

Bible Witness

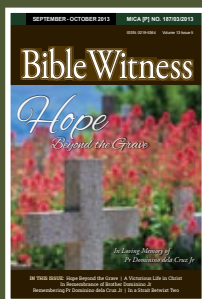
Hope *Beyond the Grave*



*In Loving Memory of
Pr Dominino dela Cruz Jr*

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Editorial

Praise God for the hope beyond the grave that He has promised to all who are in Christ Jesus. If not for the blessed hope of heaven that is in Christ, I have no idea how we can remain calm and have peace as we cope with the horrible sense of loss and sorrow which death so cruelly inflicts upon us.

When death assaulted and overpowered Dominino dela Cruz Jr, a fellow preacher and dear co-labourer in Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church, life and ministry looked very bleak and meaningless. The Bible Witness Media Ministry also lost a wonderful supporter and comrade. But thanks be to God for the hope of immortality and heaven that dispels the thick fog of death.

Preacher Dominino's death was devastating in every sense. The two young churches, which he founded through the preaching of the Gospel and nurtured with tenderness and passion, were dealt with a cruel blow as death smote their shepherd. It was a time when both churches were reeling from severe opposition and afflictions. The congregations dwindled in number as regular participants of meetings and worship were intimidated and persecuted. Some devout members of the churches were stricken with certain severe sicknesses, and some families were in the grip of serious economic difficulties, even poverty. It was a great trial that befell these churches when the deadly cancer doused the zeal and zest of their dear shepherd and finally snuffed out his life.

Death also rattled his young family of just four years. Sis Sharon, his dear wife, and Nehemiah, their beloved son, will now have to overcome their bereavement and continue their pilgrim journey on this earth. Blessed be our God who comforted them with the promise of eternal glory which their departed "dear" and "papa" has now inherited through death. Though grief and pain assailed her, Sharon was greatly strengthened by the Lord to minister to her husband till his last breath. Just after her husband took his last breath in the early hours of July 7, 2013, Sharon sent me an SMS – "He's in heaven now. Peacefully slept at 2.30am." How wondrous is the hope that we have concerning those who die in Christ! How consoling! How empowering!

Death can never prevent us from inheriting our great and ultimate hope of celestial glory with the Lord. Death shortens our earthly journey and hastens our way to heaven! As soon as death strikes, our souls shall be with the Lord. The apostle Paul said, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54).

This issue of Bible Witness, with thanksgiving to the Lord, is dedicated to the memory of His departed servant, Preacher Dominino dela Cruz Jr.

Pastor Prabhudas Koshy

Hope Beyond the Grave

Pastor Prabhudas Koshy

While thinking about his impending death, the apostle Paul wrote: “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you” (Philippians 1:23-24).

In the heart of God’s servant, Paul, there were two powerful desires at work. It is most intriguing that those desires are extreme at opposite ends. So he found himself “in a strait betwixt two”. The Greek word rendered as “I am in a strait” (*sunéchomai*) means to be pressed on or constrained, etc.; and here, it refers to the fact that Paul was in perplexity, not knowing which to choose.

What were those strong affections of his heart? First, “to depart” from this world, and second, “to abide” in this world. Both of these desires are found in the heart of every true Christian. While he is eager to be in heaven, he is also most willing to remain in the service of the Lord here on earth. So Paul confessed that to depart was far better but to stay was more needful.

All Christians must be ready to depart from this world. Death means leaving behind everything on this earth – our earthly families, friends and all other familiar things, even our earthly bodies. In death, our souls go “to be with Christ” while our bodies return to dust. We cannot stay here for long; away we must. We are “strangers and pilgrims” who journey through this earth just for a short time (Hebrews 11:13). Christians have another place to go to. When they depart from this world, they will go “to be with Christ”. This was what Jesus told the dying thief who repented and trusted Him: “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Hence, as Paul had said, to depart from this world and to be with Christ is “far better” (Philippians 1:23).

We know for sure, therefore, that all departed believers are now in Paradise where Christ is seated with His Father. There they have far better experiences than in this world. Jesus will lead them to rejoice in His resplendent glory. Jesus declared this truth in His prayer recorded in John 17:24 – “Father,

*The following announcement of the home-going of
Preacher Dominino dela Cruz Jr was published in the
Church Bulletin (Volume 26 Issue 20, 14 July 2013) of
Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore*



On the Lord's Day, (July 7, 2013), Preacher Dominino dela Cruz Jr, our missionary in Bogo, the Philippines, was called home to be with the Lord. He was only 46 years old. For about three years, he had been battling with a rare form of cancer around his stomach, which finally brought about his death. Our departed brother was a very industrious and dedicated servant of the Lord who established two mission churches in Bogo and San Antonio, and a children's outreach in Libjo in a short period of 1 year. He was also an able and faithful expositor of the Word. His demise is a painful loss to his dear wife, Sis Sharon, and their young son, Nehemiah, and to the young churches he planted, and to all of us who loved him and co-laboured with him in the Lord's vineyard. It has pleased the Lord, his Saviour and Master, to call him to His glorious presence. "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."

