

Proof

John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

I John 3:16 – “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

These two verses in the Bible are very much alike. They were both written by the same inspired man; they both are found in the same chapter and verse of their respective books; and they both deal with the subject of love. The first scripture affirms a fact, the second offers proof of that fact.

The concept of the cross is found upon almost every page of the Bible. It is foreshadowed by every sacrifice from Eden to Calvary. It is typified by Isaac who was bound upon the altar of Mt. Moriah. It is seen in the slaughter of the Passover Lamb and pictured by the priest who made his annual entrance into the Holy of Holies. Isaiah envisioned the Christ as a “lamb that was led to the slaughter.” Zechariah beheld a betrayal for 30 pieces of silver and the Psalmist saw pierced hands and feet and crude men gambling for His garments.

The cross may have many meanings and much significance to the child of God, but high upon the list is the fact that it proves his love. We would rather see a sermon than hear one any day, and in one glimpse of Calvary we know more about God’s feelings for us than we do from a thousand psalms. Pious platitudes may have their significance but actions speak much louder than do words. We can discern something about God from the voice that thundered from Sinai and from the muffled cry from the manger. We learn from the miracles He wrought and the sermons He preached. We thrill at every shred of information that illuminates our knowledge of the Father, but

every other fact is eclipsed by the splendor of the cross. . . . Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us."

The language of love is universal in its appeal and in its understanding. Golgotha means as much to the unlettered aborigine as it does to the College professor or philosopher. It speaks the same sublime message to the aged and infirm as it does to the straight backed youth who peers at Calvary through the undimmed eyes of adolescence. This is the way we understand that God loved us, because he laid down his life for us.

The writer to the Romans assures us "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." The proof of God's generosity and concern was found just outside of Jerusalem where justice and mercy struggled until both had gained a victory. While the sun hid its face in amazement and the earth trembled in unbelief the man who personified the "fullness of the godhead in a body" died for the sins of the world. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.

With all of the uncertainties of tomorrow there is one fact that stands as a Gibraltar in the midst of a crashing sea of doubt. That fact is this, God loved the world. The proof of that love is indelibly written in the blood of Jesus. The cross bars of Calvary convince the world. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Prove All Things

Nikolani Lenin (1870-1924) was a Marxist revolutionary, creator of the Bolshevik party, and founder of the Soviet state. Lenin graduated from St. Petersburg University with a law degree in 1891. In 1893 he began underground revolutionary activities and ultimately led the overthrow of the provisional government of Aleksandr Kerenski in November of 1917. Lenin is thus given credit for the creation of the first successful party of professional revolutionaries, and paved the way for an International conspiracy which not only dominates the Soviet Union but also other unfortunates throughout the world. Lenin wrote:

Why should freedom of speech and freedom of the press be allowed? Why should a government which is doing what it believes to be right allow itself to be criticized? It would not allow opposition by lethal weapons. Ideas are much more fatal things than guns. Why should any man be allowed to buy a printing press and disseminate pernicious opinion calculated to embarrass the government.

Thus Communism can only survive with the help of ignorance. Every Communist country must have its firing squad, its political prisons, and the ability to black out news and truths from other parts of the world. Ideas are fatal to the Communist cause.

What a contrast such a program is to the philosophy of Jesus. His followers are not imprisoned by barbed wire and machine guns. There is no "news blackout" within the framework of the Christian movement. Quite to the contrary we are admonished to "prove all things" (I Thess. 5:21). Barnes makes these comments in his commentary on I Thessalonians:

Other religions require their votaries to receive everything upon trust; Christianity asks us to examine everything. Error, supersti-

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tion, bigotry, and fanaticism attempt to repress free discussion, by saying that there are certain things which are too sacred in their nature, or which have been too long held, or which are sanctioned by too many great and holy names, to permit their being subjected to the scrutiny of common eyes, or to be handled by common hands. In opposition to all this, Christianity requires us to examine everything – no matter by whom held; by what councils ordained; by what venerableness of antiquity sustained; or by what sacredness it may be invested. We are to receive no opinion until we are convinced that it is true; we are to be subjected to no pains or penalties for not believing what we do not perceive to be true; we are to be prohibited from examining no opinion which our fellow-men regard as true, and which they seek to make others believe. No popular current in favour of any doctrine; no influence which name and rank and learning can give it, is to commend it to us as certainly worthy of our belief. By whomsoever held, we are to examine it freely before we embrace it; but when we are convinced that it is true, it is to be held, no matter what current of popular opinion or prejudice may be against it; no matter what ridicule may be poured upon it; and no matter though the belief of it may require us to die a martyr's death (Barnes Commentary Thess. – Phil. p. 61).

Christ never asked a man to be credulous or to disregard reason. We are not expected to blindly follow any leader without first of all putting him to the test. The word translated "prove" is the word properly applicable to the assaying of metals. It means that we are to take apart and analyze every concept to evaluate its worth.

All truth is compatible with all other truth. Every light enhanced and augments all other light. Darkness, however, fears even the light of a tiny candle. The shadows of evil retreat before the search light of truth.

The Christian philosophy can stand the full glare of publicity and the careful scrutiny of intense observation. This is why the Lord was not afraid to command – "prove all things."

Put Up With One Another

Christianity espouses the highest form of human behaviour. It is the superlative good among mortals. Those who are risen with Christ should therefore set their minds on things above and not on things of earth (Col. 3:2). Our every thought and action should transcend the lower world around us for we are to be "renewed in knowledge" so that we can live the Jesus kind of life (Col. 3:10). This superior mentality is especially appropriate for a fellowship composed of Greeks and Jews, Barbarians and Sythians. When a humanity polarized by different social and psychological extremes is drawn together into a common crucible the participants must manifest something superior to the carnal temperament. For this reason we are commanded to put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and longsuffering, forbearing and forgiving one another in the same superlative Spirit manifested by Jesus when He so willingly forgave us (Col. 3;12-13).

The word translated as "forbearance" is "anechomenoi" which comes from "and" – up and "echo" – to have or hold. It means therefore to "bear up with" or "endure" and is translated by Knofel Staton as "put up with one another."

This particular phraseology seemed to strike a responsive chord with me for I could envision in my mind's eye a woman stoutly affirming over the back fence to her neighbor "well, I wouldn't put up with it if my old man did that to me." A recent newspaper article related the grim story of a woman who didn't want to put up with her children so she locked them in a car where two of the three died in agony from the unmerciful heat. Such a temperament seems characteristic of our society: Our sky-rocketing divorce rate is ample proof that husbands do not want to put up with wives . . . and vice versa. The sordid story of child abuse and teenage derelicts is an unavoidable indication that many parents and children do not want to put up with

each other. Racial violence and social unrest are a strong indication that society doesn't want to put up with anybody either. A divided Christendom is a painful indication that even Christian people do not want to put up with one another.

In the midst of marital confusion, social unrest and religious resentment the voice of inspiration cries out *Put Up With One Another*. Of course you don't like everything done by someone else but put up with it just the same.

I spoke to one lady some time ago and reminded her that her marriage vows were, "For better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health." Then after reflecting upon her husband I said - "Well, at least he's healthy and one out three is better than nothing." Go ahead and put up with him. You may have a few years of tough sledding but someday when your children and grandchildren gather around the Christmas tree you'll be glad you put up with him and they will be too. When the figures are all tallied there's a lot more to life than some people are willing to admit and the chain reaction of people who "won't put up with it" needs to be broken somewhere . . . maybe it can start with you and me.

So just like the Bible says - Let's "put up with one another."

Repentance

*For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death . . .”
(II Cor. 7:10).*

The versatile Greek language has two different words for “repentance.” Someone has quipped, “One of them means that you’re sorry, and the other one means that you’re sorry that you got caught.”

The word for a genuine repentance is “metanoeo” and literally means to change your mind, or purpose. It is always used in Scripture of changing the mind for the better. It is a change of mind that results in a change of life.

How beautifully this word is illustrated in the lives of Joseph’s brethren.

When Joseph was a young man his brethren hated him and determined to take his life. Through the influence of Reuben he was not killed, but rather sold into slavery.

