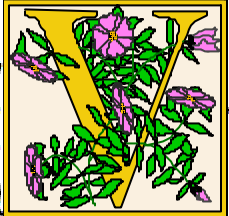


Apr

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THE ine

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus. The AGM is just over. The largest expense budget ever was presented. However, if we compare this budget to those of the mega churches which spend \$1 million in a month, it is indeed nothing. In the news, unemployment has increased to 7%. This may affect JCC in one way or another. How do we react? Our dear bishop John Tan has advised us not to fear because Jesus said, "It is I; don't be afraid." (John 6:20)

Besides money problems we have SARS. Does this cause you to panic, to stop meeting in cell groups? If it does not stop you from going to work, it should not stop you from church meetings. However, the sensible precautions need to be in place, as Christians are not immune to the disease as exemplified by the death of a pastor.

Has the last few months been tough? Sometimes we wonder, "What did I do to deserve this" or "Why did God have to do this to me." Here is a wonderful explanation.

A daughter is telling her mother how everything is going wrong. Meanwhile, her mother is baking a cake and asks her daughter if she would like a snack. The daughter says, "Absolutely Mom. I love your cake."

"Here, have some cooking oil," her mother offers. "Yuck," says her daughter. "How about a couple of raw eggs?" "Gross, Mom." "Would you like some flour then? Or maybe some baking soda?" "Mom, those are all yucky."

To which the mother replies, " Yes, all of those things seem bad all by themselves. But when they're put together in the right way, they make a wonderfully delicious cake. God works the same way. Many times we wonder why He

would let us go through such bad and difficult times. But God knows that when He puts these things all in His order, they always work for the good. We just have to trust Him and eventually they will all make something wonderful."

Even as I go through some trials in my own life, I find it difficult to accept some of these pat answers. Yet the problem is not with God but with me. I must learn to look at the long term and not at the current situation. Pray that I can come through these trials a stronger person.

The Editor



Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

1John 5:5

GOOD vs. EVIL

By John Lee

We have a vicious enemy to deal with. Even without any biological weapon showing up in the Iraq war, the fear of a mass-killing contagion being unleashed has actually materialized into a real life-and-death biological battle with a villain that is possibly only 1/1 000 000 000 000 the size of a pinhead. This villain is called the coronavirus, a.k.a. the cause of SARS. With a corona attached to its name, I shall think of it as a virus king.



The coronavirus is particularly vicious as an enemy capable of revenge. A pastor, Simon Loh, offended the virus by simply doing what he felt was a good deed to pray for a SARS victim, so the virus king ordered his life to be seized. An Italian doctor, a member of WHO and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, could not have been a bad guy. Yet, after alerting his colleagues to the outbreak of the deadly SARS, the coronavirus came after him with a vengeance. He died on 30th March. In less than a month, another doctor in Singapore and his mother who is also a doctor succumbed to the killer.

It is always sad, very sad, to note the departure of someone who is good. Good people are killed in wars and it does not diminish the pain of tragedy any bit to know whether the war is biological, chemical, conventional, nuclear or even the outcome of man's well-meaning creative or inventive enterprise. When God created man in His image, he granted man the authority to rule over everything that has the breath of life. (Gen. 1:26-30) Now, I really find it remarkable that man can tame the big and wild animals but seems so helpless against something that is not even measurable against a speck of dust. Perhaps scientists can reason that a virus is neither a plant nor an animal, nothing of the sort that has the breath of life although it is anything but inert – going by the unfettered life-taking power it possesses.

Everything God created was good and as man dwelled in the goodness of the creation, there was no need for him to know evil. “Good” was a given and it was in the experience; so God saw no need for man to have it in the knowledge too. See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil, fear no evil – so man could simply enjoy (experience) what is good and stay under the protective care of God without worrying about anything by mental acuity. Alas, under the cunning influence of the serpent, man chose to go against the instruction of his Father in heaven or the dire warning of certain death (Gen. 2:17) and proceeded to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.



Imagine the beauty of innocence that a child possesses, the simplicity of trust placed on its parents to take good care of its needs and well-being. In the same manner, the first man and woman could have depended on their heavenly Father for

reliable care and protection. Instead, they wanted to be like God, knowing good and evil. The serpent did not warn them of the serious consequence of such knowledge – the consequence that with the knowledge, they would not then be able to escape from the contest between the good and evil forces to grab their mind and allegiance when, previously, they had only to bask in the pristine landscape of the Garden of Eden without being troubled about anything. A modern-day analogy about the consequence of such forbidden knowledge is that if we do not know anything about the existence of pornography (evil), we would not have anything to do with it; but once we come to know of it, we tend to be reflexively drawn to it and become distracted from our wholesome activities. We are forced to confront the choice between what we know is good and what we know is evil but which is too tempting to shoo off our consciousness easily. Now, with the knowledge of good and evil, harm comes to us in the form of choices that we are forever struggling to set right when originally there were no choices to make and hence no harm without the forbidden knowledge to handle.

