

Don't Put It Off - Genesis 25:7-8

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Trapped!*

1. We've seen the scene probably a dozen times.
2. The hero has been caught by the villain who's tied him up and arranged an elaborate and agonizing death for him.
3. The villain gloats over his enemy, delighting in his vulnerability and imminent death.
4. Then, rather than simply ending it, he turns over an hourglass, or starts a timer, or lights a candle.
5. He turns to the helpless hero and tells him when the timer is up or the candle has burnt out, then the mechanism of death will begin its torturous work.
6. Watching the timer tick down is supposed to add to the hero's misery and sense of defeat.
7. But have you noticed in all these stories – the villain, who goes to such expense and trouble to build such a devious and elaborate means of death for his nemesis, then leaves?
 - a. instead of staying to watch his evil plan unfold,
 - b. he leaves, making some lame excuse as - he has to go push the button that will destroy the world or whatever.
 - c. you would think he'd want nothing more than to watch his enemy suffer and die.
 - d. but the villain always leaves – giving the hero the opportunity to make good his escape.

B. *Something Right*

1. While we can poke fun at the silliness of the movies and these well-worn and thread-bare plots, there's something in them that rings true.
2. That turning of the hourglass, the tripping of the timer, the lighting of the candle is a symbol of the time allotted to every one of us.
3. From the moment we're conceived, the number of our days is set .
4. At the moment we come into existence, the candle of our lives is lit, the hourglass is turned.
5. Each hour that passes is another grain of sand that drops from the upper chamber to the lower.
6. David said, [Psalm 139:16]

In Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.

7. In Psalm 90, Moses said it this way [10,12]

The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength [granola & antioxidants] they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away. . . . So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

8. That's what I want to take a look at today – the wisdom of numbering our days,
9. Of realizing that while faith in Christ brings us the promise of immortality, still, the number of our days on Earth is marked and limited, and that what we do in this life matters for eternity.
10. This life, this existence here and now provides us with a unique opportunity, and when it is gone, the choices we make now, here, today - bear eternal consequences.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 7-8

7This is the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years. **8**Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.

1. Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, the friend of God, this great man – died!
2. Though he is the prototype of the person of faith, yet still he died.
3. He lived to be 175 – that's a long, long time.
 - a. it says he was full of years, or literally “He was full!”
 - b. he ended, a success in living the life God had called him to!
 - 1) though far from perfect, Abraham had always gotten back up after falling
 - 2) though his steps of faith and obedience were halting at times, he kept moving forward, using even his failures as lesson to grow by
 - c. when he finally died, after 175 years, Abraham was FULL!
 - 1) full of faith & confidence in God, full of memories -
 - 2) with a legacy and heritage of God's grace and blessing that would lay the foundation for a nation which exists to this day, some 4000 years later!
 - d. why, it's safe to say that when he died, he even passed full of health! After all, he was 175!
4. But there came a day, that was his last day.
 - a. Abraham's hourglass saw its last grains of sand fall through the neck.
 - b. and as v. 8 says, he drew in one last breath of air, exhaled one final time, and that was it.
 - c. he stepped across that line that marks the boundary between this life and the next.
 - d. he left his people here, as the end of v. 8 says, to join his people there.
 - e. one moment he was lying amidst his physical family, and the next he was standing among his spiritual family.

B. Gathered To His People

1. When it says Abraham was gathered to his people, it means when he died, he joined all those men and women who had died in faith in God, looking for and hoping in the promise of His redemption and the promise of the Messiah/Savior made at the dawn of time.
2. He joined Adam and Eve, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, and many

- others who'd walked in faith while they lived on Earth.
3. Like Abraham, they too had all come to their last day, breathed their last, and then had stepped from this life into the next.
 4. They found that while believers & unbelievers are all mixed together in this life, in that life, there's a separation that takes place.
 - a. the believers are taken to a place of comfort while unbelievers end in a place of torment.
 - b. Jesus spoke of this in the story of the rich man & Lazarus in Luke 16.
 - 1) there was a man of great wealth who lived his life in luxury and good health.
 - 2) outside his gate day by day there lay a poor sick beggar named Lazarus, who lived off the refuse the servants of the rich man tossed out.
 - c. but as is the way of all flesh, they both died.
 - 1) because Lazarus was a believer, when he died he was carried by the angels into Paradise.
 - 2) the rich man had no faith and when he died found himself in Hades.
 - 3) seeing the comfort and joy of Lazarus at a great distance, the rich man pleaded for help.
 - 4) but he was told the barrier between Paradise and Hades was fixed – and the choice of where one spends their eternity is made **IN THIS LIFE!**
 - 5) the rich man then asked that someone go and warn his relatives who were still alive.
 - 6) but again he was told that the warning had already been given by the prophets.
 - 7) if they would not listen to them, they would not listen! And so it is.
 5. In this world, people are all mixed together, believers and unbelievers live side by side.
 6. But in the world to come, in the life that follows this life, when we breath our last and step into eternity, we'll find that people are separated into two destinies, two realms, two eternities:
 - a. believers & unbelievers / the faithful & the faithless / forgiven & sinners
 - d. saved & lost / Heaven & Hell / bliss & torment

