

## **“BE STRONG IN THE LORD”**

(Discourse given at the Fort Collins Convention on Aug. 9, 1974 by Edward G. Lorenz.)

My brethren, “Be strong in the Lord!” This is the theme of today’s convention program as it is found in the text of Joshua 1:9. It was God who commanded the faithful prophet Joshua, “Be strong and of good courage: be not afraid.” We believe, brethren, the same command is given to us and by the same loving God who is concerned about our progress in our journey toward Zion.

Our lesson today is intended to examine some of the ingredients of our faith structure, and to suggest some tests whereby we may prove if we are actually “strong in the Lord.” We each have come to recognize that our Heavenly Father, in placing before us a set of commands or instructions will also follow through with the necessary tests to see if His commands or instructions are actually being followed or are they being ignored.

In considering our characters as New Creatures, we may remember the scriptures give many descriptive terms for the facets of character, such as, peace, joy, love, patience, long suffering, kindness, meekness, and other expressions. These are the lovely colors of character which we all seek and enjoy. But God, in speaking to Joshua never considered one of them, but took another side of character that at times must be as dominate and as aggressive in its action as the other hues of character. As our lesson unfolds we will learn that the survival of the true church as has been presented in its faithful overcomers has been mainly dependent upon a faith of strong courage in the Lord and a course of obedient action that pleased the Lord. With each of the prophets of old we may find such characters.

Many of the thoughts of this lesson were gained from the writings of the Pastor in Reprint 3199. This following statement helped to frame the purpose of the lesson. We quote, “At no time in the church’s history has our adversary been so active in multiplying false doctrines and in diverting attention from the Truth.” This article was written in June 1903. Let us give this statement some serious thought. Let me repeat it, “At no time in the church’s history has our adversary been so active in multiplying false doctrines and in diverting attention from the Truth.” The surprising thing about this statement is the time of the statement and the events that were to be found among the brethren at that time. The work of the Harvest was beginning to grow into a great movement in the earth. Bro. Russell was in prime of health and vigor and the classes were growing everywhere. The pilgrim service provided sound teachers for classes across the land. Classes with elders who could be guided by the five volumes of the Pastor and the monthly sound advice of the Watch Towers could be found. In addition, no one needed to have an unanswered question upon any doctrine or scripture question, as the office of Bro. Russell was open to receive any mail to which a proper reply would be sent. With the Faithful Shepherd of

the church, Bro. Russell on hand, we wonder how it was possible for the adversary to make such strong inroads of deception upon the brethren at that time. But we must accept the warning of the Pastor and conclude that it was so—even in his day of strong counsel. From the very suggestion of the Pastor in the quoted statement, it must imply that to survive the test of that day, and following it would require brethren who were “strong in the Lord.”

The Apostle Paul, in the conclusion of his wonderful letter to the Ephesian brethren (whom he dearly loved, including the faithful elder of that class—Brother Timothy) stated, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” (Eph. 6:10) Then the Apostle tells us the reason for such advice. Following texts point out the true battle of the brethren against the powers of Satan and his agents. This is in addition to the battle against the flesh. Why would Bro. Russell conclude that the test against false doctrines would be greater in 1903 than in the year 65 or so? Particularly when all the brethren in 1903 could read, could own a complete Bible, plus all the helps (called “meat in due season”) provided by the return of the Lord? No doubt because the brethren had begun to weaken their defense of the Truth and became lax in the treatment of brethren bearing false doctrines and standards of righteousness.

Our lesson today, brethren will be built around the theme of 1 Cor. 16:13. This too, is a summation text as the Apostle Paul is drawing to a close the outstanding letter of strong doctrines of 1st Corinthians. The text reads, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” In this verse we have four bold, vigorous, forceful, energetic elements of character which will need to be found in every faithful overcomer of the Gospel age. But Paul adds, let all your things be done with charity or love.

