

**Messages
To A
Resurrected
Army**

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Take the Sword of the Spirit

The reason a soldier is a soldier is to fight! Sometimes he stands watch in the dark of the night; sometimes he wastes time in some desolate outpost; but these are merely "in readiness" stances. When the flaming missiles of the enemy are falling, when the troops of the opposition are being mustered into formation, and when his own regiment is called into action by the echoing bugle call, then he is ready to do what a soldier is to do:

Fight!

But how shall he answer the call to charge into battle? Shall he as a first century soldier prepare for the engagement empty-handed? Shall he approach his enemy with sticks? To be effective, he must take his sword.

Thus it is with the Christian soldier. After putting on the full armor of God - having girded his loins with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, having shod his feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, taking the shield of faith, and having put on the helmet of salvation - our soldier is now to take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). As one whose reason for being a Christian soldier is to fight, and whose only weapon is the sword of the Spirit, the soldier of the cross knows he must take up the word of God in order to do what he was called to do.

- **The sword** - The Bible is called the sword for a very simple reason; it cuts like a sword. "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). It is a living and active word; it cuts, slices, and pierces the hearts of those who hear it preached or taught.
- **Of the Spirit** - The word of God is the Spirit's sword; the word is what the Holy Spirit uses to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. "It is the Spirit who gives life," said Jesus, "the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and are life" (John 6:63). The words of God somehow are Spirit. "Whoever speaks," then, let him speak, "as it were, the utterances of God" (I Peter 4:11).

The soldier in the resurrected army is exhorted to take up the sword of the Spirit. He is not to lay it down and replace it with *Reader's Digest*, *Guideposts*, or *Time*. He is not to substitute his own thoughts and ideas for those, which have been written by the Wisdom of God. He is not to try to carry some other weapon and give it equal weight with the word of God. He is to take up the *sword of the Spirit*.

Neither is he to blunt the sword. He is not to dull its edges by banging it on the rocks of human opinion. He is not to put the rubber cap of being nicey-nice over the tip so no one gets hurt. The sword of the Spirit is intended by its Designer to be a *sharp weapon*, which has the capacity to cut, maim, and pierce its intended victims.

The bugle calling soldiers of the cross into battle sounded 20 centuries ago. Modern soldiers must follow the examples of Christian heroes who have gone before, take those sharp swords out of their scabbards, and charge boldly into the warfare. And remember: only the trumpet announcing the final victory of God's forces is yet to sound.

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Pray for Boldness

Boldness scares people. The timid are afraid of the reprisals, which come to all when one member of their circle speaks out boldly. The wisdom of men would say that the preacher of the word should not be bold, that he should wait until he has a favorable time to proclaim its truths, that he should make sure his audience is prepared to hear his words before he delivers. But there is never a good time, "for the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (I Corinthians 1:18).

The resurrected army will pay close attention to these words by the apostle Paul: "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6:18-20).

- **Pray at all times in the Spirit** - There is power in prayer. God hears, and God answers the calls of those who petition Him in the name of the Lord Jesus. Each soldier is reminded, then, to pray for his fellow soldiers in the gospel, and to be in the right Spirit when so praying.
- **All perseverance and petition for all the saints** - It takes a lot of perseverance to be a prayer warrior. Anyone can talk tough, but to get down on their knees every day before the throne of the Almighty, and petition Him for all the saints takes spiritual stamina that goes far beyond tough talking and high sounding words.
- **To make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel** - The apostle Paul was a man who had split synagogues wide open, who had publicly rebuked false teachers and caused them to go blind, who had preached to Roman governors about sin, righteousness, and judgment to come, and who had called the Jewish High Priest a whitewashed wall. Yet he asks the brethren to pray that he might have boldness in making known the mystery of the gospel. Is it necessary that prayers be lifted to God for boldness in those who proclaim the mystery today?
- **Ambassador in chains** - Paul was in prison for proclaiming the mystery. Was he not already too bold?
- **I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak** - Again, the apostle asks that the brethren pray for his boldness in speaking the gospel of God. A double emphasis!

The first century church was successful in carrying out the commission of Jesus Christ because there were men like Paul who were extremely bold, and because there were brethren who prayed that he might have that boldness. To be successful today the church needs men who are extremely bold, brethren who will pray that they might have that boldness, and who are willing to stand with them when they too are ambassadors in chains.

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Pray for Clarity of Speech

It is not easy to speak or to write clearly in every day matters. Companies spend millions each year to train their people how to communicate more clearly. Executives are taught to make sure that everyone understands exactly what was agreed upon at the meeting, and exactly what each one's responsibilities are. Even small businesses have to work very hard to ensure that what the customer ordered at the front counter is what is produced by the workers in the back room. Husbands try very hard to share with their wives, and smart families have procedures to keep lines of communication open between parents and their children. It is not easy to speak or to write clearly.

But it is much more difficult to communicate in clear terms the mystery of the gospel because it is intangible, and can be understood only by those hearers who make a real effort to bridge the language barrier and understand spiritual things communicated in spiritual terms. The apostle Paul requests of the church in Colossae: "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak" (Colossians 4:2-4).

- **Devote yourselves to prayer**- No one can seriously read the scripture and not derive a sense of just how important prayer is. Here the brethren are encouraged - not to just pray periodically, but to devote themselves to prayer.
- **Keeping alert with a attitude of thanksgiving** - A person's mind tends to wander when he is praying. The mind has to be disciplined to keep alert by the individual's writing prayers, or speaking the words out loud. And the protocol which opens the portals of heaven is thanksgiving and praise to the God of glory.
- **God may open up a door for the word** - God is the one who opens, and God is the one who shuts. A man may work and work and work, but it is prayer which pushes the doors open.
- **We may speak forth the mystery of Christ{for which Paul was imprisoned}** - The only way the mystery of Christ, which had been hidden from the past ages and generations, could be known was by someone speaking it. And today, it is still basically by the foolishness "of preaching that anyone can hear and understand the mystery of the gospel.
- **That I may make it clear as I ought to speak** – Paul was a well-educated, very clear-thinking, clear-speaking man. Yet he had had the Roman governor Festus, in the presence of King Agrippa and great numbers of influential Roman citizens, cry out, "Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad" (Acts 26:24). Paul wanted the brethren to pray that he could speak clearly

The resurrected needs to pray that those who speak and teach can have insight into the mystery of Christ. And the brethren today need to devote themselves to prayer that God will open up a door for the word, and preachers can speak forth the mystery of the gospel with clarity!

Pray, brethren, pray this prayer.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

The Word of Reconciliation

The world is lost The world in its wisdom has not come to know God. Seeking glory from men, they have rejected Him who made all things from the beginning; they suppressed the truth in unrighteousness, and refused to have God in their knowledge. In spite of that, the love of God is so great that He was "in Christ reconciling the world to Himself not counting their trespasses against them" (II Corinthians 5:19).

However, in order for the reconciliation to occur, the alienated need to hear and obey the terms under which a reuniting with God may be realized. So God has an army of resurrected soldiers out in the world whose main purpose as soldiers is to fight to carry the message. "He has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:19). Some key scriptures come to mind:

- Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men (II Corinthians 5:11).
- For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf (II Corinthians 5:14,15).
- Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (II Corinthians 5:20).
- Giving no cause for offense in anything, in order that the ministry be not discredited, but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger... (II Corinthians 6:3-5).
- Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (II Corinthians 7:1).
- Beloved do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God (II John 11).
- Have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them Out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh (Jude 22,23).
- And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost (Revelation 22:17).

We are the army of the Lord, bringing true liberation to an enslaved planet. We are carrying the message of reconciliation; we are bringing in the year of jubilee. "For He says, 'At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you'; behold, now is 'the acceptable time,' behold, now is 'the day of salvation' " (II Corinthians 6:2).

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Doing What Is Necessary

Every business, which intends to stay in business periodically has to stop and ask itself, "Why are we in business?" Large companies and small shop owners alike find that there is a tendency to drift away from the original intention of the business, and a continual need to refocus. Thus it is in the church of the living God. "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance," averred the apostle Paul, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (I Timothy 1:15). The "business" of the church is to save sinners, and the record of the first century church shows that they preached the gospel to all creation under heaven. The resurrected army of today must imitate their example, and do what is necessary to carry out the will of the Lord Jesus in truly saving sinners.

- **The necessity of Biblical conviction** – Much modern church growth is not really saving the souls of those who have become "members" because there is no conviction in the preaching and teaching, and therefore no conviction among those who put up with that lack of conviction. "Our gospel did not come to you in word only," wrote Paul to the Thessalonian brethren, "but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (I Thessalonians 1:5). It takes conviction to teach, preach, and enforce "sound doctrine," to turn people from denominationalism and today's equivalent of idols to serve the living God. It takes conviction to let the word of God cut with the sharpness of the two-edged sword, and to make the separation between those who are truth-seekers and those who are not.
- **The necessity of teamwork** - God has so constituted the church of Christ that it functions as a body, or a team. "Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it" (I Corinthians 12:27). All the principles of successful teamwork apply to the local body of Christ. The instruction on unselfish play, the need for humility among the members, and the necessity of working within a structure to achieve common goals are all part of Biblical injunction for each congregation.
- **The necessity of goals** - One of the sages among us has remarked, "I did not set any goals last week, and I achieved it!" This simply points out in a humorous way the necessity of setting goals in order to get anything done. This side of glory all successful effort is goal-driven and goal-directed. Our Lord Jesus somewhat cryptically established this in His reply to news that Herod wanted to kill Him, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal'" (Luke 13:32). Each Christian, walking in His Master's footsteps, needs to set and achieve personal spiritual goals. And each congregation needs to set goals consistent with the word of God.

Jesus wants the church to grow. He is interested in multitudes being truly immersed into Christ, and working faithfully in local congregations to get the uncompromised word to a lost and dying world. The individual Christian and the local congregation must never forget that it is the business of the church to save souls, and that there are certain things necessary to get the job done:

Biblical conviction, teamwork, and goals.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

No Fooling on Sound Doctrine

What did Jesus see when He came to earth? In His own words, He saw an "unbelieving and perverted generation" (Matthew 17:17), which taxed His patience and love. The overall message of the scripture is quite clear: without the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross, all men would be doomed to an eternity in hell.

But there is another message in the word of God that is equally clear: only true doctrine will save the souls of these lost men. False doctrine sends both the blind teacher and the blind follower into the pit:

- **We are saved by doctrine** - "But thanks be to God," wrote the apostle Paul, "that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching [doctrine] to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17,18). The form or mold of doctrine, which saves is immersion into Christ. Because doctrine is eternally important, the early church devoted themselves to the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42).
- **The need for "sound doctrine"** - The word "sound" has to do with that which is solid and based on a true foundation. "Unsound" has to do with that which is shaky and built on the thin air of speculation. An example of unsound doctrine: A lady recently told me that she believes a person "who accepts Jesus into his heart is saved." That is unsound, false doctrine, because there is no basis in the word of God for such a statement. "But as for you," Paul instructed Titus, "speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). "For the time will come," the apostle warned Timothy, "when they will not endure sound doctrine" (II Timothy 4:3).
- **The push for a "kinder, gentler way"** - Many congregations which were built on the foundation of strong preaching and teaching of God's plan of salvation have opted for "softening" the public proclamation of the gospel in an effort to broaden their base and get more people to feel comfortable in their assemblies; supposedly the follow-up work on prospects will solve the doctrinal problems. The problem is that these congregations are drifting away from the truth they originally heard because they have not been hearing it any more (Hebrews 2:1). One day they will find that the original conviction which fired their movement is gone, and all they are left with is a group of people who want to lull time by playing a nice little church game.
- **Sound doctrinal Issues** - The resurrected army needs to shore up its defenses and prepare to take the offensive on these major issues:
 - ◆ Proving that the Bible is the word of God
 - ◆ What God requires for salvation, including repentance and immersion for forgiveness in Jesus' name and to receive the indwelling Spirit
 - ◆ The instruction on the Holy Spirit, to clarify the outpouring of the Spirit and first century gifts, as contrasted to the indwelling Spirit of Christ
 - ◆ What the new creature in Christ is
 - ◆ The teaching of the New Testament on the structure and function of the church
 - ◆ The basics of Jesus' second coming
 - ◆ Worldliness vs. godliness

Insist on and endure sound doctrine. Let those with itching ears take themselves elsewhere.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Current or Conviction?

The winds of controversy have always blown. And just a puff of wind is enough to blow some people away. But the follower of Jesus must prepare to stand firm in his faith during the strongest hurricanes of peer pressure and the most powerful tornadoes of persecution. As is recorded in the gospel according to John, "Many even of the rulers [of the synagogues] believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God" (John 12:42-43). Paul later described the pressure he personally put on the early Christians: "And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme" (Acts 26:11). The key questions of spiritual survival come down to whether the individual loves the approval of men or the approval of God; is he going to fold due to the prevailing current, or will he stand with conviction?

- **Faith** - "Faith," says the writer of Hebrews, "is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). The two Greek words here – *hupostasis* and *elenchos* - both are very strong in their emphasis. Scriptural faith is not something to be shunted aside in every teapot tempest. The faith of the men of old which gained them approval with God was a faith which endured when they "were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experience mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment" (Hebrews 11:35,36).
- **The faith of preachers and teachers** - "You know," Paul said to the church in Thessalonica, "what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake" (I Thessalonians 1:5). Being able to deliver a carefully prepared message to a favorable crowd on a Lord's Day morning has very little to do with faith. Messages delivered and stands taken in the teeth of hostile audiences are tests of faith. "Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (I Thessalonians 1:5). Teachers and preachers of the word of God, in order to be considered faithful, must be able to hold their convictions and to be able to forcibly express them in the face of threats or death.
- **Producing faith in others** - One of the most important principles for soldiers in the resurrected army to remember is that we can produce faith in other people. The apostle Paul made his point clear: "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (I Timothy 1:5). Unless sincere faith can indeed be produced in another person, it does not do much good to have it as a goal. Our solid Bible teaching, our personal consistency, and our willingness to stand for the truth of the gospel regardless of pressure, have much to do with encouraging assurance and conviction in others who follow our examples. And, praise God for the record of the scriptures for its accounting of the faith of men in both Old and New Testament records.

"You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. The ultimate test of our faith is not only the convictions, which we personally hold, but - even more so - how much conviction we can develop in others. Men without conviction will bend in the face of pressure; only those who operate with full assurance will stand in the day of testing that is about to come on the whole earth.

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Saving Our Children

The raising of children by God's will has always been a parental responsibility. "Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4) is one scriptural injunction. But the rearing of children in Christ is not an exclusively parental responsibility. Those who lead and shepherd the flock of God have a tremendous obligation to teach parents how to be parents and to provide solid educational programs for the young people in the congregation

The record of the modern church is not good. If you do just a bit of traveling around the country, you will find buildings generally empty of high school and college age young people, and many of those who do happen to be present are not particularly spiritual. If the churches of Christ in America had even been able to save even half of their own young people since World War II, the membership of those congregations would be much greater than what it currently is. When you couple the direct losses with the modern loss of conviction in those who do still attend, the decimation in the ranks is horrifying. Judaism, from the Babylonian captivity onward, without any sort of commission to save the world, had a better record!

What must be done?

- **Strengthen the family** - The family must be encouraged at basic levels to be spiritual. Bible reading in the home, family devotions, scripture memory work, discipline in prayer, and the singing and listening to spiritual songs must all be emphasized. Parents must be taught how to discipline their children, to praise and/or punish with consistency, and to have their will power strengthened. The church has to help families reestablish the work ethic taught in scripture, and families themselves need to teach the children how to work hard and how to do their work right from a very young age. Finally, the local congregation has an obligation to help families get their financial house in order and to teach children from the time they are small to be good stewards of that which rightly belongs to God.
- **Christian schools** - The Christian of today's western society must recognize that one major modern equivalent of first century idol temples is the public or government school system. Christian parents have an obligation to God to remove their children from that rampantly pagan indoctrination, and each congregation has a tremendous obligation to God to provide a scripturally based education for families in much the same way as the synagogues trained children. As Christian parents work together in Monday - Friday school ministries, they find that just as a public school is the center of the worldly community, even so the Christian school becomes the center of the church, and the church becomes the ekklesia - the spiritual community God intended it to be. And the effect of Christian school has over a period of 15-20 years is remarkable. The number of young people who are spiritually minded and who actively participate in the commitments of the local congregation is greatly increased, and the percentage who maintain their faith as they move into adulthood increases dramatically.
- **Follow-up ministries** - Young people, as the scripture recognizes, have to deal with "youthful lusts." Church leaders and parents must realize that most young men and women suffer from a combination of inexperience, deep personal needs, and hormones on the loose. To help them through the temptations of their age, campus ministries and other young people's ministries need to be developed by local congregations. Young people who are committed to Christ are powerful and effective carriers of the gospel, and the follow-up ministries of the church are strong evangelistic tools as well.

The resurrected army needs vision. Each soldier of the cross must look beyond the selfish confines of himself and his family, and join with others in the blessing of common sacrifice to save their children.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Overwhelming Conquerors

The Holy Spirit, who knows the future as well as the past, has assured His army of certain victory, of total triumph over the forces of evil. There are soldiers of the cross who have walled through marsh and bog to carry out their mission for the King. There are those who have given all their financial resources that the rest of the army might march; there are those who have stood on the cutting edge to press the battle of true enlightenment in the fiery halls of academia; and there are myriads who have willingly perished, rejoicing in their persecution for the name of Jesus.

"Who," asked the apostle Paul, "shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' But in all these things we *overwhelmingly conquer* through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:35-37). There probably are no earthly words which can describe our *hypernukomen*, our totally awesome; magnificent, splendid triumph in this battle for truth, right, and the souls of men.