Scripture says that when Eve saw that the forbidden fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she ate it and gave one to Adam who also ate it, and then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized their nakedness. (Gen. 3:6-7) That was what they realized! Did the Bible say that they actually gained wisdom? No! What I believe is that they might have gained a little knowledge, and they became confounded by it and found themselves struggling to deal with the knowledge. They did not have full knowledge, and we know well the problem of a little knowledge – a dangerous thing!



Since Adam and Eve, man through generations has to struggle with his limited **knowledge** of good and evil, or rather the lack of **knowledge**. Here, I am not talking of good and evil per se but the **knowledge** of good and evil. As an illustration of the struggle we face, look no further than the Iraq war. We know that despite the world's castigation of Saddam Hussein, the infamous dictator still had worldwide support by way of the rowdy anti-war demonstrations even in America. Is there any logic? Yes, by our limited knowledge of good and evil, there is logic by the following argument:

“When Iraq without provocation attacked its sovereign neighbour, Kuwait, it was condemned as evil. Now, when the United States attacks a sovereign nation, Iraq, without provocation, it is hailed as a hero.”

Before you make up your own mind about the above logic, now look at it the opposite way:

“When President Bush decides to attack Iraq and there are civilian casualties in the ensuing war, war opponents say that it is an

unprovoked international crime. When Iraq invaded Kuwait resulting in large numbers of civilian casualties, there were no vociferous rallies protesting against Saddam Hussein across the world as we see now against President Bush.”

After having eaten the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, man is none the wiser about what is right (good) and what is wrong (evil). How is it that the Iraqi government could write a letter of complaint to the UN denouncing a missile strike in a shopping area in Baghdad while it would not do the same over a missile strike at a shopping centre in Kuwait? According to some warped human logic, the lives of innocents in Iraq are good while those of innocents in Kuwait are evil. Perhaps Saddam’s government had it all mixed up because, actually, the strike in Baghdad was good but that in Kuwait was bad. This does not detract from the truth that whichever side is good and whichever side evil, a gaping opinion divide exists and nobody can ever be wise enough to state unequivocally, with a straight conscience, which is really right and which is really wrong.



Adam and Eve could have eaten up all the fruits on the tree of knowledge of good and evil to their stomach’s content if they wanted to, but this would not give man an iota of wisdom to apply the knowledge for his eternal bliss. I am not an exception among the creatures that form the human race. I am not any wiser than you are to rule on the question of who is good and who is evil, what is right and what is wrong. If the U.S. fails to declare war on Saddam, there would be a lot of problems arising from the latter’s questionable ambitions. On the other hand, by declaring war, a lot of problems also ensue with divided world opinions, and the fear of terrorists settling scores rising several notches. In other words, world peace is damned when the U.S acts and it is damned when the U.S. doesn’t act. This is just an example of how incapable we are to make wisdom judgment because for every judgment, we never can have any true peace of conviction because of the stranglehold ambiguities have on our minds and hearts. Put simply, good and evil are always cloaked in a haze and we are always kept on tenterhooks with a sense of danger lurking in every shadow. With man’s knowledge of good and evil, what peace or any other form of gain does he acquire?

Man’s war between good and evil is not just a war that can be settled with Saddam’s capitulation, resolution of the North Korea issue, the end of Middle East conflicts and the “ hopeful” attainment of international harmony. We can wish for the end of all wars according to our knowledge of what peace it is good to have, but we still cannot get away from the war between good and evil in many forms that give our lives little peace. We can have the world’s nuclear weapons obliterated, but can we obliterate intelligent man’s ignorance in the pursuit of knowledge and adventure with genomics (supposedly for his benefit with the potential of a wonderful organ farm to supply bodies with replacement parts) that throws morals to the wind and increases the

risk of a Frankenstein appearing (literally or figuratively) with each successive higher-order laboratory exploit? Can we be absolutely sure that fêted inventions of cutting edge products for man's security does not instead become a threat to the world's survival, and that antibiotics designed to subdue invisible enemies do not instead build up the enemies' resilience to subdue and humble us? **Has man through the generations been doing a lot of good with his intelligence but producing evil, or has he been doing a lot of evil and learning good lessons about the vast chasm between the knowledge of good and evil he boasts of and the wisdom he sorely lacks – at least, the wisdom to meekly admit that his intelligence is not all-conquering and therefore he needs help beyond the limits of his being?**

