



# MY HOMILETIC

# SWIMMING POOL

TIMOTHY TOW



# **MY HOMILETIC SWIMMING POOL**

**Timothy Tow**

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**My Homiletic Swimming Pool**

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*To  
all my students  
of the  
Homiletic Swimming Pool  
of  
Far Eastern Bible College  
from whom  
I have  
learned the most  
in the art  
of  
Preaching*

*SOLI DEO GLORIA*

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# Take My Life, and Let It Be

Frances R. Havergal (1836 - 79)  
(Adapted from Amoy Hymnal)

Dijon



1. Take my life, and let it be Con - se - cra - ted, Lord, to Thee.
2. Take my voice, and let me sing Al - ways, on - ly, for my King.
3. Take my will, and make it Thine; It shall be no lon - ger mine.
4. Take my love; my Lord, I pour At Thy feet its trea - sure - store.



Take my mo - ments and my days; Let them flow in cease - less praise.  
Take my lips, and let them be Filled with mes - sa - ges from Thee.  
Take my heart - it is Thine own; It shall be Thy ro - yal throne.  
Take my - self, and I will be E - ver, on - ly, all for Thee.





## Foreword

Dr. Timothy Tow, author and translator of over 30 books, has dedicated this his latest *My Homiletic Swimming Pool*, to his students, from whom he has “learned the most”. I believe this is the first book on Homiletics written by a local author. Although many books on homiletics abound in Christian bookrooms today, this book is quite different from the rest. It is a model of conciseness and readability and is practical in its approach. It also contains material not found in other books, like, the importance of music to the preaching of God’s Word, the author’s personal testimony, examples of sermons he preached spiced with illustrations of local flavour and setting, sprinkled with humour. Illustrated also are his four forms of support for powerful and effective preaching, namely, Statement, Restatement, Illustration and Testimony. He further shares many valuable lessons and insights gleaned from his 48 years of pastoral and preaching experience and 36 years of teaching homiletics at Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC).

Having known the author for over 45 years and having personally benefited much through the reading of this treatise and my weekly attendance at the “homiletic swimming pool” sessions at FEBC, I highly commend this book to all who are involved in the teaching and preaching of the Word of God and to those in leadership positions in Sunday Schools and Fellowship Groups.

Elder Khoo Peng Kiat  
December, 1998.

## Preface

I had no idea of writing this treatise on Homiletics or the Art of Preaching until two months ago, when I felt a sudden urge from Above. So, when I put pen to paper, it was that of a ready writer (Ps. 45:1). I have never felt so much at ease.

Providentially, He has also preserved for me the loose records of two seminars on Preaching which I taught at Calvary Jurong Bible-Presbyterian Church, 1997-98, at the instance of Rev. James Chan, one of my earliest students at Far Eastern Bible College. These loose records are important material to form a little part of this book, which I “accidentally” plucked out hidden among many booklets, like finding a needle in the haystack. This all the more convinced me the Lord was the Higher Hand directing.

In view of the fact that more “outsiders” of late are attending our Wednesday morning Homiletics Class, I realise this treatise has come for such a time as this to meet a timely need. This need is indeed urgent, for everywhere in the Church world there is the cry for preachers, even lay preachers. If the publication of this book which is based on a booklet called “Homiletics Made Lively” hitherto in use will help train a wider circle of preachers, this humble effort will not have been made in vain.

To God the Almighty be all glory and honour and power and to Jesus, His Son, the Head of the Church (Rev 4:10). Amen.

Timothy Tow  
December, 1998.

## Prologue

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (Mark 16:15,16)

\* \* \*

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matt 28:18-20)

\* \* \*

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

\* \* \*

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18,19)

*For Christ sent me not to baptize,  
but to preach the gospel: not with  
wisdom of words, lest the cross of  
Christ should be made of none  
effect. For the preaching of the  
cross is to them that perish  
foolishness; but unto us which are  
saved it is the power of God. (1  
Cor 1:17-18)*

\* \* \*

*And the things that thou hast heard  
of me among many witnesses, the  
same commit thou to faithful men,  
who shall be able to teach others  
also. (2 Tim 2:2)*

\* \* \*

*Give instruction to a wise man,  
and he will be yet wiser: teach a  
just man, and he will increase in  
learning. (Prov 9:9)*

# Chapter I

## Homiletics : Teaching and Learning How to Preach

In order to perpetuate the preaching of the Gospel, Paul writes his successor Timothy, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Tim 2:2). Not only by mandate are Paul’s teachings to be passed from teacher to pupil, generation after generation, the Apostle also sets the pattern by teaching a Bible School in Ephesus for two years, “ ... so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10). As a result of this on-going process, five new churches sprang up in the list of seven churches in Asia to which our Lord would write (Rev 1:11). They are Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia. With the rise of these new churches, the Gospel was bound to spread to other cities, towns, villages, even unto the uttermost part of the earth.

By way of testimony I was the first to secure a sound theological education from Faith Seminary in the United States. After I returned to Singapore in 1950 to establish an English Service for our Teochew-speaking mother church at Prinsep Street, I realised the imperative of founding a Bible College to train younger people that they in turn should become preachers of the Word. As a result Far Eastern Bible College was established in 1962. Since then we have trained over 350 pastors, teachers, missionaries, etc. during the last 36 years. Thus the Gospel is able to go forward, from strength to

strength. Insofar as Life B-P Church is concerned the Lord has prospered us with 56 branches during the last 48 years. From Singapore our fair city, God's kingdom has extended all over ASEAN and now to Saipan. This latter day Timothy of Singapore also has carried out Paul's injunction to the first Timothy, his successor. Timothy, according to tradition, became Bishop of Ephesus.

The subjects that Paul taught, first of all, were the Old and New Testaments, he having written thirteen epistles out of the twenty-seven books. The receiving of Bible knowledge is prerequisite to its dissemination, but how to disseminate it is another matter. According to Paul's teaching, it is by "the foolishness of preaching" (1 Cor 1:21).

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (1 Cor 1:22-24).

What assurance and inspiration to us who are learning how to preach! Are we not commissioned to preach?

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (1 Cor 2:1,2).

The first thing we must learn from Paul on preaching is the centrality of the Cross, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Often times we are asked to preach, and we ransack our brains for an appropriate subject but find ourselves all at sea. If you have not found a subject, preach Christ! Christ crucified to pay for the penalty of our sins and risen from the dead for our justification.

Since Paul writes most profusely on the subject of preaching, and here is another admonition, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor

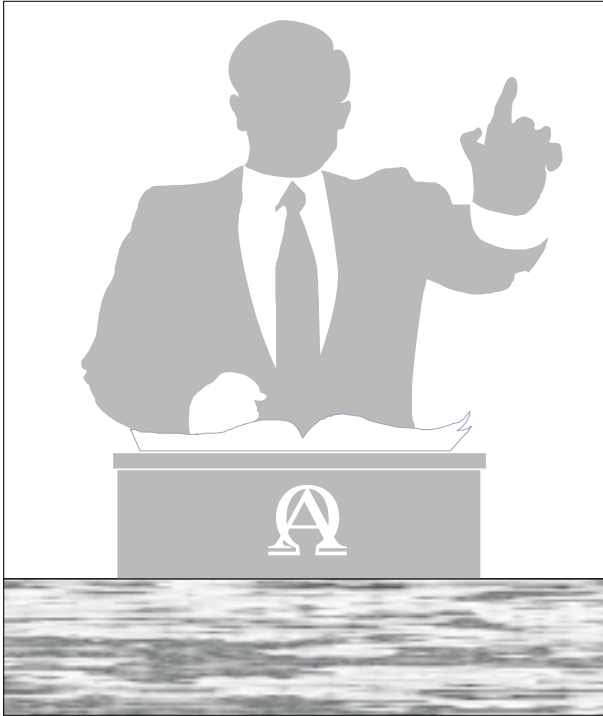
4:5), he must have taught Timothy and the other disciples plenty on the art of preaching. How, what, when and why we should preach is given to Timothy again, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” (2 Tim 4:2). To the Corinthians he adds, “For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the Gospel, I may make the Gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the Gospel.” (1 Cor 9:16-18)

Now, I am speaking to you, Bible College students preparing for a pastoral or teaching ministry. I presume you are in Bible College because God has called you into service. Learning to preach, as Timothy had learned by observing Paul his mentor, you must be in a docile frame of mind, ready to learn and learn it avidly. Is your docility comparable to that of the elephant with big listening ears? Or, when your turn comes round to preach in the Homiletics Class, is it a burden and a bugbear? The cultivation of a high spirit in preaching is therefore of the utmost importance. The call of the weekly pulpit to the pastor should also be a challenging and cheerful prospect and not a chore. This is stated negatively by the Apostle, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel”.

\* \* \*

#### Seven Pauline Injunctions on Preaching the Gospel

- I Preach the Divine Origin of the Gospel (Gal 1:11,12)
- II Preach the Centrality of the Gospel (1 Cor 2:1,2)
- III Preach the Essentials of the Gospel (1 Cor 15:1-4)
- IV Preach the Exclusiveness of the Gospel (Gal 1:8)
- V Preach the Urgency of the Gospel (2 Tim 4:2)
- VI Preach the Imperative of the Gospel (1 Cor 9:16,17)
- VII Preach the Pioneering Spirit of the Gospel (Rom 15:20,21)



*Every student must come to the Wednesday morning homiletics class, which also takes in a few interested auditors, to what we call our homiletic swimming pool. How does one learn to swim? By reading a book of instructions lying flat on a dunlopillo bed and stretching out one arm and then the other in imitation? No, just plunge in, sink or swim. That is the way to make one a swimming champion.*

\* \* \*

*“As in water face answereth to face so the heart of man to man.” (Prov 27:19)*



## Chapter II

### My Homiletic Swimming Pool

Homiletics, teaching and learning how to preach, is surely Paul's hottest subject to his pupils. This he taught by example at every session of his preachings. Timothy observed his style and methods and passed it down to his disciples in his own way. The principles are the same, but each teacher has his own style. So, in the course of Church History God has raised mighty preachers, e.g. C.H. Spurgeon, the Prince of Preachers. Having discovered those principles that are vital to powerful preaching he has perpetuated them in a voluminous book he had written, *Lectures to My Students*. In this book are discussed every homiletical principle from A to Z. It is a first book assigned to be read by FEBC students. It is a book you must have in your own library.

When I was in Faith Seminary, our homiletic classes were divided into three, since it was a three-year course. They were the Junior Homiletics Class, Middler and Senior. For theory we would take down notes from such a mighty preacher as John A. Broadus. For practice we had 30 in the Junior Class, 25 in the Middler and 20 in the Senior.

As a Junior Student I joined others to assemble at the First Independent (Presbyterian) Church in Wilmington, Delaware, which could seat 300 people. But when I went up the pulpit to preach, I had only 30 scattered in a sea of empty pews to hear me including the teacher. In such a bleak situation there was no challenge to excellence or tension to improvement. When we came to the Senior

year, there were less students and consequently less challenge. No wonder there was little spirit in the presentation.

Besides, the professor of homiletics was the youngest member of the faculty. He himself was no preacher, much less of a pastor with preaching experience. He had graduated a mere few years from Seminary. He had learned a little theoretical homiletics. How could he impart to us richly how and what we should preach from his own experience?

When I founded Far Eastern Bible College in 1962 I had to teach many subjects and homiletics was one. Taking Homiletics to be the most important subject, I determined to strike out on my own the best I knew how. I decided homiletics could not be divided into classes, but it was for the whole school. Although the class was meagre at first, it began to grow, until today, we have 90 students, men and women. Every student must come to the Wednesday morning homiletics class, which also takes in a few interested auditors, to what we call our homiletic swimming pool. How does one learn to swim? By reading a book of instructions lying flat on a dunlopillo bed and stretching out one arm and then the other in imitation? No, just plunge in, sink or swim. That is the way to make one a swimming champion.

The student now at the pulpit is given every challenge and encouragement by the attention paid to him by the whole student body. He is given the liberty of preaching on any subject he chooses and finding his own text. This he must learn from the Lord Himself, by meditation and prayer. When he has finished his sermon, members of the class are called upon to say a kind word to him, — gentle, constructive criticism. He must be handled with utmost care, like a young plant in a nursery. There will be mistakes made, in speech, in subject matter, in grammar, in voice, in gestures, etc.. But these must be gingerly hinted in order not to shatter his confidence. To be severe on the budding preacher is like pulling the young plant up, but you sever the roots. Interestingly, there are plenty of good things presented by the novice, good theology with applications. Due

recognition of merit is generously given and how that thrills and encourages the pupil's heart.

I had an old Norwegian student, Andrew Bo, an ordained missionary to China. He told me how when he preached a first sermon in Mandarin in the old China days, the senior missionaries criticised him mercilessly, like old mother hens pecking a young pullet. His confidence was completely shattered until he attended FEBC Homiletics Class. By dealing with him gently, and commending him where he excelled, he became completely restored. And he preached good Mandarin sermons and officiated the Lord's Supper for me when delegated to speak at some out-station mission church.

Paradoxically, we had a graduate who returned from the States with an M.Div.. He thought a mighty lot of himself. He demanded to teach the homiletics class. His style was the very opposite to ours. Like one of the senior missionaries criticising Andrew Bo, he tore every student preacher to bits, every one of them, if he could find fault with. Like the Chinese saying, "He blows the hairs apart to look for a bug." The principal had to retrieve his class to say the least.

The setting of the Homiletics class, to take in the whole student body, proves to be a great success. In this regard we give our women students equal opportunity. But did not St. Paul forbid women from speaking? "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." (1 Tim 2:12). We train women speakers surely not to boss over men, but rather they might be able to minister to younger women and children, e.g. at Sunday School or Women's Fellowship.

Women who sincerely join a Bible College are also called. And has not Joel prophesied, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your **daughters** shall prophesy, ... and on my servants and on my **handmaidens** I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy:" (Acts 2:17,18). And how about Philip the

Evangelist's four **daughters**, virgins, which did prophesy (Acts 21:9). To prophesy is to preach!

Then there is the Aquila-Priscilla couple to whom were sent greetings in Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Here Priscilla is mentioned before her husband (Rom 16:3). And was she not in partnership with her husband to expound to Apollos more perfectly the way of God when he came to Ephesus? (Acts 18:24-26).

Dr. Lois G. Dickie, Ph.D., Professor of English in Faith Seminary the same year I went to teach at my alma mater (1978) writes in her book -- *No Respecter of Persons* in support of FEBC's position. She says,

Nevertheless in modern times there have been great men of God who advocated and supported the leadership of women even in churches. John Wesley appointed women as leaders of the Bristol Classes; he later permitted women to become local preachers and itinerant ministers. Charles G. Finney, president of Obelin College, the first coeducational college in the world, claimed that the Scriptures do not deny women the right to speak or write in mixed assemblies. Dwight L. Moody encouraged Frances Willard to preach the Gospel. "Historically, one half of the human race", wrote Dr. James Hastings, "is the direct result of the Christian principle that all are one in Christ". (*The Greatest Men and Women of the Bible*, Vol. 6, p.369).

As to Priscilla, whose name is placed before Aquila her husband three times (Acts 18:18; Rom 16:3; 2 Tim 4:19) Dr. Dickie writes :

Undoubtedly because of Priscilla's superior intellect, her thorough knowledge of the great doctrines of the Christian faith, and her zeal--qualities which Paul highly regarded--Paul committed the work at Ephesus to her. In that city Priscilla and Aquilla remained longer than Paul did. And there, as a result of Priscilla's leadership, the little band of Christians which she had nurtured in the faith through her teaching ministry blossomed into a well-established, fruitbearing church. Indeed, there can be little question that Priscilla was regarded with

respect and high esteem by the Christians. One scholar declared that “a stream of blessing” flowed from Priscilla not only into her immediate surroundings, but to all the heathen congregations far and wide. Another scholar stated that she was “doubtless” a leader in the church. Another called her, together with her husband, “pillars of the early church at Ephesus.” Still another, heading the chapter on Priscilla with the caption “A Leader in the New Testament Church,” calls her a “great leader.” Writing specifically concerning Priscilla’s church work, this writer observes that although Priscilla and her husband labored together, there is actual evidence enough that Priscilla played “the more important part in the early Christian church.” The suggestion has been made that she, together with her husband, may have been the means of the conversion of Epaphroditus before he had become acquainted with Paul. One scholar pays tribute to her by calling her “one of the best-known and most influential women in the Apostolic church.” Paul, in writing to the Corinthian church and the church at Rome, mentioned Priscilla’s name freely, as if it were well-known to the Gentile congregations. And how could she have been well-known to the Gentile Christians if she had been silenced and veiled?

Indeed, “... there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”, says the Apostle Paul (Gal 3:28). Amen.

*To prepare a sermon one is all at sea until one has hit on a theme and an appropriate text. Can you state what is your sermon about? You must be able to put it in one sentence. Without a theme, you will fumble around when you preach. You will reel to and fro like a drunken man. Did I hear you retort, “With the help of the Holy Spirit, I will open my mouth and preach”. If you do that without serious preparation, He will fill your mouth with sand.*

## Chapter III

### On Preparing a Sermon

To prepare a sermon one is all at sea until one has hit on a theme and an appropriate text. Can you state what is your sermon about? You must be able to put it in one sentence. Without a theme, you will fumble around when you preach. You will reel to and fro like a drunken man. Did I hear you retort, “With the help of the Holy Spirit, I will open my mouth and preach”. If you do that without serious preparation, He will fill your mouth with sand.

Suppose you take your text from what is known as the Great Commission, Matt 28:18-20. In view of the fact that the Great Commission is far from accomplished after 2000 years, you can preach it from the angle of “The Great Commission is an Unfinished Commission”. The sermon can easily be divided into 4 parts:

1. Go, the Missions Emphasis
2. Teach (Evangelise), the Evangelism Emphasis
3. Baptise, the Church Planting Emphasis
4. Teach (Indoctrinate), the Full Indoctrination Emphasis

To preach it powerfully, it is discovered that there are four forms of support for effective speech: (1) Statement, (2) Restatement, (3) Illustration, (4) Testimony. The Statement is your text. The Restatement, which is the most important part, is the title of your message, your theme, in this case, “The Great Commission is an Unfinished Commission”. Illustrations are like windows letting in the light to brighten up. Paul Lee Tan in his 15,000 Illustrations says, “Everyone appreciates a good illustration. The right illustration at the

right time is half the battle for every preacher and teacher. Congregations have come to life, tears or wholesome laughter, at an illustration fittingly given.” And testimony brings the truth of what you say vividly into the mutual experience of your hearers.

Your sermon must always be expository. You must expound what the text of your message says. The text must not be a “pretext”. If you briefly touch on your text but go off on a tangent to another theme, or no theme at all, then it becomes a “pretext”. I remember this statement to have come from Dr. Bob Jones Jr.. If you preach an expository sermon, say from some part of St. Paul’s life, then stick to such reference in Acts of the Apostles or his epistles and do not jump to Noah or Abraham to illustrate a point. Not even to Peter. Stick to Paul’s account of himself.

By studying the Greek or Hebrew text you see the meaning of a word or phrase more clearly. You can bring out this aspect of truth, but do not show off your knowledge. Preach Christ, not yourself (2 Cor 4:5).

Then if your exposition is merely expository, it becomes a lecture. It is like fireworks, beautiful to behold. It is only when you apply it to the needs of your hearers that it becomes effective as a sermon. Remember, no application, no sermon. Apply as you go along the way. Each application makes a direct hit. The power of the sermon is then felt, for it hits the target.

Anticipation is another aspect of sermonising. You anticipate or perceive beforehand what are the crying needs in the hearts of your hearers. So you apply accordingly in “anticipation”. Dr. John Sung liked to receive letters from his converts who would bare their hearts, telling him of their troubles. By reading these letters, by the thousands, he knew what were the particular needs of his hearers. So when he applied his message to those needs, many a surprised old lady would respond, “How does he know I did it? How does he know the exact situation I was in?” Another old lady said, “He can make us laugh and he can make us cry”. Some people said John Sung was a psychologist. Rather, he was a pastor who knew his flock. “My sheep



hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27). These words are from the lips of our Saviour, the good Shepherd, and we are His undershepherds.

Clarity is another ingredient of a sermon. Do you know what you are saying? Progressively, logically? Bringing the subject to a climax? Or do you fumble around for words like a drowning man clutching a straw?

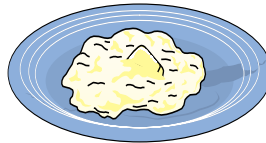
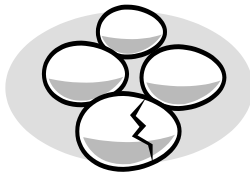
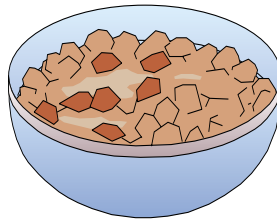
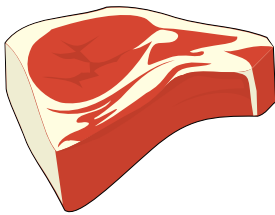
Recapitulation! When you come to the end of your sermon, do not forget to go over the points of your sermon, going back to the Introduction. In so doing it is like tying your whole package together like a bouquet of flowers. Neat and tidy to carry home. This brings further clarity.

