

FAILURES OF A BUSY MAN OR WOMAN

TEXT:

1 Kings 20:40: And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it.

We must keep the divine perspective clear in all our conduct. We cannot be too busy as to find a good excuse for neglecting our Master's business.

Our text was part of a parable that was spoken by a certain prophet to King Ahab. This prophet was rebuking the king for his leniency in dealing with Benhadad, whom God had given over to him in a triumphant victory.

1 Kings 20:26-31:

26 And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Benhadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel.

27 And the Children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, and went against them: and the Children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country.

28 And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

29 And they pitched one over against the other seven days. And so it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined: and the Children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day.

30 But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and there a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the men that were left. And Benhadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber.

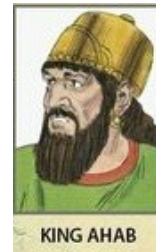
31 And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life.

Benhadad had been crushingly defeated, and for fear of his life he had hidden himself in an inner chamber in the demolished city. He then sent out messengers to inquire of Ahab what terms would be necessary to settle the war.

When the ambassadors came in before Ahab, they had robed themselves in sackcloth, sprinkled ashes upon their heads, and in a crawling manner came before him who now held their fate in his hands. Ahab was so much swelled with victory that he could not be trusted just then to open a conversation in a manner that would administer proper justice against God's enemies. Thus, he said: "*Is he [Benhadad] yet alive? He is my brother*".

1 Kings 20:32 So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, Is he yet alive? he is my brother.

That was enough. Those Syrian delegates snatched that sentence almost unfinished from the lips of the king, and brushing aside the ashes of dejection from their brows, ran with the word, telling Benhadad that all troubles of the war were ended as far as Ahab was concerned. When Benhadad heard the expression — "my brother" — he was bold at once to come and greet the king with praises.



1 Kings 20:33-34:

33 Now the men did diligently observe whether any thing would come from him, and did hastily catch it: and they said, Thy brother Benhadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Benhadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot.

34 And Benhadad said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away.

Ahab, seeing the response to his message, imagined perhaps that he had made a better speech than he knew he had, and decided to carry his pomp and pride to its end by showing the defeated king the greatest honors possible. He took him up into his chariot, and even allowed him to make his own terms of peace. Ahab was so drunk with pride that he rode high on his way back home from his great peace treaty, only to see a poor wretch of a miserable looking man by the roadside.

1 Kings 20:38: So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face.

The man hailed the king in his glory. The king never liked to do little things as well as when he could stoop down from a great height. There is more satisfaction in doing this than if we were asked to do a thing for someone on the same level, as

there is little incentive in doing so. So, if a great man puts his hand out on a boy's head, the whole world will herald it abroad.

Ahab pulled up the prancing horses of the chariot to a stop to hear from the fellow on the roadside. Pride likes praise, and the words of our text were most fittingly spoken.

Pride likes
praise

1 Kings 20:39-43:

39 And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver.

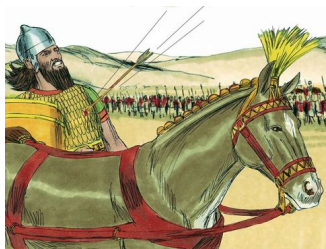
40 And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it.

41 And he hasted, and took the ashes away from his face; and the king of Israel discerned him that he was of the prophets.

42 And he [the prophet] said unto him [King Ahab], Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.

43 And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria.

Ahab was quick to pronounce judgment, but little did he realize it was upon himself. He had no more than uttered the words of condemnation upon such faithlessness and had not yet pulled the reins over his horses' backs, when the crouching man in the dust leaped to his feet before him, quickly brushed the ashes from his face, and stood forth unconcealed. The prophet of the Lord is before the king of Israel, and after Ahab realized what had happened, he drove home, heavy and displeased. What a changed man now, as the proud form of a moment ago is leaning against the padded sides of the rattling chariot. The thrill of victory seems like a nightmare. In a few chapters following, we see how unglorious a death he died.



1 Kings 22:34-35:

34 And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel [Ahab] between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.

35 And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even:

and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot.

Proverbs 16:18: Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

These words stuck out like a sore thumb or a bumped lip.

1 Kings 20:40a: And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone.

That may have been an old story we have just related, but the prophet surely was talking modern-day talk; or, we moderns are very much talking ancient talk.