When children learn about good vs. evil in fairytales, we know that they gain some knowledge that does not in any way grant them the capacity of wisdom to come to grips with real life encounters. The children still need the protection of their parents. At the time of creation, God knew that man would not possess any capacity to handle the knowledge emplaced in the specific tree of knowledge of good and evil; hence, the injunction against eating the fruit because death would surely ensue. The fact is that we, after having consumed the fruit of the tree, can claim like children to know what is good and evil; but we are still in need of our Heavenly Father for wisdom to conduct our lives. Our struggle is not against Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden or unknown human terrorists as our knowledge suggests. It is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms as the Word of God tells us. (Eph. 6:12) The nuclear proliferation that we fear would threaten the world may turn out to be nothing to fear about. The American decision to attack Iraq was feared to cast a long shadow on the world economy, but it may turn out to pale in comparison to the effect of another war against an invisible enemy more furious against the economy and deadly against lives. The SARS virus is a more dangerous threat to lives than military warfare so much so that the people in Iraq ought to be thankful for the coalition forces' military adventure that effectively cut off travelers and denied the virus a foothold on their soil. Yet, the virus king (one evil) can easily be dethroned and in the throne we find another evil more vicious and dreadful. The 1918 Spanish flu pandemic claimed up to 70 million lives in just one year before it unexpectedly disappeared. (<http://www.firstworldwar.com/atoz/influenza.htm>) How was this figure compared with the total number of deaths in the four years of World War I? Many of the people who were well in the morning succumbed to the flu and died by night! The coronavirus has been called a hide-and-seek player. A Straits Times commentary (9th April) may be right to say that the enemy "is tiny but tough, a clever quick-change artist able to lie low, change its form and re-emerge to shock and awe." The commentary further states that the super-bug "is proving yet again that man is no match for nature in a fight to the finish."

Indeed, I feel that man is no match for nature regardless of what he has been boasting through the centuries about his prowess for inventions and discoveries. The good vs. evil contest is not what we can handle by boasting our knowledge in warfare,

science, technology, etc. No matter how smart man thinks he is compared to everything else that has the breath of life, he could have been effortlessly wiped off the surface of the earth by an enemy (Spanish flu virus) that came and went at will without being seen, more formidable than a nuclear bomb. Why do we need to fear a third world war when evil can come and go easily and attack us more effectively than bombs and missiles?

Let us heed the instruction of 1 Cor 1:25 and be humble to admit that our knowledge leads us to nowhere but self-destruction, unless we couple it with the “foolishness of God” that is wiser than man’s wisdom. For generations man has tried and tried in vain depending on his own strength (and sniffed at God’s “weakness”) to do things and solve problems that never seem to go away. Instead, the problems just ‘mutate’ into new forms that become harder for our intelligence. For example, while once upon a time man just needed simple weapons to defend themselves against wild animals and enemies with swords and spears, now our high-tech arsenal (the product of great inventive brains) becomes the stuff for showmanship that is useless against an enduring lethal brew of pent up frustrations, alienation, hopelessness and despair – just the right ingredients for an ongoing stream of terror-inspiring human bombs. Will we ever solve any problem by might and intelligence? Throughout history, man trusting in his wisdom and strength has been seeing nothing but “conflicts on the outside, fears within”, unceasingly mired in crisis after crisis of security despite all the smart great endeavours to tame the wild. Shouldn’t it be time for man to put aside his wisdom and strength and give God’s foolishness and weakness a chance to work? (For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength – 1 Cor 1:25) Shouldn’t man learn from his folly of disobedience in the beginning (Adam & Eve), repent now and give obedience a fresh chance to work?



It is because of God that we are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. (1 Cor 1:30) So, this month when we commemorate Good Friday and Easter, remember not to be so ignorant as to boast our “wisdom” to remark about God’s foolishness to allow His Son to die on the cross when He could have the events take place the way we think we know better. All the valued knowledge of this world cannot explain the Christian revelation and the glorious triumphs of the cross. All the intelligence of man cannot explain the iniquities that abound in the world. God follows His own way to save man. In the titanic contest of good vs. evil, Satan only possesses limited power to attempt keeping us away from God. God uses the testing of our faith to develop our perseverance and make us mature and complete. (James 1:2-4) Satan in his fury may level all forms of evil on the earth, but he knows that his time is short and we will have the final victory by the blood of the Lamb. “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.” (Rom 16:20) The only condition: BELIEVE! (Mk 16:16)



IN AWE.

Awful. Awesome.

By Charlotte Sam

This was posted on the web in May 2001:

“ This is to anyone who knew someone on this flight or any other flight that never reached its final destination. Sometimes the pain does not go away, sometimes we still hear that familiar voice say, ‘Don’t worry, I’m o.k.’” But yet we still try to fill the void, try to stop the pain but like the Bible says, “ Believe in Me and I shall give you everlasting and eternal life.

