wife did not meet the requirement of God; they sinned and were cast out of the Garden of Eden. Since then, men have been dwelling in sin.

God also had expectations for the Israelites because they were His chosen people. Deuteronomy 10:12–13 records, “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?”

THE PRINCIPLE

From these two examples, we can see that God had requirements for His people since the creation of man.

For Christians today, God requires us to observe the teachings in the Bible. However, we must first have a correct understanding—what is the

principle of God’s requirements? Are His requirements impossible for us to meet? No! God’s requirements for us are not excessive. Parents today may impose excessive requirements on their children and have expectations that are beyond their capabilities, but God’s requirements are different.

“For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.” (2 Cor 8:12)

Although the specific focus of this verse is on offerings, the underlying principle of God’s requirements can be seen here. Firstly, there must be a “willing mind” with which anything that is done will be pleasing to God. Secondly, these requirements are based on “what one has” and do not surpass a person’s ability. Every one is different; God’s requirements for each person are also different and based on individual ability.

Take for example an elderly man. If there were a race, we cannot expect this person to run as fast as a young man. Both men need only to run to the best of their abilities. This is also the principle of God, which is why the requirements of the Bible are reasonable and based on individual ability, for God knows what each of us can achieve.

With this principle in mind, what does the Lord require of us today?

FAITH

“But without faith it is impossible

to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Heb 11:6)

Faith is the foundation of our belief. Today, we say that we believe in Jesus in order to enter heaven and have eternal life. But we have never seen Jesus, heaven, or experienced eternal life so what makes us believe in them? The answer is simple—faith. This is why faith is the foundation of our belief.

Through faith, every Christian can receive grace and blessings. In the time of Jesus, people received grace because of their faith. There were numerous instances of Jesus commending certain people for their faith, saying, "Your faith has made you well," after they had received grace and were healed (cf. Mk 5:34; 10:52; Lk 17:19).

So what does the Lord require of us in the aspect of faith? The first requirement can be seen in the first part of Hebrews 11:6, which states that through faith we are required to "believe that He is." In other words, we must believe in the existence of God. This is of utmost importance, for when we preach the gospel and tell others of God, we ourselves must believe that there is a God who created the heavens and earth. If we do not have this conviction, we cannot convince others of the existence of God.

Why is Abraham known as the father of faith? The Bible records that God reckoned Abraham as righteous because "he believed in the LORD" (Gen 15:6). Abraham believed in God and was fully aware of His presence. This recognition guided his footsteps throughout his life.

Another example is Joseph. Although he was sold to the foreign land of Egypt, he did not murmur

against God but overcame the temptations of Potiphar's wife instead.

"How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen 39:9)

Joseph's statement shows that he had God in his heart. Hence, he could live a godly life in Egypt. Today, we too must know that there is God, and this recognition will guide us to lead a steady and godly life.

The second requirement that can be seen from Hebrews 11:6 is that we "must believe that ... He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Not only must we believe in the existence of God, we must also know He listens to our petitions and rewards those who seek Him. In doing so, we will learn to rely on Him. We can take Hannah as an example. She was extremely sorrowful because she was barren. The Bible states that "her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the LORD had closed her womb" (1 Sam 1:6).

Instead of wallowing in her miseries, Hannah prayed before God when she was in Shiloh. She poured out her burdens before Him and once this was done, the Bible records how she got up, went to eat, and was no longer in sorrow because she trusted in God. When she had a son, she named him Samuel, because "I have asked him from the LORD" (1 Sam 1:20). This was a woman without any hope of having children. Yet, because she believed in God and was willing to bring her petition before God, God rewarded her with a son.

Today, what is the stage of our faith? I believe all of us acknowledge the fact that we believe in the existence of God, but do we believe that God will reward those who diligently seek

Him? Do we know how to pray to God and rely on Him in the midst of sorrows and helplessness?

In summary, God's requirements concerning faith are that we acknowledge He exists and believe He rewards those who diligently seek Him. Are these not reasonable requirements that we are able to fulfill?

OFFERINGS

"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings." (Mal 3:8–9)

The above verse tells us that the people of Israel failed to meet the requirements of God in terms of offering tithes. Hence, God rebuked them through Prophet Malachi. These people even had the audacity to ask God when they had ever robbed Him.

Today, the offering of tithes is a basic requirement for Christians. If all of us recognize this and make our offerings, the house of God will not be short of funds to finance His work. We need to take heed of the warning of Prophet Malachi and not rob God.

Through offering tithes, we acknowledge that what we have comes from God. King David, while preparing materials for the temple, prayed in this manner:

"Both riches and honor come from You, [a]nd You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great [a]nd to give strength to all. But who am I, and who are my people, [t]hat we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, [a]nd of Your own we have given You." (1 Chr 29:12,14)

David knew that although he had offered much, all that he had was from God in the first place.

Do you think that the requirement of tithing is reasonable? Let's say we earn \$1000, and we offer \$100 to God. Is this reasonable? Applying

Firstly, there must be a "willing mind" with which anything that is done will be pleasing to God. Secondly, these requirements are based on "what one has" and do not surpass a person's ability.

In all that we do, our goal should be to glorify God. This is another requirement—that we do not use the gifts that God bestows upon us to benefit ourselves. Instead, it is required of us to bring glory to God through our actions. Hence, God bestows different gifts to His children—so that they can unite their efforts and work towards the common goal of building up the church and exalting the name of God.

David's viewpoint that everything comes from God, the whole amount of money actually belongs to God. He allows us to use \$900, and we have to return just \$100 to Him. If we look at it from this angle, is this not a reasonable requirement?

MINISTERING GIFTS RECEIVED

“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (1 Pet 4:7,10)

Peter reminds us to put God's gift into good use by ministering it to each other. Every one of us is a member of the body of Christ and everyone has a role to play. God has bestowed different gifts upon us so that we can work together as a common whole.

This is what God requires of us in terms of the gifts that we have received from Him. Paul reminds us that this gift is for “the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ... from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (Eph 4:12,16).

The different types of gifts that the members have received are to be “knitted together” to build up the church of God. There is no place for individualism. For example, if we decide to walk towards one direction, both our legs and the muscles therein as well as our torso must all

move together towards the same direction. A limb cannot decide to do something different and refuse to cooperate, or else, the whole body will not be able to move in a coordinated manner. It is all about concerted efforts where everyone applies the gifts received from God to work together and complement each other with the common goal of prospering the church of God.

In addition, Peter exhorts, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Pet 4:11).

In all that we do, our goal should be to glorify God. This is another requirement—that we do not use the gifts that God bestows upon us to benefit ourselves. Instead, it is required of us to bring glory to God through our actions. Hence, God bestows different gifts to His children—so that they can unite their efforts and work towards the common goal of building up the church and exalting the name of God.

In conclusion, God's requirements in terms of faith, offerings, and the ministering of gifts received are reasonable and within our capability to fulfill. The question is: are we willing to do so? ★



The Road to Perfection

F.F. Chong—London, UK

Human nature is generally fallible and susceptible to external influence. Try as we might, whether we are an ordained minister or just a believer, achieving Christ-like perfection sometimes seems to be an impossible dream. Worse, we live in a world where corruption is the norm. Waning spiritual sobriety then exposes us to a spectrum of allurements, making it doubly hard for us to attain spiritual perfection.

Despite such gloomy prospects, Christ offers us the most uplifting promises. We are told that as Christians we can become perfect. We are reassured that with God's help, the impossible will be made possible. The road to perfection, though long, can be completed—not by puny human strength or will, but by yielding completely to the Spirit for empowerment and by following His word. Above all else, we must constantly long for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Based on this premise, we strive toward perfection.

The Law of God is the foundation on which we build ourselves unto perfection. In particular, Deuteronomy 10:12 points to

the very means to help us attain perfection: to fear God, love Him, walk in His ways, and serve Him with all our heart and soul. Revisiting and understanding the elements in this Mosaic instruction will serve as the signposts on our road to perfection.

THROUGH THE FEAR OF GOD

In the book of Proverbs, we are told that the fear of God leads us away from evil (Prov 3:7b). The Hebrew word for “fear” (yare) has also been translated as “revere” which we generally associate with a deep respect and awe. As humans, we are wont to pay little heed to people we do not respect. In contrast, we often seek to draw near to and emulate those whom we admire. Clearly then, when reverence for God is a natural part of our lives, we will gradually move towards perfection and away from evil because God and evil are two opposing forces that cannot coexist in our hearts. Loving one means hating the other. If we allow evil to gain a foothold in our lives, it will erode godly reverence and eventually destroy our spiritual life.

To protect our hearts from evil, we first need to understand why we

should fear God. God is our Savior. He saved us from this world of corruption. He has given us all things pertaining to life and godliness, enabling us to be partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:3–4). Since He has paid the heaviest of prices and traded His life for ours, it is only natural and necessary for us to revere this Master of our lives. Fearing Him is our duty (Eccl 12:13). Yet if sin dominates us, our lives, which were meant to be kept in Him, would be detached from His (Col 3:1–3).

Fearing God also means that we do not compromise God's principles. Only then can the fear of God reign supreme in our lives and truly help us to know and understand Him (Prov 1:7; 9:10). Knowing God, in turn, will help us navigate through this life. In this way, we build ourselves upon the foundation of the truth to become perfect.

THROUGH LOVE FOR GOD

The word for love (aheb) is associated with affection. Everyone enjoys being the recipient of heart-warming affection. It is also fairly easy to give our affection to a person we can see. However, to love the Lord whom

we cannot see may be difficult; and constitutes an even greater challenge when we cannot perceive His presence in our lives. While we may say we love the Lord, but at the most critical point, it is moot unless we can actually manifest this love. In the Old Testament, the house of Jacob, in their ignorance, practiced idolatry because they could neither see the Lord nor experience His help in time of trials. In contrast, the saints in persecution manifested a very different and unique love for Jesus whom they had never seen before (1 Pet 1:8). The depth of their love for God was unshaken by the severity of the trial in which they were.

How can we build up such a strong love for our Lord? The central message of God's word is that whatever God does is for our good (Ps 136), although it may be difficult sometimes to accept His word because it contradicts our stubborn will. However, faith can do wonders. Practicing His word by faith unlocks the power contained within, filling our heart with His love and great understanding.

Some find the word of God restrictive. But those who love God see His kind intention embedded in His word. Similarly, a young person often finds it difficult to perceive the loving intention underpinning parental control over him or her. However, one grown into maturity understands that deep love is the underlying reason for parental guardianship. Thus, for us who know God, abiding in His word is the most concrete expression of love for the Lord. If we do so without any hesitation, but with sincere submission to His will, we will find that His yoke is easy (Mt 11:30). In short, when we resolve to love God, we are actually working towards perfection.

BY WALKING IN HIS WAY

God's way is the best way. This is not a mere theory or slogan. It is a way of life and the only way to be blessed in the Lord (Ps 1:1–2; 128:1b). But as always, it is much easier said than

done. Sometimes, we may even find it suffocating to walk in God's way because our obstinate human nature with its natural tendency to sin wages a constant campaign to turn us against God.

So how can we wholeheartedly walk in God's way? Prophet and apostle alike give us the same answer—we must reorder our lives completely and purge ourselves from all corruption (Jas 1:21; 1 Pet 2:1). There are two ways that purging can be done. First, we can initiate it ourselves. James



4:7–10 provides us with useful and very practical pointers – cleansing our hands (i.e., abandoning our past vile habits and conduct); purifying our hearts (i.e., turning our minds back to God); humbling ourselves (i.e., acknowledging that we cannot overcome our weaknesses on our own and thus relying on Him). Then, when we have purged ourselves of hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, out of our clean heart and steadfast spirit (Ps 51:10) will flow sincerity and uprightness, incessant thanksgiving to God for all that He gives and words of grace to everyone in all circumstances.

Second, on occasions that our Lord recognizes the need for us to be purged before we do, He puts us through trials. Trials enable us to grow to know the Lord and ourselves better. Pushed to the end of our road, we realize that God is the only One we can rely on. In the midst of our suffering, we are compelled to take a careful and honest look at ourselves. When we do that, we shall be able to identify the many blemishes that continue to separate us from our Holy God. Once identified, we humbly ask for His mercy and forgiveness, as well as the strength to overcome these weaknesses. This is not unlike emerging from the great tribulation with our robes washed clean in His blood (Rev 7:14). We become perfect in the eyes of God by the grace of His forgiveness. This is most precious of all.

Walking in God's way requires great trust. Although we acknowledge the need for purging, there are times we are not quite able to see why we have to suffer. We are not the first and certainly will not be the last to struggle and doubt (Ps 73:2–4; 77:1–3; Hab 1:1–3). Indeed, adversities are particularly unbearable when the solution we long for is not forthcoming although we have asked for wisdom from the Lord. This seriously tests our determination to follow the Lord's way. Through these times, we must cling on to God's promises that He knows what we are going through and that He intends it for our good. Paul is a sterling exemplar to us in such a situation (cf. 2 Cor 12:7–10).

THROUGH WHOLEHEARTED SERVICE TO GOD

Serving God is a grace that none is

Fearing God also means that we do not compromise God's principles. Only then can the fear of God reign supreme in our lives and truly help us to know and understand Him (Prov 1:7; 9:10). Knowing God, in turn, will help us navigate through this life. In this way, we build ourselves upon the foundation of the truth to become perfect.

worthy to receive. Those who have come to this realization humbly declare that God granted them the great privilege to serve Him out of His mercy (Rom 12:1; 2 Cor 4:1; Eph 3:8). Serving God goes beyond the physical aspect of executing the assigned tasks. Our characters are revealed in the course of rendering service to God. Pride and jealousy – the dark aspects of human nature – easily surface when the heart and motivation to serve are not right before God.

How should we serve God? Besides putting in our best effort, serving God wholeheartedly must include the willingness to correct ourselves before God and others. This is particularly important for those who occupy leadership positions in the church as they are under the scrutiny of the whole church. Since every human errs prior to reaching perfection, it becomes a stiff challenge for us to recognize when we have erred, and be willing to humbly confess our errors and imperfections. Though extremely hurtful to the ego, it is nevertheless a requisite step to be taken if we are to spiritually benefit and grow.

Most importantly, serving God is preparing ourselves to see the face of our Master, Jesus Christ (Lk 12:40). We tend to slack in the pursuit of perfection when accountability is not demanded. Knowing that we shall be called to account for our service to Him will make us give the highest priority to preparing ourselves according to His will (cf. Lk 12:46–48). Accountability in service impels us to right ourselves from wrongs and do all things for God and God alone.

CONCLUSION

To strive towards perfection is a lifelong endeavor encompassing

every conceivable facet of our existence. Although perfection may appear to be a goal beyond human reach, it becomes attainable if we abide in Christ, rely on the power of the Spirit and earnestly cultivate ourselves.

We must make a conscientious effort to fear Him, knowing that He is our Savior. The wisdom to keep ourselves from falling into temptation comes from knowing His word and having a heart of reverence for Him.

God's love for us is revealed in His word. Being able to understand His word thoroughly puts us in good stead to perfect ourselves in pleasing and loving Him in return. Unquestionably, pleasing Him by walking in His way will be challenging, especially when things do not go our way and may even seem to work against us. In such situations, absolute trust in God is imperative. Afflictions should not turn us away from God, but should instead guide us to examine ourselves and consequently to change our ways. If we have examined ourselves but still cannot at the moment understand why we are being afflicted, let us still count it all as joy for His grace is sufficient always.

It is important to remember that fearing and loving God are not options on a checklist to be picked; they are inseparable. Our hearts are right before God when we keep His commandments not only because we fear punishment, but because we love and respect Him deeply. Righting our hearts before God will also make our service to Him acceptable. This in turn prepares us for the coming of Christ, enabling us to confidently and joyfully give an account of our service to Him. ★

So how can we wholeheartedly walk in God's way? Prophet and apostle alike give us the same answer—we must reorder our lives completely and purge ourselves from all corruption (Jas 1:21; 1 Pet 2:1).

Be Perfect Just as Your Heavenly Father Is Perfect

Based on a sermon by Tae-Hoon Jung—Chicago, USA

NOBODY'S PERFECT...

Nobody is perfect. The longer we live, the better we know ourselves and the more we realize how imperfect we are. All of us have both strengths and limitations. Consider how much we learn in school or university; even after gaining a doctorate degree, we have not yet learned and known everything in this world. No matter how much we see in this world, our sight will still be limited. In short, man is limited, and by his own efforts, he cannot be perfect.

According to the Bible, there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins (Eccl 7:20). No matter how religious we are or how much we try to be holy, we are still sinners; we cannot be perfect. Yet Jesus tells us to “be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Mt 5:48). Since God is the potter, and we are His vessels made by Him, we can achieve whatever He instructs, which, in this case, is to be perfect.

