

Opportunity

After being away for nearly two weeks, it is good to be home. As the time flies by seemingly faster every year, I am grateful for the *opportunity* to see family and old friends annually. We reminisce about the crazy stuff we did growing up in our neighborhood and somehow we all made it out alive. One thing in common we share, we no longer take time for granted as we did in our youth. Last year was a good example of this. Four days after our gathering last year, one of our group fell and hit his head and died the next morning. Tragic. No one knows when we will be called to our rest or when it will be the last time seeing family and friends. This week's lesson will touch on opportunities and how we respond when they present themselves.

Using the Cambridge Dictionary, *opportunity* is defined as an "occasion or situation that makes it possible to do something that you want to do or have to do, or the possibility of doing something." Opportunities present themselves in many ways and there are a multitude of types. Opportunities can be rare, the earliest, the right, a better, a little, a golden, a better, a little, and every. Countless applications. We will look at two, *missed* and *unique* moments.

Many idioms refer to opportunities and can suggest when it is time to act, speak up, or take a risk. (Risk differs from chance as risks can be calculated).

Opportunities can help us grow and understand. How many of these have you heard?- “Strike while the iron is hot, make hay while the sun shines, take a golden opportunity, the ball is in your court, jump at the chance, seize the day, go for it, rise to the occasion, the door is wide open, don’t miss the boat, and one chance in a million.” I’m sure most of us are familiar with most if not all of these sayings.

Most of these refer to using time wisely as it is one commodity we do not get back. Now, can you associate any scriptures with those listed? To make it easy on you, most can be summed up in one scripture.

Joshua 24:15- “And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

A simple choice but yet the most difficult for anyone to make with commitment.

Sadly, there are those who know, read, and study God’s Word, they agree that it is true but yet they fail to take the *opportunity* to become part of His Family. Why?

Faith? Remember the three elements for building faith and our relationship with God? **Love** God, **trust** God, and **obey** God. Many Christians say they love God, but they fail to trust Him fully. Others may love and trust Him but fail to obey His Commandments. Sunday churches are full of worshippers who truly love and trust God but do not keep His Sabbaths and Holy Days, substituting them with the traditions of men.

We all know that “... faith is *the* substance of *things* hoped for, and *the* conviction of things not seen.”- **Hebrews 11:1**.

It is difficult for people to step out in total faith. In looking at a *dictionary* definition of faith it is “confidence or trust in a person or a being.” In this case, it would be trust in God. All too often, we fail to fully trust in God, in His abilities and in who He is. Keep in mind that Our Creator *spoke* the Universe into existence (**Genesis 1:3**). We forget His power and fail to recall who we *are in* Him. We overlook Who our Intercessor is, Jesus Christ.

It is this lack of faith that causes us to “miss opportunities.” Our prayers are weak and ineffective. We tend to hold back in our efforts to serve others. Our doubts are hindering our glorifying God. Decisions are slow coming when we allow the

enemy to paralyze us with uncertainties. “Paralysis by analysis” is what we used to say in Special Operations. Waiting on administrative decisions seemed like mating elephants, it took two years and was most challenging. I am not saying caution is negative but being over-cautious can be. Sometimes actions must be sooner than later. “No good decision was ever made in a swivel chair.” – General George S. Patton. Sometimes we must strike while the iron is hot. Permitting doubts can have a negative effect spiritually especially in our prayers.

One of the hurdles that plagues our prayer life is the lack of faith.

Matthew 17:20- “And Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief. For truly I say to you, if you have faith as a *tiny* mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, ‘Remove from here,’ and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you.”

Doubt can be slight or huge depending on the situation but none the less it manifests itself in many ways. Usually, it is just long enough to miss an opportunity. That’s all Satan wants, us to miss an opportunity to serve God or others.

Sometimes it's almost as if we accept defeat before the battle begins even though the war has already been won. We tend to limit the outcome of a situation by minimizing God or His intervention.

Psalm 78:41-42- “And still again they tempted God and limited the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy.”

We forget in Whom we have believed and His power. Fear causes us to miss opportunities to serve.

Mark 4:40-41- “And He said to them, “Why are you so fearful? Why do you not have faith?” But they were afraid, and said to one another in great fear, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”

We miss opportunities to glorify God when we are beset by various trials by the way we respond. I am an expert in this area.

James 1:2-4- “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you are beset by various trials, Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But let endurance

have *its* perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything.”

Dropping a gallon jug of iced tea on the kitchen floor delayed this writing a bit and I certainly did not glorify God in my response, but the grin came quickly when I remembered who *was* teaching this lesson. Trials are God’s way of getting our attention. *If you truly desire to change* into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ, trials and storms will come, repeatedly *if* we fail to learn from them the first time. They can be answered prayers *if* you are asking God to help you change and overcome obstacles that hinder your service to Him and others. They are an opportunity to learn from our sufferings and listen to that still small Voice that is speaking to our hearts.

1 Corinthians 10:31- “Therefore, whether you eat, or you drink, or you do anything, do all things to the glory of God.”

Imagine how difficulties would dissipate if we actually set out to glorify God in ALL things? The more we learn His ways and come into alignment with His will, the fewer lessons may be given. God will not give up on what He has begun in us.

Philippians 1:6- “Being confident of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will complete *it* until *the* day of Jesus Christ.”

