



FROM THE PASTOR



(Points from Sermon of 17th Feb)

The Secret of the Abundant Life

Greetings to all the saints in Christ Jesus.

In the STREETS of Friday, 15th Feb, there was an article telling us to "*See beyond the 5 C's*". The government would like to tap the people's views on how to reshape Singapore, and challenge us to look beyond the 5 C's – Career, Condo, Club, Credit Card and Car. An official committee has thus been set up to examine the political, social and cultural aspects of survival as a nation. Even the government realizes that life is just chasing after the

5 C's will not ensure the well-being and stability of the nation. We have to look beyond careers to find new roads to success; beyond condos, to a sense of ownership and belonging to the nation; beyond club level and social relationships, to forge ethnic and religious cohesion; beyond credit cards, to reach for better income distribution, safety nets, sports and the arts; beyond cars, balancing other physical developmental needs of Singapore.

I would like to add another C for us as Christians. We should look beyond Church to seek a more abundant life in Christ Jesus. Indeed, it is very important for us to know that there is more to life as a Christian than just attending Church.

When I went back to Malaysia recently for the Chinese New Year with my family, we noted that the Chinese are very concerned

about 'Fu'; i.e., blessedness and prosperity. They are also very concerned about peace and joy, happiness and love. During the New Year, they wish each other all these and also luck and well-being. On the first day of New Year, my brother-in-law who is a Methodist pastor and I were sitting in my parents' house watching TV (Malaysian channel) which was showing a Chinese New Year program in which a doll was made out of the God of Fortune and people were holding a square piece of cloth and tossing this God of Fortune up and down because they believed that by doing so they could toss more luck for themselves. To us, we found it rather funny; but to those people, it was a serious thing to achieve better luck in the New Year. In similar ways, there are many people in this world who think that they can manipulate their god to bless them with good fortune, luck, peace and all sorts of things. This is nothing new under the sun – various cultures and religious practices hold that when the believers say certain things and treat their gods in certain manners, they can achieve what they want in life.

Suppose I tell you that you can have a joyous and blessed life that has the assurance of peace that surpasses all understanding, would you be interested? Our Church vision this year is "To Glorify God

Through a Life of True Discipleship and Disciple-making".

To glorify God, one of the key things is that you need to bear fruit as a Christian and to live a life that God wants you to live. From the Christian perspective, the Biblical point of view, God is not for us to manipulate to achieve what we want in life; rather, we are to glorify God by doing what He tells us to do. In fact, there is an English word "*THEURGY*" for the belief that if you can do the right thing, you can manipulate god to bless you and give you what you want in life. In Christianity, there is no place for such a concept.

In Jn 10:7-9, Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture." Here, Jesus says He is the gate. This is an important point. Christianity in its fundamental understanding is an exclusive religion. We believe Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Jesus said so himself in Jn 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No

one comes to the Father except through me.” So in Christianity, there is no such thing as manipulating God because God is the way to eternal life. Jesus Himself is God and He is the way. This is a genuine revelation. Christianity is not a discovery about God; it is God revealing Himself to you who He is, where your life came from, where it is heading and what He wants you to be.

In Jn 10:10, Jesus says “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (NIV) In the KJV translation, the words used are “... have it more abundantly.” If you truly want a full life, a life that God wants you to be, the only way is through Jesus Christ.

Jesus mentions further on in Jn 15:1-2, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit ...” To live the life that God wants you to live in order to bear fruit, you must be in Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ is the true vine. This means that there are other false vines, and these false vines are thieves. Not literal thieves – they can be false religions, false philosophies, etc.

The abundant life has two aspects – one is the temporal aspect (your current life on earth) and the other is the eternal aspect. You have to see that your life here is as a true disciple bearing fruit for God and also that you have the eternal blessing of God, which is very precious and what no other gods can give to you.

There are different kinds of fruit we can bear for God on this earth. We can bring souls to Christ and help them to grow in faith with the help of the Holy Spirit. We can proclaim to them the Word. Paul says in Rom 1:13 that he has the harvest among the Gentiles and he has the burden to win souls for God’s Kingdom. He wins souls for Christ and this is the fruit he bears.

Another fruit we can bear is through sharing with those in need. Rev. Daniel Ang shared with us on 10th Feb that freely we receive, freely we give.