How long should a sermon be? A sermon for special occasions, e.g., a Gospel or Revival meeting, one hour would be sufficient, according to Rev. Ting Li Mei, the Moody of China, and “evangelist with one thousand souls a month”. For the Lord’s Day Service, half hour or 35 minutes would suffice. To belabour a point and repeat stock phrases for padding loses effect. A sermon powerfully preached in half an hour is better than one dragged on for an extra 15 minutes. Remember when it is time to shut up. This is Ting’s opinion.

It is of utmost importance to keep time. If it is the custom of a Church Service to last one hour and twenty minutes, let the service last one hour and twenty minutes. To exceed ten minutes would backfire on the preacher. If he does it again and again, unless the sermon is extraordinarily gripping, he will lose his audience.

And let every sermon be prayerfully prepared and prayerfully incubated. The hour before you go up the pulpit should be spent in meditation, reviewing, praying and memorising in your closet until the Church bell is about to ring. This was John Sung’s practice. To stand at the Church Door to greet parishioners coming in before ascending the pulpit would be dissipating your spirit and energy to say the least. Trying to please men, you miss pleasing God!

*Every sermon with its theme must be derived from a suitable Scripture text, inasmuch as beef stew can only be prepared from beef, omelette from egg, Kopi-O from coffee powder.*



## Chapter IV

### **Text and Theme, Theme and Text.**

Every sermon with its theme must be derived from a suitable Scripture text, inasmuch as beef stew can only be prepared from beef, omelette from egg, Kopi-O from coffee powder.

Now, I shall demonstrate from seven or eight Scripture texts and the themes I've drawn from each of them.

I Text : “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” (1 Cor 2:1-5).

Theme : A sermon without the power of the cross is a sermon lost.

II Text : “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed

unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.” (1 Cor 9:16-18).

Theme : Programmed to a life of instant, cheerful Gospel service.

III Text : “And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon’s, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.” (Luke 5:1-11).

Theme : From catching fish to reaching men.

IV Text : “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that

hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.” (John 12:24-26).

Theme : No death, no life.

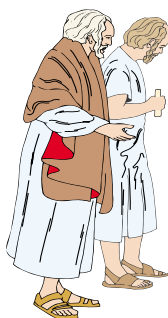
- V Text : “There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is

comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto

them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear



them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” (Luke 16:19-31).

Theme : What you receive in your next life is determined by what you believe in this life.

VI Text : “For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not,

and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt 25:14-30).

$$\text{5} + \text{5} = \text{10}$$

$$\text{2} + \text{2} = \text{4}$$

$$\text{1} + \text{0} = \text{1}$$

$$\text{1} - \text{1} = \text{0}!$$

Theme : Trade and gain, Trade and gain, is the divine plan.

VII Text : “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25,26).

Theme : When a man dies, can he live again? (This is the one and only sermon that I preach at the Graveside Service).

VIII Text : “And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.” (John 6:16-21).

Theme : Without Christ in the vessel, all toil and sweat.  
With Christ in the vessel, all joy and speed.



To further augment the effectiveness of the message, an appropriate chorus may be sung. In this case, what better choice than “With Christ in the vessel, we can smile at the storm.”?

The question is asked again, can a different theme be derived from the same text? The answer is yes!

Turning back to Chapter III, On Preparing a Sermon, let us focus our attention on Matt 28:18-20, the famous text known as the Great Commission. The Great Commission is a general theme known to everybody. But, viewing the text from the angle of its delayed fulfilment from the study of statistics, my theme is shaped, “The Great Commission is an Unfinished Commission”. (This is good revision).

Can I develop another theme from the same text? Yes! As it is stated that all power in heaven and in earth is given to our Saviour and His holy presence is also involved in the carrying out of the Great Commission I derive the theme, “How will God’s power and presence be manifested through the Great Commission?” The answer to this theme, put in question form is: If we go out into the world, and not sit at home, His power and presence will go with us all the way.

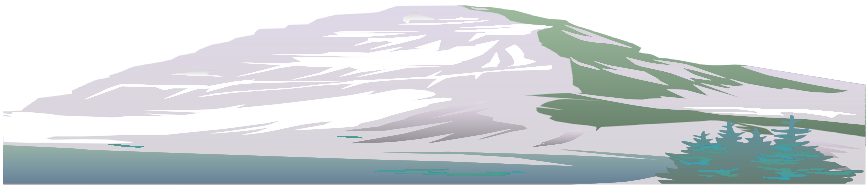
Can I find yet another theme from the same text? Yes! Seeing that “Go” is first emphasised on the missionary aspect over the



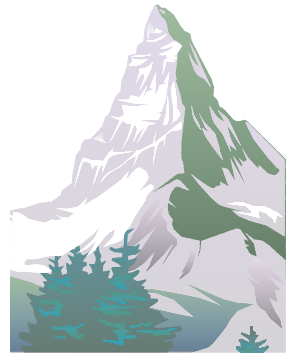
remaining three, I can conclude with this theme, “Missions is of first importance in the outworking of the Great Commission”.

And do you know that more themes can be derived from this same text? Ten preachers can preach ten different sermons. Why? This is due to each one looking at the text from his own angle.

On our way from Johore Bahru to Kuala Lumpur we will see the Pulai Mountain, a long mountain range as you pass Kelapa Sawit.



But if you approach the same mountain from the Kota Tinggi - Kulai Road that runs at right angle to Kelapa Sawit Road, you will see a totally different contour. No more a long mountain range but a narrowed one, like a pyramid. Just as you see different shapes of the same mountain from different angles, so you derive different themes from the same text when you see it from different standpoints. As simple as that!



Now try to work out, for an experiment, four different themes from the parable of the sower (Matt 13:1-23). If this is too much for you, try for only two from the parable of the mustard seed (Matt 13:31,32).

Another thought. It is important to state your theme in stylish language. For example, by using “programme” a word currently employed in computer-language, you bring the sense vividly into the thinking of the new generation. To put it in rhyme further adds punch to the statement, e.g., “A sermon without the power of the cross is a sermon lost”. Give your theme a good dress, to impress!



*Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.*

*Francis Bacon  
1561 - 1626*

## Chapter V

### Writing Out the Sermon

To learn how to compose a sermon, the best way is to write it out fully, for it is said, writing makes an exact man (Bacon). Let me illustrate by one I preached at the Chinese Service of Life Church on the eve of her celebrating the 33rd Anniversary, October 11, 1998. As my sermon had to do with the passage of time, in that 33 years would soon be flying over our congregation of 200, I chose my text from Psalm 90:10-12. What title did I give to the sermon?

Speaking to a Chinese congregation, I used a well-known couplet:

“How many have lived to seventy years,      人生七十古来稀  
And how many a full-moon have they seen?” 人生几见月常圆

To re-state it, “Man’s life is a short duration, Man’s life is seldom pleasant”, i.e., it is full of troubles.

#### Sermon

##### Introduction

Next Lord’s Day our church will celebrate her 33rd Anniversary. How quickly time flies! To our short life-span is soon added another year. How old are you?

##### Transition

As we enter another year we cannot help but recall the Chinese proverb, “How many have lived to seventy years?” 人生七十古来稀.

Moses, the leader of the Israelites and their patriarch, says the same thing, “The days of our years are threescore years and ten”. This figure tallies with the age of Chinese ancients. But he also adds a bonus of ten more years, anticipating modern man, “And if by reason of strength they be fourscore years,” which confirms a longer life span to our present generation, because of scientific advancement. And how accurate is this pronouncement of God’s Word. The lengthening of our life expectancy is at most up to 77 or 78 (Singapore and Japan). Yes, by reason of strength (with the help of vitamins and minerals), we can reach 80. Indeed, Moses saw basically what our Chinese sages saw, inasmuch as Confucius, speaking on the various stages of life, ended at seventy! (Confucian Analects, Ch IV, 6).

Now the Bible says “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord” (Lev 19:32). Christian children should honour their parents in their evening years, and not count it a burden to support them. This is also good Confucian teaching.

To leaders of God’s people, God gave extra length of days. Moses lived up to 120, Joshua 110, and Caleb at age 85 declared he was strong as when he was 40 (Josh 14:10). It is to our good when God grants long life to leaders He has appointed over us. We should pray for their longevity. Thank God for giving Singapore Senior Minister Mr. Lee Kuan Yew. He is 75 today and I would pray that he lives to 105.

In spite of long life God has given us, Moses laments, “Yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” (v10). This brings us to the second line of the couplet, “And how many a full-moon have they seen?” 人生几见月常圆

The autumn full-moon festival has just passed. And how swiftly, signifying to us the fleeting transience of happy times. I remember when I was a child in China, we celebrated the autumn moon with greater festivities. We had lanterns fitted with a revolving device

inside which was propelled by the heat from the lighted candle. A number of figurine horsemen are mounted on the revolving gadget which makes it most exciting for us little children to watch. We called these lanterns “racing horses lanterns”. As these horses “gallop” away in the revolving, how vividly they portray the shortness of life with its many changing scenes, as it is written, “for it is soon cut off, and we fly away”.

What are the troubles we face in our short life-span?

### 1. Labour

This involves our livelihood. From time immemorial man cannot eat but by the sweat of his face (Gen 3:19). Earning a living has been a struggle, even in times of plenty. It is a perennial problem.

During my childhood in 1929-32, the whole world sank into a slump. (We had not invented the more sophisticated word, “recession” yet.) The rubber king, Mr. Tan Kah Kee, almost went bankrupt, had he not been mercifully sustained by higher powers. This taught us young children a lesson when Mother admonished us to study hard, or else we would become “coolies”. “Coolie” comes from the Chinese term, 苦力, *ku li*, which means hard labour. We, if we did not do well in school, would end up carrying heavy sacks of rice for the rice towkay. We would become coolies.

Now, hard times have fallen on Singapore. With the sudden economic downturn since August 1997, the clammy hand of retrenchment has grabbed away 7%, and by next year 9% into unemployment. Livelihood is an increasingly difficult problem with the days. By God’s grace only a few Lifers are being affected. The Church should be mindful of their needs.

### 2. Sorrow

This has to do with our welfare. The Chinese proverb, 生老病死, “birth, age, sickness, death” confronts everyone of us, whether rich or poor, old or young. As we grow old, sickness is bound to invade our frail bodies. Cancer, heart attack, are two main

causes of our sorrows. Accidents, untoward incidents, all kinds of dangers, surround us. And, finally death. As Lifers get older and members increase, the incidence of sickness begins to plague us. Christians are not exempted from such vicissitudes of life.

We can only submit to the will of God and pray for His mercies. When the Lord takes away our loved one, we must not blame Him but rather say with Job, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). To keep on sorrowing is to be like those who have no hope, i.e., non-Christians. (1 Thess 4:13).

### 3. For it is soon cut off, and we fly away

This can refer to our career. For example, your business may suddenly experience a crisis as in the present economic downturn and you are made a bankrupt. Your marriage, smooth-sailing for five years, suddenly is dashed upon the rocks by the unfaithfulness of your husband. Your pursuit of learning is turned around to another course from out of the blue. Now these traumatic experiences happen not by chance, but by the chastening hand of God. “Who knoweth the power of thine anger, even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath”. (Ps 90:11). Moses speaks from his experience as leader of the Israelites going through the wilderness. And how many times God had to chastise His people for their waywardness -- for their good.

Let me tell you how the Lord cut short my worldly ambition, though I had vowed to serve Him years before this. After WWII, I determined to study law in England with a view to power, riches and fame. I was admitted to Middle Temple in London. I had packed my winter clothing expecting to arrive in London before the Fall. I booked a passage on the cargo boat Argus for £90. I had the blessings of my father and my uncle.

A few days before sailing, however, there came suddenly one morning a telegram sent by Sister: “Mother, having been ill for a few days, is taken by the Lord.” This thwarted my departure as I had to

return to Malaysia where my parents were to attend the funeral. My heart steeled like a flint, I determined to leave for London at any cost.

Lo and behold, this time while waiting on father in Malaysia, I got a telegram from my wife in Singapore. My little daughter of seven months had taken seriously ill and an operation on her was scheduled for the same day. I rushed out to Singapore, but when I arrived at the hospital, Baby was gone.

I became so crestfallen that I almost fainted by her deathbed. I sank into a sofa. There and then I fell into a trance as if I stood before the Almighty. Limp and wilted, I let go my clammy hands holding as it were \$500,000 each. I was like flying away while the glitters of earthly riches and power seemed to burn into a rubbish heap. Repenting of my waywardness, I gave myself up to the Lord. I begged for forgiveness. If the Lord should give me back my life, I would serve Him all the rest of my life.

This turned me right around. Instead of law and London, I was now headed for Nanking and theology. From there, the Lord led me to the U.S. I graduated 1950 and from then on to this day I have served as your pastor.

Is some young man here today confronted with a similar situation? If God is chastising you, it is for your good that you be saved from your empty dream for fame and power. Why not yield to serve the Lord full-time?

Moses ends with a word of prudence to his people, “So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom” (v. 12). Let him speak not only to the young and ambitious but also to the old and retiring. To you who have retired to enjoy a ripe old age.

Now here is the paradox as enacted by Noah. When he was in his prime of life, he built the Ark and saved his family of eight. After he got out of the Ark, in apparent retirement, he planted a vineyard, made wine, and got drunk. He brought shame to himself, and embarrassment to his sons (Gen 9:20-25).

There are Christians who also backslide in their retirement age. Instead of drawing nearer to God, they go back to their old cravings. They return to smoking and drinking. And now it is reported in the *Straits Times* that more and more old couples are getting divorced. So they look for other spouses. They while away their time by playing mahjong again. Or they may go horse racing. So, they stop coming to Church!

No, let none of our senior members go astray in their old age. Let them, as they get nearer to God each day, live a life of greater consecration. Let them attend Church regularly. Let them come to prayer meeting. Let them join Elders and young leaders visiting nearby mission fields. Let them give of their substance to support the work of the Lord, as God prospers them with good health. Let them give a portion of the much they have received from their children to succour the poor, e.g., the outcasts in Cambodia now being evangelised by our Korean missionaries.

How many have lived to seventy years? And how many a full-moon have they seen? Man's life is a short duration. Man's life is seldom pleasant, i.e., it is full of troubles.

To be wise we should not dissipate our lives. Let me stress again, in our advancing years we should rather double up to serve the Lord.

And let us work while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work (John 9:4). Jesus' coming is so near that He is standing on the threshold, ready to enter any moment. And we are commanded to be at the ready all the time, lest when He comes suddenly we will be totally taken aback!

“Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.” (Luke 12:42, 43). Amen.



# Anatomy of the Sermon

## Introduction

Next Lord's Day our church will celebrate her 33rd Anniversary.

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\_\_\_\_\_ How old are you.

## Transition

As we enter another year we cannot help but recall the Chinese proverb, "How many have lived to seventy years?" 人生七十古来稀.

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We should pray for their longevity. Thank God for giving Singapore Senior Minister Mr. Lee Kuan Yew. He is 75 today and I would pray that he lives to 105.

## Body of Sermon

I. In spite of long life God has given us, Moses laments, "Yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (v. 10). \_\_\_\_\_

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What are the troubles we face in our short life-span?

1. **Labour.** This involves our livelihood \_\_\_\_\_

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Livelihood is an increasingly difficult problem with the days.

2. **Sorrow.** This has to do with our welfare. The Chinese proverb, 生老病死, “birth, age, sickness, death” confronts everyone of us, whether rich or poor, old or young. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. **For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.** This can refer to our career. \_\_\_\_\_

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Why not yield to serve the Lord full-time?

II. Moses ends with a word of prudence to his people. “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (v. 12). \_\_\_\_\_

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1. Now here is the paradox as enacted by Noah

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2. No, let none of our senior members go astray in their old age.

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### **Recapitulation**

How many have lived to seventy years? And how many a full-moon have they seen ? \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Conclusion**

To be wise we should not dissipate our lives. In our advancing years we should rather double up to serve the Lord. \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_ Amen.

*The best way of presenting your sermon is be yourself. You, like David, having been brought up on the sling. Use your sling to slay Goliath! David wearing Saul's armour would be totally bogged down.*

\* \* \*

*After the John Sung Revival in Singapore, 1935, several zealous converts of his suddenly appeared like John Sung, dressed in a white Chinese gown. They almost would let their hair down, and they went about aping the great evangelist. They tried also to preach like John Sung. They only made themselves monkeys, to say the least. The lesson: Be Yourself.*

## Chapter VI

### How Best to Present Your Sermon

I had an American pastor friend who told me that the style of his presentation of the sermon was by writing it out and reading it, week after week. He averagely spent 23 hours working on his written sermon.

I have known a brother pastor who also writes out his sermon and he reads it too. But he does it so adroitly that you would not know he is reading it. He has his sermon neatly typed in double space, on single page. He silently shuffles the sheets one by one as he goes along without being noticed. But there is a clumsy note-bound preacher who turns up the pages, obtrusively, distracting the attention of his hearers. Besides it detracts from the solemnity and authority of preaching out of the very page of the Bible. Some evangelists purposely hold up their Bible with one hand while they preach pointing to the Bible text with the other hand. That's right!

On the other hand there are preachers who can preach straight out of the Bible without any notes. They go by certain key words or phrases which they mark out prominently with coloured pencil or red ink, so as to serve like pegs to hang their thoughts. John Sung preached right out of his heavily annotated Bible.

In my practice, I would use the clean back of a used envelope. Let me reproduce what I have briefly penned on the envelope to guide me while I preach.

**Text** : Ps. 90:10-12

**Title** : How many have lived to 70 years?  
And how many a full-moon have they seen?

**Introduction** : Our Chinese Service celebrates 33  
Anniversary next week. **Apply.**

**Transit** : Chinese proverb: on man living up to 70 years.  
Moses says the same, but adds to 80 anticipating  
modern man.  
How accurate is Scripture. Life expectancy today is  
77, 78 years.  
Exceptions in leaders, Moses, Joshua, Caleb. LKY.  
Pray for his longevity.  
Respect to aged parents. **Apply.**

**Body of Sermon** :

**I In spite of long life Moses laments** - How many a  
full-moon have they seen? Lantern festival.

1. **Labour** - livelihood - down turn 7% to 9%  
Retrenchment.
2. **Sorrow** - Welfare - sickness, accidents, deaths
3. **Cut off and we fly away.** Career - Business,  
Marriage, Education, My testimony.  
**Apply.**

**II Moses ends with words of prudence** - so teach  
us (v. 12)

Paradox of Noah in old age. Drunkenness.  
**Apply.** Let not senior members backslide.  
Smoking, drinking, divorce, mahjong,  
horse racing.  
**Apply.** Rather serve God coming to church  
Prayer meetings, Missions,  
Financial support of the church.  
Relief of the poor

**Recapitulation** : How many live up to 70 years .....

**Conclusion** : Work while it's day  
Jesus' soon coming and judgment.

\* \* \*

The best way of presenting your sermon is be yourself. You, like David, having been brought up on the sling. Use your sling to slay Goliath! David wearing Saul's armour would be totally bogged down.

After the John Sung Revival in Singapore, 1935, several zealous converts of his suddenly appeared like John Sung, dressed in a white Chinese gown. They almost would let their hair down, and they went about aping the great evangelist. They tried also to preach like John Sung. They only made themselves monkeys, to say the least. The lesson: Be Yourself.

Now, while it is my weekly custom to preach from an envelope's back of brief notes, it is also my exception to preach from a fully written sermon at International Conferences. Especially when the message is to be translated. In that case there is no fear of losing eye contact. Your translator or interpreter gives you enough spare seconds, so that reading your sermon is no different from preaching verbatim. A good interpreter is no "interrupter" but a great booster to the preacher.

In Korea where I went about preaching in 1960, I had a most wonderful interpreter who not only translated, but preached it with double energy. In that campaign, we brought several hundred hands in surrender to the Lord.

Preaching is a high mystery. You have to be like a boy scout prepared for any situation. According to a Chinese proverb, 随机应变, *sui chi ying pien*, you must adapt yourself to changing circumstances. Sometimes you have to abandon a prepared sermon for an impromptu one to meet with an unexpected turn of events. For

example, I had a fully prepared sermon of half-an-hour to preach at a Church Anniversary Service. When the preliminaries took one hour thirty-five minutes how could I speak another half hour? The whole service would then take 2 hours 5 minutes. In the circumstances I cut short my message to 15 minutes to the relief of the whole congregation. For a sumptuous dinner with all the fragrance of sweet spices was invading their nostrils, from the kitchen below. Time for them to open their mouths and time for me to shut up.

I had another experience of being called upon to preach when I had served barely a year at our mother church at Prinsep Street. The invited preacher phoned up 20 minutes before time to say he could not come. I had to do it whether I liked it or not. “God is a very present help in trouble” (Ps 46:1).

Can you preach like Spurgeon when suddenly called upon by his pastor grandfather to preach as he entered the grandfather’s church? How many seconds had he to catch a theme? This is his own testimony.

