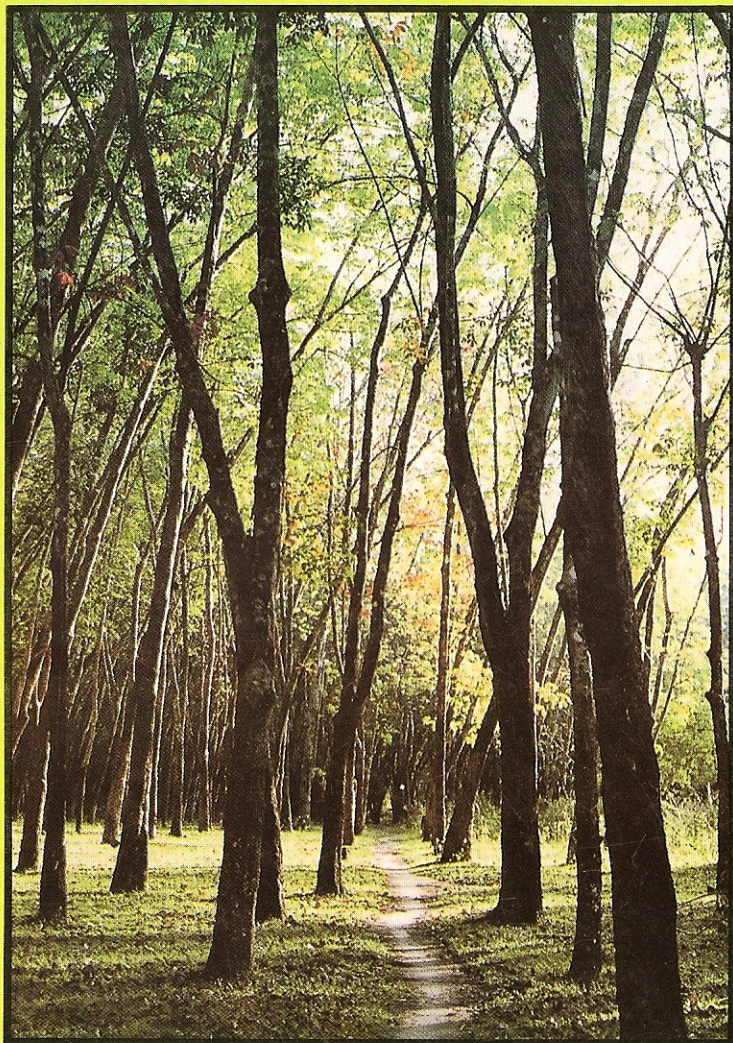
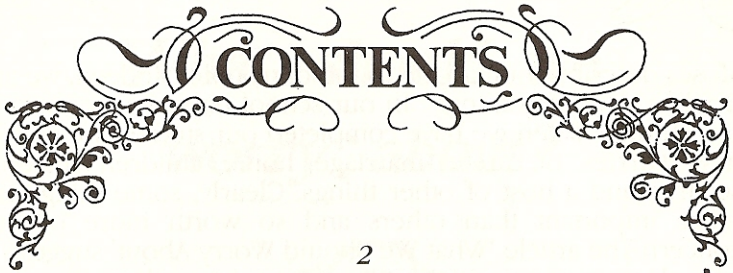


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CONTENTS

2

The Editor's Preface

3

What Should We Worry About?

8

Two Ways Of Life

12

Contentment Leads To Happiness

14

A Pillar In The House Of God

22

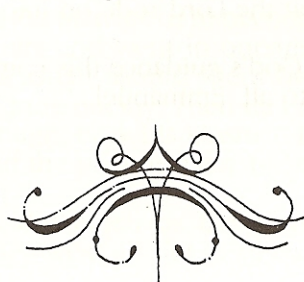
The Four 'Don'ts' Of An Evangelist

26

Three Things To Be Abstained By Preachers

28

Learning From The Ass



EDITOR'S PREFACE

Moses describes human life as full of troubles. Indeed, we are troubled by many things¹. In our school days, we worry over our studies. When we have completed our studies, we collect new worries, of career, marriage, home, children, material security and a host of other things. Clearly, some things are more important than others and so worth more of our concern. The article 'What We Should Worry About' suggests a re-evaluation of priorities and concerns in our lives. It points towards meaning and happiness in life that is achieved through contentment in worldly matters and a striving for excellence and virtue in spiritual matters.

Troubles plague both Christian and non-Christians but they are not alike. The two ways of life invite different kinds of trouble. The true Christian will be persecuted for his belief in Jesus² and his sphere of concern is larger for he has the church, family and complete strangers to love. The secular man falls into many snares in his desire to get rich³. There are many other differing aspects in the two lives. What is important is that the reader examine his own life to see which kind of life he is leading. It is possible to be a Christian in name and yet live a life of a man of the world. We call such a casual Christian.

The other articles in this issue of Manna will be of interest to church workers at all levels. 'A pillar in the temple of God' is good encouragement to young people to take up their responsibilities in the church. 'The Four Don'ts of an Evangelist and Three Things to be Abstained by Preachers' will not only serve as an admonition to erring workers but will also help to build up the spirituality of every divine worker in the church. Finally, some interesting things can be learnt from the colt, the animal that the Lord rode on into Jerusalem.

We pray that with God's guidance this compilation of articles will be beneficial to all. Emmanuel.

*Singapore
June 1988*

- 1 Ps 90:10
- 2 I Tim 1:12
- 3 I Tim 6:9,10

What should we worry about?



Today people are busy with life and full of worries for many things. In the long journey of life, we are bound to worry for some things. However, many people worry for the things which are not worth worrying and slow to respond to the things which demand their attention. As believers of the true church, what should we be worrying about?