But, lest this euphoria of the moment be but a fleeting tide, consider these thoughts:

- **Working under the sense of sure defeat** - You have seen sporting events where the game was really over in the first few minutes, but there was nearly an hour of playing time to go. The losing team really struggles under those conditions. Generally team members go through the motions, but their heads are hanging, and their zeal and effectiveness have been sapped.
- **Satan wants the church to appear defeated** - Satan is the master of illusion and deception. Through his control of the media, the devil puts on an effective and entertaining laser light show which paints him the victor in this conflict, and the resurrected army as the loser. Saints of the Lord, if they believe there is substance to this image created by the deceiver, will feel that their cause is lost, and heavily shuffle through the motions of Christianity during the days of their earthly sojourn.
- **Working under the sense of certain directory** - When a team picks up the smell of victory, there is no holding it back. Under these conditions, every play seems to work, its defense is superb, and it crushes the opposition.
- **God has given us the victory, seen by the eye of faith** - Many great examples of God's victory in physical warfare are recorded in the Old Testament for our benefit, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Israel was at war with Syria, "and the sons of Israel were camped before them like two little flocks of goats, but the Arameans filled the country" (I Kings 20:27). Impossible odds, but Israel won the battle (during which a wall fell, killing 27,000 enemy soldiers!). David, likewise, was certain of his victory over Goliath. "The Lord does not deliver by sword or spear; for the battle is the Lord's" (I Samuel 17:47).

The resurrected army has a clear vision of victory given by the Lord Himself, the certainty of which has been established by God's record of success in all those recorded physical victories in the Old Testament. Join with the Lord, pick up the sweet smell of victory above the heat of the battle, and crush the opposition. "This is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith" (I John 5:4). We are indeed overwhelming conquerors.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Attitude Adjustment

Overcoming adversity is the name of the game. No one makes it "to the top" without facing some serious challenges and some major obstacles along the way. This is especially true of the great men of faith as recorded in the Bible. These are men who faced defeat after defeat, and disappointment after disappointment, but who overcame adversity to become conquerors.

The church of the Lord in our time has, and will have, great challenges. Satan, the liar and murderer, master of violence and deception, is at work to create a scene in which the cause of Christ is pictured as outmoded and destroyed. Christians are supposed to hang their heads in shame over their "unscientific beliefs;" they are to wring their hands listlessly in the face of decaying moral order; and they are to shut their mouths helplessly before the onslaught of anti-Biblical legislation, executive branch policy, and judicial fiat. Even the dating of our years is being switched from B.C. (meaning "Before Christ") to B.C.E. (meaning "Before Current Era") and from A.D. (from Anno Domini; which means "in the year of our lord") to C.E. ("current era"). Satan's goal is to present an image of his hollow victory as strongly that the world rushes after his illusion, and the army of the Lord lifelessly slogs through the sludge of defeat.

Each soldier in the resurrected army is faced with such a picture, and is faced with his own personal adversities. He needs to draw strength from God through the inspired examples of men who overcame adversity, and where necessary, he needs to undergo serious attitude adjustment so that he marches in the sense of victory. Consider:

- **David** - David was a man after God's own heart (I Samuel 13:14), and was selected by the Almighty Himself as king over Israel. Yet David had to flee from Saul for years, and was king over Judah only for seven years before he was anointed ruler over the entire nation. And as king, he had to overcome enemies without, and rebellion within, even stemming from his own family. He had to overcome discouragement, displacement, and personal sin to be regarded eventually as "the anointed of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel" (II Samuel 23:1). Through it all David underwent serious attitude adjustment, and stands more than any other Old Testament figure as the foreshadow of the coming Messiah.
- **Paul** - The great apostle Paul was another who overcame tremendous adversity to become the carrier of the victory message. He was rejected by his countrymen, thrown out of synagogue after synagogue, and beaten and stoned by his brethren in the flesh. He was regarded with suspicion by his fellow Christians, he was dogged by false apostles and false teachers in the church, and he spent most of the last years of his life in jail. But he underwent serious attitude adjustment, and his voice still resounds the call for overwhelming victory.
- **Our Lord Jesus** - Words fail us when we try to describe the agonies of our Lord. What words could adequately describe His blood-sweat prayer in Gethsemane, His betrayal by Judas, His sense of being left alone at the scattering of the apostles, or the anguish of His soul in the separation and blackness of the cross. But He underwent serious attitude adjustment, and His voice calls us to overcome as He overcame.

These men all kept the vision of victory ever before them as the means by which they maintained their confidence through adversity. As the writer of Hebrews says of Christ: "who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). Go, and do likewise.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

What Lies Ahead

In the words of Amos, "I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet" (Amos 7:14). I cannot claim inspiration for the words and perspective, which follow (in fact, anyone who claims to be inspired ought to be pierced with a spear for being a false prophet). But as one who is more than a casual observer of the past, I offer for your consideration a perspective of a major spiritual storm darkening just over the horizon, and also light shining through that darkness. In the somewhat altered language of Charles Dickens, it will be the worst of times, and the best of times.

I regard the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD to be a foreshadow of the destruction of the world at the end of time. As God destroyed the Jews by the armies of Rome because of Jewish rejection of the Messiah, so He will also destroy the world with the hosts of heaven because of its similar rejection of Jesus. As it was the worst of times then, so it will be, in a sense, the worst of times in connection with the coming of our Lord Jesus. Here are three darkening clouds to note:

- **New Age Movement** - The so-called "New Age" movement is simply "Old Hinduism" repackaged for Western consumption. The successful marketing of this hostile and anti-Christian religion has already had a major impact on our culture, and will merge readily with the environmentalist movement in the worship of Gaia, "Mother Earth."
- **New Economic Policy** - The international bankers have successfully removed the currency of every country in the world from being backed with gold or silver. This has allowed them to take control of the world's economy, with the ability to collapse this economy at any time in preparation for world-wide martial law.
- **New World Order** - Former U.S. President Bush was excited about the prospects for a "new world order" in which the United Nations would function as envisioned by its founders. When you consider who the founders of the U.N. were, and what their vision was, you can see that the goal of the U.N. is a world-wide socialist empire, with world peace enforced by the point of the bayonet, and the obliteration of Christianity.

From a worldly perspective, prospects for the future indeed look bleak. Those who fix their hope on this world either get very discouraged, or pretend not to see the reality in front of them.

But it will be the best of times. God is already laying the groundwork for reaping the greatest harvest in the history of the church. When we realize that there are more people alive on the face of the earth today that have - in total! - died since the days of Noah, we realize how ripe the harvest really is. Here are some powerful preparatory steps the Almighty has taken:

- ◆ **Proof that The Bible is the Word of God** - There is an increasing emphasis that faith is the result of a careful analysis of the objective testimony found in the word of God. This sets the stage for converting people from all the religions of the world, and for invading the so-called intellectual community
- ◆ **Discipleship** - There is a re-establishing of the Biblical principle of making true disciples of Jesus instead of just attendees of "church."
- ◆ **Personal Prayer and Devotion** - Those who are truly immersed into Christ are seeing the need to devote themselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.
- ◆ **Restoration of the Ancient Power** - The dust of 20 centuries is being brushed off the face of Christ, who in glory is the image of the invisible God. And the powerful supernatural transformation of character in those who behold that image in the pages of the New Testament is being increasingly understood.

Such are the characteristics of the resurrected army, revolutionary detachments from heaven, who march with a

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vision of victory over a worn out earth.

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The Obligation of Church Leadership

"Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls says the inspired writ (Hebrews 13:17). There are several obvious implications here: Not everyone is a leader in the church of the Lord; there are leaders in the church; leaders are supposed to lead and leaders are to keep watch over the flock's souls. The rapidly emerging anti Christian policies emanating from Washington, D.C. are setting the stage for a major crisis in local congregations in the not so-distant future. In view of that impending crisis, the leadership of each local congregation has a tremendous obligation to the Lord and to those entrusted to their care.

- **Make sure the word Is preached and taught with conviction** - The apostle Paul reminded the church in Thessalonica that "our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (I Thessalonians 1:5). Watering down the word of God so that it is palatable to the guests in the assembly who have been sucked in by the latest "marketing the church" scam has long-term disastrous effects. The word has to come in "full conviction" so hearers of the word have enough conviction to become believers of the word and doers of the word. Those who lack conviction will be swept away in the pounding hall of difficulty about to come upon us.
- **Encourage each brother and sister to read and pray daily** - If we physically are in need of "daily bread," how much more spiritually? The One who gave His back to those who struck Him knows how to "sustain the weary one with a word" (Isaiah 50:4).
- **Equip brethren for the work** - It is the job of present-day evangelists and shepherds to "equip the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). Christians need to be shown how to make disciples, how to exhort in sound doctrine, and how to refute those who contradict the teaching of scripture.
- **Be honest about current and upcoming conditions** – It is true that most people would rather live in some sort of dream world. But true leaders "keep watch;" they inform the sheep of what is actually happening now, and of dangers ahead. They work hard to help new Christians become debt-free, and to free themselves from dependency upon the welfare state. They help families understand the true nature and purpose of the public education system, and establish Christian schools in each congregation to salvage as many souls as possible. They warn the flock of the impending spiritual storm, and help each Christian to be prepared.
- **They keep the vision of victory before the congregation** - The people can become discouraged if the focus of preaching and teaching is on world events. The Bible's picture of the resurrected army's final triumph must continually be set forth for the minds of the brethren, lest they shuffle in defeat rather than march strongly in victory.

Leaders in each flock will give an account to the Great Shepherd of the sheep. May the accounting go well.

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Rebuilding the Temple

One cannot help but note the parallels between ancient Israel and the church. Fresh from the crucible, which fired the nation, Israel began with a generation that was faithful to the Lord all the days of Joshua. Step by step, however, Israel began her descent into idolatry and apostatized from her original faith. It finally became necessary, in the wisdom of the Almighty, for Jerusalem to be destroyed and the Temple of Solomon - symbol of the presence of God - to be leveled. As the Lord spoke to the exiles of Israel in Babylon through the prophet Ezekiel: "Thus says the Lord God, 'Behold, I am about to profane My sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes, and the delight of your soul; and your sons and daughters whom you have left behind [in Jerusalem] will fall by the sword' "(Ezekiel 24:21). The gavel of God's judgment fell, and the temple was razed. But after the completion of a 70-year period of captivity, God allowed a remnant to return to the land, and to begin the process of rebuilding the temple. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel the builder, Joshua the high priest, Ezra the scribe, Haggai and Zechariah the prophets, and Nehemiah the governor, the temple was restored, the city rebuilt, and service to the Lord resumed.

The parallel between Israel and the church is striking. Formed from a remnant of honest Jews, the church began with power on the day of Pentecost, 30 AD. Those of true Israel who turned to the Lord and those of the Gentiles who were immersed into Christ in the first century AD constituted a "faithful generation." But the lawlessness the apostle Paul spoke of was already at work, and those who claimed to be "of the church" for the most part descended into idolatry and apostasy. But in the Providence of God, He allowed a step by step "restoration" of His spiritual temple to take place just as He allowed a restoration of the physical temple in the days of Ezra.

- **Restoration of the ancient name** - 1793 - The dropping of denominational appendages in favor of the divinely approved name for each of God's children, Christian. (Acts 11:26).
- **Restoration of the ancient book** – 1809 - The repudiation of man-made creeds and "confessions" in favor of God's revelation to man, regarding the Bible as the sole governing authority in spiritual matters. (II Timothy 3:16,17).
- **Restoration of the ancient order** – 1823 - A recognition that Jesus built something He called "My church" (Matthew 16:18), and that He gave complete instructions in the pages of the New Testament for its organization and conduct.
- **Restoration of the ancient gospel** - 1827 - The realization that the first proclamation of the gospel by the apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost, 30 AD, offered the individual a choice that he could make regarding his salvation, and that he was to repent and be immersed for the forgiveness of his sins, and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).
- **Restoration of the ancient power** - 1987 - The dawning of an understanding that the power of the Spirit in the inner man works in a divinely powerful way to transform the Christian when he beholds the image of the glorified Christ in the writings of the New Testament (II Corinthians 3:18).

These five stages in the restoration of the New Testament church are akin to the restoration of the temple in the days of Ezra and Zerubbabel. The difficulties they faced, the lessons they learned, the challenges from their preachers, and their reliance upon God all stand as divinely inspired markers for us, that we may learn as those to whom the instruction was intended, we who truly are the ones upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

May each soldier in the resurrected army snap to attention at the reading of the Law, and may he learn from the word of God in the examples to follow.

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First Steps in Rebuilding the Temple

The resurrected army of Christ today is called to rebuild the true temple of the Lord. From the time of the first century onward, apostates attempted to move in and desecrate the temple, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. Breaches formed in the wall, and this spiritual temple lay in such ruin that scarce a trace of its original glory could be found upon earth. But there is a God in heaven who wants His only begotten Son to be glorified. And by His grace and mercy, and His Providential control of history, He has allowed the church, this true temple of Jesus, to be in the process of being restored. The spiritual army of Christ, called to rebuild this temple, is charged to examine the inspired pages of history of the restoration of Ezra's day, and to learn the lessons thereof. Come, then, and see, from 530 BC.

- **The restoration of the altar** - "Now when the seventh month came, and the sons of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brothers the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brothers arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God. So they set up the altar on its foundations, for they were terrified because of the peoples of the lands; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, burnt offerings morning and evening" (Ezra 3:1-3). From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord, but the foundation of the temple of the Lord had not been laid" (Ezra 3:6).
- **Restoration of the foundation** - "Now in the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers the priests and Levites, and all who came up from captivity to Jerusalem, began the work... Now when the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord according to the directions of King David of Israel. And they sang, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, saying, 'For He is good, for His lovingkindness is upon Israel forever.' And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid" (Ezra 3:8-11)

There are some lessons here for the Christian soldier:

- **God wanted it done** - Even though they were terrified because of the peoples of the land, they began the work of re-establishing the altar and laying the temple's foundation because they knew it was the will of God. In the same way today, a person might be terrified of the denominational peoples of the land, but he still goes ahead with laying the foundation for Christ's church because he knows God wants it done.
- **They operated in accordance with written instruction** - They were careful to follow instructions from God with the altar, the foundation, the sacrifices, and the singing. They did not do their "own thing"; they respected and honored the wishes of God as found in the written record. The lesson for us is clear: follow that which is written.
- **They worked** - At some point their good intentions translated into the back-breaking work of laying the foundation for the temple. No one wanting to lay the foundation of a New Testament church is going to accomplish it without similar spiritual back-breaking toil
- **They praised God** - God indeed is good, and His lovingkindness extends to the true Israel of God - the church - forever!

Learn your lessons well, soldier.

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What Lies Ahead

Nothing important ever gets done without obstacles and opposition. Thus, as the sons of Israel gained some success in reestablishing sacrifices at Jerusalem's altar and in laying the foundation of the temple, their enemies stepped up their attacks. Though subtle at first, their tactics eventually involved bringing in the iron fist of government to stop the Jews from restoring the temple in Jerusalem. As the resurrected army of the Lord is involved in restoring the true tabernacle - the church of the living God - it can expect similar obstacles, and should mentally and spiritually prepare for them.

- **Enemies offered to "help"** - "Now when the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a temple to the Lord God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' households, and said to them, 'Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God' "(Ezra 4:1,2). These enemies were hidden, although the first thing the word of God does in this passage is to bring their intentions into the open. Their words flowed as smoothly as fine oil, but their intentions were as drawn swords.
- **Enemies discouraged the people** - Failing to infiltrate and to destroy the efforts of the Jewish people, the enemies took the next step: "Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah" (Ezra 4:4). Discouragement is a very strong force, and waves of discouragement can rapidly wash a whole people to the shores of inaction, and pound their animation to pieces on the breakers of hopelessness.
- **Enemies frightened the people** - Fright mongers use every form of intimidation. Parents receive notes saying that unless they cease building, their children will not return home safe from school one day. People are dragged from their houses into the streets and beaten. While the details are not given, the inspired record notes that the enemies of Judah "frightened them from building" (Ezra 4:4).
- **Enemies used lawsuits** - Having taken personal steps to stop the construction of the temple, the enemies then began to scour the law books and to pressure the Jews through the impersonal force of law. They "hired counselors against them to frustrate their counsel all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia" (Ezra 4:5).
- **Enemies used the force of arms** - Enemies of truth resort to all sorts of political intrigue and manipulation to eventually use government-backed force of arms to suppress the truth. When a lawsuit was successfully carried out by the enemies of Judah, and a decree in their favor was secured from the king, "they went in haste to Jerusalem to the Jews and stopped them by force of arms" (Ezra 4:23)

First the enemies tried to infiltrate, then they used discouragement, then fear, then lawsuits, and finally force of arms. "Then work on the house of God in Jerusalem ceased, and it was stopped until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia" (Ezra 4:24).

The resurrected army of the Lord, at work in restoring the church of Christ, will face similar obstacles and opposition. But we must learn from what is written here, and by the strength which God supplies, that our work of restoration must never cease!

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The Role of Prophets

Sometimes people quit. When the returnees of Judah were supposed to be rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, they quit. Their enemies discouraged them frightened them, used lawsuits against them, and finally used the force of arms against them. And the Jews quit work on the house of God ceased" (Ezra 4:24).

But God wanted the temple rebuilt. And what God wants done He gets done. But what is significant here is what the Almighty used to get that temple rebuilt - He used preaching from the prophets. "When the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them, then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshue the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them supporting them" (Ezra 5:2).

The word of the Lord first came to Haggai. "In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "This people says, 'The time has not come, even the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt'" (Haggai 1:1,2).

The people were saying that right then was not the time to rebuild. Listen to the voice of the Lord through Haggai as He demolishes their excuses:

- **Comment on their priorities** - "Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 'Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?' " (Haggai 1:3,4).
- **Comment on their difficulties** –“Now therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Consider your ways! You have sown much, but harvested little; you eat, but there is not enough; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes'" (Haggai 1:5,6).
- **Solution to their desolation** – “Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,’ says the Lord” (Haggai 1:7,8).