To be an instantaneous speaker, one must have the love to preach. And that was Spurgeon. When he was still a boy after he found salvation, he immediately felt the call to preach. His first preaching experiences took him to some thirteen villages. His joy was deep and abiding, as he walked out to these preaching points. He usually sang. He said of himself:

How many times I enjoyed preaching the Gospel in a farmer’s kitchen, or in a cottage, or in a barn! Perhaps many people came to hear me because I was only a boy. In my young days, I fear that I said many odd things, and made many blunders, but my audience was not hypercritical, and no newspaper writers dogged my heels; so I had a happy training school, in which, by continual practice, I attained such a degree of ready speech as I now possess.

Arnold Dallimore writes in *Spurgeon - A New Biography*:

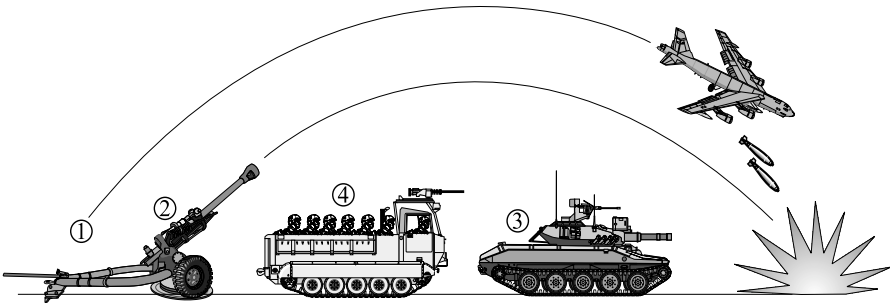


Some may wonder how he could be so fully engaged in his work at the school all the day and yet be ready to preach each evening. But the reading of theology now largely constituted the study of each day. “My quiet meditation during the walk helped me to digest what I had read. . . . I thought my reading over again while on my legs, and thus worked it into my very soul, and I can bear testimony that I never learned so much, or learned it so thoroughly, as when I used to tell out, simply and earnestly, what I had first received into my own mind and heart.”

In public and in private he ever presented the gospel, and great was his joy when he heard the news of the first convert. This was a woman who came to tell him that under his preaching she had been brought into a deep conviction of sin, but that she had received the Savior and was now rejoicing. A great many others followed, till Waterbeach was virtually transformed.

In order to be ever ready to speak, we must be in constant touch with the Lord. That is the hidden power of homiletics. We should be ready to preach at even the shortest notice, for are we not the proclaimers of the Good News? A graduate student of mine who returned with a degree from America said, “You must give me two weeks’ notice, at least, before I can accept your invitation.” How does it sound to you?

## *Four Classical Steps in Land Warfare*



*As in land warfare there are four classical steps to follow, so in preaching there are also four classical steps, namely:*

- 1. Statement*
- 2. Restatement*
- 3. Illustration*
- 4. Testimony*

## Chapter VII

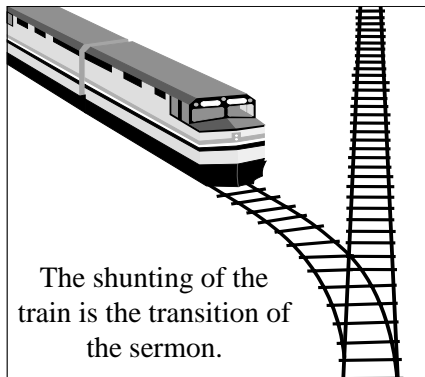
### Recapitulation of Sermonic Principles

Thus far we have learned the basics of making a sermon. Let us recapitulate all we have learnt.

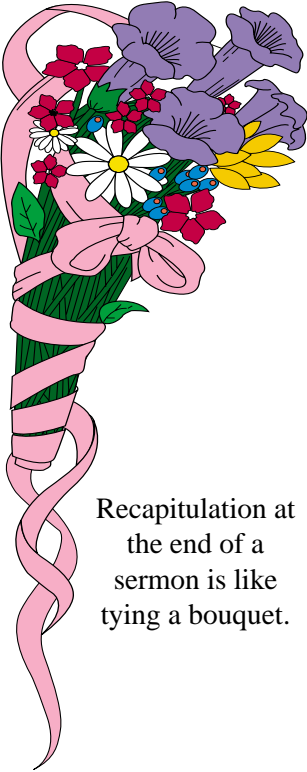
In the development of a sermon, the first thing to do is to state the theme. What is the title of your message? Can you reduce all you want to say in one sentence? Without a theme you are all at sea, or more vividly stated, driving a motor boat in deep waters without a rudder. With the theme found, half the work is done. The theme is the most important. The theme is your restatement from the text.

Then you launch out with the Introduction. The Introduction is to lead your hearers to the theme of your sermon.

The point of leading to the body of your message is the Transition. The Transition is like the train shunting from a sub-line into the mainline. The mainline is the body of your sermon.



The body of your sermon may have just one point, or two, three, four or five. Five would be the limit when you consider there are sub-points. Once I heard a theological professor preach an eleven point sermon. It was a good sermon, but I could remember but a few points. It was like taking an overdose of eleven vitamin pills which the body could not fully absorb.



Recapitulation at the end of a sermon is like tying a bouquet.

When the discussion of all the points is finished, it will do you good to go over these points briefly leading back to the Introduction. This is called Recapitulation. It is like tying up a bunch of flowers into a bouquet. Neatly you present your bouquet to the congregation that has been hearing you. Without recapitulation it would be like scattered stalks. With that comes your conclusion, an added appropriate remark on the whole sermon.

In land warfare there are four classical steps to follow to win a battle. First, you send the bombers to smash the enemy lines. Second, you open up with cannons or howitzers to further soften resistance. Third, you send the tanks. Fourth, you follow up with troop carriers and infantry for mopping up operations.

For powerful preaching, you need (also) four forms of support for effective speech.

- 1) **Statement**, i.e., your chosen Scripture text.
- 2) **Restatement**, i.e., the title of your sermon which embodies the theme. e.g., When speaking on John 10 in regard to the sheepfold you restate it as “The

Church is our alma mater”. In regard to the Porter he is the Pastor. The sheep are the church members.

3) **Illustration.** This throws light on some difficult points of the sermon, e.g., The Gospel Durian. Like the durian it is offensive to the *sinkeh* (new comer) but addictive to those who have tasted it and love it.

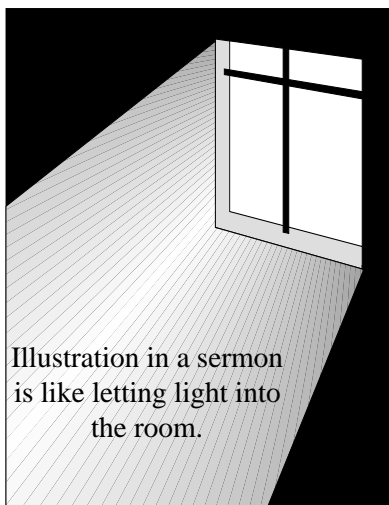
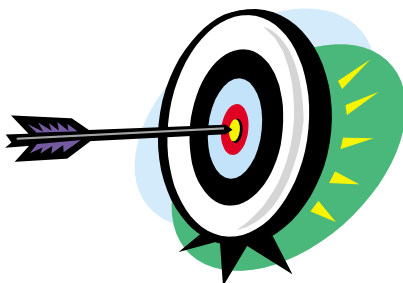


Illustration in a sermon is like letting light into the room.

4) **Testimony.** This touches the feeling of those who have the same experience as you. But you must be careful not to repeat it till it comes “sour”. Testimony of great men can be mentioned to strengthen your point. Many examples can be taken from Church History and from the less known Old Testament.

A sermon that is merely expository without application is only a lecture. What makes a sermon doubly effective is when it hits the target, when it moves your heart. This is by Application. No application, no sermon. To study what is an effective sermon, listen to two quarrelling women in the kitchen. Each jabs the other with “you”, “you”, “you”! This is application!



In order to apply you need **anticipation**. Anticipation in our homiletic parlance refers to knowing ahead the needs of the audience. This knowledge is gathered, in the case of John Sung, through reading countless letters of converts who tell him their troubles.

A pastor who knows his flock will know their troubles. So when he preaches he will hit the nail on its head. If you are aloof from your congregation and your sermons are good theological treatises, you are merely displaying fireworks. No anticipation, no target hit, as in no application.

## More Sermonic Principles

The above are what we have learnt in the first few chapters. Now we go from here to **Categorisation**. This is to classify the points in a sermon under the same category. This streamlines and simplifies.

So we say, life-long service and love-long service (using the category of hyphenated rhyming nouns).

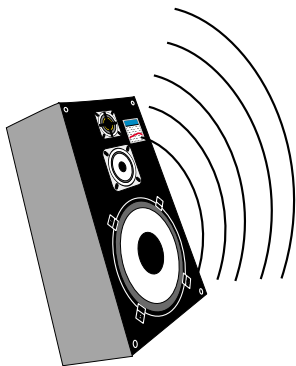
In my *Clock of the Sevenfold Will of God*, we use seven rhyming adjectives: Directive, Cooperative, Punitive, Preceptive, Permissive, Desiderative, Decretive. This is categorisation par excellence.

Another categorisation in adverbs: ready, eager and urgent in the work of the Lord.

Yet another categorisation: pride of face, pride of race, pride of place, pride of grace. Like the rhyming in the adjectives relating to the Sevenfold Will of God, here we have the rhyming of four nouns. Rhyming makes the categorisation even more effective.

**Alliteration** is categorisation in alphabetical order such as ABC, XYZ, or AAA, BBB, CCC, JOY. Here we have three point sermons subsumed under the alphabets. Using Joy to illustrate is quite sufficient. Jesus first, Others second, You last. Here is one from Rev. Jack Sin: Acknowledge it, Blame it on no one but yourself, Confess

it before the Lord, Do it no more, Express it in prayer, Flee sin and follow righteousness. Categorisation aids the memory. Here is a six-point sermon, on the Handling of Guilt.



**Amplification.** Enlarge upon and add details. John Sung is expert in Amplification. Take for example his amplification on the Rich Man, Lazarus' friend. "The rich man has a five-storey mansion, a home full of wives and concubines, attired in velvet and eating fat. But now he is down with illness. Around him are gathered his wife and secondary wives up to No. 7. These are trembling and at a loss what medicine the doctor should give to the rich man. The rich man, afraid to die, gives in to a whirl of dreadful dreams and visions. Could he now enjoy all the good things of life?"

**Imagination** adds vividness and colour. The above amplification of John Sung comes under "Imagination" also. Vividness and colour is seen in the description of the rich man's household on his deathbed.

A student of mine when preaching on Ruth's faith under trial mentioned how when she came to David's well to draw water she was made to stand last in the queue though she came first because she was a Moabite, an alien. But she bore it patiently for the Lord's sake, so God rewarded her with good success when she came to Boaz's field. This added colour to his sermon. Now, try to add your own imagination to Ruth meeting Boaz, love at first sight! And how suddenly their eyes were locked, one with the other!

**Humour.** This is a great asset in preaching when it is uttered at the appropriate moment. Again John Sung was adept in dispensing this spice of life. Once he told of a vendor of hair restorer, hawking his ware and proclaiming how effective it was, while he wore a cap.

A naughty boy pulled off that cap, and lo and behold, he displayed a *botak* (bald) head! One reason why he could hold his audience for two hours at a time was his sense of humour, though sparingly expressed, but always at the appropriate moment when you are nodding amen!



Humour is particularly appreciated on less serious occasions, such as at weddings. It is said that when a modern couple came to a modernistic parson to be married, and both had long hair so that the latter could not make out who was what, he intoned, “Will one of you kiss the bride?”

But cracking jokes and telling funny stories which some evangelists indulge in to pad up their hollow sermon is taboo to say the least. Says Dr. S. H. Tow in his “Notes to preachers of the Word”, “Never crack jokes simply to loosen up. The pulpit is not for entertainment”. A preacher can crack jokes and tell funny stories too often and the cat will soon be out of the bag that he has not very much more serious things to say.



**Acknowledgement.** Never steal copyright.

Make sure that you identify the source of your quote. Do not plagiarise. Read Jeremiah 23 the classic chapter on false prophets, “Therefore, behold, I am against the prophet, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour.” (Jer 23:30). If you take somebody’s idea and make it your own without acknowledgment, the LORD has declared you are a false prophet!

I have known of a fundamental theologian who took another man’s material as if it was his for his book. He had to pay damages, but what a loss of face!



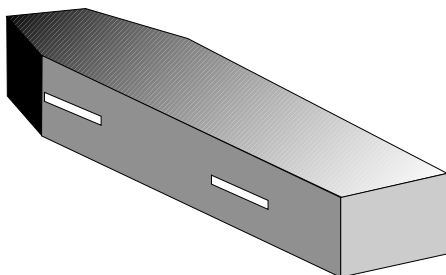
**Memorisation.** When quoting Scripture, Spurgeon says, quote every word, or else shut up! Especially the proof text, key verses. Be able to quote fluently, confidently. The more Scripture you can quote at the point of application, the more fire power is added to your sermon.

O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. (Psalm 119:97-100)

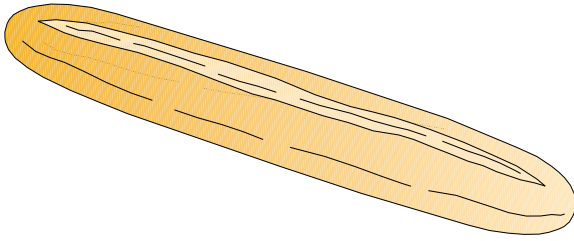
**Variety** is the spice of life. Spurgeon places great emphasis on this, even in the order of service. Change the order sometimes, e.g., on big occasions like Anniversaries or Christmas when the service lasts one-and-a-half to two hours. It is better to preach the sermon first than leave it to the end, sez my wife. I agree with her. Your wife is the best critic!

A pastor is known for preaching alliterated sermons, ABC, XYZ, XYZ, ABC. Always 3 point “ABC” sermons. It is like Rev. K. C. Quek and I staying in the home of a poor Dutch missionary while in Amsterdam. We had bread, jam and cheese in the morning, bread, jam and cheese for lunch, bread, jam and cheese for dinner. After one day we had to go to a Chinese Restaurant for just a bowl of Wan Ton Mee. Variety is the spice of pulpit life, also.

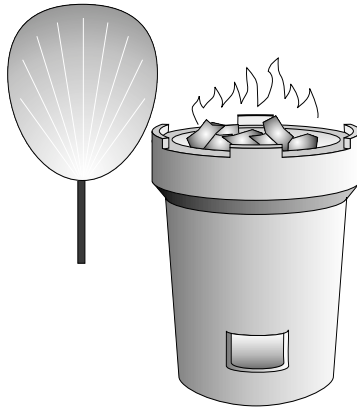
**Innovation.** Do something new and original to illustrate and make vivid your sermon. Again John Sung excelled in this. When he preached on confessing our sins he brought to the pulpit a miniature Chinese coffin. From its “hold” he pulled out strips of paper naming every sin from A to Z.



When speaking on the Bread of Life he pulled out from nowhere a French loaf which he peeled and propelled to the open-mouthed people in the pews.



To illustrate the power of the Holy Spirit he produced a miniature stove with burning charcoal. As he fanned the little stove, sparks and fire crackled and then a bright flame.

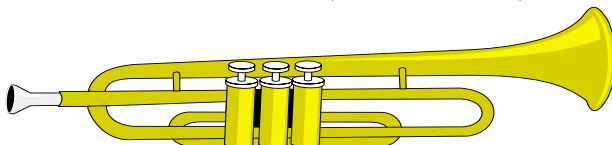


Did John Sung learn from God's injunctions to the prophets? God told Jeremiah to put his linen girdle in a rock at Euphrates. After many days he went to retrieve it. It became worm eaten. Jeremiah was told to show it to the people he preached. Like the worm eaten girdle, so will the pride of Judah be marred. So did God instruct Isaiah and Ezekiel to use other object lessons to get the message through to the stiff-necked people.

Be innovative. FEBC students have come up with bright ideas in their preaching. One used a tuning fork which gives forth the right musical pitch to show the importance of unity for FEBC students to stay together. Yes, unity is like the tuning fork that regulates the musical instruments to the same pitch.

Such simple object lessons are like the many gadgets used to teach kindergarten children. And are we not like children when listening to a sermon? “Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” (Mark 10:15).

*And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. (1 Cor 14:7-11).*



*As a trumpet must give a clear sound so a preacher must pronounce words clearly and distinctly.*

\* \* \*

*But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; (Matt 5:37)*

\* \* \*

*Begin low, speak slow;  
Take fire, rise higher;  
When most impressed  
Be self-possessed;  
At the end wax warm  
And sit down in a storm.*

*- Lines on Public Speaking attributed to  
Rev. Dr. Leifchild,  
Nonconformist Preacher, 18<sup>th</sup> century.*

## Chapter VIII

### The Mechanics of Sermon Delivery

#### I. Pronunciation

When asked what are the rules of rhetoric, Augustine who was once a professor of rhetoric replied, “The rules of rhetoric are three: The first rule is pronunciation. The second rule is pronunciation. The third rule is pronunciation.”

Good pronunciation is word power. When a word is mispronounced so that it resembles another, the meaning is totally changed. Asians often leave out the consonant at the end of a word, such as Lord. At a distance it sounds like Law. So when they say, “The good Lord” it sounds like “The good law”.

The word won (pronounced “one”), the past tense of win, is pronounced like the Korean *won* (money). It confuses.

When three words in a sentence of ten are mis-pronounced, you do not lose 30% word power, you lose all!

Hence, part of Homiletics is Phonetics. Phonetics is taught one credit for two semesters at FEBC. We call it word-tuning.

#### II. Articulation

This is the purpose of phonetics in order that speech trainees might pronounce words clearly and distinctively, fluently and coherently. The difference in affect and effect, woman and women, crash and creche, cottage and cortege, e.g., must be pointed out!

### III. Fluency, Grammar, Clarification

1. Fluency comes from the word flow. Learn to speak flowingly, like a river, in its natural course. Not stammering or in staccato (with each sound shortly detached and separated from the other). Fluency is like driving a car with a constant pressure on the accelerator, not like one releasing and stepping, releasing and stepping on the accelerator. This gives the car a jolting effect. This is most annoying. Good, flowing speech is sweet music, not like drum beating.
2. One should correct one's grammatical errors. Bad grammar shows bad breeding. Often I hear a certain pastor say, "Concerning about ...", "He gives the book to my wife and I ...". Even a Ph.D. was heard to say that! Dr. Lois Dickie, English professor of Faith Seminary said, "If a pastor makes grammatical mistakes his hearers will lose confidence in his teaching too."
3. Clarification is concerned with clear explanation of Scripture passages difficult to understand. For example, "I purpose to come unto you (but was let hitherto)." "Let" here means "hindered". (Rom 1:13). Another, "we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep" (1 Thess 4:15). Here the old English prevent means precede.

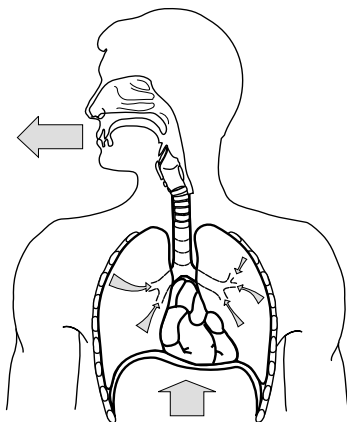
For clarification of old English words in the King James Bible, we have *The Defined King James Bible* published by the Bible For Today, USA with Dr. S. H. Tow as a contributing editor. In large print it serves as your automatic Dictionary. Every archaic or obsolete word is taken care of as you read.

### IV. The Voice

The Voice is a vital factor in communication. I had heard a Chinese pastor who preached as if he had a chronic sore throat. The fact was he must have a sip before ascending the pulpit. A hoarse voice is horse voice. It repels the hearers.

Dr. John Sung often preached himself hoarse, but he took care to regain his voice. Cultivation of the voice is a vital necessity. A pleasant voice immediately gains the attention of the hearers. Miss Deborah Mae brings business to the SIA because of her sonorous voice as announcer. Listen to her tapes!

A preacher must not shout through his throat but release with a sling-shot from the diaphragm. When he speaks he must speak with his ears, making sure that his voice is carried to the last pew, to the very end of the auditorium. By speaking often to the people he should automatically have learnt to project his voice powerfully and sonorously. His voice power should come forth as from the engine of a Mercedes Benz and not from a Yamaha scooter.



## V. Eye Contact

Eye contact is another important part of pulpit manners. I had a classmate in Nanking whose name was Lee Hsi Tien. Hsi Tien means “looking to the sky”. Whenever he preached he would look into the ceiling. That is the surest way to lose his audience. Eye contact must be maintained on the congregation like a revolving turret. This will keep the audience’s attention. Because you look at them, straight on

and sideways, at the front and to the back, you show your interest in them, so they respond. This is the best way to keep them from nodding. This high tension through the eye gate must be maintained from beginning to end. Don’t be a Lee Hsi Tien.