When Joseph came to power in the land of Egypt ten of his brothers came before him to buy grain. At this point Joseph inaugurated a plan by which their sincerity would be put to the test.

The essence of the plan involved Benjamin. Joseph’s father, Jacob, had 12 sons by four different women. He was so blindly prejudiced, however, that he only thought of himself as having one wife and two children. This is specifically stated in Genesis 44:27 when Jacob said, “Ye know that my wife bare me two sons. . . .” It was Rachel that Jacob loved more than any other, and it was Rachel’s children that Jacob exalted above everyone else in the family.

This, as you know, was one of the reasons that Joseph was hated by his brethren. His Father had given him a coat of many colors. This was in all probability, an indication that Jacob

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intended Joseph to rule in the family after his decease.

Since Joseph was thought to be dead, Benjamin would naturally be exposed to the same hatred that Joseph had experienced. Therefore, Joseph insisted that Benjamin be brought to Egypt.

When Benjamin did arrive, Joseph instructed his steward to put his silver cup in Benjamin's sack of grain when they departed. *Touche!* History was about to repeat itself. Ten of Jacob's children were again placed in the position to get rid of the "favorite" son who was destined to become heir of his estate.

When the silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack, Joseph offered to his brothers the "perfect out." He said that the guilty person should remain in Egypt as His servant, and the rest could go in peace to their father (Gen. 44:17). This was precisely what they had wanted those many years before when Joseph was sold as a slave . . . but times had changed . . . and they had, too!

Their repentance was genuine. They hadn't even been caught and they were still sorry. Judah came forward with the sincere offer to give himself as a slave if it would secure the release of Benjamin. He loved his father and his brother too much to see this evil come upon them.

Joseph could not refrain himself. He wept aloud and made himself known unto his brethren.

God, too, is overcome by the presence of a broken and contrite heart. He longs for his children to manifest that godly sorrow which leads to repentance and salvation. It is the sorrow of the world which leads to death (II Cor. 7:10).

The Divine Right

"But to all who did receive him, to those who have yielded him their allegiance, he gave the right to become children of God . . ." (John 2:12, N.E.B.). The word "father" comes from a root which means "nourisher, protector, upholder." Not everyone has the right of this relationship with God . . . only those who "believe and receive." Not everyone shares the blessed fellowship at the table of the redeemed and the divine inheritance of the royal family . . . only those who are born of that incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth forever (I Pet. 1:23).

The word "Father" denotes a spiritual relationship. This is the reason why an illegitimate child is considered fatherless. Not that the child was "virgin born" at all, only that he was deprived of that nourishment and protection, inspiration and guidance, which comes from a spiritual relationship with the one who begat them.

Though everyone was created by God, not everyone sustains that spiritual relationship with Him that enables Him to be their father. Jesus said to the Jews, "If God were your Father, ye would love me" (John 8:42). And again, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). The character of these wicked men reflected the character of their father . . . like father . . . like son. Their ideas and motivations stemmed from impulses that were selfish and satanic.

Individuals such as this can be adopted into the family of God, but this relationship can only be initiated by faith. "For we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). The scriptures teach "wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean

thing; and I will receive you, *and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*" (II Cor. 6:17-18).

The word translated "power" or "right" in John 1:12 is the word "exousia." The primary meaning of this word reflects "liberty of action." It means that the believer who has yielded to God has the perfect freedom to enjoy the father-child relationship. But many of us are so inhibited by our sins and our sluggishness that it would be impossible for us to fully enjoy this beautiful freedom were it not for the Holy Spirit who emboldens us to cry out "Abba" "Father" (Gal. 4:6). We once walked in darkness, but now we are the children of light (Eph. 5:8). We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear . . . but we have received the Spirit of adoption . . . and the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ . . ." (Rom. 8:15-17).

The Sign of the Resurrection

The Creator of the universe is understanding and compassionate. The Scriptures assure us that he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He was tempted in all points like as we are . . . yet He was without sin. He knoweth our frame and He remembers that we are dust. He created us with a streak of skepticism and He is sympathetic to our doubts. Consequently, God has never asked man to do anything without providing him a rational basis upon which to proceed.

Moses was asked by God to return to Egypt and liberate a nation of Hebrew slaves. Several incongruities were immediately evident to Moses. A combination of his personal inadequacies and police record coupled with the disposition of a pagan tyrant made the task seem irrational and impossible. At this juncture God gave to Moses a series of signs that convinced him to give it a try. The miraculous rod, the leprous hand, the burning bush, and the voice from heaven combined to convince Moses that the smart thing to do was to head on down to Egypt. He had to face either the wrath of Jehovah or the wrath of the Pharaoh and he intelligently chose the latter.

Gideon could not believe that the least in the poor families of Manasseh would be endowed by God to deliver Israel from the Midianites. He asked the plaintive question "where be all his miracles which our father told us of . . ."? God was understanding to Gideon and graciously presented him with evidence to bring his commission within the realm of reason. A God whose miraculous flames consumed the cakes and who directed the dew of heaven and the dreams of the enemy could surely bring deliverance to the nation of Israel.

A dying King was promised fifteen years of additional life and also deliverance from the King of Assyria. It seemed impossible. Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, "What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me . . ."? (II Kings 20:8). The gracious

God who understands our doubts turned back the clockwork of the heavens and the shadow on the sun dial of Ahaz went back ten degrees.

The world has catalogued and condemned its doubting Thomases but the Saviour did not. He simply said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." The word "Didymus" means "twin." God could understand the skepticism of a man who had been mistaken for his twin brother upon many occasions, and he graciously gave him evidence that was irrefutable.

But, pause, dear friend, to consider the commandment of God to you. He demands of you a change of mind and life and an immersion in water. He calls upon you to faithfully assemble and to sacrificially give of your possessions. He may place upon you a burden to die a martyr in some forgotten jungle or to turn you cheek to a vicious enemy. He will never be content with a part of your devotion but he jealously calls for total submission and surrender.

A doubting world cries out "What is the sign?" We dare not gamble everything we are on hunches and superstition! The sympathetic Savior responds - "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Thus, the sign of the resurrection is deemed sufficient by the Judge of Heaven to convince rational men to align themselves with the cause of Christ. The logic of the apostles focuses world attention upon an empty tomb and proclaimed - ". . . if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins . . . we are of all men most miserable." But the Christ was raised from the dead. His glorious resurrection is historical fact. Honest skeptics have always been converted by their analysis of the

historical Jesus . . . dishonest skeptics will not believe even though one rises from the dead and confronts them.

A sign is significant because it points to something better. Thus the sign of the resurrection directs the world down the path that leads to everlasting life.

Sacrifice . . . or Mercy

I desire mercy and not sacrifice . . . (Hosea 6:6).

It seems to me that there is something basically selfish which is an integral part of the sacrificial system. When I am involved in making a sacrifice a major part of my thinking is focused upon my own personal sin, and my own personal need for forgiveness. This is not to say that my thinking is totally divorced from the Holiness of God and the needs of my fellow man, but certainly a major emphasis of the sacrificial system is on myself.

The thrust of mercy is exactly the opposite. When I extend mercy the focus of my action is upon the needs of others. Admittedly, our human emotions are so utterly complex that we are seldom capable of doing anything with an absolute singleness of purpose. For example, when I show mercy to you, it is impossible for me to forget that by showing mercy I gain the opportunity to obtain it.

Still, however, God does make a distinction between "sacrifice" and "mercy." They are obviously different in His mind, and the Scriptures before us is crystal clear that the God of Heaven desires the mentality of mercy in preference to the mentality of sacrifice.

This difference is illustrated in a dramatic way by the parable of the Good Samaritan. The priest and the Levite are representatives of the sacrificial system. They wanted to serve God in the framework of that system and for that reason it was essential that they keep themselves pure. They not only passed by the man in need, but they passed him by on the "other side." They went out of their way to avoid the man who was wounded and half-dead. A study of the book of Leviticus reveals many reasons for their conduct. They obviously avoided the man, and as representatives of the sacrificial system it was undoubtedly to keep themselves pure (See Lev. 5:2-3; 7:21; 21:1, etc.)

