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The Real Meaning of Christmas

By Martha Noebel

It's that time of year again. December has come and with it all the joys of Christmas. But what is the real meaning of Christmas? Is it the gifts under the tree, the lights in the windows, the cards in the mail, turkey dinners with family and friends, snow in the yard, stockings hanging in the living room, and shouts of "Merry Christmas" to those who pass us in the streets? Is this really Christmas?

For many people, Christmas is a time of sorrow. They don't have the extra money to buy presents for their children, family, and friends. Many are saddened at Christmastime when they think of their loved ones who will not be able to come home for various reasons. Turkey dinners may be only a wish and not a reality for some.

Yet, Christmas can be a season of great joy. It is a time of God showing His great love for us. It can be a time of healing and renewed strength. You see, Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of the Christ child. God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to be born. His birth brought great joy to the world. Shepherds, wise men, and angels all shared in the excitement of knowing about this great event. They knew this was no ordinary baby. The prophets had told of His coming hundreds of years before. The star stopped over Bethlehem just to mark the way for those who were looking for this special child.

Luke 2: 4-19 says:

"So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married

to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart."

Why did He come? Why did God send His son to this sometimes cruel and hard world? He sent Jesus to us so that one day, He would grow up to become

a very important part of history. His story (history) is one of truth, love, and hope. It brought salvation to all of us. Without Jesus, we would all die in our sins.

Jesus was born so one day the price could be paid for the things we have done that are wrong. The Bible says that all have sinned. We are all born with a sin nature. We do things that do not please God. Through the sins of Adam and Eve, we have all inherited that sin nature. We need to have that removed. The only way is through Jesus. Jesus came so He could die on the cross for ALL of our sins. If we believe that Jesus died for our sins, we can ask Him to come into our hearts and forgive us. Then, we are clean and made whole. We can know that heaven is a place where we can go to when this life is over.

"But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong." I John 1:9

We can truly be happy at Christmas! No matter what may be happening, we can know that we are His children. We then become sons and daughters of God. Heaven will be our home one day. Look at Christmas in a new way this year. This is the year to invite Jesus into your heart. You will then have a "Merry Christmas." The joy and peace you will receive will last all year as you look to God for all your needs to be met. Jesus Is The Reason For The Season! Rejoice!

http://www.cbn.com/spirituallife/Devotions/Noebel_MeaningofChristmas.aspx

ISAIAH 40:29 NIV

He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.

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God's Riches

Rev. Wee Un Hock

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (2Corinthians 8:9) This sums up the great truth behind the birth of Christ.

Let me start with a story by Rich Anderson. A prince wanted to find a wife suitable to be his queen. One day his father asked him to go to the city for an errand. He passed through a poor village and as he looked out the window from his carriage, he saw a beautiful peasant lady and at the first glance, fell in love with this young lady.

The prince did not want this young lady to love him as a prince. He wanted her to love him as an ordinary man. He wanted this lady to fall in love with him voluntarily, out of her own choice/decision.

So, the prince decided to forsake his palace and live among the poor. He lived among the people, shared their interests and concerns, and learned to speak their language so that the lady could know and appreciate him. He would look for ways to show her kindness and care. But no matter what he did, the lady did not notice him at all. This young lady did not fall in love with him. One day, he revealed his identity and explained to her. Then, the lady understood and loved him in return. It was he who initiated and loved her first.

This is what Paul showed us – how God, the King of the universe, reached out to mankind, gave His son and lived among us. This is what Christmas is all about!

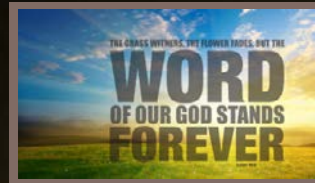
I. GOD WAS RICH

Not only did He own everything, but he was also the one who created the world and the universe. Heaven was the perfect dwelling place of God. Jesus Christ lived a very comfortable and perfect life in heaven. There was no pollution and no sin in heaven. He was perfect in Himself. He was divine and in control of all things. Yet, He came down to earth to simply become like one of us. Though He was 100% divine, He became 100% human as well so that we could understand how He loved us. He lived among us not only for a year but for thirty-three years. Jesus Christ left heaven's glory and comfort to sacrifice Himself as a ransom for our sin. It costs Him His life to bring us back to God.

A man thought that he would climb the highest mountain in the hope to find God. The higher he went, the harder it became and he started to have difficulty in breathing. The weather was very cold and he was getting slower. But when he reached the top of the mountain, he did not find anything and God was not there. The Bible says, "No one can see God." We, on our own, can never reach God because God is holy and we are sinful. God, therefore, reached down from heaven and sought us. Jesus Christ came to us because we couldn't come to Him.

II. YET HE BECAME POOR

God did not send His Son to dwell in a palace or to be born to a rich family. Rather, He was born to a carpenter's family and had to work to help support the family. This was so that the poorest of the poor could



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understand. He also had to undergo much sorrow and pain in life, even a terrible death for our sake.

God sent His Son as a SERVANT so He could meet our needs. The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve. (Matthew 20:28a)

God sent His Son as a SACRIFICIAL OFFERING so that He could save us from our sins. For Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed (1 Corinthians 5:7). So, whenever we face trials and hardships in life, remember that we can find strength and comfort in Christ because He underwent the hardest and most cruel trials a man could ever experience in His life time.

God sent His Son as a SHEPHERD so He could lead us to the Father's love. God understands and cares so much for us. In John 10:11, Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

The Son of God was infinite and yet He became finite for us. He was limitless and yet He became limited for us. We understand riches and we understand poverty. But to choose poverty over riches is beyond us and something we would never do. But that is the heart of the Gospel. Christ voluntarily gave up the riches of heaven to become poorer than poor.

And as if becoming poor was not enough, He also humbled Himself all the more and became a servant. Not serving one person but serving the world. His was a life of service and it was Christ who helped poor sinners to become rich in God.

But becoming poor and serving the people were not enough. He ultimately gave up His life and died for us on the cross. Though knowing that He would go through the most

horrible and excruciating suffering a man could ever bear, He still obeyed His heavenly Father completely.

The only way for us to understand God's love was for God Himself to ask His Son to become like us. Jesus Christ went through all these sufferings just to give us hope. He became poor to make us rich. He died to give us everlasting life. Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." John 10:10 (NKJV)

III. THAT WE MIGHT BECOME HIS CHILDREN

Come to Christ because He can make our life complete.

Come to Christ because He alone can give us God's grace.

Come to Christ because He alone can give us eternal life.

Come to Christ because He is the only mediator between God and men.

Come to Christ because there is no other way for us to know our heavenly Father.

John 1:12, "Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed on His name, He gave the right to become children of God."

C.S. Lewis said it this way: "The Son of God became a son of man in order that the sons of men might become the sons of God."

Let us therefore give our lives to Christ because there is no other way for us to become God's children. Share the true meaning of Christmas so that others may also become His sons and daughters. That's the best gift we could give to our family, relatives and friends. It is also the best gift we could give to Christ for the Bible states that there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. (Luke 15:10)



[How Not to]

Finish the Race

Pastor Angelo Gutierrez

We had a multi-sports competition when I was in high school. Each of us was asked to choose three events to join in and submit our choices to our P.E. teachers. I chose 100m dash, long jump, and high jump. Healthy and young as I was, I got my very first and only silver medal in sports, high jump category. I wouldn't be able to achieve what I had that time if I did not prepare myself for the events. Prior to the day of the competitions, we had months to get fit and build our bodies up.

With the introduction of Hellenistic culture and lifestyle, many Jews had become aware of the Olympics and had integrated the events in their daily lives. Thus, the New Testament authors were no strangers to this fact and they had used sports metaphors to teach many aspects of Christianity. Using the same ideas, the church desires to strengthen and build the church up, that we may “*present everyone perfect in Christ*” (Col. 1:28).

There have been many seminars and sermons presented to us in the past, teaching us “what we must do” to achieve certain goals. However in this article, I would like to honestly point out some of the things Christians do why we fail in accomplishing these goals, hoping that we could avoid such pitfalls not just today, but also in the future. I have observed that...

We Don't Train Under Our Own Pastors. There are two particular ways many Christians go through this. For the younger and tech-savvy Christians, we can access a myriad of materials on the Internet – sermons, Bible study materials, devotional guides – for one's spiritual growth. Physical limitations are no longer hindrances for one to hear a sermon from a popular preacher in Manila or elsewhere. Many

churches today produce online audio and video files of their sermons, if not the whole service. And with faster Internet connectivity, there's no more buffering time for us to fully access these files.