So when we die, our souls are delivered from the corruption and pain of our earthly bodies, and are ushered into the presence of Christ to experience "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). Because heaven is such a wonderful ("far better") place, its attractions drew the heart of Paul to long for heaven. Our blessed Saviour is there. There is glorious, endless worship of God rendered by a great multitude of saints and angels.

Heaven is filled with the glorious music of worship. Life reigns there enshrined in the blessings of God. There is no sin or sorrow. There is no sickness or death. There is no night, no freezing cold or scorching heat. Heaven alone can fully satisfy the desires and passions of a redeemed and sanctified soul. So Paul said that he was "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better".

Only in the presence of Christ, in that celestial glory land, can our highest hopes and holiest affections be fully realized. So every Christian who has become weary in his life and ministry on earth is able to

look for his most solemn and unhindered rest in the bosom of His Saviour and Lord. The labourer who has been maligned and persecuted, looks forward to the boundless worship surrounding the throne of God. He yearns to leave this world of sadness for heavenly gladness. There he has no opponents but the company of Christ, His saints and His holy angels. Oh the joyous expectation of every Christian, His heavenly abode!

However, the desire to be with Christ does not make life unhappy because it is driven by the pleasure of working for Christ and His church. The desire to co-labour with the Lord and to fulfil His good pleasure on earth enables every Christian to say, “Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful” (Philippians 1:24). So we, who now remain alive on this earth, continue to push forward to carry out all things needful for the Lord’s church.

Truly, “life is more our business than death”. This truth is well depicted in the following story narrated by J.L. Nye in *Biblical Illustrator*: “At a private meeting of friends, George Whitefield, after adverting to the difficulties attending the gospel ministry, said that he was weary with the burdens of the day, and declared it to be his great consolation that in a short time his work would be done, and he should depart and be with Christ. He then appealed to the ministers present, and asked if they had not entirely similar feelings. They generally assented, with the exception of Mr Tennent. On seeing this, Mr Whitefield, tapping him on the knee, said: ‘Well, Brother

Tennent, you are the oldest man among us; do you not rejoice to think that your time is so near at hand when you will be called home?’ Mr Tennent bluntly answered that he had no wish about it. Being pressed for some opinion more definite and decided; he then added: ‘I have nothing to do with death. My business is to live as long as I can, and as well as I can, and serve my Master as faithfully as I can until He shall think proper to call me home.’ It proved a word in season to the great evangelist, helping him more calmly and patiently to hold on his way”.

In my observation, the late Preacher Dominino dela Cruz Jr never appeared to be thinking about his departure from the work on earth. Though he was told by several medical doctors that he was afflicted with an incurable, life-threatening sickness, he wished for healing that he might live to serve the Lord. In the midst of all his struggles, he made every effort to visit his flock and to preach as often as possible. He seemed rather unwilling to depart; and the only reason was his love for his family and the churches that were under his care. However, he was sure that he would be with the Lord if death should finally overcome him.

Dear reader, as we rejoice that all who believe on the Lord will go to a better place, let us also delight ourselves in the opportunity that is now given to us to live and serve Christ and His church. So as we await our glorious day, let us labour for the good of the brethren and for the salvation of sinners. ■

A Victorious Life In Christ

Elder Mah Chin Kwang

In the early hours of the Lord's Day, 7th July 2013, God took our beloved missionary, Pr Dominino dela Cruz Jr, home. All his earthly burdens and the sufferings brought about by his illness came to an end. Bro Domi, as he was affectionately known, had battled against the aggressive cancer with fortitude and faith in the Lord over the past two years. The sovereign Lord ruled that it was time for Bro Domi to have his eternal rest, though there was much that he had wanted to do for the Lord. He had served in the Lord's vineyard in the Philippines for exactly five years.

Indeed, Bro Domi will be sorely missed by all who knew him, especially his beloved wife Sharon and son Nehemiah. A season of sadness and sorrowing is inevitable and appropriate. However, when we reflect upon our brother's life and his work, we will surely agree that his departure is no cause for regret or lament. It is in fact an occasion for humble thanksgiving and praise to the gracious God for what He had done in the life of His dear child. In the short time that the Lord gave him, Bro Domi sowed the Word faithfully on hard ground while fighting his illness with great hope in God, demonstrating what victorious Christian



living is. May the Lord be magnified as we reflect on how Bro Domi lived his Christian life and take a lesson or two from it.

