"Missed Opportunities"

(WASTED PRIVILEGES)
Matthew 11:20-27
12/3/2017

INTRODUCTION:

***Don't waste the spiritual privilege and opportunity you have today!**

Two reasons why people do not repent even when great opportunity exists for God to do a great work in lives:

I. UNRESPONSIVE APATHY (v. 20-24)
(Some think: *"Things are okay the way they are"*)

II. INTELLECTUAL ARROGANCE (v. 25-27)
(Some think: *"I am too 'smart' for God"*)

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ILLUS: The man ate cheese and crackers, not realizing his boat ticket included all meals on board.

Examples of blown opportunities (i.e. people who had resources, privileges, available opportunities, etc., but did not "cash in" on them, ignored them, to great ruin and loss; they did not realize what they had until it was too late). The greatest of all opportunities wasted will no doubt be made by those who came in contact with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and turned their back on it.

The people of three ancient cities in northern Galilee had the greatest opportunity as they saw and heard Jesus Christ. They witnessed most of Christ's miracles (He raised Jairus's daughter; healed the nobleman's son; exorcised the demoniac; healed Peter's mother-in-law, the woman with the bleeding hemorrhage, two blind men, the centurion's servant, the mute demoniac, and the paralytic).
And they heard most of His public messages. Yet they were totally <u>unresponsive</u> to it (11:16-17). It's not that they took any action against Jesus (they didn't oppose Him). They, like many today, simply <u>ignored</u> Him. "While the Son of God preached, taught, and performed unprecedented miracles in their midst, they carried on their lives and business as usual, seemingly unaffected" (MacArthur, p. 263).

Note prior Context: Matthew 11:16-19:
But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. (They were totally unresponsive).
For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

V. 20

***"Upbraid"* -** to reproach, revile, defame. Jesus authoritatively expressed His displeasure and disapproval of cities which disgracefully rejected the Lord's miracles and message.
"Wherein most of His mighty works were done" - Jesus performed powerful signs and wonders throughout Palestine, but the <u>majority</u> of His miracles were done in Northern Palestine. He did many, many miracles there.

He upbraided them ***"Because they repented not"*** - The Lord's strong condemnation of these cities is because they had no excuse for their unbelief. They saw His awesome miracles and heard His stirring messages, yet remained unmoved, unconvicted, unrepentant.

"Repented" - the word "repent" literally means to have a "change of mind"; to have a point of turning from unbelief to turning to faith in Christ. Christ's miracles were more than enough evidence to prove His Messiahship; His plentiful and powerful signs were more than enough to validate Him as being Lord of lords, King of kings, God of gods. They were without excuse to deny Jesus a rightful place in their lives! They had no just reasons to reject Him as their Master, Teacher, and Savior.

Man's problem is not that He lacks evidence for God's existence (Psalm 19:1-6 – "The heavens declare the glory of God…). His problem is that he refuses to accept the evidence that is available. He suppresses that knowledge (Ro. 1:18) so as to remain "unaccountable" to God and to continue his lifestyle of wickedness without a guilty conscience.

To sin against light is indeed the worse thing people can do!

> John 3:19 - And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

In Matthew 11, Jesus demonstrates that such willful ignorance is inexcusable and unjustified. Even today the world willfully remains ignorant of Christ and His relationship to God the Father despite all the evidence He gave.

"They hated Me without a cause" (John 15:25) – a prophetic fulfillment of Psalm 35:19 and 69:4. There is absolutely no reason whatsoever that anyone should hate and reject Jesus Christ!

Romans 1:20 shows how no one has an excuse to reject God or be a fool and say that there is no God. Romans 1:20 - For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Just as creation gives ample evidence for the existence of God, Christ's life, words and works give ample evidence for His messiahship. No one has any excuse who rejects the evidence of the New Testament regarding Him.

***Don't waste the spiritual privilege and opportunity you have today!**

Two reasons why people do not <u>repent</u> even when great opportunity exists for God to do a great work in lives:

I. UNRESPONSIVE APATHY (v. 20-24)

(Some think: *"Things are okay the way they are"*)

V. 21

"Woe" - a word that describes pity or sorrow because of the Judgment to come (cp. Rev. 18:10). A pronouncement of doom.

Chorzin and Bethsaida were just north of the Sea of Galilee. The Galilean region was where Christ ministered most. They saw Him and heard him.