Furthermore, we bear fruit by having a Christ-like character, bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit which Paul mentions in Gal. 5. We also bear fruit to God by praising God and giving thanks to Him. We offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that confess his name. (Heb 13:15) Of course, when we bear fruit to God by living this abundant life, we also reap the

benefit of joy of winning souls for God, of winning disciples for Christ so that they in turn bear fruit. We also have happiness when we share what we have with others, those who need help. We have assurance of our salvation when indeed we have a Christ-like character like what Peter says in 2 Pet 1:5-7 when we add to our faith goodness, knowledge, self-control and the other qualities mentioned. We have peace when we give thanks and praise to God. Paul says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving send your request to God and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. So if you are truly bearing fruit, living the abundant life that Jesus wants you to live, you in fact have all these blessings. Many of us still go round looking for all this. The problem may be that we are not really bearing fruit for Christ, not bringing souls for Christ, not sharing with those in need. We are not making a conscious effort to develop spiritual discipline and Christ-like character. Or we may not be praising God or appreciating God in our life.

Jesus went on to say that the secret of bearing fruit is by abiding in Him. In Jn 15 He says ten times "abide" (or "remain" in NIV). For example, in v. 4, he says, "Remain

in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." So an important element on living the abundant life is that we must remain in Christ.

The secret of abiding (remaining) is to obey Christ. Those who obey His command live in Him and He in them. (1 Jn 3:24) 1 Jn 2:4 also says, "The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Most of the time, following Christ's teaching is not burdensome; it is not a heavy yoke. In fact, it frees you from a lot of vices in life and you can truly be free to live for God and have this joy, blessedness and peace that we often wish each other. But often, it is an illusion because we are not abiding in Christ, not obeying Him. To obey is to love God, to love Christ. Some people obey laws and commandments because they have to, it being imposed on them. Some people obey because they need to, out of some selfish reasons in order to get what they want from their gods. But for Christians, we obey because we want to, because we truly love God, love Christ.

In order to love Christ, there is a further element. You need to know Him. You cannot really love someone if you don't really know that person. The Bible is a great source of what we can know about God. To know Jesus, you need to meditate on God's Word since the Bible is a genuine revelation from God to man and in it God expresses like a love letter to you His heartbeat and His passion for you. And this is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. As we enter the Lent season, we are again reminded of this fact, that there is only one true God who is the source of life and you cannot manipulate this God. He does not want you to obey Him because you are forced to. This God you have to love with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind because you want to. Therefore, you have to have a good bearing in your life, to know God's Word so that you truly can have the abundant life that God wants you to have as a true disciple of Christ. This year, as we meditate on this, let us go forth with clearer vision; and the abundant life we have is to glorify God, living a life of true discipleship bearing fruit for Him and making other disciples so that they too will bear fruit unto God and

glorify Him. We do this because we love Him, we want to obey Him and want to know Him.

Rev. Martin Yee

A man went to a church where he had heard many miracles had occurred, visions of Heaven. "I have come all the way from my home church to find God," he told one of the believers.

He got this reply: "Aah. God has gone all the way to your home church, to find you."

THE STORY OF THE FOURTH WISE MAN

(As retold by Rev. Daniel Ang on 10th February)

Food for thought: What is the moral of this story?

The 4th wise man in this story is called Artaban. One day, he was supposed to meet up with his three friends, the three magi from the East, to travel together to Jerusalem to worship the newborn King. He brought with him four precious stones, but never made it to worship the newborn King.

On his way, he first came across an injured soldier whom he had to nurse to health. He had to sell

one of his precious stones in order to have the money to care for this soldier. When the soldier was well enough, Artaban hurried to meet his magi friends at the appointed meeting place, but he was too late. His friends had left, leaving behind a note asking him to travel across the wilderness to meet them in Jerusalem. Reluctantly, he sold his second precious stone to buy a camel to travel across the vast desert.