The Good Samaritan, by contrast, showed mercy. He was willing to risk personal impurity and reached out to touch the wounded man. Such contact carried with it the inevitable danger of contamination. There is something about mercy which causes us to become a living sacrifice.

Again we ask the question! Which does God desire in our lives? The answer reverberates through the heavens . . . "I desire mercy and not sacrifice. . . ."

It needs to be remembered that this text before us comes from the book of Hosea. Hosea was the prophet who took a wife of whoredoms, and had children of whoredoms, and lived in the land of whoredoms (Hosea 1:2). How utterly contaminated he must have been . . . yet he married his wife and accepted her children and lived in the land by direct commandment from God.

The word "mercy" is found 10 times in the book of Hosea. The concept of mercy is woven as an inseparable part of the story. It not only reflects the fabric of God's nature but is to be an integral part of our nature as well.

Early in my Christian experience I went to great efforts to jealously guard my reputation. "A good name is better than precious ointment. . . ." I said, and my good reputation was to me a matter of strong commitment to Christ.

Then it dawned upon me that Jesus "made Himself of no reputation . . ." (Phil. 2:7). Like Hosea He was willing to take a wife and children of whoredoms, and to live His life in the midst of contaminating influence. This is the message of Hebrews 10:5ff. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not . . ." (v. 5); "In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou has had no pleasure . . ." (v. 6); "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein . . ." (v. 8).

Instead of "making" a sacrifice . . . Jesus "became" a sacrifice. Him, who knew no sin, became sin, that we might become the righteousness of God through Him.

May God grant unto us the courage to follow in His steps.

Scandal

Our English word "scandal" comes from the Greek word "skandalon." "Skandalon" comes from the root which means to "jump up. or snap shut." Originally it referred to the part of a trap or snare to which the bait was attached.

This word is used in Revelation 2:14 to refer to the way that Balaam taught Balac to trap the children of Israel into fornication and idolatry.

A trapper friend informs me that there are three basic types of lures which he uses with his traps.

The first is the curiosity lure, the second is a food lure, and the third is a gland lure.

Every animal has its own peculiarities and successful trappers make a science of understanding them. Deer, for example, mate at only one season. Should you try to lure a deer with the mating instinct at the wrong season you may actually frighten him away. So while there is plenty of food you use a curiosity lure. When food is scarce you use a food lure. During the mating season you use the gland lure.

Other animals, such as the fox, mate the year around. My friend informs me that foxes are easy to trap. First, he said, you take some scent from a female in heat. This draws the victim to the vicinity of the trap. Next you place some urine collected from a domesticated fox on a bush about 12-15 feet away. Then you set your traps about 18 inches away from the bush. The victim assumes that a rival male has marked the bush and he then is driven by his animal instinct to challenge that male for the mating privilege. This assumption is a fatal one. It is not a mating privilege at all . . . it is a trap.

One can easily see how our word "scandal" has become associated with this kind of trap.

The book of Revelation indicates that Balaam used this kind of strategy to set a trap for Israel. Balaam had traveled hun-

dreds of miles and sacrificed on 21 altars to no avail. Every message from God involved a blessing for Israel.

At this juncture, Balaam, who incidentally loved the wages of unrighteousness (II Pet. 2:15) became diabolically clever. If God was not going to curse the sons of Israel he conceived a plan whereby they would curse themselves.

Therefore, he taught the king of Moab to set a trap. The trap involved the satisfying of their curiosity, there was probably plenty of good things to eat and drink, and there were plenty of beautiful Moabite girls dancing seductively.

All of this was just too much for the Israelites. Blinded by their animal instincts they stumbled headlong into the trap which had been so carefully prepared and there fell in one day 24,000 Hebrew men.

But now let us consider the very practical matter of how you and I can avoid a scandal. It would certainly be a fatal mistake to assume that we are clever enough to outsmart the Devil. Satan is super human. Even in the spirit world he is perhaps the most cunning and clever of them all. This is the reason why he was presumptuous enough to lead a rebellion against God.

Our only chance for a successful defense against the wiles of the Devil is to put on the whole armor of God and stay close to Jesus. We are not in the battle alone but are working together with God.

Solomon said it like this, "A wise man feareth and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident" (Prov. 14:16).

Paul said, "Flee fornication" (I Cor. 6:18).

What do you say?

“Sending” Laborers to the Harvest

Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest . . . (Matt. 9:38).

W.E. Vine in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* lists 12 different Greek words which are all translated in the N.T. Scriptures as “send.” Each of these words, of course, has its own particular flavor and special meaning and significance.

When Jesus asked His disciples to pray for the Lord of the harvest to “SEND” forth laborers he chose to use a form of the Greek word “ekballo.” The word “ballo” means to “throw” and “ek” before it signifies “out.”

The word “ekballo” means literally, to “throw out.” It is used over 80 times in the N.T. Scriptures. The KJV translates it “cast out” (52 times).

Thayer defines the word “with the included notion of more or less violence.”

This is the word which the Holy Spirit used to describe the cleansing of the temple when Jesus “cast out” the money-changers (Matt. 21:12, Mark 11:15 and John 2:15).

This is the word which describes the way that Paul and Barnabas were driven out of Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:50).

This is the word used to describe the way that Sarah wanted Abraham to cast out Hagar (Gal. 4:30).

This is the word describing Diotrefes who prated against the apostles with malicious words. He would not receive the brethren and “cast out” those who did (III John 10).

This is the word used to describe the way that Jesus was “driven” into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil (Mark 1:12).

The word is also used of the way that Rahab sent out the

spies another way (James 2:25). I thought perhaps this example lacked the notion of violence. After reflecting upon the story, however, there was considerable pressure for those men to leave when Rahab sent them out. The soldiers of Jericho were searching intently for them and would certainly have killed them if only given the chance.

This, then, is the way that our Lord sometimes "sends" forth laborers into the harvest. He may find us so utterly complacent that it is difficult for Him to get our attention. He, therefore, lovingly increases the pressure until we may start to feel a bit uncomfortable. Still we may be like the proverbial hound who sat on the thorn and howled because he was too lazy to move over. Ultimately we are apt to find ourselves literally "thrown out" into the harvest.

Almost everyone knows of some Christian worker whose ministry was founded on the smoldering ashes of what seemed at the time to be a tragedy. In retrospect it might not have been a tragedy at all . . . just the Lord "sending out" another worker to the harvest.

The 32nd Psalm teaches that we should not be like the horse or the mule which have no understanding. God doesn't want to jerk us around like some dumb animal in order that we might do His will. He wants to guide us with his eye and instruct us gently in the way that we should go (Psa. 32:8-9).

If this does not work, however, He is ready, able, and willing to "send" for laborers into His harvest.

Maranatha . . . even so come Lord Jesus!

7 to 40

The other evening it was my privilege to sit next to Dr. Dan Curtis at a banquet. Dr. Curtis is a department head at the University in Warrensburg, Missouri and teaches in the field of communications. At the present time he is teaching a regular course for law enforcement officers. Included in the course are ways to detect when someone is lying to you. Dr. Curtis indicated that only a small percentage of the way we communicate is verbal. As a matter of fact, he said, some experts believe that only 7% of communication is verbal, and no one, he added, puts it at over 40%.

Isn't that astounding? The most important aspects of communication are "non-verbal." What an encouragement this is to the vast majority of us who are not eloquent. The bumbling farm boy who stammers for every word may communicate his love to that special girl far more effectively than a Philadelphia lawyer. The expression on his face, the tone of his voice, the gesture of his hands, the shuffle of his feet, the look in his eyes all combine to say what his lips may find it difficult to frame into words.

Just the other day I sought to phone a friend who ministered in another state. The secretary informed me that he was "no longer with that church." Though we spoke but a brief moment there was a certain "coldness" about her conversation which was impossible to miss, but difficult to define. It communicated to me that there had been trouble. In retrospect, the tone of her voice was a more accurate indication of what had happened than her words.

