

is rebuffed by a "I can't afford it," when the appeals for selfless service are countermanded by a selfish ego . . . then the soul has withered into nothingness. This is the kind of profit that knows no lasting gain.

On the islands of the seas there are many places where coconuts are the source of barter. There natives gather them in great numbers. Now and then when the crop is scarce, natives resort to selling a type of intelligent monkey that grows in great profusion. To catch the monkeys, the natives have devised a clever scheme of boring a small hole in a coco-

nut, putting in a bit of honey and baiting the monkeys. The monkey slips his hand into the coconut hole and gets a fist full of the white meat and honey. But the doubled fistful is too big to pull out of the hole. It doesn't have sense enough to turn loose in order to save his life. The analogy to man is ugly but honest: some don't have soul left enough to turn loose their fistful of this world in order to save their own souls. It is one thing to be listed in Dun & Bradstreet; it is something else altogether to be listed in the Lamb's Book of Life! "For what has a man profited if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?"

THREE CHEERS!

JANUARY 19, 1958

(Scripture: John 16:29-33)

The Bible is replete with the notes of optimism: notes of cheer, encouragement, and triumph. Its abiding truth sounds much like a cheering section as though life were a contest on an athletic field. Three of these cheers rise to defend us in the game of life, three cheers which you and I should hear this day.

"Fear Not"

The first of the three, "Be of good cheer, fear not," is as timely and essential as the morning sunshine. To be imprisoned in the Chilon of fear is an unbecoming state for human life. Strangely enough, old age has no monopoly on this vice. Fear maintains its grip on those of all ages—even the young children. I doubt if many of the more open sins like profanity, inordinate drinking, etc. take the toll in our lives as fear does.

It works like a malignancy: it takes good cells and runs in riotous, mob-like action. Fear enters an otherwise good life and eats away at its vitals until life is hampered, restricted, and sometimes lost. Fear is that faithless, trembling attitude that

comes up to the bat of life with an unsteady grip, an uncertain attitude, and an indecisive conviction about hitting the ball. Most time the fear-ridden person fans out because of his consuming fear.

When Fort Alcan was torn down some years ago, the natives rushed in to get all the used boards, electrical supplies, and any odds and ends that they could find for their own homes. When they came to the prison, they noticed it had huge doors, two-inch steel rods over the windows, and heavy padlocks. Bût to their dismay, the walls were made of thin plywood and cardboard . . . but were painted the color of pig iron. The prisoners constantly hacked at the steel rods, the huge doors, and heavy locks; but it never occurred to them that the walls were so flimsy.

Cardboard Barriers

Quite often the prisons of fear look as formidable as the locks and bars over the doors: yet, the walls may be nothing more than the cardboard through which one could go with determination.

When the Apostle Peter gave full vent

to his faith by stepping out of the boat on the waters of Galilee to meet his Lord, never did he show such ascendancy over fear and doubt. He knew that faith is not irrational but supra-rational—that is, above reason. It can soar like an eagle into the unknown, whereas reason must always halt at the borders of that which is provable. Faith goes along with reason like an identical twin until reason falls prostrate on its face and can go no further. Then faith, having summoned its second wind, is ready for the sprint down the track of the seeming impossible. To say that the man walked on the water sounds absurd to us. Isn't that in defiance of the law of gravity? Why, of course, it is. But is the law of gravity any less subject to God than the law of mental assent?

The fact that Peter walked on the water is no more confounding than the fact that Lazarus came from the grave, or that a cancerous victim's health returned, or that one who is vile, vulgar, and black at heart becomes victorious, clean, and pure within. These are equally "miraculous." Whenever a person fixes both eyes on God and the Son of God, then and there he is equipped to walk the tempestuous waves of any of life's seas. Momentum is maintained across the water until he repeats the same old human error that Peter committed. When faith is chilled by the icy winds of doubt, then reason takes over and we, like Peter, begin to go down. Then the words of the Master, "Wherefore didst thou doubt?" Peter, why did you put your right eye on Jesus and your left eye on the waves? Simply because he was Peter, because he was human (for the mystery is not that he sank, but that he stayed up at all. Remember that we are earthbound creatures and are far more acquainted with the laws of the sea than those of God.)

