Rev Tow was my teacher. Please permit me to rephrase and say “Rev Tow was OUR teacher.” We are here tonight because Rev Tow lived a life that has touched our lives. He has taught us how to live as Christians and how to love his LORD Jesus Christ. May these words from Ecclesiastes 7:1-4 be true of us all tonight as we leave here. “A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.”

I first heard Rev Tow preach when he spoke at Sunset Gospel Hour (today called Sunset Gospel Bible Fellowship) nearly 30 years ago. His messages from God’s Word were simple and yet profound. He had the gift of bringing out the thrust of the passage he spoke from with the greatest of ease. His statements and restatements of God’s Word were like gems from heaven. This is especially true when he taught the Psalms. Psalm 34 – As One Snatched from a Tiger’s Mouth and Psalm 36 – Man’s Megalomania vs. God’s Majesty are but only two examples of many. Rev Tow explained God’s truth with very apt and precise illustrations and testimonies. He made sure that the Word of God was always applied to the hearts whenever he taught. Once, he taught his students that if the Word of God is not applied, it is like shadow boxing. “The application has to be very pointed like a shot from a high-powered rifle and not like the many pellets from a shotgun,” Rev Tow would remind his students. But the most well known of all his illustrations that he repeats over and over again till it is indelibly etched in his students’ mind is the “banana skin story”. We learned from Rev Tow how to teach and preach God’s Word with precision.

My first personal encounter with Rev Tow was when I was looking for a Bible college to study in preparation for the full-time ministry. I had visited other Bible colleges before visiting FEBC. What struck me on my first personal contact with Rev Tow was his godly counsel. He pointed me to God in my search, unlike others whom I spoke with who merely trumpeted the strengths of their colleges. Rev Tow lived as he preached and taught God's Word. At the end of the meeting, he prayed for me unlike the others who...
treated full-time calling as a profession and they just said ‘good bye’. Rev Tow understood and empathized with a young man’s struggles and search for training and ministry. He always pointed us to Christ, and not to himself. There was no need for all these degrees in counselling. He taught many times that the only thing counsellors need today is the Word of God, not a piece of paper. With the Word of God in our heads and hearts, we are to counsel according to God’s inerrant and infallible truth. We learned from Rev Tow how to counsel according to Scriptures.

Rev Tow was always available to all. He made time for all who came to see him, no matter how insignificant the matter was; even if it was for road directions! His life was his ministry and his ministry was his life. “24/7” was his motto and he practised it. To serve man in the name of the LORD is to serve God. To love man, even his enemies, in the LORD was to love the LORD Himself. 1 John 4:20-21 – “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.” No call to preach God’s Word or to share the Gospel was refused. Rev Tow was ever ready to go, because he was always shod with the shoes of the Gospel of peace. He needed no day off. An off day was like any other day ... a day spent on God’s work and Word. He never talked about salary. “The moment a pastor speaks of his salary, he is a hireling” was what Rev Tow declared oft times. The line was very clearly drawn. There were few “grey areas” in Rev Tow’s life. The Bible was Rev Tow’s infallible guide. He made friends with the Bible as his basis. His love for man was not sentimentalism. It was according to the truth of God’s Word. For example, those who attacked his LORD and the Bible were not his friends. I once observed that Rev Tow did not shake the hand of one who attacked the Word of God, even when that person’s hand was stretched out in front of him. The LORD and the Bible were the foundations of his life and ministry. We learned from Rev Tow the meaning of full-time ministry.

On many occasions, Rev Tow stood alone. Rev Tow’s strength and courage was in his LORD. For the sake of truth and righteousness, Rev Tow would forsake all, even his ministry, and especially when the ministry is no longer God-honouring. The reason is that Rev Tow’s ministry was his LORD, not a church or a college nor based on some sentimental feelings. Blood is not thicker than water when it comes to truth and righteousness. As long as that person or church or Bible college loves the LORD, Rev Tow would go out of his way to help. But when God’s perfect Word or the name of his LORD Jesus Christ is diminished, even in the very slightest way, Rev Tow would stand up for his LORD and fight the good fight of faith to the very end. We learned from Rev Tow biblical courage and strength.

Rev Tow always held God’s Word in the highest regard. His life was temperate and self-effacing. He not only taught his students God’s Word but he lived out God’s Word. He constantly reminded his students that the world is a dangerous and wicked place. Beware of the sins of the lust of the eyes and lust of the flesh and the pride of life. The world would persecute or seduce us. Either way we are destroyed if we succumb to these sins. Be circumspect and flee even the
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appearance of evil. Rev Tow was not perfect, for no man is, but Rev Tow was holy - he lived his life as he preached. We learned from Rev Tow that life is a battleground and not a playground.

Three days after I entered FEBC, I was assigned to preach during the Homiletics class. This was the swimming pool of preaching for every student. We are thrown in and learn immediately how to swim homiletically. I was literally trembling when I stood behind the pulpit. Thank God that the pulpit was made of wood and not the transparent Perspex or else Rev Tow would have seen my knees knocking uncontrollably. We feared him, yet we loved and admired him. He looked stern and had a no-nonsense demeanour. But behind the stern facade and small stature was a kind and compassionate giant with a tender heart of gold. He gave chances upon chances to all who were prepared to learn and repent and turn from sin and error. He set aside personal feelings for the sake and cause of Christ. He knew many had taken advantage of his mercy and grace, but Rev Tow would always err on the side of mercy and grace rather than turn one genuine repentant sinner away. We learned from Rev Tow how justice must be tempered with compassion and mercy, and to give second chances.