Let us consider the first element of “watch ye.” We believe it is a proper statement that the degree to which we faithfully watch and are moved by that which we observe, may determine the measure of our reward. Watching has been one of the principal tests of the Harvest period. It began with our Lord’s own statement concerning Satan: “But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.” (Matt. 24:43) Our Lord’s statement tells us that Satan had the mastery over the heavens of this earth—so much so that had he foreknowledge of our Lord’s return he could have prevented entry into his house. Our Lord had to enter as a thief, set up His power as King, and then cast out Satan. So our Lord places the element of watching as a prime test of the Harvest. So secret was the time of our Lord’s return that faithful brethren during past centuries, like Wycliffe, Luther, Miller and even Russell prior to 1874, did not know the time of the Lord’s return. Had our Lord informed one or all of these brethren, the chance would be that Satan then could learn from them and delay or prevent our Lord’s return. So today, brethren, when we are told to watch and know what to expect we

should be very appreciative of the Lord's favor. This information could be withheld from us.

We recall the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins of Matthew 25. The main test of that parable was one of watching and doing something about what was observed. The manner of awakening to the sound of the Lord's return and then with filled lamps heralding the Bridegroom's presence. The world's estimate is that there are 800 millions of Christians. How many are awake? Only handfuls scattered in a few areas of the earth—which we call brethren of the Harvest call. Consider the final hours of our Master with His eleven brethren. The account of Matt. 26:36-45 could be read with profit, but time does not now permit. However, consider the lesson of the three times the Lord came to His own brethren at a time most vital in His final hours on earth. In V. 38 our Master stated, "Tarry ye here, and watch with me." Then he soon returned and stated, addressing himself to Peter: "What could ye not watch with me one hour?" Then we recall he left and returned the second time to again find them asleep. Again he left and returned the third time and said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest" as found in the King James translation. This would suggest that after all the Lord knew His brethren were tired and He suggested that they enjoy their sleep. If this were true it would have defeated the very purpose of the test. Too, it would have condoned sleep against being awake at other times for the church in later years. So in the Diaglott we read this text: "Do you sleep now, and take your rest?" This is a strong reprimand by the Master and stands as a lesson on watchfulness. You ask was it not unfair for the Lord to demand so much from His brethren at that time? We answer—our Lord would not give a test unless the brethren under the test could endure and be victors in the experience. No! it was not unfair for the Lord to have demanded that His brethren be awake, because with great care He had outlined all the events of His death, and its time. Notice the account of Matt. 16:21, "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and He would be raised again the third day." If my calculations are correct the disciples could have spent 30,720 possible hours with the Master during His ministry. Was it now asking too much for them to be awake during His final hours with them? What about our own faith structure in Present Truth—how many hours have you spent with the Master? and how many hours has He spent with you? Is it asking too much for us today to be fully awake during the final Gethsemane tests of the Church? Should any of the Lord's called be in ignorance of any feature of the time in which we live and the purpose of the Church at this time? We think not.

The Apostle gave us another aspect of watching, showing our need of being reminded. In Acts 20:28-31 the Apostle was bidding farewell to his loved brethren—elders of the class or church at Ephesus. Among the elders was his loved son, in the Lord—Timothy, that no doubt in the mind of Paul, was to remain a strong servant to the brethren after Paul's passing. He had reminded the brethren in his farewell message that he knew his passing

would permit great errors to come in among the brethren, and these errors, strangely, were to come from among those posing as brethren. Then Paul came to the point for this lesson: “Therefore, watch and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” Paul as a faithful Apostle and Elder “watched” over the spiritual welfare of His brethren. Then this leads to another text along this line. Heb. 13:17: “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.” In Rotherham we read, “But yielding unto them who are guiding you and submit yourselves: for they are watching over your souls as having an account to render.” This is evidently designed as special advice to the Elders in the church and those who are subject to these elders. So in this text concerning watching, we find three who are to be concerned: first, the brethren of the class as endeavoring to learn from the appointed elders; second, the Elders are charged with being watchers over the brethren of their class; third, is the Heavenly Father.