The Word of God in Ephesians 5:15-16 exhorts, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." The sense of expediency and commitment in going about the Lord's business to reclaim time lost in one's life is underscored by the reality that "the days are evil". Time ought not to be neglected nor squandered. Wise is the man that redeems his time and occupies himself faithfully while his Lord tarries. It would seem that Bro Domi was such a man.

The greater part of Bro Domi's life was wasted in sin. By the grace of God and His mighty working power, he repented of his sins and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though half of the Biblical "threescore years and ten" of his life had been spent by then, he entered the Far Eastern Bible College in Singapore to equip himself for the Lord's service. He graduated with the Bachelor of Theology (BTh) in May 2006 and the Master of Divinity (MDiv) in May 2008. Bro Domi was then 41 years of age.

With his dynamic and impassioned preaching style, backed by his solid theological training at FEBC, several opportunities for him to serve the Lord beckoned when he completed his studies. He remained, however, very focused in following the Lord's leading to return to the Philippines to start a ministry to reach out to his people, especially his unbelieving family members. His infectious smile and quick wit served him well as he went about to prepare the ground. He reached out to inmates of the local prison, to youths and children of several schools, to friends and especially to his relatives. Bro Domi's excitement and joy in serving the Lord was clearly evident.

In July 2008, just two months after his return from Singapore, the Lord led Bro Domi to establish the Gethsemane B-P Mission Church in Bogo. He was also appointed concurrently as the missionary to oversee the ministry there. No sooner had he settled down to the work when he began to pray earnestly for another area of witness to be started in San Antonio

where several of his immediate family members lived, some 10 kilometres away from Bogo. The Lord heard and answered that prayer. The Gethsemane B-P Mission Church, San Antonio, was founded a year later, in August 2009.

Bro Domi discovered that he had cancer in August 2011. Though this news came as a huge blow to him, his burden for God's work remained and he persevered steadfastly, ministering to the two young churches. He became progressively weaker by the months, but that did not stop him from starting another children's outreach ministry in Libjo, 3 kilometres away from San Antonio in May 2012. May the Lord be pleased to sustain and multiply these fruits of his labour.

Bro Domi's zest in Christian living and in leading a victorious life is eloquently summarized in his own words. In an article entitled "Overcome the World", published in the *Bible Witness* magazine, Volume 13, Issue 1, he wrote with conviction, "... it is the will of God that every true believer should overcome the world and live a victorious Christian life. That is why He has given every Christian the power that has once and for all overcome the world. God's Word gives assurance of victory to every truly born-again Christian. The key to that victory can be summed up in a single word: faith. May God help us to walk closely with Him every day because without Him, victory over the world is unachievable."

To those inspiring words, may we say "Amen!" ■



In Remembrance of Brother Dominino Jr

Pastor Reggor B. Galarpe

As of this writing, it has been two months since our dear brother was called home to be with the Lord our Maker and Master. Yet memories of him live on in the hearts of many who have known him as a friend, a brother in the Lord, a fellow labourer in the work of the Gospel, a devout student and a passionate preacher of God's Word.

Like many of you who have fond memories of him, I am privileged not only to have known him but also witnessed or have been part of the more significant events in his life.

Remembering his conversion – I first met our brother in the early part of the year 2000 when he came for the one-year residential programme at the House of Hope (a Christian ministry for drug dependents and substance abusers) in Cebu, the Philippines. I was then preparing to

come to Singapore to study God's Word at the Far Eastern Bible College when he came into the ministry. I remember sitting together with him to assist him in turning to different books of the Bible during our daily morning devotion. Thereafter, when I was in Singapore, I heard that he believed in the Gospel and had received the Lord Jesus Christ as his Lord and personal Saviour.

Remembering his call to study God's Word – Long after completing his programme, he started to take part-time courses in a local theological school. During school breaks in FEBC when I had the opportunity to go back to Cebu, I often found myself talking with him and other brothers in the ministry and sharing my experience in the Bible College. Seeing in him the desire to study God's Word full-time, I encouraged him to pray and seek the Lord's leading and guidance. In 2002,

the Lord opened a door for him to study at FEBC. I was thankful to the Lord, for I knew that he would be receiving sound biblical instruction and training that would equip him for the ministry. Indeed, many could attest to the marvellous way the Lord has moulded him for the work in the ministry, even to become a faithful expositor of God's Word.

Remembering his commissioning as a missionary – Not long after his theological training in FEBC in 2008, after much prayer as to where he would go and serve (as there were many opportunities for him to serve!), it was confirmed that he would return to his hometown in Bogó, Cebu, the Philippines. In July 2008, he was commissioned as the missionary-in-charge of the soon-to-be-established mission church. It was a great privilege for me to join Pastor Koshy and Elder Mah in the laying of hands upon our brother during the commissioning service in Bogó, which was attended by over a hundred people.

