

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

Church of Christ
371 W. Main Street
Greenwood, IN 46142
(317)888-8288

www.churchofchristatgreenwood.org

VOLUME 6 NO. 20

AUGUST 2, 2009

Planning

By Terry Bennett

"The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men, Gang aft agley, An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain, For promis'd joy!" This quote from Robert Burns' poem "To A Mouse" is many times rendered: "The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry." Burns wrote the poem after accidentally destroying a mouse's nest while plowing a field. When the mouse had thought she was well-prepared for the winter in her nest on the ground, she now must try to survive the harsh weather with little hope. Burns' point seems to be that regardless of the time and effort put into planning, the unexpected can still occur. In the words of the Preacher, "**The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all.**" (Eccl 9:11).

In II Chronicles 14, King Asa faced an Ethiopian army that greatly outnumbered the armies of Judah and Benjamin. "**And Asa cried out to the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!**" (II Chron 14:11). After this, the Lord struck the Ethiopian army and caused their defeat.

Several years later, the king of Israel came up against Asa, king of Judah. Asa looked to Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, for assistance. He offered Ben-Hadad silver and gold to break his treaty with Israel and support Judah. After the Syrians had defeated

2

the Israelite army, "Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him: 'Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand.'" (II Chron 16:7).

Why did Asa seek the Lord's assistance in one case but not the other? Had he forgotten how the Lord had helped against the Ethiopian army? Is it possible that perhaps Asa had begun to take credit for that victory himself? Maybe Asa felt he was more experienced and in better control so that he knew what to do when he faced the Israelites.

In Luke 12, Jesus tells a parable about a rich man who prospered greatly so that he no longer had sufficient room to store his crops. The man decided to pull down his current barns and build bigger ones. While there is nothing wrong with building bigger barns, we gain more insight into his attitude when we read his next thoughts: "**And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'**" (Luke 12:19). Where were the man's thoughts about the Lord? He does not seem to have thanked God for the prosperity he received nor included Him in plans for the future. The result was that the man's soul was required of him that night.

We are cautioned about leaving the Lord out of our plans in James 4:13-15. "**Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.'**" (Jam 4:15). The point is not to simply add the phrase "if the Lord wills" onto every statement we make. We must recognize the God has control over life, over death, and over all things. There is nothing in life over which we have complete and utter control, but we can be the children of One who does!

How often do we try to seize control of things without consulting God? How often do we leave the Lord out of our plans? How many times do we plot our own course and then almost as an afterthought, ask the Lord to bless what we are going to do anyway? How often do we treat prayer as a last resort rather than a first response?

Let each of us look first to the Lord in all our plans.
“O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”
 (Jer. 10:23).

Set Thine House in Order

A Selected Article

"...Thus saith the Lord, set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." (Isaiah 38:1)

These words from the pen of Isaiah the prophet were addressed to Hezekiah, the king. Death plays no favorites; his sickle reaps the king on the throne, and the slave working in the field. It claims the elderly on the bed of pain and suffering, but it takes a tragic toll of young people as well, for the young die too. In the democracy of death, some one has said, that all men are equal. The rich man is divested of his wealth, and Lazarus lays aside his rags, and every person gives account of himself to God (2 Corinthians 5:10). Surely, every sensible and intelligent person needs to give consideration to this challenging command, **"Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live"**

Remember that those who are prepared to die, are most fit to live. Thousands spend their lives in pursuit of sinful pleasures, without ever giving a thought to "setting their houses in order." Jesus once spoke of a certain man who said, **"Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry, but God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."** Such fools have always been plentiful. One may say there is no God, (Psalms 14:1), while another says **"God is dead"** and continues to make a mock of sin, (Proverbs 14:9). The way of every fool is right in his own eyes, (Proverbs 12:15). The drunkard tries to justify his drunkenness, the adulterer his infidelity, the thief his dishonesty, and the liar his falsehoods.

Isaiah gave a remedy for such sinners when he said, **"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his**

thoughts: and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). Let's set our house in order, and keep it in order. •