Don't get me wrong. I thank God for the Internet. Through it, I can access the *Daily Bread* online and I get free Christian e-books from *Amazon*. However, we have to caution ourselves not to rely so much on what's on the Internet. Not everything on the Internet is good. Everyone can post anything on it – from Christians to non-believers, from biblically sound teachers to heretics, from good people to bad. Therefore we have to choose wisely and screen the things we can get from the Internet.

The second way is to neglect, if not throwing away entirely, the idea of being discipled by your own shepherd. Most Christians do not belong to any discipleship or Bible study group primarily because they do not see the importance of it in their Christian life. Sadly, they merely regard pastors as Sunday preachers and prayer warriors to pray for them, but never shepherds to guide them closely in their spiritual walk. As a result of this, more and more Christians now prefer popular preachers, even if these preachers are not their own pastors. After all, it's now easy and cheaper to invite dynamic guest speakers and be “blessed” by their sermons that are filled with light topics that are easy to the ears.

Having guest speakers to preach on Sundays is not wrong in itself. However, guest preachers don't necessarily know the majority of the church members' needs more intimately because they are not their actual shepherds. It's like what Jesus had described the hired hand opposite of “the good shepherd.” ***The hired***

hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. **The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.** I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (John 10:12-14, emphasis added).

When it comes to light sermons (or sometimes called "how-to" messages), these do have a place in our Christian education. But while they are utilized to guide the way of the believer in living the life of the gospel that God has called us to do, they often fail to explain the basis or foundation for all these. New Testament authors first established biblical doctrines as their foundations to support their applications. We do not aim to live a holy life because it's good. But we do so because Jesus saved us and made living a holy life possible for us. Our Christian life is not a "how-to" living. Even bookstores have a clear understanding of this. Though some books are written by a prominent pastor or a Christian author, bookstores will place a "how-to" book under the "self-help" category, not under "religion." But why can't we be wiser than these secular bookstores and be able to distinguish a "self-help" material from a biblical one?

We Don't Work Out Our Salvation. The Apostle Paul writes, *"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose"* (Phil. 2:12-13). Barry Cooper, author of *Discipleship Explored*¹, explains the essence of this passage clearly. Simply put, "our salvation must have a tangible and visible effect on our lives." And that "there is awe and reverence we should feel

towards God that should make us very serious about obeying Him." The expected result is what Paul exhorted the Philippians to do, *"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ"* (1:27).

What is common to Christians today is that we tend to be "Christians" when it is only convenient for us. We practice Christian principles depending on certain situations. We uphold the teachings of the Scriptures only when they will benefit us the most. Sometimes, we do not even act like Christians even when we are with Christians! *"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel,"* says Paul. Whatever our situation is, wherever we are, and whoever we are with, we are to demonstrate what it is like to be a follower of Christ – in thought, in speech, and in deed. And just as how he admonished the Philippians, Paul intends that *all* of us must do this in *one* spirit, as *one* man. No one is excused. This means that we do not allow our business, career or reputation to become more important than our faith. When we regard earning money higher than following the Bible if there seems to be a conflict between the two, then we are not working out our salvation. When we protect our position or power more than our Christian testimony even if sin is involved, then we are surely failing to finish the race.

We need not be disheartened or burdened by God's mandate, however. For in the same sentence where the Bible exhorted us to *"work out (our) salvation,"* the Bible says that God is with us to lend a hand. It says, *"...for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to*

¹ <http://www.matthiasmedia.com/discipleship-explored-dvd> (Our Christian Education Committee has a copy of this DVD)

his good purpose."

We Drag Others to Fall. Our Lord warned His disciples in Luke 17:1-2, *"Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin."* Jesus makes known to us the inevitability of one person causing another to sin. So He tells us to watch ourselves (v.3). Some of us have become callous to sin due to our tolerant attitude towards it. This happens when we allow ourselves to commit sin without taking heed on the prodding of the Holy Spirit and repenting from sin, later it becomes a bad habit. When sin becomes a habit, we will no longer be conscious of our actions, whether we are present with a Christian or not. The Apostle Paul cautions us *"not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall"* (Rom. 14:21) or even in the ministry of the gospel *"not [to] cause anyone to stumble...even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved"* (1 Cor. 10:32-33).

If we truly profess that we are followers of Christ, we must take this matter seriously. *"Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come."* It's true that things that'll cause people to sin will come, but it will be like a curse for anyone through whom these things will come. It's bad enough that some Christians make selfish and sinful decisions to the detriment of other believers, but they even influence some to sin with them and candy-coat it as a righteous act. The call for us all is to become builders of each other, not wreckers; edifiers for the growth of the body, not stumbling blocks along the way; and

encouragers for those who are weak and of those who are in service, not human deterrents that dampen the spirits of the faithful.

We Drown Ourselves with Unnecessary Activities. The author of Hebrews wrote, *"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"* (12:1). Two things he wrote that we have to remove, or throw off, from ourselves – 1. *"everything that hinders"* and 2. *"the sin that so easily entangles."* The second one is clear as the bright skies during summer days. The first one, however, just tells us to be done with all things that get in our way. Though some would think that both phrases talk about the same thing, I would like to think that the author also understands that there are other things aside from sin that distract and stop us from running and finishing the race. This "everything" can come in different forms. Our lives have become too preoccupied with a lot of things. And most of them actually hinder us in our spiritual growth. When we invite people for fellowship, discipleship, prayer meetings or even occasional seminars, we will not just be hearing the "Sorry, I am busy" statement. But many times we hear replies like "I have an event," "I'll be meeting with someone," "I have plans for the day," and the like. As for the young people today, going or hanging out with friends and joining lots of school activities have been the common excuses. Though some of them do have important matters to attend to, there are just some things that we can easily sort out and devote some time to what's really worth doing. Even some church activities tend to be a distraction from knowing our Master more. Christians nowadays desire a lot of fun events,



celebrations and gimmicks to attract non-believers and believers alike. Though these things may not be wrong in themselves, they sometimes cultivate a wrong attitude among Christians. Christians prefer these fun activities over serious learning. They eagerly join such activities but are so quick to say they have other things to do when you invite them to join Bible studies or prayer meetings.

We put too much of our time with what is considered as the “here and now” things than what is eternal. The activities that we give importance to in our lives reflect our view of our own life as a Christian and our own spirituality. Recently, an elder² shared a quote to his friends that caught my attention. He quoted an anonymous writing on the walls of a medieval castle that says, “You call me Master and Obey me not. You call me Light and See me not. You call me the Way and Walk me not. You call me Life and Desire me not. You call me Wise and Follow me not. You call me Fair and Love me not. You call me Rich and Ask me not. You call me Eternal and Seek me not. You call me Gracious and Trust me not. If I condemn you, Blame me not.”

Instead of allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed and controlled by the things of this world, we must listen well to the call of the writer of Hebrews, “*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*” (12:2).

We Don't Even Run At All. Karen Cheng was just an ordinary girl who recently shot to fame. She became known as the girl who learned to dance in a year and posted a time lapse video on the Internet³ that documented her journey into reaching her dream to dance. She started with few, awkward, and simple steps, but gained

confidence and mastery of those steps as each day progressed. Until 365 days later, all her hard work, sweat, blood, and tears finally paid off. And you can see at the end of the video the fruit of those trying days as truly amazing!

Now imagine if Karen did not do anything to achieve that dream, that dream of hers will remain just a dream. Many of us are on that state when it comes to our spiritual lives, where we don't do anything at all for it to grow. The church plans and presents a lot of ways for our members to “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet. 3:18), year in and year out. However the church needs that actual, active, and willing participation of all church members. Christians in the early church grew in quantity and quality because all were involved in the affairs of the church. For just as God “*gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,*” we must not waste each other's gifts and let it go unused for God's glory, “*to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*” (Eph. 4:11-13).

I hope that this critique of the modern day Christianity, as individuals and as churches, will be taken positively and constructively. It is my prayer and earnest desire, by God's grace, Christ's love, and the Holy Spirit's empowerment, that our church will be different from the rest and that we can make a legacy of positively influencing other churches to follow the same as we approach the hundredth year of Cebu Gospel Church.

² The elder's name is Elder Chris Beltran of Jubilee Evangelical Church. You can access his post on <https://www.facebook.com/christopher.beltran.731>

³ <http://www.danceinayear.com/story/>

Obtain the Reward

Pastor Eric Chan

Theme Verse: 2Timothy 4:6-8 (NIV '84)

⁶For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

⁸Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.”