Once I told God, I said, ‘God, I’m depressed. Life is so hard,’ and He said, ‘That is why I gave you loved ones,’ and then I said, ‘God, I’m so sad. My loved one has died,’ and God said, ‘I too lost a loved one. He was nailed to a cross,’ and I said, ‘But God, your loved one still lives.’ and God smiled and said, ‘So does yours.’

I cannot imagine the loss that you are feeling but if my words can help just one person feel a little better and understand that one day life will return to a somewhat normal pattern, just please don’t live in death. Live in life.

Death is truly painful and losing a loved one is worse. I lost a two-year-old in a swimming accident and I know how it hurts but my Lord promises me that I will see all my loved ones again where the sun never goes down and the flowers are always fresh.

In the meantime, all I can do is keep a fresh memory in my head and love in my heart and live life and not death.”

In the days when you feel that God is far away, I hope this will bring some comfort. Whenever I feel that He is far from me, I wonder why certain blessings have eluded me. Sometimes I also lament over the loss of loved ones, opportunities, etc.

Then one day, after a few weeks of devotional study on sin and repentance, it dawned on me the significance of David’s psalms in Psalm 38 and Psalm 51. You will agree with me about the significance, especially the context that prompted David’s penitence in Psalm 51.

To be honest, I was aghast. Oops, sorry, by now you should know I am no Bible scholar. Hence, this explained my surprise find over that infamous Bathsheba incident.

I had always known Bathsheba for her adulterous ways, but did not know who’s who in her list of “willing accomplices” – let alone David, the dear King David. I believe it was not a one-night stand; it was an affair that brewed over time between 2 intelligent beings. Pretty grave sort of crime, do you not agree?

Read Psalm 51, King David, too realizes a great loss – that is how he

had betrayed the trust our Lord God had bestowed upon him as King of nations. He probably felt he did not make a good role model as a king as well as God's chosen one.

Yet, he was very sure of the Lord's mercy to be able to communicate the way he did in the psalm. This is the same king who asked and thanked God for His deliverance from the enemies; and sought forgiveness for succumbing to temptation.

At this point of writing, I am in awe of God's unfailing mercy. We all have dark secrets (don't we?!). While I am always reminded that God's unfailing mercy is not a passport to commit future sins, it is also a relief for the truly contrite. U-turns are always allowed! Amen. I am once again reminded of Kenneth's words: "...Do not grieve. God's grace equals His mercy that exists for those who do not deserve." It is one of those few but significant things that Kenneth says well. (He babbles a lot otherwise☺)

Job 38 (NIV):

²² "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of the hail, ²³ which I reserve for times of trouble, for days of war and battle?"

It is really quite amazing. At a recent funeral service I attended, I mentally calculated that I had attended equal numbers of wedding and funeral functions over the last 12 months.

Ever since graduation, I have had the habit of reading obituaries. Of late I go through them more thoroughly. I

scrutinise familiar faces and names of relatives to the deceased.

This queer habit started when I became the first to discover the death of Gregory, a colleague. He battled long and hard with leukemia. It happened one day after my visit to the hospital ... he actually declined visitors, so I could only watch him from a small viewing panel.

Greg's death was as sudden as the discovery of his illness. Life takes its turns and surprises us in many ways.

I cannot say the war against Iraqi was sudden, but to have SARS¹ happening alongside was!

King Solomon was wise indeed when he wrote in Ecclesiastes 1 (NIV):

⁸ All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing. ⁹ What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.

Followed by in Ecclesiastes 2 (NIV):

²⁰ So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. ²¹ For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. ²² What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? ²³ All his days his work is pain and grief;

¹ Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.

²⁴ A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, ²⁵ for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? ²⁶ To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

And, may I add from Psalm 127 (NIV):

¹ Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.

Indeed. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. The Lord builds and He tears down. The Old Testament is not void of records that testify to God's law to rule the nature He created.

So, in everything that we do, big or small, let us heed James 4 (NIV):

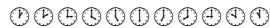
¹³ Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."

¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."



This seems like the guiding principle that explains why I insist on taking a good, close look at each of the 3 men in my house before I parted goodby with each of them every morning. I always think there is no guarantee I will see them again at day's close. Just in case the morning parting shot turns out to be life's last, I always try to leave each of them that 6-million-dollar grin I inherited from my daddy and marmie ☺.



In closing, I want to share this anecdote. You and I can identify with the objects.

Cracked Pots

A water bearer in India had two large pots; each hung on each end of a pole that he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots, full of water in his master's house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?" "For the past two years, I have been able to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value for your efforts," the pot said.