This message is of a special significance to preachers and Christian workers. Moses was of a slow speech and a slow tongue, but Pharaoh still got the message. Amos had no prophetic background or training but God still used him to stir a nation. The Apostles of Christ were unlettered peasant folk but

they were still able to hold captive the masses by their boldness and the simplicity of their faith. Words play only a small part in the way that we communicate.

Several months ago I met a lady in Ft. Chaffee, Arkansas who was in charge of a sewing ministry for refugees. The refugees all spoke Spanish, yet their communication was both meaningful and effective. I understand that she had worked equally as well with Vietnamese refugees though she did not speak their language either. The limited language barrier did not erase the more important aspects of their communication. No one who observed her at work could misunderstand or overlook the obvious fact that she cared.

There is an old illustration about two men who recited the 23rd Psalm. After one recitation the audience applauded, after the other they wept. The difference was explained by the fact that one man knew the Psalm, and the other knew the Shepherd, but it is most significant to note that they both said identically the same words.

I have a growing conviction that every Christian has a divine mandate to communicate the Gospel. It is important to remember that only 7 to 40% of this communication involves words.

Shepherds

It is impossible to accurately understand our modern world without an awareness of class struggle. It matters not whether it involves a union dispute here in the U.S.A. or a bloody riot in the streets of San Salvador, there seems to be a classic confrontation between the "haves" and the "have nots."

It is intriguing to discover this same struggle on the pages of our Holy Bible, and it is somewhat frightening to see our Lord display such an affinity with the "have nots."

Perhaps no event so dramatically and poignantly displays this fact as does the Christmas story.

Jesus was born of a peasant girl who knew the harsh reality of grinding poverty and discrimination. In the presence of her kinswoman Elisabeth, she rejoiced that God had regarded the "low estate of his handmaiden." Her psalm of praise was laced with phrases which must have been offensive and inflammatory to the aristocrats of the first century. She acknowledged that God had "scattered the proud," "put down the mighty from their seats" and the rich he hath sent empty away." By contrast she felt that God had "exalted them of low degree" and "filled the hungry with good things" (see Luke 2:46-55).

The fact that Jesus was born in a manger and never had the privilege of formal education gave to him a strong bond of association with the masses of people who existed in abject poverty. The Scriptures record that the "common people heard Him gladly" (Mark 12:37).

In harmony with His strong identity with the victims of poverty and discrimination is the astounding fact that a multitude of the heavenly host made an appearance to shepherds announcing the birth of our Saviour.

It would be a mistake to think of these shepherds in association with such Biblical heroes as Abel, Abraham, Moses and David. It would be more appropriate to remember the terse

note in Genesis 46:34 that ". . . every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians."

The *Dictionary of N.T. Theology*, Vol. 3 page 566 offers this insight.

. . . After the exile the Pharisaic rabbis brought about a striking devaluation of the occupation of shepherd in Palestinian Judaism. In a time of poor pay, shepherds were suspected, perhaps often rightly, of dishonesty. The pious were forbidden to buy wool, milk or meat from shepherds. Civic privileges (the functions of judge and witness) were withdrawn from them as from the tax collectors. . . .

One reason why these men were deemed as so unholy is that their occupation prevented them from taking part in the regular feasts and festivals of Judaism and from a regular attendance at the temple. Thus, while commenting upon Psalm 23 the Midrash observes "No position in the world is as despised as that of the shepherd."

Perhaps this will help you to understand the utter disgust which some would display for a man who kept referring to Himself as "The Good Shepherd." His propensity to fraternize with the "wrong kind of people" and his obnoxious illustrations became the focal point of much criticism and culminated on a cross.

Be that as it may, it is nonetheless a fact that the angelic announcement did not come to the theologians and the socially acceptable . . . but to shepherds.

As Long As You're Sincere

The word "sincere" comes from a compound of two Latin words and literally signifies "without wax." It hearkens back to the days of ancient Rome when artisans who worked with marble sometimes concealed the blemishes in their work with an artful application of paraffin. Items which were genuine in their appearance came to be known as "sincere" or "without wax."

I think it highly appropriate that such a beautiful word has found its way into the vernacular of modern America. It does not at all indicate that someone is perfect, but it does mean that they appear just as they really are with no hypocritical veneer to melt away.

Frequently we use the word "sincere" with reference to religion. Many are convinced that it does not matter what you believe or how you attempt to worship God as long as you are "sincere." The fallacy of this philosophy became even more apparent to me during this past summer as I was privileged to observe the ruins and relics of ancient Mexico. It is difficult to imagine a people more "sincere" in their approach to God than were the Aztecs. Their devotion to their deities was the all-consuming passion of their lives. It dominated virtually every aspect of their society. It was the governing principle in their politics and the central hub around which their social life revolved.

Illustrative of their devotion is the dedication of a holy pyramid in 1486. The pyramid was called "toecalli" which means "House of God." The dedication ceremony of this pyramid was so elaborate that preparation was begun four years in advance of the festivities.

The highlight of Aztec worship involved human sacrifices. Upon this particular occasion King Ahuitzotl desired something special for the gods and ordered the death of 60,000-70,000 human beings in one magnificent ritual. When the appropriate hour had arrived, he began the bloody work with his own

hands. The victim was stretched upon a sacrificial stone by four assistants. A twelve inch obsidian knife was plunged into his chest and his heart was ripped from his body, still throbbing, and "sincerely" offered to the gods. Throughout the long day the ghastly ritual continued. The cheers of the worshippers were mingled with the shrieks of the doomed and dying and the groans of the exhausted priests. This horrible incident is so well authenticated that even yet the name of King Ahuitzotl is an adage or a proverb among the inhabitants of Mexico.

With my own eyes I beheld an elaborately carved sacrificial stone nine feet in diameter and three feet high where 5,000 wretched human victims were slaughtered in a single year. With my own feet I walked the famous "Highway of the Dead" where countless human beings were dragged to human butchers. I thought how utterly absurd was the damnable philosophy that sincerity is a valid substitute for truth. I am filled with hideous visions of the widows and orphans produced by such insane and senseless religion no matter how "sincere" they were. I am more determined than ever to use my one short life in the education of my fellow man regarding the One True God who manifested Himself to the world through Jesus Christ.

Spiritual

The word "spiritual" is much used and often misunderstood in our modern world. In order that you might judge how "spiritual" you are I offer the following for your consideration.

The word "spiritual" in our Bible is the Greek word "pneumatikos." The basic idea of the word is to denote that which is "non-physical or "of the spirit." Hence Vine states that it "always connotes the ideas of invisibility and of power. It does not occur in the Sept. nor in the Gospels it is in fact an after-Pentecost word."

The word occurs 25 times in the New Testament Scriptures:

Romans: 1:11; 7:14; 15:27

I Corinthians: 2;13,15: 3:1; 9:11; 10:3,4; 12:1; 14:1,12, 37; 15:44,46

Galatians: 6:1

Ephesians: 1:3; 5:19; 6:12

Colossians: 1:9; 3:16

I Peter: 2:5,5

A break down of these Scriptures will reveal that the word "spiritual" is used of:

The Law – "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin."

God's Truth as opposed to money – "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"

That which sustained Israel in the wilderness – "And did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

The resurrection body as opposed to our natural body – "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (I Cor. 15:44).

The Church – "Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiri-

WORDS ARE WINDOWS

tual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5).

We also see that:

Blessings can be spiritual – Ephesians 1:3

Songs can be spiritual – Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16

Wickedness can be spiritual – Ephesians 6:12

Understanding can be spiritual – Colossians 1:9

Sacrifices can be spiritual – I Peter 2:5

A *Gift* can be spiritual – Romans 1:11 (Note that in I Cor. 12:1; 14:1,12 the word "gift" is in italics which means that it is not in the actual text.)

Most important of all is that *people* can be spiritual. The characteristics of a spiritual person are:

They judge all things – I Corinthians 2:15

They are not divided over human leaders – I Corinthians 3:1ff.

They restore in meekness those overtaken by a trespass – Galatians 6:1.