[A lady lost her handbag during a shopping rush at the mall. An honest little boy found it, and returned it to her. Looking in her purse, she commented, “Hmm, that's funny. When I lost my bag, there was a \$20 bill in it. Now there are twenty \$1 bills.” The boy quickly replied, “That's right, lady. The last time I found a lady's purse, she didn't have any change for a reward!”]¹

The Apostle Paul knew his Christian martyrdom was at hand (2Tim. 4:6). With confidence, Paul looked forward to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, on that day would award him the “crown of righteousness” (2Tim. 4:8). It was not an empty trust. Rather, his confidence rested on the fact that he had fought the good fight, he had finished the race, and he had kept the faith (2Tim. 4:7).

The Bible does encourage followers of Christ to seek the Lord's future reward. Jesus, the Risen Lord, did say, “I am coming

soon! My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” (Rev. 22:12-13, NIV '84)

Unlike the story earlier, everyone will be justly compensated. No one will be cheated of his reward, nor will anyone outwit Jesus Christ, the Lord, the Righteous Judge, who alone is the giver of the reward.

“Obtain the Reward,” that is the theme of my article. Jesus Christ will reward everyone according to each one's deed upon His Return. But wait, aren't we told that salvation is a one-time event? The moment we acknowledged Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior, and repented of our sins, we are saved from the coming Judgment of God, aren't we? Also, the Bible did say, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:8-10, NIV '84)

Made no mistake that good works can never attain salvation for anyone; rather, it is by grace through faith in Christ alone.

¹ <http://www.crosswalk.com/resources/humor/kids/change-for-a-reward-1154473.html>, August 10, 2013.



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However, Scripture did also say, “For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.” (Ephesians 5:5-7, NIV '84)

In Luke 13, Jesus told a parable: “A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'” (Luke 13:6-9, NIV '84)

What is the point of the Lord's parable? Taking a good look at the background from which Jesus had spoken that parable, obviously it is about genuine repentance – meaning “repentance that results to spiritual transformation”. So the Scripture says, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God ... For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of

light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible.” (Ephesians 5:1-2, 8-14, NIV '84)

So how do we obtain Christ's reward, the “crown of righteousness”? Christians need to be true with their confession of faith in Christ. The Bible says, “For God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight... and you also were included in Christ when you heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of His glory.” (Ephesians 1:4, 13-14, NIV '84)

Is it simply about “believing”? The Scripture said in James, “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?” “Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” (James 2:14, 17, NIV '84)

That explains Paul's sorrow in Philippians 3:18-19: “For, as I have often told you before

and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things." Let me make clear that Paul was not referring to unbelievers, but to those who had supposedly professed faith in Christ. So Scripture says, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without (good) deeds is dead." (James 3:26, NIV '84)

Again, Paul said, "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:17-24, NIV '84)

Peter explained and said, "Christ Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed."² Paul on the other hand seconded and said, "God made Christ who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."³ Mysterious, yet effective for salvation, that Paul in Philippians 3:8-9 confessed, "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."

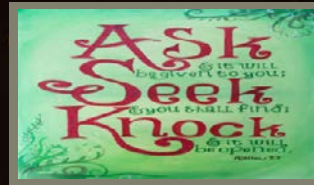
"The crown of righteousness," then, is the righteousness of Christ, from which all who believed in the Lord Jesus, and have repented of their sins, and were transformed to become a new man have received through faith in Christ alone. So, in Romans, the Scripture declares, "For in the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"⁴ In Hebrews, the Bible says, "And without faith it is

² Peter 2:24, NIV '84

³ Corinthians 5:21, NIV '84

⁴ Romans 1:17, NIV '84

What then is the "crown of righteousness"?



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impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”⁵

Who then can receive the “crown of righteousness,” that which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will award on His Return? The following statement precedes Paul's confidence and claim for Christ's Award: “For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

Can we say the same for ourselves? Do we have confidence to face the Lord Jesus comes Judgment Day?

Yes, we can, only if we put to heart Paul's words in Philippians 2:12-13, “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it

is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.” Then, we can also say, we have fought the good fight, we have finished the race, and we have kept the faith. Christian life needs to be consistent with the reason for which Christ died for – “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.” (1Pet. 3:18a, NIV '84)

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? (Rom. 6:1-2, NIV '84)

To “Obtain Christ's Reward,” followers of the Lord should live according to God's good purpose. What again is the Lord's good purpose? That we Christians may be holy and blameless in His sight (Eph. 1:4), “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10, NIV '84)

⁵ Hebrews 11:6, NIV '84

***1John 3:23-24, “And this is God's command: To believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us. Those who obey His commands live in Him, and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Spirit He gave us.*”**

Pass the Baton

Pastor Wayne Chua

2 Timothy 4:7

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

Introduction:

A part of a song goes like this: "so let Satan's army, assail me full force, their plans cannot help but to steady my course..."¹ It is true that no matter how strong the evil one and his army attack, they cannot stop believers from finishing the race. They can only delay it but they can never make it stop. As believers, the ministry that God has given us will be accomplished one day with the help of the Holy Spirit. True, there will be temptations and trials, but God's work will never fail. We might perceive it as a failure but ultimately, it will never fail.

"The race" is a metaphor Paul used to describe the journey of every believer of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a sprint but rather a marathon and it involves a "passing of the baton".

Body

What is the Baton? For runners in a race, a baton is a stick or a piece of wood that athletes pass to one another. It sends them a message saying, "I'm done with my part, now it's your turn." This is a good illustration but illustrations are just illustrations. It can never exchange the real meaning or picture of it. So we need to ask the question, "What exactly is the baton that we pass on to other believers?"

1.) A testimony that is rooted in the Scriptures

Testimony that we show to other people, especially those whom we pass the baton to, plays a very important part when the time of passing comes. Paul's letter to the

Corinthians gives us something to emulate... "follow me, as I follow Christ".² We can tell other people to follow us as long as we are also following Christ and not leading them to other religions or beliefs. Our testimony is very important. We cannot ask them to do something we ourselves do not do. Similarly, we cannot urge them to follow Christ if we ourselves are not following Christ. We cannot encourage them to join ministries if we ourselves are not involved in a ministry. Our testimony is the result of our faith. James clearly stated in his letter that faith should result in action. Faith cannot be seen, words are too easy to say, but actions can be seen and observed by people. What we do reflects what we believe. According to the Scriptures, actions or deeds are the evidences that we have faith. John 15 gives us the importance of bearing fruit (doing good deeds) in connection with our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Without this good testimony, it will be difficult to ask others to follow Christ. Before we pass the baton, let us ask ourselves this question, "Is my testimony in accordance with the faith that I believe in? Am I leading other people closer to Christ?"

2.) A Gospel that is rooted in the Scriptures

Pastor Mark Dever once said in Bible Institute of Los Angeles, "The first generation of Christians fights and treasures the gospel, the second generation assumes the Gospel, and the third generation (our generation), loses the

¹ Lyrics taken from the song *Glory is Certain*. Sang by reformed praise.

² 1 Corinthians 1:11



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2 Timothy 4:7

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

Gospel.³ We are already in a generation where the Gospel is about to be out of hand, not to mention false teachers and leaders that teach a false gospel. In the letter of Paul to Timothy, he repeatedly charged Timothy to treasure the Gospel because this is where our source of belief can be found. Looking back at 2 Tim. 3, Paul reminded Timothy the importance of holding on to God's Word which pointed him to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the message of the Scriptures.

It is the Good News that is given to us by God. This Gospel is a very important part of the "baton" that we are about to pass on to other people.

Christianity today focuses more on morality, not on the Gospel. Focusing on morality will not be effective in the long run. No matter how much time we spend teaching people to do good, they will always return to their old ways and sin, as what we have seen in the Scriptures. Why? Because Romans 3 reminds us that each and everyone here on this earth is a sinner. The only way to be saved is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and making Him our Savior and the Lord of our lives. When the Holy Spirit works in our lives, we would continue to bear fruit and repent even though there are no teachers. Sinners need the Gospel that will save them from their lives and enable them, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to bear fruit that will last. This is the Gospel that we need to pass on to the next generation of believers.

3.) A discipleship that is rooted in the Scriptures

Earlier I wrote that illustrations are just illustrations and cannot exchange the real

meaning. Well, this is another example of it, discipleship. The passing of the baton only takes seconds. Once the baton is passed, the runner will continue to run. This is not a good picture of discipleship. Discipleship takes time, effort, and a lot of bonding. It does not "just happen". My prayer is that as holders of the baton right now, we don't pass the baton as illustrated but rather, spend time with the people with whom we will pass the baton to. Talk to them, eat with them, go out with them, play sports with them just as how the Lord Jesus Christ spent time with His disciples while He was here on earth. This is the discipleship ministry that is rooted in the Scriptures.