My fellow elders—concern yourselves with this text! Your life before the Lord, and my life are on display before the Father. The manner in which we care for the spiritual life of our brethren will be the manner in which we may be judged as to our faithfulness. This is why we read in James 3:1, “My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.” We recall that God placed watchmen in Israel to warn the people of an attack of an enemy. Should the watchman fail to warn and any one of Israel lost life through this failure, the life of the watchman was required. This is the same principle the Lord uses concerning your care and my care as an elder. The text is Ezek. 33:1-7 suggesting this principle. Now, fellow elders, think with me. How has all the error been permitted to come in among us over the past decade or so? Who has failed? We believe that it might be fairly accurate to state that probably more spiritual lives have been lost through errors and false practices during the period of the Harvest (and particularly since the days of Bro. Russell) than were lost through the heavy trials of the dark ages. I think of an experience within my knowledge. About 1925 or so, my father who had been appointed by Rutherford as Bible House representative on the West Coast was removed by church trial from his services as elder and representative because he had boldly stated that error was coming in the Towers and that the spirit of the Lord was being removed by false teachings. At that time, as I recall my father stating, there were about 40 elders and deacons in a class of about 1200 brethren. What effect did the church trial have, and what effect from the clear evidence that the teachings of the Pastor were being set aside, in favor of a great organization? There was very little effect. Over the years, only, two of those 40 or so brethren finally left the Society; and of the 1200, a small class of 35 or so was formed. So we are never surprised when error and false teachings fail to move brethren into strong positions for the Lord. Let us think about the toil of the Apostle Paul in behalf of the church of Ephesus, and of his love for Timothy. What happened to the brethren of that class after the death of the Apostle and of Timothy? The account of Rev. 2:1-4 tells the tragedy—in a few years they lost their “first love!”

So the test for you my fellow elders: Would you knowingly endorse, encourage any brother to serve brethren over which the Lord has made you an overseer, who you personally know does not fully agree with the Harvest Message or the entire writings of the Pastor? Should you permit “out of love,” a brother to serve your class or convention who you know finds disagreement with any of the Volumes? If one of your class accepts the “new light” and is finally led into error, are you not, before the Lord, accountable for the life of that brother or sister? I believe this to be the meaning of Heb. 13:17—and I place this charge or responsibility for my brethren upon my own heart, by the Lord’s grace. We may use an example. Supposing you were asked by a wealthy rancher to be a guardian over his very special flock of sheep and lambs while he left for a trip. Before leaving he gave only one bit of advice—the back country had many wild animals and they may make an effort to break through the fences to kill the sheep. The rancher stated, I want you to watch the fences. As time passed and you became careless about watching and mending the fences, and a wolf came through a hole in the fence and killed a lamb—who would be held responsible? The answer is obvious. And the lesson to us as elders is obvious. And remember we are not dealing with dumb sheep, but with the lives of brethren called of the Lord.

Then the Apostle, in our Golden or Theme text of 1 Cor. 16:13 adds the next element of our character structure by stating, “Stand fast in the faith.” We have each learned that millions of people profess to have faith; but how few have “THE FAITH” in the land. We have learned that scriptural faith is an established belief, directing a course of action in harmony with the will and purpose of God. Another lesson I recall from the early period, with my parents and at the time of the beginning of false teachings after the death of Bro. Russell; and after my parents were excommunicated from the class, about 1925 (because of their strong position for the Truth) was a visit they made with an elder who had withdrawn from the class. I still recall the greeting my dad received when the brother opened his door. He stated, “you may talk about anything but the Bible and the Kingdom.” I still recall my personal immediate reaction—it was a question in my mind—how could anyone, who had possessed a grounded faith upon the Truth, turn completely around, within the space of a year or less? Later in life, I have learned that not all brethren actually possess an established faith in the doctrines of the Truth. If they did then we would not find so many completely reversing their position upon certain doctrines so clearly taught in the Scriptures, as fully outlined in the writings of the Pastor.

Let us consider some scriptures along this line. In 2 Tim. 1:13 we find Paul’s conviction in these words, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” Then follows chapter 2, V. 2, “and the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” Then chapter 3, V. 14, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned

them.” Then in chapter 3, Vs. 3 and 4 Paul gives a sober warning that endures to this our day, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned into fables.” Let us pause here a moment to consider these texts. Remember the Apostle had no previous church history to guide him in his use of strong language. He did state a very, very important point concerning the dealing of the Lord with His own children. A point that sometimes we may overlook—in each of these texts. Paul referred to the fact that Timothy and others were to abide by the teachings which they had been taught. In other words, before our test of “standing fast” can take place, we must be placed in a position upon which such faith can be tested. Our Lord is not testing the faith of those in Babylon or the Scripturally unlearned. Paul suggests that our loving God will first teach his called ones in the paths of Truth and righteousness. Then come the trials to see if we will deflect. With all this in mind we can understand why our returned Lord was most careful in the selection of a strong teacher in the end of the age, whose writings would be both clear and understandable and fully in harmony with revealed scripture for the end of the age. This brings to mind Isa. 54:13, “all thy children shall be taught of God.”