In the beginning, the heavens, the earth, and all living beings created by God were perfect. Hence, God said that it was good (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). But later, when man fell and sin entered the world, Satan

destroyed this perfection. Today, God has chosen us as His children and brought us to His church. Now He asks us to be perfect in order to restore the image of God in which we were created.

PERFECTION IS FULFILLING GOD'S PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES

God made each person with a different personality and varying abilities, and He has a different requirement for each one of us. We need not compare ourselves with others. Instead, we should strive to fulfill God's expectation towards us.

God made each of us for a purpose, and once we fulfill that purpose, we can be perfect. For example, when the potter makes a soup bowl and the bowl is being used for soup, it has fulfilled its purpose and to its maker, is thus perfect. Therefore, we should try our best to fulfill our Maker's purpose.

Conversely, if we are not fulfilling our purpose or even striving towards it, spiritual decay can set in. Consider water flowing from a mountain to a river and finally into an ocean. As it flows, it gives life to everything

around it. But sometimes the stream of water may branch off and end up in a dirty pond that gives off a stench. This water has lost its original God-designed purpose of flowing until it reaches the sea, and giving life to the land it passes through. Likewise, we must clearly identify God's purpose for our spiritual lives. Otherwise, we will go astray and our faith will become stagnant and rot.

Jesus has set this goal for us: Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. So this is our purpose—to keep pursuing God's perfection. If we do so, our life will be full of vitality. Gradually, we will be able to glorify God, and eventually, we will reach His perfection and enter the heavenly kingdom.

STRIVING FOR PERFECTION IS A PROCESS

In the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt 5), Jesus teaches us how to be perfect. Through the beatitudes, He tells us which worthwhile goals Christians should aim for. In order to achieve these goals and receive God's promised blessings, we need to constantly cultivate ourselves spiritually by relying on His Holy

Spirit and His word.

In Mt 5:48, Jesus concludes His Sermon on the Mount by specifying our ultimate goal: be perfect. As Christians, our aim is to receive these blessings and be perfect like our heavenly Father. Since we have been made a new man after our baptism (Rom 6: 3–11), we must allow our new self to grow and mature to meet God's expectations.

"You are the salt of the earth; ... You are the light of the world." (Mt 5:13,14)

Salt can be obtained by evaporating seawater. After the process of evaporation, salt still contains other impurities and has to be further purified before it becomes fine salt. Similarly, oil can be used to produce light, but first, it also needs to be refined. Likewise, in order to become perfect and be used by God, we too need to go through a process of refinement. We cannot turn into the finest salt overnight—perfection takes time.

STEPS TO PERFECTION

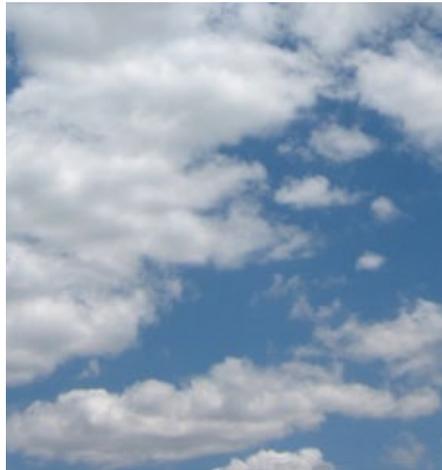
Set High Standards

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." (Mt 5:17–18)

Jesus came into this world, not to abolish but to accomplish the law by dying on the cross for us. He became the salt and light of the world, and by taking the commandments to a

higher level, He set an example for us in terms of moral standards.

For example, Jesus encourages us to avoid anger (Mt 5:21–26) and lust (Mt 5:27–30), equating them to murder and adultery respectively. He also imposes new standards regarding our speech ("Do not swear at all") and relationships ("Love your enemies"). Hence, as Christians, we need to set high standards in order to be perfect just as our heavenly Father is perfect.



Be Perfect In Holiness

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

(1 Pet 1:13-16)

"Be holy, for I am holy" can be read as "be perfect, for I am perfect." God's grace of salvation is most precious and beyond comparison with anything in this world. We have to preserve this grace. But in order to keep our salvation, we have to be holy.

We are surrounded by sin. If we are not careful, sin will enter our heart and cause us to depart from God. The young among us are especially susceptible to the countless powerful temptations that exist. But, old or young, we must not become slack and compromise with the world, lest we lose our faith. We have to be sober and watchful; we must constantly rely on the Spirit and word of God to guide us.

Be Perfect In Love

"Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful." (Lk 6:36)

The message in Luke 6:20–23, 27–36 is similar to that in Matthew 5:1–12, 43–48. Both passages refer to the beatitudes and the standard of love. Both passages end with Jesus' encouragement to love our enemies and to be like our heavenly Father. Therefore, we can once again understand that being merciful just as our Father is merciful is akin to being perfect just as our heavenly Father is perfect.

We live in a selfish world, where it is usually "me first" and others second. But as Christians, we should be different. We have to consider others first (Phil 2:4). Only then can God's love be manifested through us, and only then can we bring joy and warmth to others.

Furthermore, love is so fundamental that the underlying principle of keeping the Ten Commandments is love. The first to fourth commandments are about loving God; the fifth to tenth commandments about loving our neighbor. In short, love is the beginning of our understanding of God. It is the way to become perfect in the sight of God.

God made each person with a different personality and varying abilities, and He has a different requirement for each one of us. We need not compare ourselves with others. Instead, we should strive to fulfill God's expectation towards us. God made each of us for a purpose, and once we fulfill that purpose, we can be perfect.

We live in a selfish world, where it is usually “me first” and others second. But as Christians, we should be different. We have to consider others first (Phil 2:4). Only then can God’s love be manifested through us, and only then can we bring joy and warmth to others.

Be Perfect In Faith

“Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, ‘Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!’ ” (Mk 9:24)

Here was a father whose son was demon-possessed. When he approached the disciples for help, they could not cast out the demon. So the father turned to Jesus instead. When Jesus saw that the father did not have enough faith, He told him, “All things are possible to him who believes” (Mk 9:23). The father then cried out to Jesus, “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!”

During His ministry, Jesus healed many people. They were healed because they had faith. They did not receive healing because they deserved to be healed on account of the strength of their faith. Instead, they were healed because they had a strong desire to ask God for help, although their faith was lacking. Sometimes, we may think that we have received this or that because we had faith. But this is a misunderstanding. We receive what we ask for because God is merciful. Hence, although our faith may not be strong enough, God still helps us if we humbly ask Him.

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (1 Cor 10:12)

We should not think that we can stand firm because our faith is strong. We can stand firm because of God. True strength of faith comes from the understanding that we are weak. This realization will help us to completely rely on God and become strong.

When Jesus was about to be

crucified, Peter wanted to protect Him. He even said he would offer his life for Jesus and that he would never leave Jesus. But Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him three times. At that time, Peter still did not understand his own weakness. Jesus saw that Peter’s faith was not yet perfect. Therefore, Jesus allowed Peter to deny Him three times so that Peter could understand that he was just as weak as everybody else. Later on, when Peter had realized that he was weak and Jesus asked him for the third time, “Do you love Me?” Peter only answered, “You know that I love You.” He said this out of true faith.

Today, we may be still far from perfection. However, if we have the desire to strive for perfection and do not use human fallibility as an excuse to indulge in our weakness or tolerate sin, God will help us. With this goal, our Christian life will increasingly be filled with joy and vitality. Let us therefore strive to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. ★



The Only Church That Is Saved—True Jesus Church (III)

H.H. Ko—Heidelberg, Germany

In part two of this three-part study on one true church, we examined the uniqueness of the true church from a spiritual angle. God is One and His will is immutable—this is the basis for the church's uniqueness. Even before time began, God intended to establish only one church. Moreover, Apostle Paul compares the relationship between God and the church, which comprises believers whom the Lord Jesus has redeemed with His own blood, to that of husband and wife—an absolutely monogamous relationship. When the promised Holy Spirit filled Jesus' disciples at Pentecost, the one apostolic church was established, "[f]or there is one body and one Spirit" (Eph 4:4). Hence, from a spiritual perspective, God's true church is always one. We shall now look into the uniqueness of the True Jesus Church and explain why she is the only true church of the end times.

UNIQUENESS OF THE TRUE JESUS CHURCH FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HER NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS

The True Jesus Church Is Unique Because She Has Been Entrusted with the Truth of Salvation

When the True Jesus Church was established, her current name was prefixed with "The Church That Rectifies All Nations." She had made it her mission to continue in the salvation truth propagated in the apostolic times. If we use the Bible as our yardstick to compare the various gospels preached by different denominations globally, we

will realize that only the True Jesus Church preaches the complete gospel of salvation. This complete gospel is clearly stated in the True Jesus Church's ten articles of faith. Let us examine some key points of these articles of faith.

Through the revelation of the Holy Spirit, the True Jesus Church upholds the belief of "One true God" in accordance with the Bible¹. Furthermore, in terms of the way the True Jesus Church expounds the word of God, her view regarding holy sacraments is aligned with biblical teachings. With the presence of the Holy Spirit, she conducts baptism efficacious for the remission of sins, footwashing sacrament for having

a part with the Lord, and Holy Communion for being united with the Lord and for being resurrected on the last day. Moreover, the Holy Spirit has led the True Jesus Church to understand the truth of the Sabbath under grace. Hence, she keeps the commandment of God, and enjoys Sabbath rest with God on earth and in heaven in time to come.

While the True Jesus Church is preaching the truth, the Lord works with her and confirms the word through the accompanying signs and miracles (Mk 16:15–18). From the perspective of the entrustment of the truth of salvation in the end times, the True Jesus Church is the one and only ark in the end times, revealed and built by God.

The True Jesus Church Is Unique Because the Promised Holy Spirit Abides with Her

A scan of all Christian churches worldwide would show that the Lord has given the promised Holy Spirit only to the True Jesus Church. For the church as a whole, the presence of the promised Holy Spirit in the True Jesus Church means that the baptism she conducts has the efficacy of remission of sins: the precious blood of the Lord Jesus washes away the sins of the baptismal candidate during baptism. In addition, the promised Holy Spirit has opened the door of evangelism in the last days so that people will be able to understand the doctrine of salvation and return to the Lord's flock.

For the individual believer, the promised Holy Spirit is the guarantee of his heavenly inheritance in Christ (Eph 1:13). The Holy Spirit

testifies that believers have received the gracious anointing from God, through which they can call out Abba Father, confirming that they are the children of God, "and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Rom 8:17). The promised Holy Spirit is the power that will bring about the resurrection of the glorious body in the future (Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:20–23).

Since there is only one God (Deut 6:4) and only one incarnation of this true God (Jn 1:1,14), there can only be one church that has the indwelling of the promised Holy Spirit. Therefore, from the perspective of the abidance of the promised Holy Spirit, the True Jesus Church is the one and only church that can present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Col 1:28); she is the mother of the believers who are saved, the heavenly Jerusalem (Col 4:26; Heb 12:22).

THE PLACE OF THE TRUE JESUS CHURCH IN THE HISTORY OF SALVATION

From the creation of all things in the book of Genesis (Gen 1:1) until the fulfillment of the kingdom of God in the book of Revelation (Rev 11:15; 16:17), God is manifested in the history of mankind through the process of the "kingdom of God" coming down on earth, which is the plan of salvation. This plan of salvation originated from before creation and will conclude at the end of the world, so where is the True Jesus Church placed in this plan? To address this question, we will pass over the Old Testament and

go straight into the apostolic times to examine the position of the True Jesus Church from the perspective of the church in heaven and the church on earth.

The True Jesus Church Is the Continuation of the Apostolic Church

The structural framework of the Acts of the Apostles captured in the following period-based milestones shows how the True Jesus Church continues the spiritual lineage that began from the apostolic church.

A. Jerusalem period—Foundation building (Acts 1–7)

- Waiting in Jerusalem: the disciples received the promised Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1).

- Propagation in Jerusalem: the temple in Jerusalem was the starting point of the apostolic church and the place where the early apostolic era reached its peak (Acts 2:46; 5:12–16). Believers at that time also looked upon the holy temple as the center of their faith (Act 2–7). Moreover, in the apostolic era, the Jewish synagogues served as main bases of evangelism.

- Losing perspective in Jerusalem: believers were unwilling to disperse (Acts 8:1), although they supported the pioneering work in Samaria and Caesarea. The apostles were also constrained by their "Jerusalem complex," which was influenced by an Old Testamental fixation on geographical factors of salvation.

B. Period of Judea and Samaria—Growth (Acts 8–12)

- Steven's martyrdom, the intense persecution of the church, and the consequent dispersion of the believers led to a turning point in evangelism (Acts 8:1–8).

- Accumulation of experience and increase in human resources: Philip's evangelism to the Ethiopian eunuch, the calling of Paul, and Peter's evangelism in the house of Cornelius kick-started the pioneering evangelistic efforts towards the Gentiles.

- Critical turning point: Peter "departed and went to another place"

In the salvation plan of God, the True Jesus Church has inherited the doctrinal orthodoxy of the apostolic period. She has also received the promised Holy Spirit from God, and serves God in Spirit and truth, carrying out the great work of harvesting in the end times (cf. Mt 13:47–50). She is the physical manifestation of the "heavenly church" in the end times, a specific period in God's salvation plan, and is the one and only true church in this defined time and space.

(Acts 12:17). No longer constrained by the boundaries of Jerusalem, he proceeded towards “the ends of the world” in his evangelistic work. When Paul joined the ministry, they labored together in the work of world evangelism. We know they had worked together because Paul had commented, “Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?” (1 Cor 9:5) Subsequently, Paul toiled alone in the area of evangelism towards the Gentiles, whilst the first generation represented by Peter went to the circumcised (cf. Gal 2:9).

C. Period of preaching to the ends of the earth—Peak and completion (Acts 13–28)

During this period, Paul was the representative evangelist, and the Jewish synagogues were the bases of evangelism (Acts 13:5, 14–15, 42; 14:1; 15:21; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 7–8, 17–19, 26; 19:8). The era began with the prayer group in Antioch (Acts 13:1–3) and ended with the Jerusalem riot such that “immediately the doors (of the temple) were shut” (Acts 21:30). This was then followed by a period of defending the word, which Paul did on four occasions (Acts 22:1; 24:10; 25:8; 26:1). The Acts of the Apostles concludes with Paul receiving and teaching those who came to him while he was under house arrest (Acts 28:30–31).

D. “The hardening of the hearts of the Jewish people”—Conclusion of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 28:23–27)

The Acts of the Apostles concluded with Paul’s carefully designed evangelism work and defense during house arrest (Acts 28:17–28), which is a stark contrast to Peter’s impromptu evangelistic sermon during Pentecost at the beginning of the apostolic period. One took place at the beginning while the other occurred at the end; one was during the rise of the era while the other was at its decline. Together they formed the framework of the history of the kingdom of God during the apostolic times.

When Paul preached and defended the word of God during his house arrest, he continuously spoke about God’s word from morning until night. He exhausted all resources in expounding the laws of Moses and the books of the prophets, testifying of the kingdom of God and Jesus from the Scriptures, but in the end, no one was moved and the people departed because they could not agree.

Just before the people went away, Paul quoted the prophesy of Isaiah “... ‘Go to this people and say: “Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; [a]nd seeing you will see, and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, [a]nd their eyes they have closed, [I]est they should understand with their hearts and turn, [s]o that I should heal them” (Acts 28:26–27; Isa 6:9–13). This signified a pause in the period for the Jews to receive salvation. In his old age, Paul told the young evangelist Timothy: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim 4:3–5).

Paul had made a prophetic proclamation in Romans 9–11 regarding the question of Israelites being forsaken and Gentiles receiving salvation. In fact, the apostolic period concluded with Paul’s prophetic proclamation: “Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!” (Acts 28:28). This was the last statement spoken by an apostle in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul’s prophecy regarding the beginning of another evangelistic period is fulfilled in our generation. Entering into the end times, God sent the latter rain Holy Spirit to establish the True Jesus Church, which comprises a majority of Gentiles, through whom the ministry of the word is now being carried out.