Perhaps out of all of Rev Tow’s testimonies, what he has taught his students best is his life of humility. Time and time again Rev Tow would remind his forgetful students that the formula for success in ministry is HUMILITY! HUMILITY! HUMILITY! In an age and time when pastors are more concerned with decorating and beautifying church buildings, Rev Tow “built” the lives of sinners and turned them into saints by his life of humility and faithful preaching of God’s Word. Pastors today pride themselves in their hundred-dollar hairstyles and strut around like peacocks in their thousand-dollar suits. Rev Tow would quietly stroll around the grounds of FEBC dressed in his well worn slacks and blue FEBC T-shirt and, of course, his feet were shod with the famous “char kia”. His demeanour was most unassuming. “His LORD Jesus Christ must increase and Rev Tow must decrease” was the message he constantly sent to his students as he walked among the trees and plants in FEBC. Those who didn’t know him would never guess that Rev Tow was the principal and founder of FEBC and the B-P Movement, a ministry that spanned across the globe from Tanzania to Canada to Australia and the uttermost parts of the jungles of Indonesia and Borneo. He looked more like the doorkeeper of God’s house than a man mightily used of God. But that was Rev Tow. He did not need all the external trappings to be who he was . . . a servant of the Most High God. To Rev Tow, “a day in thy [God’s] courts is better than a thousand. I had [he’d] rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my [his] God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psalm 84:10). We learned from Rev Tow the true meaning of humility.

The list of lessons learnt from the life of Rev Tow is definitely not exhaustive. Rev Tow has made full proof of his ministry by his long years of courageous and faithful service. 2 Timothy 4:6-8 sums up well the life of Rev Tow as it summed up the life of the great apostle Paul – “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is...
at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

All his students thank God that the LORD has graciously guided our lives to cross that of His servant, Rev Tow. The impact of Rev Tow’s life in his students is immeasurable. His students owe Rev Tow their theology, precious lessons on how to live a godly life, how to minister with humility, to be sacrificial without complaining, how to love God and man, even his enemies, that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and so much more that time and space would not permit the listing of them all tonight. All his students thank the LORD for Rev Tow’s life of obedience, faith and service. Rev Tow has served us in his life even as he served the LORD Jesus Christ. Now his students must remember Rev Tow, not by serving Rev Tow or praising Rev Tow but by serving Rev Tow’s LORD Jesus Christ. He would not have it any other way. All of Rev Tow’s life has been to point his students to Christ and not to himself. Let us all honour our teacher, God’s faithful servant, Rev Tow, by loving the LORD Jesus Christ and continue to faithfully and courageously defend the inerrant, infallible and divinely inspired and preserved perfect Word of God. We are to uphold the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ by a life of holiness. Rev Tow has left behind for us an example to follow even as he followed the LORD.

Rev Tow is not dead. He is more alive now than ever before. He did not die of old age or Alzheimer’s (he was most alert whenever the Word of God was preached even as recent as a week ago, for his mind was lucid and clear though his body was weak) or a broken heart. He has been called home to glory, for his labour in the LORD is complete. His well-earned rest has just begun, and he is safe and secure in the arms of his Saviour. Rev Tow’s enemies can take his earthly works but his spiritual works have followed him to glory. Revelation 14:12-13 – “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” Rev Tow’s works are not made of bricks and mortar. Rev Tow’s works are the lives and ministries of his students who have been forever transformed by the power of the LORD and His perfect Word.

Rev Quek Suan Yew, Rev Stephen Khoo, Mrs Ivy Tow & Rev Timothy Tow.
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One day we shall meet our teacher again in the clouds of glory. This separation is only for a moment. Rev Tow’s work for the LORD is done. His students remain to continue the work of God. While we wait for that blessed reunion, let us be faithful and true to our Saviour Jesus Christ, the way that our teacher Rev Tow has been faithful. May we be comforted and encouraged by the words of the LORD in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” AMEN.

Condolences

I am currently in the U.S. on church visitations, and just heard the news of Dr Tow’s homegoing to be with the Lord. I regret the fact that my schedule here prevents me from attending his funeral. Although he has entered his rest, I am deeply saddened by this great loss and the large vacuum that he has left. He has fought the good fight (2 Tim 4:7-8) and challenged us with his devotion and commitment to the Lord and to the Word of Truth. We have to take his torch and carry on the task which he has left behind for us. There remains also a generation of traitors, heady and highminded (2 Tim 3:4). Our prayers are with Mrs Tow, his beloved ones and the family of True Life and FEBC.
In the Bond of Christ,
Rev Mark Kim
Principal
Bible College of East Africa
Kenya

I heard that the Lord has called Rev Dr Timothy Tow home to glory. He was a man of great faith, humility, boldness and vision in the Lord’s vineyard. His faithfulness and fervour resulted in the establishment of churches, Bible colleges, etc. around the world. I thank God for the fellowship I had with him through ICCC. I have had the privilege of interpreting his messages when he came to Kerala, India, to preach the Word of God.
My wife and I would like to express our deepest condolences to Mrs Ivy Tow and the family members. We are also praying that God’s continuing blessings be upon the church and FEBC.
In Christ,
Bishop M.K. Koshy
St Thomas Evangelical Church of India