



in FOCUS

Equipping God's Workers With God's Word For God's Work



THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

David A. Dean

Acts 20 records the final meeting of Paul with the elders of the church at Ephesus. This local body of believers knew Paul well; he had spent over two years teaching in their city, and they had suffered persecution together as Christians (see Acts 19). Paul was about to depart for Jerusalem on the fateful journey that would lead to his first imprisonment at Rome. Just before he left, he summoned the elders for a final word of encouragement and warning, recorded in Acts 20:18-35.

Two statements in his message stand out in my thinking. The first is this:

Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. (Acts 20:26-27, NKJV).

These are startling words. Certainly Paul was no murderer, or thief, or insurrectionist. No one had accused him of violence or bloodshed. Yet Paul understood something that every teacher of God's Word must understand. When a teacher of God's Word withholds the truth, he can be held responsible by God for the failure of his students to know the truth. In the figure of speech to which Paul alludes, their blood can be "on his head."

All of us who interpret and teach God's Word (from the home Bible study leader to the Sunday school teacher to the seminary professor) are subject to a subtle

enticement: the temptation to teach only those parts of the message that please our audience. This temptation is nothing new. In the final days preceding the fall of Jerusalem, God called Ezekiel to deliver a message of condemnation and rebuke to Jews who were already being held captive in the city of Babylon. False prophets among these Jewish exiles were proclaiming, "Jerusalem will soon be free! The Babylonian empire will fall—and we will go home!" They found a ready audience that delighted to hear these "prophecies." Ezekiel was perhaps tempted to tone down his message as he sensed the hostility of the crowd to God's warning that their beloved Jerusalem would surely fall. And so God spoke to him these arresting words in Ezekiel 33:8: "When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand." We might generalize this principle this way: *A teacher who holds back the truth of God's Word can be held responsible when his hearers fail to respond to God's warnings.* This is a solemn admonition to all who teach and preach.

In dark days like ours, when men do not want the sin-exposing light of the Scriptures to illuminate the dark corners of their lives, that temptation still exists—even within the church of Jesus Christ. This is why Paul spent his precious final

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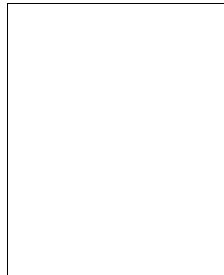


GRADUATION TESTIMONIES



LILIAN TAN

How true that the seminary is not heaven and seminarians are not angels! I believe they are saints in the making. During these three years of training, God has used BSOP to mold me into the kind of person He can use. It was like being put on the anvil, and many times I wanted to give up and to ask God, "Why me?" There are so many great, intelligent, godly people out there, why did He have to call me and allow me to go through the pain of doing research and readings?



My professors, friends and classmates always challenged me to do things I had never done before, and to face up to the painful events in my life. God has allowed me to see and know myself better: my strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. Struggles and problems have allowed me to experience God's faithfulness, sustenance, and day-to-day strength. My faith in Christ grew as I faced different challenges, especially when deadlines for assignments were right before me. I was reminded that His purpose of calling me was to be a "fisher of men." He just wanted me to see my own weakness and limits so that I would learn to depend on Him fully. Through knowing myself I have also begun to understand people who are in need and discouraged.

It is totally by the grace and faithfulness of our Almighty Father that I have survived these three years of training. May He continue to make me into a servant who can glorify Him!

JOCELYN M. ANG

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. (Ps. 118:24)

THE BEST DAY OF MY LIFE HAS COME! I am thankful to God for being with me always, in the good times and bad times of my life in the seminary. I can still remember the tears I shed in Davao three years ago when I was about to leave for BSOP to take up fulltime theological training. Those were tears of pain because of the separation from my loved ones and my ministry. But God knew my heart's desire to follow Him wherever He would lead me. He provided friends for me who became my encouragers, prayer partners and financial supporters in doing mission. Their lives became channels of God's blessing to me; how I thank God for each of them!



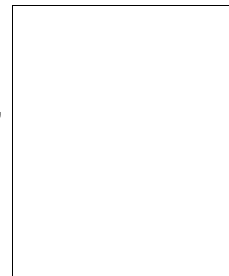
During my stay in BSOP, I learned how to study God's Word through our academic subjects. I learned how to do

God's work through our weekend and summer practicum. And most of all I learned how to share God's love to the people around me, especially to those hard to live with and "unlovable" ones in our dormitory. BSOP's training, teachers, staff, and students helped me discover my God-given ability to do cross-cultural work. It was in BSOP that I met my friend from Myanmar and friends from China, the door was opened for me to make Christ known to those living in the 10/40 window.