Listen to the commentary of the word of God concerning the response to the preaching of Haggai: "Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him. And the people showed reverence for the Lord" (Haggai 1:12).

"Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke by the commission of the Lord to the people, saying, 'I am with you,' declares the Lord" (Haggai 1:13).

“So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God” (Haggai 1:14).

When the resurrected army gets discouraged or intimidated today, and wants to quit rebuilding the spiritual house of the Lord, the Lord is going to encourage His people through the preaching of those commissioned by Him. And if the people will reverence the Lord, and get to work on the spiritual temple, the Lord will be with them.

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Ingredients for Evangelism

The church evangelizes, or it dies. The church gets excited about redemption, or it withers. The church broadcasts the word of God or spiritual famine sets in. And the church is only as effective in its evangelizing, as excited about redemption as powerful in its broadcasting the message as the individual saints are personally willing to pick up their responsibilities as soldiers in the resurrected army. Let's examine some of the key ingredients in the development of personal responsibility in evangelism:

- **Excitement brings friends** - Fresh teaching - new information - generates excitement in truth-seeking individuals. Andrew said to his brother Peter, "We have found the Messiah!" Then Andrew brought him to Jesus. Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph!" And Philip brought Nathanael to Jesus. Excitement brings friends.
- **"Know how" is necessary to reach beyond friends** - "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders," instructs the apostle Paul, "making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person" (Colossians 4:5,6). Wisdom and experience combine to produce the know how which opens the discussion about the Bible and the plan of salvation revealed in it. But the individual Christian must really desire this "know how." After his initial excitement wears off, and he has exhausted his friends and relatives, then he really has to go to work to develop this know how. Unfortunately, many Christians never get to the point of developing their skills in reaching outsiders. Examine yourself here, and take steps to improve yourself if necessary.
- **Develop a consistently good example** - "For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men" (I Peter 2:15). People in general respect consistently good performance. And they watch. Developing good family lives, with exemplary children, developing a respected business or good work habits, and being known as honest and dependable people are very important tools in opening up the people around you for discussion of the truths of God's precious word.
- **Becoming workmen who do not need to be ashamed** - The words of Paul are written to every Christian, not just those who compose the ranks of "professional preachers." "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). The soldier of Christ must be diligent in his study of God's word; if he is slack or haphazard, he will not have what it takes to endure sound doctrine, or to convince an outsider that he knows what he is talking about. The workman in the word must keep in mind that he is presenting himself to God, and that he must therefore be totally honest. And the workman must develop the skill necessary to handle the word of truth, or he will be ashamed. Which are you? Confident, or ashamed?

Christ's church evangelizes, or it dies. It gets excited about redemption, or it withers. What are you doing, and what can you do to improve as a workman of God, working with friends, relatives, and outsiders?

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Overcoming Personal Discomfort

Some people get so excited about the word of God that they don't feel discomfort in spreading the good news. Most of us, however, have certain mental blocks we must overcome in order to generate the proper amount of excitement, good sense, and discipline necessary to go about preaching and teaching the word of God. Here are some common problems, and (because of space limitations) an abbreviated solution.

- **Not used to hard work or pain** - It is one thing to picture yourself running effortlessly mile after mile; it is another to throw your body onto the track and run, especially day after day. Similarly, it is one thing to picture yourself effortlessly setting up Bible studies or sharing the word of God; it is another to throw yourself into the work, especially day after day. As Paul reminded the elders from Ephesus: "In everything I showed that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35) A person who has not first learned to work hard in the market place is not going to know how to work hard in spreading the word of God. Prove yourself in the discipline of measured performance in the workday world before you charge off into some great gospel dream.
- **Shy, without people skills, afraid of rejection** - If you really desire the salvation of other people, if you really love their souls and are concerned about their eternity, that will drive you to overcome your shyness, or your awkwardness with people. Simply meeting your neighbors, and learning to be friends with them can be a good starting place, following the ancient command, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). Among even a small group of neighbors, there are enough people problems to practice the principles from Romans: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:14,15).
- **Overcoming lack of experience in teaching** - A teacher of God's word has heavy responsibilities. "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren," says James, "knowing that as such we shall receive a stricter judgement" (James 3:1). Working with kids is a great place to start. With kids you know right away whether you are holding their attention, and you learn what you need to learn in order to hold an older audience.
- **Selfishness** - Selfishness is actually a large problem because it is not easily recognizable. One common danger signal to look for is whether you do a lot of talking, but do not listen very well to the statements or questions of the people you are with. James reminds us, "Let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak" (James 1:19). Another danger signal is compromising the doctrine of scripture, avoiding tough issues, or over-reacting to controversial questions. These all indicate a form of selfishness in terms of wanting to have numbers, wanting to be liked, or wanting to be right (in the wrong way). "And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged" (II Timothy 2:24).

All these things require that the Christian extend himself, that he go the extra mile. In the words of our Lord, "If any one wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24).

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Leadership and Perspective

To the leadership of each local congregation belongs the privilege and responsibility of setting the tone or establishing the atmosphere of the local community of saints. As those who will give an account (Hebrews 13:17), these men have the burden of generating the proper attitudes in the congregation. While they are not responsible for the action of each straying sheep, they are accountable to Christ for the direction of the herd.

Leaders in the 20th century church are evangelists and pastor-teachers (Ephesians 4:11), the church's foundation have been originally built upon the apostles and New Testament prophets (Ephesians 2:20). Preachers (evangelists) and elders (pastors) are to work in partnership in the Lord's churches in equipping other saints for the work of service, developing, training, and directing them in their personal growth. There is a perspective – an overall view - that these leaders must have in order for them to do their part in generating the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. These leaders must:

- **Keep the church's mission in focus** - While it may be desirable for a congregation to have a building in which the church family can meet, the mission of the church is not in buildings or in paying off buildings. The mission of the church is to seek and to save the lost locally, and to send out apostles of the church to seek and to save others far away.
- **See ahead** - Leaders especially must not be blind or shortsighted (II Peter 1:9). While Jesus may come tonight, He also may decide not to come. Elders and evangelists must have plenty of oil in their flasks for the long haul, and they must be developing Christian schools, making plans for growth, training people, developing positions and programs within the local congregation, looking ten of fifteen years down the road, thinking even of the next generation.
- **Be spiritual, and encouraging spirituality** - When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, he explained, "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ" (I Corinthians 3:1). Men of flesh can not get spiritual work done. Spiritual leaders understand the high priority which things like devotion to prayer and to the ministry of the word demand, and strongly emphasize and foster those developments in strengthening Christians as well as leading by example in these areas themselves.
- **Understand forgiveness, and the development of gracious attitudes In the flock of God** - "Brethren," writes Paul, "even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). If genuine forgiveness can be fostered in a congregation, there is peace and harmony. Dealing with a tough situation in Corinth, the apostle again wrote, "You should rather forgive than comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow" (II Corinthians 2:7).
- **Be sound doctrinally, understanding the principles of the new creation** - Paul told Timothy to "preach the word," warning him that the time would come when people would not endure sound doctrine. In addition to salvation which comes in conjunction with immersion for remission of sins, leaders must understand that law is a ministry of death, but it is the image of the glorified Christ which gives life.

Those who take their leadership responsibilities seriously, in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, will truly receive the unfading crown of glory at the return of the Chief Shepherd.

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Equipping the Saints

Saints do not come miraculously inspired and driven by the Holy Spirit. in the language of the Spirit Himself, "And He [Jesus] gave some as apostles and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11). The saints have to be equipped; they have to be trained; they do not come out of the waters of immersion instantly ready to perform in the church. They have to be equipped in the word, and they have to be equipped to perform certain specific jobs.

- **Equipping in the word** - There is an order in scripture, certain concepts come as of first importance, followed by other precepts. The brethren must understand, first of all, these basic principles of interpretation of the word of God:
 1. The Bible can be proven to be the word of God.
 2. There are no contradictions in the Bible.
 3. Certain basic truths are contained in plain statements of fact.
 4. Plain statements of fact can be used to understand God's definition of key terms like faith, repentance, immersion, the kingdom of heaven, etc.
 5. Symbolic language and the parables can be understood from the plain statements of fact and from the definitions of key terms. Once the term kingdom of heaven has been defined as referring to the church, then the meaning of the parables can be unraveled.
 6. The New Testament interprets the Old Testament.
 7. All this information is necessary to tackle the book of Revelation.

Many of the brethren need to be trained how to reason clearly through and from these principles, not having learned to do so in their "formal" education. The message of the word of God is communicated by "reasoning and persuading" (Acts 19:8). It is here that the devil has his opportunity, blinding "the minds of the unbelieving" (II Corinthians 4:4). It is imperative that the brethren be taught to think clearly, and that they develop convictions based on the word of God, and they in turn can pass those on to others.

- **Equipping in jobs** - The congregation is a community in which the brethren mutually serve one another. Some are eyes, some are hands, some are feet, and some are ears, etc. They do not have the same function in the body, and thus have different jobs. And the specifics of the jobs in the 20th century are much different than in the first century. The first century church, for example, did not have jobs, which involved training on a computer, or how to run a gas-powered lawn mower. But both the first century church and 20th century church need teachers to be trained. It is obvious also that some jobs require little training, and that some functions in the church require years of preparation. Boys can be trained to cut down weeds in front of the building in a short time, but to be a supervisor in a Monday through Friday school ministry requires years of education and practice.

Congregations which are going to really get the work of the Lord accomplished are those which have two elements in motion:

1. Good training programs.
2. People willing to submit to those training programs.

May you, by the grace of the Lord Jesus, get the job done!

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Building Wisely

"You are God's building" (I Corinthians 3:9). Not only is the church of Christ as a whole described as the temple of the Lord, but also each local congregation is a building or temple of God. And as each local building of the Lord is being constructed, the leaders of each congregation have some instructions derived from the building trade laid upon them. The apostle Paul writes, "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it" (I Corinthians 3:10).

- **Paul laid the foundation** - "As a wise master builder" was how Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, described himself. Anyone who truly intends to build the local church in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and His chosen angels will carefully and prayerfully imitate this great master builder of the first century. This wise master builder laid the proper foundation in Corinth. "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:11). Any foundation, which a poor or false builder might attempt to lay would be something other than the true Jesus of the New Testament, "another Jesus," and hence would be no foundation at all. Utmost care must be exercised in laying the foundation of each local congregation. When soldiers in the resurrected army come into a new area and begin to lay the foundation for a new temple of the Lord, they must root and ground each living building block in the faith of the glorified Christ.
- **Be careful how you build on the foundation** - As it was in Corinth, where Paul was followed by Apollos, Cephas, the household of Stephanas, and others, so it is in present day congregations. Those who build upon the labor of those who first laid the foundations are exhorted, "But let each man be careful how he builds upon it." The next builders can build cheaply and quickly of wood, hay, and straw, and probably have a big name in some sort of "brotherhood." They can be touted as experts in church growth clinics, explaining how to "get those numbers in." They can probably even send out fancy newsletters for financial support, encouraging others to send money to them where the Lord is "obviously blessing" the work. But wood, hay, and straw do not stand the test of fire. "Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work" (I Corinthians 3:13).
- **Building with gold, silver, and precious stones** - Once the foundation is laid, the second wave of soldiers in the resurrected army must build carefully and expensively, so that the structure will last. We must realize that the eternal souls of thousands of people are at stake, and certainly worthy of building with the care of gold, silver, and precious stones. This material, in Paul's metaphor, will stand the test of the fiery ordeal of the day, and will stand, a precious temple in the sight of God.

The soldier of the cross will do well to carefully ponder these words: "If any man's work which he has built remains [after the fire], he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire" (I Corinthians 3:14,15).

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Serving Your Apprenticeship

Paul said that he was a "wise master builder." Implicit in the concept of a "master builder" is that an individual must go through some sort of training program; that he must serve as an apprentice, develop his skills as a journeyman, and finally attain the level of master. Joshua served Moses, Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah, the apostles walked with Jesus, and John Mark bailed out on Barnabas and Paul. Scripturally, the way to become a master builder is to begin by serving your apprenticeship.

- **It takes Humility to be an apprentice** - In the world of the trades, apprentices get the dirty jobs. As we used to say in Montana's ranching country, "The only job where you start at the top is post hole diggin'." Jesus Himself set the tone in His instruction to the apostles after they had some problems over who would sit at Jesus' right hand in the kingdom. "You know," He said, "that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever would become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28). Every soldier in the resurrected army must have the humility to begin his training in a spiritual "boot camp." Every apprentice in the body of Christ will have the attitude, "Whatever needs to be done, I am willing to do it. Like the Master who bought me, I am willing to serve, even to die."
- **It takes perseverance to be an apprentice** - The natural tendency of those learning is to want the lessons to be easy, and to be able to be learned quickly. But the proven character and love, which are the salient characteristics of a master builder are only the result of a long walk down the road of tribulation and trial. "Tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:3-5).
- **The apprentice must desire to learn** - "Be diligent," the word of God says, "to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). "Walk as children of light," it says in another place "trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:10). The apprentice needs to remember that his apprenticeship is primarily a learning position, and he needs to remember that he is there to learn all the lessons - in whatever form they come - that he needs to learn.
- **The apprentice must be willing to take orders** - "You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (I Peter 5:5). Good, scriptural leadership in the church is not arbitrary or capricious; it assigns tasks because those tasks need to be done, and because those tasks need to be done by certain individuals.

Within the Lord's church there must be a general willingness to serve. Many jobs, which need to be completed are not glamorous, exciting, or even necessarily challenging. But if you are willing to serve your apprenticeship, you will gladly do those tasks in order that others might devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Moving To Bigger Things

Congregations generally remain small because they think small. If the resurrected army regards itself as having no territory to conquer, or if it thinks the "giants in the land" are too powerful to overcome, it does not conquer. Each local unit of the church of God in Christ Jesus must regard itself as in a period of transition; it must have a vision of itself as moving on to bigger things.

There are boundaries, of course. The gospel is not to be compromised, or subtly hidden away so that it is not so "offensive." Eight people were all who could be reached in Noah's day, and only Lot and his daughters could be salvaged from Sodom and Gomorrah. To have increased in numbers in either of those cases would have been done only by compromising or disguising the message of God.

But, generally speaking again, the local congregation remains small or stagnant, not because the harvest is not plentiful, but because the workers are few. What do we need to recognize, then, to move us on to bigger things?

- **The record of the first century church is inspiring** - Just one example of the spread of the gospel in the first century is that which occurred in the Roman province of Asia. Speaking of the apostle Paul, Luke writes, "And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:8-10). Because of the courage and conviction of the first century Christians, one by one the idols fell before the onslaught of the gospel. So intense and so zealous were they that the apostle Paul, speaking before the 70 AD destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, could say of the gospel, that it "was proclaimed in all creation under heaven" (Colossians 1:23).
- **Saints must anticipate the harvest** – We don't act on what we don't "see." Jesus worked with the disciples to get them to "see" the harvest. In a passage referred to earlier, Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:37,38). And at Jacob's Well in Samaria, Jesus spoke again to the disciples, "Do you not say, 'There are four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest" (John 4:35). If the brethren do not "lift up their eyes" they will not see the tremendous number of people who are hungering and thirsting for the gospel all over the world. If they do not "see," they will not act. And if they do not anticipate the harvest, they will not pray for it, and they will not reap it.

Yes, there is opposition to the gospel. That was true in the first century. Yes, people are entrenched in the religions of their ancestors. That was true in the first century. Yes, there is increasing governmental opposition to Christianity. That was true in the first century.

The resurrected army needs to march in confidence. Yes, there is opposition and persecution, and even physical death. But the fields are white, and the Lord is counting on us, and "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (I John 4:4). Let's move onto bigger things.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Congregations in Transition

As units of the resurrected army move into an area, they first lay the foundation for the local church of God. The local communities of the saints are often small to begin with. But as the gospel is preached, and numbers are added to the Lord, the congregation is in transition, and adjustments in thinking sometimes have to be made by some of the brethren.

- **Recognize the importance of your participation in the midst of larger numbers** - One of the tendencies of many of the brethren in Christ is to forget how valuable and important each one is, or to forget how important his contribution to the total effort is. He may feel that there are so many others around, that his effort is not needed or noticed. He may say to himself, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body" (I Corinthians 12:15). Our man or woman must recognize that he is a part of the body, and that his contribution to that effort is just as important in a larger congregation as it is in a smaller congregation. In fact, the impact is usually larger because it is multiplied through more people; it just can't be seen as clearly. And in a larger congregation there is more flexibility, and the brother or sister can specialize more easily; it is important that he not use that flexibility to go to sleep. Every Christian's active participation in the spread of the gospel and in other congregational activities is vitally important in the contribution to overall momentum. Jesus, for example, could have said all the wonderful things He said, and no constituted authority would have paid particular attention. What caused the authorities to put Jesus to death was the fact that multitudes actively believed His teaching. Each person's participation is critical in the gospel's impact on the world.
- **Recognize that there are changes in the way local leadership has to do things** - The new covenant is not a set of impersonal laws written on some stones some place. Each local congregation is a letter of Christ, cared for by its leadership, "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts" (II Corinthians 3:3). The new covenant always has the "personal touch," from the caring of Jesus for each person, to the caring of shepherds and evangelists for each person. In a small congregation the personal touch is obvious; the leaders can easily speak to every member of the congregation. But as the congregation moves on to bigger numbers, the "head men," so to speak, cannot even begin to speak to everyone; leadership is diffused. That diffusion does not mean that the leadership does not care; they are simply being forced by God-imposed limitations on time, space, and energy to have intermediate people helping. Develop the maturity to recognize that intermediate servants are the caring hands of the leadership, just as the leaders are the caring hands of Christ Himself.
- **Learn to cooperate with creativity** - Jesus has delegated to the leaders of the local congregation the details by which His general instructions shall be carried out. The times and places of the various assemblies, who shall speak, etc., are left to the judgment of those who have charge over their brethren in the Lord. It is up to each member of that congregation to do his best to exert his energy, influence, and creativity to implement the directives of the local leadership. "It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

Growth is a great challenge and learning experience. May each soldier learn to enjoy that challenge, and may all adjustments be made in a manner consistent with the instructions and spirit of the New Testament.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

These Entrust to Faithful Men

Not all Christians are faithful. Not all Christians are trustworthy. However, all are loved, because love is not earned. "We love," said the aged John, "because He first loved us" (I John 4:19). Trust, on the other hand, must be earned. You love your five year old, but you don't trust him to back your car out of your garage. There are many proverbs, which indicate that you cannot trust every person; in fact, the wisdom of Solomon and others indicate that if you trust the untrustworthy, you personally are foolish. "He cuts off his own feet, and drinks violence who sends a message by the hand of a fool" (Proverbs 26:6).