## VI. Gestures



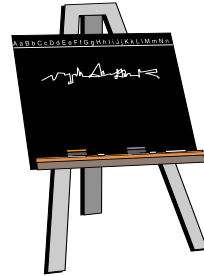
As the eyes help you to rivet your attention on the people, your hands can add expression to your speech. Use your hands freely to show you are also at ease with the situation. But never use gestures artificially, just because your teacher says so. It must be synchronised with what you say and not be acted out after you have said it. That would be clowning.

## VII. Dramatisation

That was John Sung's forte. He could do it, not you! In his sermon on the attack on Jericho he would pull out of the audience four or five young people and lead them around the pulpit - he did this without pre-warning. Yet it looked so natural, which charmed the audience through and through.

## VIII. Visual Aid

This he did often with a blackboard. Visual aids were earlier used by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.



## IX. Audio-aid



By suitable music background, choirs, children's singing, chosen choruses. John Sung choruses sung over and over again drove home the point of the sermon, e.g., "Ye must be born again" and "All my sins are washed away, In the Blood of Jesus".

## X. Careful Meditation

A sermon is like grass turned into milk with mother cow's much rumination. It goes through much churning before it can be



delivered. Keep meditating your text before you tell us in your own words what is in the Word.

## **XI. Self Appraisal**

It is good for self improvement in the arduous task of preaching to have your own feedback. This is easily obtained by making your own tape and video. After the sermon, listen to yourself. After the sermon, listen to yourself and look at yourself. Watch your mannerisms. Is your hair properly combed? Is your tie straight? Do you repeat such words, “you know, you know”, and “this morning, this morning.”? Do you lick your lips every now and then through nervousness?” So on and so on.

Next to self in appraisal is your wife, your other self, or in Chinese language, “your internal wise helper”. One reason why “a bishop .... must be the husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2) is that he might have that “internal wise-helper” to check up on his preaching and pulpit management. For there is no other who would be able to tell you off when you go wrong. To even judge your attire before you ascend the pulpit. To remind you if you have forgotten your eye-glasses. To remind you to ease yourself.

“Preach Christ, not yourself”. See that all glory is given to God. “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, .... But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth, in these things I delight, saith the Lord.” (Jer 9:23,24). One reason why God prospered John Sung’s ministry was his meticulous care to give glory to God and not to steal the least of His majesty. In the words of the Apostle Paul, “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” (2 Cor 4:5).

## **XII. Learning from Others**

Confucius says, “When I walk together with two others, at least one is my teacher.” Such a sage humbles himself. So he learns from

his disciples who walk with him. A famous rabbi says, “I learn much from my teachers and more from my colleagues but most from my pupils.” Preachers tend to stagnate if they do all the speaking but never listen to others. We should take every opportunity to listen to others, even when they are ordinary preachers. There is always something we can learn from another. When I was in Seminary, we had preference for certain professors. I disagreed. Even the dullest lecturer has his good points. Confucius says about learning again, “It is a pleasure to study with a constant application”. Do not neglect to learn from others.

In this respect, I believe I have learnt the most, listening each week to the sermons preached by my learned students!

### Notes on Delivery

1. **Preach Christ**, not ethics, or side issues. (Don’t forget to draw a cross on your sermon notes.) Your sermon must be Christ-centred and God-centred. Good if Christ (and His examples) is the climax of your sermon. The preacher is but an unprofitable servant. You are the donkey on which Jesus rides. The trouble is some donkey of a preacher would ride Christ!



2. **Preach fresh sermons.** If you preach the same sermon again and again when invited by outside groups, you are like serving overnight fried rice. I interpreted for a Chinese Evangelist once, and when I was called to interpret for him the next year, he

repeated the same sermon. He made the same congregation to eat his year old fried rice. What an embarrassment!

3. **When you preach, speak with you ears!** i.e., monitor whether your words can reach those sitting in the last pews. Be sure you project your voice that those sitting at the edge can hear you clearly. If you speak softly for effect and they cannot hear you, you lose total power.
4. **When you speak**, speak like a man, not like a clergyman. Nor intone your prayer like a Buddhist monk. Their pseudo-holy intonation is revolting to say the least.
5. **Speak not** as in a private conversation but with deliberation, like a teacher earnestly teaching a class.
6. **Enunciate** carefully, using the right accents, e.g., memorable is mémorable not memótable, colleague is cólleague not colleágue, travail is trávail not traváil.
7. **Speak homiletically** with 100% fire power.
8. **Every syllable** must be heard, with the consonants articulated.
9. **Don't show off** your scholarship in the pulpit. John Sung a Ph.D. in chemistry never used any illustration from science except that water is H<sub>2</sub>O.
10. **Talking long on Hebrew or Greek** words is like plucking the husk of a coconut, while people are waiting to drink the milk.
11. **Humour helps** to keep the audience awake, even such pedantic humour, on baptism, “More faith less water. Less faith more water.”
12. **When you are note-bound** you lose eye-contact.
13. **To make the congregation turn** to more than one or two Scripture passages during a sermon belabours them. It also slackens the high tension in their listening, so much pulpit power is lost. This is a word from my friend - Rev. Calvin Chao - founder of Singapore Bible College.

*The power of music must first come upon the preacher is what I mean by “the importance of music to the pulpit”. So, I have said to the organist and pianist, to the choir, that when they play well and sing well (the congregation too) I would preach better. Thus, music becomes half of John Sung’s ministry. How by the singing of the choruses he composed himself, but mostly from the treasury of the Church, he preached with double power. In this respect, not only the lyrics, but also the tune is of utmost importance.*

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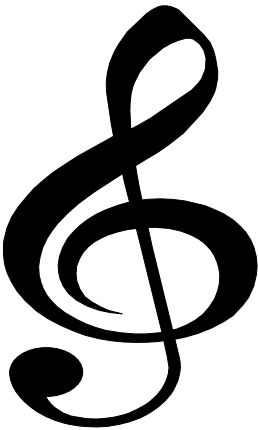
*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; (Eph 5:19)*

\* \* \*

*It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night, Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. (Ps 92:1-3)*

## Chapter IX

### The Importance of Music to the Pulpit



The importance of music to the pulpit, notice I say to the pulpit, and not to the Church generally, is of utmost importance. This is what Martin Luther meant when he said music is next to theology. Says Dr. Philip Schaff in the History of the Christian Church, “He placed music next to theology. He valued it as a most effectual weapon against melancholy and the temptations of the Devil. The heart, he said, is satisfied, refreshed and strengthened by music. He played the lute, sang melodiously, and composed tunes for his hymns, especially the immortal *Ein feste Burg* which gives classic expression to his heroic faith in God and the triumph of the Gospel.”

Music played a vital part in the composition of the Psalms of David, so that he earned the title of “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Sam 23:1). In Ps 108:1-3 David reveals how he sings praises to God with “psaltery and harp”. In Psalm 98, the Psalmist further declares, “Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King”.

From composing Psalms with the help of the “psaltery and harps” David further organised a choir for the Temple Services.

Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals: and the number of the workmen according to their service was: Of the sons of Asaph; Zaccur, and Joseph, and Nethaniah, and Asarelah, the sons of Asaph under the hands of Asaph, which prophesied according to the order of the king. Of Jeduthun: the sons of Jeduthun; Gedaliah, and Zeri, and Jeshaiiah, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the hands of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the LORD. . . . So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of the LORD, *even* all that were cunning, was two hundred fourscore and eight. (1 Chron 25:1-3,7).

Isn't music next to theology also to David?

That music has a therapeutic effect on the soul of Elisha “the prophet of water” is evidenced by his calling for a minstrel to calm his soul in the midst of confusion and commotion. An unholy alliance was formed between the kings of Israel, Edom and Judah to fight the king of Moab. Were it not for the sake of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah's plea to Elisha, he would refuse even an audience to the three kings.

And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee. But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. (2 Kings 3:14,15)

The power of music must first come upon the preacher is what I mean by “the importance of music to the pulpit”. So, I have said to the organist and pianist, to the choir, that when they play well and sing well (the congregation too) I would preach better. Thus, music becomes half of John Sung's ministry. How by the singing of the choruses he composed himself, but mostly from the treasury of the

Church, he preached with double power. In this respect, not only the lyrics, but also the tune is of utmost importance.

The four hymns that are sung on a Sunday morning worship cannot be haphazardly taken but by careful selection, even in the balance of tune to tune. In the responsive reading usually of a psalm the best is to echo with one from the Psalter. The most important hymn is the closing one, to echo the words of the message. For example, if it is a sermon on the Christian's Struggle with Sin, there is no better one than "Yield not to Temptation". If it is one on our Pilgrimage from earth to heaven, then choose one like "We are marching to Zion" or "The New Jerusalem".

Music is next to theology and music must be the spiritual food of the theologian. It is the pastor who must set the pace in worship with good music. When he preaches a sermon on the disciples' tedious rowing amidst a storm and their deliverance by the Lord coming to their help, he remembers such a chorus as "With Christ in the vessel, we can smile at the storm". The implementation of such a chorus at the end of his sermon hits the nail right on the head. (This is another revision).

Music is best for the offering bag. The pastor need not appeal for funds nor exhort the congregation to tithe. When the Lord gave me the words of a tithing song, all I needed was to sing it before the collection, with all the attendant blessings:

Bring all the tithes now before Him  
Appear not with empty hand  
God has promised you who love Him  
Mercies and grace without end.

He'll cast from you every sickness  
He'll prosper you with good health  
He'll watch o'er your steps with keenness  
He'll give you power to get wealth.

Bring all the tithes now before Him  
Appear not with empty hands

God has promised you who love Him  
Mercies and grace without end.

(Sung to the tune of “Give of your best to the Master”)

When I taught this song to Vancouver Bible-Presbyterian Church, the chairman of the worship service happily chose it for the offering part of the service. And he repeated to use it, time and again. Music opens the heart to give.

Music from the Church choir, sacred music which includes the singing of ordinary hymns, helps us to worship. Even in the regular singing of “The Lord Bless You and Keep You” at the end of the service. The children’s singing, so natural and innocent is another aid to worship. Special numbers by Deborah Mae once in a while add a magic touch. Some are even moved to tears. In this connection the right choice of hymns does the job. A lady member encouraged my heart when she said, “All the hymns we sang this Lord’s Day moved me to tears.”

The aid of musical instruments is not to be discounted. When I attended the Conference of the International Council of Christian Churches in Santiago, Chile in 1997, we were much moved by a young people’s orchestra. The flute was particularly moving. It will be a refreshing addition if some wind or stringed instrumentalists will complement the organ or piano. But, sorry, no drums! If Indian music, it is a different matter, because here the drum does not drum up its ugly head! The Indian drum is tuned to the pitch of the song they are singing and is played softly to keep time. It is pleasant to have such accompaniment. How do I know this? By my nine visits, often prolonged, to all India!

In the announcement of hymns (where there is no worship programme sheet) take care that you announce clearly at least two times, and loud enough. (For most parishioners are like twelve-year old children when they sit leisurely in church.)

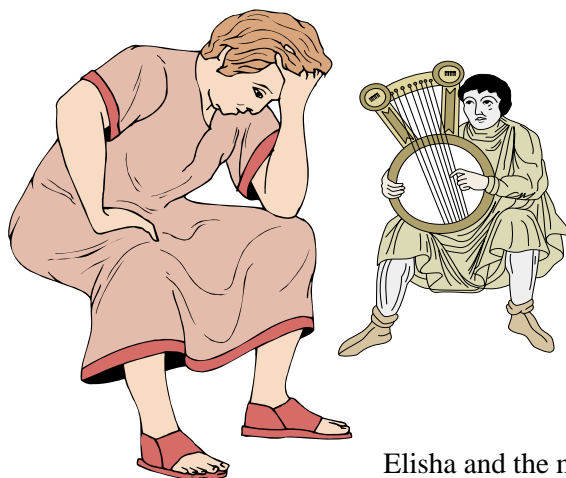
Let the organist or pianist play the prelude, the first stanza first before asking the congregation to stand up and sing. The abruptness



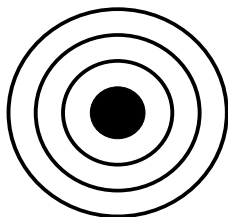
of calling the congregation to stand before the prelude spoils the sanctity of worship. It is like zooming a car out of garage without warming up.

Let the pastor or chairman voice lead, and by that he must have a loud enough sonorous voice so that even in unfamiliar hymns the congregation can follow. In solemn worship, to wave the hand ostentatiously, to show off, exalts man when all of man must not be seen.

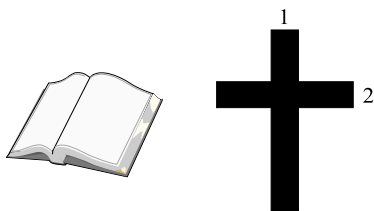
“Worship”, says Augustine, “is the mother of all virtues”. Let not any item in the worship take away from the worship. One such item is “Announcements”. This should be kept to the minimum. Let a few important ones be advertised but the rest let the congregation read from the church bulletin. I have been sickened to hear in a certain church the prolonged time taken, up to ten minutes, wherein every detail is mentioned, unimportant things like this Lord’s Day lunch menu! The effect of the sermon is particularly dissipated when long announcements come after the final Amen. That is why we have our announcements, insofar as Life Church is concerned, near the beginning. Usually, our announcements are appended to the Word of Welcome, and won’t take one or two minutes. The congregation can always consult the Weekly Bulletin for confirmation.



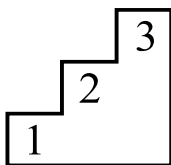
Elisha and the minstrel.



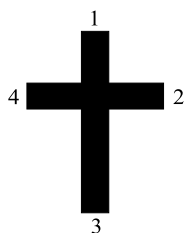
*A one-point sermon (John Sung style) is like a target.*



*A two-point sermon is like two pages of a book, or two lines of the cross (vertical : relating to God, horizontal : relating to man).*



*A three-point sermon (classical) is like three steps.*



*A four-point sermon is like the four points of the cross.*



*A five-point sermon takes the shape of the star of Solomon.*

## Chapter X

### The Different Structures of a Sermon

It is good for us to study how sermons are structured as we examine how a house is built. Here is a Church, one big empty hall. Here is a county church with the parsonage in the rear. It is divided into two main compartments. Here is a flat with hall and adjoining kitchen and two bedrooms. In HDB language it is described as a three-room flat. Then there are the so-called four-room and five-room flats.

A sermon can be a one point sermon like a dart board. The theme is the target. In throwing the dart you may hit the outer circles, but your aim is always the centre, the target, the theme.

John Sung's sermons are preached many times as one-point sermons. He might go round and round, hitting the outer circles, but he always returns to the theme. He scores the bull's eye at regular intervals.

In his sermon on Heaven and Hell, he might talk a lot on the luxurious life lived by the rich man, but he ends up with him being consigned to Hades, to Hell.

He talks a great deal on the sufferings of Lazarus the Beggar, but he exults in his promotion to glory, to Abraham's bosom.

In his one point sermon on Heaven and Hell, he ends up by showing us that when we reject the Gospel in this life we miss heaven and land down in Hell in the next. The theme of his message

is, “Only two ways are before us, after death there is no third way. No escape.” By way of recapitulation, the structure of such a sermon is like a dart board with its bulls-eye. The theme is the centre.

A two point sermon may look like an open book or like a cross.

The open book may suggest two equal components, like the Old Testament and the New Testament. The shape of the cross suggests a vertical and a horizontal aspect of your sermon. For example, I have a message on the Divine pattern for Church Growth -- Not vertical but horizontal. Here it is :

The Acts of the Apostles is not only a record of sacred early Church History, but also the Divine Pattern for Church Growth. For Paul commands his parishioners, “Be ye followers of me, as I follow Christ” (1 Cor 11:1).

Not vertical but horizontal expansion is the divine pattern for Church growth is given to us by both Peter, apostle to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles. Did you notice that Peter having won three thousand at Pentecost and thereafter five thousand, did not build a Cho Yonggi-type of a super church, and appoint himself super pastor of Jerusalem? We find him rather going to Samaria, and thereafter to Joppa, Caesarea, Pontius, Galatia, Capadocia, Asia, Bithynia, Corinth (1 Pet 1:1; 1 Cor 9:5) and by tradition to Rome. Nor did Paul settle down in Ephesus where God mightily blessed his ministry, except for two years when he taught a Bible school that the Word might spread to all Asia. He finished three missionary journeys and ended up in Rome - the capital of the Roman Empire and uttermost part of the earth.

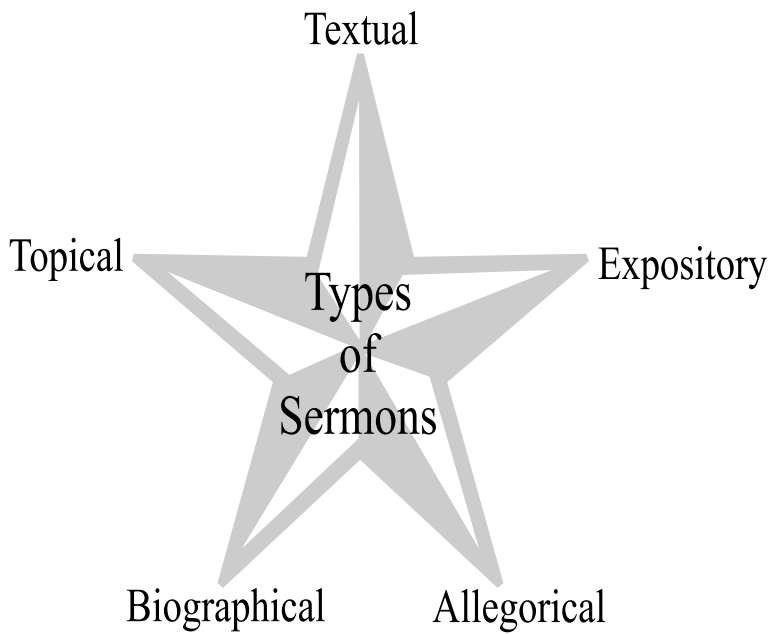
The vivid contrast of a man-made super church in vertical dimension and a Divine spreading of the Gospel on a horizontal dimension is thus clearly seen. There can be no uncertainty in such a sermon.

It is known in homiletic circles that a three-point sermon is a classical sermon. It is like three steps of a ladder. A sermon preached on the three graces in 1 Cor 13. Faith, Hope and Love is a three point

sermon. Love covers the two others, and Love is that which remains unto eternity. In heaven, hope is consummated, so hope is not needed. By way of illustration, the Jews, for two thousand years would say goodbye to one another with the added wish, “Next year in Jerusalem”. When they achieved Statehood on May 14, 1948, they have no need to say next year in Jerusalem when all Jews can come and settle in Jerusalem with a warm welcome by the State. There is no need to say “Next year in Jerusalem”. Their hope is now fulfilled.

A four-point sermon takes the shape of the cross with its four pointers. And a five-point sermon, the utmost limit, can take the shape of the star of Solomon. Beyond this, it will be hard to retain the facts in the memory. Besides, in every “pointed” sermon, there may be sub-points. Simplification is the essence of every sermon. To be safe, I think it is best to limit yourself to four points.

Once I preached in the Shepherds’ Field, Bethlehem, on “The Three Wisemen.” The first brought gold, the second brought frankincense and the third brought myrrh. And humorously, I added a fourth wiseman in myself. Having come from the Far East, and having nothing, I brought myself. That was the fourth point and climax of my sermon. A four-point sermon you can never miss!



# Chapter XI

## Types of Sermons

- I **Textual** - based on one verse, “Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else” (Isa 45:22) or “For the love of Christ constraineth us,” the first part of 2 Cor 5:14.
- II **Topical** - e.g., Heaven and Hell.
- III **Expository** - A passage of Scripture is expounded verse by verse, e.g., Psalm 90:10-12.
- IV **Biographical** - Study from the life of some great personality, e.g., the life of David or Abraham or any of the patriarchs.
- V **Allegorical** - The speciality of John Sung after the style of John Bunyan.

To teach this subject, the best is to provide an example or examples for each of the above categories.

\* \* \*

### I. Textual

- 1. *“Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (Rom 13:11)*

In what sense? In “the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:23). Our souls are saved when we have trusted the Saviour with all our heart, but our body, going through this earthly pilgrimage, must still encounter sickness, the frailties of old age and finally death. “For we

know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:22-23).

One happy aspect of the “redemption of our body” is that we will not go through death, but we will be raptured! “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality”. (1 Cor 15:51-53). This joyous transformation occurs at the Second Coming of Christ which is further expounded by Paul in 1 Thess 4:13-18.

Our Lord is coming and nearer than you think. Why make such long-term plans for your life? The signs leading to His Coming are listed in Matthew 24.