Let us inquire as to the “standing fast”—faith of Bro. Russell. Did the passing of 40 years or so cause him to change his mind upon the features of the Divine Plan of the Ages chart? Did his years of constant study and the changing world about him make him conclude that certain portions of Volumes 2, 3 and 4 should be rewritten or taken out of print? Well, we have the printed testimony so we need not question. Bro. Russell stood fast to his faith in the basic truths of the end of the age, and this record is found in the first paragraph of the first Tower article of July, 1879: “This is the first number of Zion’s Watch Tower and it may not be amiss to state the object of its publication. That we are living in the last days—the day of the Lord—the end of the Gospel Age and consequently in the dawn of the new age, are facts not only discernable by the close student of the Word, led by His spirit, but the outward signs recognizable by the world, bear the same testimony, and we are desirous that the household of faith be fully awake.” But what about 37 years later in 1916? Did he no longer believe in the overlapping of the ages, no longer believe we were in the Dawn of the new age? The last sermon he prepared for his brethren was spoken by another during the days of his funeral. The article is found on Reprint page 6013. The article is long so I will quote only a few lines to show that Bro. Russell possessed an unmovable faith as he had established it upon the clear testimony of scripture and needed no updating or forgetting. We quote, “Let us not stop now to discuss the darkness of the night and its weeping. Let us awake, and take note of the fact that the dawning of the new age is already here. For the past 42 years we have been in it and enjoying many of its blessings. But those blessings came so stealthily—like a thief in the night—that few recognize their import. Some few have been calling attention to the fact that we have been in the Millennial Dawn since 1874.”

Brethren, can we not have faith in the writings of the Pastor—unmovable faith during all the trials of the Harvest, and all the attacks by false brethren? Our Pastor, like Paul could say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim. 4:7) As we ponder the many “new thoughts” of the last few years, we wonder what some brethren have been doing the last few decades—concerning their study of the Truth? Had they made the Truth their own, they could not so easily cast aside the strong presentations in the Volumes and accepted human reasoning instead.

We now come to the third element of our character structure. Again we find a powerful force for brethren of strong faith in the Lord. The apostle adds, “Quit ye like men.” The Diaglott reads “be manly.” Other translations read, “Be courageous,” or “Play the Man.” (This last by Moffatt.) Each rendering suggests a positive, aggressive position in our battle for the Lord. It is interesting to note where the Apostle Paul seems to borrow this expression, as it is the only one like it in his writings. In 1 Sam. 4:9 we find an appeal is made by the leaders of the Philistines to not be afraid of the God of Israel and the army of Israel. These are the words—“Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines—that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men and fight.” The account then tells us that they did battle the army of Israel and the Philistines were successful. Thus the Apostle has taken a very fixed battle command for this portion of our text: a battle command that led to victory. Now how do we apply this battle command to our lives?

There must come a time in the life of each child of the Lord when he reaches maturity—if he is going to be victorious. Full maturity is to be fully “manly”—fully equipped for the issues of life. Thus in Ephesians 4:13 we find this very thought: “Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect [mature] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Then he adds, “that we henceforth be no longer children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” My, how wonderfully correct was the Apostle in drawing our attention to the fact that brethren were to be like stone fortresses—against the winds of false teachings, rather than be like dried leaves scattered across the fields by winds from any direction. This thought should be a challenge to any of us concerning our present faith—is it well grounded? or are we finding ourselves in disagreement with the things we once held?

In our Golden text (1 Cor. 16:13) we notice how some scriptures previous, the Apostle has concluded one of the strongest doctrines of Present Truth—in the words, “we shall not all sleep” but “we shall all be changed”—“therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” This denotes fully matured Christians of rich abounding and lasting faith. Yet today, in our midst, we find even the teaching of the “raising of the sleeping saints” an item of dispute and doubt. These things should not be.

Our Lord had clear and accurate knowledge concerning the trials that must come upon the Lord's people during the Gospel age to try them and to develop them. In Matt. 10:36 onward we find it clearly stated that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household." In other words, do not expect that the real enemies to your faith structure to be from without, but from within the household of faith. Sometimes we may forget to watch the proper areas from where our deceptions will come.