So the word of the Lord comes from Paul to Timothy and to all who would follow in their steps: "The things which you heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:2). The great challenge for leaders in the resurrected army is to find or develop faithful men who will teach others.

When a murmuring arose in the congregation in Jerusalem because certain widows were being neglected, the apostles said to the congregation, "Select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task" (Acts 6:3). These were obviously faithful, trustworthy men. And, with regard to faithfulness, our Lord brings forth a significant point in the parable of the unfaithful steward: "If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust true riches to you" (Luke 16:11). Let's consider these characteristics of faithful men.

- **Men of good reputation** - A man's reputation is the sum of others' experiences with him. If he is a cheat, there are those who have been cheated by him. If he is an honest man, those who have worked with him over the years know him to be an honest man. Faithful men have a good reputation with those around them. Elders, for example, are "to have a good reputation with those outside the church" (I Timothy 3:7). Faithful men do not try to excuse poor performance by hiding under the guise. "They don't like me because I am a Christian." Faithful men perform well, and have a good reputation because of it.
- **Full of the Spirit** - Faithful men are known as spiritual men. They are known for being in the word; they are known for their devotion to prayer; they are known for their teaching the lost; they are known for their consistency in participation of church activities; and they are known for their good attitudes.
- **Full of wisdom** - Faithful men show good judgement. They have a sense of what is important, and what can be ignored. They know how to work with people, and they know how to manage time. And they are not selfish men; they know how to put others' interests ahead of their own.
- **Faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon** - Jesus' point is plain; if you can't handle your finances, you can't handle "true riches," spiritual things. A faithful man has his money under control.

The great challenge for leaders in the resurrected army is to find or develop faithful men. These are the men who can be entrusted with spiritual responsibilities, and who in turn will be able to teach others also.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

The Day of Small Things

The temple of Zerubbabel's day was built with volunteer labor. The temple of Solomon, which was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC, was built with forced labor and in grand style. "Now Solomon had 70,000 transporters. And 80,000 hewers of stone in the mountains, besides Solomon's 3,300 chief deputies who were over the project and who ruled over the people who were doing the work. Then the king commanded, and they quarried great stones, costly stones, to lay the foundation of the house with cut stones" (I Kings 5:15-17). But poor old Zerubbabel...all he had to work with were the poor returnees from the Babylonian captivity.

"Volunteer labor" is, in a way, fickle. Because the rewards for the volunteers are intangible, the laborers tend to quit easily - or nothing in the world will stop them - you get both extremes. Thus it was in the days of Zerubbabel's reconstruction of the temple, and thus it is in the days when the resurrected army is restoring the spiritual temple of the Lord, the laborers tend to quit easily, or nothing in the world can stop them.

Poor old Zerubbabel's army quit. Their enemies frightened them, threatened them, and finally forced them to quit. But the Lord raised up the prophet Haggai and Zechariah to preach to the people and when the people started working again, nothing in this world could stop them.

Volunteers have trouble with small things. There is recognition, which comes to the volunteer who does big things. But for the so-called little fellow who carries out all the minute details there is little recognition. Imagine yourself as a worker on Zerubbabel's temple. The foundation is laid, and the prospects in front of you are several years of day after day, back-breaking labor of cutting, hauling, and setting stones in place. All this is with no pay, and the small mention of your name in a list of several hundred "to whom thanks is also given." You might just decide that it's not worth it, there is no appreciation here, and you're taking your tools and going home.

Hear, then, the word of the Lord: "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the Lord has sent me [Zechariah] to you. For who has despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:9,10). God had the prophets keep preaching to the people so that they could keep the proper perspective, so that they could know that their labor would not go unnoticed or unrewarded by the Almighty. "And the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo" (Ezra 6:14)

The Lord Jesus reminds us of the importance and the reward of carrying out the small things. "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward." (Matthew 10:41,42).

So, volunteers in the resurrected army, keep on cheerfully cutting those stones. Keep on whistling as you haul those bricks. Keep on singing as you slap, slosh, slap the mortar in place, remembering that you are working on this spiritual temple for the glory of the Lord. You will not lose your reward.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

By My Spirit

Man gets to thinking that he is really something. “My money did this,” says one. “My intelligence devised this,” says another. “My hands built this,” says a third. “My people skills accomplished this,” says another. And, “My armies conquered this,” says the last.

But who are these who boast, who are they but dust of the earth? Who are these who speak great, swelling words, whose breath is in their nostrils? Who is this who says he came, he saw, and he conquered? “So then it does not depend on the man who wills of the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth’” (Romans 9:16,17). As our Lord Jesus explained to the Roman governor Pilate “You have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above” (John 19:11).

The word of God contains, among other things of course, a record of those who thought they were to be built by their own might. And conquered by their own power.

- **Sennacherib** – King of Assyria – The Lord explains: “And you have said, ‘With my many chariots I came up to the heights of the mountains...I dug wells and drank waters, and with the sole of my feet I dried up all the rivers of Egypt’” (Isaiah 37:24,25). And the Lord responds, “Have you not heard? Long ago I did it. From the ancient time I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass...Because your arrogance has come to My ears. Therefore I will put My hook in your nose, and My bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back to the way which you came” (Isaiah 37:26,29). 185,000 Assyrian troops were wiped out by the angel of the Lord, Sennacherib went back to Assyria, and was assassinated by two of his sons.
- **Nebuchadnezzar** – King of Babylon – “The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’ While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty is removed from you...until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever he wishes.’” (Daniel 4:30-32).

So when it came time for Zerubbabel to finish the restoration of the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, these famous words from the Most High were delivered by Zechariah the prophet: “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6)

It was painfully obvious to Zerubbabel and his Jewish cohorts that if the temple was going to be restored, that it would be by the Spirit of the Lord. By the same token, the spiritual temple of the Lord today is going to be restored, “not by might nor by power,” but by the Spirit of the Lord. All the man-made church-growth techniques, Bible colleges, titles, degrees, and programs are simply an attempt to build by human might and human power.

The very simple equipping and encouraging of each saint to go, make disciples, immerse those disciples, and teach those disciples to observe all that Jesus commanded will get the job done. Thus says the Spirit of the Lord.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

The Last Living Stone

It was a great day when the tabernacle of Moses was completed. The word of God records, "Then the cloud covered the tent of the meeting, and glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it. And the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34,35). When the house was completed, the Lord moved in.

It was a great day when the temple of Solomon was completed. The word of God records, "And it came about when the priests came from the holy place[after putting the ark of the covenant in its proper location], that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord." (I Kings 8:10,11). When the house was completed, the Lord moved in.

But the Lord allowed the house, which Solomon built to be profaned because of the idolatry and rebellion of the children of Israel. The words of Solomon were empty: "I have surely built You a lofty house, a place for Your dwelling forever." (I Kings 8:13). Empty words from an empty king, who allowed his wives to destroy his own devotion to the one true God.

After the temple site lay vacant for 50 years, work on its reconstruction was begun by Zerubbabel, ancestor and foreshadow of Jesus, the true builder of the true house of God. The word of Lord came to Zechariah the prophet, encouraging people after the construction of the temple had ceased. "What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel, you will become a plain, and he will bring forth the top stone [of the temple] with shouts of 'Grace, grace to it'" (Zechariah 4:7).

Zerubbabel and those who worked with him were being encouraged by the great Jehovah. While the task seemed impossible to them, like a great mountain looming before them, God would make it possible, like crossing a plain. "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant of the people in those days, will it also be too difficult in My sight?' declares the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah 8:6). God was going to work with them, and, against seemingly impossible odds, the last or top stone would be moved into place, by the grace of God.

But as important as Zerubbabel's temple was, it was nothing compared to the temple of the Lord, which is being built today. Modern Zerubbabels have the assurance from Almighty God that those mountainous obstacles before them will become level plains. It was really to the church and not those of Zechariah's day that these words were written: "If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant of the people in those days, will it also be too difficult in My sight?"

The Father in heaven is intensely interested in the construction of His spiritual house. He is watching over the placement of each living stone in this construction of His spiritual house. He is watching over the placement of each living stone in this house and he is continually walling up its breeches and sharing up its defenses. It is His house.

Someday soon the great event will occur. The top stone of this spiritual house – the last living stone – will be put in place with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!" And the spiritual temple of the Lord will finally be complete. Jesus will come, and the glory of the Lord will fill the tabernacle. When the house is complete, the Lord will move in.

Work, brother, work. Who knows when that last immersion of that last repentant sinner will occur, and the God of heaven will declare an end to the earth, and dwell in the house made without hands which He has prepared for Himself?

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Victory for the Resurrected Army

The troops are gathering. Satan is step by step setting up his regime for global tyranny. On every imaginable front, the truths of God are being attacked. The devil is in the process of deceiving every nation in the four corners of earth and is gathering them together for war. The clink of Armageddon's armor can be heard by those who have the discerning ear.

But how are things in Zion, in the city of the living God? "Then I lifted up my eyes and looked," said Zechariah, "and behold, there was a man with a measuring line in his hand. So I said 'Where are you going?' And he said to me, 'To measure Jerusalem, to see how wide it is and how long it is.' And behold, the angel who was speaking to me was going out, and another angel was coming to meet him, and said to him, 'Run. Speak to the young man. Saying, 'Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls, because of the multitude of men and cattle within it. For I,' declares the Lord, 'will be a wall of fire around her and I will be the glory in her midst.''" (Zechariah 2:1-5). Jerusalem, the church of Christ, figuratively speaking without walls, and with the glory of God in her midst, has many people inside its boundaries.

But there is trouble on the horizon. Gog and Maygog are being gathered, as Ezekiel prophesied. "And after many days you [Gog, Maygog, Beth-Togarmah, etc] will be summoned, in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel...and they are living securely... And you will go up, you will come like a storm, you will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your troops, and many peoples with you." (Ezekiel 38:8,9). You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land." (Ezekiel 38:16).

Should the people of God be afraid? Should spiritual Israel tremble like an aspen leaf? Is the city, though unwalled, defenseless? Hear the voice of the Lord: "It will come about in my last days that I shall bring you [Gog, Maygog, etc] against My land, in order that the nations may know Me when I shall be sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog...And it will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel...that My fury will mount up in My anger." (Ezekiel 38:16,18)

Christians have come up out of the watery graves of immersion. The Spirit of God came into them, "and they came to life, and they stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army" (Ezekiel 37:10). But this final victory for the resurrected army is clearly the Lord's. "And I saw," said John, "the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies. Assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the [white] horse, and against His army. And the beast was seized. And with him the false prophet...these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse..." (Revelation 19:19-21). "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:10). "And I shall magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of man nations, and they will know that I am the Lord." (Ezekiel 38:23).

Rejoice, O army of Israel. The day of Lord, burning like a furnace, is coming soon. "The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to God." (Proverbs 21:31)

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Saving The World

God has always had a true global perspective. When God created Adam and Eve in His image He told them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Nine generations later by the time of Noah "the earth was corrupt in the sight of God and the earth was filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11). And God, with His true global perspective, sent a global Flood to rid the earth of its global violence and corruption, and to begin afresh with Noah and his family. Listen to the earth: the greatest catastrophe of all history was due to moral pollution.

After the Flood, God began working with Noah and his descendents, beginning particularly with Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees. As the message and plan of God threaded its way through history, it is clear that God never lost His global perspective of saving the world.

- **Genesis** - Before God brought the Israelite nation into existence, from the time that He first called Abraham out of his country and away from his relatives, He laid down the foundational planks in His plan to save the whole world, not just the Jewish descendents of Abraham. "And in you," said the Almighty to Abraham, "all the families of earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Reiterated again and again to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, this promise shows that through Christ and His Spirit, the loving Father was going to bless every family of earth.
- **The prophets** - The Old Testament prophets looked to the salvation of the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Joel had prophesied, "And it will come about that *whoever* calls on the name of the lord will be delivered" (Joel 2:32). Micah had written, concerning the coming Shepherd-King who was to be born in Bethlehem, "He will be great to the ends of the earth" (Micah 5:4). And Daniel had seen, in a night vision, the Son of Man presented to the Ancient of Days. "And to Him the Son of Man was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the *peoples*, nations, and men of every language might serve Him" (Daniel 7:14). Throughout the centuries God never lost His global perspective in saving the world.
- **The gospel accounts** - When the fulness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, into the world. Jesus, in His quotations and in His teaching, made it perfectly clear that the Almighty God had not deviated from His plan of saving the world. Speaking of Jesus, the apostle Matthew quotes: "Behold, My Servant, whom I have chosen; My beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles...and in His name the Gentiles will hope" (Matthew 12:18,21). And Jesus Himself made the point in the Golden Verse of the Bible: "For God so loved the *world*, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

God has the true global perspective. The world is still polluted through sin, and the loving Father has engaged Himself in a major rescue operation, saving an endangered species called "truth-seekers." He has followed that up with a massive clean-up and reclamation program, cleansing their consciences through the sprinkled blood of Christ when their bodies are washed with pure water. The next global catastrophe brought on by moral pollution will be the destruction of the world by fire rather than by water. God wants all men throughout the world to be saved from that destruction.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

The Global Commission

When God had properly prepared the world, Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us, His purpose being to save the whole world. "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4,5). Again, the apostle Paul emphasizes, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). The death of Christ on the cross, and the redemption associated with it, is the demonstration of God's love for all mankind, and His willingness to greatly extend Himself for their salvation.

Following Jesus' resurrection from the dead, He appeared to the apostles over a period of forty days, "speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). And these things concerning the kingdom of God primarily had to do with the apostles' and future disciples' carrying the message of salvation to the world - a global commission. Note these accounts:

- **Matthew** - "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of **all the nations**, immersing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20). What we have here is a clear four-point program for the conversion of the world.
- **Mark** - "Go into **all** the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been immersed shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16). What we have here is a clear command to preach the gospel to the whole world.
- **Luke** - "Thus it is written [in the old Testament], that the Christ should suffer and rise again the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to **all** the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46,47). What we have here is a clear command to proclaim repentance and remission of sins to the whole world. and that this should begin in Jerusalem.

As the synoptic gospels close with the instructions to spread the message of the Christ throughout the whole world, the book of Acts begins with this same global commission to the apostles, and later extends it to the apostle Paul.

- **The apostles** - "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). What we have here is the command to His apostles to be witnesses of His glory to the far reaches of the earth.
- **Paul** - "I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even *to* the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance" (Acts 26:19,20). What we have here is the result of a command to Paul to declare the gospel even to the far away Gentiles.

The apostles and first century Christians received their marching orders to get the gospel to the world. This global commission to the resurrected army has never been rescinded.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

The Application of the Great Commission

The last words of Jesus on earth were to spread the word to the ends of the earth. The first century church took the Great Commission to preach the gospel to the whole creation seriously: This gospel "was proclaimed in all creation under heaven" (Colossians 1:23). The question is whether the 20th century church (what there is left of it) and the 21st century church (if the world lasts so long) will take the Great Commission as seriously.

Properly understood, carrying out the commission of Christ is not a burdensome undertaking. In addition to saving countless souls who would otherwise be lost for all eternity, there are some real blessings, which accrue to those individuals and congregations who will seriously carry out the goal of preaching the unvarnished, uncompromised gospel throughout the world

- **Assumption of personal and congregational responsibility** - When something is "everybody's" job, "nobody" does it. Each Christian needs to take responsibility for personally setting up Bible studies, immersing others into Christ, and helping others do the same. Furthermore, each congregation has to take the responsibility for equipping the saints in its care, and for reaching its surrounding area with the gospel, and to send its people into the remotest parts of the earth. No distant missionary board, no evangelizing associations - just personal and congregational responsibility will get the job done.
- **Keeps a congregation fresh and unselfish** - When individuals are struggling to set up studies, when they personally have to take stands on the one way of salvation granted through immersion for remission of sins, they begin to experience the true fellowship of the gospel. When a congregation is trying to reach into the whole world, it looks beyond itself and remains giving and alive.
- **Vision, reach, growth** - Individuals and congregations perform in accordance with the size of their thinking. Our Lord laid out in the Great Commission a vision of reaching the world. When individuals and congregations can have their faith increased, honestly and without compromising the word of God, to see themselves as the ones carrying out this vision, the reach out and growth of the church is enormous.
- **Challenges young people; sets forth a living faith** - Christian young people, with dreams and ideals before them, need to have "conquer the world" challenges. This type of thinking presents the church in its true light as the most important activity on earth. It offers young people an exciting and fulfilling life opportunity, whether they are engineers, carpenters, homemakers, or receptionists, they have the opportunity to make their lives and careers really count in the gospel. Such a faith is living and dynamic and infuses all with a "can do, will do" attitude.
- **Partnership** - When a congregation sees itself as proclaiming the gospel in its "Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria" and to the remotest part of the earth, it recognizes immediately its need for teamwork, drawing on each other's strengths, forgiving the faults and mistakes of others so that the word of the gospel might go out. What a fellowship!