Remembering his call to family life – Just as it was said of Adam, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Genesis 2:18), little did I know that the Lord was preparing a help meet for our brother. Oh how we all rejoiced to hear the Lord's provision of a help meet in the person of our sister Sharon Ng! On March 21, 2009, it was another privilege for me to assist Pastor Koshy in conducting the Holy Matrimony for them. A year after, we praised the Lord for blessing their marriage with a son whom our brother named Nehemiah Dom. As a family, they have been a blessing to many, including my own family.

Remembering his struggle with cancer

– It was in May 2011 when he first sought medical advice for his persistent stomach problem. He went through a series of tests and examinations as the doctors then were still trying to identify the root cause. Sometime in August 2011, I received an SMS from Sis Sharon telling me that they were coming to see me in church after their medical appointment. It was then that Bro Domi shared with me the doctor's findings that he had cancer. Right there and then, I SMSed Pastor Koshy who straight away called up to talk to him and comfort him.

As advised by the doctor, Bro Domi needed to undergo chemotherapy and we had the privilege to play host to them in the mission church here in Cebu during the course of his treatment. (Until now, my two daughters refer to the room which Bro Domi and his family used to stay as “Uncle Domi's Room”.) During those times when he and his family were with us, I remember how our brother would make an effort to exercise by brisk walking, eat nutritious food, and even take food supplements to improve his condition. All these he did, in addition to taking all the medications prescribed by the doctor. There were times when I would see him quiet and by himself, perhaps contemplating his condition, his family, and the ministry under his care.

As time went by, I saw his gradual weight loss in contrast to his bulging stomach. Yet looking at him, he remained in good spirits (at least on the outside, as we could never tell how he was coping on the inside). We really could not tell how he struggled within but the Lord was gracious to sustain him and comfort him to the very end.

The last time I saw him was on June 23, 2013, when I visited him in the hospital in Bogo and we were talking about the preparation for the soon coming 5th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of the mission church there. He was telling me that his back was painful because of bedsores, yet in the midst of much discomfort, he remained composed to discuss with me matters concerning the ministry. I was reminded of what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 6:4, "But in all things

approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses."

All throughout his condition, our brother would often quote, if not recite, Psalm 30:2, saying, "O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me." Truly the Lord has healed him from all sickness and diseases, even delivered him from all pain and suffering. Glory be to His Name! ■

Condolences

*Published in the Church Bulletin, 14 July 2013,
Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore.*

Dear Rev Koshy, the Session, and members of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore,

Greetings in the blessed name of Jesus Christ.

Our deepest condolences to you all. We received the news of the home-going of our fellow-labourer, missionary Dominino dela Cruz Jr, with deepest sorrow. Humanly speaking, it is a great loss to the church and his family. Yet, the gracious Lord has purposed to give His servant a blessed rest. Though our hearts are sorrowful, we accept the will of our sovereign God because it is the best for Domi, his family and the church. It is our sincere prayer that the LORD may grant peace and comfort to the grieving hearts of Sharon, Nehemiah, Elder Ng's family, the mission churches in the Philippines, members and friends of the mother church in Singapore.

This incident is a powerful reminder to us all that tomorrow is not ours. We must strive to fulfil our calling every day. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no

man can work" (John 9:4). May the LORD raise more faithful labourers to continue the work which our late brother has begun.

May the peace of God reign in every heart that is sorrowing over the loss of our dear brother.

Praying for all of you,
Rev Ephrem Chiracho on behalf of my family,
GBI and Gethsemane B-P churches in Ethiopia



I am sorry to know that Bro Domi has passed away. Please accept my deepest sympathies for his family and brethren who love him. I pray that God will help his family cope with this difficult moment. I know that Domi was a very important person to his family, his churches and to all of us. However, every one of us has to go home to be with the Lord on the appointed day and we have to accept this truth. May God's blessing and support be with his family and those love Domi and have co-laboured with him. James 1:12; Revelation 21:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

God be with you.

In Christ,
Pr Engida Tefera
Gethsemane B-P Church of Ethiopia,
Addis Ababa

In a flash, he came, preached, and went home to be with the Lord.



On Bible Witness Web Radio, 2007



Reaching the youths with the Word, 2008



Proclaiming the Gospel, 2008



Disciple-making, 2009



Commissioning as the missionary-in-charge of
Gethsemane BPC, Bogo, in July 2008



Preaching on the Lord's Day,
San Antonio, 2010



Preaching though greatly afflicted by cancer, 2011



Teaching his congregation in Bogalusa, Louisiana, March 2012



After surgery in Singapore, preparing to preach in Gethsemane BPC, July 2012



Preaching on the Lord's Day, San Antonio, October 2012

*A
missionary
and
preacher*

2008–2013



Congregation in San Antonio



Church children of San Antonio



Baptismal service in San Antonio



Congregation in Bogo



With his flock in Bogo



Inauguration service of the church in Bogo, 2008



Church youths of San Antonio



Four Filipino preachers:
Eld Eli, Eld Richard, Pastor Reggor, Pr Dominino



Children's ministry of San Antonio



Preachers' preparation in prayer



Outing with church youths



With Preacher Edsel



Rejoicing in the Lord



Combined Family Day of Bogo and San Antonio churches, 2012



Wedding solemnised by Pastor Reggor, 21 March 2009



With the in-laws and Preacher Edsel



Precious family moments



Happy moment with a young friend



Hosting a meal for Pastor Koshy



Fellowshipping with Gethsemaneans and friends who visited him as he awaited surgery, Jun 2012



