

DATE: August 2, 1970

SUBJECT: "My BUDDY THE TIGER"

Tiphus was a friend of the apostle Paul. The two of them became hard workers in the church, spreading the gospel and building churches throughout the world of that day. As they moved around from place to place there came the day when Paul left Silus at Crete. Silus like many of us wanted to be at the center of things. He had rather had been at Rome than at other place because that's where the excitement was. But he was at Crete. Here he felt that he was shut off from the mainstream of life. That nothing significant would ever occur here. In one of those low moments he wrote a letter to Paul and he begged, "Is there not some other place that I might go." Why have you left me here in this place, I can't see that anything really worthwhile can really be accomplished, is there some other place to which I might go. Paul wrote a letter back reminding him of all the things yet to be done, the challenges that were always before him and he concluded with these words, "Now Titus remember it's not where you live, but how."

The other day I took my children to the attraction "The Land of Oz," at nearby Beech Mountain, North Carolina. Here an entertainment center developed around the Land of Oz. At the center was a bust of Dorothy, the heroine of the story. Beneath the bust was a brass plate on which these words were engraved. "Never again will I search for happiness beyond my own back yard. For if I can't find it there, it was never lost." We find ourselves in that predicament, taking longing glances into other places, other circumstances, other conditions, dreaming dreams that will not materialize where we are but somehow remain fragmentary if only we can get to that place. If we could only break the bond of the circumstances we are in at the moment and if conditions would mold according to our own needs and wishes, then we could find those illusive characteristics of life that men yearn for but have not yet found. Oftentimes, we wake up in Crete wishing we were in Rome.

Oftentimes, we are in Crete in our vocations. I have a friend who went to college preparing for a vocation that at that moment he thought that was what he wanted to do with his life. He spent the long years in preparation, moved out into his profession and gave many years of his life to the performance of that profession, only to realize that this was not where he belonged. Now there was another profession that was attractive to him, he wished that he had prepared for that vocation. But in those insuing years he had taken a wife, reared a family and not his responsibilities were too great, his finances were too reserve to begin all over again. To him every day is a dread now spending the days doing the thing that now has soured in his life. Unable to get out of the bonds of his vocation. How many times that story can be repeated in the lives of so many others. Not only those who have chosen the wrong field but those who by necessity have been projected into a field that is not his own and the things to which he gives the major portion of his time it the thing that he dislikes. He finds himself vocationally in Crete. We awaken to find that our environment is Crete.

It may be a geographical environment. There are places that are less desirable than other places and we are forced to go there. There's a portion of our annual conference that is somewhat less desirable than the major part of our conference. The standard of living is considerably lower, the cultural opportunities are limited. Geographically it's rather unattractive as compared to other regions of our conference. It's a standing joke among young seminarians in seminary as to their appointment and each one dreads the possibility that when his appointment is read his name will be linked to one of those places. My first appointment in seminary put me in the middle. It was ~~an appointment~~ a pulpit that a few years before I went there the minister stood up on his first Sunday and said all my life I have prayed that I would never be sent to one of these places. It turned out to be one of the most delightful periods of my memory. Sometimes our environment become our Crete.

Perhaps it's a racial environment. Perhaps there we find ourselves imprisoned racially. Realizing that we have not yet reached that level of life where each man can compete on his own ability. But there are still prejudices and limitations that some of us are kept at a level lower than what we could really become. In many ways we can awaken to find ourselves environmentally in Crete.

It may be in the realm of relationships. We have become sensitive these days to gaps in relationships. It began popular as a gap between parents and children - a generation gap. But we soon learned that gaps are not restrictive only to age but circumstances as well and we find personality gaps. We find intellectual gaps. Over and over again we find ways in which we are separated from our fellow man, unable to communicate, unable to intertwine our lives meaningfully. We are becoming greater separated from one another. In our environment, oftentimes we feel that we are out of pace with our companions. That our concepts are not popularly held concepts. That our creative forces are not given an opportunity to be expressed. We feel imprisoned environmentally in Crete. But Paul said, when you wake up with that feeling, -remember this, it's not where you live but how.

