

Divine Opportunities

2 Chronicles 21:20

► Preface

Most of you know I have a business right down Greeno Road. Next to my business is B & S Machine shop. Harry Babb owns that business and he is a great neighbor. We work together well on projects relating to common ground and share equipment resources from time to time.

However, when it comes to grounds upkeep and landscaping, Harry and I have two different philosophies. I like to keep things looking sharp and believe it is a reflection of your attention to detail and quality service. Harry on the other hand figures that keeping the grounds and landscaping looking good has nothing to do with making money so why fool with it.

However, this last week he was busy cutting the grass, trimming bushes, planting monkey grass and all sorts of other things. He even decided it was time for us to fix the median where the trucks had created large mud holes, something I have been wanting us to do for months.

When we were finished, I went over to his office to give him a check for my half of the concrete bill and the ladies were even cleaning the office. That is when it hit me. I said, "You must have some VIP coming to visit." To which he said, "Yeh, how did you know?" He proceeded to tell me that he had some visitors coming this week to check out his business. They can potentially give him a lot of business in the coming year.

In other words, he sees a very profitable opportunity and he is doing everything he can to seize the opportunity.

As Christians, we have opportunities to do magnificent things for God. I call them Divine Opportunities; those special moments when God opens a door for us to step up and really serve Him in a way that impacts people for God's kingdom.

► Read Text 2 Chronicles 21:1-4, 12-15, 20

"²⁰Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. He passed away, to no one's regret, and was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings." 2 Chronicles 21:20 (NIV)

Prayer

4/14/05

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► Introduction

Throughout the scriptures there are heroes that we learn from like King David, the prophet Daniel, Peter and Paul just to name a few. God's Word is filled with men and women who realized their divine opportunities and acted upon them by following the leadership of God.

Likewise, there are stories of others who missed their divine opportunities or shirked their opportunities to act upon the calling of God. You and I can learn some very valuable lessons from the lives of these people.

King Jehoram was one such person who missed his divine opportunity. He was king of Judah and had the potential of becoming a great man of God in his day. Instead, those dreaded words, "he passed away, to no one's regret" are recorded about him for all of history.

It seems impossible that a man could live his life as a king - die and not touch a single person's life in a positive way. King Jehoram did exactly that with his life.

This morning, I believe if Jehoram could speak to you across the annals of time, he would say to you and to me - **"Do not miss your divine opportunities!"**

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◆ Observations of Jehoram's Divine Opportunity

1. Jehoram missed his divine opportunity (vs. 3)

Jehoram's father, Jehoshaphat was a pretty good king. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. But he still allowed some places of idol worship to remain and this affected his son. **Have you ever noticed how some of the things we do; our children do in excess?**

Jehoshaphat was a successful king and enjoyed a reign of peace. He had 7 sons, and we are told that they were left very well off. He left them silver and gold and each cities to rule over. But Jehoram being the oldest son was given the kingdom.

Jehoram had every opportunity to make an incredible difference by being a great king. He could have loved the people and obeyed God. He could have re-united Israel and Judah. He could have been a true son of David by being a man after God's own heart.

But somehow, Jehoram didn't see, understand or CARE about the tremendous opportunities he had before him.

2. Jehoram refused to honor God (vs. 6)

Jehoram was more concerned about himself than God. He married the daughter of Ahab. Ahab and Jezebel apparently influenced his life much to the side of evil. Jehoram made awful choices and those choices would prove to cause him enormous pain inflicted by a displeased God (*"and he did evil in the sight of God"*).

Our young people should make note that we are all strongly influenced by our heroes. There are many so-called heroes today - music stars, movie stars, athletes and such - that will make godlessness and immorality look like the "way to live."

Our young people are often easily sucked into their glamorous lifestyles. But we should look beyond the surface to see their real motives and the ultimate outcomes of their choices.

Illus: Recently, I was at a traffic light. Two young men were next to me in a truck with their music playing rather loud. Actually, I would not consider this music. I rolled down the window so I could hear the words more clearly. It was absolute disgusting filth. I wondered how listening to such violent and awful lyrics will ultimately affect their lives. I wonder who their heroes are.

Never forget that we tend to imitate those who we admire.

3. Jehoram built himself up at the sacrifice of others (vs. 4)

Because his brothers were also heirs to the throne, he had them all killed to alleviate any threat.

Illus: We have all heard people say, "I am going to climb the ladder of success and I don't care who I have to step on to get there. How often have you heard someone say, "Business is business" or "That's just business?" This usually follows some action that has hurt or cheated someone else.

This was the attitude of Jehoram and too often it can be our attitudes. We don't murder our competition but we are often guilty of hurting others in our quest for success. Human nature tells us that the easiest way to make ourselves look better is to put others down.

This is the complete opposite of what God intends for you and me to be. Over and over, God's Word instructs us to care more about others than we do about ourselves. You will never be happy until you sincerely care about others.

Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus said - do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

God will never accept the person who makes it a habit of walking over others to get what they desire.

4. Jehoram refused to repent (vs. 13-15)

The prophet Elijah delivered some very strong words to Jehoram about his actions. God had already judged Jehoram's heroes, you would think he would have taken the prophet's seriously. But he did not.

Jehoram did not repent. Other things were simply more important to him than listening to God. He continued to repeat the same mistakes.

We need to learn that when God speaks we must listen. But even today we have trouble listening to God.

The Bible says that God loves His children and every child he loves he chastises. That means he disciplines them and corrects them. Jehoram ignored God's prophet and he had to experience terrible punishment for it.

Jehoram gave no regard to the future. He simply ignored what judgment was to come. Jehoram was living for the moment.