Table 1 is a brief illustration of the relationship between the structure of the Acts of the Apostles and the Book of Revelation:

Table 1

Beginning of the Acts of the Apostles	End of the Acts of the Apostles	The fulfillment of the kingdom of God in the last days
Upper room	Rented house	The True Jesus Church attains perfection
120 persons	1 person	TJC
(Acts 1:13–15)	(Acts 28:30)	(Rev 4–22)

In the Plan of Salvation, the True Jesus Church Is the One and Only True Church of the End Times Within Time and Space

At the end of the Acts of the Apostles, the Jews who were the original recipients of grace had quickly become hardhearted and obstinate. According to Paul’s report, they were those “who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost” (1 Thess 2:15–16). The Jewish synagogue, originally the apostles’ evangelism base, had become “a synagogue of Satan” in the eyes of the Lord Jesus by the time Apostle John wrote the book of Revelation (Rev 2:9).

The Holy Spirit of promise established the apostolic church on the day of Pentecost, with Jesus Christ as the church’s corner stone and the apostles and prophets as her foundation (Eph 2:20). However, during the last days of the apostolic period, that is “while men slept,” the devil came and sowed “sons of the wicked one” in the field of God (cf. Mt 13:24–30, 36–42). From then

on, the apostolic church that had the truth and the Holy Spirit gradually degenerated.

The departure of the Holy Spirit of promise can be validated by the rise of Montanism. This is universally acknowledged as the first charismatic movement in church history. The advocate of this campaign, Montanus, publicly proclaimed in 156 A.D. that the Holy Spirit had greatly moved him to become a vessel of the Holy Spirit and to reveal the mystery of God; he began to rebuke the Christians of his time and accused them of accepting worldly philosophies, corrupting the church organization, submitting to the schemes of man, going against the guidance of the Holy Spirit, disobeying the holy teachings, and indulging in their own dissipation. He also accused the bishops of being unspiritual, of bringing shame to their office by not performing their duties, and of not being qualified for their holy vocation, as they lacked the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Not long afterwards, he declared that the Helper whom Jesus mentioned in John 14 had come and that this was fulfilled in him.

We shall not discuss the credibility of Montanus' message here. However, when we read of the circumstance of the church then, and how he advocated the return to "spiritual gifts" that were lost, we know that the promised Holy Spirit had left the Catholic Church before 156 A.D.

From historical records, we can trace the degradation of the historical church in terms of the compromises it made and its alteration of the truth. For example, from second century

writings such as "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" (The Didache), chapter 7, a record on baptism reads:

But concerning baptism, thus shall ye baptize. Having first recited all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living (running) water. But if thou hast not living water, then baptize in other water; and if thou art not able in cold, then in warm. But if thou hast neither, then pour water on the head thrice in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let him that baptizeth and him that is baptized fast, and any others also who are able; and thou shalt order him that is baptized to fast a day or two before.²

This excerpt shows that the church at that time still preserved part of the original truth, for example: the strict expectation of the baptismal candidate and the administration of baptism in flowing water, similar to Jesus' baptism in River Jordan (Mt 3:13–17). However, in the apostolic church, baptism was conducted in the name of Jesus (Act 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16), which had been changed to baptizing in the "name of the Father, Son and of the Holy Spirit." There was another deviation from the original pattern of truth. Instead of insisting on baptizing in living water, they sacrificed the truth for convenience under special circumstances. Words such as "but" and "if" appeared. For example, they had added: "But if thou hast not living water, then baptize in other water; and if thou art not able in cold, then in warm. But if thou

hast neither, then pour water on the head...." From here, we see that the truth concerning baptism for the remission of sins was lost.

Following this, man-made religious festivals and speculative lore about piety continuously seeped into the church, appearing in the form of Christmas, worship of Mary, and assimilation of other pagan practices into Christianity. Due to the absence of the Holy Spirit, the degradation of the truth, and pagan influences, the apostolic church went into "Babylonian captivity."

In the salvation plan of God, the True Jesus Church has inherited the doctrinal orthodoxy of the apostolic period. She has also received the promised Holy Spirit from God, and serves God in Spirit and truth, carrying out the great work of harvesting in the end times (cf. Mt 13:47–50). She is the physical manifestation of the "heavenly church" in the end times, a specific period in God's salvation plan, and is the one and only true church in this defined time and space.

In the Plan of Salvation, the True Jesus Church Is One with the Heavenly Church Beyond Time and Space

From the perspective of the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places (cf. Eph 1:3), the chosen people of the Old Testament, the saints in the apostolic church, the people of God in the True Jesus Church, which is the ark of the last days, as well as the remnant of Israel who are saved after the gentile numbers are fulfilled form the "heavenly Jerusalem." They are one body in Christ Jesus through the cross (Eph 2:16). Although appearing at different times in the plan of salvation, they are hidden in the mystery of the salvation in Christ by the omniscient and omnipotent God according to His will; through the fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit, they are all born through the same mother, all belonging to the "heavenly Jerusalem" (Gal 4:26).

CONCLUSION

The truth is clear when we put

From the perspective of the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places (cf. Eph 1:3), the chosen people of the Old Testament, the saints in the apostolic church, the people of God in the True Jesus Church, which is the ark of the last days, as well as the remnant of Israel who are saved after the gentile numbers are fulfilled form the "heavenly Jerusalem." They are one body in Christ Jesus through the cross (Eph 2:16).

together the various bases discussed earlier. The True Jesus Church is the only saved church—not due to external factors, but because of what she is spiritually. She is the ark of the end times, ordained by God. From the perspective of the spiritual characteristics of a church, we know she has the evidence of being established by God—she has received the promised Holy Spirit and revelation of the truth of salvation that presents man perfect before God. She is now carrying out the will of God to accomplish the great work of God's salvation in the end times.

Therefore, in these last days, the True Jesus Church is the only church of God amongst the multitude of denominational churches. If any one thirsts for the grace of salvation from God, the True Jesus Church is the only church of God, where this grace can be found. She is the "Jerusalem above" that the nations shall go to for blessings of rain (Gal 4:26; Zech 14:16–17). ★

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Steadfast in the Truth

Our faith is precious because we have the immutable truth. This truth is the word of God which guides us through our lives. Following the truth keeps us from getting lost in our journey through life and will eventually lead us into the heavenly kingdom. [Read more...](#)

Christian Living

So We May Boldly Say: "The Lord Is My Helper"

Korea is a divided country and men who are over eighteen years old must do military service for a year and nine months. The military service is not easy. Nowadays, it is a lot better, but previously, everyone had to suffer beatings, insults and wrongdoings from senior officers or senior soldiers. From young, I have heard many negative stories about military service, so I was quite afraid to enter the army. [Read more..](#)

Our Stories

In the Sweet By and By

Sister Lee Chor Sian hails from Alor Star, a town in northern Malaysia. She moved to Singapore in 2001 to live with her children after her late husband Bro Lew Sey Lou rested in the Lord in 2000. In this testimony, Sis Lee recounts the two dreams she had when her late husband fell seriously ill and shortly before he passed away. [Read more...](#)

Q & A

Why We Can and Should Baptize Our Infants

Why do we baptize our infants even though they cannot believe and repent? [Read more...](#)

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If you would like to receive a monthly supply of spiritual encouragement, please subscribe to our e-newsletter, The True Vine!
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1 For details, please refer to The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, 2008, Elder Sun Tao Hsieh, Chapter 1.3

2 Source: <http://www.annomundi.com/bible/didache.pdf>



What the LORD Delights In

Rebecca Lee—Calgary, Canada

TRAGEDY IN ZIKLAG

First Samuel chapter thirty records one of the most distressing times for David and his men; perhaps more distressing than being fugitives from Saul when they had to constantly rove from place to place. It was the time when their temporary dwelling place, Ziklag, had been burned and their wives, sons, and daughters taken captive by the Amalekites.

Here we have an emotionally charged scene: hundreds of families torn apart, mighty men wept until they had no more energy to weep, and everyone completely uncertain of the future. David's men, who had been loyal to him all along, even "spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved" (1 Sam 30:6). With such bitterness and tension, it is difficult to imagine a happy ending.

STRENGTH IN THE LORD

But we see that David reacted differently, even though his own family had also been taken from him. He looked no further than to God for strength, and with that strength, he was able to lead his men, under the guidance of the LORD, to recover all

that had been stolen.

Of the six hundred men, two hundred were too weary to cross Brook Besor and stayed behind with the supplies. David and four hundred men went after the Amalekites and triumphantly recovered everything from them. Just imagine the joyful family reunions that followed—wives embracing their knights-in-shining-armor and children waiting to exalt their fathers for rescuing them.

This may appear to be a happy ending, but much more follows when we read on. From these subsequent events, we can learn three important characteristics of David that the LORD delighted in and how these characteristics apply to our servitude today.

A KIND WORD

On their return to Brook Besor, the two hundred men who were anxiously waiting must have been exhilarated at the very sight of their loved ones returning! David and his men, however, would be exhausted after attacking the Amalekites from twilight of the previous day until evening of that day. Yet David somehow found the strength to greet

the two hundred and ask about their welfare. Such lovingkindness and compassion could have only come from the strength that the LORD gave him.

David was a great leader, but that did not stop him from showing lovingkindness to the people around him. This is what the LORD delighted in and something we should apply in our interactions with our brethren. Sometimes we may be given a task or responsibility in church that seems to be more important than what others are doing. However, we should be careful not to disregard or ignore our brothers and sisters in the background, no matter how preoccupied we are.

Perhaps we may be completely exhausted or anxious to get on with personal matters, but we should never be too tired or too busy to greet our brethren and ask about their well-being. Sometimes we tend to underestimate the emotional comfort a simple greeting like "How are you" can bring to a person. It could make the difference between someone feeling coldly neglected or warmly cared for in the house of God.

Perhaps we may be completely exhausted or anxious to get on with personal matters, but we should never be too tired or too busy to greet our brethren and ask about their well-being.

A BEAUTIFUL MOMENT DESTROYED

Back to this beautiful scene of the triumphant return. When the two hundred men who stayed behind were about to be reunited with their families, an ugly turn of events emerged. The Bible describes that “all the wicked and worthless men of those who went with David” suddenly became territorial and did not want to divide the spoils they recovered. Not only that, they wanted the two hundred men to take their own families and be gone. In their opinion, these two hundred did not deserve any of the spoils or the glory.

Think about it—these men who had just fought alongside David, accomplishing the will of God, were now referred to as “wicked and worthless!” The Hebrew word for worthless is *belial*, which encompasses a range of meanings such as being ungodly, evil, corrupt, or useless. What is interesting is that the Bible uses this very same word to describe idolaters¹, those who withhold from the poor², the perverted men from Gibeah³, the sons of Eli⁴, the rebels who despised Saul after he was anointed⁵, Nabal⁶, and Jezebel’s false witnesses⁷—just to name a few. So after a great victory from God, David’s men brought shame and humiliation to themselves when they revealed what was in their hearts.

In the same way, when we start to think that we are better than our brothers or sisters, we tread on dangerous ground. Perhaps we may not only ignore them but may even go so far as to despise them! Such feelings might arise when we feel that others just sat around while we did all the hard work. Perhaps we might then also want them to take what is theirs and be on their way,

thinking that we are fair. However, if we think like this, we would be placed in the same category as all the worthless people in the Bible! Any kind of reward from God for the work we have done would automatically be stripped away. Any worker who compares his worth to another worker and prides himself as better is deemed worthless in the eyes of God.

ALL GLORY BELONGS TO GOD

To their amazement, David calmly told the four hundred, “My brethren, you shall not do so with what the LORD has given us, who has preserved us and delivered into our hand the troop that came against us.” This humble response from David must have made them feel ashamed of themselves. Yet, all the while, David maintained his composure and did not reprimand them.

One stark difference between David and his men was how they viewed their victory. The men felt that they had recovered what was theirs and that the spoil was a bonus reward. Likewise, when we feel that we own the victories God gives us in life, we may make the same mistake as these men. We may feel as though everything is a given and that we deserve what we have worked hard for. However, in doing so, we are keeping the glory from God when, in fact, all glory belongs to Him. For without God, we have nothing and can do nothing (Acts 17:28; Jn 15:5).

Perhaps, like the men who went to battle, we only desire or accept tasks that show instant results. We do not view menial tasks with similar importance as tasks that provide high profile and have far-reaching effects. Yet in God’s righteous eyes, any kind of work that we do for Him is valuable such that we all share alike in His blessings.

David, however, saw the big picture. He saw how every man broke down at the thought of losing their loved ones. He too lost hope for a second, but remembered to strengthen himself in the LORD and was able to pursue the Amalekites. He saw how God preserved his people’s lives and the lives of their families. He saw how God delivered the enemy into their hands as He had promised. He saw how everything was graciously given from the LORD.

David rightly judged the situation with a perspective from above, and the LORD delighted in this also. We too must learn to see things from God’s perspective rather than our own. Only then can we humble ourselves and give all glory to God as we serve Him.

THEY SHALL SHARE ALIKE

David went on to say, “But as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike” (1 Sam 30:24). This short but authoritative statement shows that the righteousness of God was in David. Because no one could refute such righteousness, he boldly set the precedent that day, making equal respect a “statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day” (1 Sam 30:25).

From God’s righteousness, which David emulated, we can learn that all church work is equally important and no work should be slighted. Apostle Paul put this aptly:

And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor... God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there

should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

(1 Cor 12:23-26)

Nowadays, this may apply to us when we are assigned to do tasks that we do not view as important. Perhaps, like the men who went to battle, we only desire or accept tasks that show instant results. We do not view menial tasks with similar importance as tasks that provide high profile and have far-reaching effects. Yet in God's righteous eyes, any kind of work that we do for Him is valuable, and we all share alike in His blessings.

UNDERSTAND AND KNOW THE LORD

From these events at Ziklag, we can see that David's perspectives always

transcended that of his men—whether they were faced with a devastating situation or a triumphant victory. This was because David chose to look from God's perspective and acknowledged that he was nothing before God. In David's heart was God's own lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness—evident in his words and his doings. The LORD clearly delights in these, as it is written in Jeremiah 9:23–24:

*Thus says the LORD:
 "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,
 Let not the mighty man glory in his might,
 Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;
 But let him who glories glory in this,
 That he understands and knows Me,
 That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.
 For in these I delight," says the LORD.*

Let us keep in mind that the mentioned events occurred before David became the King of Judah. In other words, he was not yet exalted as a wise, mighty, or rich man who should receive glory. Yet because David had always understood and known the heart of God, he, unlike Saul, remained highly favored by God and by men even after he was anointed as king.

In times of distress, let us strengthen ourselves in the Lord. In times of victory, let us give all the glory to Him. May we always strive to have a loving, humble, and righteous heart like David in our life of service to God so that He may also delight in us. ★

- 1 Deut 13:13
- 2 Deut 15:9
- 3 Judg 19:22, 20:13
- 4 1 Sam 2:12
- 5 1 Sam 10:27
- 6 1 Sam 25:25
- 7 1 Kgs 21:10,13

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The Fall of Satan—A Biblical Investigation (II)

Ci Yi Luo—Taiwan

Adapted from Holy Spirit Monthly—Issue 423

In part (I) of this article, we explained the origin of the names “Satan” and “devil,” and established a correct understanding of the God we worship. He is the one and only self-existing true God and the Creator of all things that are in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.

THE FALL THAT OCCURRED BETWEEN “THE CREATION OF ALL THINGS” AND “THE RECONCILIATION OF ALL THINGS TO GOD”

In the first two chapters of Genesis, the beauty and goodness of God’s creation is repeated in the phrase: “God saw that it was good”¹. After God created human beings and entrusted them with their mission, the Bible emphasizes that God “saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen 1:31).

However, such goodness did not last; after our first ancestors disobeyed God, sin entered the world and death came to all men (Gen 3).

In Colossians 1:12–22, Paul briefly outlines the essential elements of God’s salvation. From the passage, we learn that God had not only “created all things,” but that critically, Jesus, our Savior, “made peace” through His precious blood that was shed on the cross. His blood brought about salvation, through which “all things were reconciled to God”².

Reconciliation is effected through water baptism for the forgiveness of sins, enabling the redeemed to be holy. This brief but vital description of the redemption process clearly shows a “fall” and “salvation” between “the creation of all things” and “the reconciliation of all things to God.” Comparing “the creation of all things” and “the reconciliation of all things to God,” we can understand two important points: first, these two events occurred at different time periods; and second, the meaning of “all things” is not entirely identical within these different time periods.

THE FALL OF GOD’S SPIRITUAL CREATION

Amongst “all things” that God made, there are both physical and spiritual beings. Satan is the fallen creature among the spiritual “things” that God created:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ’s Testimony

When the seventy whom Jesus had sent out returned from their

preaching, Jesus took the opportunity to reveal a mystery of the spiritual realm to them. He told them: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Lk 10:18).