As I leave BSOP and go to the place where God has been leading me to work with Him, BSOP will always be my partner in doing God's work. My tears of pain has now become tears of JOY. As I prepare myself for mission in a restricted country, to do a greater task for my Master, BSOP keeps on reminding me: IF SYMPTOMS FOR SUFFERING PERSIST CONSULT YOUR BIBLE. *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for Him. (Phil. 1:29)* To God be the *glory, honor, praise and victory!*

JOE CLARENCE LI

I am sure that throughout the years, many of the BSOP graduation testimonies you have read have probably inspired you regarding how wonderful seminary life is. Allow me to show you the other side of the wall. First of all, I never really knew the meaning of backsliding until I entered BSOP. Suddenly, it was so easy to compromise my devotional time with God, to excuse myself from fulfilling my duty to God, man and society. It's so easy to be unloving in dealing with people around me. I ask myself: was it the tons of papers to write and the readings? Was it the dormitory life? Was it the way the school handled the "situations" we encountered? These, I find, are but small parts of the dilemmas that I met.



Secondly, upon entering seminary, I thought I already knew a lot. I was so confident about handling my ministry, leading Bible studies, and even preaching in fellowships. I thought I would only be going through the formalities to improve my skills and knowledge. Now, as I am about to graduate, after three years of Master of Divinity studies, fear runs through my veins, fear that carries respect and awe. Suddenly, I find nothing to base my confidence in. I realize how little I know and am apprehensive of the responsibilities and expectations that will fall upon the minute I receive my diploma.

So where does this leave me? What did three years of seminary life teach me? It made me realize my unworthiness

(Continued on page 4)

FACULTY ON THE MOVE

- * The Third Gospel Congress of CCOWEF-Phils. was held last Feb. 4-6, 2002. Dr. Joseph Shao spoke during the opening ceremony while Prof. Rosa Shao gave a special lecture on Feb. 5, 2002. About 150 attended this event at Mimosa Holiday Inn, Clark, Pampanga.
- * Dr. Joseph Shao was the guest speaker at the 35th Anniversary Thanksgiving celebration of Jubilee Christian Academy last January 31, 2002. Dr. & Mrs. Joseph Shao will be the resource speakers at the Summer Conference of UECGreenhills from April 28-30, 2002.
- * Dr. Shao and Dr. Tan Chiu Eng will teach "Exilic Period Theology" (April 22-25, 2002) and "Exegesis of I Peter" (May 27-30, 2002) respectively at the Gospel Church of Taiwan.
- * Prof. Dennis Yam will be speaking at the Summer Conference of Jesus Christ Church of Calapan from March 27-30, 2002.
- * Dr. Jane Chuaunsu will be the Commencement Day speaker at Gideon Academy (3/25/2002). She will also speak at the Women's Fellowship Retreat at St. Stephen's Parish (3/30/2002); and at the Sunday School Assembly of Grace Gospel Church (3/31/2002).
- * Prof. Jean Uayan will lecture on "Paganism" at the QCEC Family Retreat on April 3-4, 2002. While attending the 50th Founding Anniversary of Dagupan Chinese Baptist Church on Feb. 17, 2002, she was able to interview Rev. Max Pettit, one of six missionaries who started said church.

WEDNESDAYS AT BSOP

We invite all our readers to join hands with us in the ministry of prayer every Wednesday. Here are some praise and prayer items.



✠ Pray for new students for School Year 2002-03. May the Lord move deeply within the hearts of those who have dedicated themselves to fulltime ministry!

✠ The estimated budget for 2002 manifests an increase in the monthly operational fund to 300,000 pesos. The number of students receiving scholarship has also increased to fifteen. Please pray with us for regular support from friends and churches.

✠ After the graduation, please pray for the TEE/preaching ministries of the faculty and practical work of the students.

Remember that we're praying for you every Wednesday, so write/call/text us your prayer requests every week!

TWO RETREATS

This year the whole student-faculty group enjoyed two retreats in a row. First we attended the Third Gospel Congress sponsored by CCOWEF-Phils. at Mimosa Holiday Inn (Feb. 4-6, 2002). Then BSOP held its own retreat at Ciudad Christia on Feb. 13-14, 2002. These retreats revived our burden for mission and our soul and body through the messages and recreation (swimming, group games, bowling, etc.).