Ye Which Are Spiritual

Many of us have fallen into a mindset which equates spirituality with going to religious meetings and quoting Scripture. The Pharisees did all of this but they were not "spiritual." They were, in fact, quite carnal. They read their Bibles, recited their prayers, paid their tithes, wrapped their self-righteous robes about them and ultimately they crucified the Son of God. When they saw someone in need they would avoid the man in trouble and "pass by on the other side."

The Bible gives a much different definition to the word "spiritual" than the Pharisees were familiar with:

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

This concept of "spirituality" involves relationships. If you speak with the tongues of men and angels that does not necessarily make you spiritual. As a matter of fact your words may sound to God like a "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." The Scriptures teach that it is possible to have prophetic insight and mountain moving faith without having love. It is even possible to bestow all your goods to feed the poor and to give your bodies to be burned without having a vital and living relationship with people. "Spirituality" involves people! The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost and those who possess His "Spirit" must do the same.

Working with people, as Jesus did, involves the burning desire to "restore such a one in the spirit of meekness." This cannot be done from a distance or by proxy. It cannot be accomplished by casually dropping a few coins in the cup, or by dialing a professional to handle the job for you.

Jesus calls us to follow in His steps. he dared to become involved with the publicans and sinners whose lives were in shambles. He sat down to eat with the messed up and mixed

up refugees of society. Once you do this your life will never be the same. The man who works with metals can go home in the evenings and be left alone. Even the farmer can build good fences and find a measure of isolation and insulation from the animals who might need his attention. But the person who dares to work with people is in a class by himself. this creature called "man" was created in the image of God. He possesses the capacity to act independently and to make choices which defy reason. Working with man provides the ultimate challenge as well as the ultimate reward.

There are no two of us who are exactly alike. We possess the capacity to be totally frustrating and unpredictable. Yet, Jesus came to earth to get personally involved with us. He did not delegate this responsibility to others that He might find protection from the physical pain and emotional trauma of working with mankind, and neither can we. Those who are "spiritual" must by virtue of their very nature behave as Jesus did. A leopard cannot change his spots. He is what he is. So also the one who is "spiritual" is drawn like a magnet to the person who has problems. He cannot help himself. It is no longer he that lives but Christ who lives within him.

In the crucible of life we learn by experience that those who are overtaken in a fault are much like ourselves. In the process of helping others God opens our eyes to some of our own blemishes and imperfections. The Pharisee who proudly announces his righteousness is the victim of self-delusion. He is blind to the fact that he too is in desperate need of mercy and grace and the man who will not see is to be pitied more than one who cannot see.

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Synergy

A number of years ago I made notes from a radio program regarding the 1885 World Series of Mule Team Competition. The winning team pulled 9,000 lbs. the specified distance. When the first and second place teams were hooked together, however, they pulled 30,000 lbs. I regret that I cannot more accurately document this event but I can say something about the principle of synergy which would make these incredible statistics more believable.

The Dorlands Illustrated Medical Dictionary, page 1492 defines syergism as "The joint action of agents so that their combined effect is greater than the algebraic sum of their individual effect."

The book on *Synergetics* by R. Buckminster Fuller (MacMillan Publishing Co.) provides us with another example of synergy which I can document with greater certainty.

The tensil strength of commercially available -

iron is 60,000 lbs. p.s.i.

chromium is 70,000 lbs. p.s.i.

nickel is 80,000 lbs. p.s.i.

carbon is 50,000 lbs. p.s.i.

Total mathematical strength of these metals - 260,000 lbs. p.s.i.

The actual strength of the alloy, however, is much greater than their mathematical sum. It is 350,000 lbs. p.s.i.

We have been taught that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. If we view these various metals as a chain we would expect their strength to be no greater than 50,000 lbs. p.s.i. which is the strength of carbon, the weakest link.

If we view all of these metals not as a chain, but rather as woven or braided together into a rope or cable, we would estimate their strength to be 260,000 lbs. p.s.i.

The synergic concept, however, transcends either illustration. When these metals are not linked together, or woven

together, but are rather melted together, they have a strength much greater than their algebraic sum. The jet engine would have been impossible in the days before the discovery of the alloy called chrome nickel steel.

The synergic principle is applicable to a great many areas of life, and most certainly to theology. When believers are joined together like links of a chain, or woven together like strands of a rope, we will never know the miracle working power we could experience if we were only melted together into the same kind of oneness that Jesus had with the Father. When all believers experience this kind of unity Jesus promised us that the world would believe (John 17:20 ff).

We should further note that an entity which is meant to be one cannot be accurately analyzed except as one. For example, should we remove the earth from its solar system it would immediately lose many of its essential characteristics. The sun, the moon, the stars, the rotating orbit, etc. all combine to give to us our days, our seasons, our tides, much of our energy, and etc. If we removed the earth from its God given environment it would be nothing like God intended it to be.

Surely the same is true of the Christian. The fact that we are estranged from one another in direct violation of His eternal purpose is a factor that forever precludes that natural state of victory and power which we were created to experience and enjoy.

This is the God given principle of synergy.

Tarry One for Another

Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another (I Cor, 14:33).

A few short days ago, I was privileged to travel with a singing group from our church to Mexico. By Mexican standards, the people with whom we worshipped were not poor. They had fine clothes and lived in homes with doors and windows. The average income per family, we were told, was \$25-30 per week.

At each place we sang, we were treated with great respect. Invariably there was food. By American standards there was usually not enough to go around. Each time, however, our Mexican brethren always insisted that we eat first; and they also insisted that we continue eating until it was gone. Sometimes they ate nothing at all.

It was an awkward experience for us, for we would have preferred that it be the other way around. We were told, however, that it was something which they deeply wanted to do and that to refuse their hospitality may prove to be offensive.

Is it any wonder that when we left, we were hugging one another and crying? The beautiful love of Jesus had spanned the barriers of language and culture and enabled us to experience a unity too wonderful for words.

The same generosity displayed by the Mexican churches was also exemplified by individual families. Some of us were privileged to stay in Mexican homes; and reports came back that again we were privileged to eat, while sometimes they did not. We were privileged to sleep in beds, while they would sleep on the floor.

In retrospect, this seems to be the very type of love and consideration which Paul recommended for the church at Corinth. They came together, not for the better, but for the worse

(11:17). They were so utterly selfish and self centered that they thought only of themselves. They took precautions to insure their own well being, regardless of what happened to others. "For in eating everyone taketh before others his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken" (11:21). Such a state of affairs begets hard feelings and strife. It promotes argumentation and division. It resulted in spiritual sickness and death (11:30).

The divine solution was to "tarry one for another." It was to encourage each to assume the mentality of Jesus and to become more interested in the welfare of others than in his own well being.

This is an important lesson which our Mexican brethren have helped us to learn. Let us also follow their example and "tarry, one for another."

Tasting the Lord

. . . if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious . . . (1 Pet. 2:3).

The Bible word for "taste" is "geuo." It means to "taste, eat, or experience." There is a certain finality about "tasting." Either you do taste something or you don't. There is no "in between" with tasting.

In a number of places, for example, the Bible makes reference to "tasting death." In Hebrew 2:9 the Scriptures teach that Jesus tasted death for every man. It seems a bit unnecessary to ask "how much" death Jesus actually tasted. You are either alive, or you are dead. One taste of death is all you need.

So also Jesus predicted that some of his listeners would not "taste of death" until they saw the Son of man coming in His Kingdom (Matt. 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27 etc.). In a spiritual sense Jesus promised that those who kept His sayings would never "taste" of death (John 8:52).

The same word is also translated as "eat." The early Christians "did eat" their food with gladness and singleness of heart (Acts 2:46). Peter was on the housetop expecting to "eat" (Acts 10:10). When the Christians at Troaz had "eaten" they talked until the break of day (Acts 20:11). A group of fanatical Jews took a vow that they would "eat" nothing until they had killed Paul (Acts 23:14).

Once again the word conveys the concept of something without ambivalence. Either you eat something or you don't, either you taste of death or you are alive.