1. ... the captives.

When David and his men returned to the city Ziklag, it was found burnt by the Amalekites. The women and all who were in it, both small and great, were taken captives. All the people turned to David and wept. David was full of worries and in great distress. (1 Sam 30:1-6).

When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen of them, and went in pursuit of them as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and routed the enemy. Then he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his goods, and the women and the people (Gen 14:14-16).

The two incidents above tell us the worries of David and Abram, and how they went all out to rescue the captives.

When we turn to our church and look at our brethren and relatives who have fallen captives to the devil, do we feel anxious and determined to save them? What did the Lord Jesus tell us? He gave an illustration, "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:3-7). Paul was chosen to become the Apostle to the Gentiles. The will of the Lord is to send him to save those who are under the power of Satan, to bring them to the light and the True God. As the Scripture says, "My brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and some one bring him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:19-20).

We should constantly watch over our brethren to see if they are being taken captives by Satan. We must resist the devil by our firm faith and at the same time help those who are weak. Paul said, "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (1 Cor 9:22).

2. ... those who stumble and fall.

On one occasion I watched in a women's 100 meter race, one runner was taking the lead right from the beginning, and it was quite certain that she would get the gold medal. However, halfway through the race she suffered from leg cramps and fell to the ground. I was anxious for her. In the end, she lost the gold medal and was taken away by the ambulance. When someone stumbles and falls in a race, our spontaneous response is to worry for him. This spontaneous response should also surface when our brethren stumble and fall. Paul said, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?" (2 Cor 11:29).

The brethren in the Lord may stumble for various reasons:

- i) Those who stumble because of riches (Prov 11:28)
Demas, who was a co-worker of Paul, deserted Paul because of his love for the world (2 Tim 4:10). Lot moved

toward Sodom because he love the world.

- ii) Those who walk in the night stumble because there is no light to guide them (John 11:10)
Many believers continue to indulge in the things of this world and fall to the snares of Satan. They do not see or sense these snares because they walk in darkness. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness ..." (John 8:12). Following the Lord guarantees a lighted path. We can hence evade stumbling for dangers and snares are exposed.

- iii) Those who stumble because they cannot endure tribulation or persecution (Mark 4:17)
There was a brother who had been very active in church work until a sister unintentionally passed some discouraging remarks about him. Later he resigned from his duties and refused to participate in any church work. And he stopped attending church service and drifted further and further away. I was filled with distress for him and exhorted and encouraged him to come back. He did come back to church for a period but the sense of injury was never completely healed.

To the brethren who stumble and fall, we need to constantly encourage them with the word of God, so that their feeble knees are made firm (Job 4:4). We must also constantly pray for them (James 5:13). Through our fervent prayers, the Lord will uphold them.

3. ... the backsliders

The Psalmist said, "My zeal consumes me, because my foes forget thy words" (Ps 119:139). When David was chosen, he was persecuted by Saul. Saul was the first Israelite king. In the beginning, he was obedient to God and he did according to what God had instructed him. But later Saul disobeyed God in many matters and when the devil entered him, Saul tried to kill David. At that instant, Saul had completely forgotten the word of God. He did not know how to rely on God and obey Him. In the end he was rejected by God. But David was filled with distress for him, like a burning flame. Although David was tied up by the ropes of a wicked man, he did not forget the law of God and constantly reminded his son Solomon, saying,

“Solomon my son, know the God of your father, and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off for ever.” (1 Chron 28:9).

The word of God is the lamp of our feet and the light of our path. Without the light, we will be walking in darkness. Walking in darkness makes us fall easily and we become easy victims. The Psalmist says, “If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy!” (Psalm 137:5-6). And he further asserts, “I will never forget thy precepts; for by them thou hast given me life.” (Psalm 119:93).

4. ... the temple of God.

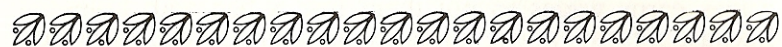
David was constantly concerned for the matters of God. He was anxious for the temple of God. He said, “For zeal for thy house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult thee have fallen on me.” (Ps 69:9). In fact, his heart was set to build the temple of God. But God did not permit him to do so because David was a warrior who had shed the blood of many (1 Chron 28:2-3). Though unable to fulfill his dreams, he was constantly thinking about the matter and reminded his son Solomon to take heed and be strong and determined to build the temple (1 Chron 28:10). Furthermore, David gave Solomon the plans for all the temple buildings, for the storerooms and all the other rooms, and for the Most Holy Place, where sins are forgiven. He also gave him the plans for all he had in mind for the courtyards and the rooms around them, and for the storerooms for the Temple equipment and the gifts dedicated to the Lord (1 Chron 28:11-12). In addition, he also had all the building materials ready and offered the wealth which he had accumulated to the building of the temple. Because of what he did, the people were moved and they followed him in quest to build God’s temple (1 Chron 29:6-9).

Today we must emulate the determination of David. We must take positive steps to build churches where there is none. We must not just be concerned with ourselves. The Bible reminded us through the word of the Lord which came to Haggai, “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your

panelled houses, while the temple lies in ruins? Now therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider how you have fared. You have sown much, and harvested little; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages earns wages to put them into a bag with holes Because of my house that lies in ruins, while you busy yourselves each with his own house. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce.” (Hag 1:4-10).

