

## OPPORTUNITIES TO TAKE

Phil.3:12-14

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. **TEXT:** *“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”* (NKJ)
- B. In this beginning month of this new year, we've been talking about the church moving forward into the future, and some things we must consider if we're going to do God's will most effectually!
1. We've looked at: a) challenges to accept. b) enemies to defeat. c) dangers to avoid
  2. Today I want us to consider some opportunities that we need to take into consideration!
- C. As we move toward the 21st century, the church should take note of a statement found in *The Marketing Imagination*: "The future belongs to those who see possibilities before they become obvious."
- D. Opportunities Missed (or The Curse of the Impermanent Potential)
- There was a very cautious man Who never laughed or played  
He never risked, he never tried He never sang or prayed  
And when one day he passed away His insurance was denied  
For since he never really lived They claimed he never died.
- E. The fact of the matter is that the church has many, many opportunities before us – but they are absolutely WORTHLESS in glorifying God until we take them and make something of them!
1. For the next few minutes, I want us to look at what the Bible tells us about our opportunities!
  2. And we really need to think of those opportunities before us as BLESSINGS from the Lord!

### I. THE ABILITY TO SEE OPPORTUNITIES IS A KEY TO ANY SUCCESS

*[Ponder these opportunities of Jesus and see how He handled them...]*

- A. **Mk.1:16-18-** *“And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, “Come after Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” And immediately they left their nets and followed Him.”*
- B. **Mk.6:2-3-** *“And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him.”* (NKJ)
- C. **Mk.6:41-44-** *“And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among them all. So they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men.”*
- D. **Mk.10:46-48-** *“Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! Many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me!”*
- E. **Mk.12:42-44-** *“Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”* (NKJ)
- F. **Jno.4:35-** *“Do you not say, There are still four months and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!”* (NKJ)

## **II. THERE ARE REQUISITES INVOLVED IN *TAKING OPPORTUNITIES* THAT WILL AUGMENT & INTENSIFY OUR CAPACITIES [*ABILITIES*] FOR SERVICE!**

- A. **The ability to see** the possibilities of different opportunities, for the ultimate success in glorifying God and spreading the borders of His kingdom!
- B. **The ability to eliminate** negative thinking and attitudes as the instruments of Satan as we maintain that attitude standard of God's Faithful: "*For when I am put down, then am I exalted!*"
- C. **The ability to risk** the failure of personal assets and desires in order to be most effectual in soul-saving activities!
- D. **The ability to make** determined efforts for the Lord with zeal and enthusiasm!
- E. **The ability to sacrifice** for something greater; viz, taking our "EYE" of service OFF OF OURSELVES and focusing on Almighty God's Everlasting Plan!

## **III. OPPORTUNITIES BEFORE US**

- A. "The Evangelistic Harvest is always urgent. The destiny of men and of nations is always being decided. Every generation is strategic. We are not responsible for the past generation, and we cannot bear full responsibility for the next one; but we do have our opportunities of service in THIS generation. God will hold us responsible as to how well we fulfill our responsibilities to this age and take advantage of our opportunities." -- Billy Graham
- B. An article in the *Harvard Business Review* called 'Market Myopia' talked about how some people didn't understand what business they were in. For example, the railroad people didn't realize they were in the transportation business; they thought they were in the railroad business. Had they realized they were in the transportation business they would have invested in the airplane. The telegraph people thought they were in the telegraph business instead of the communications business. In 1886 or so, they could have bought **all the telephone patents** for \$40,000. So obviously these people didn't know what business they were in. I used to think these guys were really dumb because they didn't know what business they were in. Then I asked myself, "**What business am I in?**"
  1. We need to ask the same question about this congregation of God's people: "**What business are we in?**"
  2. That question should get us to the core of our purpose for existence!
  3. It should help us FOCUS ON what we are expected to accomplish in the **Service of Jesus Christ!**
- C. **WE ARE IN THE BUSINESS OF BUILDING UP THE KINGDOM OF GOD!**
  1. That involves numerous things:
    - a) Evangelism
    - b) Developing spiritual maturity [in ourselves and in those who will help us].
    - c) Developing faith in God among all people [the ONLY way we can lead to salvation!].
    - d) Teaching God's word – NOT as "*orators*" but as a simple CHRISTIANS, children of God!
    - e) Developing men and women of godly character to guide others to the Lord.
    - f) Infusing spirituality into all phases of life, mentally/ morally/ physically/ emotionally!
  2. To really take advantage of those opportunities before us, we must know precisely what it is we are trying to accomplish! Clear-cut goals with defined pathways, an urgency of mind and the stability and perseverance of heart to see these things through, **TO THE PRAISE OF JEHOVAH!**
- D. Consider some of the fantastic opportunities that are before us RIGHT NOW!
  1. Communication ABILITIES are better & more far-reaching now than they've ever been before!
    - a) We TRULY DO live in the communication age, DON'T WE?