In my experience with our brethren, I sometimes find that there is a lack of full understanding of why our loving God permits such severe trials to develop amongst us. Too, I find, there is a lack of application of present tests to our work in the Kingdom. For example, in 1 John 5:16 the Apostle suggests that we may see our brother sin a sin which is not unto death and states, "he shall ask, and he shall give him life for those that sin not unto death." Now this is Kingdom work for the faithful church—to give life to the world; but the Apostle states that we should practice it now. Not that we can actually give life—but now the Heavenly Father can see our prayers and assistance to one of our brethren—and the Lord like Moses to Israel, can use us to help our brother in his re- standing. So other trials or tests are now permitted to come to us to see how we will deal with like problems in the Kingdom. The test to Adam was to learn to distinguish between good and evil. In principle this too is our test. The world in their day of visitation will have the same test. The faithful church will be the administrators of the test to bring mankind to choose the good and reject the evil. But what are we doing now with this principle? How do we treat error, and those who advance wrong teachings? Do we in "love" permit it in our class or permit outside brethren to serve who we know are not fully in agreement with Present Truth? If we do it now, it can only mean in the sight of the Lord that if granted the same opportunity in the Kingdom we would also tolerate wrong practice or teachings. This is the test brethren, and we must understand this. Today, is when we are showing the Lord our works for tomorrow. But if we fail now—we will not have another opportunity to prove that we would do differently. I am certain, my brethren, you are thinking of the seriousness of our present course of action and our attitudes respecting the will of the Lord.

In the study of this third element of our strong character ("Quit ye like men"), we recognize that we must become full grown, full stature if we expect to share the reward for the loyal and brave of heart. Of our Lord it was prophesied, "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good." Now we realize in this text of Isa. 7:15 it did not mean that our Lord had to decide whether it was wrong to steal or to injure another; of course not! Our Lord's trials and testings were on a much higher plane—those which would eternally affect His spirit begotten life. He had to learn to refuse the evil religious practices of His day—the false teachings of men and act in accordance with the teachings of God. He had to choose between good and evil doctrines or teachings. So with our tests. Have we learned as grown adults in Christ to refuse all

false teachings and not parley with those who downgrade Bro. Russell and his writings (since his writings are the only teachings of the returned Lord apparent to us).

Now may we turn to the fourth element of our text—“be strong.” We will notice that all these elements of character blend together and combined make a whole. As with any single aspect of character, the only way in which it can be determined as existing is to see it in action. So! how will the Lord prove us to see if we are actually “strong in the Lord”? Simple!—by permitting wrong conditions to arise that could injure our spiritual life or that of our brethren, and then noting if our strength of character will arise and be strong enough to do something about those conditions. Somehow we seem to hold the thought at times that the trials must be as great storm clouds in order to test us. When, I believe, most of our testings are over seemingly very small matters. Just consider the test in Eden. Really was it not a small thing? The question of taking or not taking a small piece of fruit—that was all the Lord needed to see the direction of Adam’s mind. So with us—the little pieces of fruit, as it were, may make us fit for the Kingdom or unfit.

Our Lord, in looking down the corridor of time to our day, knew that brethren living during the period of the last church (Laodicea) were going to experience a great trial to their fully overcoming. Our Lord knew the spirit of the world would have its effect upon the brethren; so He wrote through John to us—“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.” Rev. 3:15.

Over the last few decades we have witnessed the course of the nominal heavens in which a complete compromise of scriptural teachings is sought under the banner of unity and love. The adversary has found the same trap effective among the brethren since the 1916 period—and it is still in use. At a recent convention one of the brethren asked me, “do these various views of doctrines really make a difference?” To some the answer would be “No!” To your speaker the reply is a most definite “Yes!” Doctrines do make a difference. An important difference between ourselves and Babylon is doctrine. Our Lord at His return restored the full harmony of Truth in order to find a sanctified class of brethren set apart by Truth from all other religious people on earth.

How firm was our Lord in character. Note with me Isa. 50:7, “For the Lord God will help me: therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.” Do you find any spirit of compromise in this description of the Master? Would you not say that He was “strong in the Lord?” Of course! And can we afford to be less?

Some time ago when I found it necessary to separate from a class whose doctrinal position I could not endure, one of the brethren came to me to state that “he was going to follow the middle road” in these matters. My reply, as I recall it was, “The scriptures

speak of the highway for the world, the present broad road to destruction and of the narrow way. These are the only three scriptural ways—unless you refer to the text ‘there is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof is the ways of death.’”