The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path." Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again it apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house." ❀

Robbing God by Tan Swee Leong

*"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.
"But you ask, 'How do we rob you?'
"In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."
(Malachi 3:8-10)*

Introduction

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament written about 430 years B.C. During the time, the people of Judah had returned from the exile in Babylon (present day Iraq) back to Israel. Malachi rebukes the Jews, the chosen nation of their wilful disobedience and contempt of God in their worship, failing to live according to God's will and in withholding their tithes and offerings to God.

The Lord charges his people with robbery. They have stolen from God robbing Him in respect of their tithes – the practice of giving a tenth of their income to God. They have also robbed God in their offerings – voluntary gifts for special purposes over and above the tithe. Can we really rob God? Does the word of Malachi have a message for us today?

Robbing God

In the time of Malachi, the tithe was used to support the priests and Levites, giving of the tithe was seen as giving to God. To the extent we withhold what we ought to give to God we are robbing Him of the support that we ought to be giving to.

In giving of money, we express our heart devotion to God. God is interested in our hearts. The way we use our money speaks of where our heart devotion is. Failure to use our money for God speaks of a heart that robs him of our devotion.

How do we rob God?

The idea of the tithe finds its origins in the Old Testament. We may argue that today we are not under the law (Gal 5:18). The Pharisees legalistically followed the requirements of the law and gave a tenth of everything they had. Jesus calls us to be those whose righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees. The tithe is a good guide but if we stick to it legalistically we are missing the point. The Christian is not ruled by giving of a tenth of their income but is to give sacrificially and in a cheerful manner.

Jews of the OT were called to give to God of their animals and crops. We live in a different time and culture. There are things even more precious to us than our money. One of the most precious

commodity is our time. We can rob God by keeping most of the time to ourselves. We can rob God of time that should be given to God in personal prayer, worship, ministering to others. We should make time for God, a definite part of our schedules.

Another area is our concentration. Our jobs require so much of our effort and careful thought. The amount of concentration we give to our work or even our hobbies can cause us to rob God of the level of concentration we give to God. For the continuing work of God to be fresh and relevant today needs the concentrated effort of Christians.

The penalty for robbing God

Robbing God brings a penalty – *“You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me”* (v 9). In the Old Testament, Israel was an agricultural economy, sowing seeds and living by the crops of the land. God’s curse often means that they will have a poor harvest. Today we sow a different kind of seed and are looking for a different kind of harvest. We sow the seed of the Gospel and look for a harvest of conversions. The penalty of robbing God today as in the Old Testament is that our harvest will be poor. If a church shows little genuine love for God and is skimping in their offerings to God, this is hardly the kind of fellowship into which God will want to introduce new converts. How can such a church be entrusted

with helping in the development of a new babe in Christ? Even as we in JCC want to reach out to others, let us also examine our love and the expression of this love in our giving.

When God's people will not give to the support of God's work, it has a very direct and practical impact on their influence. The church staff may not be well supported and are unduly concerned with the financial needs of his family. We cannot expect such workers who are plagued by such anxieties to give of their best in preaching and ministering. In JCC we are indeed blessed as we do not have to grapple with such issues and in addition we have gifted people to help us in building the church and making the paradigm changes. The call is for God's people to want to invest in these resources for the building of God's kingdom.

Christians have the great privilege of storing up their treasures in heaven. There is yet another way we rob God. When we store up our riches on earth, spending our money in this passing world. Only what we invest and accomplished for God in this world will remain for eternity – souls won for Christ. Do we invest in that which facilitate God's work and which will stand forever? When we rob God we rob ourselves.

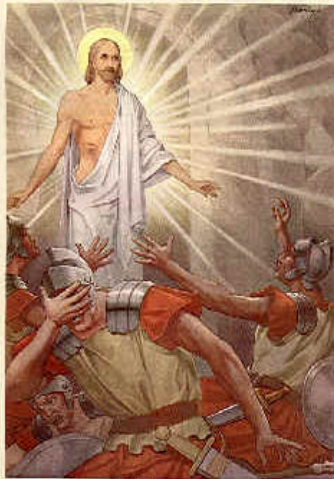
Promise of reward and blessing

God is a gracious and loving, He offers a generous incentive for

Israel to bring in the tithe for which He promises blessing which will flow arising from whole hearted obedience. To be obedient to God wholeheartedly and unreservedly can appear to be very risky. God challenges the people of Judah, "Test me." The Jews were not well off at that time, to give of their tithe would involve sacrifice and hardship, they may not have enough food to see them through to the next harvest. If they have faith to step out, God promise to respond miraculously.

God's call in Malachi is the same call to us today. His call to obedience is a call to exercise faith in him, faith which will open the windows of heaven. Sometimes we restrict our obedience to a lifestyle that involves no risk, and call for little faith in God. Our Christian walk is reduced to something that is virtually indistinguishable from mere respectability and church attendance. The floodgates of heaven remain firmly closed and the church remains powerless.