Conclusion:

Passing the baton is never a simple task. It requires hard work, time and most importantly, help from God because we can never do this on our own. It will always be the work of the Holy Spirit. As you finish reading this article, I hope and I pray that you have already chosen somebody whom you want to disciple and one day and pass the baton to. Don't forget: pass on a testimony that is rooted in the Scriptures, the Gospel that is rooted in the Scriptures, and a discipleship that is also rooted in the Scriptures.

Since I started with a song, let me end with the same song: "I have died to this world, and am hidden with Christ, so my mind will be set on this, glory is certain, for Christ is in me, glory is certain, for Christ is in me."⁴

³ Mark Dever, Bible Institute of Los Angeles, youtube message.

⁴ Lyrics taken from the song *Glory is Certain*, sang by reformed praise

Just a Glimpse of the End Times

Heir of the King

On the eve of October 15, 2013: In the provinces of Cebu and Bohol, some people were having their birthday parties. Some were celebrating their passing the board exam. Some were preparing to leave for another country and most students were packing for the long awaited trip back home during semestral break. Yet, there were those who just experienced the loss of a loved one. There were others who were recently diagnosed with a terminal illness. Nonetheless, they all would soon experience something in common, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake the day after. When tomorrow arrived, they were all shaken and dazed by the strong earthquake and the many aftershocks – a disaster unforeseen by man. Hardest hit area was the entire Bohol Province.

On the eve of November 8, 2013: It was noticeably quiet in Cebu and other nearby provinces. However, media reported that a super typhoon was expected to hit the Visayan region. Tall trees and branches, forcibly cut down. Cross masking tapes stuck to glass windows. Schools and offices, closed. Cell phones, flashlights and electronic gadgets, charged. Billboards and tarpaulin, rolled up. Disaster crews were activated. Utility companies went on red alert. Emergency numbers were broadcast on print and radio as well as posted on social media.

Citizens stocked up food, water and batteries. Inhabitants living near the coastal areas evacuated their homes and set up a place inside evacuation centers. Prayer brigades were started all over the country. These were just some measures the Visayan communities made in light of the forthcoming super typhoon Yolanda (international name: Haiyan). True enough, the typhoon passed by Cebu and its neighbouring provinces and its effects were felt as far as Luzon and Mindanao. Hardest hit areas include Tacloban City and most part of Leyte and Samar provinces.

These two memorable events happened in less than a month but they actually differ in many aspects. One had devastating results since no preparation was made for this unexpected calamity. Howbeit, the other had less catastrophic results in some areas since many prepared for its coming at a given time. We had prepared for the worst and hoped for the best.

If we had known about the coming of a strong earthquake on the 15th of October, would we have prepared better and thus, achieved less heart grieving outcome? Maybe we would have. And what if the preparatory measures for the super typhoon were not being implemented when we were already



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informed that it would be reaching our area? That is absolutely crazy, you would say. Indeed, it is the natural instinct of man to safeguard himself when he knows danger is lurking around or is yet to arrive. But come to think of it, as Christians, are we definitely prepared for the second coming of Christ which is sure to come? Are we sure that we will be as prepared for the day of Christ's arrival as we were that day when we faced the super typhoon? For "concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." (Matthew 24:36) Therefore, we must "stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." (Matthew 24:42)

All through the upshot of these tragedies, I began to catch a glimpse of how the coming rapture would look like. Everyone must be ready to meet his Savior face to face "because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him." (Luke 12:40) This world is but a waiting room where we not only anticipate but also prepare for Christ's speedy return.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, we could see that buildings, houses and roads had been damaged due to the fact that we ourselves had not prepared well for such a calamity. After the typhoon, we could see that damages in some areas were far lesser because of the measures that were strictly implemented. Through this, we can conclude

that with great preparation comes great success. Truly, it is better to be safe than sorry.

But you may ask, "How will we prepare for Christ's coming?" We prepare by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting Him to cleanse us from all our sins and receiving His salvation. Likewise, we prepare by bringing unbelievers to know the One and only Savior of the world whose love and mercy is great and vast. Greater than anything mankind would ever know. As the saying goes, it wasn't the nails that held Him to the cross but it was His incomparable love for you and me. Moreover, Matthew 24:14 says, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Unless everyone will hear of the Gospel, the end will not come yet. For that reason, as Christians, we were tasked by Jesus Christ Himself to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20)

As heirs of the Most High King, let us strive to bring others to know the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as we simultaneously prepare for His apt and prompt return. Make no mistake of not preparing well for His eventual coming or you will be left behind! That would be a disastrous mistake.

惜用上帝全副軍裝

雯華

以弗所書6:10-18

既然咱是與屬靈氣的惡魔爭戰，咱真正的敵人是魔鬼，牠的能力和智識是比咱大幾萬倍，咱絕對不是牠的對手。但是咱要感謝上帝，祂是比魔鬼更大，祂是創造宇宙萬物的大主宰，是萬權能的上帝。祂有賜給咱全副軍裝，咱必須要把每一件藉著信心穿戴下去，才能夠抵擋魔鬼一切的詭計。

閩南聖詩#489首寫得很好：“當謹守，當儆醒，當祈禱，無時停，提防對敵魔鬼的羅網；魔鬼宛吼的獅，在遍地的遊行，四處尋會可吞喫的人。”

所以每日在清早的時候，咱必須用充份的時間來親近主，吟詩讚美主，仔細讀主的話語，專心祈禱及等候。

現在咱要來穿戴神的全副軍裝。

1. 要戴上救恩的頭盔 (the helmet of salvation)

魔鬼時常把骯髒的思想射入咱的頭腦裡。如果咱不戴上救恩的頭盔，那麼這些骯髒的思想會在咱腦海裡懷胎。生出罪來，罪繼續下去的後果就是死。所以咱要戴上救恩的頭盔，求聖靈充滿咱的頭腦，讓祂控制咱一切的心思意念（以弗所書5:18-21）這樣咱才能夠得勝魔鬼。

2. 用公義當作護心鏡遮胸 (the breastplate of righteousness)

魔鬼知道咱未信主以前所犯的罪，牠常常藉著此把柄控告咱，指責咱。但是咱感謝上帝，祂因為愛咱，祂使主耶穌為咱所犯的罪來死在十字架上，給咱在祂裡面成為神的義（哥林多後書5:17-21）。所以咱若真正認罪，悔改，求主赦免咱的罪惡，過著聖潔的生活，上帝是信實的，是公義

的，祂必要赦免咱的罪，洗清咱一切的不義（約翰一書1:9）。那麼魔鬼就沒有辦法再來控告咱了。

3. 用真理當作皮帶束腰 (the girdle of truth)

魔鬼很善說謊，自從始祖亞當時，牠就很善說謊，所以約翰福音8:44稱呼牠是說謊人的父親。羅馬兵的裙和劍都是被這個腰皮帶連結在一起的。如果沒有皮帶不但他的裙會掉下來，他也沒有掛劍的地方。意思是說一個基督徒如果還會說謊，在社會上不但給人譏笑，他沒有資格使用上帝的話語。因為上帝是聖潔的神，也是誠實的神。

4. 拿著信德當作籐牌 (the shield of faith)

魔鬼時常用各種的火箭來攻擊與引誘咱。好像污穢的思想，給咱生氣失去平安，懷疑上帝的存在，懷疑上帝的愛，懷疑上帝的應允和各種肉體的私慾。但是如果咱有堅固的信心，認識咱所信的上帝，咱可以完全信靠祂，這就是咱信德的籐牌。上帝知道在咱人生的過程中會遇著很多苦難，試煉與試探，所以祂特別賜給咱聖靈，居住在咱心裡保護咱。咱要注目在主耶穌，遵行祂的旨意，不要聽魔鬼甜蜜的話去犯罪，因為犯罪的後果是死亡。因此當魔鬼射牠的火箭來攻擊引誘的時，咱就會馬上辨明出牠的詭計，咱可以靠著聖靈的大能大力得勝魔鬼，榮耀上帝的聖名。

5. 拿著聖靈的寶劍就是上帝的話 (the sword of the Spirit)

這寶劍是上帝全副軍裝內唯一能夠攻



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擊魔鬼的武器。上帝的話就是聖經，咱必須好好的攻讀聖經，並且要默念聖經。詩篇119:11 “我將你的話藏在心裡，免得我得罪禰”。咱若默念熟聖經節，當咱需要的時就馬上可以拿出來用。

希伯來書4:12-13告訴咱上帝的話是活潑的，是大有功效的，比雙面利的劍更利。但是要應用上帝話語的人，必須要有聖潔的生活又受聖靈充滿的，否則這雙面利的寶劍不但會打傷對敵，而且也會打傷用寶劍的人。

