

# We'll Get There . . . Eventually

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## I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. A new employee had been caught coming in late for work three times and the fourth morning the foreman decided to read him the riot act.
  - 1. "Look here," he snapped, "don't you know what time we start work around here?"
  - 2. "No, sir," said the man, "there're always working when I get here."
- B. It certainly seems that in the church some do not know at what time worship begins.
  - 1. There are so many who habitually come in late for worship, and we can do much better.
  - 2. I'm not talking about those mornings you just can't get here on time. We all have those mornings.
    - a. The alarm clock doesn't go off, or one of the kids simply will not get up & get dressed, or you spill coffee on your suit on the way out the door and have to go back and find another one.
    - b. We've all been there & we'll likely be there again.
  - 3. We're talking rather about habit. We're talking about things in our control. We're talking changes we can make.
- C. This morning, we want to look at the need for punctuality in our gathering.
  - 1. It's not at all my desire to single anyone out or make anyone feel inferior to anyone else.
  - 2. My wife gets aggravated at me because, quite honestly, I have the opposite problem.
    - a. I hate being late so much that it's a curse to those around me.
    - b. Tammy & I almost didn't get married because of this problem.
      - i. We had a date one Saturday night; we were going to go eat and go see a movie.
      - ii. I was so wasn't going to be late & I wasn't!
      - iii. I showed up at Tammy's doorstep before she even had a chance to get a shower! She was, putting it mildly, angry!
    - c. I say that to say this: I, too, need to learn some things about time management. Most everything we'll say this morning will apply to that extreme as well.
- D. What is the teaching of the Scriptures?

## II. THIS SUBJECT IS BIBLICAL.

- A. Some might find it strange that I would preach an entire lesson about the necessity of good, solid time management.
- B. However, this is a biblical subject, one to which the Scriptures speak.
  - 1. The Scriptures teach the importance of making the proper use of our time.
    - a. "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them'; before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed" (Eccl 12:1-3).
      - i. It isn't enough for Solomon simply to honor God; God needs to be honored early in life.
      - ii. Time is of the essence, according to Solomon.
    - b. "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil" (Eph 5:15-16).
    - c. "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time" (Col 4:5).
  - 2. The subject of which we speak this morning is biblical, for the Scriptures urge us to make the best use of our time.
- C. Uninspired wise men through the ages have seen the virtue of punctuality.
  - 1. Charles Simmons: "Promptitude is not only a duty, but is also a part of good manners; it is favorable to fortune, reputation, influence, and usefulness; a little attention and energy will form the habit, so as to make it easy and delightful."

2. W. Fisk: "I give it as my deliberate and solemn conviction that the individual who is habitually tardy in meeting an appointment, will never be respected or successful in life."
3. Thomas C. Haliburton: "Punctuality is the soul of business."
4. Don Marquis: "Punctuality is one of the cardinal business virtues; always insist on it in your subordinates."
5. Lord Nelson: "I owe all my success in life to having been always a quarter of an hour before my time."
6. Louis XVIII: "Punctuality is the politeness of kings."

### III. LATENESS MISTREATS OTHERS.

#### A. Lateness disrespects others.

1. We are instructed to respect our brethren.
  - a. "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor" (Rm 12:10).
  - b. "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves" (Phil 2:3).
  - c. How does being late show disrespect?
    - i. If I walk in the assembly while you're in prayer & I interrupt your thought, how disrespectful is that?
    - ii. If I walk in during the Lord's Supper while you are examining yourself and remembering the death of Jesus, could I show you more disrespect?
    - iii. If I'm scheduled to teach your child but I come in well after class is scheduled to begin, am I not being terribly disrespectful?
2. Being late also disrespects the presence of the Lord.
  - a. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Mt 18:20).
  - b. We would be quite unlikely to be late for an appointment with someone we deemed important.
    - i. If the President of the United States were meeting you for dinner tomorrow evening, how many of you would honestly keep him waiting?
    - ii. If your boss were to meet with you in the morning to discuss a pay raise, how many of you would be late for that meeting?
  - c. Why would we, therefore, be late for a meeting with the King of kings & Lord of lords?
  - d. William Hazlitt: "Few things tend more to alienate friendship than a want of punctuality in our engagements. I have known the breach of a promise to dine or sup to break up more than one intimacy."
  - e. Shall we break up our intimacy with God & with one another?

#### B. Tardiness is also a violation of the Golden Rule.

1. "Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Mt 7:12).
2. Does it bother you when someone is late in meeting you?
3. Do you really want others to be late to worship?
  - a. If you are trying to meditate on the greatness of God, do you want someone to have you move down in the pew & interrupt your train of thought?
  - b. If you are listening to the lesson do you want someone to come in & cause you to miss part of what is being said?

#### C. God is to be first in my life.

1. God has no equal & he will accept no equal in my life.
  - a. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mk 12:30).
  - b. "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him" (Phil 3:8-9).
2. If God is first in my life, I'm going to assemble with him & his people when it's time to assemble.
  - a. God will be more important than staying in bed & getting that extra 15 minutes of sleep.
  - b. God will be more important than catching that show in the TV.
  - c. God will be more important than my chores or anything else I have going on.