The Lord is wise and good. He could have had the angels carry the message of salvation to men. But by His grace He has allowed each Christian and each congregation to be full partners in the spread of His glorious word, and the blessings which result overflow, to the praise of His glory through Jesus Christ. Amen!

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Publicly and from House to House

The intensity and desire of the apostles and first century Christians to broadcast the word of God is clearly recorded in the scriptures. When the apostles were first flogged and ordered to preach no more in Jesus' name, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer shame for Christ. "And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42). Nothing, nor nobody, was going to shut their mouths. As Paul later said, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:20,21). The twin-pronged attack of public proclamation and teaching in the homes is the one, which conquers.

- **Public proclamation** - Those who adorned the doctrine of God went everywhere preaching the word of God. They preached in the temple in Jerusalem, they preached in the synagogues, they preached on the streets, they even preached in the court rooms.
 - ◆ **In the temple** - The first gospel message was given in the temple by Peter and the apostles on the day of Pentecost, 30 AD as recorded in Acts 2. 3000 souls received the word of God, and were added to the Lord in immersion on that day. In Acts 3, the second message was preached, also in the temple, and the number of Christian men reached 5000.
 - ◆ **In the synagogues** - As the church spread from Jerusalem, the brethren took the message into the synagogues. Saul of Tarsus had letters from the High Priest to the synagogues at Damascus to round up followers of Christ, the synagogues being places where Christ was proclaimed. Saul himself, after his immersion, immediately began "to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God.'" (Acts 9:20). From there on to Antioch of Syria, Antioch of Pisidia, to Lystra, Derbe, Iconium, to Ephesus, to Thessalonica and Berea, and onto Corinth, in the synagogues Jesus was preached.
 - ◆ **In the streets** - In Athens, for example, Paul "was reasoning in the synagogues with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be present" (Acts 17:17). The result – an invitation to speak in the open forum of Athens.
 - ◆ **In the courts** - Many of the great messages recorded in Acts were preached in court. The apostles' message in Acts 5, Stephen's message in Acts 7, and Paul's message in Acts 26 were all opportunities to fulfill the words of Jesus: "You shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles" (Matthew 10:18).
- **House to house** - The apostles did not depend on public proclamation alone to accomplish the spread of the word. It was in the home of Cornelius that the Gentiles first became Christians. It was to the house of Titius Justus that Paul went after being rejected in the synagogue in Corinth. It is in the home where questions can be answered, conviction built, and sin problems properly handled. "And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God will give them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to his will" (II Timothy 2:24-26).

They did it - publicly, and from house to house. If we are going to accomplish God's work today, we are going to get it done the same way - publicly, and from house to house.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Publicly and from House to House Today

The first century church did it - publicly, and from house to house. If we are going to get the job done today, we are going to get it done the same way - publicly, and from house to house. But because of the modern false doctrines we face, and because of the way people live in 20th century America there are certain factors we must keep in mind as we, the resurrected army, get on with the work.

- **Publicly** - There are problems the 20th century church faces with public proclamation. We do not have a temple to begin in. Those who have the courage to preach the Bible's terms of pardon, including repentance and immersion for remission of sins, are generally precluded from preaching in denominational congregations, today's equivalent (to some degree) of first century synagogues. Being able to converse and preach on the streets is difficult because much of today's traffic is motorized. But there are some advantages that we do have: we can publicly declare the gospel by television, by radio, and by the printed page. In addition we have our own synagogues in which to meet, and we can invite others to hear the word of God taught and proclaimed there.
- **House to house** - In America today, this is where the bulk of the work must be done. The confusion factors - everything ranging from evolution vs. creation, to propaganda warning everyone about "cults," to false doctrine, to problems with "TV evangelists" - require much education in each home. In the home, you can answer the tough questions. In the home you can build conviction within your new-found brethren. In the home you can deal with moral problems, and family problems. In the home you can build excitement, and generate your "third party influence contacts," the "word of mouth advertising" which is so important. In the home, taking meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, is where the true fellowship of the church is built.

But, in focusing on house to house work, the questions come: How do we get the job done? What is available for help? What must we do?

- **Videos** - There are a number of good video programs, with more coming, available on a variety of subjects, ranging from the New Age Movement, to *Origins*, or the *Visualized Bible Study Series*. Most Americans have TV screens, and a significant number own VCR's. This makes a video series an excellent beginning point for education in scriptures, or exposing anti-scriptural doctrines.
- **Printed material** - The Bible study series beginning with Proof that the *Bible is* the Word of God is necessary to help the individual develop a working knowledge of the vocabulary and concepts of the New Testament. Here the teacher benefits greatly also as he must be active rather than passive in the presentation of the material.
- **Training** - The church is constantly to be training the brethren to spread the word of God faithfully to others. "And the things which you heard from me in the presence of many witnesses," Paul reminded Timothy, "these entrust to faithful men, who in turn will be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:2). It is important to remember that in Christ, it is not so much how much we can do ourselves, but how much we can help others to do.

The church of the Lord, the resurrected army, must take the offensive. Each congregation must move forward, teaching and preaching publicly and from house to house, as rapidly as it possibly can. Time is short!

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Riots, Confusion, & Focus

In April of 1992 riots broke out in Los Angeles following a not guilty verdict handed down by the jury in regard to four L A policemen and their rugged arrest of a black man, Rodney King. The results of the riots: 55 dead, 2300 wounded, and millions of dollars worth of property destroyed. In a throwback to the Watts violence and other "civil rights" outbreaks of the 1960's, operating behind the scenes of the "spontaneous" riots of 1992 were the California Workers Patty, the Trotskyite Workers Party, and others of their revolutionary ilk. These riots are but a precursor of what is yet to come.

In his powerful late 1960's presentation, *Anarchy, U.S.A.*, G. Edward Griffin outlined five steps revolutionaries systematically use on the nations of the world to break down their internal law and order, and used to set the stage for world-wide martial law in *The New World Order* under the aegis of the United Nations.

1. Divide the people
2. Create the appearance of popular support
3. Neutralize the opposition
4. Dramatize demands with "non-violent" demonstrations
5. Outbreak of violence, and imposition of martial law in preparation for final revolution

These elements have been at work for sometime, and have deeply imbedded themselves in the fabric of American and Western society. The people are not only being split along racial lines, but the environmentalist movement, the feminist movement, the "children's rights" movement, the "abortion rights" movement, and now the perverted homosexual movement are shredding America. The media gives, as an example, the "gay rights" movement favorable publicity, creating the appearance of popular support reaching even to the White House. Those who would speak out against homosexuality as an "alternative lifestyle" are saddled with the invectives of "hate speech" and "homophobic." The "non-violent" demonstrations are occurring, complete with "Dikes on bikes" and open perversion on parade in Washington D.C., and other cities. And some of the reactionary violence these open displays were intended to perpetrate are beginning to occur. These are but a precursor of what is yet to come.

The resurrected army of the Lord must recognize that these times simply parallel those of Jerusalem when she approached her 70 AD destruction. The people were split into fighting factions, the immorality was great, law and order had broken down, and disaster was just around the corner. Concerning these times, our Lord had predicted some 40 years earlier: "At that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold" (Matthew 24:11,12).

The brethren need to remember that this world is not our home. Regardless of the reaction of the Gentiles trapped in the circumstances, which surround them, the child of God is to remember that he is to act, rather than to react. As a soldier in the resurrected army, he is to remember the words of Paul: "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:1,2). Though things are confused on earth, things have not changed where Christ is. Focus on Him!

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Straight Talk from Hebrews

Our situation today parallels that of first century Jerusalem as she approached her 70 AD destruction. As the riots and political shake-ups rocked Jewish society, the people were disoriented, lawlessness and looting increased, people's love grew cold, and destruction overwhelmed them. The book of Hebrews was written to prepare the Hebrew Christians for that imminent destruction. So as we look at Hebrews, we can get, among other things, some positive admonitions from the Holy Spirit through the writer of Hebrews on how to handle ourselves during the times which lie ahead.

- **Do not forsake the assembly (Hebrews 10:23-25)** - "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope with wavering," writes the Holy Spirit, "for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near." The worst tribulation that ever was or ever would be, according to Jesus, was coming on Jerusalem. In the face of that day, the Holy Spirit told them specifically not to forsake their assemblies. This lets us know the great importance the Lord puts on our assembly to break bread, and how necessary it is for our continuing spiritual strength.
- **Do not be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:12,13)** - "Take care, brethren," the Spirit again says, "lest there be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart in falling away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." In time of trial, when earthly hope is gone, there is a tendency to give up, to say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." The word of God instead encourages purity and warns against this hardening of the heart through sin.
- **Endure suffering, focus on the reward (Hebrews 10:32-39)** - "But remember the former days," the author of Hebrews calls to mind the Hebrew Christians' earlier suffering at the hands of their countrymen, "when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings - partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. 'For yet in a very little while, he who is coming will come, and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him' (Habakkuk 2:3,4). But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul." The writer reminds them of their past success in earlier sufferings, warns them of the loss of their souls if they do not remain faithful during the upcoming tribulation, and lets them know he has confidence in their faith and steadfastness. Above all, he emphasizes the reward, which will come if they remain faithful.

As the rotting corpse of Judaism was surrounded by vultures because of her rejection of the Messiah, so the rotting corpse of the world as it approaches its end is surrounded by vultures because of its rejection of the Messiah. Let us then be faithful in the assemblies; let us not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin; and let us endure suffering, focusing on our reward.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

More Straight Talk

The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD at the hands of the Romans was a devastating event. Secular historians tell us that the Romans systematically cut the Jews apart in case they swallowed gold to get it out of the city, that they raped and ripped women, and threw the babies over the city walls. Jesus had this to say, 40 years before these events happened: "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city; because these are the days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:20-24).

In the face of that oncoming onslaught, the writer of the book of Hebrews gave instructions that would help first century Christians hang on to their faith. The resurrected army today faces a similar onslaught. The soldier of the cross will do well to listen to these instructions and apply them carefully to himself and his family. We have seen that the Holy Spirit does not want His soldiers to forsake the assembly of the saints, or to be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. He wants the Christian to endure suffering, to hold his faith firm to the end. And He has other important instructions:

- **Obey your leaders (Hebrews 13:17)** - "Obey your leaders," the Spirit says, "and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you." The more intense the times of crisis, the greater the need for leadership. At times of pressure and confusion, the flock tends to scatter. Thus it is increasingly imperative that strong, spiritual, scriptural leadership be developed in each congregation, and that Christians learn to obey their marching orders willingly.
- **Keep making spiritual sacrifices (Hebrews 13:15,16)** - In times of turmoil, according to Jesus, most people's love grows cold. They turn bitter and selfish when they see their earthly hopes dashed. But the Holy Spirit instructs us: "Through [Jesus] then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased." Act positively; don't react.
- **Focus on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1,2)** - Great men of the past have suffered - in the Old Testament, as well as those in New Testament times. In the language of the writer of Hebrews, "they were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated" (Hebrews 11:37). These all serve as a "great cloud of witnesses" for us, that we may "lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith...". That is the key to it all, to keep focused on our Lord, receiving His strength, and looking for His approval.

The Christian soldiers who march onward must keep these six points in mind, and they must begin now. As Jesus Himself said, "For if they do these things in the green tree, what will happen in the dry?" (Luke 23:31).

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G.E.A.R. U.P.

Get Excited About Redemption, Uplifted People! In Acts chapter three, Peter and John healed a man who had been lame from birth. This man was excited about his being healed and his excitement gathered a crowd. If this man could get excited about being healed physically how much more should the Christian be excited about being healed spiritually in the redemption of his soul?

In Luke chapter 7, as Jesus dined with Simon the Pharisee a woman of poor reputation came in and began to wet Jesus' feet with her tears and to wipe them with her hair. When the Pharisee began to wonder about what sort of "prophet" this Jesus might be who didn't even know what sort of woman this was who was touching Him, Jesus taught a lesson on forgiveness. "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little" (Luke 7:47). The basic principle is that if we don't perceive that we have been forgiven very much, we don't love very much. On the other hand, if we really love God deeply because of our consciousness as to how much He forgave us, that will be translated into love for our fellow man. And love for our fellow man is first of all concerned about his redemption and His eternity.

So how can the resurrected army maintain and increase its consciousness of God's redemption? The following suggestions, if the individual soldier of Christ will practice them, will result in a deeper appreciation for the forgiveness found in Christ, greater love for God, and greater concern and action in behalf of the lost.

- **Use of scripture in prayer** - The untaught child of God, when he prays, tends only to make his petitions known. But an examination of prayers recorded in the Bible shows that a significant portion of our prayer to God is to be set aside for praise and thanksgiving. And, as the living oracles unfold, more and more previously written scripture is included in the praise and thanksgiving. And as praise and thanksgiving to God overflows from our hearts in the words of the scripture, the redemption, which has come to us in Christ is foremost. Praises to the Lamb of God are expressed in these words from Revelation, for example: "Worthy are You to take the book, and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and nation" (Revelation 5:9). Consciousness of redemption is obviously increased.
- **Study of scripture** - Men and women of God have always been students of His word. And study of scripture always brings attention to the lost condition of men, and the redemption provided eventually through Christ.
- **Participation in the Lord's Supper** - The breaking of the loaf, which the Lord ordained as the centerpiece of the assembly of the saints, is a powerful and continuing reminder of the redemption provided by Christ. Thoughtful participation in this memorial feast heightens a person's consciousness of Christ's redemption, and increases his desire to spread the good news to others.
- **Participation in Bible studies with the lost** - When you share the word with the lost, you are conscious of the precariousness of their position. And when you have the opportunity to see one immersed into Christ, and to rejoice with the angels over the sinner who has repented, the joy and appreciation for Christ work together and feed the desire to see others saved, and to spread with excitement the good news of the gospel.

Maintaining and increasing your consciousness of God's redemption will cause you to love God and your fellow man more and more. So... G.E.A.R. U.P.!

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God's Financial Backing

Sometimes the local congregation is scared. Take the church in Corinth as an example. The apostle Paul is in the process of collecting a goodly sum of money from the Gentile congregations to take to the poor saints in Judea, and is motivating them to individually contribute, without that contribution being affected by covetousness. When an individual would look at his own personal finances, or the church leadership would examine the congregation's finances, it would be generally pretty easy to say, "We'd like to help, but we just don't have it." The apostle has already noted how the Macedonians have impoverished themselves, giving beyond their ability, participating in this gracious offering for their fellow brethren from the circumcision. The congregation would thus tend to be afraid that the apostle was pushing them beyond their limits.

A modern congregation of the resurrected army might feel the same way today about some of the demands placed on them to spread the gospel, or to share with those laboring far away. Listen to these Holy Spirit inspired points to the congregation of saints in Corinth:

- **You reap according as you have sown** - "Now this I say," intones the apostle, "he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully" (II Corinthians 9:6). What it comes down to is faith in God. The apostle is not speaking of a blind faith, of a blind hope that God will do something, which He has not promised to do. Here they (and we) have the solemn assurance that if those who share with the poor saints share bountifully, God will cause them to reap bountifully. While this verse is used as the basis of rip-off schemes by false prophets whose goal is to fleece the flock, when true Christians honestly give to honorable spiritual causes led by truly spiritual men, then the resources of heaven are available to those who have faith enough to sow bountifully. Correspondingly, he who sows sparingly shall only reap sparingly.
- **You contribute as you have decided** - "Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:7) God has never wanted contributions because people felt forced or shamed into making them. These special offerings have to be purposed in each individual's heart, and whatever he decides is between him and the Almighty. God loves the person who gives cheerfully, and is therefore the One who rewards individuals for their attitudes.
- **God has infinite resources** - "And God is able," writes Paul, "to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; as it is written, 'He scattered abroad, He gave to the poor, His righteousness abides forever'" (II Corinthians 9:8,9). The point the apostle makes here is this: the more you give, the more God makes available to you. He guarantees that you will always have all sufficiency in everything!
- **God will multiply your blessings** - "Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God" (II Corinthians 9:10,11). God not only promises to make up for any deficit incurred when the soldier of the cross gives to others, but He has gone on to promise to more than make up for that which was given! Who could not wish to give as much as he possibly could?
- **Many thanksgivings to God result** - "For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God" (II Corinthians 9:12). God is surely great in His goodness, and the goodness of His plan as He works through man, and enables His children of faith to be partners with Him in spreading His love and good cheer throughout the church. Here not only would the needs of the brethren be met, but many thanksgivings to God would result, and people's hearts would be cheered and thankful.

God used the apostle Paul and others with him to bring an offering to the poor brethren in Judea. Through Paul

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this ministry produced thanksgiving throughout the brotherhood of the first century church, and both the giver and the receiver were blessed. May we remember these lessons, and extend ourselves voluntarily for the great spiritual causes among true brethren today. God has His resources available to those who have faith enough to use them!

The Big Picture

There are two pieces of information which help an individual to be motivated, two questions which he asks: "What is the big picture?" and "What is my part in this picture?" As the apostle Paul writes to the church in Corinth, he has made it clear what each Christian can do to help the poor brethren in Judea; give abundantly, as the Lord has prospered each. As he closes his appeal to the brethren in Aehais, he paints the big picture so that each could see how important his contribution is. Soldiers in the modern resurrected army will pay careful attention here, because the big picture has not changed since the days of the first century.