主耶穌在世的時間曾在曠野受魔鬼三次試探，祂三次都是應用上帝的話語來得勝魔鬼(馬太4:1-11)

6. 膝蓋(knee cap)是保護膝的鐵版。是指跪下祈禱的膝。祈禱是基督徒的力量。咱若多多祈禱，就多多有力量。少少祈禱，就少少有力量。若沒有祈禱，就沒有力量。基督的精兵必須有祈禱的生活，並且要不住的禱告(帖撒羅尼迦前書5:17)。

不住的禱告是甚麼意思呢？意思是說咱的靈要與上帝常常有親密的交通。就是無論咱在家裡做家務，在車上開車，在運動場上運動，在辦公室裡辦公，或是在工廠裡做工，咱的靈一定要與上帝有密切的交通，咱不要留下絲毫空間去聽魔鬼的話，咱總要做醒祈禱免得入了迷惑(路22:40b)。

耶穌在世間的時候，從祂出生到死，祂的靈一直與天父有親密的交通。

一個基督徒的祈禱如果是向上帝求討，那麼他失去了讚美，感恩和為人代禱的福氣。讚美和感恩的祈禱是基督徒第一最有力攻擊魔鬼的武器。因為魔鬼最不爱咱讚美上帝，因為牠是和上帝敵對的。當咱讚美上帝的偉大，祂的大能，祂的信實和祂的慈愛，上帝大大得到榮耀。咱的信

心也得到剛強。上帝會為咱改變咱的惡境。當咱為人祈禱，關心幫助人需要的時，上帝也要關心咱的需要，並改變咱的苦境(約伯42:10)

當約伯為他的朋友祈禱，耶和華就使約伯從苦境轉回，並且耶和華賜給他的，比他從前所有的加倍。

7. 要穿上福音的鞋(Gospel of Peace)

在提摩太書4:2保羅教導咱要傳道，無論得時不得時，總要專心，並用百般的忍耐，各種的教訓責備人，警戒人，勸勉人。

羅馬兵的鞋，鞋底有安裝鐵釘，使他在戰場上與敵人相殺的時候能使他的足很穩固的站住。特別是在斜坡或濕的地方會使人很容易滑倒。但是因為他的鞋有許多鐵釘，當他的足踏下地面上的時，這些鐵釘會深入土裡使他的足站立穩固。

這個意思是說：咱做基督的精兵不但每日要勤讀聖經而且要多用時間進深研究聖經，讓咱做有根有枝的基督徒，裝備咱自己。因為當咱向人傳福音時，他們如果問咱一些難題時，咱能夠很詳細為他們解答他們的問題，引導他們信主耶穌，歸在主的名下，榮耀主的聖名。

羅馬兵在戰場上與敵人交戰的時有進不退，一致進攻，忠心到底為國家爭光榮，為國家犧牲。同樣的，咱做基督精兵也要好膽進前不倒退，為主傳福音，搶救失喪人的靈魂，忠心到底。雖然咱的仇敵甚多甚兇惡，但是咱有主耶穌做咱的將軍，咱不必怕，因為祂是萬權能的神，祂必要保護咱，幫助咱得勝咱的對敵魔鬼。將來在審判的時候，祂要賜給咱公義的冠冕，又要給咱與天父上帝同坐寶座(啟示錄3:21)。哈利路亞!

傑出的領袖 - 尼希米

許郭錦繡

尼希米是在書珊城當波斯王亞達薛西王時為酒政、當他聞到猶大省遭大難受凌辱、城牆折毀城門被焚燒、就決心回國建城、負起這重大的使命。

在尼希米書中、我們可以看到他是一位具有才幹並滿有毅力的領導者、他的表現也是值得每一個教會領袖效法的。

尼希米領導的作風: Nehemiah's Leadership

1. 關心故土(尼1:2-3) - Care for Israel

當他聞到猶大省慘重的狀態時、就不想自己的利益或安危、願意犧牲而歸回故土、彰顯出他愛心的關懷。

2. 禁食禱告(尼1:4) - Fast and Pray

他坐下哭泣、悲哀幾日、禁食禱告、求神開路。

3. 請假建城(尼 2:3-5) - Take Leave to Rebuild Wall

他因容貌憂愁、引起國王的注意、王就問其原因、他乘這機會傾吐心意、向王請假、求王批准他回國建城。

4. 求王詔書(尼2:7-8) - Request for Safe Pass and Timber

他蒙了王的允許、就作充分的預備、求王賜詔書准他經過河西之地、並請求王賜詔書、給他木料作建築橫樑和城牆之用。

5. 親身巡察(尼 2:9-12) - Personal Involvement

他首先參考地圖、親身騎馬去察看、沒有告訴任何人。

6. 思想計劃(尼 2:13-16)- Think/Plan/Organize

他在夜間從谷門開始巡察、到了糞廠門、再往泉門、然後再歸回谷門、留心

計劃工作的範圍。

7. 挑戰百姓(尼2:17-20) - Challenge the People

他勸民重建城牆、挑戰他們一同起來、努力奮勇作此善工。

8. 分工派職(尼 3) - Assign Works and Demand Accountability

他做事井井有條、分配各人的工作、由祭司首先領導、並將名字都記錄下來。

9. 忍讖訪敵(尼4:1-3; 7-13; 16-19; 21-23) - Withstand Insults and Cautious with Enemies

他遭受參巴拉的惱恨喧笑、多比雅、亞拉伯人、亞捫人、亞實突人的惡謀、他們故意使城內擾亂、尼希米便派人看守、晝夜防備、叫百姓按宗族拿刀、拿槍、拿弓、拿盾牌、穿鎧甲、保護自己、對付敵人。

10. 信心交託(尼4:4-6) - Trust in Faith

他面對這麼多的問題並沒有灰心、因他以信心交託神、相信主沒有難成之事、知道主的大能大力、必使他們亨通、護得勝利。

11. 鼓勵安慰(尼 4:14-15, 20)-Give Encouragement and Comfort

當百姓害怕時、他就吹角聚集他們、鼓勵安慰他們說:「主是大而可畏的、祂必為我們爭戰!」

12. 責備取利(尼 5:1-13) - Reprimand Usurious Practice

除了對付外面的問題、他也要應付內部的問題、有些百姓需要去得糧食來度生命、有些典當了田地及房屋來得糧食充

飢、有些借錢來納王稅、有些將兒女作別人的僕婢、所以人民就呼號嗟怨、當尼希米聽見這些情形時、便發怒召集大會、斥責貴冑和官長、勸他們歸還田產、免去利息、贖回子民、眾人就起誓照應許而行、於是問題就終於解決了。

13. 不收俸祿 (尼 5:14-19) - Demand Nothing for His Service

尼希米奉派作猶大地的省長共十二年之久、他沒有用省長的俸祿、沒有像以往省長索要糧食和酒、也沒有收取四十舍客勒的銀子、不轄制百姓、不置買田地、不出怨言、不容不公平之事、專心為百姓著想、恆心修造城牆。

14. 拒絕妥協 (尼 6:1-9) - Refuse to Compromise

敵人看見城牆很順利的進行、便想阻止築牆之工、採取合作的偽計、四次打發人去見尼希米、要他在阿挪平原的一個莊林與他們相會、尼希米知道敵人的惡意、堅定拒絕了、敵人第五次又差人帶信、捏造謀反的壞話、尼希米不加工會、繼續工作、求神堅固他的手。