Let us be moved by the Holy Spirit and revive the work of building God’s temple. There is a need to build more churches to house the congregation. But more importantly, we must build first the temple in our hearts. The scriptures say, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are.” (1 Cor 3:16-17). We must constantly think about our own temple. We must be concerned for any blemish found and remove it immediately so that the Holy Spirit may continue to dwell in it. In one occasion, Jesus went to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; you shall not make my Father’s house a house of trade”. His disciples remembered that it was written. “Zeal for thy house will consume me.” (Jn 2:13-17). If our brethren are backsliding, we must quickly bring them back to the fold. We must look after the temple of God, whether it is the physical temple or the spiritual temple of our hearts, so that we will glorify God and edify man.

In conclusion, those who are in charge of the church today, the elders, deacons, preachers and brethren who are strong in faith should not just be concerned about their own faith and be satisfied that they are saved. They should keep a watchful eye on the weaker brethren and be concerned for those who are taken captives, who stumble and fall or who have forgotten God’s word. They should be concerned also for the temple of God. They should go forth to save, help, exhort, encourage and finish the good work of God through the strength given to them.



Two Ways of Life



There are two kinds of people. Those who are of the flesh and those who are of the Spirit. Those who are of the flesh love this life and seek its glory. They worship evil and hate what is good. The spiritual people give up their lives for the sake of righteousness. They live for the Lord. The two differ markedly in thoughts, wills and standpoints.

THOSE WHO ARE OF THE FLESH

Those who are of the flesh refer to those who live in this sinful world, who refuse to accept sound advice but insist on their own ways. They may be classified as follows:

1. Worshipping the false gods.

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” (Rom 1:19-20). These people have exchanged the truth of God for lies and worship the created instead of the Creator. They have changed the glory of God into breathless idols which look like perishable men. For this reason, they can never find peace.

2. Seeking after pleasures.

Many people seek after pleasures in order to satisfy the desires of their flesh. One needs to earn money before one can seek pleasures. Some countries develop a type of “pleasure fulfillment”. The advance in Science, industries, agriculture and technology does not make one live in peace. The fear that good things don’t last is always present. Millions of people in the Superpower nations are sick because they worry too much about losing their happiness through sickness. They are fearful of cancer and high blood pressure because these are the diseases which have no known cure, and which make one lose the love ones. Money is not everything. It can only give you enjoyment when you are well but it will not remove the pangs in your heart because of the loss of your loved one. As sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all men sinned (Rom 5:12).

3. Showing no charity to the poor.

The world offers a sea of opportunities to love and show kindness to the less fortunate. However many refuse to give aid to the poor and needy. They show no compassion to the sick and dying. Such people will realise the follies of their actions as seen in the gospel of Luke. Jesus narrated a story of a rich man who cared for nothing except his own indulgence in earthly pleasures. He showed no charity or mercy to a poor man named Lazarus who was full of sores, lying at the gate of his house. In the end God punished him.

He was tormented in Hades after he had died (Luke 16:9-31). Hence, if it is within our means, we should always give to the poor and never follow the footsteps of the stingy rich man.

4. Rejecting the salvation grace.

There are those who treasure the world above anything else. They will give all sorts of excuses for not accepting the grace of God. They are like those recorded in the gospel of Luke chapter 14 where the Master sent out invitations to a great banquet. Excuses such as having bought a field, oxen and having married a wife were given for not accepting the invitation to attend the banquet. Thus, many people reject the salvation grace because they are preoccupied with the things

of the world, little realizing that they are walking in the path that leads to destruction.

5. Quarrelling over the division of family wealth.

There are those who would quarrel over the division of family property with no regard for blood relation because of their greed for money. The Lord Jesus gave warnings to such people: "Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?" And he said to them, "Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:14-15). People turn away from God because of their greed for money. Without God, the spiritual life will wither and die. Judas Iscariot is an example of a man whose greed for money leads to his own destruction.

THOSE WHO ARE OF THE SPIRIT

Those who are of the Spirit are the people who have given up fame, status and wealth to take up the Cross and follow Jesus. They lead people to walk in the path of righteousness and bring glory to the name of the Lord.

They are characterized by:

1. A truthful heart.

People who are truthful have no deceit in their hearts. They flee from what is evil and keep to their path. They worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). It is for this reason that God chose Abraham (Neh 9:7-8). He was made a great nation, having peace in this life and blessing in the life to come.

2. An ability to discern truth from falsehood.

A true believer is not only truthful and faithful to the Lord, he also knows what is from above. "He who comes from above is greater than all. He who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly matters" (John 3:31).

People who belong to the light walk in the light. They bear the fruits of goodness, righteousness and truth, to the glory of God (Eph 5:8-9). But the fools give themselves up to drunkenness and immorality. They make troubles for others and plot evils

against the innocent (Prov 17:5).

3. A charitable character.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (I Cor 13:4-7).

4. A devout heart.

They worship the one and only Lord Jesus who hates evil and abhors wickedness. God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth (Phil 2:9-10). Paul sacrificed himself and served the Lord faithfully because he knew that (1) the resurrected Lord Jesus who is now in heaven will one day come again to end the world with his judgment, punishing the evildoers and rewarding those who do good; (2) there is no salvation apart from Jesus; (3) Jesus holds the key to life and earth and he gives grace to whom he has chosen; (4) Jesus is the father of Light; (5) those who believe in him have their woes changed to blessings, and will pass from death to life; (6) he created all things in heaven and on earth and in him all things hold together; (7) he forgives our sins and heals our sickness; (8) his love is everlasting; (9) his words are true; every word he said will come to pass; (10) those who reject him will surely die, being unable to save themselves.

5. A thirst for God's righteousness.

They seek God's kingdom and consider His righteousness foremost. This enables them to abstain from impurities and overcome temptations. They understand that bodily needs like food and clothings will be granted if they pursue the higher goal of spirituality.

6. A complete trust and faith in God

To trust God completely and to fully obey him is to receive His blessings. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be

called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. They are able to press on towards the goal which is to receive the blessings from above.