Called home to be with his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 7 July 2013



Vigil service at San Antonio, 7-10 July 2013



Funeral service at the cemetery, 11 July 2013

Photo Credits: Reggor Galante, Eliezer Ortega, Sharon dela Cruz, Sheryl Macapinig, Marites Mingo, Sarah Yong, Leow Beng Wee.



Remembering

Pr Dominino dela Cruz Jr

Elder Eliezer Ortega

All praise and glory be to the Lord who raises up men of His choice to serve Him faithfully. Preacher Dominino was a man whom the Lord raised up in order to serve Him by starting churches in the northern part of Cebu island in the Philippines. Two churches that the Lord has established through him are Gethsemane B-P Mission Church, Bogu, and Gethsemane B-P Mission Church, San Antonio. Through the faithful preaching of the glorious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ by Dominino in these mission churches, many lives have been transformed. What a blessing he was to the many souls in Bogu and San Antonio who had been brought to the feet of our Saviour!

As it was with some of the folks in his two churches, Pr Dominino was the Lord's instrument for my salvation. We grew up together in the same town

and were friends. We engaged in many worldly activities and unprofitable ways of youthful sins together. However, the Lord's Gospel call came to Dominino first. Upon his conversion, not a few occasions did he try to reach out to me that I might also experience the renewed and transformed life that he had received from the Lord. But I rejected his evangelistic efforts. Nonetheless, with hindsight, I can say that the precious seed of the Gospel had already been sown in my heart by Dominino. It did take root and flourish within me, producing the fruit of eternal life when he introduced me to a Christian drug rehabilitation centre, where I confessed the Lord Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour.

Another memory of the late Pr Dominino that stands out in my mind is that he was careful to flee from the temptation of sin. While he attempted to

reach out to me, he was very cautious that I would not in any way influence him to return to the old sinful habits. Once when he returned to our hometown from the Far Eastern Bible College in Singapore, together with some of his Christian friends, he came to look for me in one of my “hiding places”. The moment I came out from the “hiding place”, he ran across the road to the other side of the street, without even minding the approaching traffic. I was a bit puzzled at that time as to why he risked his life to run away from me, though he came to look for me. It was only after I became a Christian that I learned he fled from me in order that I would not influence him, and also to be safe in the company of his Christian friends who were on the other side of the street. He would go as far as resisting “unto blood, striving against sin” (Hebrews 12:4). Not only did he risk his life while attempting to flee from the temptation of sin, but he also tried hard to find me and deliver me from my miserable condition.

Truly, Dominino was a warm and cheerful person who never ran out of encouraging words. He never failed to cheer my family on to serve the Lord. He also urged us to resist worldliness. On several occasions, he took time to talk to my children, and gave them godly counsels. By his encouraging words and wise counsels, my family was stirred up to serve the Lord with joy and gladness, and also to be careful to maintain a good testimony for the Lord. He was an important part of my family.

When the Lord led me to the Far Eastern Bible College, Dominino was a senior student there. I saw his dedication towards his duties and responsibilities. He was a very devoted student, showing diligence and discipline in his learning of the Word of God. He taught me how to persevere in my theological studies and to benefit from the rigorous training at FEBC.

In his service to the Lord, Dominino was unwavering. His heart was totally given to serving the living Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amidst the difficulties he faced, especially during the last stretch of his service to the Lord, he remained true and faithful in his concern for the two churches he had established, Gethsemane B-P Mission Church (Bogo) and Gethsemane B-P Mission Church (San Antonio). His words to me in the service of the Lord was, “Make sure that you are called into the ministry, for it is God’s calling that gives us strength of heart to be true and faithful to Him.”

All praise and glory be unto the Lord who had called and separated Dominino to be a blessing to me and my family. Now the Lord has entrusted me with the burden of the two churches which He had begun through the late Preacher Dominino.

My memory of Preacher Dominino shall always be that of a true friend, a wonderful brother in the Lord, and an important part of my family. ■

In a Strait Betwixt Two

Elder Richard Tiu



For the Christian, there can be no greater blessing than to be taken up into the glorious presence of God. A far, far better place of heavenly mansions awaits him as he finally gets to see the Lord Jesus face to face after departing from this world (John 14:1-3). Yet, the desire to continue serving the Lord here on earth and the attachment to human affections can put the believer in some kind of a dilemma.