15. 不怕驚嚇 (尼 6:10-14) - Not Succumb to Threat

敵人知道所用的計謀全都失敗了、便賄買偽先知、設計用驚嚇的方法叫他懼怕、尼希米認識敵人、懂得辨別是非、分別善惡、持守他的立場、並不動搖。

16. 完成任務 (尼 6:15-16) - Mission Accomplished

城牆將於以祿月廿五日完工、共修了五十二天、仇敵聽見便害怕、因為他們知道這工作完成是出乎神的帶領。

17. 計算家譜 (尼 7:5-9) - List All Exiles Who Returned

要知道實力、應該了解人數、尼希

米受神的感動、招聚貴冑官長和百姓、照家譜計算。

18. 獻財聖殿 (尼 7:70-72) - Contribute to the Temple

他推動捐獻財物於聖殿、包括金、銀、碗、祭司禮服、共同感謝主的厚恩。

19. 宣讀律書 (尼 8) - Reading of the Law

建城後、所需要推動的就是建民、怎樣建民呢？就是以神的話為律法書、以斯拉在水門宣讀主的話、眾民側耳而聽、清楚明白真道、一齊應聲敬拜耶和華。

20. 禁食認罪 (尼 9) - Fasting and Confession

眾民聚集禁食、身穿麻衣、頭蒙灰塵、就與一切外邦人離絕、並且承認自己及列祖的罪孽、述說主的恩典、記念祂所行的神蹟、稱頌主名！

21. 遵行律法 (尼 10) - Carrying Out God's Command

省長、祭司及百姓都起誓遵行神藉著祂僕人摩西所傳的律法、謹守遵行主一切的誠命、典章及律例。

22. 運用恩賜 (尼 11: 19-24; 12:1-25) - Utilization of Gifts

尼希米分派人民各居城邑、安頓岡位、以各人的恩賜分配聖工、事奉吟詩讚美耶和華。

23. 最終改革 (尼 13) - Final Reforms

- 當以色列人出埃及地到曠野時、亞捫人和摩押人不但沒有拿食物和水來迎接他們、而且雇了先知巴蘭來咒詛以色列人、所以在摩西律法書有寫著永遠不可給他們入神的會。

Ammonites and Moabites are Not Allowed to Enter the Temple

- 此後祭司以利亞實與多比雅結親、便將在神殿院內歸祭司舉祭的屋子

給比多雅使用、當尼希米回耶路撒冷知道此事、便非常惱怒、將多比雅一切家具從屋裡拋出去、將神殿的器皿又搬進來。

Clearing All Tobias Personal Items from the Temple Room

- 令猶大納十分之一。
Ask Judah to Bring Tithes to the Storeroom
- 招聚利未人照舊供職、並命令供利未人所當得的分。
Call Back the Levites to Assume Their Posts and Support Them
- 警戒猶大人不可在安息日做生意。
Rebuke People Doing Business on the Sabbath Day
- 禁止猶大人與異族通婚、叫他離絕一切外邦人。
Disallow Inter-marriages with Foreign Women

尼希米領導的作風可供教會領袖來應用:
Nehemiah's Leadership for Application to Church Leaders:

1. (關心故土) 關心教會 – Care for the Church

教會增長、需要領導者對教會有真誠的關心。

2. (禁食禱告) 恆切禱告 – Steadfast in Prayer

禱告是推動聖工的原動力、也是與主交通的橋樑、領導者需重視禱告。

3. (請假建城) 忠心事主 – Faithful Service to God

無論大小事、都要忠心盡力為主來做。

4. (求王詔書) 充分預備 – Properly Equipped

有機會事奉神是一種的福份、不可以馬馬虎虎的態度、應該要有充分的預備、獻上最好的給神。

5. (親身巡察) 委身參與 – Personal Participation in Church Activities

教會所推動的聖工、領導者必須以身作則、委身參與、別做個旁觀者。

6. (思想計劃) 確定異象、預定目標 – Determine Vision / Set Goals

異象及目標是成功絕不可缺少的要素、因為異象及目標是進行工作方向的指南。

7. (挑戰百姓) 挑戰會友 – Challenge the Congregation

要挑戰會友參與聖工、分工合作、共同去做。

8. (分工派職) 分配鼓賞 – Delegate / Encourage / Appreciate

教會是一個肢體、除了分配工作之外、領導者也該指導、鼓勵、並欣賞會友所做的工。

9. (忍譏防敵) 忍受批評 – Accept / Persevere Criticism

無論做何事、難免受人的批評、應該分辨批評的原因、如果需要改正的就應該加以改正、如果需要忍耐就要忍耐。

10. (信心交託) 信心堅定 – Strong Faith in God

領導者無論處在任何的情況下、應該堅定信心、順服上帝。

11. (鼓勵安慰) 愛心關照 – Show Love and Care to Church Members

要以愛心及關懷照應兄弟姊妹、使信徒經歷主內大家庭的溫暖。

12. (責備取利) 勸告管教 – Give Advices / Administer Discipline

何西阿書10:12 “你們要為自己栽種公義、就會收割慈愛”。公義和慈須要並

行、神因愛、就賜下祂的獨生兒子來拯救世人、因祂的公義、甘願使祂兒子主耶穌釘死在十字架上。同樣的、教會不但需要彰顯愛心、同時也必須施行公義、如果有會友陷於罪惡中、除了勸告之外、也要施行管教、以免受辱主名。

13. (不收俸祿) 犧牲精神 - Willing to Sacrifice

耶穌說：「若有人要跟從我就當捨己、背起十字架來跟從我」(太16:25)。做教會的領袖需要捨己、犧牲、顧及他人、甘願為主忍受苦難的精神。

14. (拒絕妥協) 持守真道 - Establish in Truth

要立定好的根基、不受異端邪說的影響、在真道站立得穩。

15. (不怕驚嚇) 站穩立場 - Firm Conviction / Not Conform to the World

不可效法世界、不可與世界妥協、不可討人的喜悅、乃是照主的旨意而行。

16. (完成任務) 做完神工 - Finish the Race

事奉上帝不要喪膽、不要冷心退後、要竭力多作主工、免得空手見主面。

17. (計算家譜) 計算會友 - Update Church Members

領導者須認識會友、加強探訪的工作、重視傳福音的使命、搶救失喪的靈魂。

18. (獻財聖殿) 捐獻聖工 - Give Offerings to God's Work

我們所擁有的才幹、金錢、權力、都是主所賜、應該以奉獻來報答主恩。

19. (宣讀律書) 閱讀聖經 - Read the Bible

領導者需要閱讀聖經、對神的話要有更深的認識、方可引導羊群、使他們的靈命增長。

20. (禁食認罪) 悔改認罪 - Repentance and Confession

最近菲律賓所遭遇的地震、颱風、海

嘯、更提醒我們末日已近、我們應該悔改認罪、讓主醫治我們的地、求祂洗清潔我們一切的不義。

21. (遵行律法) 遵行神言 - Obey God's Word

真正屬主的兒女是一個行道的基督徒、有美好的見證為主發光。

22. (運用恩賜) 發掘恩賜 - Discover the Gifts of the Believers

神賜每人有各種不同的恩賜、領導者應該從眾會友中發掘恩賜、使他們有份在聖工上事奉、各盡其職、互相配搭、擴展神的國度。

23. (最終改革) 最終命令 - Final Commands

- (不允許亞捫人和摩押人入神的會) 遠離罪惡 - Shun From Evil
- (趕出多比雅一切的家具) 務要聖潔 - Be Holy
- (令猶大人納十分之一) 奉獻施捨 - Give and Share
- (招聚利未人服職) 樂意事奉 - Glad to Serve
- (戒百姓在安息日做生意) 守安息日 - Observe the Sabbath
- (禁止猶大人與異族通婚) 不可相合的 (林後6:14)
- Not to be Yoked Together:
 1. 信與不信不相配 - Believers and Non-believers
 2. 義與不義不相交 - Righteousness and Wickedness
 3. 光明與黑暗不相通 - Light and Darkness

願我們藉著尼希米書中學習到做教會領袖應有的品格、願我們繼續不倦的為主效勞。

An Irreverent Look at the History of CHRISTIANITY

A SPECIAL SERIES BY THE IRREVERENT HISTORIAN

Part 7: The First Noël

How was it like to be a Jew living in Israel during the time of Jesus' birth? For the most part, it was quite peaceful. The Roman Empire dominates the region, and controls the entire continental Western Europe and large chunks of territory in North Africa, Asia Minor (Turkey), and the Middle East. Nobody dared to challenge the Roman army, so for once, the Jews were free from regional wars.

Rome has a centralized government with the Emperor as its leader, but it grants religious autonomy and limited political freedom to its subjects. As long as the people continue to pay their taxes and lived peacefully, Rome didn't care who they worshiped. Rome's main concern is getting enough tax revenue to support its lifestyle, and maintaining internal stability.

At the beginning of the New Testament, Judea was a vassal state ruled by **Herod the Great**. When Herod died, his kingdom was distributed among his three sons: **Herod Archelaus** (who took Judea, Edom, and Samaria), Herod Antipas (Galilee), and **Herod II**. In 4 AD, Archelaus was stripped of power, and his territory was turned into the Roman province of **Judaea**.

Instead of being ruled by a Jewish king, the Jews were now ruled by a **prefect** (governor) appointed by Rome. The prefect also has the power to appoint the **High Priest** of Jerusalem. The loss of political and religious autonomy made many Jews unhappy.

They became even more unhappy when Rome ordered the new province's population to be counted. The census, which was mentioned in Luke 1-2, was administered by regional governor **Quirinius**. Its purpose was to determine how much taxes the new province should pay.