Conclusion

The advancement in science and technology and the improvement in the standard of living have made the world a heaven to some. It has all forms of entertainment for pleasures and life is transformed from simplicity to sophistication, from a relaxed pace to a fast-moving pace. In the final analysis, the world has two kinds of people, the godly, righteous and the saved ones and the worldly, wicked people who will face destruction.

Those who are of the flesh do not believe in God and their souls have no anchor. However, those who are of the spirit lead a life of fearing God and loving man. Obedience to God's word gives meaning and value to their lives, having a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul (Heb 6:19).

* * *

Contentment leads to Happiness

Jack and Jill are friends. Each has a different outlook towards money. Both of them have a dollar each in their pockets. Jack said, "Thank God, I still have a dollar in my pocket." But Jill said, "Too bad, I have only one dollar left in my pocket! What should I do?"

Though both of them have a dollar each in their pockets, their feelings can be vastly different. Jack's concept of life is optimistic. His thinking is progressive, full of hope; whereas Jill's concept of life is very pessimistic. She feels hopeless and desolate. The strength of Jack's optimism lies in his

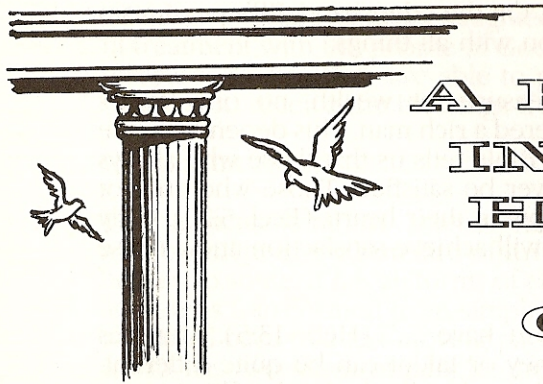
contentment on all things. On the other hand, Jill's pessimism is due to the dissatisfaction with all things.

There is no absolute measure for wealth, no one knows exactly when he is considered a rich man. This depends on the individual's thinking. The Bible tells us that those who always desire more will never ever be satisfied. Those who are not contented always feel empty in their hearts (Eccl. 5:20). Only those who are contented will achieve satisfaction and a sense of tranquillity.

"Be content with what you have" (Heb. 13:5). Attitudes towards possessions; money or talent can be quite different. The amount of money we have decides the kinds of businesses we undertake. But there are people who desire to operate big businesses even though they do not have large capitals. They would borrow. If their businesses fail, they declare bankruptcy. This will not only bring hardship to themselves but also impose misery to others. Certainly it is not uncommon for a businessman to borrow money to finance his business, but a contented person keeps it under control. In terms of talent, those who are less talented can only handle small jobs and to those who are more talented can shoulder heavier responsibilities. But there are some who are less-versatile who want to tackle big jobs despite their limitations. These people are just like the small limbs of a grasshopper pushing a big-wheel, their great efforts not meeting with any result. They are headed for failure. Though it is true that we must do everything with the best of our ability, we must admit that there are limitations to our endeavours and things beyond our capabilities.

Some may ask this question, "If all the people in the world were to believe in Jesus and all the people were contented, what would happen to the world then? How can it progress?" The answer is obvious. Contentment is not antagonistic to progress rather it is to do our work within our capabilities while using the best of our abilities. We can then neatly expect to achieve something. This would in turn lead to happiness.

To greed is human while contentment is the result of relentless effort of spiritual perseverance. As Paul puts; he could be contented in whatever circumstance. He has learned this lesson well in Christ (Phil 4:11).



A PILLAR IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

"He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name." (Rev. 3:12).

Elder John was commissioned to write to encourage the believers of a spiritual church. He exhorts them to be victors and to become pillars in the temple of God. Pillars are the support of a building. The building collapses when the pillars fail to support it. Hence, pillars have a far reaching effect on the entire building. Young believers must determine to become the pillars in the temple of God and take on greater responsibility. The life span of man lies in the hand of God and life is soon over (Ps. 90:10). No one can add a cubit to his life span by being anxious (Lk 12:25). All those who work for the church now will one day rest from their labours (Rev. 14:13) and return to heaven. Their task will be taken over by the younger generation. Hence, while we are still young, we must be concerned in all church work. The day will come when the responsibility will fall on us and we will not be unprepared.

We must build ourselves up to be the future pillars of the temple of God. But how?

BUILD UP A GODLY ASPIRATION

We have believed, and have come to know that Jesus is the Holy One of God (Jn. 6:69). Moreover, we know whom we have believed (2 Tim. 1:12). Since we have such a firm foundation of faith like a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul (Heb. 6:19), we must go on to build up the godly aspiration. This is the aspiration mentioned by Paul: "Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ. For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me." (Col. 1:28,29). Jesus said, "You received without paying, give without pay." (Mt. 10:8). God in His great love once drew us up from the desolate pit and pulled us out of the deadly quicksand (Ps. 40:2). Now it is our turn to save others by snatching them out of the fire (Jude 23). By the power of God, we can achieve what we aspire. The weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Cor 10:4,5). Just as Paul said, "I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6). Dear brothers and sisters, do strive on to achieve your aspiration!

LOOK BEYOND THE HORIZON

Abram and Lot both reared their cattle between Bethel and Ai. When the herds grew bigger, quarrels broke out between the men who took care of Abram's cattle and those who took care of Lot's cattle. Abram felt that he should not quarrel with Lot who is his nephew. He asked Lot to choose the land he wanted for his cattle. Lot, who was selfish and short-sighted, chose the whole Jordan Valley for himself. But Lot later lost all his possession in a destruction. Abram had no choice except to move to the land of Canaan. The Lord said to Abram, "Lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see I will give to you and to your descendants forever." (Gen. 13:14,15) If God were to ask us to look in all directions and give to us the land our eyes can see, would we not go up to a hill and try to look beyond the horizon and hope for a bigger piece of land? The further away we look, the more we will receive. It is good to be able to look beyond.