Sometimes the Lord permits us to learn from the children of this world. We recall Luke 16:8 where our Lord gave a good lesson from which at times we may profit. His words were, “for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.” Of course our Lord did not mean in all things; but at times they can even detect class problems better than the elders and the members of a class. I have found it so. While on a plane to a recent convention I chose the Time magazine for a quick review of world events. It was the July 1, 1974 issue and my attention was directed to an article called, “The trouble with being in the middle.” At that time I was working on this lesson so this article provided added proof that our logic was correct as the principles suggested in the article fit exactly into the Bible Student movement of the last two decades, more than some years previously. So brethren, I copied word for word, certain portions of the article and will read them to you. As I read, think with me brethren, THINK, THINK! Remember this article was written concerning the political stage of the last three presidencies of the United States; but the reasoning fits the trials of the brethren in our day. The article was quite long, so only a few sentences have been selected and I will read them to you. I quote: “The middle is generally agreed is the right place to be. To the Greeks, moral wisdom was considered to be in the golden mean or center. The poet Robert Frost, growing impatient with Eisenhower’s repeated middle of the road metaphor, complained that the middle of the road is where the white line is—and that’s the worst place to drive. Middle leads naturally to mediocre, a word taking its roots from what is middling and therefore ordinary. It also adds to the confusion about just what the middle stands for. But confusion is already there inherent in middleness.”

We continue to quote: “Intellectually, the middle encourages a convenient fussiness of attitude, for it defines itself by letting others declare the extremes that it will compromise between. Smugness is the peculiar vice of the middle, the hardest of all qualities for anyone to check in himself. A person wanting to be understood as common sensible and doctrinaire will describe himself or herself complacently as middle of the road.”

We quote further: “The middle is thus the natural hiding place for the uninvolved. It includes in its domain hordes of the indifferent, who call themselves tolerant, and the uncaring, who think themselves pragmatic and flexible. Such people are apt to congratulate themselves on being superior to those who strive, who get worked up, who agitate for causes, who make demands and air grievances and who disturb the public tranquility. They, the middle of the road class, may think themselves the backbone of society and the ultimate arbiters of change, but history is apt to judge them differently. For change comes from those who care, who propose and agitate.”

My, oh, my, brethren! Is this not an exact lesson for each of us? I wish I had time to repeat the whole reading—but did you notice where the author suggests the real fuzziness of understanding lies—with those who chose the middle of the road!

Now brethren, be ye strong! Follow the path the Master trod—where the truth was at stake, our Lord died to protect. If we are unwilling to die for the Truth of God’s Divine Plan of the Ages and all its harmony, we actually do not possess the spirit of the Truth. Be strong, my brethren—the reward is worth the battle.

We quote a thought from Reprint 3200, and no doubt all have read this before, “There is among Christians today a great lack of established faith on any doctrine. They say, I think, I hope, or perhaps it may be so, but this is only my opinion, etc. But of Paul, he was a plain uncompromising teacher. When he knew he had the truth, he spoke it with confidence and boldly declared everything contrary to it was false doctrine, and taught his disciples that it was not only their privilege, but their duty also.” Therefore, my brethren, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong,” and do each of these in love for one another.

And finally, brethren, a summary lesson which we may apply to ourselves whether we be elders or not. From this lesson we may determine whether we are actually “strong in the Lord.” We have in mind Rev. 18:4: “And I heard another voice from heaven saying, Come out of her my people, that you partake not of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” We who appreciate the Harvest period beginning at the time of the Lord’s return in 1874 have come to apply this text to the early years of the Harvest. In fact, when the Truth movement first began around 1874 onward, and the influence of the writings of Bro. Russell began to be felt by the nominal church systems. Those who were awake and seeking the truth left their church affiliations and joined themselves to other brethren of like minds and the classes began across the country and overseas. Then the call by tract, by sermons and by other means was, “Come out of her my people.” Some of us who are second, third or even fourth generation Bible Students can thank our forefathers or foremothers that they manifested enough strength in the Lord to leave friends, old pastors, members of their families to follow the Lord in the light of Present Truth. We may forget that it did take great faith and confidence in the Lord and in His Word of truth to pay the price of ostracism—to be the only one in a little town in that time—who, by the Scriptures, could prove their relationship to the Lord and who could declare that the local ministers and church members were wrong in their teachings and practices. Some of, including myself, never had to come out of the Lutheran, Baptist, Catholic or other denominations, to prove that we counted Truth and the Lord’s will above our close friends family, job or other things. So, may I ask you each a question, my brethren—would you have left your nice comfortable church, with a very respected kindly minister, where your neighbors and family so enjoyed singing hymns of praise together each Sunday morning—just because the minister now and then gave thanks that