When Artaban reached Jerusalem, he discovered that he was late again and his three friends had left by another way. By then, Herod had already decreed that all boys under the age of two would be killed. As a result, fear and wailings filled Jerusalem. While walking in the dead of night, he heard soldiers rushing into a home. He followed suit; and there, standing in a corner, was a woman holding a baby looking rather pitiful because she knew the captain of the guards would take the baby away from her. Artaban moved forward and told the captain of the guards, "Take this precious stone and pretend that you have never seen the woman and baby." At last, the baby was safe. However, Artaban was still left hoping for whatever news he could hear in order to meet up with the newborn king so that he could give him the last precious stone. His

wandering took him to Egypt and all the way back to Jerusalem again.

33 years later, as an old man walking in the streets of Jerusalem, Artaban heard the commotion over a crucifixion that was going to take place. He moved with the crowd, wanting to see what this crucifixion was all about. On his way, he saw a group of Arab merchants trying to snatch a young woman away from her family. Reluctantly, and out of sympathy, he stepped forward and said, "Let this my last precious stone redeem the girl for the family." Gladly, the Arab merchants took that stone and the young girl was saved. Finally, when he reached the place where three 'criminals' were crucified, he stood in the shed watching. Then there was a storm and a tile from the roof fell and hit his head. In his semi-conscious state, he heard a voice telling him, "as often as you did it to one of these brothers of mine, you did it to me."

Ω



The above is a fictional story which Rev. Ang said was based on Henry van Dyke's Dutch Christmas classic. (pic., left)

There is an excellent moral to the story. While the three wise men might have managed to find the newborn Messiah King, Artaban's own quest for Christ was never in vain in the sight of God. Although he did not succeed through his long journey to pay homage to the newborn King with his precious gifts, he was considered righteous for his deeds in helping the poor and needy. Note what Jesus said in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats, especially the reference to what "the righteous will answer" and what "*The King will reply*":

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison

*and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" - *Matthew 25:34-40**

In Jesus' parable, the righteous are those like Artaban who sought to do what is right (paying homage to the King; i.e., worshipping the Lord) but, though unaware himself, actually demonstrated much righteousness by his life spent in real deeds of helping the poor and needy ("*whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine*") while he might not see himself as having done anything worthy to the Lord ("*Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or ...*") by his charity to others.

The way Rev. Daniel put it, "In the Gospel reading, the parable of the Sheep and the Goats contains a very interesting twist to the whole story. Just as the people thought that they were just serving another person out of pity, kindness, or maybe out of compassion, Christ on the day of Judgment turns around and says, "*I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me*"; and to those who failed to extend a helping hand to the needy, Christ says, "*whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.*"

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SET-UP OF THE LUTHERAN COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES

Rev. Daniel Ang wants us to recognize that while as a people of God we are not of the world, we are sent by Christ into the world. He said that one of the motivations for the Lutheran Church to engage in social work is that we look at fellow human beings as 'a type of needy Christ', the Christ we seek to serve. This is a cue to us that Christ, in the person of the deprived or disadvantaged in our community, is in our midst – Christ is just nearby and we do not have to go far to seek Him out, to serve Him. According to Henry van Dyke, "*as long as you did to them, you did it for me*" are the most beautiful words we can hear. Isn't it wonderfully reassuring that the good service we render to the hungry and the poor in the community, regardless of race, language and religion will find favour with our Lord?

Rev. Daniel Ang also shared a number of other Scriptural imperatives that motivate us to move forward in the Community Care project. His prayers are that those who are able to give financially will reach deep into their pockets and those who have the talents and time to serve in this ministry will be stirred in their hearts to step forward. Ω

DO IT ANYWAY

People are often unreasonable,
illogical, and self-centered;
Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may
accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;
Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some
false friends and some true enemies;
Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank,
people may cheat you;
Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building,
someone could destroy overnight;
Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness,
they may be jealous;
Be happy anyway.

The good you do today,
people will often forget tomorrow;
Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have,
and it may never be enough;
Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis,
it is between you and God;
It was never between you and them anyway.

-Mother Teresa

Topics to meditate:

Christlikeness, Forgiveness,

Integrity, Service, Spiritual

Mt 25:40: Phil 2:1-4: 1 Jn 3:16-18

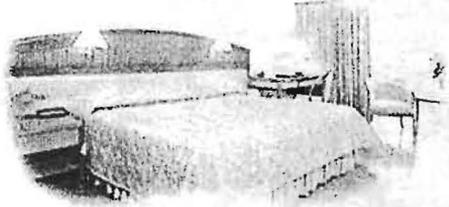
ANNOUNCEMENT

2002

Sofitel Palm Resort, JB



Good Recreation



Comfortable Rest

For the first time, we have this combined retreat with the Chinese congregation. It's an opportunity for fellowship not to be missed.