Many of you have used the excuse for not coming to church on Sunday or during the week that you are too busy. Many of you are too busy to pray and read the Bible, or you are too busy to speak to others about Christ. Some of you businessmen try to carry a shield of defense from any neglect you may be accused of - that your work takes all your time. In all of the history of the world, there has never been a time when excuse makers, both men and women, did not avoid spiritual matters of great importance with the reply, *'I am too busy'*. Busy? Busy doing what?



1 Kings 20:40a: As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone.

Behind the smug sign of “*too busy, here and there*” is the refusal to be bothered, except with more business. Most people don’t want to go somewhere or do something unless it fascinates them — and then they are up and gone again.

Imagine meeting a soldier immediately after he has been put in charge of an important prisoner. He walks with purposeful stride and knows his task demands serious watchfulness. He seems to appreciate the honor that has been conferred upon him. A sense of his responsibility is serious, so with diligence he follows orders.



But time passes, and we are greatly shocked to no longer find the soldier on guard. When we look about, the prisoner is gone. Upon inquiry, we find he has escaped. In shame, the guard bows his head and utters this confession:

As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone.

“How come this escape? Were you surprised and overcome, or did a band of

soldiers come and overpower you and take him out? Were you attacked in the dark?" "No, I was not attacked, overpowered, or surprised, but he escaped because I was too busy to watch him."

Too busy? Doing what? What task do you find more important than saving your country, your home, and your honor? "Oh, no task in particular", he answers. "I was just busy, here and there."

This man was sentenced for his crime — and that man was Ahab. He was not sentenced for cutting anybody's throat, or stabbing anyone, or stealing anything. **He was simply punished for what he had failed to do.** And that kind of sin, let me warn you, is just as deadly and dangerous as killing, or our broken sins. How foolish are they who think they are pious simply because they do no wrong. How absurd it is to get it into our head that a man is a Christian by virtue of what he does concerning moral deeds, yet neglects the orders of his Master.

How foolish are they who think they are pious simply because they do no wrong.

Jesus said: "Watch and Pray". **The watching is as important as praying.**

Mark 14:38: Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.

Luke 21:36: Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

Have you studied the commands of our Master?

Matthew 19:29: And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My Name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit Everlasting Life.

Matthew 5:44: Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

1 Thessalonians 5:17: Pray without ceasing.

2 Timothy 2:15a: Study to show thyself approved unto God,

John 15:5b: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.

Luke 9:23: If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

When the summons comes to leave the world, we are without excuse.

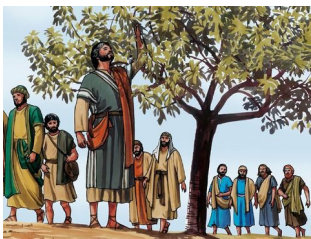
Matthew 16:26a: For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

This is Jesus pounding into our thick skulls that yours is a sacred trust: a human soul, eternal, redeemed at infinite cost, to be consecrated to God. The trifling with minor duties and the neglecting of the chief responsibilities to God for our families, our church, and our God will be inexcusable when we stand before Him.

The prophet of the Lord took up this incident and turned it into a parable that applies to all of us. A trust is given to this man for the care of another. In a very different sense, God has given to us the care of others. No man dares ask, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

God has given to us the care of others.

Fathers and mothers have a tremendous responsibility in these modern days. If they don’t have an influence over their homes, then who else can? God’s Word sets forth parents over the children in the place of God until they reach the years of accountability. How can the fathers and mothers who are dragging their children after them in rebellion against The Word expect those children to show reverence to the Lord, His Word, and His Holy Day? Your family can easily be an exact reproduction of yourself. If mother is a society butterfly, what can you expect of the daughter? **If she is a gad-about, so will the child be. If the father has little reverence of holy things and is not faithful to his place as head of the home, how can the children be anything less or more than useless and faithless.**



Jesus cursed the fig tree because it was useless, not because it had any poison on it. **Neglected duties to the lost have caused many to stumble into a Christless eternity.**

What was wrong with the foolish virgins? It was not that they had water in their lamps. It was simply the fact that they had no oil. Did they fail thru ignorance? Did the soldier lose his prisoner thru lack of understanding his task? No. In both cases, they failed in carrying out their duties, and this wrecked them. They knew what to do and knew the importance of their task — that it was life or death business — but still they failed.

Our greatest need is to live up to what we already know. The reason many are selfish, godless, unclean, and powerless is not because they do not know better. They are neglecting to do what they know they *should* do. “How shall we escape

if we neglect so great salvation?”