This testimony was from Jesus’ own knowledge as the Word made flesh. To have seen Satan falling from heaven transcends any human experience, but Jesus witnessed this process in His role as the Eternal One and revealed it to us. From Jesus’ statement —“Satan fall...from heaven”—we can deduce that Satan was one of the members of heaven. Falling out of heaven in the original text is *ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ* (ek tou ouranou), which means that Satan originally belonged to the kingdom of God.

2. Apostle John’s Report

In addition to Jesus’ testimony, John also reported the cause of Satan’s fall: “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy

the works of the devil” (1 Jn 3:8). This verse marks the point in time when the devil started sinning, which is “from the beginning.” It is important to note that “from the beginning” (ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς – ap’ archís) is not the same as “in the beginning” (ἐν ἀρχῇ – en archē). The Gospel of John shares that “[i]n the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life...” (Jn 1:1–4) Although the two phrases sound similar, it is important to differentiate between the two.

In the Book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus revealed: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last” (Rev 21:6; 22:13). In the beginning, only God existed. His existence is unique, as no other being can be ranked equally with Him or indeed self-exist. “In the beginning,” the Word was with God, and the true God created the heavens and the earth. In the beginning, “all things” were created and were sinless. This is why God declares that these were “good” at their creation.

“From the beginning” is quite different; it refers to a time after the beginning when all was pure and blameless. It points to a time after sin entered the world. Furthermore, when John says that Satan “sinned,” he uses the term ἁμαρτάνει (hamartánei), which means “to sin and to continually sin.” Satan sinned and has continually sinned against God since that moment in time.

In the beginning, only God existed. His existence is unique, as no other being can be ranked equally with Him or indeed self-exist. “In the beginning,” the Word was with God, and the true God created the heavens and the earth. In the beginning, “all things” were created and were sinless. This is why God declares that these were “good” at their creation. “From the beginning” is quite different; it refers to a time after the beginning when all was pure and blameless. It points to a time after sin entered the world.

3. Peter and Jude’s Explanations

Peter and Jude also left us information about fallen angels in the spiritual world. Peter tells us that “God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment” (2 Pet 2:4). Jude also explains this truth: “the angels who did not keep their proper domain...left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, for the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6). If we compare these two passages, we receive a clear understanding of the fallen angel:

Bible verse:	2 Peter 2:4	Jude 6
Angel committing sin and its connotations:	Even angels sinned	The angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode
Mortal sin:	God did not spare them	God has reserved in everlasting chains
Being detained in a place prior to Judgment Day:	Cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness	Under darkness
Final judgment:	To be reserved for judgment	For the judgment of the great day

From these two verses, we can see that the angels sinned because they “did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode.” In other words, they disobeyed God, as they failed to maintain their assigned positions as well as to fulfill their duties and responsibilities.

God does not spare a fallen angel. Jude received the revelation and used the expression “He has reserved in everlasting chains” to depict God’s punishment for mortal sins. While the fallen angels await Judgment Day, they will be reserved in everlasting chains in darkness, able to move around in the kingdom of darkness but having no opportunity to be reconciled with God. Before Judgment Day, “darkness” will be their only destiny—in other words, “hell” or the “dark pit.” This “hell” or “dark pit” does not refer to the “hell” of eternal condemnation, the “lake of fire burning with brimstone” that will occur after the Judgment Day. Instead, it refers to a kingdom of darkness reserved for fallen angels.

This punishment occurred because Satan was “puffed up with pride” (1 Tim 3:6), and his trick tempted Eve to try to “be like God.” These points triggered Satan’s ultimate downfall in the spiritual world.

4. Paul’s Warning

When explaining God’s creation, Paul said: “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him” (Col 1:16). All things created by God are good, and it is important to understand that the “all things” He created include “principalities or powers.”

In Ephesians 6:11–12, Paul warns the believers to “[p]ut on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” From his words, we learn that “principalities” and “powers” have become equal

The “principalities or powers” were part of the “all things” created by God, and were originally good. Later, however, they became the enemies of the redeemed believers, and were at par with the “rulers of the darkness of this age” and “spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12).

to the rulers of darkness and the representation of evil that we, as believers, fight against.

“PRINCIPALITIES OR POWERS” WITHIN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD—THEIR ORIGIN AND DESTRUCTION

Information in the Bible provides insight into the origin and destruction of the “principalities or powers” within the spiritual world.

The “principalities or powers” within the spiritual world originated from God’s creation as we have seen in Colossians 1:16.

1. The “Principalities or Powers” Became the Believers’ Spiritual Enemies

The “principalities or powers” were part of the “all things” created by God, and were originally good. Later, however, they became the enemies of the redeemed believers, and were at par with the “rulers of the darkness of this age” and “spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12).

2. The Salvation of the Lord Jesus Prevailed over the “Principalities or Powers”

Because of our merciful Father’s great love for us, He was manifested in the flesh³. Through the cross, Jesus “disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (Col 2:15). Ephesians 1:21 states that after Jesus resurrected from the dead, He became “far above all principality, and power.” This was only possible through His broken body and shed blood (Heb 10:20-22); His blood redeemed the church “to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by

the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places” (Eph 3:10). Therefore, in confidence and joy, Paul testifies that through Jesus’ blood and because of His intercession on our behalf to reconcile us to God, we are “more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom 8:37–38).

3. The “Principalities or Powers” Were Destroyed

The opening of the Lord’s Prayer hopes for the name of our Father in heaven to be made holy, for His kingdom to come, and for His will to be done (Mt 6:9–10). We know that these will come to pass when Jesus’ revelation to John is fulfilled: “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev 20:10). Though worded differently, Paul declares that when the end comes, Jesus “[will] deliver(s) the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power” (1 Cor 15:24), which brings together the two passages from Matthew and from the Book of Revelation.

[To be continued...] ★

In the final installment of this article, we will examine the work of Satan and his limits, how Jesus has triumphed over Satan, and how evil will eventually be destroyed.

1 Gen 1:4, 12, 18, 21, 25
 2 Rom 5:10, 11, 15; 2 Cor 5:20;
 Eph 2:16; Col 1:20
 3 Jn 1:14; 1 Tim 3:16

Unchanging Faith

Based on a sermon by Aun-Quek Chin—Singapore



CHANGING FAITHS, CHANGING FAITH

In 2007, the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey found that more than a quarter of American adults (28%) had left the faith in which they were raised in favor of another religion, or professed no religion at all. If the change in affiliation from one denomination to another was included, 44% of adults had either switched religious affiliation, moved from being unaffiliated with any religion to being affiliated with a particular faith, or dropped any connection to a specific religious tradition altogether.

Since its establishment by the Holy Spirit in 1917, believers in the True Jesus Church (TJC) all over the world have been united by “one body and one Spirit, ... one hope of [our] calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all” (Eph 4:4–6). But in a world that prides itself on having change as the only constant, have we also – like the 44% of Americans - changed in our faith?

This is no empty threat. As in the days of the apostolic church, the TJC today faces renewed and relentless

attempts to change her teachings. As individuals, these crises are a personal trial of faith for us. Do we truly believe? Why do we believe? Have we changed in our faith and faithfulness to the Lord’s word? Constant self-examination of our faith is critical (2 Cor 13:5). As the ultimate aim of our faith is salvation, we must know what we ought to do in order to be saved.

HALF-TRUTHS IN THE TRUE CHURCH?

Some may wonder how deviant teachings can possibly arise in the TJC, a church who has the truth and the presence of the Holy Spirit. In their disappointment, some even begin to doubt that the TJC is the true church. Yet we need neither be surprised nor disappointed, for the Holy Spirit has already revealed that such things will surely befall the true church. God allows this as a test for us. As Paul told Timothy, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim 4:1).

Paul did not just stop at warning Timothy but also added: “If you

instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed” (1 Tim 4:6). Today, every minister of the church, as a steward of God’s household, has the responsibility to remind the brethren not to heed deviant teachings and never to veer from the pure unadulterated word of God. Whether as part of our pulpit ministry or other areas of church work, we have the responsibility to protect the believers so that they are not deceived and can stand firm in the truth.

A CHANGING VIEW OF THE ONE TRUE CHURCH DOCTRINE

In the TJC, believers are still strongly convinced that there is only one true God; we have no qualms proclaiming the one true Savior. However, when asked about their belief in the one true church that is saved, some hesitate. In fact, many have wavered in their belief and chosen to reject this article of faith. Why? There are two common reasons.

First, the doctrine of the one church that is saved is a concept that turns

off many other Christians because it smacks of elitism and arrogance. Proclaiming this doctrine inevitably opens us to more quarrels with other churches. Some believers thus feel that, to co-exist harmoniously with the rest of Christendom and perhaps even grow in favor with them, the TJC ought not highlight her differences nor emphasize that we are the only church that is saved. They justify such reticence as diplomacy and “respect for another person’s beliefs.”

But reflect a little deeper. If refraining from the one-true-church claim were the right and wisest step to take, should we also stop preaching about the one true God and the one true Savior? Preaching these aspects has even more serious consequences. When we talk about the one true church that is saved, we merely offend other Christians. However, when we talk about the one true God and one true Savior, we risk offending every other religion in the world!

Although we could please non-believing friends and family by saying that “all religions are the same because they all teach you to be good, Christianity is just one of the many ways to God or the Ultimate Being,” we will never say that. We bravely proclaim that there is only one true God because we truly believe Jesus’ words that He is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6). We strive hard to bring the people we love to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ because we believe the Scriptures’ teaching that there is salvation in no-one else, “for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Similarly, we have made the decision to be baptized in the TJC, believing in all the “one-s” elaborated by Paul in Ephesians 4:4–6. Yet why are we afraid to say that there is a one true church that is saved?

This leads us to the second reason. We still firmly believe that “one true God” and “one true Savior” are part of the truth. But some of us are no longer totally convinced that the truth also includes the teaching that there is only one true church that is

saved. We thus need to understand again why the true church concept is a biblical truth and not just a claim concocted by some ministers in the TJC.

THE FALLACY OF LOVE

When the TJC was first established in 1917 in China, the number of believers was small and many of the early workers came from poor financial backgrounds and were without much education. But they were unmovable in their belief that the True Jesus Church is the only church that is saved, and went forth to preach exactly that. Undoubtedly, they were met with skepticism, and the true church concept was criticized for its seemingly arrogant and cultic nature.

Almost a century later, we thank God that the TJC today is all around the world. No longer do other Christian churches reject her as a cult. Many have understood that we call ourselves the true church because we truly adhere to all that is commanded in the Bible. These other churches also acknowledge that there are some parts of the Bible that they have not truly obeyed, because they have different interpretations of those passages. But they cannot and do not deny that the teachings of the True Jesus Church are in accordance with the Bible. At worst, they merely describe the TJC as “fundamentalist” due to our strict adherence to the Scriptures or our relative conservatism.

Ironically, there are members and even ministers from within the TJC family who have stood up to challenge her claim to be the one true church that is saved. When believers who were already embarrassed to tell others that the TJC is the one true church hear of this, they are naturally attracted by such a message. These detractors even play the “love” card. They say that other churches are full of love. Their missionaries have taken the gospel to the poorest of poor countries. Some even emigrate to these countries with their spouse and children. Besides evangelism, these missionaries have also done

a lot of charitable work. They have established orphanages, hospitals, and schools. And despite all their good works, the TJC says that they cannot be saved because the TJC is the only church that is saved. We have neither their love nor sacrifice, yet we mock them.

Hearing this, some may agree that it is embarrassing to continue to state we are the one true church. Is this right? Should we stop teaching a biblical truth because we have yet to match other churches’ standard of love and service to society? Should the TJC eliminate an article of faith because it disqualifies other churches whose social service and evangelistic efforts surpass ours?

We must return to the fundamental question—on what does salvation depend? If salvation could be earned through actions of love, Jesus would not have to be crucified and to die for us; and we would not need to talk about baptism, footwashing, Holy Communion, etc. As long as you have faith and love, you can be saved. It is your faith and love that saves you. This is the gospel of love advocated by some denominations.

While this gospel of love is appealing in its simplicity, can it truly effect the forgiveness of human sin and bring salvation to a person? When we read the Bible and study what Jesus says, we understand that man’s salvation does not depend on his actions, no matter how much love he has shown or how great a sacrifice he has undertaken. Instead, we are saved by believing that our sins are forgiven through water baptism in the name of Jesus. By and through Jesus’ love and His death on the cross for us, we receive the forgiveness of our sins, and thus salvation. By that reasoning, if a person has not and does not receive this forgiveness of sin, he or she will not be saved; no matter what great deeds of love he or she has achieved.

WHY WE MUST BELIEVE IN THE ONE TRUE CHURCH DOCTRINE

Understanding and believing the truth is thus very important, and belief in the one true church is an

indispensable article of faith, which brooks no compromise. There are three reasons why.

Christ Only Established One Church

Firstly, there is only one church that is saved because Christ only established one church.

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (Mt 16:18)

The Lord Jesus said, “I will build My church on this rock.” Jesus Himself established the church and personally built up this church. Importantly, He did not set up different churches. He only established one church to save both the Jews and the Gentiles.

“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.” (Jn 10:16)

It is the will of God for everyone to be saved, not just the Jews. However, there is a process for the attainment of God’s will. First, the gospel was preached to the Jews. Hence, in the time of Jesus, the sheep of the Lord referred to the Jews. When Jesus first sent out His workers, they were sent to the Jews to preach the gospel. After the Jews, the gospel was to be taken to the Gentiles so that the sheep of the Lord amongst them would return to Jesus’ fold (cf. Rom 15:15–19). These are also the “other sheep” that the Lord wants to bring into His fold.

Jews and Gentiles are to be one

flock, belonging to one shepherd. Sheep of other flocks will have to be rescued and integrated into this one flock that belongs to Jesus. It stands to reason that there should only be one church that is saved, a church comprising not only the Jews but also the Gentiles. This is the church built by the Lord Jesus—the one church that is saved.

Christ Gives the Keys to Heaven to Only One Church

Secondly, the church that is saved is only one because the Lord Jesus has given the keys of heaven only to this church.

“And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Mt 16:19)

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said that He would build His church. There would only be one church through which both Jews and Gentiles will be saved. In Matthew 16:19, Jesus went on to say that He would give this church the keys of the kingdom of heaven. These keys confer the authority to open up heaven. Whoever holds these keys to heaven will have the authority to lead people into heaven. Such authority was not given to Peter alone. Rather, Peter accepted this authority on behalf of the church. Since the Lord Jesus has entrusted the church with the keys of heaven, she has the authority to mete out judgment and salvation.

Some claim that judgment and salvation is the sole prerogative of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, they teach that

we only need to believe in Jesus and not the church, because Jesus has the sole authority to forgive or condemn us of sin. This is in direct contradiction to Jesus’ unequivocal statement: He has given this authority, these keys of heaven, to the church.

In particular, this authority refers to the true gospel that allows man to be saved so that they can enter into heaven. The Lord Jesus established the church so that the gospel of salvation could be preached to all man through the church. The church conducts the baptism that washes away sins, the footwashing sacrament that allows believers to have a part with the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Communion so that those who partake of it can share in the life of Jesus; the church also teaches the believers to pray to the Lord for the promised Holy Spirit. All these are Jesus’ instructions and are directly related to salvation. Rejecting the church’s role in conducting these is akin to rejecting the truth. The following examples illustrate:

Challenge 1: The TJC maintains that a person who does not receive baptism conducted by the church will not have his or her sins forgiven, and thus cannot be saved. Some challenge this by saying that their faith is established on Jesus alone, and that should be sufficient. Since different denominations have varying interpretations of the Scriptures, baptism in Christendom is conducted in many different ways. Hence, belief in Jesus is all that is needed for salvation. The church has no authority.

Clarification: It is crucial to recognize that the baptism sacrament conducted in the TJC was not invented by her ministers. Jesus Himself was baptized as an example for us. Moreover, Jesus instructed the church to carry out baptism, saying, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...” (Mk

Since its establishment by the Holy Spirit in 1917, believers in the True Jesus Church all over the world have been united by “one body and one Spirit, ... one hope of [our] calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all” (Eph 4:4–6). But in a world that prides itself on having change as the only constant, have we also – like the 44% of Americans - changed in our faith?

16:16a; Mt 28:19–20).

All these are instructions from the Lord Jesus that allow us to be saved. If we believe, our sins are removed and we are saved. If we do not believe in the baptism that saves, our sins continue to be pinned on us and we are bound to them. The church's possession of authority does not arise because the church elders or preachers have such authority. Instead, the church's authority is established on the truth and on the Lord Jesus.

Challenge 2: The TJC maintains that footwashing is a prerequisite for a person to have a part with Jesus. Otherwise, the person cannot be saved. Some challenge this by claiming that the TJC invented the importance of the footwashing sacrament. They describe footwashing as superfluous to salvation.