A conducive atmosphere too for a spiritually nourishing experience with messages from God's Word



You'll be provided with enough energy for great activities

Get ready for these exciting dates

6th to 9th June

(Thursday to Sunday)

@ Sofitel Palm Resort, JB

Registration:

24th Feb to 31st March 02.

Lena Maria

She was born without hands,
With a left leg just half as long as
the right,



But she did not bow to fate,
Trusting that “whatever potential I
have by providence, there must be
use for it”,

Her confidence and fortitude
prevailed over her fateful disability.

In this pressure-cooker of an island
Singapore,

All for “No. 1” a dear price we pay,
“Kiasuism” tells us that we cannot
be “No. 2,

Daily we are chased by the fear of
falling behind others,

Teachers and students face the
pressure of the education system,

Workers are under pressure to fulfill
productivity targets or face
retrenchment,

Businessmen face the pressure of
the economic recession,

Pressure, pressure everywhere
enveloping one and all.

Is there a window of life to permit
one’s spirit to gaze into the distance
of the azure sky?



Lena Maria 2002, 17th –18th
May “It’s great to live”
concert helps all who are
weighed down by pressures
in Singapore to open a
spiritual window.

You and I can spare an
effort for our nation, our
people - Come! Let us pray,
let us take action,
participate in fund-raising
to offer up our love.

Who is Lena Maria?

The picture below shows Lena and her husband. She was from Sweden, born with only one arm and one



healthy leg.

Through the years, she has proven herself to be a great survivor. Her

handicap did not stand in the way of her learning to

swim at age 3, winning 3 silver medals at the National Swedish Games at age 18, and setting two national records in two butterfly events. After retiring from athletics, she proved herself as a talented singer, studying at the Stockholm's Music Conservatory. The following extract from

http://www.lenamaria.com/who_is_lena_maria.htm says only so much about her creative energy and talents:

"The last eleven years Lena Maria has been singing in churches all over Sweden, Norway and Finland and done TV and radio performances together with the jazz pianist Anders Wiik. They perform gospel with strong influences of jazz, soul and pop. She has also done concerts in Moscow, Latvia, Belarus, Germany, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, USA, Hong Kong, Thailand, Korea and Taiwan. But in Japan is where she is most popular. Through TV, radio and media Lena Maria has attracted attention and probably about 80% of the

Japanese people have in some way heard of her. Specially at the performance at the opening ceremony at the Paralympic Games in Nagano.

Lena Maria has recorded five albums with a variety of songs and some of the songs Lena Maria has written herself. In fall -98 an album was released, Lena Maria then worked together with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. In May this year a new album was released in Japan called 'Heartfilled'.

In addition to her singing Lena Maria is a scholarship student with Mouth and Foot Painting Artist since -93."

Lena Maria's positive attitude as "a singer, painter, manager and bringer of happiness" (as another website describes her) puts to shame many able-bodied Christians who surrender to the slightest impediment in life. How many of us have the same strength and courage as our sister-in-Christ Lena Maria in overcoming the greatest odds in life without losing sight of a purpose for us in God's plan?

If you want to join the VIPs, including our Prime Minister, to see Lena Maria in concert in Singapore, quickly move your eyes to the next page for more details.

Lena Maria Concert
("Life Can Be Good" Project)

- 1) Date: 17th & 18th May 2002
- 2) Venue: Singapore Expo Hall
- 3) Organizer: Concern & Care Society
- 4) Sponsors:
PSA, SCANTEAK,
CSP Productions (Light & Sound),
Ching Hwa (Stage Design),
Envisage Concepts
(Security & Information),
IKEA, Singapore Press Holding
- 5) Fund Raisers:
The Diocese of Singapore
(Chinese Department)
The Lutheran Church in Singapore
The Methodist Church in Singapore
(Chinese Annual Conference)
The Presbyterian Church in Singapore
- 6) Beneficiary:
S'pore Anglican Welfare Council
The Star Shelter
- 7) Invited Guests:
Prime Minister Mr. Goh Chok Tong
Officials from Ministry of Education
Taipei Representative Office in S'pore
Eminent professionals & businessmen
- 8) Invited Artists:
Comperes: Ms. Evelyn Tan,
Mr. Darren Lim
Singer: Ms. Lena Maria