- **The ultimate goal is for God to be glorified**- "Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all" (II Corinthians 9:13). The Christian says all that he does is to glorify God. In this case the apostle Paul points out that there must be proof. There are many who want to limit glorifying God to singing praises in some concert, but it is clear here that the proof of glorifying God is connected with the sacrifice of the pocketbook. The apostles had originally agreed that this offering from the Gentiles be taken at a meeting in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15 and Galatians 1; here Paul now speaks of these Corinthians' obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ in terms of their willingness to participate in what the apostles had laid down. This done, and the offering delivered to the Judean brethren, and God would be glorified.
- **Distant brethren are drawn together** - "While they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you" (II Corinthians 9:14). There was a huge middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, but God made the two into one new man. so to speak, having made peace by the blood of Christ. The Almighty, in His infinite wisdom, allowed the circumcised brethren in Judea to become impoverished so that the Gentile Christians could help them out. The Jewish Christians would then actually yearn for these unseen and previously unknown brethren, and would pray for them, and would recognize the surpassing grace of God working in these former "sinners from among the Gentiles."
- **God's ways are beyond words** - The apostle closes out this section with these words: "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (II Corinthians 9:15). The indescribable gift here is the bond of love established between brethren of Jewish and Gentile background through this outpouring of material blessings from the Gentile congregations throughout the Roman Empire. To see those of the circumcision yearning for those of the uncircumcision was something, which would not have entered into the heart of man, yet God was able to produce this on a mass scale. And further more, this yearning would be translated into prayer for the Gentiles, and in all God would be glorified. His ways are certainly above our ways, and His thoughts higher than our thoughts!

A key part of the big picture is for each Christian to see in the other's necessity his opportunity. Sometimes people's needs are self-generated through poor judgment or lack of discipline; sometimes these needs are generated through large scale forces that the Majesty on high has set in motion. In either case the soldier in the resurrected army must recognize his responsibility and his opportunity for God to be glorified in his generosity, and to realize what bonds of love can be established through this sharing. God works through Christians so that which is written may be fulfilled: "He scattered abroad, He gave to the poor, His righteousness abides forever!"

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Congregational Goal Setting

The congregations of the first century serve as examples for us in the closing portions of the 20th century. How they handled the problems they encountered, and how they worked through the great challenges before them are recorded in the sacred writ that we may profit from their experience. In particular details of a major offering from the Gentile churches for their impoverished Jewish brethren are recorded that we might see how to set some congregational goals, and that we might see how to spiritually work together to accomplish those goals. Leaders in God's resurrected army in particular need to pay attention to this great example, and govern themselves accordingly.

- **The promise** - Paul and Barnabas in particular promised the apostles to the circumcision that they would bring an offering to the poor Jewish brethren in Judea.
- **The obligation** - The message was sent out to the Gentile congregations for them to begin to set aside monies for these Jewish brethren. Each congregation was informed that they were indebted to the Jewish congregations because of the spiritual blessings which had come to the Gentiles, and were thus obligated to share their material things.
- **The individual responsibility** - Care was taken to not only bring out the obligation of the Gentile congregations, but it was broken down in such a way that each individual had an obligation to lay aside something each week for this contribution.
- **The carriers** - The congregations were assured of the honesty and integrity of those who carried this offering from the Gentiles. Care was taken so that not only the Father in heaven could know of the honesty in which these monies were handled, but that regard for honesty in the sight of men was a key part of the whole process.
- **The specifics in Corinth** - Details of Paul's motivational work with the congregation in Corinth were recorded by the Holy Spirit. The apostle took the following steps in motivating the congregation to move ahead and finish the task of gathering their portion of this major offering:
 - A "friendly challenge" using the example of the Macedonian congregations was issued.
 - The spiritual nature of the offering was brought forth, and the impoverishment of Christ for their benefit was specifically detailed.
 - The congregation was reminded of their initial desire to participate in this offering, and they were now encouraged to finish what they had started.
 - The trustworthiness of the brethren involved was again mentioned.
 - Paul's confidence and care for the congregation in Corinth was carefully exhibited. He had already boasted about their readiness to the Macedonians because he was so confident in their collection, but he sent messengers ahead just to make sure so that the Corinthians would not be embarrassed.
 - The apostle worked with their fears in establishing how much God would back them financially in this project.
 - He finished by giving them the big picture of how this offering would draw the Jewish and Gentile Christians together, and how God would be glorified in the process.

One of the applications of these lessons today has to do with congregations' setting spiritual goals, and how to go about achieving them. Leaders in the Lord's church should make sure that the commitments they make are in line with scripture, and that they have truly prayed for good judgment before they go ahead. Then the spiritual obligation of the congregation should be clearly set forth, and the responsibility of each individual Christian must be delineated. The qualifications of those who lead the project should be put forth, so that all things are done honorably in the sight of men and God. And the congregation should then be motivated by scriptural principles using Paul's exhortation to the church in Corinth as a model.

These types of goals are necessary. Without specific goals congregations drift along, maybe doing some good, but without really accomplishing what needs to be done. Had not Paul and others set goals for the offering for the

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saints in Jerusalem, all there would have been would be good intentions. Goals give direction and meaning to activity. Goals intensify activity and increase efficiency. Goals provide the necessity of and the blessings of teamwork. Praise God for His great wisdom, His unspeakable gifts in so many ways!

Doing A Quality Job

"Let each man be careful how he builds," wrote the apostle Paul. He was speaking of building in local congregations, specifically as he wrote to those who followed in his footsteps in Corinth. The implication of these words is that a workman can build the church of God poorly or he can build well, just as in the construction of a physical building. And, just as in the physical construction trades there are those who have experience and who build to please their Master, there are those who build not to last but to get their money and get out, and there are those who are inexperienced. The dishonest guys we can't do much about. But the honest and inexperienced are to be exhorted to do a quality job of spiritual construction.

"Do you see a man skilled in his work?" asks the wise author of Proverbs. "He shall stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men" (Proverbs 22:29). The point of the proverb is that a skilled craftsman will be honored for his work; he will be honored in the presence of kings. Hear, then, brother in Christ, the skill, which will honor you before the great King: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (II Timothy 2: 15). God wants us to be skilled in handling the word of truth. In this particularly we want to do a quality job.

Certain very positive things happen when the word of God is presented skillfully. We are not talking about earthly oratory expositions and worldly entertainment pretensions of presentations of the word of God. We are speaking of solid scriptural rebuking, reproving, and exhorting in knowledgeable and understandable manner. And when this is done by many members of the local body of Christ, the impact of God's resurrected army is awesome. Here are some of the areas where Saints must do a quality job of presenting the word of God:

- **Public teaching and preaching** - The word of God must get to the public. Weddings and funerals are places where the word of God should be clearly preached in a positive, life-giving way, where God's plan of salvation is set forth so that those interested hearers might learn and have hope. There are all kinds of opportunities for the skilled workman in Christ to sound forth the word of God in the public arena, and his confidence and faith in God help him to make the most of those opportunities.
- **Private teaching, individual Bible studies** - Working with the one lost sheep is where conviction can be built, where questions can be answered, and where the real work of the church gets done. In the homes the needs of the individual can be met, the teaching from the word of God can be tailored for the individual or family's needs. Here the skilled workman is really rewarded for the investment of his time, because those whom he has taught tend to learn by imitation, and they then go out and do likewise.
- **People problems** - People struggle because there is sin in their life, and sin in the world. Again there is great opportunity for the skilled workman to help these suffering souls to apply the powerful life-changing principles of the scripture to their lives in practical ways. But some of these situations are difficult to handle, and the workman must have prayed for wisdom for along time, and be very capable of bringing the wisdom of scripture to bear on these problems.
- **Christian schools** - One of the greatest needs of our time is to get children out of the incredibly destructive public school environment. There are some parents who can safely guide their youngsters through that hostile anti-Christian atmosphere, but the record across the board is wholesale spiritual slaughter of God's precious little sheep. Here in the church of the living God is a great opportunity for skilled workmen to work with the young people of Christian families, and to help train them up in the way they should go.

When a quality job is done in these areas, with a consistent emphasis on basic truths of the word of God, then small congregations grow into large congregations, and large congregations split off into two or more, and the word

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of God keeps on spreading and being glorified. He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, will set an open door before those quality workmen who do not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

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How to do a Quality Job

Sooner or later, the spread of the message of Christ comes down to *the presentation*. Sooner or later, the individual Christian needs to present the gospel of Christ to his neighbor, his friend, his fellow worker, his family. Sooner or later, the message of the cross needs to be presented publicly to a Bible study group, or in the assembly, or to a group of interested hearers. Sooner or later, each soldier in the resurrected army finds himself in the position that he needs to preach or teach the message of the gospel of the glory of Christ, and that it is important for him to be able to do a *quality job!*

How does the child of God develop to the point where he can do this quality job? What sorts of steps can he take to ensure that when his time to perform has come, that he can step up and meet the challenge? How does he become a “workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15)? Consider the following:

- **Do all you do for the glory of God** - The scripture exhorts us, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father" (Colossians 3:17). And again, "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men" (Colossians 3:23). When the Christian does his work to glorify God, he does a quality job. Whether it is cleaning toilets, or making million dollar business decisions, if the Christian remembers to do his work for the Lord, then he does his work in a way that is honest, fair, well-done, and without any hidden lapses. And as he keeps working in this way, it becomes a habit for him, so that when he comes to share the gospel of Christ with someone, he will automatically do a quality job for the Lord in this matter also.
- **Be always conscious of God, thinking of scripture** - The Father wants us to be in constant remembrance of Him as we work, and conscious of His word. "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11).
- **Be thinking about your presentation** - God has given us, in the general experience of living, many illustrations as grist in the gospel mill. God's word is indeed living and active, and it is important to catalogue our experiences so that we can use them to illustrate the principles of God's word in living presentations.
- **Do your homework** - Those who listen to our presentations of the gospel are considering much more than where to make a \$100,000 investment; they are considering where to invest their souls. The Christian will think carefully about this, and do his homework to be able to field tough and sincere questions. He will want to know what he is talking about.
- **Learn to relate to the people you are working with** - In spreading the gospel, methods are much less important than person-to-person ties. Without compromising your morality or scriptural position, you must meet people where they are. As the apostle Paul said, "I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (I Corinthians 9:22).
- **Extend yourself, make extra effort** - There is an old saying that is consistent with scripture: “People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care!” The Christian needs to set up the Bible study at the other person's home. He needs to go to the other's house, he needs to inconvenience himself to show the other person that he really cares for that person's soul. The burden of the Lord is upon the Christian soldier, "Go, therefore" (Matthew 28:19).

If each man or woman in the Lord would carefully practice the above suggestions, he would be ready to do a quality job any time of sharing, individually or in a group, the wonders of the gospel of Christ. He would always be "ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is within you" (I Peter 3:15).

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Be A Quality Congregation

The church in Antioch was a quality congregation. This congregation, in the Roman province of Syria, was an aggressive congregation from its inception, with a massive amount of involvement by each Christian. "So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen," begin the inspired records, noting that the martyrdom of Stephen as recorded in Acts 7 set off a widespread scattering of individual soldiers of the cross, "made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone" (Acts 11:19). "But," continue the accounts, "there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks [Gentiles] also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:20,21). The church in Antioch was a quality congregation.

What are some of the characteristics of a quality congregation, and what can we do to be quality congregations today?

- **Have a lot of people doing quality jobs** – The church in Antioch of Syria was a noted success because many people were involved in spreading the word. At first they simply spoke to those who were of Jewish background, but some of them began taking the message to the Gentiles. We have a picture of disciples of Christ flooding into Antioch, and the message of Christ overflowing the city, reaching even to the Gentiles. A quality congregation of today will have its disciples of Christ flooding its city with the message of Christ and salvation by immersion into Him.
- **Give some flexibility and room for others to grow** - In Antioch there was obviously not a real tight grip on those carrying the message. In fact, those who carried the gospel of the glory of Christ to the Gentiles "lumped the gun" as far as the brethren in Jerusalem were concerned. But the hand of the Lord was with these in Antioch, and many of those who believed turned to the Lord in immersion. The record shows that many mistakes were made in understanding the gospel were made in Antioch and Jerusalem, and that a lot of work was necessary to lead the teaching in the right direction. Leadership in a quality congregation will give that flexibility to those who have a zeal for the gospel, and will work diligently to shepherd the flock in the direction of the Lord.
- **Each Christian a willing participant in congregational projects and activities** - The activities of each congregation are dependent upon participation by soldiers of the cross. A basketball team is not effective unless the team members show up for practice and games. That is why Christians are instructed to obey their leaders and submit to them, so that the local team of Christ can function (Hebrews 13:17).
- **Learn how to give positive criticism of projects and who and who to give them to** - There are those who are critical just to be critical; there are those who are critical because they have a hidden agenda, and want to use criticism to help carry out their agenda; and there are those who actually have criticism because they see a better way and want to make the project work. Good leadership generally figures out how to ignore the first two types of criticism, so if you want to be a participant in progress, become a willing worker, and one who contributes positively to those projects at hand, so that when you talk to the person in charge, you will get a good hearing on your ideas.
- **Keep focused on the big picture and long term goals** - A quality congregation remembers that its primary responsibility is to convert its community to the true knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. It therefore focuses on spreading the word to the lost, making sure the saints are grounded in the word, and gives room and flexibility for individual growth.

Antioch was a quality congregation. The word of the Lord sounded forth from them into Western Asia and Europe. The first congregation, which was a mixture of Jew and Gentile was in Antioch, and this congregation has the distinction of being the place where disciples of Christ were first called Christians. Let us look to their example

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today, and spread the word with the same zeal and conviction, which they did. Onward, Christian soldiers!

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Marks of a Great Church

The word great is a superlative word, and one not to be used too freely. So when the Holy Spirit, in His inspired word, uses the word great, the soldier in the resurrected army should take note. The first century church was indeed a great church, and we have wanted to note from the scripture some marks of a great church so that we in the 20th century (and the beginning of the 21st, if the Lord tarries) might do our part to make the contemporary church a great church also

- **Great power** - "And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33). The most difficult project in front of the apostles and other first century preachers was to convince the audience that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. The rational individual does not easily believe that someone would rise from the realm of those who have passed beyond. In my own case, for example, I would have a difficult time believing reports that even Houdini had come forth from the grave. So the apostles were able to prove the resurrection of the Christ by three things: 1) Their own personal eyewitness account 2) Quotations from the Old Testament scripture. 3) Ability to perform confirming miracles. "And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6:8). The great power here has to do with the confirming miracles which the apostles and first century men who had received gifts of the Holy Spirit performed in the presence of many witnesses to confirm to them that Jesus had risen from the dead. Today we have something better and more sure than miracles; we have the completed New Testament which actually gives us better ground to stand on than what the apostles themselves had. We are to be "strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16).
- **Great grace**. - "And abundant [great] grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need" (Acts 4:33-35). The first century church was certainly a sacrificing church. Once they realized the importance of the message to be spread, and the tremendous needs in the congregation became clear, those who had the resources sold them and gave the proceeds to the church leadership for distribution to the needy. The Lord later made it up to those who impoverished themselves for the sake of the gospel; the church at Antioch sent money, and later the Gentile congregations brought a large offering for the brethren in Jerusalem. The time may come in the near future where this same great grace is necessary in the church, where those who have resources sell them so that the needy in the church do not starve.
- **Great fear** - After Ananias and Sapphira tried to lie about the sacrifice they had made to the Lord, both were struck down dead. When this happened, "great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things" (Acts 5:11). Even in the New Testament, God is to be feared; God is a consuming fire. These people simply tried to indicate that they had given all that they had received from the sale of a piece of their property, and the Lord killed them because they had only given a portion of the sale. There is a great need today for *great fear* in the church. If preachers and teachers were more conscious that they preached and taught in the presence of God and Christ Jesus and His holy angels, they would take more care to make certain that their teaching was consistent with the word of God instead of trying to please men.
- **Great multitudes** - "And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many priests were becoming obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). "And it came about that in Iconium they [Paul and Barnabas] entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a great multitude believed, both of Jews and of Greeks" (Acts 14:1). Great multitudes resulted from a great number of people uncompromisingly spreading the word of God. Great multitudes will result today when 20th century Christians have the same uncompromising conviction as their first century counterparts.

Great power, great grace, great fear, and great multitudes were three marks of the great church in the first century. I have an idea that great fear is where we need to start today, and the other "greats" will follow.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Marks of a Great Church (Cont.)

There are always those who wish to be great without paying the price. Our Lord Jesus was the greatest to ever put foot on the face of the earth, but He suffered the greatest persecution and died the greatest death. There are those who would like to be a great Messiah like Jesus, but who certainly would not, and could not, pay His price. Similarly, there are those in the 20th century who would like for the church to be as great as it was in the first century, but without the church paying the price. Consider the following characteristics of that great first century church:

- **Great persecution** - After the death of Stephen, Saul of Tarsus and others really cranked up the pressure on the church. "And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1). What would Christians today do if their homes were invaded by the police, and the men and women dragged away to trial and death? Would they still stand for the faith, or would they cave in to pressure? To be a great church, we have to be able to stand in the face of great persecution.
- **Great uproar** - There are always those who want Christianity to be without controversy. But the message of the gospel strikes the soul, and Satan is always at work to try to thwart the spread of and obedience to God's word. Thus the apostle Paul, on trial, "perceiving that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees...began crying out in the Council, 'Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!' And as he said this, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. And there arose a great uproar..." (Acts 23:6-9). The church has to be able to understand that the true gospel of glory will cause a great uproar at times, and be willing to stand with those who seemingly cause the uproar.
- **Great dispute** - It is a great mystery to me how otherwise rational men could get so irrational when it comes to looking at the truths connected with salvation found in Jesus Christ. How they could look at the Word's teaching on immersion, and say that it does not save, and that it is not for forgiveness of sins is a mystery to me. But thus it has always been; the good news that saves has always been a source of dispute, even in those who had the opportunity to listen to the great apostle Paul. "And when he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves" (Acts 28:29). A great church is always going to be involved in great dispute in the community as those who resist the gospel continue to argue and argue and argue.
- **Great dissension** - There are those misguided souls, who have never seriously read their New Testaments, who have the mistaken idea that the first century church was of pristine purity, that not a voice was ever raised in its conduction of its affairs. But the inspired record informs us that they also had their difficulties, that there were doctrinal issues that were major problems to them. Such a problem arose in the great congregation in Antioch of Syria: "And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' And when Barnabas and Paul had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to apostles and elders concerning this issue" (Acts 15:1,2). Even the presence and knowledge of the great apostle Paul was not enough to settle this issue; it became necessary for a group of men to go to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders. And even their pronouncement did not quiet the brethren; this issue continued to smolder in the churches of Galatia and other places where Jewish brethren tried to enforce the Old Testament law on the Gentile Christians. Unfortunately, there will be times in the church where there is great dissension within. Do not let this move you from your faith; stay consistent with the word of God, and keep on moving forward in the spread of the gospel.