Such a situation was descriptive of the apostle Paul's predicament when he wrote: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith" (Philippians 1:23-25).

All Christians, at some point in life, will experience this perplexing situation. On the one hand, we all long to see the fulfilment of our faith in Christ. On the other hand, we certainly do not wish to

see ourselves or our loved ones pass away so soon. While the Bible has said that we should be "willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8), there is also a necessary purpose for us to remain for a time here on earth. Nevertheless, the sovereign hand of God rules and overrules all these things.

Our late beloved Preacher Dominino dela Cruz was in the same dilemma before finally being called home to be with the Lord on the 7th of July 2013 after a long and agonizing battle against cancer. He was in that strait betwixt two – a longing to be with the Lord versus a longing to further serve the Lord and His people.

Pr Domi, as he was fondly called, was a man of action. When he got started, he was like a man on the run. This is true as he laboured in the ministry, often running here and there to the different Gospel outreaches he had established. When he was diagnosed with advanced stage of cancer in 2011, he had his hands full with serving in the Lord's ministry and at the same time seeking medical attention. He would pursue all medical procedures available that could give a glimmer of hope, and then literally 'fly off' at every opportunity.

This pursuit took him to hospitals in Singapore, Cebu and Manila during the last three years of his life for rounds

of chemotherapy as well as surgeries to remove tumours. This writer was privileged to have ministered to Pr Domi and his family during the last medical procedure done on him in Manila in May 2013. The doctors were to open up his abdomen for a very risky operation. At that time, we could only pray and ask for the Lord's grace and favour upon our brother.

The surgery was unsuccessful. As he regained consciousness at the intensive care unit (ICU), Pr Domi gestured something, indicating that he had finally resigned to the fact that nothing more could be done. Twice he pointed upwards to say that he was ready then to depart and be with the Lord. It was his way of showing his submission to the Father's will over his prolonged affliction. The Lord would soon end his suffering once and for all.

On the plane journey back to Cebu, one could notice a changed disposition in Pr Domi. He no longer had that tense and fretful look on his face; a calm demeanour and a quiet, more relaxed spirit took over. Looking at him, I could not help but remember what Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo, wrote in his Confessions: "O Lord, Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee." Our dear brother knew that an eternal rest was in store for him and it would come soon.

I believe many would agree that Pr Domi's life story seems like one that dreams are made of. An erstwhile miserable life on drugs was transformed by the grace of God – he was later called into the full-time ministry and started a church. Not long after that, the Lord gave him a godly wife followed by a wonderful blessing of a

baby boy. With a young church and an even younger family in tow, a blissful life ahead was seemingly in store. It could only be a story where the logical conclusion is that "they lived happily ever after". So it seemed until that fateful day in August 2011 when doctors pronounced him cancer-stricken. And in one fell swoop, life drastically changed for the family and the ministry.

In the Lord's infinite wisdom, He weaves and crafts the stories and circumstances of our lives that no human comprehension can ever fathom. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Yes, Pr Dominino dela Cruz Jr did succumb to cancer. Yet, he is no longer in a strait betwixt two, for he now indeed will be living happily ever after, dwelling in eternal mansions above, basking in heaven's glory and never more to suffer.

Likewise, all believers in Christ who remain here on earth are assured of that eternal rest. The day will also come that we will no longer be in this strait of a dilemma. The day will come when we can also say these words written by the apostle Paul, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).

*That strait in betwixt two
One day soon we'll bid adieu
To be ushered into blest eternity
When Jesus' face we all shall see*

*With loud hosannas all saints will sing
As death will lose its painful sting
Safely now on heaven's shore
To worship and serve Christ for evermore!* ■

BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 14 & 15

Sarah Yong

1

READ EXODUS 14 & 15. In the passage below, certain mistakes have been identified and underlined. Read the text from your Bible and then fill in the correct word in each box.

The LORD led His chosen people out of Egypt into the wilderness,

1

between Migdol and the mountain. Then the LORD caused the heart

2

of Pharaoh, minister of Egypt, to be hardened. Pharaoh took more

3

than six thousand chariots and pursued after the children of Israel.

4

They were unhappy when they saw the approaching army and they

5

murmured against Pharaoh. He told them, "Fear ye not, stand still,

and see the salvation of the LORD". That night, the LORD sent a

6

strong east current which parted the waters of the sea and left the

7

8

ground dry for the soldiers of Israel to walk across. In the evening

watch, as the Egyptians pursued, the LORD took the wheels off their

chariots and caused the waters to return and cover all the host of

9

10

Israel. God's people then feared the LORD and disobeyed Him and

His servant Moses. They sang a song of praise unto the LORD.