Virus of the Soul

Fear, that virus that infects the soul, takes a ghastly toll from most of the human race. It took too much of a toll from one of those stewards to whom his master had entrusted one talent. In that day of reckoning the excuse given as to why he had not invested and increased

his talent was: "I was afraid . . ." The biggest gamble on earth is not in Wall Street but within the human personality when it says "I will" to God.

He takes a chance that these ragged fragmented talents, when touched by God's wand of blessings, will flower out into usefulness. He must march through the lines of the enemy with a forward gaze toward ultimate victory. Oh, our world needs to hear this first thunderous ovation, "Be of good cheer . . . be not afraid."

The Christian who says "I believe . . . but I am afraid" must reckon with that contradiction. To say that one has faith and still is afraid is to ignore what Christian faith really means after all. God is no puny puppet living in some celestial domain who ignores the travail of His people! He is everywhere present extending a helping hand that fear might loose its painful grip.

"Thy Sins Are Forgiven Thee"

Hear the second cheer as it rises from the bleachers of heaven: "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." In the course of my life some high peaks of good news stand out in memorable force: the news that the war was over, that the lost child was safe, that the old mortgage was paid, that the starboard motor which had stopped running suddenly came back to life . . . these and many more newsworthy events. But the one message of good news which eclipses all the others was this headline from heaven's home edition: "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." It means that the fellowship between God and a human life which was broken is now restored; that guilt like an overbearing monster, must no longer goad life like an oxen.

It means that while one does not sin intentionally, still the unintentional sin are handled by a forgiving God as man repents in honesty. It means that man has a new destiny . . . an alternative to destruction . . . an eternal home not made with hands. Forgiveness means that the book

can be balanced; that the scales can be adjusted; that the minus, negative needle of the compass can be set in its rightful place. It means that life now is worth living since there is someone to live it with and through and for! Forgiveness means that earth and heaven are now reconciled . . . that One has died for the many, that no one more needs to die for the sins of the world. A mystery? The greatest of all time, yet a fact that can be accepted by the simplest.

"I Have Overcome the World"

The third cheer sounds as though all the bugles are blowing: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." One way you look at it, the life of Jesus seems like a tragic defeat; that is, if you look at it at the time of His saying this statement. His friends deserted Him: those whom He fed on the mountain had gone back to their small talk and petty grievances; all the bright talk of a kingdom coming in their day seemed vaguely remote. His own pastel optimism seemed to mire up in the morose preoccupation about dying, and toward the end He was treated as a common criminal.

Now, in what sense is that overcoming the world? Wherein does victory lie there? Who succeeded: Jesus or Pilate? Ah, take a look now: if for no other reason, let your hindsight point up the

easy answer. Jesus was no blind fate-ridden dreamer who walked into a Roman trap. His was the calm, deliberate conviction that life is conquered through suffering, through sacrificial dying. In the supreme act of giving Himself, He overcame the whole world. It is that simple; it is that complex.

But what injustice we do Him when we forget that while He was God, He was also man: man in the human sense of flesh and blood, subject to the same type of temptations that we are. If that is not the case, then victory He won and the muscles developed in the winning are of little help to us.

Overcoming the world means that He wrestled with all the senses, the bid of lust for the body, the bid of mammon for the soul, the bid of humanism for the mind: all these were very real and He fought them out and won! He came into the world with His eyes wide open, predestined to do nothing but to be free—and to die if He so chose to do so. Every major force that bids for man's allegiance entered the arena of His life and played it out to the end. Not dodging a one of them, He fought in the power of His God. He died the way He lived—like a man. Not even his fiercest enemies accused Him of one trace of cowardice. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

UNIQUE WISDOM: SOUL WINNING

JANUARY 26, 1958

(Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20)

If, by some strange stroke of magic Jesus walked into your room right now, what would He say? or do? or think? What would be your reaction? Would you want to ask Him if certain loved ones go to heaven or what He had in mind for your life? If He had but a minute to stay and could say only one thing, no doubt it would sound like this:

"You go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

At least, that is what He said just before He left. That we have largely ignored these words is beyond argument. What,