

Beating the Air

August 2021 – 44



Upon High
Places



INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH REFORM MOVEMENT

Youth Department of the General Conference

My dear youth:

I greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, hoping that you enjoy good physical and spiritual health. This month I want to share with you a reflection that I will base on 1 Corinthians 9:26, “**Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus, I fight: not as one who beats the air.**” According to these words of the apostle Paul it follows that there are different ways of living life, at least two: One that is correct and the other which is not; that which doesn’t have any goal or which *beats the air*.

Life goals

Paul was a man full of spiritual purpose, aspirations, and goals. This is what made him great, an example to follow, a source of inspiration for millions and millions of people. In reality, few humans decide to live life God's way; most of them plunge into their earthly projects and aspirations without leaving space for the One who created them and placed them in this world. Living is something very solemn, it is actually a miracle. Existing is not just anything and we are not here by accident. God designed the time, the place, and the circumstance in which you and I were to be born. Let's think about this, no one can create life; life is a gift from God. We know the biological mechanism that originates life. An egg is fertilized and the fetus subsequently develops until the individual is ready to be born. It is something apparently simple, but no one, no privileged mind, has managed to produce this miracle in their laboratory without having pre-existing matter. This matter is a divine

prerogative. Yes, dear youth, God has decided to create us and give us a goal, so that we live life with the purpose of reaching our aim. What goal is this? To live for eternity.

Because of sin we are mortal and one day we will have to put down our armor and rest in the grave; sooner or later that moment will come to all of us. In the meantime, we have to live prepared for God to raise us up and inherit eternal life. But not in our way, not as we understand or like to believe, but in God's way. That is why John tells us in the Gospel that each believer has a concrete goal if he wants to go to heaven: **“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”** John 17:3.

Here is the key! To know God and his Son whom he sent to this world to save us. All life that is not founded on this purpose, is a useless life, a wasted life.

What do we hit?

Paul uses the illustration of “beating the air,” that is, wasting time, misguiding, not focusing on the target, not having a goal, not focusing on what we are in this world for. In boxing you can see this attitude often, and it is usually the cause of the loss of the fight. When the fighter hits the air and not his opponent, the muscles of the arms fatigue as if they were hitting the opponent, which represents a great loss of energy because the body must make an effort to return to the starting position. Had he struck the blow accurately, the chances of winning would have been much greater.

Each of us is in the ring of life and we fight the “good fight of faith” as Paul says (1 Timothy 6:12). The question is whether we are hitting the air or whether we’re focused on hitting the target. When we use violence and decide to take revenge—return evil for evil—we hate someone or hurt them with our words or looks; when we are indifferent to the needs of our neighbor, we ignore our spouse or children, we feel better than others, we live to accumulate material goods marginalizing faith, when we distance ourselves from fidelity to live in sin in any of its forms, etc., we are “beating the air,” that is, wasting energy in that which will not lead us to victory over sin, nor give us greater moral excellence.

“Striking the air” is the dominant human tonic of all time. Judas is an example of this. He believed in Jesus, he loved him and even believed that he was the Messiah who was to come. But he was not clear about His goal, he did not live to know God and His Son who had become incarnate; he had focused on money and was looking for a way to obtain it, even if it was fraudulently. The result was devastating, he ended up taking his own life. Jesus knew his heart and looked for a way to help him, but Judas kept “beating the air.” I mean, doing what he liked the most, allowing himself to be carried away by his selfishness and personal interest. He made no effort to change and drift with the current.

John also had his flaws and also “beat the air” surely on many occasions. But he learned from his mistakes and tried to improve; he did not let himself be carried away but sought with the help of his Master the genuine change of his heart. His most precious goal was to know more about his Savior and to imitate Him in all His way of being. Which was the result? He reflected the character of Jesus and became the “disciple of love.” He stopped punching the air to focus on a victorious stance. He decided to spend his time in transcendental things, in disciplining himself, in self-

control, in the contemplation of the eternal. He drank daily of the water of life that came out of the mouth of Jesus. John was not more privileged than the other apostles, but he took more advantage of the teachings of his Master and incorporated them into his life. Will we do the same?

Conclusion

Dear youth, you have probably missed a shot more than once and in the end you have realized that you have been “striking the air.” But it does not mean that you have lost your fight. Reboot and keep going. God has not abandoned you, neither should you abandon him. Receive His blessings.

José Vicente Giner
*Pastor and Leader of the Youth Department
of the General Conference*

For reflection:

1. What does the apostle Paul mean when he speaks of “striking in the air?”
2. Do you have the feeling of having “beat the air” in your life?
3. What are the reasons why you have reached this situation?