One must always look beyond the horizon when doing the work of God.

We must not just be immersed in the immediate work of our local church. We must widen our vision and bring the gospel to all nations. The era for preaching the gospel to all the world is here. We must resolve to go to a place far away because many of God's people are there in that city (Act 18:10). We preach the gospel so that their eyes may be open and that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ (Act 26:18).

By the wisdom of God and the spirit of revelation, and having the eyes of our hearts enlightened, we must look beyond the horizon through the eyes of our hearts (Eph. 1:17,18). We hope for a bountiful harvest. The eyes of the flesh cannot see the great plan of God. We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18). For the sake of the great harvest, we must persevere to do the will of God even though it may appear to be difficult and full of obstacles. Our labour is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58).

CULTIVATE THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE

Paul said, "So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13:13). The possession of faith and hope leads to blessing for oneself. The possession of love is not just for oneself but for God and for man. For this reason, love is the greatest of the three. Every spirit of sacrifice springs from love. God so loved the world that he sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. This is how the love of God is manifested. He sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. This is the great love of God - to sacrifice for the world (1 Jn. 4:9-10). The sacrifice made by the Lord Jesus is the outcome of his love for us.

Service entails the sacrifice of one's money, time, energy and spirit. This cannot be achieved without love. When the disciples of Jesus were quarrelling over who among them was the greatest, Jesus taught them and said, "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came

not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mt. 20:26-28). It is a sacrifice to offer service in the household of God. If it is not for the sake of love, no one is willing to become a servant of all man. The Lord loves us and he willingly laid down his life for us. This shows that love and sacrifice are closely related. He loves us and died for us. His love controls us. Let us not live for ourselves but for Him (Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:14-15). Let us be like Him in loving man and in service. Let us carry our cross and follow Him and live for Him (Mt. 16:24).

Paul urged the people in the church not to look only to their own interests, but also to the interests of others, and to have the mind of Jesus as their mind (Phil. 2:4-5). To be the pillar in the temple of God is to be a slave of all man. He is often called upon to endure hardship and suffering and to show the spirit of sacrifice. All the hardship and suffering become bearable because of love.

THE ABILITY TO FORBEAR AND FORGIVE

Those who are successful in life are often marked by their ability to forbear and forgive others. As the Chinese proverb says, "The belly of a Prime Minister can 'bear' a ship". Most of the great people in this world possess the ability to 'bear' the shortcomings of others. The ability to 'bear' others comes from forbearance and forgiveness which need to be cultivated.

To be the pillars in the temple of God and to lead in the church work, one will inevitably come across people who are not co-operative. Directly or indirectly, one would also hear some insulting criticisms. More often than not, some simple-minded and impulsive people will jump into conclusion and start criticizing about a certain matter before the matter is clarified. And there are those who are jealous and who will point their fingers at everything. If one does not have the ability to forbear and forgive, one would have given up the job in a moment of anger. All the efforts will go down and drain. For this reason, we must learn to forbear and forgive the shortcomings of others.

The Chinese proverb says, "Lack of forbearance in a small thing will upset a great plan". We must succeed in our forbearance and

not to give up halfway. The key to success in forbearance is to begin with love. Paul said, "Love is patient and kind" (1 Cor. 13:4). Love is manifested when the mother shows patience and forgiveness to her naughty children. There may be members in the church who go around and offend people by their words or attitude, but they usually harbour no ill feelings. Perhaps they are a little stubborn or they just want to show off. But their behaviour will not harm the rest of the party as a whole. We must forbear and forgive them and let them have a chance to repent.

The Lord Jesus, after washing the disciples' feet, said, "You also must wash one another's feet" (Jn.13:14). The teaching here is that of forgiving one another. It is a common fault of the people of this world not to admit one's own mistake. If there is any dispute, it is the other party who is at fault. But who is faultless? Must it be others who is at fault? We too need to reflect upon this. When opportunity arises, forgive one another just like washing one another's feet.

When Isaac dwelt in the valley of Gerar, the wells he dug were either robbed or filled with earth by his enemy. An ordinary person in Isaac's place will not tolerate such injustice. But Isaac's forbearance and forgiveness soon put his enemy to shame. The enemy admitted wrong and made an agreement with Isaac that they will not harm each other. Isaac's ability to forbear and forgive is indeed admirable (Gen. 26:18-31). Paul exhorts us not to repay evil with evil or to take revenge but to give in to the enemy. When the enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing we will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:17-21).

In order to cultivate our ability to forbear and forgive and to become the pillars in the temple of God, we must bear in mind the following verses, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. and above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony (Col. 3:12-14).

A HEART LOWLY AND MEEK

Meekness is called upon especially in the household of God. If the pillars in the temple of God, that is, the slaves of all men, are proud and autocratic, how would they gain respect from the believers? Believers are brothers and sisters to us and should be treated with love as such. It is not like an autocrat exercising his power over his subjects. Otherwise, the believers will gradually depart like lost sheep and become food for all the wild beasts. Then the Lord God will require from the shepherds. The wicked shepherds will be rejected by God (Ezek. 34:7-10).

Paul wanted us to have the heart of Christ as our hearts. What is the heart of Christ? Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Mt. 11:29).

God chose Moses and entrusted him with a great responsibility because Moses was very meek, more than all men that were on the face of the earth (Num. 12:3). If Moses who led the people was a proud and autocratic man, then either he would have been killed by the people he led or he would have given up the task halfway.