- 9) Total Tickets for Churches:
5,000
 - a) 2,000 tickets for front seats
(S\$100/- per ticket)
 - b) 3,000 tickets for seats further
back (S\$50/- per ticket)
 - c) Tickets can only be collected
by completed donation cards
and on a first come first serve
basis. Each donation card
can only collect 2 tickets.
- 10) Total Tickets for VIP: 100
(S\$500/- per ticket).
Each ticket is for 2 persons.
- 11) Publishing of Magazine:
March 2002
- 12) News Conference:
3rd May 2002 @ 2:00 pm
- 13) Award Presentation Ceremony:
16th May 2002
- 14) Donation Cards given to all
local congregations in January
2002. The cards should be
returned by March 2002

A novice said to a master, "I want to be a great man. What is the first thing I should do?"

The master answered, "Forget about being a great man." ☺

The Crash of Ken-Air



.....
● I'm going to lose everything I have!
● Ken-Air founder Kenny Goh may have the roof over his head soon but the end-time travel giant is not giving up. BOM BOM PIZ tracks his rise and fall, and asks him about his plans for the future.
● The first thing you see when visiting Mr. Kenny Goh's home is that it has a long driveway, unlike many of his other landed East Coast neighbours.
● Rise inside the 1,800 sq m compound and there are the usual trappings of a man who has made good: a double storey house, big car, swimming pool, aquatic imported chandelier and several dogs.
● There is even a squash court inside the house.
● But the entrepreneur's glow of success seems to be fading, as the spectre of liability casts its shadow over him.
.....



What do the collapse of Enron (the Energy Giant in America) and the demise of Ken-Air (the Travel Giant in Singapore) have in common?

While one is a US\$50 billion behemoth and the other is relatively just a "pygmy giant" with a S\$100m annual turnover, both of them send out with their fall shock waves that reach ordinary people whose confidence in the company had been solid. Shock! - Because each of them is among

the biggest and most well known in its own sphere of business and for this reason alone it is simply beyond comprehension how it can cave in as completely as the WTC towers.

Such sudden deaths of corporate giants were not the first and they are not going to be the last. (Need to be reminded about Barings? How about digesting the application by Global Crossing, a NYSE-listed company that invested billions in fibre-optic cables spanning oceans and continents, for bankruptcy protection only a few weeks ago?) I believe we have heard enough of innumerable local and foreign examples of businesses biting the dust when realities failed to meet projections. A statement I read somewhere goes like this:

"Everything with a beginning has an ending. For all we acquire, in our relationships, and in who we become as persons, life involves passages and saying many goodbyes."

While the statement quoted is about human life, it is as applicable to the coming and going of corporate entities that have lives of their own detached from the persons who operate them. The ending may be gradual and anticipated, pleasant or otherwise, so it does not stir the placid air; it may be abrupt and out of the blue bringing in its wake high drama for grappling with.

Ken Air is proof of how things can go fantastically right or terribly wrong within a short space of time beyond one's wildest imagination. Its earnings of \$200 000 in 1975 shot up to \$3m in just two years; and that was an enormous leap considering the monetary value in the 1970s. As the company prospered by leaps and bounds, and expanded into other non-travel businesses, the superstitious would say "touch wood" to anybody who would foretell a decline in fortunes as precipitous as the rise; yet, such a calamitous fall happened when a promising merger plan fell through, closely followed by the dawning of the Mad Cow Scare in Europe and the 911 tragedy. Who could ever predict the happenings when they were yet to materialize? Another passage I read says: *"Men come and they go and they trot and they dance, and never a word about death. All well and good. Yet when death does come – to them, their wives, their children, their friends – catching them unawares and unprepared, then what storms of passion overwhelm them, what cries, what fury, what despair! To begin depriving death of its greatest advantage over us, let us adopt a way clean contrary to that common one; let us deprive death of its strangeness, let us frequent it, let us get used to it ..."*