It amazes us when we discover some of the great men of history. The humble beginnings out of which they came, the poor preparations from which they were forced to launch, their years of service. Yet in spite of it what tremendous giants they have become. One of the great ministers of America died just a few years ago. He was acclaimed as a orator in the pulpit that was unexcelled. Young ministers tried to immitate his thought patterns and his mannerisms. It was a fact that this great preacher never had an opportunity for any formal study in a seminary. He felt all his life that he was less than his fellow man because he had been denied what they had been given. But every day he went to his study and he spent hours heaped upon hours in intense work that the average man was not forced to do. But because of the limitation of his background he was forced to do it and in doing it he excelled. We can find ways to overcome, to project, to excel; when there's that extra ingredient that will enable us to do it and will motivate us to do it.

Thoreau stood at Walden Pond surveyed the world about him, hurdling head-long toward varied goals. He who had withdrawn for a moment to sense this true meaning of life made this observation. We increasingly improve our means toward unimproved goals. How true it is. How necessary it must be for us to find greater ends rather than building so much emphasis upon the means by which we live.

Out of ancient Greece came an art that has never been matched. The living conditions of ancient Greece would horrify us if suddenly we were forced to live in those conditions and circumstances. We pride ourselves today upon our intellectual accuman and we say that we are better educated today than any of our forefathers and in one sense we are, but is there yet a mind to match the mind of those cultured philosophers in Greece and Rome. Whose environment was such, so primitive that poverty today would be considered riches for many. Look at Palestine at the time of Christ. Many lived in little more than hovels. Many hovels were barns and houses combined so that when one slept in the loft there might be cattle beneath. Yet it was in such times as these that a young man, a carpenter by trade, began to speak of eternal truths that would change the whole course of history, that would plant hope in every man's heart. Crete, my words mean, have little meaning at all when we are forced to measure our ends for which we live. We're long on means. Never has any nation of people had such means at their disposal as we have today. Thumb through the latest issue of Sears and Robuck catalogue and you'll find things that can satisfy almost any need that one of us might have - the physical. Thumb through the Yellow Pages of your phone directory and discover all of the services that can be preformed for you to make life meaningful and satisfactory, to bring excellence into the ordinary of life. Thumb through a current college catalogue and study it's circulum, the doors that ajar, beckoning, waiting for any one of us to enter through and become excellent in one field or many fields. Words of wisdom waiting to be consumed by an eager mind. We're long on means, but while we are long on means we are short on happiness.

There's so little happiness to be found in the world about us. We can be in conversation with one another only for a short time until we discover that there are deeper longings and empty places in many of our lives that many times overwhelm those blooming experiences of joy and pleasure. Look into the faces of people as they pass by hurriedly and discover how drawn so many are as though there is no glint of joy. Not the rule but so many in a world where there ought to be so few. Happiness is an illusive characteristic because the priorities that we give in our lives are not those things that bring us peace of mind in the happiness which is spiritual. We're long on means but we are short on security.

Ours is a fragmented world, ours is a fragmented nation. At a time when we want to bring ourselves together in unity of purpose, in unity of philosophy we discover that there is a constant outbreak of alien philosophy and alien viewpoints that tend to overwhelm and destroy. We find minority groups gaining in strength to pit themselves against other minority groups until we become a waring nation. At a time of prosperity and affluence when every man ought to be thankful for such a land, a nation as this we find crime rising. When opportunity for making it own your own is the best that it has ever been, more and more are bent on taking it from other who have made it. Crime is on the increase every year. We're long on means - we are short on security. Even now our minds pin point the middle east and we know that here two nations, each one bent on destroying the other, each one backed by one of the primary nations of the world. Knowing that many historians and scientists have prophecied that if there is another world war it will begin in the Middle East and here the sabers are rumbling today. We're short on security.