C. Whose People Will You Be Gathered To?

1. Though Abraham lived to be 175; an old, old man, he couldn't outlive death!
2. Like he, one day, you and I will breath our last, and step from this life into the next.
3. Barring the Lord's return in the Rapture, we will all be gathered to our people!
4. And if the Rapture does come – then it has the same effect – the lesson to be learned is the same – this life, right now, counts for eternity.
5. One day, we **WILL** be gathered to our people!
6. The questions is, what people are your people? The people of faith or the people of unbelief?
7. Who will you be gathered to when you die?
8. Your fate, your eternity is determined right now. Once you've exhaled your last breath you'll have no second chance.

9. The choice of where you will spend eternity is made in this life, and as far as this life is concerned – all you have is right now, this moment. Are you using it wisely?
10. As Malcolm Forbes wrote, “Time is all we really have in life. How much of it we have, we don’t know till its run out.”

D. Don’t Put It Off

1. I’ve noticed a tendency among people in general and Christians in particular.
2. It’s the problem of procrastination.
3. We tend to put things off; we all too often take the “oughts” of life and turn them into “laters.”
4. What I mean is, we say, “I really ought to do this or that” but then quickly put it aside.
5. I ought to read my bible more, I ought to pray more. And I will, tomorrow, or right after this TV show’s over. When I’m finished with that project at work.
6. I really ought to start going to Wednesday night bible study. I will, as soon as this season of Friends is over and they start the reruns.
7. I really should start going to a home group – and I will as soon as someone invites me.
8. I really should pray with my wife on a regular basis – and as soon as we stop arguing, I will, maybe.
9. I know I ought to reconcile with my estranged brother or sister, and I will, as soon as they start acting nice to me.
10. Just this week, a brother here in the fellowship got a call his sister was in the emergency room of the hospital.
 - a. she was at the point of death.
 - b. they were estranged over some pretty heavy stuff
 - c. but what he said on the phone as he knew she had just a few hours, maybe even minutes to live was profound,
 - d. he said that right then he realized what had divided he and his sister was so petty in comparison to what united them and what ought to have seen their reconciliation.
 - e. he determined to use the little time he had left to go into her room, tell her he loved her, to ask forgiveness and seek that reconciliation.
 - f. he wanted her to share the confidence he possessed because of his faith in Christ.
 - g. she was breathing her last breaths, and he wanted some of them to be used to frame a prayer of faith in Jesus as her Savior.
11. Friend, don’t procrastinate in your obedience or faith to the Lord.
12. If there is an “ought to” or “should” in your life, turn it right now into a “done!”
13. Don’t procrastinate! Don’t say, “Later,” to the Lord.
 - a. in Exodus 22:29, the Lord cautions His people about delaying obedience.
 - b. in Matthew 21, Jesus told the story of a father who had two sons.
 - 1) to the first he said, “Go into the vineyard and work.” But the son refused.

- 2) Regretting his disobedience, he then went to work.
 - 3) the father told the second son the same thing, to go to work in the vineyard.
 - 4) He said he would, but then put it off and went and did something else.
 - 5) Jesus asked His disciples which of the sons had actually done the father's will - they rightly concluded that the first son had.
14. There are a lot of second sons in the church today – a lot of people who confuse knowledge with obedience.
 - a. they say “Yes,” but don't follow through, excusing their inaction by saying, “Well I was going to but . . . ”
 - b. they think intentions are good enough.
 - c. they think knowing what they ought to do is sufficient, it's not; never was and never will be.
 15. Delayed obedience is really just disobedience.