1. Turmoil in Geology: Earthquakes. Studies have shown intensification during the last decade. In the first three months of 1998 there have occurred 3 earthquakes in the Afghanistan-Pakistan area. The first one destroyed 4,500 lives. As we go to press another quake of 6.5 on the Richter scale has hit the West Coast of Sumatra. By God’s mercies, we in Singapore have been spared.
2. Turmoil in Ecology: Pestilence. Those that befall animals - mad British cows, so hundreds of thousands were slaughtered. “Mad” Taiwan pigs and millions of Hong Kong “flu” chicken. The earth: 1,000 fires now raging in Kalimantan and haze returning to Singapore. Again the Lord has spared us.
3. Turmoil in Economy. The toppling of currencies in South East Asia resulting in rioting in Indonesia, and influx of illegal immigrants to Malaysia and Singapore because of a battered



livelihood. Singapore is now appealing for \$5 million to feed Indonesia's poor. Is this not famine?

4. Turmoil in Ecclesiology: False Christ and false prophets, such as Benny Hinn, slaying in the spirit. Benny Hinn collected \$50 million in 1996.
5. Turmoil in Diplomacy. WWII is building up in the Euphrates region, which is Iraq (Rev 9:14-15). Saddam is alive and kicking and Clinton is being wagged by his tail. WWII will erupt from the Euphrates, which is Iraq (Rev 16).
6. Turmoil in "Computerology". This can come under Pestilence. When the Millennium Bug bites hard in less than 13 months, the disasters that will trigger from it has scared computer experts. One Hong Kong newspaper paints the scenario of two planes colliding in the sky. Don't fly, I advise for January 2000. Pray, hugging Mother Earth! It will cost one million million US\$ according to latest estimates to make computers compliant. Millions worldwide will be thrown out of job. The Indonesian crisis now is but a faint foreshadowing of sinister hordes of things to come. (In so far as I am concerned, I own no computer and know nothing about computers. So I will be all right!)

*You've all heard about the Millennium Bug,  
Also known as the Y2K problem.  
There are only thirteen months before It strikes,  
Even earlier by '99 September.*

*Tangled with the Computers are the Chips.  
Billions upon billions scattered worldwide.  
All the king's horses and all the king's men  
Are not able to save us when they bite.*

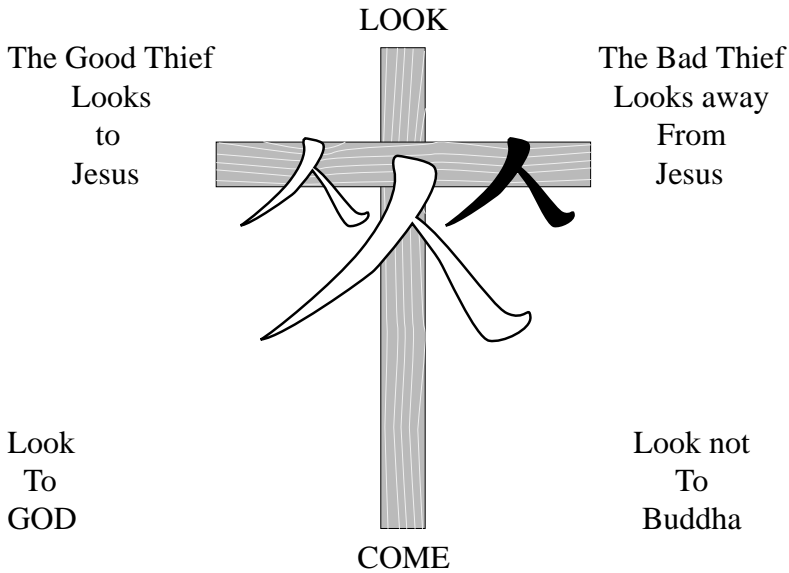
*I have no computer. I don't care what  
Will come by this Monster Millennium Bug.  
All that I care is Christ's coming is near.  
He'll snatch me away from It's grisly hug.*

Christ is all set to come within our lifetime, I believe, but the Church is soundly slumbering. Repent, “awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Rom 13:11-12).

Put on the armour of light in holy living. (Eph 6:12-18) And put on the armour of light in holy warfare! Evangelise! Tell it to all nations the Saviour cometh. “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come”. (Matt 24:14). Even so, come Lord Jesus, Amen.

**2. “Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of earth, For I am God and there is none else.” (Isa 45:22)**

Using the Chinese character come, which depicts two small men and a big Man, the two thieves and Jesus on the cross, we can preach a powerful message especially to Chinese listeners. Yet it was equally effective when I used this message for Palestinian students studying at a Mennonite school in Bethlehem.



### 3. *“For the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor 5:14a)*

Intro. : The Lord requires of us to serve Him under all kinds of conditions

Transit : What wins in the Marathon of Christian fulltime service

- NOT :
1. DUTY (Give ye them to eat, Matt 14:16)
  2. SCARCITY (The Labourers are few, Matt 9:37)
  3. OPPORTUNITY (An open door, Rev 3:8)
  4. URGENCY (White already to harvest, John 4:35)
  5. PITY (To feed the poor, 1 Cor 13:3)

But by LOVE CONSTRAINED, i.e.,  
The CHARITY of 1 Cor 13.

## II. Topical

### 1. *Heaven and Hell (Luke 16) (By Dr. John Sung)*

This afternoon I would like to speak on heaven and hell. This is a most important subject, but there are many who do not believe in heaven or in hell. Before I was born again, this was a perplexing question to me.

When I was nine years old, I saw a small black thing placed in front of our door. I asked Mother what it was and she said it was a coffin for my three-year old sister to sleep in. Mystery of mysteries! I only knew how lovable little sister was, but Mother was referring to her death. I entered the room. I saw her lovable face now pale and white. Her hands and feet were ice-cold. I did not realise I had seen death.

I called to her, but she did not reply. She cared not for me. I came out and saw Mother's eyes brimming with tears. I didn't know what to do. I did not know how sister died. How was it that I who was older than her had not died? Just then, I saw someone lift little sister into the coffin. I called out to Mother, "Why don't let sister sleep in the bed, but put her in the coffin?" Mother did not listen nor did anybody else, but carried the coffin out. I asked Mother where they

took sister, whether she would return. Mother said they had taken her to the lonely countryside and she would not return. Hearing this I burst into tears and wailing.

I asked Mother whether I would become like little sister and Mother said yes. I grew more gloomy. That night I dreamt that I died like little sister, and was put into a coffin. I was afraid and I cried to Daddy and Mummy, “I won’t die, I want to stay with you.” I woke myself up with a loud sobbing which brought also Father and Mother out of bed to inquire after me. I said, “I dreamt that I died. I was afraid. I do not want to die. Death is so fearful. It takes me to the lonely countryside. No, I won’t die! I want to live with Daddy and Mummy forever.”

Beloved brothers and sisters, are you afraid of death? Now I’m not afraid, not a bit. For man has to die. No one can ever escape this check-point. What is fearful is where you end up after death. This subject is worthy of our careful consideration. This afternoon is devoted to the discussion of this subject, that we may know where to go after death.

V. 19. “There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously everyday.” This rich man is what you would call a capitalist, even such a one as is found in Amoy today. He has made a great name for himself on earth but in heaven his name is not found. He cared only for the outward and not for the inside. He lived sumptuously everyday, in wine and women. Now the Bible records no other sin of this rich man save his luxurious living. Imagine for yourself: Did he ever look upwards to heaven or did he look on the things of earth? Yea, he only looked on earth, on the present. So did Emperor Yuan Shih Kai turn his eyes on the present world. He did not believe in heaven or in hell. He thought once a man died everything was over. But remember, this rich man was a worshipper of God, a son of Abraham, of the elect. Maybe he was an elder or deacon in his church. As a matter of fact he did not trust God. He was a nominal believer by his reckless godless behaviour.

V. 20. “And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores.”

There was another man called Lazarus. He was nobody on earth but his name was found in heaven. This man was sick with sores all over his body. He carried the cross daily as a beggar, not that he won't work but because of his disabled limbs and sick body. In our church today there are many like Lazarus but nobody ever cares, like the rich man in this Bible story. These care only after their own comforts. This is wrong, for we should take care of one another which is our God-appointed duty.

Lazarus, though in such a sad plight, never thought of doing evil. For he believed there was a heaven and there was a hell. He was afraid of the retribution after this life. Many robbers and warlords there are who rob and kill, massacre and plunder, and many capitalists there are who exploit and profiteer -- because they do not believe in heaven or hell. Lazarus looked up to heaven. He looked to the future. In contrast, the rich man looked down to earth. He cared for the present. Lazarus, like Jesus, dared not seek for unrighteous mammon. When Jesus was on earth, he possessed not a thing, not even a place to pillow his head. Lazarus was the same. Lazarus carried the bitter cross daily. In Lazarus we see a type of Christ. Lazarus said, “I have no desires of this world. I want to go to heaven. Heaven is my home.” Many have asked me, “So many in China have neither food nor clothing, and are dying of hunger and cold in extremest misery. Who will believe your talk on heaven and hell? If they don't take care of the present, how will they give attention to the future?” But I say to you, “If you believe in Jesus, then you won't worry not having food and clothing. For, in God's Kingdom, there is the rule of love among us. We take care of one another. When we love God, we logically love His children, who are now our brethren in the same kingdom. How can we see our brethren suffer in hunger and cold?”

V. 21. “And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.”

Lazarus sat daily at the rich man's doorway waiting to feed on the tit-bits that fell off his table. Nobody loved Lazarus. For, he was a decrepit, he could not work. Dogs were his friends, who comforted him. When Christ was on earth neither did the people love Him nor receive Him. He was assailed wherever He went. He found his friends among the tax collectors and sinners, the despised of society. These loved Jesus, who were poor and sinful, and a few others. Now Lazarus' eyes were lifted to heaven and the rich man's eyes were fixed on the earth in abandonment.

V. 22. "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died and was buried." Whom would you choose to be of the two? Who would like to be the rich man and who Lazarus? True, Lazarus died first, since he was a poor sick man with no one to care for him. But he was not afraid to die. He was very happy in fact. He knelt and prayed to Jesus, "Lord, I am coming home!" Was Lazarus' death the end of everything? No, He was carried by angels to his father Abraham's bosom, in paradise, which is heaven. This is evidence that heaven is real. When I go to the villages to preach and meet with some old, zealous church member's death, it is one in which angels have come to receive the departed. Now Lazarus could not afford a burial. His body being discarded in the wilderness was eaten by dogs. What a contrast with some member's death in which they make such a big show and celebration, and drum up with a procession. A funeral looks more like a religious festival to welcome the gods. Beloved brothers and sisters. See what luxury must also be lavished on a dead man, and all this for what? Was such a celebration made for Jesus' death? But Jesus did not bequeath to this earth even one of his bones. Sakyamuni, Confucius, Laotse, Mohammed, died and left behind their bones. Only Jesus did not. Now, you spend such a lot on a dead body and what do you get? Look! This rich man has a five-storey mansion, a house full of wives and concubines, attired in velvet and eating the fat. But now he is down with illness. Around him are gathered his wife and secondary wives up to No. 7. These are trembling and at a loss what medicine the doctor should give to the

rich man. The rich man, afraid to die, gives in to a whirl of dreadful dreams and visions. Could he now enjoy all the good things of life? He couldn't even know anything about these things. All he worries about is death. Why? There is the pain of judgment after death! Could he know after his death the best of coffins they put him in and the best of clothes they put on him? Could he see the farce they make for him and the noise of celebration that excel even a festival of the gods? Those who come for the funeral and all the on-lookers make a festive noise. Does he know? How many fat members of the church, fat deacons, fat elders and fat pastors when they die make such a show-off in their funerals, no different from what was done for this rich man! Their merry-making is to celebrate his home-going to heaven? What does the Bible say? Where did all his luxury go once he died and was buried? And the burial ended everything? The material and the spiritual parts of the man had now come to an end? No!

When I was preaching in Shantung, a college student from Tsinan came to see me. I asked him his philosophy of life. To which he answered, "Enjoy-myself philosophy." When I asked him what would happen to him when he died, he said death ended all things for him. I asked him if that was the case, why should he pursue his education and go to the university? Would it not be better to spend that money on self-enjoyment? He was dumb-founded. Beloved, let me tell you what comes to end after death. The body is finished, but not the soul!

V. 23. "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." How is it after death now? The rich man ends up in hades, in hell, to suffer in the fire that is not quenched and to be bitten by worms that dieth not. This proves hell is real. So death does not end all. Should you ask me where heaven and hell are, astronomers have observed a place in space where there are no stars, wide and empty in the heavens, surrounded on its borders by galaxies of stars. This region is in the north. This is heaven since in Isaiah it is said God's throne is "in the

sides of the north.” Where is hell? In science you have studied that there is fire in the heart of the earth, fire that is of extreme heat. Where did the rich man go? Is it to the fire inside the centre of the earth? I say hell is right there! Now there are those who ask, “Since God is all-loving why will He punish men in an everlasting hell? But you must carefully consider this fact that God has given man the chance to repent, and has sent His beloved Son Jesus to tell that unbelievers will be condemned. Now, if you refuse to repent, what further can be done? When you prick your flesh with a needle, does it produce pain in the flesh or pain in the soul? Know this that without the soul there would be no feeling. So, to keep on pricking when it produces pain is to suffer pain of your own choosing. Not to repent from knowledgeable sin will meet with punishment. God is a God who judges between good and evil and metes out the retribution. This is manifestation of the justice of His love. The rich man went to hell to be tormented in fire. The pain of thirst in the fire is unbearable and he now realises his mistake. He begs Abraham to tell Lazarus to give him a drop of water to cool his thirst, but there is no intercommunication. He did not look up to heaven until he was landed in trouble, but it was too late. Here is a mystery: It is that after death a man’s spiritual eyes can see great distances, from hell to heaven, but not while living on earth. Because we cannot see afar nor into the future, so many are unwittingly seeking the pleasures of the present. Hence the sufferings they have to bear after death. Brothers, wake up!

V. 24. “And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” Now the rich man knows how to pray. Though he requests Abraham his father to send him help through Lazarus, it is not possible by reason of a great gulf separating them. The rich man is all wailing and misery. Despite his remorse, his loud cries of prayer, he has now to suffer the retribution of his sins.



V. 25. “But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst the good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.” Did Abraham love the rich man? Yes. Abraham loved him and God loved him too. God used every means of salvation to save the rich man, but he refused to repent. Now he must taste its bitterness. Dear brothers, God has used all kinds of methods to save you. If you repent not, He has no other.

V. 26. “And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they who would pass from here to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.” No way out! For there is a great gulf fixed between you and God. Though God is omnipotent, yet He cannot help because you have not repented while He waited and now you are to suffer for what you deserve.

V. 27. “Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father’s house.” Ah! The rich man shows love for his five brothers. He begs Abraham to send Lazarus to go and tell them that they might know there is a heaven and a hell that they might repent from their evils. But time did not permit this. The brothers had others to tell them. It was not necessary for someone from the dead to do this.

Vv. 28-31. “For I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

Abraham said, they have the Bible, the Words of the prophets telling them. If they believe not the Bible, there is no other way. I also did not believe in heaven or hell before, being blinded by a worldly education and scientific knowledge. Praise the Lord, He has

shown me heaven and hell that I might return to Him. If we open the Book of Revelation we shall know what heaven is like. What I say of seeing heaven is what Revelation tells us, they are exactly the same. God has revealed heaven to us that we might understand the most beautiful spot on earth is not equal to it. God has also shown hell to me. When I was in the lunatic asylum, there was a patient warded in a room next to me. This madman would weep and pray when night fell. He would recount the sins he had committed and bite his tongue. When daylight came he stopped. When night fell he repeated the same process. This demented fellow would see flames burning all around him. At first I did not understand this. I asked God and He said to me, "In hell, the inmates have nothing else to do except think upon the sorrows, and the more they think about them, the more acute their suffering becomes. So those who repent not will have to face up to all these sins with increasing sorrow to torment them. Whatever they think about will become their punishment. I have had this experience. The more I recall the sins I committed the more I become tormented. When I could bear it no longer, I remembered I needed to pray. When I prayed all my sorrows vanished and peace returned. Have you repented of your sins? If not, you will never be at peace!

When I was preaching in Peking, there was a girl surnamed Chow. She died at the age of fifteen. She got sick at first for four months and was warded at the Central Hospital. When she came to hear me preach, the Holy Spirit worked in her heart to save her soul before death. After she repented of her sins, her illness worsened, so she asked her brother to seek for Pastor Wang (Ming-tao?) to baptise her. She found peace after baptism, yea, even joy unspeakable. Before she died, she asked to see her father. She said to him, "You must believe there is a living God." Father replied, "I'm an opium smoker and a great sinner. How will God want such a sinner like me?" She said to her father, "God is love. He loves sinners. He loves you. If you don't trust in God, I shall never see you again." Father was moved by her pleas, so he knelt down to confess his sins.

Now she asked to see her elder brother. “Big brother,” she said, “You must believe in the living and true God. God is love. If you repent and confess your sins before Him, He will save you. If you refuse to repent and believe not in Him, I shall never see you again.” Big brother was also moved to repentance and returned to God.

Similarly she summoned her younger brothers and sisters who also repented and returned to God.

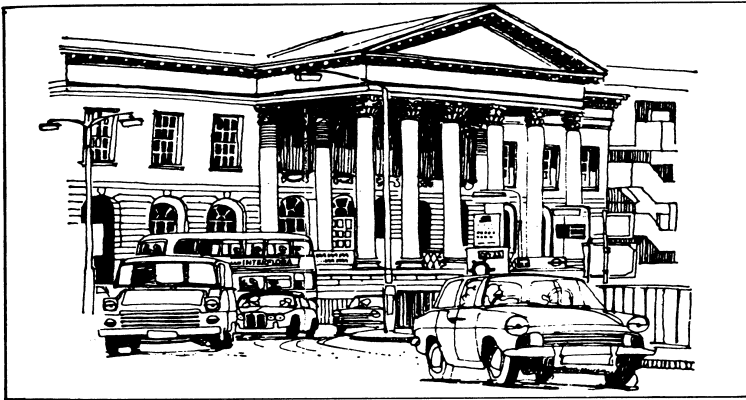
She saved a whole family. She was overjoyed. Finally she asked her parents and the whole family to come before her. She said, “My sickness is fatal. Though I know I’m going to die, I am very happy. For I’m going to a happy place. Daddy and Mummy, brothers and sisters will all be there too. We shall meet over there, and live forevermore. Now angels are coming. Jesus comes! I’m going home. Don’t be sad nor weep to make me sorrowful.” Thus saying, she departed. A smile broadened over her face. She had gone to the heavenly home.

Beloved brothers and sisters, may you also prepare to return home to God.

## ***2. Following Christ in the Steps of St. Peter (John 1: 35-36, 40-41; Matthew 6:21-26; Luke 5:4-11; Matthew 19:20-21, 27-30; John 21:18,19)***

It gives me great pleasure this morning to be with you, not only for the reason that the name of Spurgeon is one that we love, but also for sweet memories of 36 years ago when I was here worshipping, perhaps with some of you, in the cellar. Now, having known Dr Masters as a very dear brother in the Lord, it gives me even greater joy and courage to come and witness to you our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I bring greetings from our churches in Singapore to you as we shall further fellowship with your pastor and his wife who would be visiting us in Singapore in two months’ time.



The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Elephant & Castle, London

Now, I have been here to speak at the School of Theology on the Revival we had received in our young days from the ministry of Dr John Sung. When we mention John Sung and China, the Far East, and other servants the Lord has raised, immediately we think of three names that have been recognised by the west. These three names are John Sung, Watchman Nee and Wang Ming Tao. These three who have been recognised leaders of the Chinese Church may be compared to three running a race. John Sung died in 1944, the first to be taken home after fifteen years of relentless service. Watchman Nee, having been imprisoned by the communists for twenty years, was taken home a week or so before he was to be released. This was about a decade ago. Wang Ming Tao and his dear wife, having been released after twenty-three years of imprisonment, are now living in Shanghai - they are still alive! Wang Ming Tao is eighty-six years old. Praise be to His Name, God has given to each man a portion of work to do. But I want to say that, in point of time, John Sung is the first to be received into glory. So he is number one in the race. He is number one in the race also for pouring out his life beyond all other servants of the Lord that I have known.

My subject this morning is "How Far Have You and How Far Have I Followed the Lord Jesus Christ?" These three men have followed the Lord faithfully and diligently. Let us examine ourselves: Have we attained? Have we followed in the plan He has laid out for

us? We can learn it from the life of Peter according to the five passages we have read, in five steps.

Now, in Chinese, the word “Christian” is a “Christ follower.” The Chinese character for “follower” is made up of two radicals, and both refer to “movement.” The left radical means “to walk,” and the right radical means “to run.” In other words, we must be good followers of Jesus Christ. Not only are we to follow Him, but we are to follow Him briskly, spiritedly, not lagging behind. When I think of this, I realise in many areas of my life I have not followed Him enough. Our prayer this morning is, “Lord, help me to follow closely after You.” From the life of Peter, we can see certain failures. But we thank God that Peter finally had attained. He can say also with the Apostle Paul, “I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. (2 Tim 4:7).”