*Some trust in chariots, and
some in horses: but we will
remember the name of
the LORD our God.*

Psalms 20:7

2

Read Moses' song of praise in Exodus 15 and fill in the missing words to learn more about the LORD of the children of Israel, who is also the Lord God of every believer.

The LORD is...

- my _____ and song, and my _____ (v. 2)
- my God and my _____ ' _____ God (v. 2)
- a man of _____ (v. 3)

None is like unto Him, He...

- is glorious in _____ and holiness (v. 6, 11)
- is fearful in _____, doing wonders (v. 11)
- mercifully leads those whom He has _____ (v. 13)
- shall _____ for ever and ever. (v. 18)

The enemies of the LORD will...

- be dashed in _____ (v. 6)
- _____ and be afraid (v. 14)
- be overcome by _____ (v. 14)
- tremble and _____ away (v. 15)
- experience _____ and dread (v. 16)
- be as _____ as a stone (v. 16)

The people of the LORD...

- will be guided by His strength unto His holy _____ (v. 13)
- dwell in the _____ that He has established (v. 17)

ANSWERS TO VOLUME 13 ISSUE 4: BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 13 (P.26-27)

Section 1 : A3; B5; C1; D2; E4; F6; G9; H7; J10; K8

Section 2 : LORD; way; fire; night

The Tsar Who Crushed Napoleon

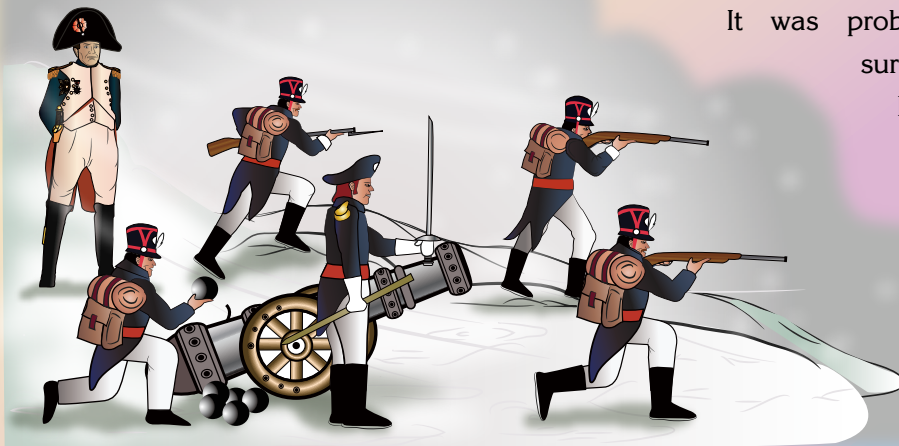
Story retold by Ruth Low and illustrated by Linus Kok

Sources: "Men of Destiny" by Peter Masters, and Wikipedia

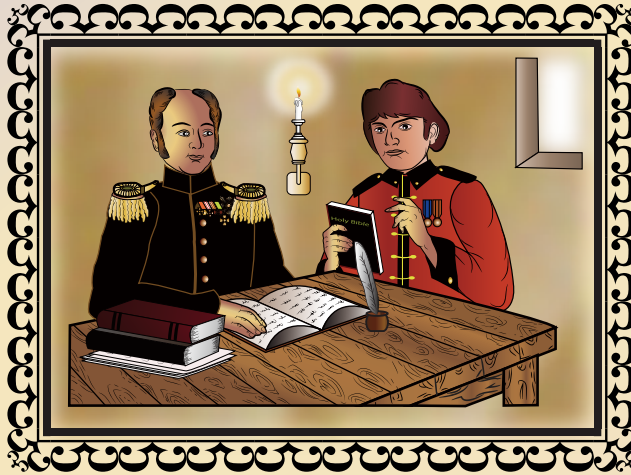
What is a tsar? A tsar (pronounced as "zar") is a title for European supreme rulers of countries like Russia, Bulgaria and Serbia from the 10th to the 20th century. This word is derived from the Latin word "Caesar", and is intended to mean "Emperor". The tsar in this story was an emperor of Russia. His name is Alexander Pavlovich, also known as Alexander I of Russia, and he reigned from 1801-1825.

At the start of his reign, Alexander was not a good leader. He was also not faithful to his wife (Princess Elizabeth), had no religious convictions, and did not prepare himself or his men for warfare. He only knew how to dream and boast of what he could do. As a result, when Napoleon and his army fought against him and his army, Tsar Alexander failed to direct his men, leaving them in disarray, and himself in great shame.

Who was this Napoleon who fought the Russians? He was a great French military commander. He was very clever and brave and had won many victories in battle against other European nations. It was probably no surprise that he could



defeat Russia too. But after defeating Russia this first time, things started to change for the better for Alexander and his country, and for the worse for Napoleon. What changed, and why?