Great persecution, great uproar, great dispute, and even great dissension within did not stop the great church of the first century. Let us recognize that great forward movement always creates great resistance, and rejoice in the progress of the gospel.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Marks of a Great Church (continued)

In the midst of great persecution and great dissension, there are also some great positive things, which happen to a great church. There are great men of God with a great congregation, and at times determined by the Lord, He uses these men in a great way. It is important that members at the church not be so involved in their own problems or families or circumstances that they miss their great moments in history. Think about these great events in the history of the first century church:

- **Great joy** - Our Lord Jesus, telling the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, gave us the proper perspective on what is important and what really is cause for happiness. "There will be more joy in heaven," He said, over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). And the first century church learned from the Lord, and had great joy over the conversion of people to Christ. As Paul and Barnabas made their way from Antioch to Jerusalem, the scripture records, "Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren" (Acts 15:3). A mark of a great church today is great joy over seeing others actually turning to the Lord on His conditions.
- **Great eagerness** - "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness," said Jesus, "for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6). There are those souls out there who are seeking for truth and for relief in Jesus Christ. Thus it was in the Greek city of Berea, when Paul and Silas had been run out of Thessalonica. "And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:10,11). Another mark of a great church is one in which the people search diligently, and receive the word with this great eagerness. "Like newborn babes," says Peter, "long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation" (1 Peter 2:2).
- **Great hush and great pomp** - Those who are involved in the church of the Lord are actually the history makers, the great men and women of earth's existence. Even though the newspapers do not cover the activities of the church with the same fervor with which they cover city commission meetings, the "goings-on" of the church are infinitely more important to the Lord than the banal meanderings of mere earthly governments. But there are times when the Lord really brings his people into direct contact with the world in a big way. When the apostle Paul, for example, was arrested in the temple after the Jews started a riot, the Almighty led him into events where great things happened. When the Roman captain gave the apostle permission to speak, "Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a *great hush*, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect" (Acts 21:40). Later, Paul appeared before King Agrippa and the Roman governor, Portius Fenton. "And so, on the next day when Agrippa had come together with Bernice [Agrippa's wife], amid *great pomp*, and had entered the auditorium accompanied by the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at the command of Fenton, Paul was brought in" (Acts 25:23). There will be times when a great church has its preachers and teachers in the midst of this world, and they will be listened to amid a great hush and great pomp.
- **Great learning** - Christians are often pictured as backwoodsy, ignorant clods, easily led by scheming preachers. While this may be true of denominationalism, it is not true of Christ's church. Christians, by the way scripture weeds out those who are not truly interested, are truth-seekers, and are the most intelligent, educated, and enlightened people on the surface of the earth. A mark of a great church is that when its leaders touch the world, their *great learning* is noted. When Paul appeared before Fenton and Agrippa, and made his defense, "Fenton said in a loud voice, 'Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.'" (Acts 26:24).

If soldiers in the resurrected army will search the word with great eagerness, and, experience great joy at the immersion and continuing steadfastness of individuals in Christ, then the great learning will become evident to the world as the Lord wills it, and there will be those times of great hush and great pomp in the midst at which the

Messages to a Resurrected Army

gospel of the glory at Christ is proclaimed. These are truly marks of a great church.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Awareness of Satan

There really is a devil. One of his goals is to get people to believe that he does not exist, that he is a fairy tale figure, a throwback to some ignorant, benighted time in the past, before modern, enlightened man gained all his wonderful scientific knowledge. Another of his goals, if he fails to accomplish the first, is for men to simply lose their consciousness of his actions, to cease to be aware that the "prince of the power of the air" is at work, making his sinister suggestions through sundry sensual appeals. But, in spite of men's lack of belief, or lack of consciousness, the devil is real, and is hard at work. And one of the purposes of the word of God is to reveal to men Satan's existence, and to expose to their spiritual view his actions.

Our Lord Jesus was constantly aware of the cunning of His adversary, and checked him at every turn. When the tempter met Jesus in the wilderness after His forty days of fasting, Jesus was ready with a memorized Old Testament. When the devil incited His home synagogue to kill Him, He walked through the crowd. When Satan worked with the multitudes so that they would want to make Him an earthly king, He hid on the mountain. When the destroyer worked with a Jewish conspiracy to ensure the death of the Messiah, Jesus kept Himself free from sin so as to be ready for His death as the pure Lamb of God. As He Himself said, "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me" (John 14:30). Praise be to our God for our Lord Jesus Christ, for even in His death He conquered Satan and sin, and in His resurrection He was absolutely triumphant over Satan and his spiritual rulers of darkness. "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him" (Colossians 2:15). And, as the writer of Hebrews put it, Jesus rendered "powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14).

But, in God's will, the triumph of Christ over the prince of darkness is not so abject that the soldier in the resurrected army is unconcerned about the deceiver's activities. Both the apostle Peter and the apostle Paul have some somber warnings for those who have enlisted in the cause of Christ.

- **Peter warns about Satan** - "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (I Peter 5:8). The devil can devour Christians; that is why this warning is here. The lion devours on both a mass scale, and on an individual basis. Whole schools of people are swept into the lion's mouth by false religion and anti-Christian teaching. And the child of God must be aware of these schools of thought, and distance himself and his family from their maelstrom effects. The lion will also attack a lone sheep in its moment of weakness. When the Christian refuses to attend the duly appointed assemblies of the saints, when he refuses to talk to church leadership about his problem, when he is critical of everyone in congregational leadership - these are all signals that his head is along way down into the lion's mouth, and there is great danger of his being imminently devoured.
- **Paul warns of Satan** - Writing to the church in Corinth, the apostle Paul discusses a brother who had fallen into temptation, and who through repentance was being restored to fellowship. Encouraging full forgiveness, he writes that "no advantage [should] be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes" (II Corinthians 2:11). Satan does not just have one sneaky, destructive plan; he has many "schemes." And whether these schemes areas broad as the New World Order or the New Age movement, or as individually directed as moments of temptation, they are still aimed at the destruction of the eternity of Satan's targets.

Jesus was continually aware of Satan, and governed Himself accordingly. Peter was continually aware of Satan, and governed himself accordingly. Paul was continually aware of Satan, and governed himself accordingly. Are you continually aware of Satan, and governing yourself accordingly?

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Destruction of You and Your Family

The devil is a killer. He wants to destroy your life, and the life of your family. In the words of our Lord Jesus, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Let us go back to "the beginning," and learn how Satan destroyed the first family on earth, and then take some positive measures to ensure that it does not happen to our own.

- **The first lie** - The serpent of old knew who to go after. Adam had heard the words directly from the mouth of God that he was not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, lest he die. But Eve apparently only had Adam's word for it, and was comparatively easy prey for the evil schemer. Appealing to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the boastful pride of life, Satan lied and Eve died.
- **The spread of Destruction** - Somehow Eve shared the fruit with her husband, so that he went down also. That seems to be the nature of evil; those who sink into death generally are bound and determined to take everyone else down with them. "Misery loves company," we say. And when Adam went down into death, the whole universe sank with him. "Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).
- **The first "Happy family"** - Adam and Eve's family could have been one of joy and happiness. But it wasn't. When two of the older boys grew up, Cain, in rage and jealousy, killed his younger brother Abel. "And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous" (1 John 3:12). A really good reason, right? Think of the heartache and recrimination mother Eve underwent at the death of her son. Think of the guilt feelings and second-guessing father Adam went through at the news of his boys' fighting to the death. One happy family.
- **The destruction goes on** - Satan continues to destroy individual lives, and lives of the family. Through government programs, divorce is encouraged, the provisional responsibility of the father is weakened, and children are increasingly becoming wards of the state. The devil was a murderer from the beginning, and continues to murder through big lies.

So how can we stop the slaughter?

Individually, we must obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must check the spread of destruction personally by being immersed in Jesus' name for the remission of past sins, and, through the Holy Spirit and commitment to Christ and His church, overcome sin in our own lives.

And as families, we must implement the teachings of Jesus Christ. Children must be trained up in the way they should go. They must be extracted from the government school system, and worked with in congregational Monday through Friday educational ministries. They must be taught to work with their hands in that which is good. They must be disciplined corporally with the rod when necessary. They must be prayed with, loved, hugged, and pushed down the road of life. Children must be shown by their parents that attendance at all services of the church is a joyful and important activity, that Bible reading, prayer, and spread of the gospel are not just talked about, but actually done.

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:31,32). The devil must be firmly resisted in the home, and the positive principles of Christ must be diligently implemented.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Satan Will Divide The Church

The church is the whole plan of God. Just as the church trusts Christ as her husband, and is confident that He will do what He has said that He will do, so Christ also trusts the church, and has counted on her to be His helper in accomplishing His task on the earth. Thus He calls her his bride; He calls her the kingdom, the family of God, the temple of the living God, the redeemed of the earth, His body, and a host of other endearing and uplifting affections. God is counting on the church, the whole church, and nothing but the church.

Satan knows this. So he engages in "monkey-wrenching." He does everything he can to foul up the church's working machinery, he puts legal roadblocks in its way, and he "spikes" certain timber in the path of the spread of the word of God so that the one who lays the gospel saw at the root of the trees is maimed or killed when he contacts this "hidden reef" in the love feast. He works to divide the church, to get the congregations so fighting among themselves that they cannot accomplish the plan of God.

What are some of the techniques the master of division and deception uses?

- **He introduces false doctrine by appealing to sensual desires** - Referring to what the false prophets did in Israel, Peter writes, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words" (II Peter 2:1-3).
- **He causes a division through those who are slaves of their own appetites** - "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting" (Romans 16:17,18).
- **He causes division through misplaced personal loyalty** - To the church in Corinth the apostle Paul writes: "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ" Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you immersed in the name of Paul.?" (I Corinthians 1:11-13).
- **He causes division through petty problems** - A couple of ladies in the church at Philippi had some personal problems, and ended up being an example used in the eternal word of God. "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women..." (Philippians 4:2,3).

Satan is the one who is behind the division game. But the way to beat him at his game is to have the attitude of Christ and willingly sacrifice ourselves for the gospel. "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me," (John 12:26), said our Lord Jesus. When we really have the sacrificing attitude of Christ, we can conquer, and Satan cannot divide us.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Satan Will Persecute The church

The natural tendency of the flesh is to avoid pain. And persecution by definition involves pain. Therefore the flesh lends to avoid persecution. In the devil's war against God, he uses persecution and threat of persecution to shut the mouths of those who would otherwise speak he simply cranks up the pressure of resistance until very little gospel flows through the conduits

But the early church faced intense persecution and faced it successfully. Satan was not able to shut their mouths.

- **The church in Jerusalem** - The church began in Jerusalem just as the prophets foretold. Repentance and remission of sins was to be proclaimed to the whole world beginning at Jerusalem; and it was, because the devil could not silence them. Resistance to the gospel began with threats, then it went to beatings, then to death. After Stephen was stoned, the church faced intense persecution, with men like Saul of Tarsus sending his shock troops into their homes and dragging off men and women. They had their property confiscated, they were beaten, and put in prison, they were stoned to death, yet they kept right on preaching and teaching about Jesus Christ.
- **The churches on the first missionary journey** - On Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey, they established congregations in Lystra, Derbe, Iconium, and other central Turkey cities. Here they were driven out the towns, threatened, and Paul was even stoned and left for dead. "And after they had preached the gospel to that city [Derbe] and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.'"(Acts 14:21,22). Just the facts of life, son, just the facts.
- **The church in Thessalonica** - When Paul first preached in Thessalonica, the Jews were so intensely against the gospel that not only did they drive him out of their city, they also went down and drove him out of Berea, some distance away. The apostle would later write to them, "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example of all the believers in Macedonia and Achala" (I Thessalonians 1:6,7). He also wrote: "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and drove us out" (I Thessalonians 2:14,15).

The soldier in the resurrected army knows when he signs up that he is in for a fight. He has counted the cost. He knows that "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (II Timothy 3:12). Satan's attempts to hinder him do not succeed, for he marches on with the one hope of his resurrection fixed firmly in his mind's eye; he is looking for his approval to come from the Lord at the blessed hope and appearing of his great God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And he marches, armed for persecution, rejoicing when he is considered worthy to suffer shame for the sake of his Savior and King, the Lord Christ.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Satan Will Introduce False Doctrine

False doctrine will kill you! We are freed from our sins in obedience to the form of the doctrine to which we were committed, our immersion into Christ being the form or mold of the likeness of the doctrine of Christ expressed in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to glory. Thus, our Adversary, Satan, would like to adulterate the gospel of God by introducing just a small amount of strychnine into our gospel food, so that we are poisoned spiritually. Since the soldier in the resurrected army moves on his spiritual belly, so to speak, he must pay close attention to the purity and wholesomeness of his intake.

The word of God itself, recognizing that the Christian must live off every word which proceeds from the mouth of God, has a number of serious and solemn warnings about the sneaky introduction of false doctrine. Hear, then, the words of the Lord as He speaks from heaven:

- **II Peter 2:1-3** - But false prophets also arose among the people in the Old Testament, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. Not everyone who claims to be interested in unity is honest and sincere. There are those who, according to the word of God, have a hidden agenda, whose desire is to use apparent sincerity to secretly introduce strychnine into the regular fare of the saints.
- **Jude 3,4** - Beloved, while I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Again note that there are those who have a secret agenda, and who use fleshly appeals within the church of Christ to draw away disciples after them.
- **Matthew 7:15** - "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." Remember, sheep's clothing is the garb of a wolf. So how do you tell the difference? See the fruit of their efforts; check their track record. "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit."
- **Philippians 3:18,19** - "For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is their destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is their shame, who set their mind on earthly things." When making sure the building payment is made by compromising the gospel in order to bring in more numbers, then you have an enemy of the cross of Christ.

These wolves pervert the plan of salvation; they attempt to widen the narrow gate, which leads to life. They disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness while they lie to people about the word of God, when they are in fact servants of the dark angel who disguises himself as an angel of light. They indicate that a person can be saved without repenting, or being immersed for the remission of his sins, and wolfishly smile in the name of unity and brotherly love. And the word of God clearly establishes that they are on their way to hell.

Satan will do everything he can to introduce fake doctrine into the church, because fake doctrine kills. Beware, soldier, beware!

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Satan Will Make Christianity Illegal

Suppression of the truth is more dangerous than competition. The truth of the word of God can win in the face of any competition, because those who will take the time to examine the claims of the word of God can prove to themselves that the message of the scripture is true, and they can also understand what it says. So the devil and his agents seek to suppress the church of the living God by destroying her freedom to preach the living word. These are those who, in the language of Paul, suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18).

Over the centuries wars have raged on the surface of this planet, and ultimately all those wars have to do with the war of darkness against the light. The hosts of the prince of darkness have endeavored to destroy political freedom in every nation on earth in order to prevent men from being saved and coming to a knowledge of the truth. Enter political oppression that darkness might gain suppression of the truth.

Thus it was in the first century. Shortly after the beginning of the church in Jerusalem as was prophesied through all the prophets, the persecution of the church at the hands of the Jews set in. This oppression had the backing of Roman authority, with full use of public jails and outright capital punishment for those who preached the resurrection of the Christ. First Peter and John are threatened; then all the apostles beaten and jailed. Zoning ordinances are passed which forbid the preaching of Jesus in restricted areas because of the disturbances caused by the crowds. Stephen is stoned for the faith, and oppression sets in earnest. Believers in Jesus are dragged from their homes in the middle of the night, beaten, and forced to blaspheme the name of Christ or die.

So how did these first century Christians handle the oppression? They kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ!

As the church spread throughout the Roman Empire, the persecution continued. In Lystra, Derbe, Iconium, Ephesus, and Thessalonica the beatings continued, the court cases multiplied and soldiers in the resurrected army died in fond hope of a better resurrection. They fought with the wild beasts in the circus at Ephesus, they were cut to shreds in the gladiators' rings, and used as torches for the Emperor's parties. Their religion, somewhat tolerated by Roman authority at first, was declared illegal, and brothers and sisters died by the millions or survived in catacombs.

How did they handle the oppression? As long as they believed in the word of God, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ!

What can we expect? Anyone with half an eye can see that in America the forces of Satan are arising to do all they can to suppress the church once again. Here is a sample of some of the ugly specters whose heads are already peering over the horizon;

- **"Hate Speech"** - There is a growing movement that all sorts of sexual orientations and perversions are acceptable lifestyle. Not only is adultery permitted and encouraged, but male and female homosexuality is being glorified in spite of the strong and eternal warning signified by the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Those who would preach against such abominations are regarded as hateful and engaging in hate speech, and this speech will be outlawed as violating the rights and sensibilities of those who have chosen this so-called alternate life-style.
- **New Age Movement** - This country is awash in "new age thinking". Whole networks of various meditators, channelers, spiritual counselors, and environmental gurus are working to destroy the Biblical basis for spirituality, and replace it with ancient paganism.
- **New World Order** - This political and economic movement is designed to destroy U.S. sovereignty, and replace Americans' freedoms under the Constitution with old Soviet style "freedom" under the United Nations Charter.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

So what are 20th century Christians to do? Keep right on preaching and teaching that Jesus is the Christ!