ALUMNI NEWS

The annual welcome party for seven soon-to-be alumni was held on Feb. 17, 2002 at UECPhilippines. Rev. Vicente Sia gave a special message on Church Growth. Ptr. Michael Lim (MDiv, 1997) will be ordained at UECGreenhills on March 31, 2002. Congratulations!

DEANS DEPART

We will all miss David, Miyoung, Caleb, and Andrew Dean when they depart to go back to the US this April 13, 2002. The Deans have been with us since December, 1994. The teaching and life-example that they have imparted since then have blessed the BSOP family richly. May God bless Prof. Dean as he pursues further studies.

3RD FULLTIMER'S CONFERENCE

Speakers:
 Ptr. Jonathan Edwards Banzuelo
Faculty Member, FEBIAS
 Dr. Paul Kang
Former Academic Dean, CES

Date: May 26-30, 2002

**HERE AM I!
 SEND . . . who?**

hours of life on earth penning a letter to Timothy, his beloved son in the faith, which included this final charge:

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:2-4, NIV).

“Don’t tell them what they want to hear, Timothy,” Paul is saying. “Tell them what they *need* to hear—and do it courageously.”

By the time this article is printed, my family and I will (Lord willing) have departed for the US, ending the second term of our seven-plus years of ministry at BSOP and in the Chinese churches of Manila. Those of you who know me know that I have tried never to “pull my punches.” I have spoken the Word boldly, and accepted the risk of offending my

hearers, because I want to be able to say, as Paul did, “I am innocent of the blood of all men.” Perhaps, at times, this has earned me the ire of men—but I am convinced that the displeasure of men is infinitely preferable to the disapproval of God. I want, as Paul did, to leave behind a legacy of proclaiming the whole counsel of God.

This leads to the second portion of Paul’s message that jumps out at me from the pages of Scripture:

I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20:29-30, NIV).

Paul knew that within the church of Jesus Christ, men often arise who seek to exploit the saints for their own power and pleasure, using oily-smooth words and a phony cloak of godliness to make themselves appear as God’s messengers (see 1 Timothy 4:1-3 and 2 Timothy 3:1-9). Such devious and destructive false teachers appeared often in the early days of the church...and they still do today.

As we watch each batch of new graduates leaving BSOP, I think that

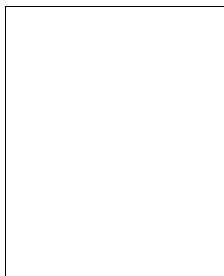
we professors feel the same concern that Paul expresses here. Will our students be able to sniff out false teachers and phony spiritual leaders? Will they be able to withstand the attacks of the “savage wolves” who will target the local churches where they serve? Will the foundations that we laid in them stand?

The answer can only be “yes” if our teaching centers upon the Word of God in its entirety—the whole counsel of God. To those of you who teach the Word of God—in whatever capacity—I appeal to you, *declare the whole counsel of God* because this is your duty. To those of you who support and pray for BSOP, I urge you, *help us continue to equip our students with the whole Word of God*, because God’s Word is always practical and effective in protecting and building up Christ’s church. And to this year’s graduates (and future batches as well), I charge you, in the name of Christ, *teach and obey the whole counsel of God*, because it alone will enable you to stand in the truth and defend the church of Jesus Christ, as good shepherds must. Let all of us who name the name of Christ proclaim, obey, and trust in *the whole counsel of God*.

and weaknesses. God has made me see who I really am, an inconsequential worm. As a result, He has also allowed me to see that it was He who miraculously carried me through all these years. And it is He who has enabled me to survive and overcome all the trials. In Him I found everything that I needed to fulfill what He has called me to be and to do. Truly, it is *not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.* (Zechariah 4:6)

EDUARDO T. YU

It never occurred to me that enrolling in a seminary would make me better holistically. I thought that seminaries are just to supply mentally-starved students



with facts and doctrines for their satisfaction. But to my amazement, I learned that these facts and doctrines are part of a life-changing process that comes in a package, meant to transform an ordinary student of the Bible into a true minister of God, at least for those who are willing to be transformed. The requisites of being a good minister of God (i.e., upright character, emotional stability and rational judgment, among others) were highlighted during my stay in BSOP. Academically, I learned to read and think in a more critical fashion, while spiritually, I drew closer to the Lord and learned to have empathy and get along with people of different temperaments.

While cherishing all these blessings and enhancements to my life, I would like to extend my heart-felt thanks to the faculty and staff of BSOP, and also to my fellow students, without whom I would not be where I am today. I will never forget the role that all of you played in my life. Rest assured that even though distance may separate us for a while, your endearing presence will remain in my heart. To God be the glory!