First, Tsar Alexander was humbled by his country's first defeat under him. He began to see the ugly side of his life – his pride, immorality and empty dreams. He also thought about his friend, Prince Galitsin, who was once a playboy notorious for his outrageous public life but had become an entirely different person after he professed to have known a living Saviour. Amidst his shame and public ridicule, and with the persuasion of Galitsin, Alexander turned to the Scriptures and often had Galitsin talk to him about spiritual things. Alexander's search for God had just begun, but more troubles were in store for him that would eventually turn him to the Lord, and change Russia.

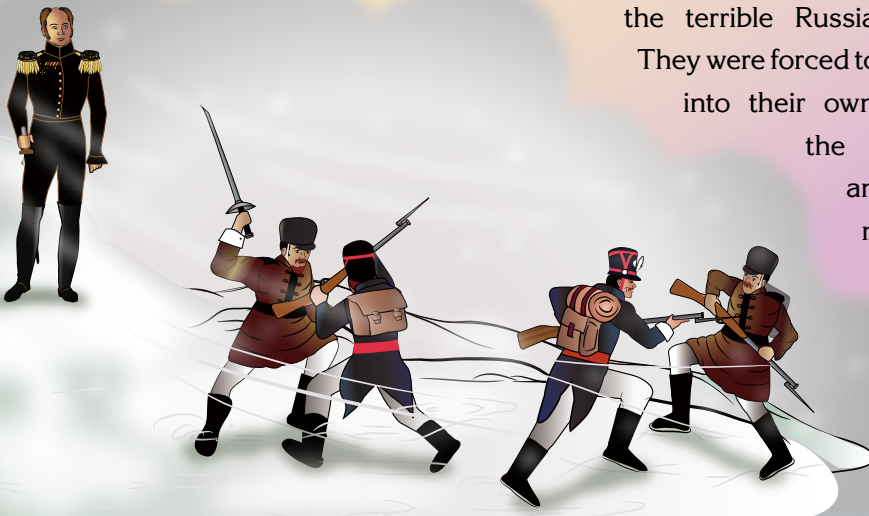
Second, Tsar Alexander's little daughter born to Princess Elizabeth developed tuberculosis and died. The couple's sorrow brought them together again although Alexander had been unfaithful to his wife. The girl's death also made Alexander more aware that Someone greater than he was in control of life and eternity.

The third life-turning event for Tsar Alexander involved another setback in his military campaigns. Napoleon had come again to attack Russia. His artillery, cavalry and infantry fought the Russians on the

Moscow Road and forced them to retreat. The people of Moscow were also frantic and left the city. For unknown reasons, the whole city, which was the capital and pride of Russia, was set ablaze so when Napoleon and his men entered it, nothing but flames greeted them.

While all seemed lost for Alexander and Russia, it was just the beginning of victory, and more so a time which brought Alexander's search for God to a climax. He strategised to keep Moscow abandoned and Napoleon's army in it until the harsh winter closed in on them, and then defeat him. He also realised that through the death of Moscow, Russia could be saved – a parallel of his own life, how that by the death of his pride and self-love, he could be saved by the Lord, just as Prince Galitsin had been. So Alexander fell before God and prayed. He acknowledged his sinfulness and pleaded for forgiveness. God heard his prayers, and he was no more a seeking soul, but a man who knew and walked with God. He wrote to Prince Galitsin – "My faith is now sincere and ardent. It grows firmer everyday and I taste joys of a kind I never knew before. For several years now, I have been seeking my way. The reading of the Scriptures, which I know very superficially, has done me a benefit which is not possible to express in words. Pray to the Almighty Father, and to our Lord Jesus, and to the Spirit... that They may guide me and confirm me in the only way of salvation."

As planned by Alexander, Napoleon and his army faced near total destruction by the terrible Russian winter. They were forced to withdraw into their own land by the Russians and other nations in league





Alexander Pavlovich

with Tsar Alexander. The tsar then marched into Paris to take over. But Paris simply surrendered without violence. It was March 1814. Tsar Alexander, already a Christian then, chose not to humiliate or hurt the French people. However, together with the other forces, he exiled Napoleon to the Isle of Elba, an island near Italy. And this was the start of Napoleon's downfall.

Having defeated Napoleon the French, what did Tsar Alexander also do for his own people in Russia? It is recorded that he established a university system; founded a system of over 2,000 local schools; freed slaves; and helped the poor. He knew his people well too, particularly the Christian congregations in the main cities. Although Russia was full of government officials who were corrupt, Alexander upheld a character of compassion and uprightness true to that of a Christian. He had become the most kindly ruler the Russian people ever had.

Children, we see in this beautiful story how it was God and God alone who ordered the events in the life of Tsar Alexander – not only to defeat Napoleon and save Russia, but also to save Alexander's own soul and mould him unto Christlikeness. As clay in the hand of our Master and Lord, may we all humble ourselves before God and yield to Him as Alexander did! "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6).



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