Messages to a Resurrected Army

The Church's Ultimate Victory

Here stands the bride! Breathless, she waits expectantly for her bridegroom to come from the sky and rescue her. Clad in her linen wedding dress, she continues to pray for her Savior to hurry while she hears the gravel crunching under the feet of soldiers who now entirely surround her. In the darkness she can dimly make out the shroud of the false prophet who has so viciously lied about her, and she can see the faint form of the beast who so cruelly oppressed her. And in the distance she notes the eerie gleam of Satan, smirking in stolen light as he superintends the whole scene. Somewhat frightened, but confident too, she apprises the condition of the approaching army, awash in the wine and lusts of Babylon.

Having issued her last call for anyone who would to come out of Babylon, she now turns her entire attention skyward. Earnest in prayer, loving her bridegroom passionately, in her own reflected light she awaits the appearance of the Prince who has given her the assurance that He will come and take her from the encroaching darkness.

When the foul breath of the drunken soldiers are already upon her, when their lustful hands stretch forth to lasciviously paw her, then the heavens break open to reveal the jealous wrath of the Prince. Shouts of a multitude from heaven ring:

- "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her."
- And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up forever and ever."
- And the four and twenty elders add, "Amen. Hallelujah!"
- And the voice of a great multitude thunders, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready."

The Prince has come for His princess at last. Having been taken out of His wounded side, His bride has suffered the tests and tribulations of time, and she has proven herself faithful and true, a help meet worthy of her Husband-to-be. Full of righteous anger, He rides in on His white charger, Faithful and True Himself, leading the armies of heaven with Him. His eyes are a flame of fire, out of His mouth comes a sharp sword to strike down all His enemies, and He is prepared to tread on them in the wine press of God the Father's wrath. He has come from different country, and is now wearing more crowns than His heaving bride ever imagined that He had. His robe is soaked, having been immersed in blood, and His robe and the clothing on His thigh bear the dreaded insignia: "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

By this time the drunken army, the shrouded false prophet, the oppressive beast, and the red dragon have all begun to hide, to call for the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and save them from the wrath of the Prince. But it is too late. The anger of the Prince toward those who have in any way besmirched His precious intended is only appeased as they are tossed into the lake, which burns with fire and brimstone.

Then, clutching His bride to His breast with emotion, which has been choked back for over 6000 years, the Prince takes her in her now radiant gown to His castle. There she finds the whole of heaven anxiously awaiting her, and with more joy and love filling her heart than she could have truly understood even in the pictures, she and the Prince and all the servants in the castle live happily ever after.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Goal Setting

The resurrected army of the Lord is assured of victory over the forces of evil. But, by the will and wisdom of the Almighty, each Christian soldier decides what extent he wants to participate in that victory. He can participate a little, he can throw himself wholeheartedly into the battle, or he can even shrink back in shame. In any case, he is going to consciously or unconsciously, intelligently or unintelligently, set some goals..

But, again by the will and wisdom of the Almighty, Christians function together in the local body of Christ. And congregations set goals, consciously or unconsciously, intelligently or unintelligently. Congregations which intelligently set goals in accordance with the will of God, and work and pray to achieve those goals are commended by the Lord Himself. Those congregations, which allow themselves to drift eventually have their lampstands jerked by the Lord. Goal setting is a part of the character of God, and the focusing of attention which goal setting provides results in an intensity, which shows in the lives of holy men in the Bible and in our Lord Jesus.

- **Paul** - "One thing I do," says the apostle, "forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13,14). The intensity of the apostle shines out in his drive to be resurrected at Jesus' return, and infused all his activity with life and expectation. As he wrote to the church in Rome, he spoke of his goal to preach in Spain. "I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain" (Romans 15:23,24).
- **Jesus** - The intensity of our Lord derived from His goal setting is illustrated in His somewhat cryptic reply to some Pharisees who tried to frighten Jesus by using the threat of Herod's desire to kill Him: "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal. Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem'" (Luke 13:32,33). His statement rings with determination stemming from His goal to be crucified in Jerusalem, and to be raised on the third day by the power of an awesome and eternal God in contrast to the pitiful pomp of the puppet king who threatened His life.

Jesus in the flesh set goals, and Paul and the other apostles set goals. In fact, God Himself set goals, even putting them in writing in the Old Testament. Looking to the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles as part of His plan through Jesus and the church, the Father promised Abraham 20 centuries before Christ: "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 22:18).

Thus it was that "at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6), was raised from the dead, was seated at the Father's right hand, and sent the Spirit from heaven to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

The child of God, then, needs to be a goal setter, imitating the Father through the revealed character of His Son, and through the positive example of men like Paul. In this way, we also are to "become partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4).

But, in the church, we need to be goal setters together, to work together to achieve common and God-pleasing goals. Without goals we drift, slowly sliding into routine "going through the motions"; with goals we become a city set on a hill which cannot be hidden.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

The Goal of an offering for the Poor Saints

To accomplish any project goals have to be set. Targets must be placed before the people, deadlines must be put forth, procedures must be implemented, and communication channels set up. While all of these sound like instructions from a business motivation series, they are actually from the Bible, the greatest practical "how to" book ever written.

During the early years of the church the congregations of Jewish heritage impoverished themselves that the gospel might be spread to the Gentiles. The problem was compounded by Roman persecution of the Jews, and by famine. Thus by the will of God a situation was set up so that the Gentile churches could greatly assist their brethren of Jewish background, and the Lord could record, for our benefit, the steps which they went through in setting and achieving a complicated goal.

- **A promise given** - When Paul and Barnabas and other brethren went up to Jerusalem from Antioch as recorded in Acts 15, their purpose was to establish that the Gentile Christians did not have to be circumcised and be drawn under Old Testament law. The situation was settled and "James [elder in the Jerusalem church] and Cephas [Peter] and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship" (Galatians 2:9). Paul then adds, "They only asked us to remember the poor - the very thing I was eager to do (Galatians 2:10). Paul promised to collect an offering from the Gentile Christians for the sake of their impoverished brethren, something, in his own words, he was eager to do.
- **The pleasure received** - As Paul closes his letter to the church in Rome, he writes: "But now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things" (Romans 15:25-27).
- **The personal responsibility** - As Paul discusses this offering, he writes to the church in Corinth: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches in Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come" (I Corinthians 16:1,2). Each was to participate as the Lord had prospered him by setting aside a pre-designated percentage every week when the saints assembled, and this offering would then be taken to Jerusalem.
- **A Participation by the congregation** - All of II Corinthians chapters eight and nine are devoted to motivating the congregation of believers in Corinth to have the right attitude about their participation in this special offering.
- **The purveyors of the offering** - The men who carried the gift were honorable men. One unnamed brother was appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work" (II Corinthians 8:19). Paul speaks of Titus, "my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, they are apostles [messengers] of the churches, a glory to Christ (II Corinthians 8:23). Some of the men who accompanied the gift, probably worth thousands and thousands in gold, silver, and other transferable wealth, were Sopater of Berea, Artstarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Gelus of Derbe, Timothy (also from the Lystra-Derbe area), and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia (Ephesus).

Targets were placed before the people, deadlines were put forth, procedures were implemented, and communications channels were set up. And, by the grace of God, the goal was achieved - the money was collected, and the offering delivered.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Achieving the Goal in Corinth

How do you motivate an entire congregation? How do you motivate them honorably and spiritually? The dishonest man has all kinds of schemes and scams to pull on the congregation so that the sheep are expertly fleeced. But the honest, scriptural, and sincere leader of Christ's people looks to the word of God to see how to inspire the local assembly to set and achieve great goals.

Paul was collecting an offering for the poor saints in Judas, brothers in Christ who had given their all so that the Gentiles might hear the word of Christ. As he wrote to the church in Corinth to motivate them to get their portion of the offering ready, he brought several points to their attention, that all things might be done right in the sight of men and God:

- **The "friendly" challenge of Macedonia** - Corinth was in the Roman province of Achaia, and a sort of friendly rivalry existed between Achaia and the neighboring province of Macedonia to the north. Thessalonica, Berea, and Philippi were congregations in Macedonia, and Paul uses their example to spur the Corinthians on. "Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality" (II Corinthians 8:1,2). The Macedonians, in spite of the great persecution that continued to come upon them, and in spite of their "deep poverty", gave very liberally. Paul goes on: "For I testify that according to their ability and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints" (II Corinthians 8:3,4). The Macedonians were so poor and afflicted that Paul was not going to have them participate in sending financial help to Jerusalem. But they wanted to be apart of it so much that they begged Paul and others with him, and Paul was amazed at how they gave "beyond their ability". The Corinthians, who were not so persecuted, and who were better off financially, should really have been motivated to share. "And this," Paul adds, "not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God" (II Corinthians 8:5). Now the apostle keeps everything in the right perspective: the Macedonians gave themselves to the Lord – everything was a living and holy sacrifice – and as a result were able to give beyond their ability. The Corinthians were thus encouraged to give themselves to God also. His thrust off the Macedonian base concludes in these words: "Consequently we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well" (II Corinthians 8:6). Titus was going to be the man "on the scene," and the Corinthian Christians were urged to work amenably with him in putting together this great offering.
- **An exhortation** - The apostle now really works on the spiritual side of the church to help them understand the importance of what they were doing, and their necessity of following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. "But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also" (II Corinthians 8:7). The congregation had received many, many blessings as a result of their participation in the gospel, they had faith, they had spiritual gifts of prophetic utterance and knowledge, they had received a positive earnestness from God, and God's love in their hearts from the Holy Spirit. Because of these blessings, they should have been more than willing to put up some cash to help others. Again the apostle flavors his words with the proper perspective: "I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (II Corinthians 8:8,9). This seems to be the secret of Christianity. Our Lord Himself gave all and was left with nothing, that we who had nothing might have all. We then are exhorted to follow in His steps, to prove that our love is not empty words, but in the actual impoverishing of ourselves that our love is sincere and Christ-like. This point would certainly have struck at the heart of every earnest brother and sister in Corinth.

The words of Paul echo through the ages. We today are to be motivated by those same principles, and to use those principles when encouraging others. Onward for the sake of Him who freely gave that we through His poverty might become rich.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Messages to a Resurrected Army

A Proper Appeal

The resurrected army of the Lord is not just an infantry slogging through the mud. It is more than armored units and weaponry; the resurrected army is also its own source of supply (backed by the resources of heaven, of course). While physical armies concentrate essentially on carrying out orders in their specific domains, the church of the Lord is concerned about fellow soldiers who by the will of God have come under persecution and impoverishment. And, by the will of that same God, they then act to help supply those needs.

The apostle Paul was exhorting the church in Corinth to participate in a large offering taken from the Gentile churches to assist the struggling brethren of the circumcision in Judea. Having appealed to their sense of honor in pointing out the efforts the Macedonians had already made, and having pointed to the impoverishment of the Lord Himself that we through His poverty might become rich, the apostle continues in his exhortations:

- **A reminder** - When the apostle met with Peter and John in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15, he was asked by them to remember the poor. The church in Corinth was one of the first to volunteer to help in this project, and Paul reminds them of this fact. “And I give my opinion in this matter,” says he, “for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it” (II Corinthians 8:10). This would inspire the willing among them to work hard to maintain their original position of leadership in this matter.
- **A strong finish** - One of the most important spiritual qualities is to be a strong finisher. The apostle, aware of this, encourages them to victoriously attain their goal in this collection: “But now finish doing it also; that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability” (II Corinthians 8:11).
- **An explanation of God's fairness** - In money matters, a weaker or inexperienced Christian can easily get his feelings hurt, or subtle covetousness can overtake his thinking. The apostle works on these attitudes to explain the character and will of God, and to help those who would struggle with this offering to make the mental adjustments necessary. “For if the readiness is present,” he points Out, “it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he does not have” (II Corinthians 8:12). If one man has \$100,000 to give, and another has \$10, then both amounts are equally acceptable to the Father in heaven, whose judgement is based on the readiness of the individual. “For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction,” adds the apostle, “but by the way of equality - at the present time your abundance being a supply for their want, that their abundance also may becomes supply for your want, that there may be equality” (II Corinthians 8:13,14). Paul wanted to make it clear that the needs in Judea were legitimate, and that the brethren there were indeed in worse straights than those who were giving the offering in Corinth. He brings the wisdom and justice of God into the picture: “As it is written, ‘He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little had no lack’” (II Corinthians 8:15). Appealing to the gathering of manna during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the apostle points out that the superintending hand of God was watching over this collection, and that the Father would make sure that the results were equitable.

God's people do need to be motivated to do what God wants them to do. They need to be exhorted to finish, and they need to be aware of the Father's desires in all money matters. The leadership of any congregation will pay close attention to the principles here, and the saints in each congregation will recognize the scripturality of them when they are applied locally.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

The Trustworthy Brethren Involved

Those who handle money must be trustworthy. Money can be a source of temptation, and was the downfall of Judas Iscariot. Those who were carrying the offering to the saints in Jerusalem had to be men of extraordinary character, or the Christians simply would not contribute. The apostle Paul spends some time in his letter speaking of the trustworthy brethren involved.

- **Titus** - Titus was a close associate of Paul, and had done work in Corinth before. "But thanks be to God, who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus. For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord" (II Corinthians 8:16,17). "As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you" (II Corinthians 8:23). Thus was known to the brethren in Corinth, was obviously known to be trustworthy, and was recommended by Paul as Paul's partner and fellow worker.
- **An unnamed brother** - This brother was known to the saints in Corinth, but for some reason the Holy Spirit chose not to record in his name in the scriptures. "And we have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches; and not only this, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work..." (II Corinthians 8:18,19). "And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but even now more diligent, because of his great confidence in you" (II Corinthians 8:22). The brother was famous throughout all the churches, and was known by them to be trustworthy and diligent. Paul also personally recommended this man, having tested him often and found him diligent and trustworthy. Finally, the man was somehow enough of a leader in Corinth that his confidence in the saints in Corinth was a motivating factor to them, which further demonstrated his trustworthiness to the church there.
- **The brethren's carefulness** - Paul lists some points in assuring the Corinthians that this money was being handled honorably. "This gracious work... is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our readiness, taking precaution that no one should discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (II Corinthians 8:19-21). The apostle, in all honesty, notes that the offering was being administered for the glory of God, a claim, which would have been meaningless had not Paul had already established his reputation before the brethren in Corinth. He also points out that everything will be done honorably in the sight of men - all the offering would be carefully accounted for in being received, and in being distributed to the Christians in Judea.

Responsible brethren in Corinth would justly be concerned whether the monies they contributed would actually reach those for whom they contributed. The apostle and the Holy Spirit allayed those concerns by pointing out the trustworthiness of the brethren involved, by establishing that this offering was for the glory of the Lord, and by reaffirming that all things would be done honorably and above board. Church leadership today should establish the same credentials in motivating the brethren to participate.

Messages to a Resurrected Army

Confidence and Care for the Corinthians

Confidence and care are major factors in motivation. An individual who knows that someone else cares deeply for him can perform much better than someone who is not sure if anyone cares. A person who has confidence is able to step up and meet challenges better than the one who lacks who is unsure of himself. Those who would motivate others inspire confidence in them, and make it clear that they love and care for them.

The apostle Paul, a great commander in the resurrected army. was involved in collecting an offering for the poor brethren in Judea, and was a great motivator. His confidence in the brethren in Corinth, and his deep love for them stand out as he writes to the community of believers in that city.

- **Paul's confidence** - Paul lets the Christians know that, even though he has not been able to be in Corinth for some time, he has confidence that they have been working on this offering. "For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints; for I know of your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians. namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them" (II Corinthians 9:1,2). Paul was so sure that Corinth had been setting aside money that he had actually used the Corinthians as an example and a "friendly" challenge to the Macedonian Christians.
- **Paul's care** - The apostle was a father in the gospel to the Corinthians, and his concern for them was expressed in many ways. After expressing his confidence in them, Paul then shows his care by sending brethren with the second Corinthian letter just to make sure everything was ready so that the brethren would not be embarrassed. "But I have sent the brethren, that our boasting about you may not be made empty, in this case, that, as I was saying, you may be prepared: lest if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to speak of you) should be put to shame by this confidence" (II Corinthians 9:2-4). A caring leader does not want those under his charge embarrassed, and the apostle handled this situation well. "So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead of you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, that the same might be ready as a bountiful gift, and not affected by covetousness" (II Corinthians 9:5). He also helped cover weakness. setting this up so that the covetousness that might come in connection with this large, or bountiful, offering would be eliminated.
- **The bountiful gift** - All the gold, silver, incense, myrrh, and other readily transferable wealth that a congregation such as Corinth could collect would be a considerable sum. Paul expressed his confidence that the brethren would be putting this together by using the term "bountiful gift" twice.
- **Not affected by covetousness** - Covetousness can be a large problem. Covetousness is not an obvious sin; it is not so easily identified as other sins, and the covetous one can more easily convince himself that he is not covetous. Furthermore, covetousness is measured, not by what is done wrong. but by what is not done right. Who but God knows what an offering would be if it were not affected by covetous. The apostle Paul's care for the brethren is really expressed in his helping them through this temptation by sending other men to help get everything ready.

Paul was a great motivator. Having learned from the Holy Spirit, the apostle was able to establish his confidence and his care for the Corinthians, and the offering was eventually delivered to the elders in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit furthermore made sure that this was recorded that leaders in the resurrected army today might have an example to follow, and that these great practical principles might be studied and practiced as we go out to conquer the world.