Clarification: If footwashing were merely a TJC invention, we would have to explain why Peter reacted so frantically when he heard Jesus say, "If I do not wash your feet, you have no part with me." Peter had initially rejected his Teacher's attempt to wash his feet, but now he accepted it. What was the reason for this dramatic turnaround? Peter realized that this was no ordinary footwashing custom. Instead, this was an important truth concerning salvation, and so Peter accepted the footwashing conducted by the Lord.

More generally, the TJC's five basic doctrines—baptism, footwashing, Holy Communion, Holy Spirit, and Sabbath—are all instructions given by the Lord Jesus for salvation. Even our nearest and dearest cannot be saved if they adamantly refuse to believe in these doctrines. Our faith cannot save them.

It bears repeating that no individual has the authority to decide who can be saved or not saved. It is the church who has been entrusted with the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Hence, the church must carry out Jesus' instructions to preach the gospel of salvation. A church that does not

carry out the Lord's instructions, e.g., they do not conduct baptism or they do not carry out footwashing, cannot be saved. It is not the TJC who has judged them. Instead, such a verdict is based on what the Lord Jesus has entrusted to the church and on His teachings.

Only One Holy Spirit Promised and Given to the Church

Finally, there is only one true church that is saved because there is only one Holy Spirit who has been promised and given to the church.

"Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear." (Acts 2:3)

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36)

On the day of Pentecost, the promised Holy Spirit descended. When the believers received the promised Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues, everyone was astonished. Peter then explained to the people that what they had seen and heard was the promised Holy Spirit of the Lord Jesus. Furthermore, he testified that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior, and that the gospel that the disciples believed in is true and leads to salvation. The Jews were moved, because they had personally seen the promised Holy Spirit descending upon the disciples. So on that day, three thousand people were baptized into the one true church. This is the church that the Lord Jesus has established. This is the church that is saved.

Today, the gospel that the TJC preaches is the same as the gospel that the apostles preached. The Holy Spirit that we receive, evidenced by the speaking in tongues, is exactly the same Spirit that the apostles received. Hence, we believe that the true church today is the same as the church of the apostolic times; she is

the one true church that is saved.

How can Christians in search of the truth that saves recognize the true church? Acts of the Apostles provides a model that allows us to see that the apostles preached the instructions of our Lord Jesus. They preached the truth that saves.

CONCLUSION

The Holy Spirit has already revealed that in the last days there will be deviant teachings and straying away from the truth. Indeed, we have seen for ourselves that some have deviated from the truth. Paul exhorted Timothy: "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen" (1 Tim 6:20–21). Today, all of us have this responsibility. We must hold fast to the pure word of God that saves. We must never allow this word to be changed or contradicted.

A modern ploy is to appeal to relationships, feelings, and "love." Love is an important tenet in Christianity, but only the gospel, the word of Jesus Christ, can save us. Without the truth, all talk of love is meaningless. Therefore, we must hold firm what we believe in so that our faith is an unchanging faith. ★

TESTIMONIES



Journey of Faith

Mary Lee—Singapore

In the name of Jesus, I bear testimony of God's grace for me and my family.

Ten years ago, I was diagnosed with Stage II nasal cancer. I was devastated as my children were very young then; Joshua was only about six years old and was still in kindergarten. The children were told of my condition by their daddy. Surprisingly, they did not seem troubled by the news, and we could feel that the peace of God was with them just as the psalmist said in his time of trouble, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; [f]or I shall yet praise Him, [t]he help of my countenance and my God" (Ps 42:11).

Simultaneous radiation and chemotherapy sessions to treat my condition followed. Whilst undergoing treatment, I suffered from side effects such as burnt skin, vomiting, loss of taste, hair loss, and so forth. Most of the time, I went for daily treatments by myself. Nevertheless, I felt blessed because many brethren in church encouraged me and prayed for me. During that time, I saw other patients who were worried and in despair, but they noticed that I was calm and at peace:

"[The Lord] gives power to the weak, [a]nd to those who have no might He increases strength" (Isa 40:29).

By God's grace, I was able to return to work five months after I had started treatment. I returned to my active and busy lifestyle: going to the gym every weekday morning before work and working late often. In addition, I moved to my present home and went on holidays with my family.

Four years later while on vacation in Beijing, I noticed that my facial expression was unbalanced. One eye was smaller than the other. In addition, one morning on the way to work, I could not catch the bus, because my left leg felt weak. I consulted the doctor and was subsequently sent for an MRI scan as well as cancer screenings. Although the results showed that there was no cancer relapse, I was diagnosed with Radiation Necrosis. My neck's C3 spinal nerve was scarred due to my previous radiation treatment, and this affected the movement of my limbs.

Thankfully, the condition is not life threatening. However, it is permanent and comes with much suffering, as it can only be managed

through medication. I was also placed on intravenous steroid drips to reduce swelling on the spinal cord. Yet all I can say is, “in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess 5:18).

My condition stabilized shortly after, and I returned to work. It did not occur to me to stop working, as I wanted to make sure that my children have the financial means for further studies. My mother was a widow with two children. We were poor then, and I started to work at eighteen, because I did not have the money for further education. Therefore, I made a promise to myself that my children will not be denied of the opportunity. I thank God that my eldest son, Jonathan, is blessed with the opportunity to study in Perth, Australia.

Soon after, my department's work was outsourced to Shanghai and Bangkok. Thus, I had to work and travel a lot more. Moreover, the probability of retrenchment was high. One day, on my way to work at Jurong Island, the same weakness returned. I sat at the subway station for nearly an hour as I could not get onto the coach that ferries me to my work place. Thankfully, as Prophet Nahum says, “The Lord is good, [a] stronghold in the day of trouble; [a]nd He knows those who trust in Him” (Nah 1:7).

The Lord gave me strength to make my way directly to my doctor. When my husband Ivan came, I went for another MRI scan, and the results showed that there was another similar scar but now on the other side of my spinal cord. I was hospitalized again for the same treatment, and since then, I have not been able to return to work, as my limbs became weaker and I became wheelchair bound.

A year later in 2009, due to my immobility, I developed bedsores on my buttock. The sores turned into a deep hole right to my tailbone. At this difficult time, I remembered the words of Jesus, “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Lk 12:7).

Between July to October 2009, I underwent a total of three operations. The first operation was done to remove the affected decaying tissue. I was hooked on to a V.A.C.¹ machine to drain fluid from the wound and to promote new tissue growth. I also had three bags of blood infusion due to a blood infection from the wound. My neurologist told me that I could have died if treatment had been delayed. The second operation was about six weeks later. There was no improvement, and as my tailbone was affected, it had to be removed. The third operation took place about two months later. There was still no improvement and the recovery was slow. At this point in time, I could only cast my worries and cares upon God, for He cares for me (1 Pet 5:7).

As the use of the V.A.C. machine was very costly, the plastic surgeon suggested rotating the buttock tissues to cover the hole, and I agreed without hesitation. The suggestion proved effective and both my husband and the doctor were surprised at the immediate improvement! Just as the Scriptures say: “The Lord nurses them when they are sick and restores them to health” (Ps 41:3, NLT) and “Cast your burden on the Lord, [a]nd He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved” (Ps 55:22).

Even though I had to lie on my side for three weeks and was not able to feed or to clean myself, I thank God, that at that time, my helper, Heide, and two church sisters took turns to wash and feed me. Moreover, by God's grace, my costly medical expenses were absorbed by the company and insurance until 2010 when I officially stopped working. I then received a lump sum of money from my company, which, together

with personal insurance claims, enabled us to pay for my medical expenses.

I once asked my neurologist, “Doctor, what is the worst case scenario for my condition?” He answered, “Paralysis and being bedridden.” But Philippians 4:6-7 reminds me to “[b]e anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

I thank God that according to the doctor, my condition is now stable. I ask God to grant me the physical strength to exercise. I know that He is listening when we make requests, and we can be sure that He will give us what we ask for (1 Jn 5:15). Matthew 6:34 also says, “...do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” Thus, I live each day, one day at a time. I also thank God for each day and for each Sabbath that I can attend, despite being wheelchair-bound, for I remember that there may be someone who cannot come to church or who may not even awake to see the day. We may encounter trials and tribulations, but valuable life lessons in long suffering, endurance and perseverance are learned on our journey of faith.

May all glory be given to God. Amen. ★

1 V.A.C. stands for Vacuum Assisted Closure.

Thus, I live each day, one day at a time. I also thank God for each day and for each Sabbath that I can attend, despite being wheelchair-bound, for I remember that there may be someone who cannot come to church or who may not even awake to see the day.



From Hearing of God to Seeing Him

Qin Ru Wang—Fuqing, China

FAITH OF MY FATHERS

In the name of Jesus, I testify on how I established my faith in God. I am very thankful that I can grow up in a True Jesus Church household. My family came to believe in the true church through my grandparents.

My grandfather used to be a pastor of the Methodist church in China, but believed in the True Jesus Church after he heard about the teachings of the true church and was healed from a long-standing illness in 1926. Later on, my grandparents had to suffer much persecution and hardship for believing in the true gospel, but they still held on to their faith.

I was baptized as a baby, and when I was one week old, I was afflicted with an incurable disease, also known as the Black Death in the West. It was a terrible disease, and sometimes an entire village would be wiped out by this plague. My parents would do anything to see me treated. However, the doctor could not do anything, and he told my parents that nothing could be done and that they should return home.

My parents then remembered that they had forgotten to rely on God and that they needed to ask

God for mercy. They then took me to a nearby chapel where there was an old church worker. They put me by the bed of this worker, and the three of them prayed all night. In the morning, I was healed.

DOES GOD TRULY EXIST?

In 1956, the church in mainland China ceased having services and could not do any church work. Growing up under a communist government with an atheistic education, I was both ignorant and weak in my faith. When my parents asked me to pray, I would pray, and when I faced difficulties, I would pray too. Yet I questioned God's existence in my heart.

During the Cultural Revolution in China, my entire family went through great tribulation. My father used to be a well-known dentist in Fuqing, and I used to work for the government, but we were not allowed to continue with our jobs. The entire family was taken to a hillside to be farmers. Our life was very harsh then, and a doubt surfaced in my heart: in my prayers, I asked God, "God, if you truly exist, why does my family have to go through so much suffering?"

WATER THAT TURNED INTO MEDICINE

Life as a farmer was difficult and so when my wife fell ill, we did not have money to send her for treatment, and she had to stay at home for two days. One day when I returned from the hillside, my mother told my father that she wanted to take some water for my wife and pray before letting her drink it, so that God would heal her. My father agreed, and so my mother took a cup, filled it half-full and went to my room. My parents and I then stood in front of the bed and began to pray. After the prayer, my father gave the cup to me and told me to pass it to my wife. When I received the cup, I smelled a strong medicinal aroma. My parents left, and I passed the cup to my wife. I asked my wife how she felt when she drank the water. She asked why the water had such a distinct taste of medicine, although we did not have any medicine in our house. My wife was later healed. This miracle allowed me to experience God personally for the very first time in my life.

A DEMON CAST OUT

Another unforgettable miracle

happened when a brother came to my house and knocked on the door one night. I asked the brother what he needed and he asked for my father to pray with him at his house. So my father and I took a flashlight and followed this brother. When we reached his house, we saw his wife dancing and singing. I was afraid because I thought that she must be mentally ill. I wondered if prayer would help such a person and that it might be better for her to be sent to a mental hospital.

My father asked her family how she became like this, and they told him that she had a quarrel with her husband that night and had left a foothold for Satan. Next, my father instructed them to kneel down and pray. During the prayer, I was also on my knees. However, I did not dare to close my eyes completely, because I was afraid that this mental patient would attack us. I wanted to watch what she would do.

After the prayer, my father stood up and walked to the sister, raised his hand and said, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bind Satan!" Immediately, the sister calmed down, opened her eyes and stared at us, asking, "What are you doing in my house in the middle of the night?" Her entire family laughed after that. My father encouraged them to preserve harmony in the house instead of fighting, so as not to leave a foothold for Satan.

GOD EXISTS!

Afterwards, we went home. The incident touched me deeply. This demon-possessed person could be freed from Satan through prayer, which is not possible with man, but only with God's power. The event showed me that, when we went to this brother's house to pray, the Lord Jesus was also there praying with us. He was the One who made this miracle happen. That night, I was so moved that I could not fall asleep.

The following morning, I fasted and prayed for a day and told God, "I have now seen Your presence. A person who is demon-possessed

proves that there is such a place as hell, and the fact that Satan was cast out through prayer proves the existence of God and heaven. I do not want to go to hell, but I want to enter heaven. May the Lord have mercy on me so that I would never leave you through out my entire life."

After the Cultural Revolution subsided, my siblings were all baptized in Christ, and the grace of God came upon my household again. My parents resumed their original work. Even though I was given the opportunity to return to my former job, I was afraid to do so because I felt that I was a weak person and I would lose my faith and my spiritual life after returning to the world. When the 1970s came and the Cultural Revolution was coming to an end, the church gradually resumed services and, through God's guidance, began to grow and prosper.

FINDING LOVE WITHIN THE CHURCH

Since the Mao government persecuted my entire family during the Cultural Revolution, many of our relatives and friends were afraid to communicate with us. Similar to the lepers in the Old Testament, people shunned us because having a close connection to us would affect the future of their family. Thus, many of them refused to interact with us apart from my sister and brother-in-law.

Although this was sad, the brothers and sisters in church continued to visit us, encourage my father, and pray for us. Through this, I found true love in the church. The love that is found in this world is conditional—only the love of God is unconditional. I was deeply moved that I had found such a wonderful church, the house of God. Why should I return to the world? The world was unstable and turbulent, but I had found a place of refuge in the true church, such that my soul received rest. Through God's choosing, and encouragement from my elders, I began to involve myself in church work, which allowed me to experience more miracles and blessings that strengthened my faith.

ANGELS PERFORMED SURGERY

These testimonies are endless, but I would like to share two of them. There was a certain Mr. Lin in my village who worshipped idols. In 1991, he contracted an incurable disease, a tumor on his neck, and was sent to the best hospital in Fujian for treatment. But the doctor who performed surgery for him eventually did not dare to remove the tumor. After that, he returned home, feeling very sad. This person was only in his thirties, and his family was very poor. He reckoned that he could only wait for his death.

One day, a sister from our church visited him, and he and his wife were in tears because they felt that he had no more hope. So the sister preached to them, telling them that though there is no hope in this world, we still have hope in the Lord Jesus who is the greatest doctor; nothing is impossible with Him. She shared many testimonies of how patients with serious illnesses were healed. After listening to these testimonies, the man was greatly moved and wanted to believe in Jesus. His wife came to the church, and the church seeing that she was very earnest, sent three church workers to Mr. Lin's house to remove all the idols and to pray and fast for him for three days.

One afternoon, a few days after they left, Mr. Lin was half-asleep on his bed, and his wife and daughter were by his bed, sewing blankets. As he was half-asleep, he saw two persons clothed in white, just like doctors, walking into his house. He suddenly woke up and told his wife what he had seen.

Since his wife had heard many testimonies of how people had been healed, she immediately thanked the Lord, saying that God had sent two angels to their home to heal her husband. She told him to kneel down, pray, and face the wall with his shirt unbuttoned, so that the angels could perform surgery. The whole family of three continued in prayer, and after Mr. Lin had prayed, he fell asleep, and the two angels appeared again. He felt that the angels were performing

surgery on his neck to remove the tumor. Afterwards, they propped him up on his bed and showed him the tumor, telling him that he had been healed. When he woke up, he saw that his wife and daughter were still praying. He exclaimed, “The angels have completed the surgery!” They were so amazed because there were bloodstains on his neck and on his collar. Before that, he could not move his neck and lower his head to eat, but that night he could freely move his head.

Later, he went to Gaoshan church in Fujian Province to bear testimony. That Sabbath, I so happened to be at Gaoshan church to give a sermon. The following Sabbath, he went to another church in that area, Sanshan church, to bear this testimony, and, once again, I happened to be there too. After he had testified, I asked him what he had been wearing during the surgery. He replied that it was the same shirt he was wearing then, because it was his best shirt. I asked to look at his shirt, and he said that he had washed his shirt twice, but the bloodstain was still visible. I told him not to wash this shirt anymore, but to keep it as a testimony.

Since 1991, more than twenty years have passed, and brother Lin is still very healthy. He later offered his house as a place of worship, built another house, and allowed the church to build a chapel above his former house.

THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS MIGHTILY

Starting from 1991, the Holy Spirit continually moved people to come to our church to study the Bible and listen to the word of God, especially students who were from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. On March 1, 1993, more than forty

people were baptized in Nanjing and subsequently, the church was established.

In May, many more truth-seekers came to our church. They were very fervent and thirsted for the Holy Spirit, but because there weren't any preachers, evil spirits started to work among them. That same month, I went to Nanjing with another preacher, and after teaching them how to discern the spirits, the work of Satan quickly came to an end.

When we conducted the second baptism in Nanjing, we baptized three times a day—in the morning, afternoon, and at night before Holy Communion; people kept coming to ask to be baptized. Thus, the Holy Spirit worked mightily, and every night people would receive the Holy Spirit. Even those who came for the first time to listen also received the Holy Spirit. There was no chapel then, and we gathered at a sister's house. We were afraid to pray loudly, and so every night, we told them to keep their volume down. During the second baptism, more than forty people were baptized.

A LAME WALKS

One night, after service, some theological students approached us and we talked until about 10:30 p.m. when they had to return to the seminary. I invited them to pray together before they left. As we were about to pray, an elderly sister, Sister Wang, joined us. She was sixty-eight years old. Because she had been in a car accident before, both her legs were crushed, and she had been using two crutches to walk. When she saw that we wanted to pray, she asked us to pray for her, so that she would no longer need to walk with the crutches and would be able to venture out and preach. Since she

asked us, I did not want to reject her request. She was unable to kneel, so I gave her my seat.

Then I knelt down to pray with the other preacher and the theological students. I prayed to God, saying “God, Nanjing church is established by you. I did not come here on my own accord, but You have led me here. Please manifest your power so that these people would know that the True Jesus Church is the church that has the abidance of the Holy Spirit.” Then I laid hands on Sister Wang, and asked the other preacher to lay hands on her too.

After the prayer, I accompanied the students to the door, and little did I expect that this Sister Wang would walk towards us without her crutches, praising God that she did not have to use them anymore. When the theological students saw this, they were so amazed, moved, and greatly strengthened in their faith. After they graduated and returned to their respective areas, they preached the gospel and established the True Jesus Church there.

FROM HEARING TO SEEING

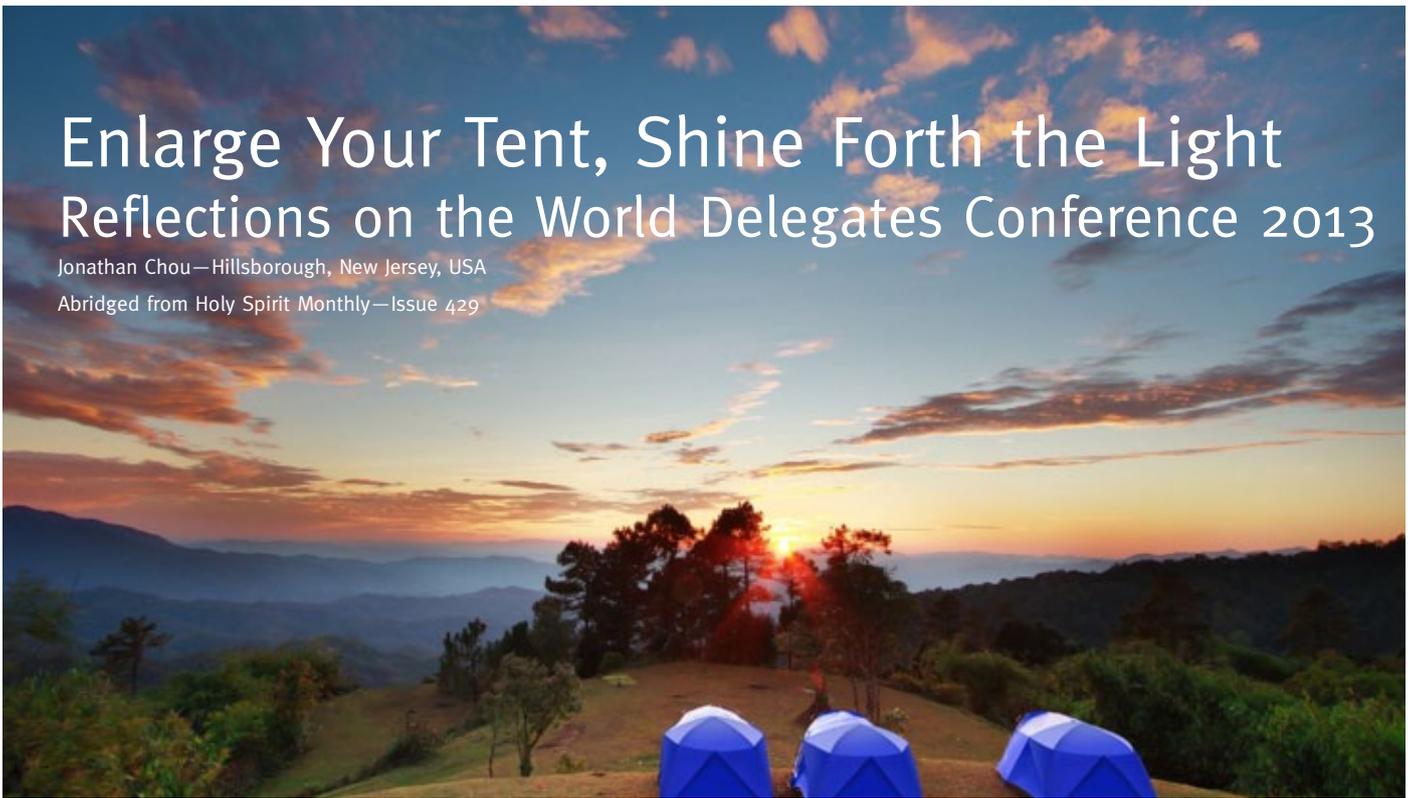
Since 1926, the faith has been passed on to the fifth generation in my family. Even though we face many trials and tribulations in our journey of faith, my grandfather's testimony strengthens us greatly whenever we meet with hardships. Looking back at our sufferings during the Cultural Revolution, I can also say that these afflictions were beneficial to us. Through them, my family and I progressed from hearing about God to seeing God with our own eyes. Our faith was revived, and, eventually, all my siblings were baptized. The Lord has also allowed me to witness many miracles that enabled me to experience Him personally, revived my faith, and cleared my doubts. Thank God, may all glory be unto His name. ★

Afterwards, we went home. The incident touched me deeply. This demon-possessed person could be freed from Satan through prayer, which is not possible with man, but only with God's power.

Enlarge Your Tent, Shine Forth the Light Reflections on the World Delegates Conference 2013

Jonathan Chou—Hillsborough, New Jersey, USA

Abridged from Holy Spirit Monthly—Issue 429



“Enlarge the place of your tent, [a]nd let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; Do not spare; Lengthen your cords, [a]nd strengthen your stakes. For you shall expand to the right and to the left, [a]nd your descendants will inherit the nations, [a]nd make the desolate cities inhabited.” (Isa 54:2–3)

On May 14, 1948, the land of Palestine hoisted the flag with the Star of David and the nation of Israel, which had been non-existent for almost two thousand years, was officially re-established. However, on a spiritual level, the above prophecy applies to the revival of the true church, the spiritual Israel.

At the end of the apostolic era, God withdrew the Holy Spirit because the truth had been changed. However, in line with biblical prophecy concerning the revival of the true church, the Holy Spirit re-established the true church of the end times under the name of True Jesus Church in Beijing, China, in 1917. Since then, the church has been growing and through the Lord’s guidance, she is now found all over the world, fulfilling the biblical prophecy that “this gospel of the

kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Mt 24:14).

Entrusted with God’s commission to preach the complete gospel of salvation, and guided by the power of the Holy Spirit, our early workers expeditiously spread the gospel. They prayed and worked together, and with one accord, held meetings to discuss, plan, and promote the work of evangelism.

During a delegates’ conference in Nanjing, China, in 1926, the delegates passed resolutions to establish a system of general assemblies, to start theological training courses, and to have church publications. These decisions had a far-reaching impact on church development, with the gospel spreading rapidly throughout China and to other parts of Asia. However, from 1950 onwards, due to internal political turmoil, the church in China lost contact with the churches in other parts of Asia.

In 1967, the General Assembly in Taiwan hosted the first World Delegates Conference (WDC), attended by church delegates from countries where the True Jesus

Church existed. Shortly after, the International Assembly (IA) was established to co-ordinate the church’s overall human and material resources. Subsequently, the mission of evangelism was actively advanced, and the gospel reached all five continents. When China re-opened its doors to the world in the 1980s, the church in China was revived, many China brethren emigrated to other countries, and the church as a whole continued to expand. God guided and blessed each of these developments. We believe that the complete gospel will continue to be preached to the ends of the world.

Last year, the WDC was held from March 26 to April 7, 2013, at Irvine Church, Los Angeles, California, in the United States. This was the second WDC held in the US, and local brethren invested much time and effort in preparing for the meeting.

Currently, the WDC is held every two years; with each session lasting for approximately two weeks. The program includes the IA Standing Committee Meeting, IA Executive Council Meeting, IA Truth Research Committee Meeting, the IA Evangelical and

Pastoral Work Symposium (also called IA Holy Work Symposium), the WDC, the International Youth Ministry Committee Meeting, the Internet Ministry Program Advisory Committee Meeting, and many other activities, including visiting local churches in the vicinity.

The theme of the WDC 2013, "Increase the Nation, Expand all the Borders of the Land" (Isa 26:15), followed the previous theme, "Succession." Discussions focused on advancing God's kingdom by rapidly spreading the complete gospel to all parts of the world and by preparing to welcome the Lord's second coming. While the church is approaching her centenary, she faces a fast-changing society, which greatly impacts individual believers' faith. It takes foresight in the pastoral and evangelistic work to strengthen the believers' faith and to promote church growth.

To address this, the IA has designed a series of sub-themes under the broader topic "Global Development of the True Jesus Church" that are to be discussed during Holy Work Symposia. At the WDC 2013, the discussion focused on the "Review and Outlook of the True Church on Her Centenary," and the conference participants contributed their ideas, knowledge, and experiences, which will subsequently be organized into a special publication.

REFLECTIONS ON THE WDC 2013

A Sound Church Organization

The church is a spiritual body and must be organized in accordance with the Bible. The Truth Research Committee (TRC) has previously passed a resolution that church organization must not go beyond biblical principles. We must care for the household of God as servants entrusted with a commission, with the truth as our guiding principle. In addition, the church's organizational principles should follow the spirit of Jesus in managing His household (Mt 20:25–28; Mk 10:42–45): willingly, and not to lord over those entrusted

to us but to be examples to the flock (1 Pet 5:1–4; Acts 20:28–30).

The early apostolic church was established on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. As the gospel spread, churches were established in more places. Locally, ministers were ordained and workers were also sent to guide the local churches to become independent. As the number of churches gradually increased, Jerusalem and Antioch became coordination centers for the holy work.

Today, the church's development is the same. When a new church is established, we need to first cultivate the pillars of that church, and help her to be self-governing, self-financing and self-propagating. As the number of churches increase, coordination boards and general assemblies are established, serving as coordination and communication hubs. The IA is similarly established. At present, the IA comprises seven general assemblies, six coordination boards, and a number of IA directed missionary regions.

The bi-annual WDC serves as a platform to discuss the truth, coordinate the holy work, and provide mutual support. During the WDC, workers are elected to plan and execute the holy work. Currently, IA has six departments and two offices. One office is located in Taiwan (Eastern hemisphere) while the other is based in the United States (Western hemisphere).

As "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers few," the IA has responded to the need for more workers by providing different types of training,

including the active recruitment and training of full-time preachers and volunteers for the pastoral and evangelistic work. During the WDC 2013, the IA has increased manpower in each IA department by also electing deputy directors to each IA department to ensure smooth progression of the holy work and provide additional channels of service. Working groups were also established to facilitate training and preparation of future workers.

Hold Fast to the Truth, Keep the Unity of the Church

The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim 3:15); in order to grow, she must also come to the unity of the faith and to the measure of the fullness of the stature of Christ (Eph 4:13). God's servants must speak the oracles of God, rightly dividing the word of truth, so that man may return to learn righteousness, do good deeds, and be saved (1 Pet 4:11; 2 Tim 2:15). The church must guard against heresies and false teachings—altered truth that seems to be right on the surface—for these will corrupt our faith, hinder the unity of the church, and cause the church to lose the presence of God (1 Tim 1:3,19; 4:1,6; 2 Jn 9).

Our church's basic beliefs were given to our early workers through the revelation of Christ (Gal 1:12). Every revelation must be thoroughly examined to determine whether it is from God and in accordance with the Bible. If it has an adequate biblical basis, we should earnestly preach and keep this teaching. In everything, we need to carefully

The theme of the WDC 2013, "Increase the Nation, Expand all the Borders of the Land" (Isa 26:15), followed the previous theme, "Succession." Discussions focused on advancing God's kingdom by rapidly spreading the complete gospel to all parts of the world and by preparing to welcome the Lord's second coming. While the church is approaching her centenary, she faces a fast-changing society, which greatly impacts individual believers' faith. It takes foresight in the pastoral and evangelistic work to strengthen the believers' faith and to promote church growth.

consider and discern, for we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth (2 Cor 13:8).

Hence, the IA Truth Research Committee (TRC) was established to defend the truth of the Bible and to prevent wrong teachings from creating confusion in the church. Thank God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and through careful study and preservation of the truth, the TRC members have been able to clarify differing views on the truth in recent years, and, in most cases, to achieve consensus and validate the common faith of our church.

Succession and Youth Ministry

Our youths are the church's future workforce. Hence, the church has been cultivating them in various ways. In 1981, the IA established the International Youth Fellowship (IYF) to promote communication among youths globally. Subsequently, IYF conducted youth theological training courses as well as fellowship activities.

During the WDC in 2011, the IYF was replaced with the International Youth Ministry Committee (IYMC). The IYMC aims to train youths and to encourage them to participate in the holy work of their respective local churches as well as pioneering regions. Moreover, in 2011, the first IYMC meeting and the Holy Work Symposium were held simultaneously. The IYMC members could also attend the Holy Work Symposium to understand the development of global church work and how they could assist in this work. We hope that more trained youths will join the pastoral and evangelistic workforce to further the church's holy work.

At the same time, the church needs to continue to show concern for the faith and life of our youths. We need to counsel them with regard to marriage, family, and social interactions so that they are equipped with a sound biblical attitude towards life, can build Christian families, and become a stable support force for the holy work.

Holy Work—Long-term Plan and Development

During the Holy Work Symposium, delegates shared the development of the true church in their respective countries and the church's future plans and outlook. The content was rich and the information precious. The organizing committee also presented a proposal on the vision of global church development.

Participants of the symposium proposed to establish a "Holy Work Research and Development Center" for spiritual cultivation, discussion, training, deployment, and research. The IA's Executive Council decided to establish a "Holy Work Development Committee" to research and plan the future development of the holy work.

Facing the Age of Internet Ministry

The Internet has become a powerful pastoral and evangelistic tool (cf. Mt 13:47; Rev 14:6–7). Apart from presenting our doctrines in written form, the church should consider using multi-media to introduce our faith. In most countries, information is easily accessible and available through the Internet. With careful planning and systematic execution, the Internet can contribute to the evangelism work. Although it can not serve as a replacement, the Internet can complement the printed media and the in-depth study of the truth. Written materials on our doctrines and basic beliefs in the languages of our target pioneering regions remain invaluable.

In conclusion, there are many challenges facing the church as she approaches her centenary. Therefore, it is vital that we continue to labor for the complete gospel with one heart and one mind. ★



An Introduction to the General Assembly of West Malaysia

THE EARLY YEARS

In 1925, Elder Titus Hwang from Fujian, China, went to Singapore, where he preached the gospel of salvation. He was joined by Elder Philip Foo a year later. Together, they traveled north into Malaya and arrived in Sitiawan, Perak. From there, they took the gospel to the towns of Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur (KL). In 1927, a missionary outpost was officially established in Singapore together with churches in KL and Ipoh.

By God's grace, in the 1940s, more churches and worship centers were established. Joining Ipoh and KL were those in the northern states of Kedah and Penang (Sungei Petani, Sungei Kop, Penang), Perak state (Chenderong, Ayer Tawar), as well as Selangor (Kajang) and Negeri Sembilan (Seremban). During the Second World War, Malaya was occupied by Japan and many members were persecuted. Thank God, despite such trying circumstances, they kept their faith.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Singapore and Malaya Advisory Board

Soon after the Second World War

ended in 1945, the first Malaya and Singapore Church Delegates Conference was held on August 23, 1947 at the True Jesus Church in Ipoh. During this meeting, the Singapore and Malaya Advisory Board was established. With this development, there was greater coordination in the holy work, and joint convocations between Malaya and Singapore were organized.