## I

Before we can follow Him, we must find Him. Many people are following, but they are lost, though they think they are following Him. We have the case of Andrew and Peter and Philip, the early disciples, and John. They had heard John the Baptist. They were trying to find the truth. We thank God that as for Andrew he was able to testify to his brother Peter, “We have found the Messiah!” Have you found the Messiah, have you found the Lord? It is possible for us to attend Church, a Bible-believing Church where the Gospel is preached, and not find the Lord Jesus Christ. I speak from my own experience. I was a seeker from a very young age. I was always troubled about my salvation. I always wanted to know how I could know for sure that I would go to heaven. And my grandfather was the pastor. He spoke the Truth, but I did not find the Truth because I always argued, “How can it be so simple? “

We thank God for your great predecessor, Mr Spurgeon. How I love to read that story! And how he was troubled, he was seeking. Until that morning when the Lord found him, and he also found the Lord! It was in a snow-storm, in a very small Methodist Church. He

heard the Methodist lay-preacher call to him, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” (Isa 45:22). And one look, he found Jesus! He knew that his sins were washed away. I thank God for that noonday when as we sang in that Revival Meeting in Singapore fifty years ago, “In the cross, in the cross, Be my vision glorious: All my sins are washed away in the blood of Jesus.” Now, these words meant everything to me. I had found the Saviour at last! I hope everyone worshipping here may be able to say, “I know that my sins are forgiven. I’ve found my Saviour.” Don’t say, “Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world.” I could say that. You must say, “Jesus Christ is my personal Saviour.” That is Peter’s first step.

## II

Secondly, in following Jesus, we cannot follow Him on our terms. The servant is not above his master. The follower cannot go before the one who is leading him. For example, someone is going to run in an Olympic race. He will be under coaching, he will be under instruction. One thing I know of the terms he must keep - he must lose much of himself. I am talking of it physically. But in following the Lord Jesus Christ, you must lose all your life, your whole life. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.” When you take your cross, you are being sentenced to death, you are going up there to be killed. Are you willing to follow the Lord, on His terms, paying the price of your life?

Now, Peter did not understand this. He said, “O Lord, please don’t go to Jerusalem. I cannot think of you going there to suffer.” “Get thee behind me, Satan,” Jesus spoke to the chief of the Apostles. We must pray that the Lord will give us the devotion, to surrender our whole life, because if He has given His life for us, we must be willing to die for Him. Now, it is easier said than done. Often I have thought to myself, “If there should be a persecution, and I should be taken to prison, would I be able to say that?” I tremble. We must ask the Lord for strength. It is only by love and devotion to Him that we can so do.

Recently in my church we had a young girl preparing for baptism, but she came to me in tears. She said, "My father has threatened to beat me up if I should be baptised." Chinese parents are willing to let their children go to church for a selfish reason - to learn English, and my church is English-speaking. But they will warn them, "You don't get baptised. If you get baptised, we will beat you up." So this young lady, with tears in her eyes, pleaded, "Pastor, what shall I do?" I said, "I cannot dictate to you. It is between you and the Lord, if you love Him. 'If any man will not love me more than father and mother, he is not worthy of Me.'" So, she prayed, and I left her at that. I was very happy to see her come Sunday morning for the baptism. For she was prepared to be beaten up. When she went home that afternoon, however, the stern voice of her father came to her ears. The father had earlier told the younger sister to call her to the room. She was trembling. Wonder of wonders, the father had a "hongbao", a red packet with money inside for her. God honours those who honour Him. When she took a stand for Him, the father had to surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank God for the ordinance of baptism. When the catechumen is baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus, the heathens are afraid. So her father yielded and instead of beating her up, gave her the "hongbao". It was not a consolation prize, it was a great reward from the Lord!

But, maybe, a greater paying that price is paying it in peace, when we have every liberty to keep our life. We must be willing to serve Him unconditionally. I say this particularly to those who are entering fulltime service, becoming pastors, or in some other sphere of service in the church, even as a caretaker. Anything and everything is for the Lord. We have no right or claim, or privilege.

We had a young man who was brought up in our Bible College. He went abroad, and got a higher degree. I loved him very much. But because I loved him, I overlooked his faults. We had a vacation Bible school. As pastor, I did all I could to bring the children in. So I drove our station wagon. And I said to that young man, "Here is another station wagon for you to drive." So we went out to collect the

children. The next day, my wife said to the young man, “Please, will you help?” He said to her, “This is not my job,” meaning to say, “I am a venerable scholar, it is not my job to drive a van.” Well, that showed me that he was not willing to give his life to the Lord. I said to myself, “I cannot use him.” That prediction came true. Neither could the elders use him. Let those who are serving the Lord, serve Him gladly. Picking up a piece of waste paper from the Church ground is as sacred as preaching from the pulpit, if you do it in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There was the great Emperor Justinian in those days of emperors, who built a great cathedral. For the dedication of the cathedral there was a plaque that was made to his own glory. “I, great Emperor Justinian so-and-so, have built this cathedral. . . .” But there was a poor widow named Euphrasia, who loved God’s House, but could not contribute any substance. But she said, “I will do my part to bring water and hay to the donkeys that are hauling the stones.” On the day the curtain was drawn, angelic hands had already erased the name of the great emperor, but there were words of commendation to the poor widow Euphrasia.

### III

Now Peter had followed the Lord. But then we come to the place where he had his boat, and was mending the nets. The whole night he and his partners had caught nothing. They were part-time disciples. But Jesus wanted Peter and John and the others to follow Him full-time. Peter could not understand this. “I have got my wife, I have got my children (perhaps), I have got my parents.” These particularly are considerations for Chinese disciples. They have many obligations. I must attain self-support before I can follow the Lord. But this is not the Lord’s way. When Peter got nothing that night, that was the beginning of fulltime discipleship. Some people will follow the Lord when they have lost out in business. Their motivation may not be very pure. Yet, the Lord knows our weakness. When the Lord had given Peter two ship-loads of fish (how much do they cost in England?), then Peter knelt down before the Lord and said, “Depart



from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man. I have been harbouring so many reservations about you.” He forsook his net and followed Jesus.

I thank God I came to that point one day. But I have heard some of our zealous people back home say, “We want to serve the Lord but we will keep this job or have shares in certain businesses to upkeep ourselves, so we will not be a burden to the Church.” I cannot find it in the Bible. If the Lord has called you, then you have to give up your job to serve Him fulltime. That is the Bible way. Thank God, Peter understood. He forsook his fishing business. How about you?

#### IV

We come to the fourth step, and that is in the encounter between the rich young ruler and our Lord. After our Lord had told him all the conditions, he said, “What lack I yet?” He felt there was something wrong with him. You want to serve the Lord and yet there is something in you that asks, “What lack I yet?” He was a rich man with position and power. That was the thing that kept him from fully following Jesus. So Jesus said, “Sell all that you have and give to the poor, and come and follow me.” Give away your wealth. The problem with us today is we are too rich! I read in Singapore an article about America. It says America is a mediocre society today because there is no pressure. For everything is fine. It does not bring out the sparks of excellence. And that is exactly what Jesus Christ sees of the rich young ruler. If you want to live a life that is productive, meaningful, then distribute your wealth. Give away your money. Is that easy? “Oh, I give my one-tenth.” But so far as the States is concerned, I understand it is deductible from income tax. In Singapore it is not like that. The Government gives no preference to any religion. Everyone’s the same, you just pay tax. Therefore, giving to the Church in Singapore is pure giving.

Some who have given their tithes feel very cocky about it: “I have given my one-tenth.” But I have heard of Colgate and

LeTourneau, how they gave one-tenth and two-tenths, and finally nine-tenths. But then the Lord says, “Not only nine-tenths, give all!”

Let me tell you the story of a very dear brother in the Lord who has struggled together with me since thirty-six years ago to witness for the Lord. He gave himself full-time, and was ordained as a pastor. Then he went to New York and he had a church. Later on he did not have a church, but served as an honorary pastor. To keep himself alive, he became a taxi driver. A taxi-driver pastor. He said to me, “We have made a resolution to the Lord. We give 80%. Ten percent for myself, and ten percent for my wife. The rest goes to the Lord. For thirty-six years he has been supporting our Church, giving to missions, especially for pioneer missions to the Dyaks of Borneo.

How about Peter? Peter has given all. And so he said, “Lord, how about me? How about us, who have given all!” The Lord blessed them: “You will receive eternal life and in this life, one-hundredfold in houses and lands.” And that is very true. The Church today lacks power because the members are holding back that blessing that the Lord has for them. I pray that the Lord may give me more grace to give and keep on giving. It is a joy. When you begin to give and give sacrificially, you will receive the spiritual power in return.

## V

Thank God for Peter. Finally, we see Jesus asking him three times: “Lovest thou me more than these?” Peter said, “Lord, you know that I love you.” The three times uttered may be due to the fact that he had three times denied the Lord Jesus. Jesus wanted Peter to re-consecrate himself.

Not doubling up, but trebling up! Recently I sent my teacher, Dr. Jack Murray in America, a copy of the book I have written on the life of Dr. John Sung in whose Revival in Singapore I found the Lord and gave myself to the Lord full-time. Dr. Murray, having read the book, wrote me a very kind letter. He said, “Timothy, I thank you so much for telling that story. But as for me, I closed my door, I knelt down

before the Lord, and I prayed, ‘Lord, help me to consecrate my life anew to You as John Sung had done’.” Thank God it is not only Peter who had consummated his following the Lord when he died for Jesus Christ in the end. John Sung poured out his life for Him as well.

This morning, if we realise we have not followed the Lord enough, let us also treble up.

### **III. Expository**

Please refer to Chapter V, p. 33 to p.38

### **IV - Biographical**

#### ***1. The Story of the Hero - Model of the Old Testament - Abraham (Gen 11-22) (By Dr. John Sung)***

From Ch. 11:27-32 we learn that Abram’s father was Terah. Terah had three sons; Abram, Nahor and Haran. We do not know much about Abram’s youth, but here’s an interesting story about him:

Terah was a devout idol-worshipper. He built a big shrine in his house. In this shrine he kept all kinds of idols and images, and spent all his time serving them. But, Abram, did not believe in idols.

One day Terah went out of the house on business. He entrusted the shrine to Abram’s care. Now, while his father was out, Abram took a hammer and smashed all the idols to the ground. Then he put a piece of meat in the mouth of one of the idols, and left them as they were.

When his father returned home to this situation, he was furious beyond words. He asked Abram, “How did all these idols become like this?” Abram, replied, “Soon after you went out, someone brought us meat. The idols rushed upon the meat, and a fight broke out. Do you see meat in that idol’s mouth?” Terah was dumb-founded, but the whole family turned to God that day.

One day God said to Abram, “Leave this dark place of Ur, leave your home-country.” God did not tell him where, but only towards the South. Abram, went in absolute obedience. This was his first obedience. To obey God in the first instance, we must leave our “home-country”. Beloved brothers and sisters, to obey God, one must leave everything! So Abram, went out in obedience to God, four in the company. Himself, father, wife and nephew Lot. They found their way to Haran.

When Abram came to Haran, he halted. He stopped half-way in his journey. Beloved brothers and sisters, Abram, got downhearted! How many have followed Jesus and stopped half-way? Now Abram was weak, and God wanted to train him. God also wants us to go forward and not stop half-way.

Now, when Abram halted, the Lord let his father die. Abram wept. “O God, How is it that death has taken my father? And in this foreign land?” God said, “Abram, my beloved Abram! Because you have not obeyed me fully, to follow me all the way.” Not going with God all the way has brought death to his father. God said, “Get up and go on.”

Ch. 12 vv. 1-4. “Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” When Abram heard this Word and started out, he was seventy-five years old. Beloved brothers and sisters let us never, never stop half-way. Let us go straight forward, and glorify God.

V. 5-8. Abram headed southwards with Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew. That’s not easy! The people of the land were giants, and they were short. Moreover this was a wild country where human beings were sacrificed, even sons and wives. They were a fierce people. Abram was afraid, and his heart throbbed. Slowly he came to

Sichem, to the oak tree of Moreh. There he built an altar to the Lord. God said, “Fear not, I will give this land to your children. Abram, don’t be afraid of your surroundings.” Abram was assured, and he continued on his journey.

When he came to Bethel he became frightened. He built another altar and sacrificed to the Lord. The Lord comforted him further, and he went on his way. Beloved brothers and sisters, the greatest lesson is this: Whenever we are afraid, let us look only to God. The oak tree which is deeply rooted and presents a beautiful picture to the eyes is a symbol of Abram’s faith. In our heavenly pilgrimage, we should also rise above our circumstances. If not, we will not obey. Elder sisters, do you hear me?

Vv. 10-12. Abram slips! Confronted by a fierce famine, Abram went down to Egypt. And he fails flat. He is overwhelmed by the circumstances. When he went down to Egypt, he no more followed the Lord. O, how many on the heavenly pilgrimage have forsaken God when their skies darkened. They also “go down to Egypt” not following the Lord. How many meeting with evil circumstances go it alone. They trust in their own strength!

At that time Sarai’s beauty was in full bloom. Abram was very fearful for this and said to Sarai, “Let us promise together. I know you are a charming lady. When the Egyptians see that you are my wife, they are sure to kill me and take you away. Let us call ourselves brother and sister.”

When they came to Egypt, the Egyptians lusted after Sarai’s beauty. Pharaoh’s ministers talked about her before Pharaoh. Seeing she was such a charming woman, Pharaoh took her for himself. Abram wept for having left the Lord and gone on his own way. Beloved brothers and sisters, how many have gone on their own way! They drink bitterness as a result. Why is your family in such bitter unhappiness? It’s because you’ve left the Lord. Otherwise, peace is surely yours.

Abram prayed the Lord to forgive him and the Lord listened to his repenting heart. God in a dream spoke to Pharaoh and Pharaoh got frightened. Pharaoh called Abram and said to him, “Why did you bluff that your wife is your sister?” Pharaoh returned his wife with a gift and asked him to leave. Beloved brothers and sisters, when you truly repent and get back on your heavenly course, God will forgive you.

Now Abram had become a rich man when he returned from Egypt with gold, silver and animals. This divided his attention in running the heavenly race. A pilgrim must give up his own plan. Beloved brothers and sisters, a self-wise man is bound to lose his way. As for me, I pray for the Lord’s will in anything I do.

Ch. 13 vv. 1-18. Here is recorded Abram’s becoming a rich man after leaving Egypt, having many herds and camels. Lot also changed. Lot now left the Lord out in everything he did. His heart was bent on money and self. He could no longer stay under Abram’s roof. This led to quarrels over grass feeds between Abram’s servants and Lot’s servants. Quarrels led to fights. When Abram heard this his heart was grieved. He called Lot to a dividing of their property. Lot’s eyes were upon the world. He took leave of Abram and moved, step by step, towards Sodom. Abram’s heart was grieved for Lot, but God comforted him. Beloved brothers and sisters, as followers of Jesus, you must treat money and the world as nothing. God comforted Abram and led him to the highest country. There He told him to look north, east, south, west. He said, “All the land you see I will give you and your children, forever. And I will increase your descendants as the sand.” Beloved brothers and sisters, let us never be near-sighted. Let us look to the future. Let us enlarge our vision. Now often there are also conflicts inside the Church. Pitiful! Beloved brothers and sisters, let us not look at the things we now see just in front of us.

Vv. 14-16. As Lot grew richer, he drifted farther to Sodom. He made his pile from Sodom by opening many business houses - Lot Trading Co., Lot Groceries, Lot Travel Service, Lot Banking Corporation. He built a villa for himself.

As for Abram he kept to his old job of tending the sheep and herds in the country. He received from lofty Lot no better regard than sarcasm and ridicule --What Jesus? What God? How foolish! Lot prided over his goods and popularity. His daughters could dance and swirl around like society birds. Lot became a tycoon. But Abram remained in the village, away from the world. He praised God all the day.

Now a war broke out between the five kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela and the four kings of Shinar, Ellasar, Elam and Goiim. The five kings were defeated by the four, who broke into their cities. Lot Company and Lot Bank crashed, and Lot Villa was burnt up. Mrs. Lot and eldest daughter were carried away. Lot wept. Beloved brothers and sisters, when Lot wept bitterly for his sins. God comforted him all the same. God sent Abram to save him.

When Abram heard of Lot's misfortune, he forgot the past. He took 318 of his trained soldiers to go and save Sodom. He recaptured all the booty taken by the enemy, including all that belonged to Lot, even the women. All gathered to congratulate Abram, even kings, with many presents. But Abram refused them and Abram said, "Lot, do you now understand me? I won't take even one blade of grass nor one thread from you. I only pray that God's servant Melchizedek would bless me." Abram spurned these things. What he desired was God. Beloved brothers and sisters, may you spurn money and all this world offers. Follow Jesus to the end.

Now the defeated four kings wanted to take revenge. Fear gripped Abram, but God assured him, "I am your shield. I will give you everything." Abram replied, "But I have no son. What's the use of all these?" God said to Abram, "Lift up your head to the skies and look at the stars. I will give you children like the stars." Though Abram was old, he believed and he was counted righteous. Nevertheless, he could not but keep within himself a little doubting. So, God gave him proof, "Take for Me a three-year-old cow and a three-year-old she-goat, one three-year-old ram, a turtle dove and a

young pigeon. Cut each one in two.” Abram obeyed, and knelt down to pray. Suddenly fire came down from heaven. That day God made a covenant with Abram. God said again, “The day will come when your descendants will be taken into slavery, but I will save them from Egypt to Canaan.” Abram believed! Wonderful! Let me tell you, God will open a way for me into all the world, and I believe. Though I am a speck before Him, He is almighty. He can do the impossible. Now wasn’t Abram wonderful in having given up everything around him to come and trust in God? But he had no son, and he became anxious. He thought of taking another wife, seeing how pretty Hagar his servant girl was. He did not ask the Lord when he married her, though it was Sarai’s plan for him to have a son. But when a person does anything without the Lord, he will get into the soup. When Hagar bore him a son she despised her mistress. Quarrels now rocked the family. Beloved brothers and sisters, one taking things into one’s own hands is sure to fail. A quarrelling family is worse than hell; Abram regretted. God told him to send Hagar away and he obeyed. Let us also follow Jesus to the end.

Ch. 17. Now Abram was 99 years old. He was dissatisfied with the old way of life. He put to death the old man in him. He lived a new life. He made a covenant with God through circumcision, separating unto holiness. God changed his name to Abraham, i.e., Father of many nations. Sarai became Sarah. God said, “Next year I will give Sarah a son. I will bless her and she will be a mother of many nations. Abraham did not believe. He said in his heart, “A 100-year-old man. Can he beget a son? How can?” Nevertheless, he clung to God’s Word.

Ch. 18. Here we see the depraved depths of sin and pollution into which Sodom and Gomorrah were sunk. Lot lolled luxuriously on. God decided to destroy the two cities and God told Abraham. Abraham was very worried, so he knelt and prayed, “O God! Would you destroy that city if there are fifty righteous men in it?” God said, “If there are fifty righteous, I will for their sake pardon the place.” He prayed again, “If forty-five righteous? Thirty righteous?” God



said, “If there are so many, I will not destroy it. And I will not destroy it if there are only ten righteous.” Beloved brothers and sisters, God treasures ten righteous souls more than anything. Everything is vanity. Souls are most precious. God loves the souls of the righteous. Beloved brothers and sisters, God regards the souls of ten righteous men more precious than the whole world. So does He regard Amoy and Kulangsu’s ten righteous souls today. For Abraham’s sake He saved Lot, and with Lot only two daughters. Mrs. Lot who lingered behind to take a last look at the world was turned into a pillar of salt. Sodom and Gomorrah perished in flames. God showed Abraham that the world was all vanity. God had trained him many years so that he would give up every whit of materialism.

Now, the next year saw the birth of a son, Isaac, when Abraham was 100 years.

Ch. 22. God had led Abraham step to step to treasure His Word, to treasure the value of righteous souls. Now he must needs put him to another test, even his faith.

Isaac was a handsome, lovable son, the darling of Abraham’s soul. How should a son of a 100-year-old father be not beloved? As Isaac grew up, he was a gentle character, at the beck and call of his father. Abraham loved him, like “carrying a pearl in the pan of his palm.” Isaac had become his idol, occupying his thoughts more than God. Isaac took the place of God.

One day God said to Abraham, “Take your son, your only begotten son, your beloved son, to Moriah, to the mountain of my appointment, and there sacrifice him to me.” Beloved brothers and sisters, Abraham burst into tears! But though he understood not, he obeyed: The Lord’s will be done.

The next day, before it dawned, Abraham got up. Silently, lest Sarah should know, he took Isaac and two servants, and off they went to Moriah.

A lovable son of thirteen left with his father Abraham in the murky darkness of dawn. As they went along. Abraham’s heart ached

with every step. That night they stayed at an inn. Abraham told his two servants to sleep in the hall, while he and his son slept inside the room.

Abraham spent a sleepless night. He knelt before God and cried, “O God, I can’t understand this. He is a lovable boy of thirteen. Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done.” Isaac woke up afraid. “Father,” he said, “How are you? Father, why are you awake?” Abraham replied, “My son, sleep on!” Abraham pleaded with the Lord, “O God! Let this bitter cup be removed from me. Only let Thy will be done.”