But now let us apply this very obvious truth to "tasting the Lord." The Scriptures admonish believers who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious" to desire the sincere milk of the word as a newborn babe desires milk. One does not get a little bit pregnant, or a little bit converted. You are either pregnant or

you are not, and you either taste the Lord or you do not! There are certainly various stages of growth for the child of God, but there is no ambivalence or uncertainty about whether you are a Christian or not! To "taste" the Lord is to personally experience Him. It is to know by your own faculties the God of the universe.

There is an old illustration about the little boy who was trying to describe the taste of honey to his father. He stammered and stuttered for several minutes searching for some appropriate analogy and finally said: "daddy, if you want to know what its like you'll just have to taste it for yourself." There is no way for a human being to taste something by proxy. It must be done personally.

To "taste" the Lord is the ultimate experience of life. It places us in touch and in tune with the Creative Force that spoke the universe into existence. The God who became incarnate in Christ has condescended to also make His abode in the believer. In Him we live and move and have our being. When we "taste" of Him we are born from above. We receive His seed into our heart and we reflect and project His likeness to the world.

But now let us consider the ultimate absurdity. Let us think about that person who has "tasted the heavenly gift," and has been made a partaker of the Holy Spirit, and has "tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:4-5). If this person falls away it is impossible to renew them unto repentance. They have "tasted" the Lord and spit Him out . . . and He has tasted them and done the same.

Therefore . . . be Steadfast

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (I Cor. 15:58).

I Corinthians 15 is called the "Resurrection" chapter of the Bible. Each verse in this chapter deals in one way or another with the subject of the resurrection.

The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ was "according to the scriptures" (vv. 3-4). Every major event in our Lord's ministry was predicted by the prophets and read in the synagogues centuries before it came to pass. This was particularly true of his decease and resurrection. Every slaughtered lamb from Eden to Calvary depicted the sacrifice of Jesus. The one "sign" which Jesus was to give to a wicked and adulterous generation was the "sign of the prophet Jonah."

Faith is the acceptance of testimony. Our faith grows in direct proportion to evidence. The faith of the Corinthians was strengthened by the testimony of hundreds of eye-witnesses to the resurrection (vv. 5-11). Included is the witness of Paul himself who testifies how the fact of the resurrection spurred him to action.

Verses 12-19 makes the resurrection of Jesus the "keystone" in the arch of Christianity. The entire superstructure of the church will come crashing to oblivion by the production of one corpse and the refutation of one fact.

Verses 20-34 relates the resurrection of Jesus to your resurrection and mine. In the same way that we all die because of Adam, we shall all be made alive because of Christ.

The remainder of the chapter deals with some of the technical questions raised. Paul points to the terrestrial and celestial marvels which we too frequently take for granted. If God can

bring new life to a grain of wheat that decays in the earth, can he not bring new life to your body when it is gone? If God can regulate the billions of blazing suns that are scattered to infinity, can he not perform the wonder of the resurrection?

But the last verse is perhaps the most precious. The word, "therefore" relates to all which has been said about the resurrection. It means that nothing is lost which has been entrusted to Christ. Even a cup of cold water given in the name of the prophet shall not be forgotten. Our labor is not in vain in the Lord. Moth and rust cannot corrupt that which we have done for Christ.

Therefore we can be steadfast. We do not fear the morning headlines or the Wall Street quotations.

Therefore we can be unmoveable. We are not ashamed of the gospel or tossed to and fro like a branch in the breeze.

Therefore we are always abounding in the work of the Lord. We are convinced that nothing we have ever done for Christ has been done in vain. Our account is secured by an agency of God. Our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

What tremendous news this is for our present age of doubt and pessimism. While thousands are jumping off bridges and blowing out their brains, the Christian rests in perfect peace. While the multitudes mill in frustration at the shrines of psychiatry and science, the Christian sleeps like a lamb at the feet of the shepherd. The resurrection makes sense to our labor for the Lord.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always bounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Thermostats or Thermometers

Ron Jones told me yesterday a humorous incident involving visitors from Asia. After spending their first night here they complained that there was something wrong with the furnace. It kept going off and on all night long.

In retrospect, it must have been quite confusing to an outsider who was not familiar with thermostatic control. An ever increasing number of homes are now equipped with a remarkable little device called a "thermostat." The setting on this device controls the temperature of the home.

In the dead of winter that thermostat will summon whatever quantity of heat from the furnace is required to maintain the desired temperature. In the heat of summer it can also be used to regulate an air conditioner for the desired amount of cool.

The thermometer, by contrast, does not regulate anything. On a cold December day it may register a passive twenty below zero, and on a sweltering August afternoon a hundred and twenty in the shade. But it doesn't change anything.

It occurs to me that people can be either thermostats or thermometers. We can passively drift with the tide, or we can actively seek to stem the tide. We can merely register upon our face a frown when things go wrong, or we can roll up our sleeves and get busy seeing that things go right. We can acquiesce to uncomfortable circumstances and simply let the world know how bad things really are, or we can concentrate our energies in a courageous struggle to bring the refreshing change which society so desperately needs.

Jesus was a man of action. The pages of Scripture are alive with the good news He brought to the poor, and with the healing He gave to the broken hearted, and with the deliverance He made available to the captives, and with the sight He gave to the blind, and with the liberty He gave to the broken and bruised. His very presence was like the trumpet sound of

Jubilee. It was a dramatic and unmistakable signal that something good was going to happen. He was a thermostat and not merely a thermometer.

Those who are filled with His Holy Spirit will naturally endeavor to be like Him. We too will want to bring relief to the poor and the broken hearted, the bruised and the blind. We will not be content to sit on the sidelines of life and passively reflect upon what others are doing. If we are to be like Jesus we will be out where the action is.

Thermostats and not thermometers!

Thoughts – Imaginations Strongholds

Francis P. Martin in his booklet *Hung by the Tongue* offers a keen insight into II Corinthians 10:4-5. In this passage we are informed that “. . . the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of *strongholds*; casting down *imagination*s, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every *thought* to the obedience of Christ.

Martin suggests that a “stronghold” begins with a thought. Many times these thoughts come directly from Satan. Using Judas as an example he writes: “Betray Jesus? Oh, no, I would never betray my Master.” “Now wait a minute, if I betray Him, let’s see.” It is easy for a thought to turn on our imagination if it is not cast out immediately. Undoubtedly the imagination of Judas began to run wild. What would happen if he did betray Jesus? Maybe His followers would revolt against Rome . . . maybe He would call down fire from heaven and destroy the Scribes and Pharisees . . . maybe it would be a blessing in disguise . . . etc.

Once you have imagined something too long, that imagination is turned into a stronghold. It is hard to walk an unused path, but walked too often it can become a rut.

Martin uses another dramatic illustration:

For example, the thought of suicide comes to your mind. You can decide to dismiss the thought or keep it. If you choose to keep the thought and dwell upon it, the thought will become an imagination or an intention to commit suicide. If you leave it as an imagination, it will grow into a stronghold and you will be going into the act of suicide with no power to turn back, except you submit that thing to the power of God and pull it down in the name and authority of Jesus’ name.

The Scripture before us is a very positive Scripture. It indi-

cates that we as Christians possess the Spiritual weapons to pull down strongholds, and to cast down imaginations, and to ultimately bring every thought into obedience to Christ.

Is there a "stronghold" in your life from which you are seeking deliverance? That deliverance is available to you through Jesus Christ!

Josh McDowell describes in vivid details his mental bondage to the memories of an alcoholic father. All of his early recollections were poisoned by bitterness and resentment. These negative thoughts continued even past the point of his conversion. It was only as he was in the process of producing his autobiography that he was able to see his father in a different light. The "stronghold" was pulled down and he was able to praise God for the father who brought him into the world.

Corrie Tenboom was filled with bitterness and hatred for the German soldiers who murdered Jews, and especially for the Gestapo agents who were responsible for the torture and death of her sister. These thoughts, as you might well know, filled her imagination until they became a fortress. That fortress, however, was not impregnable. Our weapons are "mighty" through God to the pulling down of strongholds. By the power of God Corrie came to the place where she, like Christ, could pray for those who persecuted and despitefully used her.