We are called to exercise faith in God. Success in the Lord is generally in proportion to our faith rather than to our ability. According to your faith be it unto you and in the words of Jesus. *"Everything is possible for him who believes"* (Mk 9:23).



The Resurrection

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ resurrected on Easter Sunday, the third day after his death and burial. This is a plain fact stated very clearly in the four Gospels. He is the only founder of a great religion who resurrected, as the Holy Scriptures testified, and as all the Christians believe. Mohamed and Buddha and Confucius did not resurrect, as their Holy Scriptures testify, and as their faithful believe...and, of course, Abraham and Moses did not resurrect, nor Lao-Tze, nor any Hindu founder, nor Zoroaster, nor Guru Nanak...

The last chapter of each Gospel tell the story of the resurrection of Jesus and his apparitions, and the

Gospel of John dedicates the last two chapters to it ... Probably, the most important chapters in the whole Bible are Mt.28, Mk.16, Lk.24, and Jn.20 and 21, because they tell the most important event in human history, the Resurrection of Jesus the Messiah from the dead, capstone of the whole Bible.

Some Resurrection Questions:

1- Jesus resurrected at the third day:

Question: The Gospel says that the Son of Man will spend three days and three nights in the depths of the earth, comparing the death of Jesus to the story of Jonah (Mt.12:40). But Jesus died on Good Friday at 3 PM and resurrected on Easter Sunday early in the morning (Mk.15:25, 34, 37, 16:9).

Answer: Jesus resurrected "on the third day" (Lk.24:7): The Orientals reckon any part of the day as a whole day (Esther 4:16, 5:1, 15:1). Thus, one whole day and two parts of two days, along with two nights would popularly style as "three days and three nights". Such usage is seen elsewhere in the Scriptures. "The third day" of Mt.27:64 is used as being identical with "after three days" of Mt.27:63. The Gospels use both expressions meaning the same, from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning: "After three days", on Mt.27:3, Mk.8:31, 10:34, Jn.2:19. And "the third day", M.16:21, 17:23, 20:19, 27:64, Lk.9:22, 24:7, 21, 46.

2- Was it a hallucination?

It is impossible to say it was the imagination of the woman, plus the imagination of the two of Emmaus, plus the imaginations of the apostles who did not wanted to believe it, as mentioned above...How could a doubting Thomas have a hallucination, or 500 imagine something at the same time? (Jn.20, 1Cor.15:6).

3- Was the Body of Jesus stolen at night, as the soldiers claimed? (Mt.28:15):

The only report we have on this issue is the Gospel of Matthew, who says clearly that the soldiers were bribed by the chief priests to tell a lie (Mt.28:11-15). And certainly his Body was not stolen. If his enemies had done so, they would have produced it. If his friends had done so, they would have not been willing to die for it, preaching a lie.

4- Was that a hoax?

Not at all! How one then account for the wonderful change in all the disciples from deepest gloom to radiant joy, cowardice to valor, timid disciples to powerful witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus the Messiah?

5- The Apparitions at Jerusalem or Galilee?

Jesus appeared many times to his disciples. None of the Gospels tries to tell us about all the apparitions. In 1Cor.15 some apparitions are reported not included in the Gospels. Matthew gives the apparitions at Galilee, John the apparitions at Jerusalem and one at Galilee...no contradictions at all!

6- The women, how many?

They are mentioned in the four Gospels. No one is trying to give a complete account.

- Magdalene is mentioned in the four Gospels, and the only one mentioned by John (20:1-3).
- Mary, the mother of James and Joses, is called "the other Mary" in Mt. (Mt.28:1-8, Mk.16:1-8, Lk.24:1-11).
- Salome, mother of James and John (Mk.16:1-8).
- Joanna, wife of Herod's steward (Lk.24:1-11).
- "Other women" (Lk.24:1-11).

In all, a half a dozen, or possibly a dozen or even more.

All the activity of the women and Peter and John around the tomb happened in less than an hour's time. It was all excitement and in a hurry: The first sight of the empty tomb, and the angel announcement that Jesus had risen, threw them into wild excitement.

They run to tell others, hurrying back and forth in alternate joy, fear, anxiety, wonder and bewilderment. One Gospel tells one thing, another, another thing. One gives in a sentence what another gives in detail, or in a general statement cover various incidents. No one gives a complete account, and probably many other things happened that are not recorded.

7- How many angels, one or two?

- "An angel" sitting upon a stone, outside the tomb (Mt.28:2-7).



- "A young man", inside the tomb, when the woman entered into the tomb (Mk.16:5).
- "Two men" inside the tomb (Lk.24:4).
- Magdalene, "two angels" inside the tomb (Jn.20:12).
- When Peter and John went into the tomb, no angels, just the clothes (Jn.20:3-9, Lk.24:12).