As they continued their journey the next day, his heart weighed heavier still. This heaviness wore on into the third day, which made Abraham even more restless throughout the night. As he now stroked Isaac’s head and gazed on his gentle, handsome face, he groaned, “O God! Why did You deceive me? Did You not promise me many children like the stars? But why do you want to take away my only begotten, darling son? Why? Yet, I trust in You.” As he gazed for the last time on his son so soon to leave this world, he wept.

The morning of the third day saw the four of them plod on to their destination. Abraham told the two servants to wait at the foot of the hill. Isaac now carried the wood, and step by step father and son climbed the hill. Frightened, Isaac asked his father, “Father, everything is ready. But where’s the lamb?” Stabbed to the heart, Abraham said, “My son, God can prepare it for us.”

On the top of Mt. Moriah, Abraham held Isaac’s hand, and said, “My little darling. You are the lamb! God wants me to offer you a sacrifice.” Isaac replied, “Father, May the Lord’s will be done!” So Abraham tied his darling, 13-year-old son and made him kneel over the wood. With eyes upon his son he called to heaven, “O God, I praise Thee, I obey Thee! I love you above everything.” Now, to Isaac he said, “My son, I love you, but I have to carry out God’s will....” As he painfully raised the knife to kill his son, suddenly a voice called out, “Abraham, Abraham.” Abraham answered, “Here I

am.” God said to him, “Do not hurt your son. Now I know you love Me. You love Me more than all, even more than your only begotten son!” Beloved brothers and sisters, today God is still seeking, seeking for you. On Moriah God had found Abraham. Beloved brothers and sisters, on Mt. Moriah, there was one who had offered his only begotten son to God.

Abraham looked up when he heard the voice, and lo! in the thicket there came the bleatings of a lamb. God said, “Offer this lamb to Me.” Abraham took that lamb and offered it a burnt offering, its blood in the place of his son. This lamb’s blood saved Abraham’s children and children’s children. Who is the Lamb? O, He is our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. He walked after God for 33 years. Finally he gave His precious body a sacrifice for the whole world, to save all mankind. On Golgotha God sacrificed His Son for Abraham’s children. Beloved brothers and sisters. Do you know what the Cross means? Beloved brothers and sisters, do you love Jesus above everything? Abraham was victorious! He became the Father of all ages. He loved the Lord over everything. Beloved brothers and sisters, who in Amoy and Kulangsu loves God more than everything else? May the Holy Spirit pour out His power to move us to love Jesus to the end.

## **V. Allegorical**

### ***1. Kway Teow, Bee Hoon, Rice***

Kway Teow, Bee Hoon, Rice  
3 Essentials in our Diet  
Faith, Hope, Love  
3 Essentials in our Life  
As Rice is the most staple,  
So is LOVE  
1 Cor 13

## **2. *The Unfathomable Grace of God (2 Kings 7) (By Dr. John Sung)***

Samaria, Capital City of Israel was surrounded by the armies of the Syrians. The people were in grave anxiety, for many had nothing to eat. So much so they were obliged “to eat pigeon dung.”

V. 1. But Elisha said, “By this time tomorrow two gallons of flour or four gallons of barley grain will be sold in the markets of Samaria for a dollar. . . .” Beloved brothers and sisters, the grace of God is beyond our imagination. Many of God’s people are waiting for His saving grace to come quickly, not knowing that it has already come. Now is the accepted time!

V. 2. Here we have a high officer, assistant to the King, who said to Elisha, “Impossible! A dollar to buy two gallons of flour? Unless the door of heaven would open up!” Elisha said, “Whether you believe or not, this thing shall come to pass.” O the unfathomable grace of God! The grace of God is beyond our wish and imagination. The grace of God is still with us. Before I came here, I never could have dreamed of such a crowd tonight.

When I went to Huchow, I hoped to see only 200 born again. So, I asked for this number in prayer. On the first day, however, out of 400 who came to the meeting, 300 were saved! On the second day, over 1,000 came and we had to meet outside on the grounds. Almost 1,000 were saved, including a pastor’s son. This pastor’s son said to me, “Mr. Sung, I never knew God’s grace until now.” Beloved brothers and sisters, whether you believe or not, the grace of God must come to you. How great and wonderful is His grace!

V. 3. Praise the Lord! Here are four lepers who refuse to die, sitting up. They want to get out of death. Pitiful, there are so many who would prefer death, never desiring a way out. There are many more struggling in their daily sorrows. These also have never thought of getting out!

V. 4. Wonder of wonders, these four lepers thought of a way out. They said, “If we sit here we are sure to starve to death. If we go into

the city, we will also die. Why not get out of here and surrender to the Syrian Army?" Now, I'm not in favour of their surrendering. I am in favour of their determination to find a way out.

A sister in Shanghai wrote me of her mother's plight. Only over 30, she has succoured ten children. But every one of her children has died, except herself. She says, "My mother is a devout Buddhist. Buddha said to her that her ancestors in hell had need of money. So they had taken her children to hell to sell them for money. Now her only way out was to worship the devils with money. When my mother asked how much money she needed to pay up, the answer was \$200. She really spent that \$200, but when she went to inquire of Buddha again, Buddha replied "Your ancestors are still penniless. So on the 8th day of the ninth moon, they will also take your only surviving daughter to hell and sell her. My mother was scared to death. She went to the Church and asked the pastor to pray for her. This brought us peace and nothing happened to me, her daughter. After this, she got hold of a hammer and had her Buddha idol smashed to pieces."

Beloved brothers and sisters, Satan had utterly oppressed this woman. Could she do anything else but struggle her way out? How jubilant! Today how many are under the throes of the Devil's grip? There's the tobacco devil, the gambling devil, the alcohol devil. Why won't you seek a way out?

Vv. 5, 6. The four lepers found their way to the Syrian camp. But when they got there they saw not even a shadow of the Syrian troops. "Ha, Ha!" they chuckled, "Such a lot to eat! How lucky we are, and there is none to fight against us . . ." Beloved brothers and sisters, wonderful is the work of the Holy Spirit. If a person is willing to be led by the Holy Spirit to seek a way out, he will find the way ahead marvellous, and more marvellous yet. Once, after a sermon, a new convert said to me, "Mr. Sung, I was in great trouble when I decided one day to come to your meetings. At first I found your preaching entirely tasteless, but I decided to sit through the sermons. As I concentrated on the sermon, my heart began to beat and throb. When

you said, ‘Anyone who is a sinner, let him raise his hand.’ At first I had no courage, but afterwards I raised my hand, I went forward, and as I went, all the sins I had previously committed flooded before my eyes. I felt miserable. But the moment I put my trust in Jesus, a ton-load of sin fell from me. I received such a joy as I had never known.” Beloved brothers and sisters, if a man wants to be saved, he will find salvation wonderful, yet more wonderful.

Vv. 7, 8. The four lepers were thrilled by the wealth they now possessed. For, the Syrians being overwhelmed by a sound of horses and chariots they had heard the night before had fled to the last man. God’s grace is given to us freely without any charge. Without arms, without lifting a finger to fight, the lepers had plenty to eat, more to spare, and a whole lot they couldn’t carry away. O, the inexhaustible grace of God.

One night I had a dream. I saw a man who had lost a lot of money. I began to pick the money up, and I picked and picked every one of the coins. When I awoke, I couldn’t find a cent. Such is the nature of dreaming. But God’s grace is not such vanity, not such a dream. God’s grace is real. It defies our counting. God’s grace did not merely satisfy the leper’s hungry stomachs. This would not be enough.

V. 9. Most precious is this verse. The four men, having eaten, thought of the hungry plight of their countrymen. They agreed, “Let us tell the good news at once! If we do not make the report when dawn comes, the King would surely punish us.” Beloved brothers and sisters, how many of you are having your talent buried. You have never told forth the good news i.e., the Gospel! Paul says, “Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.” Now the people of Amoy have nothing to eat, while you are being fully fed. Mongolia, Kweichow, Yunnan are teeming with countless starving souls. They have never tasted the grace of God. Beloved brothers and sisters, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.”

Let us see what these four have reported. They have preached the Gospel. They have given a vigorous testimony, for woe would come on them if they preached not the good news. Beloved brothers and sisters, let us remember: it is a greatest sin not to preach the Gospel.

Vv. 10, 11. They are now on their way. They tell it to the gate-keeper. The gate-keeper believed because he saw them all well-fed. People believed them because they were well-fed.

Once there was a man selling hair-restorer. He bragged about his hair-restorer as he hawked: "If you buy my hair-restorer and rub it on your bald head, it will make your hair grow." A little child came and pulled off the hat he was wearing, "You just said, 'If you rub the hair-restorer on your head, hair would grow'. But, look, you are a bald yourself. Why don't you do what you say?" What a big joke! A bald-head selling hair-restorer! This is like a man never born again preaching a sermon on "salvation through the new birth". Laughable! Why is the Church so slow moving today? Because in it are many bald heads trying to sell hair-restorer. Who would buy it? These four lepers are fed and round-bellied. They are convincing to the gatekeeper. May you also say, "We have been to the revival meetings. We have eaten a lot." Before you were gambling fiends. Now you can praise the Lord and convince others.

V. 12. The gate-keeper said, "Let me go and tell the king." Now the king, when he got up in the middle of the night, was prejudiced. He said, "Perhaps the Syrians have gone away in disguise. If we go after them, may we not fall into their ambush?" In such a case, can God open the door of grace?

Vv. 13, 14. Someone told the king, "Don't be prejudiced. Let us send five men to find out." When those five returned, they said with one voice, "The enemy has retreated! The ground is strewn all over with goods." When I was preaching in Shanghai, the Church in Hangchow sent four delegates to hear me, because they were not sure of inviting me. When these four were favourably impressed, they invited me. When I got to Hangchow, a super-pastor there was

fiercely opposed to me. He had a son, a habitual gambler, who never read his Bible. Wonder of wonders! While others remained unsaved, he got saved, he repented. He was changed. He organized many Gospel teams. He told his father, “You are against revival meetings, but I have been converted. I won’t gamble now. I love to read the Bible.” Beloved brothers and sisters, when men resist you, don’t be discouraged. If God be for us, all problems will be solved.

Once when I went to Swatow, I got no invitation to preach the first day. I was invited by only one place. After the first meeting, over 200 were born again. The second meeting saw over 1,000 in attendance. After this, every church invited me to preach. Brothers and sisters, if you preach the truth, you needn’t worry even when you are being resisted.

Vv. 16, 17. O, the open door of God’s grace! All went! There was no need to invite, or to coerce. They rushed for all their worth. All were dying of hunger, and all fought for the food. If what you preach is the Gospel, people will come and hear. If what we preach is truth, we needn’t worry if men oppose us. When I was preaching in Canton, detectives and policemen were sent to arrest me. When they were on the point of doing so, a band of students protested. This truly was God’s help.

On another occasion when I went to another Church, there was a notice put up, “Meetings Prohibited.” But this could not stop a multitude coming. Who can resist when the Holy Spirit is working? God said, “A dollar will buy two gallons of flour.” True? Yes? Unfathomable is God’s grace.

V. 18. Was God’s Word fulfilled? Most certainly. Whoever disbelieving is a stumbling block. But such is trampled to death! If we preach it good, Satan is surely defeated. Now you’re born again. You’re blessed. If you preach not the Gospel, woe will come!

God called me on Feb. 10, 1926. The Lord wanted me to preach. Many a time I didn’t want to, for preaching is a difficult job. If I became a teacher, no one would bother me. When I started to preach,



I found many adversaries. If you preach you must carry the cross. Your whole life must be hung on it. Thousands upon thousands are still in Satan's grip. "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel."

Beloved, we are well-fed. Woe is unto us, if we preach not the Gospel.

\* \* \*

### **Allegory in the Bible**

For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. (Gal 4:22-31).

*This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

*(1 Tim 3:1-7)*

## Chapter XII

### The Preacher Must be His Own Sermon

The preacher can only be heard, not by what he says but by what he is. What he is, is what he does. If he does not practise what he preaches, his parishioners will not hear him. They might come to Church on the Lord's Day, but they will criticise his sermon in the light of what he does. For example, if he quarrels with his wife, will the congregation listen to his sermon on a Happy Home?

First of all, the preacher must be called. He takes on the job of a preacher for no other reason than obeying the voice of God. He then must love his God and Saviour with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind (Matt 22:37). And he must also love his neighbour as himself. He must, constrained by the love of God, love his congregation and those outside his church.

He must be a man of prayer. Of serene dedication, seeking to do His will all the time, and not his own will. He must be like the Son, who testifies of His mission, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:36). He must hasten with His Master, "I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." (John 9:4).

He must also be a man of the Word. Rev. Ting Li Mei, first revivalist of China and evangelist "with one thousand souls a month" was a mighty preacher. To sustain himself as a preacher he read his plain Bible without cross reference six chapters a day, with a red pencil to mark its golden verses. Dr. John Sung, the next revivalist

after him read his Bible 11 chapters a day and 13 on the Lord's Day. How about us?

There are 1189 chapters in the whole Bible. If we read a little more than three chapters a day we would finish it in one year. *The Defined King James Bible* published by Dr. D.A. Waite has a yearly Bible Reading Schedule. He encourages us to read 85 verses per day with a diamond "asterisk" marking it, like a milestone on the road for the motorist. By this scheme, it behoves every preacher to read the Bible through at least once a year. But let us not read perfunctorily, merely to salve our conscience, but rather meditatively, marking our Bible those verses that are of particular importance to our understanding. And let us memorise the key verses especially. We should study to "shew ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15).

A preacher cannot be a frivolous person. As a leader he must be grave. He must have a humble and teachable spirit. He must as a good scholar, "review the old and acquire the new" like the scribe Jesus talked about, "a householder which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matt 13:52). He cannot afford not to study, for without reading up to replenish his knowledge, how can he instruct others? For, "reading maketh a full man" (Bacon).

Dr. John Sung was a one-book man. He read nothing else except the daily newspaper. Is he our example? If we read no other book except the Bible as much as he did and the daily newspaper, we will do well. Each man has his own taste, but if we neglect the Bible, we totally lose out.

The preacher must be a soul-winner. He will show it in his preaching, and in his interest in promoting any soul winning project. He will touch on salvation to his hearers in his Sunday sermons. He will hold special Gospel campaigns. He gives time to tracting and may write Gospel tracts himself. He is all things to all men in order to save some (1 Cor 9:22).

The preacher should maintain a good physique. This he does by not being a glutton, that ends up much overweight. Dr. Chia Yu Ming, my teacher in China, had no good word for a fat preacher with his “archbishopric”. While we are neither to be skinny, the prophecy on Christ that he is a root out of dry ground shows he was not like the one we have just mentioned. He surely would be on the slim side. Let us not overeat.

Neither is a preacher a sportsman “for bodily exercise profiteth little ... and exercise thyself rather unto godliness” (1 Tim 4:7,8). This does not mean that he cannot play a game of badminton or go out jogging. The point is, don’t overdo.

He should know how to maintain his health. A sickly pastor commands little respect, just like an employee often on sick leave is suspect. In my case, while I might be laid off once in a while, I always see to it I’m fresh and alive to ascend the pulpit every Sunday morning. It is of great thanksgiving to God that I’ve never been sick one Sunday the last 48 years. I’ve never missed my pulpit.

The preacher must live “joyfully” with his wife (Eccl 9:9). And rule his household well, bringing up his children in the knowledge and nurture of the Lord (1 Tim 3:4). His home should be a foretaste of heaven. This will liberate him to speak freely and convincingly from the pulpit.

But there are preachers encumbered with quarrelsome wives and disobedient children. His preaching will be a struggle. His congregation, knowing his background, will sense it immediately, “He must have quarrelled with his wife last night”.

The ministry of hospitality is another part of his calling. A pastor who has no guest in his house will find no host when he travels abroad, according to a Chinese proverb.

Life Church is well-known for taking care of strangers and the sick with the ample facilities of Beulah House. The Church Warden is also vitally involved in this work of kindness.

A pastor cannot be sidetracked into any kind of secular business. Some go into realty business, and insurance, to earn a commission. Some invest in shares. But we must follow Peter to abandon our fishing net and boat to follow Him fully (Luke 5:1-11). “Lovest thou Me more than these? Feed my sheep”. (John 21:15-17).

A pastor should also set an example to the congregation in tithing. Paying the tithe is just the beginning. A pastor who preaches on tithing but does not tithe himself is cheating God and himself. Apart from the tithe he is willing to give way beyond his stipend in order to support the Gospel work to the ends of the earth. Indeed, he would be willing to give his all whenever the occasion arises. William Chalmers Burns, “Grandfather of Bible-Presbyterians” gave one year’s salary back to the Mission Board in order that it might pay the way for a new missionary to come to the field. “All to Jesus, I surrender” is the devotion of this man. When he died, he left but a few coins in his locker. We need the William Burns spirit.

Finally, Wang Ming Tao says a preacher is first tempted by money, second by sex and third by pride. For total walk in all righteousness, it is good to publish his “Proverbs for Christian Living” for our admonition, as follows:

## **PROVERBS FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING**

Fearing God is the foundation of life.  
Loving neighbour is the way of living.

Be very sincere in dealing with others.  
Be very severe in regulating yourself.

When in poverty, do not cringe.  
When in prosperity, be not proud.

Never harbour a spirit of jealousy.  
Rejoice with them in prosperity.

Rejoice not at the misfortunes of others.  
When others are down, share their troubles.

Don't overtake your neighbour where profit lies ahead.  
Don't step backwards in the face of common danger.

When you're indebted to others, be ready to confess and redress.  
When others are indebted to you, be indulgent and forgiving.

When doing good to others, regard that your duty.  
When others do good to you, recognise it is by their grace.

Let not any wealth that goes through you,  
whether big or small, soil your palm.

In making friends with members of either sex,  
be proper and open.

Do not promise easily.  
Having promised, be diligent to fulfil.

Do not borrow at random.  
Pay back quickly any loan.

Respect your elders, and elders of others.  
Love your children, and children of others.

Let the strong points in others become a pattern to you.  
Let the weak points in others be a warning.

Control your temper: be not easily provoked to anger.  
Guard your lips; and be slow to speak.

Do not spread any unfounded report.  
Do not do anything that fears exposure.

Do not covet the wealth you see in others.  
Do not look on with folded arms when others fall.

Bow not nor fawn before people.  
Speak no evil behind others' backs.

Be diligent and loyal in serving others,  
True and straightforward in your transactions.

Hate evil like snakes and scorpions.  
Love neighbours like rare treasures.

Rather lose money than trustworthiness.  
Rather lose your life than self-control.

Do not cover up your mistakes,  
Nor boast at all of your virtues.

Be always courteous in speech and conduct.  
Be always neat and tidy in apparel.

Do not provoke others to hate you,  
Nor speak words that irk your hearers.

Absolutely no smoking, no drinking, no gambling,  
Taboo to all seductive make-up.

Think always for the good of others.  
Wherever you go, seek God's glory.

Amen.



## Epilogue

*Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.*

*(Rom 16:25-27)*

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# APPENDIX

## Insight Into Rev. Ting's Homiletical Principles

*by Rev. Lee Chi An*

### I. REVIVALISTIC PREACHING.

The first time I came in contact with Rev. Ting was over a decade ago. The atmosphere of the revival meetings was fervent yet restrained, to God's glory and men's salvation. His method of revivalistic preaching may be classified under five headings.

1. His topic was Bible-based. He expounded Scripture with Scripture, interspersed with his spiritual experiences, and moving anecdotes. His sermon lasted about one hour. It came to an abrupt ending when the climax was reached, when the audience was most attentive.
2. His demeanour was natural and kindly, though he might sometimes strike the pulpit to arrest attention, when the audience tended to stray. Otherwise he would be like a steady flowing river, neither swift nor sluggish. He spoke the Word of God most sincerely.
3. In a week's campaign he would generally divide his objectives into three. The first three days he would preach on the problem of sin. The middle day of the campaign he would speak on nurture of the spirit. The last two nights would be devoted to consecration and responsibility, appealing for covenanters with the Lord. If there were no students he would give the congregation a final opportunity to learn how to pray and read the Bible.
4. In meetings with students he could not avoid answering their questions. If questions were genuine he would give a satisfactory answer. If questions were queer and off on a tangent he would ask

the questioner to answer them himself. By this soft reply the one bent on trouble-making would beat a hasty retreat.

5. On the last day he would report on those who had asked him to intercede. There was once when this list of names in his prayer register nearly touched 5,000. He declared he would still pray for them all.

## **II. Sunday Sermon.**

1. It lasted half an hour.
2. Topics were appropriately chosen like in the discharging of one's stewardship. No old topics. Though some were preached before, the contents included new ideas.
3. Objective: Spiritual nurture. It included one or two steps on spiritual progress. It pointed out to those who lost their way.
4. His delivery was terse and to the point, a method he used also in revivalistic preaching. This was more evident, however, at worship service. He spoke for half an hour. Verbosity would take away much of the precious time.

## **III**

I heard little of Rev. Ting's outdoor preaching. But there was once when he joined the Preaching Band of North China Theological Seminary on a preaching excursion. There I saw him standing on a table preaching away with a loud voice, testifying Jesus to be the Christ. As I look back I can draw three good methods from this style of preaching.

