



Lively Stones

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Holding forth the word of life

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A Heart to Follow Christ, A Faith to Believe, and Courage to Act

“And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.” (Joshua 3:3)

Our Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong had reported that Singapore had grown a slower-than-expected 1.2% in 2012, a rate economists say implies the economy has slipped into technical recession after two years of sound growth.

A technical recession occurs when growth is negative for two quarters in a row. In the USA, the Senate has just voted to pass legislation that will avoid the drastic sweeping tax increases of the fiscal cliff.

This and many other political, economic, social and technological issues confronting the world today present a consensus view that what the world needs today is Hope! And this Hope is found in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. God has entrusted the Church with this Gospel message for the world.

The urgent need of the church today is Spiritual Leadership. We need spiritual leadership to build radical discipleship within our church in order that every disciple of Christ may obey the Great Commission to reach out to this lost world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

As a church, I say to you, we should not be satisfied with the status quo and become complacent in our daily life. We need to evaluate and examine our hearts to see if we are obedient to the call of the Great Commission in 2013.

God had called Moses to deliver His people from slavery and led them out of Egypt to the Promised Land. The people disobeyed God and one generation perished in the wilderness through a forty-year period. Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because of his own disobedience.

The task of leading the people into the Promised Land was passed on to Joshua. God specifically instructed Joshua: “Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.” (Joshua 1:2)

God’s people will enter the Promised Land; however, they need to cross the Jordan river first. During spring time, the Jordan river was flooded (“for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest” – Joshua 3:15b). It was practically an impossible task to cross the river at this time. But God commanded Joshua: “Arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people to the land which I give to them, to the sons of Israel.” (Joshua 1:2) Thus, Joshua commanded the officers: “Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it.” (Joshua 1:11)

Please understand that this was a tall order, God’s people was tasked to cross the uncrossable! We learn one very important theological principle in Joshua 3:3 - “When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.”

Very often, God’s words and instructions are simple and clear. But we make things complicated

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General Superintendent's Address

“And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.”

(Deuteronomy 31:8)

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with our many interpretations. God says, follow the ark and cross the river. The principle here is: “Have a Heart to Follow!” God commanded them to focus on the ark which is His *shekinah* presence.

The ark of God is mentioned ten times in this chapter. It shows the significance of the ark of God. We are to follow God whole-heartedly, without wavering! The ark of God is all the people need to focus and follow (read Matthew 6:33).

The second theological principle is: “Have a Faith to Believe!” When the people reach the river, the water did not cut-off! Even after the priests carried the ark of God into the waters, the water didn’t cut-off! What happened? Did God make a mistake in the timing? Did He go on leave and ask Archangel Michael to part the river, and Michael failed to part the water accurately? Not at all! God acted upstream!

“And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.” (Joshua 3:15-16) The spot where the priests entered the river was still wet with water, but God had already cut-off the water upstream “very far from the city of Adam” some 15 miles upstream.

Did God cut-off the water? Yes, He did, a far distance away from the point of crossing. Sometimes, when we pray, God had already answered us, but He did not reveal the answer to us immediately. He did this to test our faith whether we trust Him or not. More importantly, He wanted to show His people that crossing the river wasn’t the main objective, possessing the Promised Land was the main objective!

What an important lesson for us to learn! We need to learn to focus on the big picture and not be distracted by minor issues in life. A third

theological principle is: “Courage to Act!” Very often, we read God’s Word and memorise His promises in the Bible, but these remain as head knowledge which renders ineffective in our lives.

God wants us to apply biblical truths and experience His special grace upon us. God says it, He means it, and that settles it! This is faith in action. Truth alone does not change life; it is truth applied that changes life! In this New Year, we need to apply these theological principles in our daily lives and let God lead us into His ways. God is doing a new work in this New Year in a new way. In Deuteronomy 31:8, God says: “And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.” (Deut. 31:8)

God promises that He will go before us, He will lead us into the New Year, He will be with us, and He will not fail us nor forsake us! What a wonderful God!

May the Lord help us to have a heart to follow Him; a faith to believe His promises, and courage to act upon His promises in 2013, Amen!

In Christ,
Elder (Dr) Sherman Ong
General Superintendent
Life Bible-Presbyterian Church Sunday School

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All SS teaching and non-teaching staff are strongly urged to attend the SS Staff dedication at the 1045 Service TODAY.