You sow a thought and you reap an action. You sow an action and you reap a habit. You sow a habit and you reap a destiny. The cycle of evil can be broken, however, for he that is within you is greater than he that is in the world.

May God grant you that power to pull down your strongholds, cast down any evil imaginations, and to bring every thought into obedience to Christ.

Truth or Repose

"God grants to every mind the choice between truth and repose, take what you will, you can never have both," Ralph Waldo Emerson.

The night of our Savior's birth the angels announced that there would be peace on earth in the lives of those who were well pleasing to God. This peace, however, was not the kind of peace that the world could give. It was an inward tranquility in the midst of tribulation. Jesus said it like this: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

The "peace" of which Jesus speaks is a strange phenomenon indeed. It comes to sheep who are in the midst of wolves. It was bequeathed upon His Disciples at the very time Judas was betraying Him and a few brief hours before His arrest and crucifixion. The blessing was not to evade or avoid persecution, for this is the lot of all who will live Godly in Christ Jesus. The blessing was rather to triumph in such trouble.

How aptly this is illustrated in the lives of the apostles. Beaten, they rejoiced. Imprisoned at midnight, they sang hymns. Reviled, defamed and persecuted, their personal lives remained a Gibraltar of unmitigated trust.

The paradox would not be complete without some reference to the life style of the persecutors. Isaiah described the wicked like a troubled sea. From a distance it may seem peaceful, but when examined closely it reflects a churning turmoil of mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked. It was hard for Saul to kick against the goads. Stephen could die with an angelic countenance, but the man who held the garments for those who stoned him was possessed of an inward probing from which he could not escape. On the Damascus Road he had a conversion experience which transformed him from the

persecutor to the persecuted. He gave up outward peace and inward turmoil for inward peace and outward pain. Perhaps this is the "trade-off" which Emerson had reference to.

Those who refuse to be conformed to this world are forever consigned to the role of strangers and pilgrims in search of a better city. We do not belong here. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are misfits in a constant struggle against the temptations of the flesh which war against our souls. When we cease the struggle we abandon the truth. Choose what you will, you can never have both.

The God whom we serve is a decision making God, and we are created in His image. We can arrive at decisions in essentially the same way that God does - just because we want to. We don't have to make judgments upon the basis of evidence or coercion. We can decide anything we want to decide. Every day of our lives involves a variety of choices. When we select truth we must be prepared to accept the consequences. We may find ourselves at church when our carnal nature would prefer to be in bed. We may be constrained by our convictions to deal with some distasteful problems when self would prefer not to get involved. The heroes of our faith wandered in deserts and in mountains, and were obliged to live in dens and caves in the earth. The world was not worthy of such martyrs to the truth.

Thus there remains for every man the eternal choice, truth or repose. Choose what you will, you can never have both.

Unfeigned Love of the Brethren

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently (1 Pet. 1:22).

Our English word "unfeigned" comes from the Greek word "anupokritos" which literally means "without hypocrisy." The hypocrite is one who pretends. He projects an image but conceals some aspect of his real character. He speaks in a voice that does not reveal his true identity.

It is quite easy for Christians to be hypocritical. We actually have two natures which war within our souls. Once we have made a public commitment to Christ, we find our lower nature embarrassing. Thus, when we have bad thoughts or do bad things we prefer to hide such inconsistencies behind the mask of our spiritual personality. Each of us have certain stereotyped ideas of how a Christian should act and we will probably have a strong temptation to appear that way regardless of how we feel. The problem, of course, is compounded in the lives of preachers, teachers, and other church leaders for they face additional pressures to project the proper image.

A certain amount of this "acting" is no doubt healthy. We can "act our way into feeling" more easily than we can "feel our way into acting." Our mind should dominate our emotions. A mother may not "feel" like taking care of a sick child in the middle of the night but she must not allow these feelings to prevent her from doing so. There are also many times when a Christian does not feel like going to church, or smiling at an insult, or doing good to those who hate . . . but our feelings must not prevent us from doing so. Our actions are transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Yet, there is a very real sense in which our love of the brethren is to be without hypocrisy. There was a time, for example, when Jesus was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He did not seek to hide such feelings from His disciples but rather sought their help and assistance. Human weakness is not a sin and Jesus was human.

So, also, in the life of the Apostle Paul. When writing to the Corinthians he felt constrained to admit "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength insomuch that we despaired even of life" (II Corinthians 1:8). Perhaps this was the "love unfeigned" to which he made reference in II Corinthians 6:6. Such openness may have made Paul vulnerable to additional criticism from his enemies in Corinth who had already challenged his apostleship. But God's is without hypocrisy (James 3:7) and Paul possessed God's wisdom.

The word "anupokritos" occurs six times in the New Testament Scriptures. We have already mentioned three (I Pet. 1:22; II Cor. 6:6 and James 3:17). The other three are: Romans 12:9; I Timothy 1:5 and II Timothy 1:5. In James the word is translated as "without hypocrisy" and in Romans "without dissimulation." In each of the other references the authorized version has "unfeigned." The two references in Timothy refer to "unfeigned faith"; the others all refer to love.

Several years ago it was my privilege to hear Ray Stedman speak. He said that the secret to the "body life" ministry for which his congregation is now famous can be traced back to a time when he loved "without hypocrisy." When he opened up and admitted his own problems the brethren were not only able to minister to him more effectively, they were also encouraged to open up and admit to problems of their own.

As we love one another with a pure heart, fervently, we must see to it that our love is "unfeigned."

The Vision of the Apostles

Here is an apple . . . what do you see? Some see only something to eat and throw away. Others might envision something to eat and plant. Some might see an apple tree . . . others a grove of apple trees . . . still others might behold a limitless panorama of trees, and trucks, factories, canneries and market places . . . all from the same apple.

Here is the world . . . what do you see. Some see the world as only a place to gratify their animal appetites. Their philosophy is "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die." Others think in terms of providing for a family . . . or a community . . . or a country. The vision of the apostles, however was a world wide vision. It transcended every social barrier, every racial prejudice, and every national boundary. They dreamed of one world united in Christ . . . of swords and spears beaten into plowshares and pruning hooks. They foresaw a society without violence – where the knowledge of the Lord deluged mankind like the waters cover the sea.

Look again at that little band of ragged and illiterate peasants. There they stand upon an obscure hillside just East of Jerusalem. Their clothing is tattered and their pockets are empty. They have no prestigious connections with government and they are outcasts in their own religion. They have lately been intimidated by local authorities and were described by their leader as "sheep in the midst of wolves." Yet they dare to dream of world conquest. They start with the teeming and treacherous multitudes of Jerusalem . . . they fan out into the hostility of the Judean hillsides . . . they progress to the segregated society of the Samaritans . . . and then they lift their eyes to the harvest of a limitless horizon.

From this perspective in history, it is easy to forget how absolutely irrational it must have seemed back then. The flames of persecution seem cooler from the vantage point of an air-

conditioned Sunday School Class. The hatred of the Jews and the contempt of the Romans is not nearly so sharp when it is separated by so many centuries. We find it easier to talk about their battles than to commence any of our own.

One of the rules for safe driving is to "aim high." The man who overdrives his field of vision is vulnerable to destruction. As long as the church is double parked by the local department store there is little danger of this problem, but if we ever get in gear we ought to be in the market for apostolic eye-glasses. The church without that kind of vision is apt to spin out in bogs of trivia or be lulled to sleep by the lullabies of liberal preaching. The straight and narrow can only be traversed by the alert and the active.

Imagine, if you can, how shocking it would be to everyone if the apostles suddenly dropped by during our annual planning session. They would discover to their amazement that we really didn't have any plans. We had suffered no great defeats . . . we had experienced no great victories, and our only combat with evil had been the result of accidental encounters and still worse, more of the same was on the drawing board for the future. What an amazing experience it would be for us to have fellowship with men who stormed empires with greater ease than we turn off the football game and drag ourselves out to hear a sermon. We have more money than the apostles, more education than the apostles, more of virtually everything . . . but vision. They had nothing but Christ and dreamed of world conquest. Yet, in their lifetime they preached the gospel to every creature under heaven (Col. 1:23). We have virtually everything . . . and we're supposed to have Jesus too . . . but attack is as far from our minds as retreat was from theirs. The problem is our vision – look on the fields – they are still white unto harvest – and the laborers are still few.