The meek are the great leaders who remain calm and not driven by impulse when dealing with things. James said, "Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God." (Jas. 1:19-20). The Proverbs also taught us when it says, "He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly." (Prov. 14:29). And again it says, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." (Prov. 16:32). It is not easy to have full control over one's emotion and anger and to manifest gentleness. We must make effort to cultivate meekness in order to attain perfection.

Paul taught and exhorted the young preacher Timothy and said, "The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil." (2 Tim 2:24-26). A gentle speech

will not stir up the anger of the opponent. It saves oneself and at the same time guides others to the way of life. The scriptures say, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." (Prov. 15:1) and "A gentle tongue is a tree of life." (Prov. 15:4). A gentle tongue brings forth the way of life, while the tree of life gives forth the fruit of life so that those who eat of it will receive eternal life.

A FIRM DETERMINATION

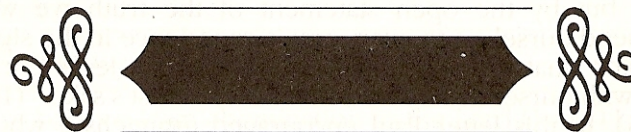
An athlete must possess a strong determination to persevere to the end. In a marathon race, speed is of no avail if one fails to reach the destination. In the journey to the heavenly kingdom, without a strong determination to press on to the end, one can only look to the holy city and sigh, unable to reach at the entrance. The Bible recorded, "For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end." (Heb. 3:14). In other words, if our faith is not steadfast till the end, then we have no part in Christ. There are those who will say to the Lord, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" (Mt. 7:22). But the Lord will declare that he never knew them. What a tragedy! The Lord said, "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Mt. 24:13). Thus, we need to have endurance so that we may do the will of God and receive what is promised (Heb. 10:36). James also exhorted us and said, "Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and the late rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." (Jas. 5:7-8). The strong determination to persevere to the end comes from the growth in endurance.

We must have a faith which will take us to the end. As the pillars in the temple of God and as slaves in the household of God we must also take our tasks faithfully to the end. Even on the day when we are to depart from this world, we are able to join in the chorus with Paul, "For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness." (2 Tim. 4:6-8). We must imitate Paul, just as Paul imitates Christ.

Conclusion

As the pillars in the temple of God, we must train and nurture ourselves in our godly aspiration, in looking beyond the horizon, in sacrifice, in our ability to forbear and forgive, in meekness and steadfastness. We must continue to press forward and be a strong pillar in the temple of God. When the Lord appears again in his glory, he will say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master." (Mt. 25:21).

May the Lord take delight in us. May we be the vessels of noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house. May all glory be to the Holy name of Jesus (2 Tim. 2:21).



THE 4 'DON'TS' OF AN EVANGELIST

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he exhorted himself, "Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways, we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Christ's sake." (II Cor 4:1,2,5). In this letter Paul encouraged evangelists, who are chosen by God for this honourable position in the Gospel, to fulfill the four essential 'Don'ts' namely not to lose heart, not to use underhanded ways, not to tamper with God's word and preaching themselves. Evangelists should strive to observe these 'don'ts'.

1. Do not lose heart.

One must possess courage in serving God. After the death of Moses, God encouraged his successor, Joshua, to lead the Israelites. On numerous occasions, God said to him, "Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Josh 1:6,7,9,18). As we serve God more, the Devil will intensify his efforts to hinder and destroy our works. To this end, he places obstacles in the form of trials and physical afflictions. Others may misunderstand us, slander us and become jealous of us. If we lose heart, we can never fight the spiritual battle successfully (ref: Deut 20:2,8). We need to ask God for courage so that we can fight a good fight (Acts 4:29, 30). For God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control (II Tim 1:7).

Paul told the Corinthians, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Christ may also be manifested in our bodies." (II Cor 4:8-10). Paul's courage in the face of death enable him to fight the good fight and do much. Indeed, if a soldier views death as returning home, he will be able to fight bravely in the battlefield. In like terms, an evangelist must have sacrificial spirit. He should put the welfare of the church and the battle for righteousness above his personal gains, even above his life. He needs to rely on divine power to destroy strongholds, arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ (II Cr 10:4,5). We pray to God to strengthen our courage so that we will not shrink from battle when faced with difficulties. We pray also that each one of us will follow Christ's footsteps in serving God loyally.

2. Do not use underhanded ways.

A false balance is an abomination to the Lord (Prov 11:1). No one who practices deceit shall dwell in God's house (Ps 101:7). As such, an evangelist should all the more avoid evil intentions and behaviour.

In speech, an evangelist should not be double-tongued, use flattery, cause divisions, harm or judge his co-workers. David, in his psalms, said, "What man is there who desires life, keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit." (Ps 34:12,13). Sincerity in speech is an essential part of spiritual nurture. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt, who can understand it? (Jer 17:9). Again, he who hates, dissembles with his lips and harbours deceit in his heart (Prov 26:24). The saying is indeed true: Never judge a book by its cover. Divine workers should be sincere in their hearts because God looks into our hearts although men will judge our physical attributes (1 Sam 16:7). Co-workers should not harbour hatred and jealousy and slander one another. In church, elders, deacons, leaders and evangelists are co-workers. Therefore, let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from us, with all malice, and be kind to one another, as God in Christ forgave us (Eph 4:31,32).

Honesty is the best policy in our life. We hope every evangelist today would be a modern 'Nathanael' receiving the praise of God, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." (Jn 1:47).