3. One church placed these words on their website: "When we are late for these meetings to worship God or to learn of God, it may be indicative God is not really as important as whatever causes us to be late, be it our bodily rest, our meals, our recreation, our chores, etc. We are, of course, not saying that all lateness for the appointed means would fall into this sin. But if we are habitually late for the means, we must really examine our attitude towards the Lord. One who is generally on time for other appointments but is usually late for worship or prayer is probably experiencing severe backsliding. One who is generally late for all appointments is probably also suffering some form of tardiness in the soul. No one who genuinely loves Christ can be late for an appointment with him without feeling shame and embarrassment."
4. In the Parable of the Great Banquet, Jesus tells of the importance of placing him above the duties of life.
  - a. Lk 14:16-20. Because his invited guests were busy with many pursuits, "the master of the house became angry" (v 21).
  - b. How angry to you suppose it makes the One who died for our sins, the One who gave up so much for us, that we can't spare five more minutes to arrive on time?
5. The prophet Haggai also speaks pointedly to this whole issue.
  - a. Haggai prophesies about 16 years after the return of the people from Babylonian Captivity.
    - i. The temple had not yet been rebuilt, but it was left in ruins.
    - ii. The people kept saying that they were too busy & didn't have time to rebuild God's house.
  - b. The Lord sent a drought upon the people. Why?
    - i. "Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house" (Hag 1:9).
    - ii. The people had time for their own houses, for their own interests, for their own pursuits, but they had no time for God's house, God's interests, or God's pursuits.
    - iii. How much time do we have for God's house, God's interests, & God's pursuits?
  - c. Someone once said: "If you are too busy to spend time with God, you are too busy!"
- D. Not only does God need to be first in my life, but he deserves the praise of his people.
  1. "Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God!" (Ps 48:1).
  2. Around the throne of God are 24 elders who continually say: "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (Rv 4:11).
  3. If I come in late for worship, I have denied God that praise, glory, and honor he so rightly deserves!
    - a. If I miss a song, those are words of praise I could have given to God, but I have failed to do so.
    - b. If I miss a prayer, that's time I've missed falling down on my face in front of a holy God.
    - c. If I come to Bible class late, I have missed hearing the words of the Great I Am.

#### IV. LATENESS ROBS ME OF OPPORTUNITIES.

- A. Others have spoken in this regard.
  1. Niccolo Machiavelli: "Tardiness often robs us opportunity, and the dispatch of our forces."
  2. Freeman Hunt: "The best-laid plans, the most important affairs, the fortunes of individuals, the wealth of nations, honor, life itself, are daily sacrificed because somebody is 'behind time.' There are men who always fail in whatever they undertake simply because they are 'behind time.' There are others who put off reformation year by year, till death seizes them; and they perish unrepentant, because for ever 'behind time.' Five minutes in a crisis is worth years. It is but a little period, yet it has often saved a fortune or redeemed a people. If there is one virtue that should be cultivated more than another by him who would succeed in life, it is punctuality; if there is one error that should be avoided, it is being 'behind time.'"
- B. What opportunities do we miss by being late to worship?
  1. We miss the opportunity to fellowship with our brethren.
    - a. The church is a fellowshiping community.
      - i. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).
      - ii. "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2).
        - a) If I come in late & leave as soon as the last "Amen" is pronounced, how am I going to know my brethren well enough to know what their burdens are?

- b) If I don't know my brethren's burdens, how can I bear their burdens and fulfill the law of Christ?
  - b. Let us not neglect to fellowship with our brothers & sisters!
2. We also miss the opportunity to be of service if there is a last minute need.
  - a. What if I were to break my leg coming over to the building one snowing morning? If you aren't here, how can you help by teaching my Bible class or looking for a teacher or watching the kids so Tammy can take me to the ER?
  - b. What if Larry needs one more person to serve the Lord's Supper? If you aren't here, you aren't going to be able to step up where you're needed?
3. If you come in late, you will miss hearing any truth that was presented prior to your arrival.

## V. CONCLUSION.

- A. Solomon said, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (Eccl 9:10).
  1. While the wise sage was not speaking of the worship assembly, the principle certainly applies.
  2. Let us commit ourselves to working in the assembly of the Lord with our might.
- B. William Shakespeare once said, "Better three hours too soon than a minute too late."
  1. As I mentioned before, that motto has caused my good wife a great deal of grief; we don't need to be that extreme, either. But, we do need to be careful that we aren't habitually late to worship the Father.
  2. While we don't need to be three hours early for worship, it is certainly better to become a Christian sooner rather than later.
    - a. How many people have thought, "I'm going to become a Christian one of these days," yet were called to meet Jesus before "one of these days"?
    - b. Far too many have experienced the tragedy of being late.
      - i. Saul experienced such tragedy.
        - a) 1 Sm 15:24-26.
        - b) Saul wanted to repent, but he was too tardy!
      - ii. Judas experienced such tragedy.
        - a) Mt 27:3.
        - b) Judas apparently didn't think that Jesus would really be killed because of his betrayal, and when he saw that he would be, he was too tardy!
      - iii. Shall you experience such tragedy, or shall you refuse to be late?