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Too Late

by Steve Klein

Are you ever late? Late completing assignments at school or work? Late getting to work, appointments, school or church? Are you ever too late? I've known people who got the time for church services wrong and drove up in the parking lot just as church members were coming out the door. I've also known people to show up for a dinner appointment just as everyone else was finishing dessert! Now that is too late!

What makes us late? Procrastination. Laziness. Failing to recognize and value opportunities. Poor scheduling. Not allowing for emergencies or unexpected circumstances. These are a few of the reasons that people are late for things every day. These same factors will cause some people to be too late when it comes to obeying the gospel.

In Matthew 25:1-13, Jesus tells a parable about ten virgins who were to participate in a wedding feast. They all waited for the appearance of the bridegroom, but the five "foolish virgins" had taken no oil for their lamps. Why not? Procrastination! Laziness! Poor planning! They failed to prepare properly. Then, when the bridegroom was delayed (an unexpected circumstance), the foolish virgins had to go out to buy oil. He came while they were out (another unexpected occurrence), and when they returned, they were too late. They were not allowed entrance to the wedding. Imagine their frustration, sorrow and humiliation.

Another Bible example of folks who were too late is found in Luke 19:41-44. As Jesus approached Jerusalem, "He saw the city and wept over it." He foresaw the day when all that were within would be destroyed and the city would be leveled to the ground, without one stone left on top of another. Why would this happen to Jerusalem and its people? Jesus tells them that it is "because you did not know the time of your visitation." They missed their chance.

On the judgment day, it will be too late to obey the gospel. Those who squandered opportunities to heed and obey in this life will feel a lot like the five virgins who were shut out of the wedding feast - very foolish indeed. They will realize that, like the people of Jerusalem, they missed their chance. And like the children of Israel of old who disobeyed God, they will cry out in despair "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" (Jeremiah 8:20)

Don't allow that sickening feeling of despair and loss to be yours for all eternity. Life is too short, eternity is too long, and the risk is too great to wait too late to make your life right with God.

On A Daily Basis

~by Bill Hall

A man, asked recently to describe memories of his college days twenty-five years ago, replied, "A few big moments; many goofs, but, overall, pleasant memories."

Would these words not describe our memories of life generally? As we recall our years, there are always the "big" moments, the emotional "highs," that we love to relish. Then there are the "goofs," the embarrassing occasions that just keep coming back to haunt us. But, through it all, the pleasant memories sufficiently prevail to enable us to feel generally good about life.

But, in reality, success or failure in life is not determined by the "big moments" or "the goofs." We will not be eternally saved on the basis of a few great spiritual achievements or eternally lost on the basis of a few gross mistakes (assuming they have been repented of). Life consists of everyday actions and decisions, and it is these that bring ultimate success or failure, eternal happiness or eternal damnation. "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

It is one thing to express concern for our children as we talk of their future spirituality and faithfulness. It is quite another to provide on a daily basis a spiritual atmosphere in the home, a good example of godliness and faithfulness, consistent and loving discipline and a love for God and respect for fellowman that are so essential to the training of our children. It's the little impressions that are made day by day that prove to be so decisive.

It is one thing to dream of someday being appointed an elder in the church. It is quite another thing to put forth the effort on a daily basis to learn the scriptures, to develop leadership ability, to grow spiritually, and to live as to gain the confidence of a discerning congregation. One does not qualify for the eldership in one big leap. It comes through daily development.

It is one thing to talk a "good line" on priorities. It is quite another thing to put God first on a daily basis. The devil knows so many ways to test our resolve in these realms. Our intentions are good, but, through his subtlety, he has us selling our souls for a mess of pottage or thirty pieces of silver.

It is one thing to think that we would die for the Lord if our faith were so tested. It is quite another thing truly to live for Him on a daily basis. Egos may be fed on the "big moments," but true spirituality develops through daily prayer, study and meditation.

Our lesson is this. Set your goals for the future, and set them high. But recognize that it's the little, day-by-day moments, the often forgotten moments, accumulated through the years, that truly shape our destiny. Tomorrow's success depends upon the choices and decisions that are made today. Make them with care.

Will A Man Rob God?

by Heath Rogers

God makes a very serious accusation against His people through His prophet Malachi. "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings" (Mal. 3:8).

The word "rob" has two definitions: 1) to seize and carry off property of by unlawful violence or threat of violence, 2) to deprive a person something belonging or due, defraud (Funk and Wagnalls New Comprehensive International Dictionary). While there is no way we can take things from God by violence or force, we can fail to give God the things that are due to Him.

Our Contribution. These Jews were robbing God by withholding their tithes and offerings. This was commanded under the Law of Moses. Today, the Christian is not commanded to tithe (give ten percent), but we are to give as we prosper (1 Cor. 16:1-2), as we purpose in our heart (2 Cor. 9:6-7), liberally and cheerfully. In withholding our contribution, we are robbing the local church of funds needed to carry out the Lord's work,

but we are also withholding a statement of worth and thanksgiving unto God. In doing this, we are only hurting ourselves (Mal. 3:9).

Our Worship and Praise. “Give to the Lord the glory due His name” (Ps. 96:8). We worship God because He is worthy of such. He is our Creator, Sustainer, and Savior. We rob God of His praise when we remain silent during the worship of the church, or worse yet, when we remain absent from the assemblies of the church.

Our Service. God has given His Son for our sins. The least we can do is give ourselves in His service. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1, emphasis mine – HR). A dead sacrifice is good only once, but a living sacrifice has perpetual benefit. We entered into service unto the Lord when we were baptized into Christ. We are not our own. We have been bought with a great price (1 Cor. 6:19-20). We have been redeemed and purified for good works (Titus 2:14). To hold back any part or portion of my heart, soul, mind, or strength from God is to deprive Him of that which belongs to Him (Mark 12:30).

Our Testimony to Unbelievers. God has revealed His existence through His creation (Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:18-20), His providential kindness (Acts 14:17), and His written revelation (1 Cor. 2:9-13). However, there is another way God’s greatness is to be made known to the unbelieving world – through the lives of His people. We are to let our light shine before men. Our good works in service to God will cause them to acknowledge God’s existence (Matt. 5:16). Our love and unity as brethren will give people a reason to believe Jesus is real (John 13:34-35; 17:20-21). We are robbing God when we fail to live in a way that causes the lost to see the Lord.

It is possible for us to rob God today, and we do so in more ways than just closing up our wallets and checkbooks when the plate is passed at church. We can deprive God of our praise, our service, and our testimony to the world. Christians are the richest people the world will ever know. May it never be said that you or I have robbed God!