- b) On our computers we can talk to people all over the USA and even overseas -- people who are interested in Christianity! We can **be an encouragement** to Christians in every land!
  - c) Radio – television used to be the ultimate! Out of our reach as individuals, usually!
  - d) Print media is STILL a good means of reaching interested people. *Try putting an ad in the personal column of your newspaper just asking for someone to study the Bible with you, and **BE SURPRISED** at the response you get!*
2. There's a much greater interest in spiritual things by people all around us than most of us have ever observed before in our lifetimes, *can you agree with that statement?*
- a) I don't **necessarily** mean there's great interest in "joining and attending a church," but just a great of enthusiasm in people around us regarding spiritual matters!
  - b) The BIG question before us is, will we reach out to *WHERE PEOPLE ARE*, or **wait around and demand** that **they come to where we are** before we try to tell them about **THEIR SAVIOUR?** The emphatic of the great commission is "**GO!**"
3. Because of the failure of government subsidies and social programs to **provide a better life** we have opportunities to IMPRESS how OTHERS can have a **PREFERRED LIFE**, now and forever!
- a) Members of the church have greater and varied opportunities to become more active participants in our communities: *participating in youth activities; school activities; civic responsibilities; neighborhood watches; ongoing bible studies; helping neighbors!*
  - b) Benevolence programs by the government hasn't raised hardly anyone's standard or quality of life – **because "quality of life" is not counted in DOLLARS AND CENTS!** When people realize what God has done for us and what He wants of us and WHO He wants us to be, people are IMMEDIATELY BETTER off than they were before! **It's a little thing called HOPE, AND IT PROMISES FULFILLMENT!**
  - c) Government programs for children and older adults **for the most part** make people **DEPENDENT**, rather than offering them useful avenues for making productive, worthwhile accomplishments!
  - d) All of these things give multiplied opportunities; but they're ONLY for us IF WE ARE READY TO REACH OUTSIDE OF OURSELVES, *to stretch beyond our current comfort zones*, and to **BE ALL THAT WE CAN BE** – in God's service!
4. People! All around us! Thousands ... hundreds of thousands of people!
- a) This is our number one FOCUS, and this provides us our GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES to take hold of the reins ourselves and really be a driving force for the LORD!
  - b) We must revive the ability of individual members to reach the people around them
5. Small groups are the productive groups! If we don't get caught up in the BIGNESS of our own egos we can EACH ONE WIN SOME to the glory of God! **You can be an ACTIVE participant!**
- a) Small groups don't have to fall prey to mistakes that have been destructive in the past
  - b) Small groups are an excellent way to provide for people's needs and to involve more people in what the church does best – hide behind the power and glory of the Lord!
  - c) Most church growth is taking place through the wise use of small groups
- E. These are but a few of the opportunities that lie before us

## **CONCLUSION:**

A. In a recent motion picture called "*The Dead Poet's Society*," Robin Williams plays the role of a teacher in an exclusive eastern prep school. On the first day of school, he takes the class of boys out into the hallway to look at the pictures of past, now dead, graduates of the school. He's seeking to motivate them to learn and excel in life with the following words:

"We are food for worms, Lads! Believe it or not each and every one of us in this room one day will stop breathing, turn cold, and die. Step forward and see these faces from the past. They were just like you are now. They believed they were destined for great things. Their eyes were full of hope.

But, you see, gentlemen, these boys are now fertilizing daffodils. If you listen real closely, you will hear them whisper their legacy to you. Lean in. **What do you hear?**" Then Robin says in an eerie grave-like voice, "Carpe Diem!" (*Latin for seize the day*) "Seize the day boys! Make your lives extraordinary!"

B. If the secular world can understand that message, how much more should we be able to understand it, and **SEIZE THE DAY FOR THE LORD?**

1. We need to **THINK** bigger, **DREAM** bigger and **ACT** bigger than we ever have in the past!
2. The opportunities will amaze us if we will but look for them and take them.

C. Invitation

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