As a result, a new political movement called **Zealotry** was formed. The Zealots wanted to rebel against Rome and declare independence. They steadily gained influence, until the Jews finally rebelled against Roman rule in 66 AD. This was a disastrous for the Jews, but that is a story for another time.

Three other sects influenced Jewish religious life. The **Sadducees** are religious traditionalists who were tied to the upper class and the Temple. The **Pharisees** are a group of populist religious reformers that gained power during the Hasmonean dynasty. The last sect, the **Essenes**, choose to seclude themselves in communal settlements, much like monks.

Although life was peaceful, it's not easy. Roman taxes were heavy, and unlike Persia, Rome allows slavery. People who can't pay their debts often became slaves. This is why tax collectors, especially if they are Jews, are seen as collaborators and hated by everyone.

Judaea's economy is primarily agrarian, meaning most people are farmers, shepherds, and fishermen. For urban Jews, there are housecraft professions available: cloth-making, pottery, metal-working, basket-weaving, dyeing, stone masonry, and carpentry. Some Jews became bankers and moneychangers, which can be a very profitable line of business.

In order to entertain its subjects, Rome blankets its major cities with entertainment venues like theaters and coliseums. Chariot races, sports contests, gladiatorial shows, and theater plays are held regularly. In addition to their Sabbath (Greeks and Romans have no rest day), Jews also have many religious holidays to help forget about the hardship of their daily lives.

This was the world that Jesus Christ was born to. His birth is a very important historical event, directly influencing the dating system we use today. The **Gregorian calendar** which is used throughout the Western world uses the *Anno Domini* dating system. All events that happen after the birth of Christ are dated **A.D.** — old Latin for "in the year of the Lord." Events that happened before the birth of Jesus are called **B.C.** or "before Christ."

One would expect that under this system, Jesus was born on 1 AD. However, this no longer holds true today. Based on research, scholars agree that Jesus was born earlier, between 6-4 BC.



The First Noel

務光特寫

Gospel Light Feature

Historicity of Jesus

For sources to be historically reliable, they must be confirmed by other sources. The reliability is increased further if those sources are written by third parties. So, did Jesus truly exist?

I am happy to say that, yes, based on available historical sources — not just the accounts written in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — the existence of Jesus is an established historical fact, even by atheists.

Two events in Jesus' life are widely accepted, based on the *criterion of embarrassment* in historical analysis. Basically, if an author writes something that would embarrass him or his beliefs when there was no need to do so, then the account should almost certainly be true.

- **Baptism by John the Baptist.** John the Baptist practices baptism for forgiveness of sins. By having John baptize Jesus, the gospels are basically elevating John above Jesus, which is an unnecessary embarrassment if he was invented by the early church.
- **Crucifixion by Pontius Pilate.** If you were to invent a messiah, you would probably not admit that the Romans killed him via crucifixion, which is the most shameful (not to mention painful) way to die at the time.

Both **John the Baptist** and **Pontius Pilate** are documented historical persons. The Jewish historian **Flavius Josephus** writes that John was executed by **Herod Antipas**, and that Herod's subsequent defeat in battle was divine payback for the killing. Pontius Pilate's existence is confirmed by the **Pilate Stone**, an inscription where the prefect of Judaea dedicates a new building to **Emperor Tiberius** of Rome.

Because of his interaction with well-established historical persons, the historicity of Jesus is firmly established. Of course, scholars disagree over other aspects of Jesus. For example, atheists would definitely deny his divinity and that he was resurrected after death. Obviously, there can be no universal agreement on this particular aspect.

Dating the Life of Jesus

There are a few ways to establish the dates of Jesus' life. Here are some methods scholars used to come up with estimates:

- **Nativity.** Matthew and Luke state that Jesus was born at the time of Herod the Great. Since Herod chose to kill all male babies up to 2 years old, Jesus could be two when the wise men visited. Herod died at 4 BC, so the birth year can be any time between 6 BC to 4 BC.
- **John's Ministry.** Jesus emerged shortly after John the Baptist started his own ministry at the 15th year of **Tiberius Caesar** (28-29 AD). Luke 3:23 states that Jesus was "around" 30 years old when he began his ministry. Estimating an age of 32 in 28 AD and working back, Jesus' date of birth is estimated at between 6 BC to 4 BC.
- **Temple Construction.** In John 2:20, the Pharisees accused Jesus of wanting to tear down the temple that has been under construction for 46 years. According to Josephus, Herod began building it during his 18th year as ruler (19-18 BC). This dates Jesus' temple visit to 27-29 AD. Assuming a mean age of 32 in 28 AD and working back, Jesus' date of birth is between 6 BC to 4 BC.
- **Terms.** Jesus was tried by high priest **Caiaphas**, (he held the position from 18-36 AD), Pontius Pilate (prelate of Judaea from 26-36 AD), and Herod Antipas (ruler of Galilee from 4 BC-39 AD). This puts a limit of 26 AD to 36 AD for his year of death.

How long was Jesus' ministry? We do have a lower limit on his ministry start date (28 AD, which is John the Baptist's start date) and his ministry end date (36 AD, when Pilate was recalled to Rome). His ministry could be as short as 1 year, and as long as 8 years, although the most common estimate is 3½ years.

The First Noel

We now focus our attention on the birth of Jesus Christ. Two books from the Bible cover this period: Matthew and Luke. Everyone knows the traditional Christmas story, but you would be surprised to learn how many elements are actually misconceptions:





The First Noel

HISTORY OF JESUS IN THE FOUR GOSPELS

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Birth and childhood of Jesus :				
Genealogy of Jesus	1:1-17		3:23-38	
Conception of John the Baptist			1:5-25	
The Annunciation (announcement to Mary)	1:18-25		1:26-38	
Mary meets Elizabeth; birth of John			1:39-80	
Birth of Jesus	2:1-12		2:1-20	
Slaughter of the Innocents	2:13-18			
Childhood of Jesus	2:19-23		2:40-52	
Jesus' Ministry				
John the Baptist arrives	3:1-12	1:1-8	3:1-20	1:1-31
John baptizes Jesus	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-22	1:32-34
John the Baptist executed	14:1-13	6:4-29	9:7-9	
Jesus tempted by the Devil	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13	
Jesus finds his disciples	4:12-22	1:14-20	5:1-11	1:35-51
Sermon on the Mount	4:23-7:29		6:17-6:49	
The Lord's Prayer	6:9-15	11:24-26	11:1-4	
Criticized for eating with sinners	9:10-17	2:15-22	5:29-39	
Jesus sends out his disciples	10:5-25	6:7-13	9:1-10:24	
Jesus rejected in Nazareth	13:54-58	6:1-6	4:16-30	4:43-45
Zacchaeus climbs the sycamore tree			19:1-10	
Entry into Jerusalem	21:1-11	11:1-11	19:28-44	12:12-19
The moneychangers in the temple	21:12-17	11:15-19	19:45-48	2:13-17
Cursing the fig tree	21:18-22	11:12-23	13:1-9	
Giving tribute to Caesar	22:15-22	12:13-17	20:20-26	
The two commandments	22:34-40	12:28-34		
Jesus anointed in Bethany	26:6-13	14:3-9	7:36-50	12:3-8
Judas visits the priests	26:14-16	14:10-11	22:3-6	
The Last Supper	26:17-30	14:12-26	22:7-39	13:1-17:26
Jesus washes his disciples feet				13:3-20
Garden of Gethsemane	26:36-46	14:32-42	22:39-46	18:1
Betrayal of Jesus	26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-53	18:2-11
Trial and Crucifixion				
Jesus tried by the high priest	26:57-68	14:53-65	22:54-71	18:12-28
Peter denies Jesus three times	26:58-75	14:54-72	22:55-62	18:15-27
Judas kills himself	27:3-10			
Jesus is taken before Pilate	27:1-14	15:1-5	23:1-6	18:29-37
Jesus is taken before Herod			23:7-12	
Barabbas released	27:15-26	15:6-15	23:13-25	18:38-40
Jesus is crucified	27:27-44	15:16-32	23:26-49	19:16-37
Jesus dies and is buried	27:45-66	15:33-47	23:44-56	19:25-42
The women find the tomb empty	28:1-8	16:1-8	24:1-12	20:1-10
Mary Magdalene sees Jesus	28:9-10	16:9-11		20:11-18
On the road to Emmaus		16:12-13	24:13-32	
Jesus appears to the eleven	28:16-20	16:14-18	24:33-49	20:19-23
Doubting Thomas				20:24-31
The Ascension		16:19-20	24:50-53	



The First Noël

- **December 25.** The Bible is silent on the date. December 25 was chosen because it is exactly nine months after Jesus was conceived, traditionally on March 25.
- **Three Kings.** Jesus was indeed given three gifts (gold, frankincense, and myrrh), but he was not visited by three kings. Matthew 2:1 says that an unspecified number of wise men (Magi) from the East came to Bethlehem. Incidentally, the Magi did *not* witness the actual birth — their visit was some time after.
- **No Room at the Inn.** Some translations refer to an inn, but this is probably a *guest room*. Jewish culture values first-born children, and it is unlikely that a heavily-pregnant wife of a kinsman would be denied any room.
- **Born in a Manger.** This is technically true, but the manger is not an animal stable. Many houses during this time have mangers attached to the ground floor — the animals were brought inside for the night. Since the guest room was not available, the couple had to stay at the ground floor — the manger.