Again, neither Gospel tries to give a complete account. There were several women, who went to the tomb at different times, and sometimes one angel was visible, other times two. Luke mentions only Peter going into the tomb, John mentions both, Peter and John. No discrepancies, just different accounts of the real fact of the resurrection of Jesus.

8- The records tampered with?

Question: Could it not be that the resurrection was a later addition to the story of Jesus Christ, invented years later to glorify a dead hero?

Answer: Not at all: It is known from historical records, inside and outside the Bible, that the Christians came into existence in the reign of Tiberius, and that what brought them into existence was their belief that Jesus had risen from the dead. The Resurrection was not a later addition to the Christian faith, but the very cause and start of it. They rested their faith, not on records, but on what they had seen with their own eyes. The records were the result of their faith, not the cause of it. Had there been no resurrection, there would have been no New Testament, and no Church.

What a halo of glory this simple belief sheds on human life. Our hope of resurrection and life everlasting is based, not on a philosophic guess about immortality, but an historical fact. Praise the Lord!

It is notorious, however, the problem of the divergences between the accounts of the Resurrection appearances in the four Evangelists... and, paradoxically, this may be one the best proves of "not tampering". If they would have tried to tamper it, they certainly would have done a much better human work! And the many "divergences" do not have any "contradiction" as shown in the above harmonization of the Resurrection facts. Glory to God.



If you are interested in learning how certain Chinese characters were formed, looked it up at the following website:

<http://www.wbschool.org/chinesecharacters.htm>

Prayer News:

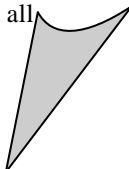
Sis Chui Yin went for a 2 months trip as a medical missionary under World Gospel Missions attached to a Missions Hospital near Nairobi, Kenya. We indeed thank God for her, may we continue to pray for journey mercies. May the Lord use her mightily in His service.

This is a very wonderful testimony for the late pastor who has died of SARS through a letter written by one whose life had been "touched" by him. Read on and be "touched" too.

Dear Pastor Simon,

I am writing to you this letter on the aeroplane on the way home to Singapore because I never got to say goodbye. I am sorry I never took time off to sit down and tell you how grateful I am that God gave you to me as a pastor. Right now the only way I can express it is through the constant flow of tears I share with every member of Faith Assembly who has been genuinely shepherded by you. I cannot rage at your death, baffled as I am, because I know you wouldn't. I remember vividly every word, gesture, joke, prayer and song that you taught me. And this is the only means in which I can keep you alive, always. I would never forget the day I made my decision to quit school and go to Bible school. My father was in Uganda and I went to you, because I trusted you to always say the right thing in my life. You did not tell me glibly what to do, but you looked at me and you struggled. You said, "I can only say to you what I would really say if my daughter told me she is going to Bible school." You said, "I would really struggle because I know the hardships and costs of the ministry, but I know I would release her for God's service." I was so moved by your transparency and your genuine love to me as a person and how seriously and personally you took my calling. Since that day, I always regarded you as a spiritual father and never feared telling you what is in my heart.

Pastor Simon, thank you for being there in my moments of failure, when I made a mess of things and you always prayed with me for my life partner. I was so glad you were there to witness my marriage last year and interpret for it. You gave me courage to dare to love and commit to someone of a different nationality because of the way you loved Sis Lorena. We never got tired of listening to your love stories, told with such openness and humour. You always prayed over the love lives of the young people and though we sometimes laughed over it, inside, we are so blessed by how you understood the issues of our heart and cared so much. When I was still in bible school, you came to me one day and said something I would never forget because it revealed to me the secret of your joy and strength. You said the most important thing in Bible school is to hold on to your personal relationship with God – to do your quiet time everyday, read the bible and pray. I remember those words almost everyday of my life. And I know that in the last days of your life, when you were cut off from all



personal contact with your friends and family, I am comforted that your personal relationship with God must have been your comfort and your last moments was with God, who is your most valuable treasure. I would never forget the times we worked together in the prayer committee. I knew first hand that one of your life vision is to see every member in Faith Assembly come for prayer meeting. You were relentless in asking me to make prayer posters and "Prayer Moves Mountains" booklets to get people to pray more. In your sickness, your dream came to pass. The church prayed like we never did before. I taught my Bible school students in Cebu all the songs you taught me, like "Every time I pray, I move the hand of God." "Join your hand with mine, let our faith combine." You loved prayer, you loved God, you loved Whampoa, you loved this church so much. I am so inspired by your capacity to love. I know my life will have a different course from you, but I pray I will leave this earth the way you did – while in the line of duty.