1. His demeanour was earnest, quite different from his usual appearance. Every word was power-charged to draw the bystanders' attention.
2. The aim of the theme was to declare Jesus to be the Saviour.

3. Time taken was half an hour. It is to be noted that a sermon longer than that would lose its effect, and moreover usurp the time allotted to other preachers.

## IV

In Bible study and lectures, I was under him for two years. Once we met at Hunan Bible Institute, Changsha. There I had Bible study under him once or twice. Whether Bible study or lecture, the method employed was more or less the same.

1. Whether it be one book, or several chapters, or one chapter, he would give it a very arresting title. This he would chalk on the blackboard. There could be no haziness in what was to be discussed. Moreover, he would subdivide the body of the message and write it on the board. He would read these and repeat them so as to impress them more firmly in the mind. He would explain the contents of each section and proceed to lecture along three lines.
  1. The outline of the sections
  2. The important points of sub-sections
  3. The main idea of each sentence to be explained in simple language and by parable and by pertinent Bible verses to substantiate its Biblical meaning.

In personal conversation, evangelistic correspondence, or personal evangelism while travelling, he had his way of expression. In conclusion the gift of evangelism that God had bestowed Rev. Ting was many sided. Thus he had done a good work for God during the last thirty years. Glory be to God.

# Notes to Preachers of the Word

*by Dr S H Tow*

## A. ON PREACHING

1. Preaching, simply put, is transmitting a message from God. We are “oracles” (mouth pieces) of the thrice holy God.
2. We can only transmit what God first puts into our “system” (heart and mind). When God’s Word within is hot (like “fire in the bones”) then it must come out. That is “Spirit-hot” preaching.

*As Jeremiah said, “But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jer 20:9).*

3. Dr John Sung was such a transmitter of the Word. He knew the Word “inside out,” “backward and forward.” In mental hospital 193 days, he read the Bible 40 times, making extensive notes, in Chinese.
4. Daily, he read 11 chapters of the Bible, with prayer. When he preached, the Word flowed “*out of his belly [like] rivers of living water*” (John 7:38).
5. John Sung was an extraordinary man. He was wholly committed to God and holy for God in total surrender. That gave him pulpit power which turned men in repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever he preached, it lit revival fires in a thousand hearts, some still burning after 60 years.

6. Social life was minimal. He never socialised: For him, no welcome dinners, no time for inconsequential. “All for Jesus, all for Jesus, all my days and all my hours.” John Sung lived Christ all his fifteen years of whirlwind ministry.
7. How do we regard the pulpit? A place for “show off”? God forbid. Oratorical skills, eloquence and showmanship are of the world, for the world. The pulpit is planted on Mount Calvary, the place of repentance and tears.
8. The Chinese converts leave Saipan loaded with Bibles, sermon tapes, doctrinal books, preaching aids instead of the usual American and Japanese electronic goods, bought with their “life savings.” Back in China, they preach in house churches, at great risk.
9. If they do it thus, can we do less?  
We are not bothered by secret police or party cadres. Only the urge for social advancement and worldly pleasure weigh us down.
10. An exchange with our Chinese brethren will do us good! Or a visit to China? Why not?
11. Worldliness dims the brightness of our witness. Sins rob the power from our preaching. God save us from both.
12. No time, no time! Too busy, is the common complaint. But we know not what shall be on the morrow! What time do we have before “time up” and the Son of man breaks through the clouds of heaven?
13. If we cannot be sure of tomorrow, how can we be making five- and ten-year plans? Plan—yes, for God first. So I plan for Year End, New Year—God willing, to do this or that, in Sydney, Perth, Vancouver. If God will, DV, you too.
14. This urgency must constrain our **PREACHING**, our **SERVICE** in every area, if we mean business for the Lord.



## B. ON PREPARING

### 1. Preparing—for what?

That we may be vessels fit for the Master's use. Vessels are channels. They must be clean and pure for God's Word—the life-giving Water—to flow through.

2. *“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”* (Ps 139:23–24). Let the Spirit do His perfect work in us before we can do His perfect will.
3. Bathe heart and mind with *“prayer; and . . . the word”* (Acts 6:4). Deep communion with the Lord in the secret hour will open windows of heaven and make us channels for God—channels of blessing.
4. *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim 2:15).

Study takes time, no shortcuts.

5. Memorise, memorise, memorise! It's time-consuming, it's painful, it's uncomfortable! But it's the KEY! Why is the preaching powerless? The preacher fumbles at God's Word, quotes wrongly, hesitantly, showing his lack of preparation.
6. Use Aids, Helps, from the pens of godly men: Spurgeon, M Henry, J C Ryle, Arthur Pink, John Sung, Lloyd-Jones, Campbell Morgan, Puritan writers.
7. How I prepare for a Sermon:
  - a. Meditate on the Title. What does it say to me?
  - b. Search the Scriptures, relevant to the title.  
Read over and over.  
Pray, meditate, jot down holy thoughts.

- c. Read commentaries, helps, etc.
- d. Make an outline.

The Theme—always keep in sharp focus.

Points which bear up the theme are like a framework on which to build. Jot down the relevant thoughts which fall within the framework. Note other Scripture texts which support, amplify, clarify, the theme passage.

- e. After a day or two:
  - i. Write out the Sermon, as fully as necessary. My usual is 10–12 pages of A5-size papers with “double-spacing.”

With practice and experience, sermon notes may be reduced in length.

- ii. Write in a progressive manner—expounding, explaining each verse of the text, each key word.

- iii. In the course of writing,

Apply, Apply, Apply

Build to a Climax

the final Punch of the sermon.

- f. Sleep over the sermon a couple of days.

Revise, Revise, Revise

Underline Key words in Red

Circle Key words in Red

- g. Re-write—if necessary

Rewrite, Refine, Review

- h. More Prayer, many times, over the Sermon notes, for sanctified thoughts.

## C. ON DELIVERING

1. The Day has come!

Nerves? By prayer and supplication, the Spirit of God takes over.

“Lord, Thou hast called me here to declare Thy Word. I am only your instrument. From Thy Holy Throne, Help!”

God answers! You preach!

2. Bible open, notes beside the Book.

Look at your audience.

3. If well rehearsed, you will not read but address the audience.

The occasional “down glance” at your sermon notes, focusing on the Key words, enables you to speak and not appear to read.

4. Secret of Power—

Keep to the Bible text,

verse by verse,

word by word,

do not digress and stray from the theme.

The Spirit will enable, give utterance.

5. Never refer to many, many different passages of the Bible.

In any sermon, an average of 2 or 3 supporting passages is more than enough.

6. A sermon worked around the Bible text, even just a few verses, will drive home a message more effectively than a multitude.

7. Liven and brighten up the preaching with real life examples, illustrations, incidents. A few relevant anecdotes will reinforce the sermon, but not too many.

8. Never

- a. Never crack jokes simply to loosen up. The pulpit is not for entertainment.

- b. Never speak of oneself, family, own business, children (unless there is a very proper spiritual application).
- c. Never run down, belittle others.
- d. Never indulge in “small talk.”
- e. Never resort to theatrical dramatisation.
- f. Never clown at the pulpit.
- g. Never use “street language.” We are on holy ground.
- h. Never misquote, tell half-truths.
- i. Never show off.

9. Time yourself.

A good sermon should last 40–45 minutes. A poor sermon of 30 minutes is better than 45! Do not Pad! Do not waste words, repeat and repeat. Never fall into the habit of saying one sentence twice.

10. Self-appraisal.

Take home your message tape.

Play back and carefully appraise it,

note book in hand, pen ready, and make notes: that’s the way to improve.

11. Ask your wife / children:

Tell me, how was it?

Humility the key!

12. Keep Learning, Trying Harder.

**The Spirit is on your side if you humbly ask for help!**

# **Insight Into John Sung's Doctrinal Emphasis and Preaching Methods**

## **I**

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). It is evident from a study of John Sung's life that God had sent him to Union Seminary, to taste the bitterness of liberal theology that he might find the grace and truth of the living Saviour the sweeter. From a failure to obtain salvation in the sages and sutras of the Orient, it made him treasure all the more the Word of God. Through all his conflicts with a false Christianity on one hand and human religions on the other, John Sung's solution to the problems of life, now and beyond, was the Bible. More than ever a fundamentalist after conversion, believing the Bible to be the infallible and inerrant Word of God, he took a strong stand against the higher critics. Once when he was confronted by missionaries who denied the truthfulness of Genesis and the efficacy of the Blood of Christ, he quoted Confucius by way of contrast. Confucius (551-478 B.C.) said, “If I hear the Truth in the morning, I am prepared to die in the evening.” Commented John Sung, “Had Confucius lived in Christ's day, he would have become a Christian.” With his former encounters with Fosdick, it was an old game to cross swords with liberal missionaries in the fields.

Though he had visions and dreams during the days of spiritual conflict, he rarely referred to them in his sermons, except his conversion experience. His emphasis was on God's Word and the

reading of the Bible. Relying on the Holy Spirit as his Teacher through much time spent in prayer and meditation, he read eleven chapters of the Bible everyday and thirteen on the Lord's Day, making annotations as he went along. This holy habit he kept up without a break to the end of his life.

A thorough student of the Bible, John Sung knew the Old Testament as well as the New. His sermon texts ranged through every book of the Bible. A Premillennialist, believing in the soon coming of Christ, he would expound Daniel or Revelation in his follow-up "spiritual nurture" meetings after every revival campaign. These Bible-study sessions, like the revival meetings, would last two hours each session, three times a day.

Though the Bible was his only textbook, John Sung could have used a Scofield Reference Bible, as reflected in the dates of authorship and other dates in his Homilies on the whole Bible. If he had consulted the Scofield Bible, he did not show any trace of Dispensationalism in his teachings. He strongly emphasised the holiness of God by quoting the Ten Commandments, and denounced sins by their families under each Commandment. And since the wages of sin is death, he spoke often on the theme of Heaven and Hell, acting out the Rich Man and Lazarus.

When he first started to preach after returning from America, he spoke out against Government enforcement of thrice-bowing before the portrait of Sun Yat Sen, Father of the Chinese Republic. This, he declared, was breaking the Second Commandment and no different from ancestor worship. For so saying the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) ordered his arrest, but God delivered him. As to the modernist missionaries' argument that bowing is merely an Oriental way of showing respect, like saluting the flag in the West, Rev. Timothy Pietsch, now veteran missionary to Japan who supported John Sung retorted, "If the one you bow to can bow back to you, then you can bow."

In his theological position, John Sung was an Arminian. But he rejected the doctrine of “sinless perfection”, nor did he quarrel with Calvinism and Predestination. He did challenge those who beguiled themselves, “Once saved, always saved,” when they were living in sin. John Sung was sound in Christology. Making Christ Crucified, Risen, Ascended and Coming Again the centre of his preaching, his sermons were orthodox and well-balanced. So is his doctrine of the Church. While he was not slow to rebuke modernist ecclesiastical leaders, he loved the people and worked with the Church, having been nurtured in a parsonage from birth to manhood. A Methodist in upbringing as we have noted, he submitted to the laying on of hands by the Methodist Bishop to his ordination.

As to the mode of baptism, he naturally sprinkled. This he did to a batch of two hundred at their request while campaigning in Manchuria. In Hong Kong, however, he went under the water in a Baptist Church to identify himself with the Baptists, and for the sake of gaining entrance to Baptist territory. Now that he was immersed, the missionary of that Church asked him to baptise twenty-one women and twelve men, which he did.

It can be concluded from what he humorously said in a sermon in Singapore, which is recorded by Professor Liu Yih Ling in his Chinese publication of “John Sung’s Sayings and Anecdotes”, that the doctor was badgered by controversialists on both sides of the Baptism question. I can still see him with that impish smile, “Well, if you want it from me, More faith, less water; less faith, more water.” Now, I hope you of Spurgeon’s Tabernacle will not duck me under, being a John Sung follower, but John Sung’s stance, I believe, was right. He was primarily an evangelist, like Paul, putting soul-saving by the precious Blood above ordinances. He could say with Paul, “For Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel . . .” (1 Cor 1:17). Well could he also recite with the Apostle, without prejudice to Baptist brethren, “And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that

are without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” (1 Cor 9:20-22). That Evangelism is of paramount importance to his ministry over denominational distinctions is further attested by a Chinese couplet in his handwriting, published in Leslie Lyall’s book on John Sung. The couplet reads, “With united heart and will, Let us promote the Gospel.”

## II

In 1885, Edwin Joshua Dukes, a Church Missionary Society missionary to Fukien Province, wrote, “One needs to be a Chinese to think as a Chinese, and to use such illustrations and references and phrases as will make public speech effective... China will never be converted through the lips of the foreigner... Not thousands of Englishmen or Americans are needed, but thousands and tens of thousands of Chinese with consecrated lips and hearts. Not so much scholars as men are needed. If the scholar is tacked on to the man, well and good, but it is the man that is needed, the brave, true-hearted, consecrated man who can stand alone... It is time to look for China’s apostle. He has not given signs of his coming. When the apostle comes, he will be a Chinese and not a foreigner. Will he come out of the theological colleges or will he come from some unexpected quarters, as God’s ambassadors often do? We cannot tell; but may he come soon! and may he shake the nation as did the Baptist the desert!”

What that Anglican missionary to China has said above is true to a great extent. Highly educated missionary teachers and pastors could liberally quote Confucius’ sayings to find common ground with their Chinese hearers, but how much could village old women and letter-blind farmers perceive of the profound doctrines drummed into their ears?



Once I attended a Dutch Church in Amsterdam. All that I could grasp at were recurrings of “Jesus Christus” and “Paradox”; “Paradox” and “Jesus Christus”. The high-nosed Calvinist preacher with all the profound doctrines of a sovereign God paradoxically could not make Christ known to me apart from his name. Since I do not know Dutch, I am also to blame. The point is, we preachers sometimes talk a lot, but I am one who after a sermon would sometimes wonder what I was telling my people all about. When a good old theme like John Three Sixteen is repeated and repeated in the same old phrases and its exposition is not mine but copied from some one, does it not fall on deaf ears?

Once a young preacher had no message to deliver on a Sunday evening. In desperation, he brought along a Billy Graham sermon to read it out. He was honest to acknowledge its authorship, but there are those, as in Jeremiah’s day, “that steal my words everyone from his neighbour” (Jer 23:30). John Sung was no plagiarist, nor was he a phlegmatic preacher. He was one more than what that Anglican missionary to China had hoped for. Yes, John Sung, above any other Chinese preacher, could speak the people’s language, to both old and young, to the educated and the uneducated, to ancient women and underage children. Although the doctor’s sermons invariably lasted two hours, there was never a dull moment, not like the dry-as-dust lecture-type sermons droning from many a Sunday pulpit, sending many off to Slumberland. Dr. Sung clothed the doctrine he was putting across in vivid, lively figures, like Bunyan in Pilgrim’s Progress. During his campaign in Singapore, some foot-bound old ladies were overhead saying of the doctor, “He can make us laugh, and also make us cry.”

Dr. Sung excelled in allegorical and biographical sermons. Though Wang Ming Tao did not like his allegorisings at first, he saw the effectiveness of that type of sermon construction for the common people. Those allegorical sermons I had heard in Singapore were not only sound as a bell, but struck a responsive chord in my heart. Oftentimes he would act out his sermon on the pulpit platform. On

other occasions, he would draw cartoons on the blackboard. Like the prophets of old, now told to carry a yoke, and now to smash an earthen vessel before their hearers, he used many visual aids of his own innovation. Apart from a French loaf and a miniature Chinese coffin which I have mentioned earlier, I can recollect him wearing the rags of a Chinese gown to represent sin and a linen-white one for our righteousness in Christ. For the Holy Spirit he would use a little bell which he rang vigorously to show how a born again person is disturbed by sin under conviction. As he fanned a little charcoal stove he would lead the congregation to sing, “Let it breathe on me, Let it breathe on me.”

Another observation I have made of John Sung’s homiletics is the employment of music. If Martin Luther has regarded music as being next to theology, John Sung made it at one with theology. For every message he preached he would have an appropriate chorus to sing at intervals. For example, for the topic of the new birth, he had, “Ye must be born again”. For the joys of the heavenly home, he would choose “In the New Jerusalem”. In commissioning the Preaching Bands, there would be that chorus of the Japan Evangelistic Band, “I Will Make You Fishers of Men”. Preaching on the woman taken in adultery, he had composed by himself “Shine Forth for Jesus Everywhere,” borrowing the tune of “Brighten the Corner”. In a message calling weary ones to rest in Jesus, he has a most touching tune as published by my brother Dr. Tow Siang Hwa, No. 507 Revival Hymns and Choruses. So Dr. Sung knew how to use audio-visual aids long before this generation.

Dr. Sung believed that an evangelist is like a midwife whose job is to deliver babies. As he preached for a verdict, he must help the believing and repenting sinner in the rebirth process, which he acknowledged to be entirely the work of the Holy Spirit. This procedure he had learned in the first storming of Shanghai, China’s megapolis. He said, “An evangelist must help a troubled soul to come to Christ by giving him an opportunity to make public profession, and to confess his sins. He must then follow up with

words of comfort and assurance for the broken-hearted.” Attorney James E. Bennett, a Bible-Presbyterian elder and soul-winner of New York City, agreed with John Sung’s method. When challenged by hyper-Calvinists, Bennett quoted the case of Jesus asking Martha, “Believest thou this?” in respect of His Resurrection Power as the basis for calling for a decision at the end of a Gospel message. This precious truth I learned from Bennett when he visited our Church in the fifties.

John Sung believed in further counselling after confession for those with deeper problems. This he would do all by himself during his revival campaigns once a day after the morning sermon. At such sessions there would be those with grievous sins needing spiritual surgery. Restitution of stolen sums of money would be made, for example. To further relieve the heavy-hearted, the doctor would read from anyone who cared to write him. The writer was requested to affix a passport size photograph to his letter. Thousands were sent to him and he would pray over each one. Such follow-up we do not see today! By reading thousands of these letters John Sung entered into the problems of his “parishioners”. “Truth being stranger than fiction,” - he gathered many wonderful testimonies and illustrations which he used most effectively in his sermons. His messages which anticipated the individual problems of his hearers never missed their mark.

While the Chinese Church fifty years ago had no national woman pastor or teacher and very few even now, we were quite familiar with women missionaries from England who spoke in our Churches. When John Sung held his first campaign in Singapore, a male government Chinese language teacher interpreted for him, from Mandarin into the local dialect. As this man was too slow to keep up with him, he had him stand down after one or two sessions. No other person could fill the gap except the interpreter’s sister. This lady, Miss Leona Wu, interpreted so well that she became his assistant in his extended campaigns to Malaysia and Indonesia.

This same lady, a graduate of Ginling Women's Theological Seminary, Nanking (whose principal was Dr. Chia Yu-ming), was moved to start a Bible school for John Sung converts desiring deeper training in the Word. The result was the founding of the Golden Link (Chin Lien) Bible Seminary in Singapore which today is 50 years old with several hundred graduates. While we believe in the institution of presbyters over the Church, God is sovereign to use women in times like these. Does He not at the first Pentecost say, "I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and *daughters shall prophesy*" (Acts 2:17)? In those days did He not call from the house of Philip the evangelist "four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy" (Acts 21:9)? While holding to certain set practices in the Church, we learned from the John Sung Revival that there are exceptions. "A higher law overrides a lower law" is one principle of Church administration we have learned thereby. (In this regard, "No Respector of Persons" by Lois G. Dickie, Ph.D., my English teacher at Faith Seminary, USA, is worthy of our study).

We have made a brief study of the preacher's doctrine and emphasis and we have made a brief survey of his methods. Though right doctrine and good methodology are important, it is the man who has totally devoted his life to His Saviour that counts. God had given John Sung fifteen years, or five periods of three years, to serve Him. Knowing the days of His service were numbered, he laboured for Him with all His might, like running a hundred-metre race. His devotion to his Lord might be expressed with Paul in his letter to the Philippians in which he avers, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:12-14). If you say that Paul the Calvinist sounds rather Arminian here, John Sung the Arminian had more perseverance in following Christ than many Pauline disciples who talk Calvinism.

As an evangelist, John Sung's doctrinal emphasis was above the denominational. His methods, whatever have been discussed, flowed from his own understanding of how best he could put across to his compatriots the doctrine of salvation he had received. Dynamic Calvinists are not afraid of innovations! Amen.



Dr. John Sung





## PREACHING THE WORD

*Dr Archibald Brown, a co-worker of Spurgeon,  
gave this advice to young preachers:*

**The Gospel is a fact;  
therefore, tell it simply.**

**It is a joyful fact;  
therefore, tell it cheerfully.**

**It is an entrusted fact;  
therefore, tell it faithfully.**

**It is a fact of infinite moment;  
therefore, tell it earnestly.**

**It is a fact of infinite love;  
therefore, tell it feelingly.**

**It is a fact of difficult comprehension to many;  
therefore, tell it with illustration.**

**It is a fact about a person;  
therefore, preach Christ.**



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