We know that Herod perceived Jesus as a threat to his throne. After they were warned, Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt. This matches what we know about Herod historically. He was very paranoid and killed many of his own children. Egypt is safe because it is part of the Roman Empire, but Herod has no control over it.

After Herod died, Joseph and Mary felt it was safe to return home. They chose to go to Galilee upon learning that Herod Archelaus ruled Judaea. This is historically accurate: Archelaus was a brutal man, and Rome removed him after his harsh treatment led to many complaints.

Formative Years

The Gospels are mostly silent about Jesus' years as a child, teenager, and young adult. The only accounts we have are all from Luke 2:

- **Presentation.** At the age of 40 days, baby Jesus was presented at the Temple in Jerusalem in a ritual called *Pidyon haben*.
- **Passover.** When he was twelve, his family visited Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. He was accidentally left behind. When his family

found him four days later, he was sitting at the Temple Court, holding a mature spiritual conversation with the teachers there.

Some accounts say that Jesus studied under the Essenes, and that he visited Great Britain as a child. There is no historical evidence to support these claims. Most likely, he was educated by the Pharisees, and later worked alongside his father Joseph as a skilled carpenter in Nazareth.

Ministry

Jesus began his ministry after his baptism and temptation by Satan. He stayed exclusively in Israel during his ministry, focusing on two areas:

- **Galilee.** For the vast majority of his ministry, Jesus stayed in the area, perhaps using Capernaum (a fishing village on the Sea of Galilee) as a base. His hometown, Nazareth, was close by, and he recruited most of his disciples from here. His famous **Sermon on the Mount**, the central tenet of Christian discipleship, was given in Galilee.
- **Jerusalem.** Jesus generally avoided the Judaea area, particularly Jerusalem, due to threats to his life. Depending on what chronology you want to use, he visited the city up to four times. During his final visit, he triumphantly entered the city a week before Passover, warmly greeted by the people.

Ultimately, Jesus' impact while on Earth pales in comparison to his later influence in world history. During his ministry, he probably gathered a few dozen core disciples, and ministered to thousands of people.

But many people supported him only because they thought he is the Messiah who will deliver Israel from Roman rule and reestablish the monarchy of King David. Jesus preached conformity to Rome, and promised something else entirely — a kingdom in Heaven.

The religious establishment took advantage of fickle public opinion to eliminate someone they view as a religious threat. The cheering crowd that welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem became the jeering crowd that demanded his crucifixion one week later. We see the fallout during the next installment of our series in **Part 8: the First Christians**, only here in Gospel Light!

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Gospel Light Feature



CHURCH NEWS

June-November '13

by: R.O.L.

Spiritual Discipline by: Rev. Leonides Son

Last June 8, 2013, Rev. Son shared the importance of meditation and other aspects of personal quiet time with God. He taught the young people how to concentrate on the scripture during devotion & how to clear our minds of clutters so we can have free space to focus on God and His Word.



Obtain the Reward (The Crown of Righteousness)

by: Rev. Jeremiah Cheung

"For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." (2 Tim. 4:6-8)

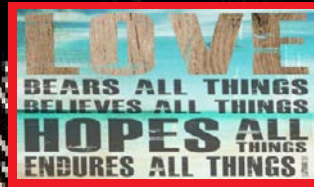
On August 18, 2013, Rev. J. Cheung shared about how Christians can obtain the reward. We should have the right intention, right direction and right

action in order to reach the destination or the goal. But this can only happen when people work together and have the same goal.

God called us and commanded us to make disciples and those disciples should also be able to disciple others.

Good intention + right direction + right action = good destination

The right destination for a church is discipleship making. And the one thing that determines everything is our relationship with our Lord Jesus because it's all about Him.



Medical Examination

Last Aug. 18, 2013, the Membership Committee conducted a free medical examination for all members aged 40 years old and above.

Praise God for giving us physicians who helped us evaluate our physical condition and see the differences and problem.

May we come to God's Word for spiritual examination as well that we may also see our spiritual condition and find improvement in our spiritual walk as Christians.

Senior Citizen Week

The Membership Committee sponsored a special activity for our elderlies last September 7, 2013 (Saturday) at the auditorium. Rev. William Young was the invited speaker.

For Fun: Senior Citizen Texting Code

ATD—At The Doctors

BFF—Best Friend Fell

BTW—Bring The Wheel Chair

BYOT—Bring Your Own Teeth

FWIW—Forgot Where I Was

GGPBL—Gotta Go Pacemaker Battery Low

GHA—Got Heartburn Again

IMHO—Is My Hearing Aid On

LMDO—Laughing My Dentures Out

OMMR—On My Massage Recliner

OMSG—Oh My! Sorry, Gas

ROFLACGU—Rolling On Floor Laughing And Can't Get Up

TTYL—Talk To You Louder

Mission Week Sept. 11-15, 2013 by Rev. Stewart Young

"So I Send You" was the theme of the mission week last September 11-15, 2013. This year, representatives from various Christian organizations we are supporting were asked to present their ministry in their respective booths. This different and unique way of sharing their ministry was really an eye opener.

We encourage all the adults, yuppies, teens and even children to get to know the organizations our church is supporting so we will learn from them and remember them in our prayers and support.



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Gospel Light

CHURCH NEWS





Mid-Autumn Festival

The Membership Committee, together with the Sister's Fellowship, held the Mid-Autumn Festival for members who were 40 years old and above on September 17, 2013.

This festival which falls on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month is a much celebrated Chinese festival.

This annual occasion marks an end of the harvesting period and a close to a year's hard work. Families gather and rejoice over a bountiful harvest and feasts are prepared in anticipation of a better harvest in the year to come. Mooncakes are traditionally featured in this sumptuous feast.



Sunday School Sunday September 29, 2013



Finish the Race by Rev. Wilson Gonzales (October 20, 2013)

One of the video clips that Rev. Gonzales showed that stuck into my mind was the race between the disabled and the crippled children. Whether they were on wheelchairs or in crutches, whatever disabilities they had, they should race to the finish line. When the race started, the children gave their best to reach the finish line but one of them fell and had a hard time getting up. When the others even those who were near the finish line saw him, they came back for him, helped him get his feet back on the ground and with hands joined together, reached the finishing line all together. This is one of the greatest example the church and leaders should learn. Sad to say, it's easier said than done. These children were Indians and Muslim by religion. If they could set such example for each other and for the world to see, how



much more for us who call ourselves Christians meaning "mini Christ". Christ Himself set a good example that we should follow in His steps. Let us let our light shine and not allow the dark side to rule over us. Something for you and me to think and ponder.

If we want to finish the race together—let us begin with ourselves. It's always easy to look at the disabilities of others but let us learn to see beyond these imperfections and appreciate capabilities instead.

Jesus Loves You Ministry - Relief goods repacking for Typhoon "Yolanda" victims in Tacloban City (November 16, 2013)



AND THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS
LOVE joy
 peace **PATIENCE**
KINDNESS
 goodness **FAITH**
 & **gentleness**
 & **self-control**
 GALATIANS 5:22

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Thanksgiving Day Celebration (November 21 & 24, 2013)

A special Thanksgiving celebration was held in the evening of November 21, 2013. Different fellowships rendered their respective special numbers and testimonies in praise to our Lord.



Speaker Rev. Michael Tsang



Violin rendition by the Sunday School Department



Presider Mrs. Belian Ong



Songleader Elder Peter Yap



Testimonies by the Carmel Fellowship

CHURCH NEWS



Song number by
Mandaue Gospel Center



Song number by
Sisters' Fellowship



Song number by
the Church Council



Song number by
Joybells Gospel Team



Song number by Monday &
Saturday Bible Study Group



Song number by
the Church Choir



On November 24, 2013 Thanksgiving Sunday, three teens committed their lives to our Lord Jesus and went through water baptism. They are Angela Belle Ong, Jeri Garielle Yap and Peter Tyler Po III.



CYF 65th Anniversary (November 29, 2013)





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