No Vision

Where there is no vision the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he (Prov. 29:18).

Most of our churches have fallen into a traditional rut. We gather to "hold services with little sense of direction or purpose beyond that of increasing our membership and perhaps even starting other churches "holding" more services. It is imperative that we rise above our traditional trenches and take another look at the battlefield. With world population increasing 35 times faster than people are being saved it does not take much of a tactician to recognize the need for a different strategy.

I am reminded of a friend in Kansas whose Grandfather assured him that tractors would never be widely accepted on the farm. As if the tires packing down the ground wasn't bad enough he reasoned the oil dripping out of the dern thing would surely destroy any chances for a decent crop. It is interesting to observe that Robert Hutchings Goddard was experimenting with rockets at a time when most of us were reluctant to even accept tractors. Goddard died in 1945 and was virtually unknown to anyone but Hitler's scientists who were trying to perfect the rocket as an instrument of war.

As badly as we need visionaries like Goddard to use their genius for the progress of Christianity . . . this is NOT the message of Proverbs 29:18. The word translated "vision" is the Hebrew word "Chazown" which is the normal word for prophetic revelation. In other words this Scripture teaches us, not the importance of human dreams, but the importance of divine revelation.

The word translated "perish" in the King James Version is the Hebrew word "para." It comes from the primary root which means "to loosen." It is translated as "naked" in Exodus 32:25. Perhaps you will recall that Moses returned from his encounter

with God on the mountain to discover that the people were totally unrestrained. The Hebrew word "para" was used to describe this orgy but probably would be better translated as "broken loose" as in the revision.

The idea therefore of this verse is that when there is no revelation from God the people become ungovernable.

The next phrase in the Scripture proves a suitable antithesis to this thought . . . "but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." The word translated as happy is the Hebrew word "eshar" which comes from the root "ashar" which meant "to be straight." The person who walks a straight path of integrity will naturally find happiness, hence this word becomes a very appropriate descriptive regarding that man who keeps the law of God.

When people are without a revelation from God they become ungovernable, those who keep God's law will walk a straight path and will therefore discover happiness and prosperity.

Though these words were spoken about 3,000 years ago their message is as fresh as the morning news. The cohesive which binds the believer into a functioning fellowship is the word of God. Without this God's people are unrestrained. A first century mentality is therefore to be preferred over the traditions of the 19th century of the dreams of the 21st.

The crying need of the church is for a return to the Scriptures . . . a systematic sifting of Bible truth from traditional chaff . . . The willingness to admit that perhaps one of the reasons for our miserable mess is that we have failed to follow the directions. For where there is no vision the people perish.

Waiting on the Lord

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; thy shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isa. 40:31).

Did you ever have the feeling that your “get-up-and-go” has “got-up-and-went”? The context of this passage teaches that “even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall utterly fall” (v. 30).

As a young man I used to compete in distance running. How vividly I still recall a cross country race in Stillwater, OK where a teammate and close friend collapsed from exhaustion a few yards short of the finish line. Fortunately he revived from that experience, but the point is that even young people are vulnerable to weariness and exhaustion.

But they that wait upon the Lord are different. The contrast in the Scriptures is quite obvious. Somehow they that wait upon the Lord are distinguished from others.

The word “wait” in the English language has at least two different meanings. First of all, you can “wait” on a table. By this we mean that you serve those at the table whatever they request. Secondly, we can make an appointment to meet with someone at a certain place and “wait” for them to arrive.

The Hebrew word translated as “wait” in Isaiah 40:31 is “gavah.” It means to “wait, expect, look for, hope.”

The word for “serve or minister” is “sharath.” This word is translated as “waited” in II Chronicles 17:19 but is not the primary emphasis of our present text.

Occasionally we make appointments with people who disappoint us by not keeping their end of the bargain. The more we wait, the more discouraged we become.

They that wait upon the Lord are not so. The Lord is not slack concerning his promises. What He has promised He will also perform. The longer we wait, therefore, the more excited

we become for we are utterly confident that we shall never be disappointed.

We shall "mount up with wings as eagles." High above the mountains are friendly cushions of air that buoy up the eagle in such a manner that his flight seems effortless. Hour after hour he can soar gracefully in the heavens without flapping his wings or feeling the frustration of exhausting effort. He intuitively senses which direction to turn to gain the advantage of favorable winds and can actually climb higher and higher while resting.

Those who claim the promises of God and who wait upon the Lord are promised a renewal of strength that will enable them to mount up with wings as eagles.

But we will also run and not be weary, and walk and not faint. A farmer once told me how exhausted he was at the close of the day, only to discover that when his friends came by inviting him to their favorite recreation his weariness would vanish like a vapor. His exhaustion was as much mental as it was physical.

The yoke of Christ is designed for work, but in the midst of that work we find rest unto our souls. Our positive mental outlook is founded upon His exceeding great and precious promises. These promises provide a firm foundation which enables us to "wait" upon the Lord with a bright-eyed confidence that He will never leave us or forsake us.

So to all who labor and are heavy laden we offer the resilience and refreshment that comes from waiting on the Lord.

". . . They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: thy shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Renewed Strength

. . . they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; thy shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isa. 40:31).

The book of Isaiah is in two parts. There are 39 chapters in the first and 27 in the second. This can be easily remembered as it corresponds to the number of books in the Bible.

The second part has been called the "Book of Consolation" as it offers assurance to the People of God following the Exile. There is something about a slave mentality that is morbid and depressing. There is something electrifying about freedom.

Have you ever noticed the difference in locker rooms following a football game? Both teams played the same amount of time and exerted approximately the same amount of effort. Their locker rooms, however, are dramatically different. One is filled with laughter and excitement . . . the other with frowns and depression. One is filled with back slapping energy . . . the other with weariness and fatigue. The difference is above the ears. There is something about being a "winner" that transforms us.

The word in Isaiah 40:31 that is translated as "wait" is the Hebrew word "gavah." It comes from a primary root which means "to bind together" or "collect." Those that wait upon the Lord are "bound together" with Him. His triumphant power permeates every aspect of our being and we can say with assurance that "all things are working together for good."

Paul said it like this to the Corinthians: "Now thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ . . . (II Cor. 2:14). Beat him up and throw him in a Philippian jail and he will be singing at midnight . . . before morning his contagious faith will have infected the jailer and his whole household and they too will be rejoicing . . . oblivious to the lack of sleep.

WORDS ARE WINDOWS

Chain Paul to a Roman soldier and he will be writing a letter of rejoicing that a Christian witness was being made throughout the whole praetorian guard (Phil. 1:13). Cripple him with some painful affliction and he will glorify God for his infirmities and find new strength through his weakness (II Cor. 12:9-10). Much of the difference is above the ears. The same sun which melts the wax will harden the clay. It all depends upon the stuff you are made of . . . and those that "wait upon the Lord: are fashioned from an indestructible confidence.

It doesn't take long for even a total stranger to discover which locker room he found. In just a few moments he will be able to discern whether they are winners, or losers. The same principle applies to the church.

The late Mike Pratt once observed that some song leaders in church perform like cheer leaders on a losing team. Whatever enthusiasm is whipped up is too artificial to be enduring. People come to such a gathering and leave deflated and depressed.

A close personal friend visited an alive and vibrant congregation in California and described them as having a certain "glow." "Eureka"! They had apparently found that beautiful relationship with God which "renewed their strength." Like eagles they could soar above their pain and problems with the assurance of victory. They could run and not be weary . . . they could walk and not faint.

The secret is found in "waiting" upon the Lord. Human energy is not sufficient for the crises of life. His infinite power is able to accomplish exceeding abundantly above all that we could ask or think.

Therefore, let us wait upon the Lord.