3. Do not tamper with God's words.

Paul encouraged Timothy, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (II Tim 2:15). And evangelist needs to search and examine the Bible daily (Acts 17:11) so that he can be guided by God's words and not lose God's light. This accompanied by prayers for the Spirit's guidance will prevent him from distorting the truth and destroying the faith of others (ref: II Tim 2:17, 18; Gal 1:6,9).

Besides speaking the truth accurately, an evangelist should manifest the truth in his lifestyle. Paul said, "Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain ... We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labours, watching, hunger, by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left;" (II Cor 6:1-10).

Today we ask: how much do we practice what we preach from the pulpit? We preach the truth, but have we practised it? This is an important question which warrants our consideration (Jas 1:22-25; 2:14-20).

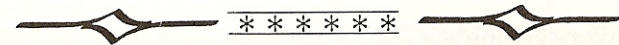
4. Do not preach ourselves.

For the sake of the Gospel, Paul decided to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

An evangelist should exalt the name of God and give all glory and praise to His name (Ps 115:1). After fulfilling our duties, he should say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty." (Lk 17:10) and magnify God in his heart

(Lk 1:46). An evangelist must never preach himself and boast of his abilities neither should he rely on his wisdom to gain fame. An evangelist should not aim to be famous. For a famous evangelist is not necessarily a successful one and vice versa. If an evangelist preaches himself and becomes famous through all his works but fails in the eyes of God, all these become without value.

Evangelists are given ministries by God's mercy and not by profession (II Cor 4:1). They are servants of God and not servants of men (Phi 1:1). They should rather please God than men (Gal 1:9; II Cor 5:9). "Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ." (Col 1:28). Take some time to consider: do we preach Christ as our Lord? The faith of the believers should be rooted in the Rock, Jesus Christ (I Cor 3:11; Mt 7:25). This will indeed make the church united (Jn 17:20-23), without divisions and power struggles. Every member will then be able to work diligently and harmoniously together (I Cor 1:10) and to submit to one another in the fear of the Lord (Eph 5:1). In all matters, we should please God, rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance and pray to the Lord to be with us so that the Gospel will be propagated quickly. With God manifesting signs and miracles in our works, we will be able to accomplish the entrusted commission of preaching the Gospel to all nations (MK 16:15, 20; Acts 1:8).



Three Things to be Abstained by Preachers

The calling of preachers is a noble one. As such, their actions, decisions and activities have a great bearing on the church. While it is necessary to ensure that their positions will not be instruments of abuse, it should not be done through a set of stringent rules and regulations meant to restrict and control. The correct approach would be constructive admonishment. This could be achieved with the help and motivation of the Holy Spirit. Described below are three things which preachers should be cautious of:-

1. Being a hireling.

There are notably three kinds of shepherds. The first is like thieves who are bad elements, like a pack of bandits (Jn 10:1) only receiving wages but without doing any work. The second is like hirelings (Jn 10:12) working only for wages. The last type is like Jesus, sacrificing His life for the sheep (Jn 10:11). Peter and Paul are typical examples who suffered willingly for the Lord's sake (Phil 2:17; 3:9; Mk 10:28-30 ; 2 Pet 1:13-15).

2. Power-seeking.

During the apostolic times there was a person named Diotrephes who had crazed for power (3 Jn 9-12). The two sons of Zebedee, James and John also on one occasion requested Jesus for positions by His sides of his throne in the kingdom of God (Mk 10:35-45). Even on the eve of the crucifixion, the twelve apostles were still contending among themselves as to who was the greatest (Lk 22:24-27). All these were foolish acts. The leaders in the church do not represent authority. They are called to serve. The position of the church will be at stake if her leaders are out to greed for power. Sincere workers will be disappointed and consequently the church will suffer great loss.

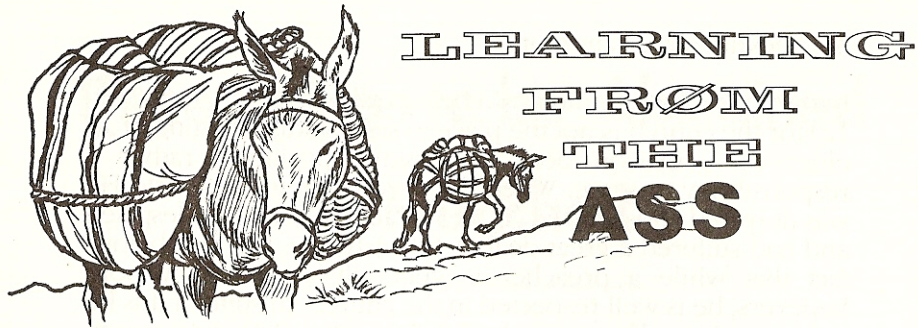
3. Seeking after vain glory.

In the church we should avoid being called "Master" (Mt. 23:8-12) for the church is not the place to seek status. The title of an elder or a deacon does not signify positions, rather a responsibility to serve. When the Lord came to the world He was despised and rejected (Is 53:3). Paul likewise was despised and had suffered a great deal (1 Cor 4:10-13). It is an obvious fact that while a preacher is generally despised by non-believers, he is well respected in the church. In spite of this he must not be self-conceited (Gal 5:26; Phil 2:3) nor preach himself (2 Cor 4:5), much less to commend himself (2 Cor 10:18).

The Lord Jesus, when He was ministering on earth said, "I do not receive glory from men". He also said, "How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" (Jn 5:41,44). He said again, "He who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but he who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood." (Jn 7:18). As such, a sincere preacher does not seek his own glory, but the glory of God.

Apart from being wary of the three things mentioned, a preacher must also honour the Lord as head of the whole church (Col 1:18), enabling every part to function, that is, to mobilize the members so that everyone performs his duty and concertedly build up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-16).