III. CONCLUSION

A. *No More Convenient Time*

1. These verses in Genesis 25 remind us that no matter how many years we have, this life is quickly over.
2. As Switchfoot sings –

Gone, Like yesterday is gone, Like history is gone.
 You're going, going - Gone.
 Like summer break is gone. Like Saturday is gone.
 Life is a day that doesn't last for long.
3. God would have us live with a keen sense that one day we WILL breath our last and be gathered to our people.
4. So we must use today, this time, this moment, to be busy with the things that are important.
5. As we read earlier from Psalm 90 -

Teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.
6. If the Spirit is speaking to you about some “ought to” some “should,” don't delay.
7. There's a good chance we'll never see death; that the Lord will come for us in the Rapture.
8. Are you ready? Truly ready – or will there be regrets at the unfulfilled oughts and shoulds?
9. Jesus spoke a parable about 10 virgins waiting the arrival of the groom.
 - a. when His arrival was delayed, all 10 were faced with a decision about how to spend the time while they waited.
 - b. half of them trimmed the wicks of their lamps and made sure they had plenty of oil to endure the night.
 - c. the other half were careless and saw the delay as an excuse to delay their own readiness.
 - d. to translate this into modern terms, the faithful brides bought extra batteries and an extra bulb for their flashlight, while the foolish brides said, “Oh, we

- can go get batteries later. Let's just use the batteries we have to play cards by.”
- e. as the night went on, the flashlights of the foolish brides grew dim and went out.
 - f. and in the wee hours of the morning, when the groom finally came, it was only the faithful brides with the fresh batteries who had the light to go to Him.
 - g. the foolish brides begged for batteries but there was only enough for those who'd wisely prepared.
10. Jesus's point is clear; even among His own people, those who are a part of His Bride, the Church, there are those who will regret His coming.
11. 1 John 2:28 says -

And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

12. When Jesus comes for us, there's the potential that He'll find some in the midst of compromise; their hands filled with and lives centered on worthless things; building with wood, hay and stubble while having pushed the gold, silver and precious gems of God's grace & truth to the side.
13. Don't be one of them – be an Abraham – passing from this life to that – Full!

B. Who Will You Be Gathered To? The Saved or The Lost?

1. Let me end by asking – Who will you be gathered to when you step from this life into eternity? Believers or unbelievers? The saved or the lost?
2. There's an ancient story that tells of how Satan called for a great convocation of his chief tempters.
 - a. it was their goal to develop an effective strategy for keeping people out of heaven.
 - b. there was a long silence, and then one demon rose and said, “Why don't we tell the humans that there is no God.”
 - c. Satan sneered and replied, "That would never work. God has put eternity in their hearts and they know intuitively that He exists. All they have to do is look at creation. That lie would work with a few of the less intelligent ones, but not the rest.”
 - d. there was another long silence then another demon raised his hand and said, “Let's tell them there is no right and wrong.”
 - e. many demon heads nodded up and down the table, but again, Satan just shook his head and said, “God has given them a conscience. When they sin, they feel guilt. Again, we might fool a few, but the majority will never buy it.”
 - f. an even longer period of silence settled over the conclave until the devil himself began to chuckle.
 - g. the chuckle turned into a roaring laugh and he banged the table in front of him, “I've got it,” he said, ‘We can't tell them, there is no God or there is no right and wrong. We'll just tell them there is no hurry.’”
3. And maybe that's what's being whispered in your ear right now.
4. You know you ought to give your life to Christ and receive Him as your Lord

- & Savior, but you keep delaying.
5. "Later" you say! After this or that . . .
 6. How do you now there is a later? You're not guaranteed later – you have right now and that's all.
 7. In Acts 24 we read about a man named Felix, the governor of Caesarea.
 - a. the Apostle Paul was in his prison for preaching Christ.
 - b. Felix saw something in Paul that he wanted and had Paul regularly brought to him to hear him preach
 - c. and Paul would, reasoning with him about God, and eternity, sharing with him about Christ's love and forgives.
 - d. Felix knew what Paul was saying was right and that he ought to become a Christian
 - e. but he hesitated because that meant repenting and forsaking his sin, and Felix was loath to give it up.
 - f. so he resisted, and sent Paul away, saying, "When I have a more convenient time I'll send for you again and hear what you have to say."
 - g. it never came – he was replaced as governor and never saw or heard Paul again.
 8. Don't play with eternity, don't gamble with your soul.
 9. There is no more convenient moment than this!