The same is true of people today. They ignore God's Word and the words of his servants. They do not heed the warning as they are living in the moment and the moment is all that matters. They continue to make foolish choices and refuse to repent.

◆ Observations about Divine Opportunities

1. Divine Opportunities are of God

Divine opportunities are those windows in life when we can do something for God and make a difference. They are planned and ordained by God to accomplish His purposes.

Divine opportunities always involve impacting the life of others in a positive way. **They are never self gratifying but God glorifying.**

They are opportunities when we are challenged to rise above our normal human selfishness. In doing so, we become saints used to build the Kingdom of God.

2. Divine Opportunities require recognition

Divine opportunities don't always look like opportunities. In fact they generally appear as great challenges, conflicts, tragedy, trouble, fear or heartache.

Perhaps your divine opportunity will be when you hear the word cancer or your loved one is diagnosed with cancer. Your divine opportunity may involve a dispute at work or with a sibling.

We can't predict when our divine opportunities will come. Chances are they will come in the middle of a storm. We must always be in prayerful attention watching and waiting for God to open the door and give us the instructions.

Illus: I remember speaking with a pastor friend of mine a few years ago and he explained to me that he had a member of his church staying with his family for several weeks. He went on to explain that she had fallen and broken her ankle and wrist and that she could not care for herself so his wife had offered for her to recover at their home. My friend also had three children and lived in about a 1500 square foot home.

A few weeks later he shared with me how difficult it was getting and how time consuming it was for him and his wife. His wife even had to bath the lady. I remember remarking that I felt that it was above the call of duty for a pastor and surely there was someone else that she could stay with. He said they felt like God would have them do this regardless of the difficulty.

Two years ago, I got to meet Mable, the lady who recovered in my friends home. I first met her while preaching a revival in their church. I later really got to know Mable when we were on a mission trip together in Mexico. The trip was hot, dirty and challenging to say the least. It was the worse mission trip I have ever been on. But Mable was the light of the trip. She beamed with the love of Christ and she was the life of the trip. When everyone including the teenagers, were exhausted and ready to rest, Mable was still ready to go. She still had energy to share the gospel with anyone who would listen.

There is no doubt in my mind that Mable was a divine opportunity for my friend and his family. And thanks to the recognition and faith of that family, the opportunity was filled. Mable's love for God was directly influenced by their actions.

3. Divine Opportunities require faith

Divine opportunities require real faith. As previously stated, they often come in moments of tragedy or fear. It requires faith to step up to the plate and follow the instructions of God.

Very often, we cannot visualize how God will work things out. We can't see how God will provide the resources and we feel poorly equipped. It is at those very moments that God wants to show us a miracle.

I believe we never see the miracles in our life because we never respond to God's divine opportunities. We always keep things within our own human control. We do not allow ourselves the vulnerability of really depending on God.

We must trust God, take the first step and like Isaiah, we must say, "here am I God, send me."

4. Divine Opportunities require obedience

Divine opportunities require obedience to God and His Word.

So often, the action that God would have us take is not the easiest road for dealing with the situation. Usually, the easiest path is to not respond at all. It easy to just say no or to ignore a situation and hope it will go away.

When we do that, we rob ourselves and others of a blessing from God. We hinder rather than further the Kingdom of God.

You might say, well I am poor and I have no education - how do I have opportunity?

I want you to understand that if God can use a shepherd boy like David, or a farmer like Amos, or a fisherman like Peter - he CAN USE YOU!

If God is present in your life, divine opportunities will come along. Will you be obedient or will you be too self-centered to recognize and respond in faith? Are you living for the Kingdom of God or living for the moment?

◆ Conclusion

Illus: I have had divine opportunities in my life that I have missed. Fortunately, I have some that I have not missed. I would like to share one with you. Several years ago my brother went through a really nasty divorce. Following the divorce, he went into much depression. He worked the 3-11 shift at the shipyard in Pascagoula, MS. Every evening he would go home and drink until he fell asleep only to wake and start the routine over again.

One evening while traveling home on a dark road with no lighting, he came upon something in the road protruding into his lane. At first he thought it was a dog or wild animal. At the moment of impact, the reality hit him that he had just hit a women right in the head.

The woman had been out drinking and doing drugs with her boyfriend. They had a fight and he kicked her out of the truck in the middle of the road. She was too messed up to get up and out of the road. Within minutes after impact, she was dead.

This was no fault of my brother. However, the constant agony of wondering if he could have avoided the accident continued to haunt him. His depression became even deeper. He hardly left

the house. The dent in his old Ford Escort was a constant reminder of that horrible night.

I knew God wanted me to do something. I did not feel equipped and I could not foresee the outcome but I knew I had to help. I arranged for us to spend a couple of days alone at a house on the river.

We talked; we prayed and shared many things during those days. He shared with me how lonely he was and how he could not date anyone because he felt like a loser. I shared with him how God loved him and how he needed God in his life. I shared with him that he needed to trust God with all of his heart and ask God to send him someone who had the same commitment to God.

A few weeks later, I ran across a red Nissan pickup truck that looked sharp and was affordable. Pam and I purchased it and took it to my brother and handed him the title and keys. I explained to him that God had blessed me and that God wanted me to use whatever I have to help others when possible.

Today, my brother is in church every Sunday along with his Christian wife and three children. He works conscientiously and loyally in our business.

Where would he be today if I had not responded to God's divine opportunity? Where would I be today if I had not responded to God's divine opportunity?

It is never too late. God will give you other great opportunities to make a difference for Him. Will you be ready? You may be facing a divine opportunity right now. Will you step up to the plate and allow God to use you?