While it is not proper to equate a death of fortunes with the physical death of a person, it is a fact that there are people who thump their chests in agony, cursing and swearing, when any substantial financial loss strikes suddenly as though all is lost and life is no longer worth living. We may not have the chance to lose billions like Enron did or just half the \$30m that vaporized from the wallet of Ken-Air's founder; but how would one avoid being overwhelmed by *"what storms of passion, what cries, what fury, what despair"* as averred in the passage above – as though the actual death of a loved one has descended upon one's life – if one were just to lose twenty thousand dollars of his life savings to theft or investments gone awry, or lose her precious Rolls Royce baby to a lightning strike (Acts of God excluded from insurance policy)?

Well ... well, I may be laying it on thick in the comparison of corporate life or one's financial fortunes with the life that God breathed into each and every one of us; however, you will have no difficulty agreeing with me that corporate life, financial fortunes and God-breathed life all bear out one common truth – i.e., no one can predict what comes tomorrow.

One man's peanuts may be another man's fortune. So, even if Bill Gates doesn't mind missing \$10 000, I would certainly feel uptight if a pickpocket were to lift \$1 000 out my possession. The significant thing is the

feeling of loss and not the actual quantum of loss. With this musing, I therefore find it remarkable Ken-Air's founder's comment to the Straits Times that he "has no problems about losing all he has." According to the newspaper report, the businessman had given up golf six years ago to spend his Sundays at Church. In the face of the demise of a great business (for whatever reasons commentators talk about), he also said the following:

"My faith is in the Lord. That's why for me to lose \$30 million and still be sane is a miracle. If you place your faith on the material, the minute there's trouble, you'll be shaken."

Is life all gone just because of a blow? The answer is obvious:
Certainly not!

What God can give, He can take away. What He can take away, He can give again. While the story of Ken-Air is ordinarily reckoned as a sad one, it is just one of many examples of failures in life for which the silver lining of the dark clouds is the hope (or good prospect) that still remains. The Straits Times reports that after "liquidating his companies and 'facing the music', he [Ken Air's founder Kenny Goh] wants to take a three-month break to review and plan the next phase of his life, which includes buying a Housing Board flat for his children with his Central Provident Fund savings. While he has received offers to work overseas, he said he wants to complete a book he's been working on to illustrate biblical lessons as well as to turn church sermons into Powerpoint presentations."

Perhaps, as Kenny Goh reflects and meditates on God's Word in the coming days and months in conjunction with his writing, he will come to see that God has a great plan for him to turn his experience with the rise and fall of Ken-Air into Powerpoint presentations of fresh lessons learnt about divine truth. The most urgent race in life is not the business race that is fraught with imponderables, but the race to propagate the pure and sure Gospel message. Here is a lesson from the Bible:

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning

its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” (Heb. 12:1-3)

The state of the world economy needs no introduction. The economic dark clouds hanging in the air bring gloom to many big and small businesses. (I have heard of one well-known company dealing in essentials losing \$6m in sales in just one month recently when earnings had not looked bad for the preceding period!) In the past, there were corporations fallen and gone into oblivion. Still, there were businesses that fell, stood up again and succeeded with a Second Chance or, maybe, a Third Chance. There are similarities in the experiences of bodies corporate and those of individual persons. Many Christians share the same feeling of loss with job retrenchments, bonus curtailments, etc. Even though the scales of their losses in absolute numerical terms may be different, the suddenness of bad news, the sharpness of the pain when livelihoods are put on edge, the sense of helplessness, etc. – they are all the same. In fact, those who lose a regular \$2000 pay packet may feel a greater sense of despondency than someone who loses \$2m. In these difficult times, it is good for Christians to be reminded not to lose their spiritual resolve in conquering odds. Often, all is not lost when all seems to be lost. There is still hope in Christ. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.” (2 Cor. 1:3-5)

It is in times of trouble that one should draw closer to God rather than away from Him. Those who choose to abandon God in the worst of times and return in the best of times are fair-weather Christians. “But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.” (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

Will the economic dark clouds float away soon? I hope so. What will happen tomorrow is yet unseen. “But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.” (Rom. 8:24b-25)

John Lee