



in FOCUS

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



Knocked Down Yet Not Knocked Out

By Dennis Yam

If at any time in your life you have stumbled and fallen down, rise up immediately. Do not stay there to pity yourself.

The year 2004 brought a few pleasant and unpleasant memories. On a positive note, we continue to give thanks to God who has shown his faithfulness to his people. He has been gracious to each and everyone of us individually and also to His church as a whole. Many good things have happened during that year whereby we can name only a few: I still remember with great excitement when the Mars rovers *Spirit* and *Opportunity* landed on Mars during the early part of 2004. Until today, both rovers are still going strong for a six-month stint. Then, we heard about the first Chinese astronaut (or Taikonaut) to reach orbit on a Chinese-made space ship. Also, it seems space travel for ordinary citizens would be a reality soon with the first privately-funded spaceship to reach outer space and to return safely back to earth. Please understand that the author takes quite an interest in the sciences, that is why he cannot just exclude the Cassini-Huygens spacecraft and probe that flew into Saturn's orbit last July after nearly seven years of travel. As a result we have seen stunning and spectacular photographs of Saturn and its rings together with its known 31 moons and satellites. Just a few weeks ago, the Huygens probe made a smooth landing on Titan, one of Saturn's moons, showing us for the first time its surface and its methane atmosphere.

However, the year 2004 also brought along its share of calamities. Still fresh in our minds is the successive storms that came into the eastern part of the country which brought tragedies to many families early last December. There was also a scare when many Asian countries reported the spread of the bird flu virus (What? When we were still reeling from the SARS scare!). We are also reminded of the May presidential elections along with the election-related violence. Then there was the burning of an inter-island passenger vessel just outside of Manila bay that led to its sinking. Then the worst earthquake to strike in forty years—9.0 on the Richter scale that brought death to at least 226,566 people (<http://msnbc.msn.com/id/6758619/> accessed 29 January 2005) in ten countries. We saw the effect of the tectonic movement at the bottom of the Indian Ocean which created huge tsunamis that traveled at 800 kilometers per hour.

Life's Reality

It seems that year after year, we see unending tragedies go by one after the other. It is as if they will never cease to come at all. Many times we just cannot understand why these things happen—

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FACULTY ON THE MOVE

- ☞ Dr. Joseph Shao will be teaching in Thailand from January 27 to February 3, 2005.
- ☞ Dr. Tan Chiu Eng will be attending a conference on Missiological Reflections and Strategy for Evangelizing Buddhists at Chiang Mai, Thailand on January 28 to February 4, 2005.
- ☞ Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Pan spent the Christmas vacation in Hong Kong. Dr. Pan spoke for three consecutive Sundays at the Evangelical Chinese Gospel Church, as well as during the Christmas Service.
- ☞ Prof. Jay Hallowell was the chairman of the OMF annual conference held at the Paradise Resort in Davao City last December 26, 2004 to January 1, 2005. Prof. Michael Malessa and his family also attended the affair.

VISITING FACULTY

There are two visiting faculty members this quarter: Mr. Huang I Ming came to teach Systematic Theology III and Theology of Worship from January 3 to February 7, 2005. Mr. Lo Hai Peng will teach General Epistles and Marriage Counseling from February 7 to March 7, 2005.

CHRISTMAS AT BSOP

Last December 10, 2004 the whole BSOP family enjoyed a delicious banquet and Christmas program courtesy of the students, staff and professors. Special guests who attended were the parents of Mrs. Anka Malessa (wife of Prof. Michael Malessa) who came all the way from Germany. Prof. Jay Hallowell, an American missionary of OMF, gave an inspirational message in fluent Tagalog!

ALUMNI AT REST

Another alumnus has been laid to rest from his labors. Rev. Philip Ang, the first to graduate from BSOP's TEE program in the 80s who went on to complete his theological training, graduating in 1987, suddenly passed away last November 3, 2004. After graduating, Rev. Ang served in San Jose, Oriental Mindoro, then at Grace Gospel Church. He was actively involved in such organizations as Filipino-Chinese Christian Foundation (FCCF), Youth Gospel Center (YGC), and CCOWE-Philippines. May the Lord comfort his wife, children and many grandchildren.

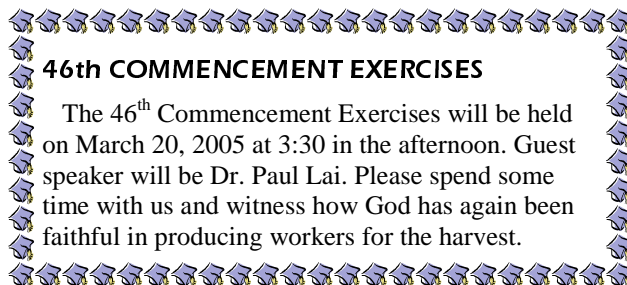
By James Ong Co

TESTIMONY

For many years the aroma of coffee and the ambience of a cushy office, where I worked as Accounting Manager of the Benison Group of Companies, was a daily experience for me. My days were full of coordinating with my staff, attending managerial meetings and rushing deadlines of management reports and financial data.