National Spiritual and Evangelistic Meetings held in different regions were first organized during this period. After the second National Spiritual and Evangelistic Meeting, the Youth League was formed in 1955. This league sought to promote youth fellowship and holy work, paving the way for youths to become future leaders of the church.

In 1967, the Taiwan General Assembly (GA) began to send their workers to other countries to assist in the holy work. As a result, a Religious Education (RE) unit was established in Malaya. Training for ministers, RE teachers, and church leaders was conducted, and seminars were held to help strengthen and develop the spiritual qualities of the members and leaders.

The local holy work made another stride with the ordination of full-time preachers in Malaysia. A total of five preachers, including two lady preachers, were trained between the mid-1960s and the end of the 1970s. During this period, the gospel reached Padang Serai, Kulim, and Alor Setar in the north, Klang, Kampar, Sungei Siput, and Bidor in the central Selangor and Perak states, as well as Malacca, Bahau and Johor Baru in the south. With this, TJC churches had been established in almost every state along the West coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

The West Malaysia and Singapore General Assembly

As the number of members and churches increased, the need for stronger coordination became more evident. Hence, the General Assembly of the True Jesus Church in West Malaysia and Singapore was officially established during an Extraordinary Delegates Conference held on May 30, 1976 in Kuala Lumpur, replacing the earlier Advisory Board. This GA was successfully registered as a legal body in 1987.

The establishment of the GA



helped to give a boost to our holy work. Nation-wide programs customized for members of different age groups were developed. In the past, RE was left to individual churches. Under the GA, a formal and structured national RE system was implemented to provide systematic RE for children from four to eighteen years of age. For youths, the church began to conduct annual short-term theological training courses and seminars for tertiary students to firmly root these future leaders in the truth. For married and working adults, there were regular workshops on various practical topics. The more senior members were not neglected – fellowship sessions were organized both in local church and on a regional basis to encourage them to continue their valuable contributions to the holy work.

Another key focus area for the GA was continual training for church leaders and ministers. These were critical in enabling workers to maintain and improve their spirituality and in improving communication with one another for mutual support.

Branching Out and Formation of the Singapore Coordination Board

Although Singapore became an independent country in 1967, historically, the holy work in Malaysia and Singapore was coordinated under a single organization: the West Malaysia and Singapore GA. However, due to the widening economic and political differences between the two countries and the restrictions imposed on cross-border religious organizations, the Singapore Coordination Board was formed in 2000. Despite of the organizational separation, the churches in the two countries continue to maintain strong ties with each other.

PRESENT SITUATION

Currently, we have twenty-five churches, five prayer houses, four evangelical points¹, three worship centers², and six home fellowships³ in West Malaysia.

There are altogether 3,192 members, twelve preachers, five

elders, forty-two deacons, and fifteen deaconesses. Nine of our preachers are active, two are retired, and one is a trainee. A breakdown of the elders, deacons, and deaconesses is as follows:

	Elders	Deacons	Deaconesses
Northern Region	2	12	7
Perak Region	0	4	4
Central Region	2	18	2
Southern Region	1	8	2
<i>Total number of ministers: 12 preachers, 5 elders, 42 deacons, 15 deaconesses</i>			
<i>Total membership (as of 31/10/2012): 3,192 members</i>			

Thank God for His grace—through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the efforts of the early workers, the church in West Malaysia has developed to become what it is today. However, there are still challenges ahead, and we seek to place greater emphasis on the following areas in the coming years:

Strengthening the Faith of the Members

There are many lost sheep yet to be brought back to the fold. We hope to reach out to them and bring these sheep back through visiting, counseling, and spiritual convocations. Another key area of pastoral work is family faith. We believe that a strong church depends on strong individual family units. Thus, in order to strengthen the faith of the members, we emphasize the importance of setting up a family altar for every family. This enables family members to gather regularly for worship and mutual encouragement during a busy week of work and studies.

Finally, in the face of the increasing temptations found in today's fast-changing society, we will update and enhance our RE system to meet the changing needs of our younger members. Ultimately, we hope to nurture and build up the believers systematically so that Christ will be formed in them and they will be able to live out the will of God in His ministry for His glory.

Enhancing the Awareness and Participation of All Members

In order to enhance the awareness of all members regarding the holy work and to increase their participation in the work, the GA publishes a regular newsletter containing details of various types of work throughout West Malaysia. In addition, we have held national symposia on topics such as "Strategies for Regional Evangelical and Pioneering Work of the True Jesus Church in West Malaysia," as well as a forum on the prospects and future strategies for Malaysia's RE system. These platforms aim to encourage members to be more involved in the holy work in West Malaysia as well as to gather their feedback on what other useful programs can be organized.

Evangelism

A multi-pronged approach is taken to preach the gospel to all corners of West Malaysia. First, two months each year, in the first and second halves of the calendar year, are specifically devoted to evangelistic work. During these two months, wherever possible, all local churches in West Malaysia hold their evangelistic meetings. The West Malaysia GA supports these events with additional programs, such as personal evangelism seminars, which are held at the regional level.

Second, apart from evangelizing in areas with well-established churches, we are also actively reaching out to residents of remote areas, such as the native tribes living the villages of the Cameron Highlands. Preachers, ministers, and voluntary workers conduct pastoral visits and undertake pioneering evangelistic work at regular intervals in these areas.



Third, as the majority of West Malaysian churches conduct their worship services in English and Mandarin, there is a need to cater for members of other main languages. For example, a church has been established in Kajang Utama (approximately thirty kilometers south of Kuala Lumpur) to cater to our Tamil-speaking members. By God's grace, the evangelistic work in the Tamil⁴ community has thus been greatly enhanced.

In addition, we have some members of various ethnic origins (Chinese and natives from West and East Malaysia) in the east coast states (Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang) of peninsular Malaysia. The main language of communication in these places is Malay⁵, as the majority of the local population is Malay. At present, we only have prayer houses and evangelical points; the long-term plan is to establish churches in these places.



Map of West Malaysia

BE THOU OUR VISION

Our vision is to establish a glorious church that shines forth a light, drawing people from afar to worship and seek the Lord, to gain the truth, embark on the pathway of salvation, and receive eternal life. In order to achieve this goal, there is still much work to be done. The GA executive committee, elders, preachers, deacons, regional executive committees, and church management councils need to work together, focusing on administrative, pastoral, and evangelistic work for the overall development of the church.

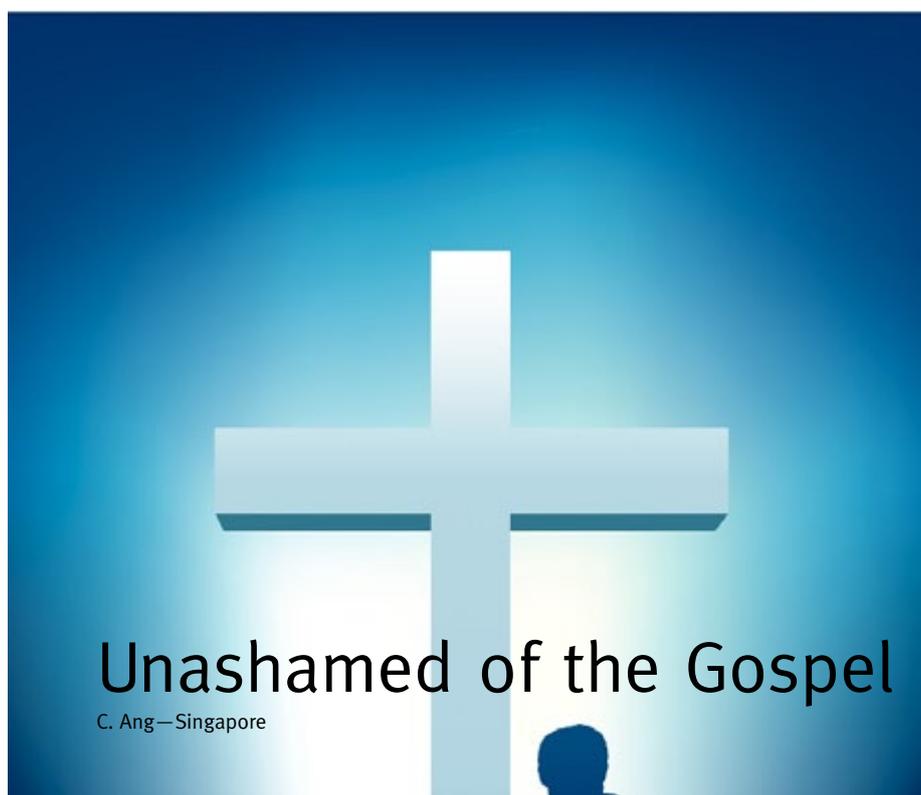
In terms of evangelism, it is important that we identify key areas for growth

and prepare the necessary resources so that we can commission workers to participate in pioneering work. We also need to nurture Christ-like shepherds who will pastor the flock in a holistic manner and help members develop a sense of belonging so that they may realize their commission and serve God more actively.

We pray for the Lord's guidance in realizing our vision for the churches in West Malaysia. May He strengthen us and give us wisdom to serve Him according to His will. ★

We believe that a strong church depends on strong individual family units. Thus, in order to strengthen the faith of the members, we emphasize the importance of setting up a family altar for every family. This enables family members to gather regularly for worship and mutual encouragement during a busy week of work and studies.

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- 1 Evangelical points are new pioneering areas where truth-seekers are in regular contact.
 - 2 Worship centers are places where regular services are held for a small group of members.
 - 3 Home fellowship refers to services at members' houses.
 - 4 Tamil is a Dravidian language of Tamil Nadu state, India, and of northern and eastern Sri Lanka. The term also refers to a Tamil-speaking person or a descendant of Tamil-speaking ancestors.
 - 5 Malay refers to either a member of a people of the Malay Peninsula, eastern Sumatra, parts of Borneo, and some adjacent islands, or the Austronesian language of these people.



Unashamed of the Gospel

C. Ang—Singapore

Open any university textbook in foundational studies in biology, anthropology, or geology and you will find traces of evolutionist theories, especially relating to the beginning of man. The theory of evolution proposes itself to be the alternative explanation to biblical creation. Moreover, modern philosophy and English literature have their roots in the humanist movement, involving a turning away from the Christian faith toward the individual.

As the modern day Christian is bombarded daily with such atheistic notions and faces an increasingly ungodly society that mocks at essential Christian doctrines, how can we remain assured of our own faith? Before preaching to others, can we stand convicted in our beliefs in Christ?

FINDING YOUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Bearing witness to the gospel by conduct is no easy task. It always boils down to the daily basics, such as how much time we spend in communion with God and invest in spiritual nurture.

The key to shining as a true Christian depends on how deeply we

know God, whether we are sure of what we believe in, and, ultimately, what our identity in Christ is. When Moses came of age, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin (Heb 11:24–26). Because he was nursed and brought up by his own mother, a Hebrew woman (Ex 2:7–9, 11), Moses retained his Hebrew identity and chose to be with God's people rather than to be an Egyptian.

Similarly, as Christians of the True Jesus Church, we should have the correct faith based on the doctrines of Christ and understand that it is true and unique, and not be ashamed of its differences from other religions or Christian groups. It is this strong sense of identity that will keep reminding us of who we are and the commission entrusted to us—to preach the good news.

Having this identity will ensure that we will not easily fall away in the face of opposing beliefs and theories. When we have an irremovable identity in Christ and see ourselves as part of Christ, there is basis for us to keep our values.

BE A CHRISTIAN OF SUBSTANCE

To be a Christian of substance, it is vital to maintain our stance on our faith and to know what we believe in despite opposing beliefs and theories. We need not necessarily join the apologetics movement, but certainly need to know how to defend our faith when it is undermined by the worldly knowledge we feed our minds with at secular institutions.

Find Answers to Prevalent Questions

First, we can know and find answers to prevalent questions regarding the faith. One of the arguments against God in my first year Philosophy class was, "Why does a good God allow suffering?" At that time, even though I believed in God, I was unable to rebut what seemed like a really good argument against the case for the existence of God.

Indeed, to refute philosophical theories against the faith in academia, one is often expected to use the tools learned in philosophy. But this is not the recommendation given in the Bible, which tells us to not indulge or be caught up with men's philosophies (Col 2:8). Instead of using the tools of the world to defend our faith, we



... as Christians of the True Jesus Church, we should have the correct faith based on the doctrines of Christ and understand that it is true and unique, and not be ashamed of its differences from other religions or Christian groups. It is this strong sense of identity that will keep reminding us of who we are and the commission entrusted to us—to preach the good news.

should be equipped with the word of God, which is fit for reproof, correction, and instruction (2 Tim 3:16), to fight for our faith.

For example, there are biblical answers to the question of suffering. Suffering can be the result of man's sin against God, or a trial sent by God to perfect the faith of a believer. Examples include the Israelites' chastisement when they departed from God's commandments (Hab 1:5–11; 2:15–16; Hos 2:2–13), and Job whom God wanted to perfect by removing his self-righteousness through sufferings.

In fact, God is good, but man does not always choose to do good (Jn 1:4–5), thus he suffers. It doesn't help that the devil often wreaks havoc in men's lives (Job 1:6–12), but God allows it as a trial to shape us into a better person.

With special regard to the matter of suffering, sometimes, the Bible does not always give explicit answers to specific questions we may have. When our young child is diagnosed with a chronic illness or when Dad is laid off at work without a reason, we tend to ask God why these unfortunate events happen to us. Whether it is to bring one's entire household to Christ or to train us to give up our lives to God, we may not know at that moment in time. The search for answers is often a journey and takes time. In such situations, we need to look ahead with faith (Job 13:15; Hab 2:4; 2 Cor 5:7) and trust in the abundance of God (Job 42:5).

Discern Right from Wrong

Second, discern right and wrong by being on the right side. Our allegiance is towards God; we are not trying to win a philosophical debate.

When I was younger, I used to think that the only way to discern between right and wrong was by having full knowledge and an understanding of both sides. But life soon taught me that I was wrong. Man is fallible.

When we incline ourselves to what is unrighteous, we will gradually be influenced by wrong concepts and thus breed wrongdoing in our life. Putting ourselves in the shoes of someone who blatantly does wrong merely serves to blur the boundaries between right and wrong, making it difficult to do what is right. This eventually leads to the corruption of good values.

Thus, I learned that the discernment between right and wrong is given by God (Heb 5:12–14) and cannot be attained through our own vain pursuit. Moreover, I learned that whilst we can pursue knowledge to a certain extent according to the best of our own abilities, the maturation of that knowledge involves faith and waiting for the Lord, the One who gives fruition to our efforts. Until then, the only thing required of us is that we are faithful to the Lord and remain on the right side of His commandments.

Spotting Fallacies of Opposing Theories

As sojourners living in a transient world, it is useful for Christians to gain worldly knowledge that can help us support our livelihood. Yet how do we find a way from being influenced by atheistic theories prevalent in school and society? While we cannot isolate ourselves from the world by living in an utopia in which all of God's laws are upheld, there are many ways in which we can prevent our beliefs from being

compromised, if only we let faith dictate the way. While we can know about atheistic concepts, we should avoid subscribing to them. One way to achieve this is to be aware of the flaws of these concepts and why they are not in line with God's will.

For instance, if we are assigned to write a paper on the theory of evolution, we can use the opportunity to find out about the fallacies of this theory as well as other scientific findings that are in accordance with the Bible's account of creation. There are times when it may be necessary to abstain from studying too deeply into concepts that contradict our faith: we don't need to challenge our faith by purposely picking controversial fields to expand our knowledge, for gaining knowledge of the wrong sort may corrupt good values. Instead, we should desire to grow in the knowledge of the grace of the Lord (2 Pet 3:18, 1:8).

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD

If finding an identity in Christ forms an intrinsic part of a Christian's values, daring to be different is how we keep those values. As the world changes and Christianity declines in the countries where it once flourished, more and more people no longer profess to be Christians. Due to pop culture, the young may find it to be "uncool" to be a Christian, and such influence is widespread.

In this growing tide of ungodliness, it is hard to be a Christian and to profess one's faith without being labeled as overly religious. Hence, it takes courage for a Christian to stand up for his faith. Youths and adults alike, but especially youths who are prone to peer pressure, must dare to be different from the world, to be "the salt and light of the earth" (Mt 5:13–14).