Whereas ***"Tyre and Sidon" -*** two cities on the Mediterranean coastline of Phoenicia (located in modern Lebanon).

"Both cities were typical seaports, noted for their immorality and godlessness (even by pagan standards) and were deeply involved in the licentious Baal worship. A certain king of Tyre was so proud and evil that Ezekiel used him as a picture of Satan (Ezek. 28:11-15). The city's violence, profanity, pride, injustice, greed, and immorality were so excessive that the Lord destroyed it (vv. 16-19; cp. Jer. 25:22, 47:4)" (MacArthur, p. 264).
(For a description and the prophesied destruction of Tyre and Sidon, see: Eze. 26-28; Joel 3:4-8).)
"Sackcloth and ashes" - signs of mourning and sorrow! The sorrow is over sin.

If God's Word does not ever move us to tears, it's time for us to pray: *"God, forgive me for my calloused heart; please create in me a new, soft, pliable, moldable, responsive, submissive, believing heart."*

Jesus is saying that the people of Chrorazin and Bethsaida were more calloused and hard-hearted than Tyre and Sidon.

NOTE: When truth is seen and heard but not accepted and obeyed, it produces a hardening affect on the hearts of those who stubbornly and obstinately refuse to believe it (EX: the gospel-hardened southern USA; rebellious children in Christian schools; apathetic church members in Bible-preaching churches).

The sin of Chorazin and Bethsaida is committed today!

When God shows His infinite power and grace by saving a person and by transforming that person (giving undeniable evidence of His mighty power) and for people to coldly say: "Oh, it's just a fanatic religion," or "Oh, give them some time, they will get over this passing religious fad," -- they are committing the sin Jesus is describing.

Our prayer needs to be: "Lord, give me a tender heart to receive Your truth and a submissive will to obey Your truth."

V. 22

"Tolerable" - bearable, endurable.

Tyre and Sidon will be better able to handle (endure) their judgment than you will!

Jesus is not teaching that Tyre and Sidon will "get off the hook" and that they would somehow escape judgment or avoid paying the wages of their sin; but He is saying that their payment will not be as severe as yours will be. Their suffering will not be as intense as yours. Their pain and agony in the Lake of Fire will not be as unbearable as yours will be.

V. 23

"Capernaum" the city on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee.

"Exalted unto heaven" - the critical text views this as a question: *"Will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be. . ."* I think it is best taken as a statement (as the KJV).

"Exalted" - lifted up. In pride and self-sufficiency, with wealth, prosperity, and independence, this city viewed itself as "lifted up" (in arrogance).

"Sodom" - a city that existed south of the Dead Sea in the days of Abraham. God noted that this city was one filled with *"Pride, fullness of bread. . . abundance of idleness. . . and [greed]"* (Ezek. 16:49).

Not even <u>ten</u> righteous people lived in Sodom (Gen. 18:32).

The city of "Sodom" from which we derive the word "sodomy" is mostly remembered for its sexual immorality, particularly homosexuality (Gen. 19). God destroyed this city along with its sister Gomorrah with brimstone and fire from Heaven. The twin cities lie bury under mountains of salt to this day.

"It would have remained until this day" - Sodom was destroyed in 2,066 B.C. Jesus is saying that this city (if it had seen and heard what Capernaum did) would have remained for over 2,097 years!

Jesus is implicitly teaching us that: Righteousness <u>preserves</u> nations!

Prov. 14:34 - *"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people"*

Nations decay, rot, fall, and crumble because of <u>sin</u>! Because they forsake God and His Word (EX: Rome).

V. 24

"The day of Judgment" - this is none other than the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15 -- This will be a holy (v. 11); impartial (v. 12a, 13); honest (v. 12b), fair (v. 12c, 13b) and final (v. 14-15) judgment.)

The purpose of this judgment is <u>not</u> to determine who is lost or saved, but to:

1. <u>Demonstrate</u> the <u>justice</u> of the condemnation of all who appear ("*every mouth will be stopped*" - Rom. 3:19)

2. <u>Determine</u> the <u>degree</u> of torment to be suffered for eternity

The Bible teaches a heightened condemnation for those who had the opportunity to know the truth but did not accept the truth.

SEE: II Peter 2:21 - For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

Luke 12:47-48 - And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Luke 20:47 - And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

The people of Sodom, though they were Sodomites, will suffer less intensely than the occupants of Capernaum, who for the most part were not Sodomites! Why? Because Capernaum heard but didn't heed; they saw but didn't submit; they came into contact with truth personified but didn't repent!