I started attending some theology seminars at a seminary or in my local church after work because I found it extremely important to be properly equipped in order to minister to other people as I became involved in teaching Sunday School and leading Cell Groups. One day I stopped to think: what shall I be teaching these kids in the future? Bible Introduction became one of my primary subjects. Despite tiring days of office work, I rushed to the seminary eager to learn what the professors would be teaching during the evening classes. We were assigned to read the whole thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. When I was reading Second Kings in preparation for writing my reflection, the power of our Almighty Lord gripped my soul as I came to this passage: "The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord – to follow the Lord and keep his commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant." (II Kings 23:3) Even a mighty king as Josiah obeyed God's commandments! Tears began to cloud my eyes. I realized what an ordinary human being I was! Shame on me. There was nothing to be proud of even if I was working in one of the top 100 corporations. For years I had been delaying to respond to God's call to be His fulltime servant. So I committed myself and entered BSOP as a fulltime student. Glory be to God!

I now claim the words of the passage in Romans 10:15 – "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Please continue to pray for God's mercies and guidance upon me as I continue to do His will.



46th COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

The 46th Commencement Exercises will be held on March 20, 2005 at 3:30 in the afternoon. Guest speaker will be Dr. Paul Lai. Please spend some time with us and witness how God has again been faithful in producing workers for the harvest.

the truth is, they are just beyond our control!

Have you ever felt why life is so cruel at times? At times, we as human beings feel that, with all its vulnerabilities, living this life is not worth all the trouble at all. Just when everything seems to go so well, suddenly without warning, tragedy comes into our midst. When it strikes, can anybody survive the onslaught? From the human point-of-view we probably can, but without its toll which can come in loss of property or loss of life.

God's Purpose and Plan

Being a Christian does not exempt us from encountering all these difficulties. Yet what sets us apart from the despair of non-Christians is our faith in God. The Bible often reminds us that God has designed us this way. In the midst of our human frailty God intends to show His glory through us. Our humanity is compared to an earthen vessel that is prone to cracks and deterioration in time. It is a vessel that is not designed to last long. Whether the vessel is made of clay or iron, as time passes the vessel will erode and rust. However, our body is designed in such a way as to contain that which is much more beautiful and powerful. What is more precious is the life that it holds—that is, the life of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:7). We are made frail and weak to show the “surpassing” power of God in our lives. We will continue to deteriorate, and that is a fact of life, so that we will not trust on our own strength but will completely rely on Him.

Paul's Never-Ending Troubles

Sometimes, many of life's difficulties are mere inconveniences. They may disrupt some of our routines to remind us that we have become complacent. Certainly, difficulties come in different degrees of disruptions. And quite a few times certain difficulties have proven to be more than just disruptions. They knock us down. They test our faith, our strengths and abilities. They become so draining mentally and emotionally. To the apostle Paul, who has experienced all kinds of adversities, you can name each of them one by one, and the apostle Paul would say, “I've been through them.” Yet in the midst of all these he still can give us good counsel:

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed . . .

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 (ESV)

May 8, 2004. The main event of boxing—the featherweight championship fight between the Philippine southpaw Manny Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez. It was a fight that brought so much excitement and drama. The fight was on a Sunday and I was in Iloilo City during that time. After church one of the church members brought me to his house to watch the fight on television. Any boxing aficionado will agree that the first round was the most crucial one. In that round Pacquiao floored Marquez three times. Yet he could not wrap it up to conclude the fight with a knockout win. Marquez managed to get up every time he was knocked down and went on to retain his crown. He fought hard

and fought back to win the fight (the final result was a draw). What a fight we may say—and what a come-back!

In the Christian life, we should not easily give up. The reason why Paul never gave up is simple: because of Christ who lived in him. And he can say this to us—when it seems that he has experienced it all: pressed like grapes to get the juice out, yet he still stands tall. When it seems that there is no way out anymore, there still is. When he has reached and used up all his human based resources, there it is—God's abundant resources are still available. Knocked down yet not knocked out.

Paul stood up again and again. He showed to us that we should never give up! That's our test today. If at any time in your life you have stumbled and fallen down, rise up immediately. Do not stay there to pity yourself. The test to our ability to stand up is to trust in His strength and not in ours. We have to stand up fast and stand tall again.

The pressures of life have been proven to be good to us. In nature the pain that results from pressure is an ordinary phenomenon. As a butterfly struggles to get out of its cocoon it gains strength from that exercise. As soon as it gets free, we wonder at its beauty as it flexes its wings and flies away. As a seed starts to germinate it has to push its way out of the pod and out of the ground. Likewise, as we go through the tensions and struggles of life we should not forget this: the strength we draw from our gracious God—it is for His glory.