I believe that many of us may regret when we realize, in retrospect, that we would have done much better had we not given in to peer pressure during our pre-adult years. I draw this analogy because daring to be different is just that—being our own



unique selves without succumbing to more dominant social pressure. And the challenges it poses to us don't just stop during our teenage years but continue in our quest to be mature Christians.

We might have sustained or nurtured a hidden dream or passion if only we had not given it up just to blend in with the rest or belong to the "cool crowd." Maybe we would have spoken our minds in class, or perhaps gotten better grades, or hung out with that sweet yet unsocialized slip of a friend whose friendship we treasured. Daring to be different is far from claiming exclusivity or being intolerant of others; nor is it all about standing out from the crowd. More often, it is about knowing our identity and claiming it, even if it means bearing with inconveniences and nuances in everyday living.

Despite censure from unbelieving parties, we can evangelize powerfully and keep the faith at the same time, without compromising it, by being ready to give an answer for the faith that is in us (Col 4:6) to anyone who asks.

BEING FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Finally, we should be faithful to the word and keep it to the end (1 Jn 3:24). When short-term solutions cannot solve present problems, one may have to endure hardship for the faith. We ought to know that to apply the Lord's word in this world is to first bear the costs of our decision to follow Him and be rewarded at the end with the crown of righteousness—just like Lazarus, who might have been poor for the sake of not wanting ill-gotten gain (Lk 16:19–25), like Paul suffering in chains, hard-pressed on every side for the Lord and beaten for the cross (2 Cor 4:8). Yet a good Christian should never quail at this prospect. It is a form of fighting for our beliefs in a very real way.

We should resolve to "contend" (Jude 1:3) and protect the "precious faith" (2 Pet 1:1; 1 Pet 1:7) by upholding its tenets in doctrine and not let God's name suffer abuse by

blasphemous words. We ought to be arrows in His quiver, daring to take a firm stance on church beliefs and fight for the Lord as one conscripted in the army (2 Tim 2:3–4).

Initially, we may employ tact, but in the face of opposing beliefs, we must stand up for our faith and not consent to erroneous teachings. We should point out where the misconceptions are and present the teachings of Christ the way it was imparted to us. It all boils down to this: not being afraid to be different from the world and being willing to suffer for the Lord by offering our lives to Him. For in living out our faith in this manner, we take our understanding of the truth to a different level, a higher ground in which we can concretely experience God.

CONCLUSION

In summary, our daily decisions for God contribute to our boldness for Christ. If we can keep our faith over the little things, we will be trained in righteousness to handle matters of greater importance. Let us honor our status as children of God. May the influence of the Word pervade our lives, and the teachings of Christ translate to godly actions so that when it is time for us to testify for the Lord, we can be unashamed like the apostle who willingly gave up his life for the sake of the gospel (2 Tim 3:10–12). ★



Magnifying Christian Values in the Corporate World

Philip Shee—Dubai, UAE



You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

(Mt 5:14–16)

While this message was directed at all Christians, it is especially relevant to those who are entrusted with supervisory or managerial positions in the workplace. As Christians move up the corporate ladder, it is natural that we also become more visible. Therefore, it is not surprising that bosses are regular features of lunchtime conversations. Just as a city set on a hill, they cannot escape from such scrutiny, especially from their subordinates. Every little act or word may unleash a wave of unintended perceptions. Any negative impression created may cause Christian bosses to be stumbling blocks to their subordinates, who may be turned off by the Christian faith. For this reason, we need to be careful not to use our positions to push our weights

around when we are promoted to higher positions. Conversely, if we were to leverage on our visibility and manifest Christian virtues through our good works, we could gain the respect of our subordinates and be powerful testimonies that bring glory to God.

RESPONSIBILITY VERSUS LORDSHIP

The corporate world often associates position with power. When people are promoted into senior managerial positions, they assume bigger authority, which often comes with expectations of submission from other people.

In contrast, the Christian philosophy for the office place is best expressed by Jesus' words: "...You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant" (Mt 20:25–26). Christian bosses can also adopt this virtue in the workplace. As our careers progress, we must always remember that the position we hold is a responsibility we have

over staff under our management. If we care for the well-being of our subordinates, take special interest in helping them progress and serve them by providing the support they need for success, we will surely stand out from many others. The fair-minded among our subordinates will see this light shining against the darkness of bosses who are lording over their staff, raising unreasonable expectations, and demanding their services only to fuel their own selfish ambition and progress. Subordinates of good Christian bosses may very well choose to reciprocate and go the extra mile to support them.

As we adopt the attitude that the office we hold is about shouldering responsibility for our people rather than assuming authority over them, we start to magnify our Christian virtues in the corporate world and provide an effective alternative to successful management style.

FAIRNESS OF REWARD

One of the most common grouses in the workplace is the lack of fairness and transparency in the reward and recognition system. The undeserving are rewarded for the extra mile they



go to socialize, wine, dine, and golf with the bosses and not for hard work or performance. The talented and hardworking are not recognized for their excellent performance, just because they are not in the bosses' inner circle. These common scenarios often act as a catalyst to trigger dissatisfaction among employees.

As Christian bosses, we, therefore, have another opportunity to shine and magnify Christian principles if we adopt the guidance provided in Jesus' parable of the minas. In the parable, a certain nobleman entrusted his servants with one mina each and instructed them to do business with it. When he returned, the first servant reported that he had made ten minas from that one mina. He was praised by his master and rewarded with authority over ten cities. The second servant reported that he had earned five minas from the one mina. He was then rewarded with authority over five cities. Then another servant came forward to return the same one mina to the master, citing his fear over his master's austerity as the reason for doing nothing. The master then judged him because he did not even do the barest minimum of placing the money in the bank to earn interest (Lk 19:13–26). The following principles can be observed:

The servants who put in effort and made positive profits were rewarded, while the servant who did not bother to make even the barest minimum effort was judged. This was not just about the results but the attitude. Likewise, Christian bosses need to pay attention to incentivizing good attitudes and dis-incentivizing bad attitudes.

Boaz has left a wonderful reference for us in the way he interacted with his workers. When he met with his workers, he started off with a blessing, "The LORD be with you!" This gesture would have set his workers at ease, and they responded with a blessing for him as well. This good relationship between Boaz and his workers was clearly not built upon fear, but rather, care from the boss and both respect and love from the workers.

This is very much aligned with the conclusion in another parable of Jesus, the parable of the talents (Mt 25:14–30). In that parable, the three servants were each given a different number of talents. The servants given five talents and two talents each gained another five and two talents respectively. Though the results were different, both received similar recognition: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Mt 25:21, 23). The slight difference in this parable is that the master rewarded both servants equally, as he was fair enough to expect different results from the different resources he had placed with them. However, with the servant entrusted with one talent, the conclusion was similar, with the master rebuking him for not doing even the least by depositing the money with the bankers to earn interest. The master likewise concluded that he was a wicked servant and in that parable, also rebuked him for his laziness (Mt 25:26–27).

All the servants were given the same resources but achieved different results. The one who achieved more was given a bigger reward. Equality does not necessarily equate to fairness. If one had indeed put in more effort and thereby achieved more from the same resources, it would be inconceivable that he should receive just the same reward as another who had put in less effort and achieved less.

This principle is also supported by the parable of the talents illustrated

above, with two servants being rewarded equally for different output because they were given different resources to start with. The Bible also reminds us, "Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven" (Col 4:1).

RENDER CREDIT WHERE IT IS DUE

In the workplace, it is not uncommon to see people devote much effort to do a good job, only for the bosses to take all the credit. There are two important principles for Christian bosses here:

Do Not Be Guilty of Stealing

While it is less likely for Christians to willfully break the commandment, "You shall not steal" (Ex 20:15), we may be doing so unknowingly if, as Christian bosses, we simply take credit for ourselves when we should have attributed credit to our team members. In a similar vein, the Bible reminds us, "You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning" (Lev 19:13). "Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the LORD, and it be sin to you" (Deut 24:15). "Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth" (Jas 5:4). It is noteworthy that withholding wages from workers is equated with cheating, robbery, and fraud. Though these verses are directly applicable to monetary wages, this principle is equally applicable as a reminder to Christian bosses not to withhold credit from our teams.

Act Justly

Christian bosses must recognize that workers are worthy of the credit due to them. "You must not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain" (Deut 25:4). Indeed, it would be completely unreasonable to expect an ox to



continue working while putting a muzzle on it and denying it from simultaneously grazing or eating. Paul subsequently used this principle to remind the church that it was not oxen that God was concerned about when this law was written (1 Cor 9:9). Rather, this principle was about being fair in rendering to God's workers the material needs that they deserved for their work (1 Cor 9:6–12). Later on, this was used again to reinforce the respect and honor that elders in the church deserve if they rule well, especially those who labor in work and doctrine (1 Tim 5:17–18). God also gave a stern warning against the injustice of denying what workers deserve, "Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness [a]nd his chambers by injustice, [w]ho uses his neighbor's service without wages [a]nd gives him nothing for his work" (Jer 22:13).

The importance of this teaching was played out in the episode between Laban and Jacob when Laban cheated Jacob and changed his wages ten times. God was displeased with Laban and intervened to ensure that Jacob received that which was due to him (Gen 31:6–12; 40–42). As bosses naturally front the work of their teams with their superiors, it is both easy and tempting to ride on this work to gain advancement and recognition. However, for Christian bosses, this is another opportunity to stand out, to be fair and just, and to attribute credit to whom it is due.

RESPECT VERSUS FEAR

"And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him." (Eph 6:9)

It is natural for people to somewhat fear those in positions of authority. For this reason, Christian bosses should heed the Bible's instruction to "give up threatening" to portray an image of kindness and reason, which is more aligned with Christian values.

Boaz has left a wonderful reference for us in the way he interacted with

his workers. When he met with his workers, he started off with a blessing, "The LORD be with you!" This gesture would have set his workers at ease, and they responded with a blessing for him as well. This good relationship between Boaz and his workers was clearly not built upon fear, but rather, care from the boss and both respect and love from the workers. Boaz further displayed his kindness towards Ruth when he allowed her to glean in his field and to drink from what his workers had drawn. He also spoke kindly with her, comforted her, and blessed her for all she had done for Naomi. In addition, he specifically instructed his men to deliberately let grain fall from the bundle so that Ruth might glean (Ruth 2:4–16).

Subordinates often fear their bosses either because they have an unpleasant nature, or because they are volatile and unpredictable. For Boaz, his kindness as witnessed by his workers would have won him respect. Likewise, Christian bosses should seek to earn the respect of their subordinates rather than instill fear in them. In this way, Christian bosses will be living testimonies of Christian virtues and bring glory to the name of the Lord.

THE PROOF

There are numerous management books written about corporate leadership and management theories. While they may be useful references for the MBA student, what remains a critical foundation for Christian bosses are the principles in the Bible on how Christians should treat others. The following are questions about our behavior that we can reflect upon:

Do we show partiality and treat our workers shabbily simply because they work for us, while we treat others less beholden to us with more dignity and respect?

Do we take advantage of our workers simply because we have the upper hand?

Do we simply issue orders but not render support to help our team members accomplish the work?

Do we withhold reward and credit due to our teams but mete out disincentives even quicker when things go wrong?

Are we only interested in the tasks and not the people?

The proof of a successful boss in the world may often only be the achievement of the task. But for Christian bosses, the achievement of the task is a given. Besides and more importantly, we need to test our success by using additional criteria:

Do our workers see good Christian values displayed in us such that glory is given to God?

While others may be quick to bring management concepts into the church, have we actually done it the right way round, i.e., bring the church into the world by displaying Christian virtues in the workplace so we can reach out to people through our good conduct?

Are our workers submissive simply because of fear or out of respect?

If our workers had a choice, would they still choose to stay on and work with us?

If our workers should walk into church one day and see us there as an active member, will their first reaction be one of bewilderment at our hypocrisy or will it be a smile of enlightenment as to the secret of our good behavior?

These questions can continue. But more importantly, can we stand before God and declare that we have made the best of the position He has blessed us with to glorify Him? ★

Manna is looking for certain types of articles, or article genres. Each genre constitutes a different subject matter and writing approach. If you are planning to write an article (regardless of topic), please try to adhere to one of the genres below.

Christian Living

A Christian Living article gives practical biblical guidance on real-life issues and how to use Jesus' teachings in our daily lives.

Article length: 1500-2000 words.

Bible Study

A Bible Study explores a passage or character from the Bible and draws out the teachings for readers to apply to their lives.

Article length: 2000 words.

Doctrinal Study

A Doctrinal Study examines an aspect of True Jesus Church beliefs and may present it in comparison to other beliefs.

Article length: 2000 words.

Exhortation

An Exhortation encourages and admonishes the reader in different aspects of the Christian faith.

Article length: 1500-2000 words.

Testimony

A Testimony recounts an experience in the Lord that will encourage and edify the reader.

Article length: 1000-1500 words.

Creative Writing

Creative Writing pieces include poems, parables, or short stories that illustrate a biblical teaching or idea. Keep in mind as you're writing: how will this edify the reader?

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Please email electronic files of articles (Microsoft Word) to manna@tjc.org.

Please direct any questions to manna@tjc.org or Fax: +1-562-402-3190

In your submission, please include your name, mailing address, email address, and telephone number even if you wish to remain anonymous.

CALL FOR ARTICLES

Author Guidelines and Editorial Calendar

Issue #73:

Topic: Employing Our Gifts

Articles due: April 30, 2014

Through Jesus' love and sacrifice, we have become part of the body of Christ. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12 that some of us are the presentable parts and some of us the unpresentable. Whether we be ear, or eye, or nose, hand or foot, weaker or stronger, Jesus regards each of us as indispensable to Him and each other. However, do we share this mind of Christ?

Do we recognize how important we are and use our gifts to serve God to the best of our ability? Paul urges us to desire the best gifts, but when we have received these talents, do we use these in the house of God for His glory or for our own? We may be serving zealously, but have we inadvertently disparaged other less honorable parts?

Share with us your experiences and lessons learned in serving the Lord through employing diverse gifts in diverse ministries through diverse activities for the profit of all.

In your submission, please include your name, mailing address, email address, and telephone number.

GENERAL WRITING GUIDELINES

CONTENT

- Content should be biblically sound and adhere to biblical principles.
- Article should be organized and have a logical flow of thought.
- The main point or teaching of the article should be clear to the reader.
- Readers should be able to apply what they have read to their daily lives.

GRAMMAR/STYLE

- Use active instead of passive voice.
- Write concisely.
- Use concrete words and ideas instead of abstract concepts.
- Use "plain old English" instead of obscure, academic language.
- Use the NKJV version when quoting Bible verses.
- Use American spelling, if possible.
- Adhere to the IA Style Guide in its latest edition.

True Jesus Church

Articles of Faith

Jesus the True God

Jesus Christ, the Word who became flesh, died on the cross for the redemption of sinners, resurrected on the third day and ascended to heaven. He is the only Savior of mankind, the Creator of the heavens and earth, and the only true God.

Holy Bible

The Holy Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, is inspired by God, the only scriptural truth, and the standard for Christian living.

Church

The True Jesus Church, established by our Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit during the time of the "latter rain," is the restored true church of the apostolic time.

Baptism

Water baptism is the sacrament for the remission of sins for regeneration. The baptism must take place in natural living water, such as the river, sea, or spring. The Baptist, who already has had received baptism of water and the Holy Spirit, conducts the baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the person receiving the baptism must be completely immersed in water with head bowed and face downward.

Holy Spirit

Receiving the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues, is the guarantee of our inheritance of the kingdom of heaven.

Footwashing

The sacrament of footwashing enables one to have a part with the Lord Jesus. It also serves as a constant reminder that one should have love, holiness, humility, forgiveness, and service. Every person who has received water baptism must have his/her feet washed in the name of Jesus Christ. Mutual footwashing may be practiced whenever is appropriate.

Holy Communion

The Holy Communion is the sacrament to commemorate the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It enables us to partake of the flesh and blood of our Lord and to be in communion with Him so that we can have eternal life and be raised on the Last Day. This sacrament shall be held as often as possible. Only one unleavened bread and grape juice shall be used.

Sabbath Day

The Sabbath day, the seventh day of the week (Saturday), is a holy day, blessed and sanctified by God. It is to be observed under the Lord's grace for the commemoration of God's creation and salvation and with the hope of eternal rest in the life to come.

Salvation

Salvation is given by the grace of God through faith. Believers must rely on the Holy Spirit to pursue holiness, to honor God, and to love humanity.

Last Day

The Lord's Second Coming will take place on the last day when He descends from heaven to judge the world: the righteous will receive eternal life, while the wicked will be eternally condemned.

TRUE JESUS CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information on the True Jesus Church, contact us or visit us on our website. We look forward to hearing from you!

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