The self-righteous, Pharisaical, indifferent church goer who heard God's Word but ignores it and doesn't obey it is even more repulsive in God's sight than the idolatrous and immoral pagan (MacArthur, p. 266).

"The greater the privilege, the greater the responsibility; and the greater the light, the greater the punishment for not receiving it" (MacArthur, p. 264).
John 3:19 - And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

II. INTELLECTUAL ARROGANCE (v. 25-27)

(Some think: *"I am too 'smart' for God"*)

V. 25

"At that time" - at the same time that Jesus denounced the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum (this context v. 25-27 continues the thought of v. 20-24)

"Hid these things" - hid the meaning of Christ's mighty works and mighty message.

Why would God hide truth? He hides it from those who are too proud of their own wisdom and intelligence to receive His truth.

"Wise" - Not true wisdom (Psalm 111:10; Prov. 9:10) but worldly wisdom, worldly philosophical reasoning, like that adored by the ancient Greek philosophers (Col. 2:8 - *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ"*)

(Acts 17; SEE: I Cor. 1:18-29)

"Prudent" - intelligent. Not true intelligence or knowledge, which comes only from God via His Word (Prov. 1:7, 2:6, 8:10), but again worldly intelligence that reasons out God and dismisses Biblical truth.

Some people are so "smart" they lack common sense! Some, rather than falling down and worshipping God, rather worship at the shrine of their own intellect.

The Lord does not exclude smart people from His Kingdom, but rather those who trust in their smartness and stiff-arm God's truth (EX: Paul was a brilliant, highly educated scholar...). "It is not intelligence but intellectual pride that shuts people at of the Kingdom" (MacArthur, p. 270).

Beware of the colleges or universities you send your kids to (secular humanistic, anti-God, anti-Bible thinking prevails). There is a deliberate agenda to strip away all belief in a Creator God through the "unscientific" propaganda of the theory of evolution.

"Revealed" - to uncover, to unveil, to make manifest

"Thou hast revealed" - only God via His Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:10) can illuminate men's minds to comprehend Scriptural truth (Heb. 6:4, 10:32; Eph. 1:18).

"Babes" - infants, little children, not literal infants, but people of all ages who are humble and dependent (trusting) like little children (Mt. 18:3 - *"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven."*).

It pleases God to uncover real truth to those who are humble enough to receive it. Unless one receives the Word with "meekness" (humility), he does not receive it (ja. 1:21). . . with desire like a *"babe"* (I Pet. 2:2).

V. 27

"All things" - in context refers to "people." All people who come to Jesus come to Him because the Father gives them to Him (Jn. 6:37, 39).

Only divinity can fully comprehend divinity (cp. I Cor. 2:9-16), and only God the Son can reveal God the Father to you.

No one (man or angels) fully knows (*epiginosko*) the Son except the Father, and no one fully knows the Father except the Son, and whoever the Son desires to reveal (uncover -. cp. v. 25) the Father to.

Unless Jesus opens your eyes, you will never know the Father (Jn. 14:9 - *"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"*).

Sovereignty does not exclude human responsibility to *"come"* (v. 28).

CONCLUSION:

America is a privileged nation.

Freedom, abundance of Christian literature, Bibles, churches, Christian videos, music, colleges, seminaries, Bible institutes, etc. (contrast with other countries like China, India and Muslim countries who do not have such abundance)

The problem = people in the USA are wasting their privilege and ignoring their opportunities. Our country is becoming as dark as Europe which also has wasted great spiritual privilege.

Apathy and lukewarmness abounds. God's truth is not viewed seriously. Even by multitudes who call themselves "Christian". We are busy in our land "playing the fiddle on a ship that is sinking fast!"

We at VBC are tremendously privileged! We must not forfeit such opportunity.

We must redeem the time! Buy up the opportunities!

For the Child of God, it's time to get serious about God's Word.
Ask God to help you be serious about His Truth. Hear it eagerly; Study it intently; Believe it willingly; and Obey it conscientiously.

For those without Christ, if God's Spirit is prodding your heart, it's time to finally yield to what the Spirit is showing you about Christ. This could be your final opportunity to trust Jesus Christ alone to rescue your soul from perishing. He is only a call away. You can cry out to Him right now and ask His to save you.
2 Cor. 6:2 - (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured (helped) thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)
Proverbs 27:1 - Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.