

The Church as a Team

The story is told of a horse pull where one horse pulled 9,000 pounds, and another pulled 8,000 pounds. Together you would expect them to pull 17,000 pounds. Not so! When teamed together they pulled 30,000 pounds.

The principle is called “synergism.” By definition, the simultaneous actions of separate agents working together have a greater total effect than the sum of their individual efforts. More can be done in a team effort than can be accomplished solo. In order for the principle of synergism to work like it should there has to be team work.

Everything we do takes teamwork and trust. Every person in the local church is valuable and needed. The church is a team and together we can build for the Lord.

“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Corinthians 12:27)

- Selected

Thinking About the Devil at Work

The Bible never treats the devil lightly. He is active with goals in mind as he “walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8), with much work in misleading religion through false “apostles of Christ” and false “ministers of righteousness” and himself as “an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Paul warns us that we can help him. When “angry” in an controlled “wrath” we “give place to the devil,” opening a door to our lives (Eph. 4:26-27). When the immoral man at Corinth repented, the church had to forgive him, “lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:7-11).

It looks like the devil has four working goals. He wants us lost as his ultimate goal, yes, but we’re talking about ideas at work while here on the earth, what his schemes are for reaching that ultimate goal. Here are some suggestions.

- **He wants to keep us away from the Bible, or separate us from the Bible.** In the parable of the sower (Mk. 4), Jesus explains “Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts” (15).
- **If he can’t keep us from the Bible, he wants to keep us out of the church,** because in the church God “has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Col. 1:13).
- **If he can’t keep us out of the church, he wants us to leave it for sin,** “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world...they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning” (2 Pet. 2:20).
- **If he can’t get us to leave the church for sin, he wants us to stay in it and be halfhearted,** since Jesus tells us, “Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:15).

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James. 4:6-8).

- by Bob Hines

Pleasant Words

“Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.” Proverbs 16:24

This passage shows the effect that pleasant words have to a person. It is as if the words sink deeply within. They are sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. Cold weather often makes our bones ache. Stress and hard work can make us "bone tired." We have learned that calcium can strengthen our bones. But in this passage, the writer is not talking about literal bones or literal healings, but the positive effect that good words have deep within us.

There is a difference from pleasant words and flattery. Pleasant words are true, sincere and genuine. Flattery is often artificial, self seeking and doesn't do much other than swell the head.

Notice today how many pleasant words you hear. I think you'll find that a typical day is void of many pleasant words. Look for ways to give pleasant words, especially to family and brethren. Once you have tasted of the sweetness of pleasant words you want others to enjoy it as well. The compliment, the words of gratitude and appreciation, and even words of forgiveness all fall under the category of pleasant words.

Paul talked about "words fitly spoken" - he may have had "pleasant words" in mind when he wrote that! I think of Barnabas, who the apostles called the "son of encouragement." He must have been one of pleasant words.

- by Roger Shouse

The Mark of The Beast

Many people are confused and disturbed by the various signs and symbols used in the Book of Revelation. Numerous self-proclaimed 'prophecy experts' add to the confusion with their erroneous interpretations which suggest that current world events are the fulfillment of the things discussed in Revelation.

Students of this important book in the New Testament should always remember the important 'keys' to understanding which are expressed in the very first verse. It clearly states that "things which must shortly come to pass" are under consideration, and these are "signified" (spoken in signs by use of symbolic language) in the book.

Many have tried to decipher the "mark of the beast" which is mentioned several times in the final chapters of Revelation. Here's what seems clear:

- The "beast" was a representation of agents that Satan ("the dragon") was using to persecute Christians.
- Those who worshipped the beast and received his mark were the ones who aligned with those evil forces that were opposing God and His people.
- Some have speculated that those who received the "mark of the beast" on their hand were the ones who compromised with these opposing forces for their own safety and prosperity. They might not have really accepted the worship of the beast 'in their head,' but they outwardly complied for convenience sake. But, those who received the mark on their forehead were the ones who were fully accepting of everything these evil forces were doing.
- The promise of God was that anyone who united with these forces that were opposing the Lord and persecuting His saints would "drink of the wine of the wrath of God" (14:10).

The "mark of the beast" is not something that is happening in the world today. But, of course, it is still true that those who oppose God will pay an eternal price for their rebellion.

- by Greg Gwin