we have believed on Jesus and were saved and need not fear the torment of hell for the unsaved? Would you have left over this teaching? Would you? Would you have left over the teaching that our soul being immortal could not die, and thus at death must either be rewarded or punished forever? Would you have left because of this doctrinal error? Would you? Of course, we would each cry out—we would have left if these teachings, contrary to the scriptures were taught in our midst, and we could not correct the source of teaching!

But brethren, do you suppose the Lord intended the value of the test of Rev. 18:4 to end, say in the middle of the Harvest period or when the general call ceased? No, I do not think the purpose of this text ceased when the general call ended early in the Harvest period. You ask, why do you so believe? Because the Lord has permitted many new Babylon conditions to come along in the heart of the Truth movement since 1881. Many new cries, “come out of her my people” have been necessary. Recall this lesson began with a quotation from Bro. Russell in these words, “At no time in the church’s history has our adversary been so active in multiplying false doctrines and in diverting attention from the truth.” So, it is very evident that as soon as the Lord brought an end to the earthly ministry of Bro. Russell—who was in charge of all the Lord’s goods—confusion, errors, wrong spirit and the Babylonian spirit developed in the heart of certain brethren, who a few years earlier were loyal to the teachings of the Pastor.

Because of the deviations of the Society, it was necessary again—“come out of her my people” a repeat of the test of 1881. What did some of you do at that time? Why you recognized the errors and digressions from the writings of the Pastor, and you “came out”—you left old friends, class leaders of many years, creating broken home conditions—but you left another Babylon condition. Was it easy? No more than had they left the old church of their parents and friends in 1876 or onward.

So, what is the test of our faith and character today?—to determine if we place the love of the Lord and His Truth above anything else. And how easy it is for the Lord to prove us along this line. All that is required is to permit the slow development of false teachings to come into our midst and then check our reaction. No doubt it is apparent to all of us, that if today we see error, or teachings that set aside all or part of the writings of the Pastor—and we continue in such a spiritual atmosphere—we give evidence to the Lord that we prefer “Christian congeniality” to paying the price of supporting His Word of Truth. If we are to meet the test successfully we must be “strong in the Lord.”

There is a difference between the errors of the early days of the Harvest (from which our brethren left, as they heard the voice—“come out of her my people”) and the errors of today. The denominational ministers of that early period, who taught the various errors of their organizations, never had the Truth, and were not responsible to the same degree, as our leaders today. Our religious leaders have had the Truth and have been thoroughly

enlightened. But now, some of them no longer hold to Volumes II, III and IV, and declare this publicly. Their responsibility is very great indeed.

So, my brethren, “be strong in the Lord,” and by the Lord’s grace give proof of your strength.

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Question 83.—What led Cain and Abel to bring offerings to the Lord, and what was done with them?

Answer.—I do not know whether the Lord told them that they should bring such offerings to the Lord or not. If God had not told them in so many words, we may reason that he told them in some other way. God’s law was originally written in their hearts. They had at the top of their heads the organ of veneration which may have said to them, You ought to worship the great God who made the universe, you ought to bring something which would represent your desire to be in harmony with Him. This may have been the only thing, or He may have told them directly and definitely. But when they came with their offerings, and when they found that one was accepted and the other was not, Cain, finding that his was not acceptable, should have promptly withdrawn and gone and gotten one that was acceptable. He should have said, Abel, I see that God has accepted your sacrifice and not mine, I will trade with you. Give me the finest animals you have and I will exchange for it all the fruit of the ground that I have. Then the Lord would have had respect for his offering. God wanted to teach that the only way in which divine justice would be propitiated would be by the sacrifice of a life. God thus early began to give experimentally an observation lesson that a Saviour would be at the cost of the life forfeited—the “Lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world.” Cain’s manner shows that he did not have the proper respect for God.

—1909 Convention report, page 122.