Asses are close cousins of horses. They enjoy less glamour compared to their cousins. However, they have valuable characteristics as recorded in the Bible. Their red-letter day came about when the Lord Jesus rode on one of them into Jerusalem. The Lord had rejected all other animals but chose the ass to take Him into Jerusalem. This incident alone is enough to make us reconsider the position of the ass.

1. Asses are tame and peaceful animals

Practically all Biblical and historical records of the horses are connected with wars, illustrating the fact that horses are meant for war. "The horse is made ready for the day of battle," (Prov. 21:31).

On the contrary, mention of the ass is always connected with peace. For instance, Abraham in his bid to please God rode on an ass to Mount Moriah to offer his son Issac as a burnt offering (Gen 22:15). Moses, obeying the great commission of God to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, mounted on an ass with his family for Egypt to confront Pharaoh (Ex.4:20). Besides these, there are other instances mentioned where asses provided a means of transportation. (Josh. 15:18 ; 1 Sam 25:20,23,42).

It is known that asses are especially good means of transport on mountainous areas. In Szechwan, China the place is very hilly. The residents depend largely on asses for land transportation. Despite the road condition being rugged they seldom meet with accidents. Credit should go to the good-natured asses which are groomed for easy manoeuvre.

On one occasion, the Lord Jesus overlooked the horse, mounted on an ass and went to Jerusalem. The Bible recorded it in the following manner, "And when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'God into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If any one says anything to you, you shall say, THE LORD HAS NEED OF THEM, and he will send them immediately.' This took place to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

"Tell the daughters of Zion,
Behold, your kind is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on an ass,
and on a colt, the foal of an ass.'" (Mt. 21:1-10)

The Old Testament passage of the Bible prophesies,

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on an ass,
on a colt the foal of an ass.
I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall command peace to the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth." (Zech. 9:9-10)

Only the ass a tame and peaceful animal, is deemed worthy to transport the Prince of peace into Jerusalem. May all of us emulate the characteristics of the ass to be a peaceful, gentle, fruitful believer greatly used by the Lord to preach the gospel of peace.

2. Faithful and hard working.

Asses are greatly used by men in their daily lives especially in the olden days. When a country went to war, the generals would ride on horses while transportation of food and supplies were done using asses. In some parts of China where

the system of communication is backward the people depend largely on asses for communication. The farmers, in particular, use asses to transport their produce to the market. They even use asses to grind their mills. These animals are very faithful and hard working.

When Jacob was in Canaan he met with a severe famine. On hearing that there was food in Egypt he said to his son, "Why do you look at one another? Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt, go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live, and not die." On their return they used their asses to load the grain they had bought from Egypt (Ex. 42:26).

Prophet Isaiah rebuked the Israelites severely because they proved themselves unfaithful to God. He scolded them saying that they were worse than the ox and the ass which were faithful to their masters, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken: 'Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand.'" (Is. 1:2-3).

The Bible records about an ass which once spoke human language. And from the conversation we gather that the animal had been very faithful to its master. The following is the story. "When the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam; and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the ass with his staff. 'What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?' And Balaam said to the ass, 'Because you have made sport of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you.' And the ass said to Balaam, 'Am I not your ass, upon which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Was I ever accustomed to do so to you?' And he said, 'No.'" (Num. 22:27-30). Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with the drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed his head and fell on his face. Then only did Balaam realize that he had wronged his ass. Balaam would have been slain by the angel of the Lord if not for his faithful ass. The spirit of the ass is indeed worthy of pursuit by servants of God today. The Bible exhorts, "knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ." This is basic knowledge, and every worker should know. It is also the goal that every one should strive after.

3. Working silently.

It is not wrong to say that asses can contribute much more to mankind than horses can. But generally, horses enjoy better privileges than asses do. In the eyes of man, horses are always welcome, for they look good, bright, proud and happy. On the other hand, asses are often linked with stupidity, clumsiness and disappointment. But asses are faithful animals, always working silently for their masters.

Incidentally the life of man is similar to that of an ass. Some lives are full of silent toils, yet uneventful, others are very successful, enterprising and highly esteemed in terms of status and wealth. Subordinates are often being scolded as silly asses by their superiors. But many of these subordinates are not stupid at all. These so call 'silly asses' share common characteristics: they are silent workers; they will not live against their principles; they hold fast to righteousness and will not compromise with injustice; they do not work for fame neither do they flatter others; they will not be enticed by material gain and they will not defect by blackmail but always pressing forward, not neglecting their duty.

Generally people love money and high position. When one is better off than others in his performance and talents he may become puffed up and self-conceited. Even Paul, a highly spiritual apostle was afraid that he might be tempted to become proud because of the abundant grace he had received from God, what more of us? So he often pommeled himself by bringing his body under subjugation; he said, "And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated." (2 Cor. 12:7).

After Gideon the judge had delivered Israel from the hands of the Midianites, the Israelites requested Gideon to rule over the Israelites as a show of their gratitude. But Gideon replied, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you." His reply sounded very noble. However, Gideon requested the people to make for him an ephod of gold for the remembrance of the battle against the Midianites not knowing that this would bring unto miseries to his family and people. "And Gideon made an ephod of it and put it in his city, in Ophrah; and all Israel played the harlot

after it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family." (Judges 8:22-27).

In church we must conduct ourselves properly, not working for fame nor for other gains, never currying favour nor acting at the expense of our principles. We should guard ourselves from being tempted by material gains and must not falter when facing with threats and blackmail. On the other hand, we should not be haughty even if we have made some achievements in Church, to blow our own trumpets. Instead, emulate the spirit of the ass. Render our service to God not for self-glory but do all things according to His will. We must be sober and serious in our work, to please God and to always press forward in order to accomplish the great commission which God has entrusted to us.