There are many scriptures within God’s Word of those who demonstrated their faith when the unique opportunity presented itself during a trial or test.

Hebrews 11:5-8- “By **faith** Enoch was transported so that he would not look upon death and was not found because God had transported him; for before his departure it was testified of him that he pleased God. Now without **faith** *it is* impossible to please *God*. For it is mandatory *for* the one who comes to God to believe *that* He exists, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

By **faith** Noah, after being divinely instructed by God about the things *he could* not yet see, was moved with fear *and* prepared an ark for *the* salvation of his house; through which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by **faith**. By **faith** Abraham, being called *of God* to go out into the place which he would later receive for an inheritance, obeyed and went, not knowing where he was going.”

These scriptures give examples of great faith. Can you imagine being as old as Noah was and telling everyone it was going to rain? And then having the faith to

build an Ark for over 100 years withstanding the scorn and ridicule? Or Abraham, willing to sacrifice his son Isaac, having the faith that if Isaac was indeed sacrificed, God would raise him up? Incredible faith. They all stood fast and pressed through. They loved, trusted, and obeyed God. They all had faith and were pleasing God.

Examples of pressing through the storm when an opportunity was on the other side can be found in Matthew and Mark.

Mark 2:3-4- “Then they came to Him, bringing a paraplegic borne by four *men*. And since they were not able to come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was; and after breaking *it* open, they let down the stretcher on which the paraplegic was lying.”

The four men knew that if they just got their friend through to Jesus, he had an *opportunity* to be healed. The only way they could do this was to cut a hole through the roof and lower him down to Jesus. They were persistent and did not give up.

Matthew 9:20-22- “And behold, a woman who had been *afflicted* with a flow of blood *for* twelve years, after coming behind *Him*, touched the hem of His garment. For she said within herself, “If only I shall touch His garment, I shall be healed.” But Jesus turned; and seeing the woman, He said to her, “Be of good courage, daughter; your faith has made you whole.” And from that hour the woman was healed.”

She reached out, *pressed* through because she knew *if* she could just touch His garment she would be healed. She believed all the way through the crowd. She knew in her heart what she had to do. She had that *all out faith* seeking God.

Again, **Hebrews 11:6-** “Now without faith it is impossible to please God. For it is mandatory *for* the one who comes to God to believe *that* He exists, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

We have the *unique* opportunity to have the same faith as the Centurion in Matthew 8.

Matthew 8:5-8- “Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, beseeching Him, And saying, “Lord, my servant is lying in the house

paralyzed and grievously tormented.” And Jesus said to him, “I will come and heal him.” But the centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under the roof *of my house*; but speak *the* word only, and my servant shall be healed.”

The Centurion knew and believed Jesus had the authority to heal his servant. We too can have this same opportunity to stand on God’s Word. The *unique* opportunity that we have is we have the complete Bible. We have been given His truth, understanding, and plan of salvation for mankind and most important, His Son Jesus Christ as our example.

John 20:29- “Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, Thomas, you have believed; blessed are the ones who have not seen but have believed.”

Luke 8:10- “And He said, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to the rest it is given in parables, so that in seeing they may not see, and in hearing they may not understand.”

We have been given the gifts of His Holy Spirit and the gift of prayer.

1 Peter 4:10-11- “*Let* each one, according as he has received a gift from God, *be using* it to serve the others as good stewards of the grace of God *which* manifests *itself* in various ways. If anyone speaks, *let it be* as *the* words of God; if anyone serves, *let it be* as from the strength which God supplies; so that in everything, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to Whom is the glory and the power into the ages of eternity. Amen.”

We have the opportunity to use this knowledge and gifts to serve God and others He *may send*. These are opportunities we do not want to miss.

Colossians 4:5-6- “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside *the church*, redeeming the time. *Let* your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how to answer each one.”

Galatians 6:8-10- “For the one who sows to his own flesh shall reap corruption from the flesh. But the one who sows to the Spirit shall reap eternal life from the Spirit. Now we should not lose heart *in* doing well because we who do not faint will reap in due time. So then, as we have opportunity, we should do good to all, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

One day, we will no longer have these *opportunities*. It will be too late. For the ones we missed, God may ask us, why?

2 Peter 3:9-11- “The Lord is not delaying the promise *of His coming*, as some in their own minds reckon delay; rather, He is longsuffering toward us, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. However, the day of *the* Lord shall come as a thief in *the* night in which the heaven itself shall disappear with a mighty roar, and *the* elements shall pass away, burning with intense heat, and *the* earth and the works in it shall be burned up. Since all these things are going to be destroyed, what kind of *persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,”

There is one more thing that opportunity does and I was saving this for last, it “knocks.”

Revelation 3:20- “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.”

If Jesus Christ is knocking on the door of your heart, open up and let Him in ***while there is still time.***

2 Peter 3:17-18- “Therefore, beloved, since you know this in advance, be on guard against *such practices*, lest you be led astray with the error of the lawless ones, *and* you fall from your own steadfastness; Rather, be growing in *the* grace and *the* knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and into *the* day of eternity. Amen.”

This is *your* window of opportunity, the door is wide open, the ball is in *your* court, jump at the chance, seize the day, take advantage of this opportunity, and don't miss the boat! Amen.