Hebrews 2:3: How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him;

The soldier who was supposed to watch the prisoner did not fail because of lack of ability. If he had been overpowered or waylaid, he could have been pardoned. We would sympathize with one who could show: “*I have won these wounds trying to keep the prisoner*”, or “*I am weary seeking the oil for my lamp*”. But there are no scars to show, and no weary feet to show. God never requires of us the impossible. He tells us:

God never requires of us the impossible.

Proverbs 3:6: In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

This man did not fail because he was lazy or idle but because he became busy. He has so many things to do — so many engagements to keep and so many functions to attend — that he could not do his duty. Do you know anybody like that? You allow the secondary things to absorb your life, but you are neglecting the primary. These unnamed tasks you are performing are not bad, sinful, or harmful, but they rob you of doing your best.



It is near insanity to play with trifles and to lose the opportunity of service to the Master by spending time on that which is temporal and not eternal.

Why will you allow yourself to be so busy, here and there, that you allow the peace of God to leak out of your soul? Why will you be so busy talking and visiting for hours, and yet spend so little time with Jesus? While you are busy here and there, you lose your interest in The Word of God and in prayer. While busy here and there — like Martha — you lose the sense of the Presence of Jesus in your life.



Luke 10:38-42:

38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that He [Jesus] entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house.

39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His Word.

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my

sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

41 *And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:*

42 *But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*



Oh, saints, the Words of Jesus are so needful to be heeded:

Matthew 6:33: *But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

You — as a Christian or Christian businessman — have no right to put any other endeavor ahead of your service for Christ. Your influence is more telling to the world than that of a minister whose life is mostly hidden away in prayer and ministry of the Word. Your advice is sought, and your words are telling for Christ. Likewise, in the neglect of telling, you are failing God in your duty to Him.

“*I am too busy, here and there,*” will accuse us on the Judgment Day. Too busy at what? It sounds like a good excuse until you actually measure it against facts. When all your business life is summed up, you will find all of it stamped: **Temporal**. You will have been spending your energies on that which will crumble before a siege of illness. Whatever you gain in the world, you must leave behind.

All the “reassures” you have amassed will absolutely end with the word **Worthless** at the final reckoning day. ALL will be left down here. Don’t fail to note the right word in that sentence. Not thousands, or millions, or dollars. The real big word is LEFT. He left it. He left a mansion beside a lake . . . a fortune . . . a nice car . . . a great factory — HE LEFT IT ALL!

Shallow fascinations are holding many of you good people down. Someday, you will leave that television, that amusement park, that magazine — you will leave all of them behind, and they will make you weak at the Judgment. You cling to these little things — and you call them little — and say you see nothing wrong in them.

Oh the pity of the question, for when you have succeeded in getting an answer which you think satisfies your idea of Right, you will turn again and give yourself again to the same useless things. Imagine Nero fiddling while Rome burned! Silly Nero. I know there is no harm in fiddling, but the harm is found when you discover why and for whom you are doing it.

Such a shallow measure to pour out one’s strength for the old self into things you do. They are keeping you from doing other and better things. Rome may not be

burning, but souls are dying and going to Hell. America is at wit's end, and men's hearts are failing and fainting for fear for the things coming upon us to destroy us.

Remember, our Scripture text is not stabbing the guilty man because the thing he was busy at was a wicked thing. Rather, he was fooling around with trifling things, placing them before reality. If I ask you to qualify yourself by using the word "Busy" for "Important", I know somebody will come up with a red face. Let's remember the parable Jesus taught about the Rich Fool – "*Tonight thy soul shall be required of thee*" – but "*tonight*" he was busy building barns.

Luke 12:15-21: Parable of the Rich Fool

15 And He [Jesus] said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.



16 And He spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.



CONCLUSION

What was the result of neglected duty in the life of the busy man? "*He was gone*". The consequence of misplaced attention is that the one he was to keep his eye upon was gone while he was occupied in a good thing. Gone, never to be retrieved. Gone, while eternity rolls on. **The soul whom the Spirit urged you to speak to is gone.**

Examine your works in the final balance sheet. Will wood, hay, stubble, gold, silver, or precious stone be to your credit?

1 Corinthians 3:11-15:

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide [live] which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

So, beloved, I urge you to consider the eternal facts vs. your mortal excuses. May you never be 'too busy' with the things of this world that you fail to hear and obey the Master's Voice in preparation for your future home. I pray that your future home will be Heaven as you seek to hear and obey the Master's Voice.

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