We're long on means, but we are short on spiritual power. We have not yet come to the depths of spiritual understanding that we can bring that force into play in our lives that has been promised in the teachings of Christ. Some have stood out from their piers, magnificently arrayed in things spiritual overshadowing those who live only by material things alone. But most of us have not unlocked those resources. We still lean heavily upon the things that we can encompass about us that mark the success of other people's lives. We try to bring into our own, to grand our own, to symbolize success. And all the achievements that are allied with success and all the while it is the spiritual realm where life is really full. It is spiritual power that overwhelms rather than physical power. Too many have learned that lesson and have portrayed their lives to history for us not to believe.

George Washington Carver was born in slavery. A little lad who was soon separated from his parents, sold to someone else to be reared as though he were their child. Yet not being able to enter into a family relationship because of the world into which he was born. Somehow though separated from his parents, separated from the kind of upbringing that most of us want for our children. There was somehow bred in his mind a concept of what life could be. Taking the legal sources that were at his disposal he began to create for himself a mind that was preceptive, an energy that would relate itself in opportunity. He became interested in the world of science and he worked his way through what formal education he could get. He found a laboratory in which he could work. He discovered the peanut among other things. And he began to unlock the mysteries that other men had overlooked. One day while he was earning a good salary he got a call from Tuskegee Institute in Alabama to come there and help train others of his own race in a small school that had been founded by Booker T. Washington. They couldn't promise him a salary, they couldn't even promise him a laboratory, but they could give him a room and he would be on the faculty. It didn't take long to make his decision to go and there he began to work with people, with young people and give to them a vision of what he had done with his life. He excelled so greatly among other scientists of his day that other corporations away began to entice him to come and give his gifts to them. One offer was so great that it overwhelmed his mind. He couldn't conceive of earning the salary that was offered him to come and work in their laboratories. He wrote them a letter back and he said, "I've given my life to helping my race" and he received a letter back saying if you earn over \$100,000 a year think of what you can do with that money to help your race. When he was eeking out a livelihood, confronted with a salary like that. He wrote back, "If I earned that kind of money I might forget the needs of my race." And so he stayed. He had that ingredient of spiritual life that was greater than the ~~spiritual~~ enticement of life.

Charles Stienmetz was another who found that extra ingredient. Born dwarfed, a hump upon his back, grotesque, distorted. He was ashamed to be seen in public. He took a vow as a young man that he would never get married because he didn't want his wife to have to look at him every day grotesque as he was. When he grew to manhood it was discovered that he was a genius, a brilliant mind. He became the most brilliant electrical engineer that has ever been produced. During the years of his manhood, he loved children. He would go out and play with them, he devised games to play. They were never aware of his grotesqueness. They loved him because of the radiance that emanated from him and each day as he returned home

they grouped to meet him. In the classroom it was said that more students crowded into his classroom than any other because of the magnetic truth of this man who unfolded truth in such a way as only he was able to do. He found that ingredient that released the spiritual energy of his life. For he said, he that had achieved so much in the realm of science, said, "that the realm of the spirit is far greater yet unexplored, promises more, than all the achievements of science." Titus found himself in Crete, he wanted to go to places where things could be done. Paul said, "It's not where, It's how." And then he affirmed the conviction of his life and the rule by which he lived. He said, "For me to live is Christ."

We have our Crete many of them. They can consume us, drain our energy, blind our dreams until we are useless. Or they can serve us. They can be apart of our greatness.

A little lad had a recurring nightmare of a tiger that came into his room every night. He woke up crying because he was afraid the tiger was going to eat him up. One day his mother took him to a child physiocologist and for a long time they talked together. And the physiocologist said to the young man, "Well, sonny that tiger really wants to be your friend, he won't harm you. The next time that tiger comes into your room instead of crying out in fear, you reach out and touch that tiger on the head and say 'hello ther old buddy'. He wants to be your friend." That night his mother sat outside his door and she heard the whimper that marked the beginning of his dream. She opened the door and stood ther looking at the little boy, his face began to twist in fear. Then suddenly his face relaxed and his little hand lifted up from the cover and went through the motion of stroking and one his lips she saw him form the words 'hello, there old buddy.' And then his hand fell limply to the bed and he fell deeply in sleep the whole night through. Out Cretes can be our tigers, but our tigers can really be our friends. When like Paul, for us to live is Christ - not where but how.

Let us pray.