You died because you were doing what you always did – going out of your way to visit and love someone. I know God is so pleased with you and so are we. We love you so much, pastor. So sorry we did not tell you enough while you were alive. We miss you like crazy but I know God and all His angels and those in heaven will really enjoy your company, your smile and your jokes, the way we all did. Thank you for giving a big part of your life to us. Your death challenges me to live better, to love more and to dare to take risks for His cause. Now you have finished your course and have joined the great cloud of witnesses in heaven, watching the way we run. We will arise as a church. We will send more pastors, missionaries, evangelists to continue where you have left off. That is my personal commitment to you. We will let your death really teach us how to live. Pastor, I will see you in heaven and I know I will recognize you easily because of your many crowns.

A life so touched by yours,

Pastor Grace Ong Cabusac

Ed: The author of this letter is a missionary from Faith AOG to Cebu. Acknowledged with thanks permission granted by Snr Pastor Rev. Andrew Ong of Faith AOG (who is also the father of the author) for permission to re-print this letter here.

I think there're a lot of doubts/challenges/questions Christians faced (both from external & from internal) re Pastor Loh's death in SARS - i.e. is there a GOD does GOD care? Is GOD powerful enough? Why "bad" things happen to good people, even God's peoples, even a pastor? This letter may yet speak to many hearts!

James Quek Teik Keat

FROM THE KEE'S

April 2003

Rev Terry & Sally Kee, 77/267 Soi Phumijit, Rama 4 Road, Bangkok 10110
Tel:001-661-8275426

Dear praying friends,

Greetings to all of you in the most blessed name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus the Christ.

Great is the Lord and He is greatly to be praised. In January, one of our members came to us and informed us that someone who owned a piece of agricultural land near his farm needed to sell his land urgently as he needed to redeem his house and land from the finance company by the end of the month. He is willing to sell his land of 45 Rai (about 20 Acres) together with the tapioca planted on it for 180,000 baht.

As the tapioca can be harvested in March this year we decided to buy the land with a loan from some friends and rent it to poor members for their farming purpose.

Thanks be to God, we are in the midst of harvesting the crops now and due to the good price tapioca is enjoying at the moment together with the exceptionally good harvest, they are expected to fetch around 180,000 baht and the church is able to repay the loan in full.

This acquisition would enable Siikhiu Church to :

1. Receive at least 8,000 baht in rental per year
2. Provide land to 4 landless families for their farming needs
3. Provide additional jobs for jobless members hired by these families during planting, weeding, fertilizing and harvest.

Thanks be to God.

In addition to the above, Siikhiu congregation was able to send members for the following training.

Sunday School teachers' training. A total of 7 members attended a SS teachers' training camp from 11 – 14 March 2003

Dedication of Farmland. Siikhiu Congregation had a dedication service to the Lord for the newly purchase farmland on the 16 March 2003. After the fellowship, members of the congregation were transported to the farmland of the church where we had a dedication service. Following that, we proceeded to the farmlands of every member and blessed them onsite. There was great excitement in the spirit of celebration.

Children Ministry Workshop We are able to send my co-workers and some members to a special training on children ministry which focus not only on evangelizing the children in our neighbourhood but also on discipling them.

Sisters' fellowship. The sisters fellowship had a picnic at a beautiful park not far from the Church on the 21 March 2003. We are thankful to God for wonderful weather and great fellowship.

Prayer points:

1. Pray for God's protection in our ministry: spiritually against the devil's attack and physically in our travels.
2. Pray that members of the church would continue to grow in love towards God and one another, faithful in worship, diligent in the study of God's Word and active in the sharing of God's love through proclamation and service.
3. Pray for those preparing for baptism on the 20th April 2003 (Easter).
4. Many of our male members are still fighting to overcome alcoholism. Pray that they have the determination and ability to overcome the temptation of the evil one as well as their flesh.
5. Pray that the land and other resources of the church be well used for the glory of God and the well being of His people.
6. Pray for the election of Bishop and the executive council this April.



May God continue to bless all of you richly according to His wonderful grace.

Yours in Christ's love,

Terry and Sally Kee



Getting Ready

completed the competition events in 6 hours moving around 7 stations, and emerged among the top teams to share a spot in the Gold Honour Roll. It is worthy of note that 13 of the 15 Boys were first-time participants in the National Bible Quiz. They did not disappoint themselves and their teacher for all the diligent training effort that they put in during the March school holidays.

Congratulations to the BB Juniors for their remarkable achievement in the competition!



At the Charade Station



Do you remember the reason for the existence of the Boys' Brigade?

"The Object of the Boys' Brigade is the advancement of Christ Kingdom among Boys and the promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, Self-respect and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness. "

The Boys' Brigade is concerned with developing youth into responsible adults with sound moral character.

And it needs your generous help. It seeks your active partnership to impact the Boys positively in their most formative years.

Are you game for the challenge to be counted among the supporters and active partners?