

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES **(Acts 24:22-27)**

I. Joshua missed an opportunity to use God (Joshua 9:1-15).

- A. When God allowed the children of Israel to finally enter the Promised Land, He commanded them to destroy all the people of the land (Deuteronomy 7:1-2).
- B. When the people entered the land, that is exactly what they did at Jericho and Ai.
- C. However, one group of people came to Joshua and the leaders of the people with deceit.
 - 1. The Gibeonites heard of the conquests by God's people and they decided to try and trick them into making a league with them.
 - 2. Notice vs. 3-13.
- D. These people were trying their best to not be destroyed.
 - 1. No one can blame them can they?
 - 2. The whole land was fearful of the Israelites, just as Rahab had pointed out to the spies that came to Jericho (Joshua 2:8-11).
- E. Sadly, Joshua and the princes of the Israelites agreed to make a league with the Gibeonites.
- F. Notice Joshua 9:14.
 - 1. They didn't ask the counsel of God.
 - 2. God had directed them for 40 years.
 - 3. God had led them to victory at Jericho and Ai.
 - 4. In this instance, all they would have had to do is ask wisdom from God, but they failed to seek His counsel.
- G. God was there to be used by them, and wanted to be used by them, and they didn't use Him.
- H. How many times have we been guilty of such a thing?
 - 1. Some event was coming and we never asked God's counsel.
 - 2. God has promised to give us wisdom if we ask (James 1:5).
 - 3. God's word is always with us, but how many times have we ignored it when making a decision?
 - 4. God's throne is able to be approached through prayer, but often times it is avoided instead.
- I. When faced with a decision, let's use God not avoid Him.
- J. He wants us to approach Him in prayer.
- K. He wants us to come to His word in study.
- L. He wants us to use His people that have shown wisdom.
- M. Let's be those who use God instead of avoid Him (Proverbs 14:12).

II. Felix asked Paul to go away (Acts 24:22-27).

- A. Paul had been taken out of Jerusalem and brought to Caesarea because of a plot by the Jews to kill him.
- B. While in Caesarea, Paul had several different trials and was able to speak for himself, which allowed him to preach.
- C. Felix, the governor of the area, had an opportunity, along with his wife Drusilla, to hear Paul preach.
 - 1. Drusilla was a Jew.

2. She had probably heard of the things going on in Jerusalem and wanted to know more.
 3. Who better to teach her than Paul the apostle.
- D. Felix missed tremendous opportunities to obey the gospel.
1. He was in the right place at the right time.
 2. He got to hear the gospel from the mouth of one of the Lord's apostles.
 3. He heard a sermon specifically preached for him.
 - a. This was not a public trial.
 - b. This was a face to face event where Paul got to preach specifically to him and his wife.
 - c. Paul taught him about three things he, and all of us, needed to hear: righteousness, self-control and future judgment.
 4. Felix had an emotional response to the message.
 - a. Felix became afraid.
 - b. He heard a message and was made aware of his situation and it frightened him.
 - (1) I know fear, emotion really, is not a foundation on which one can base his life.
 - (2) However, emotions bring about change in one's life.
 5. He even had future chances (Acts 24:26).
- E. It may be that there are some in this room that have missed tremendous opportunities to obey the gospel.
1. You've heard numerous sermons on the condition of one who is lost eternally.
 2. You've heard sermons about God's desire and plan for you to be saved.
 3. You've heard sermons about the glories of heaven.
- F. It may be that, as you've heard these sermons, you've had an emotional response.
1. I've seen white knuckles gripping the pew in front of them.
 2. It may be your stomach was churning, knowing you need to respond in obedience to the gospel message.
- G. What is holding you back?
- H. We never read of Felix obeying the gospel that Paul preached to him.
- I. Don't let that be the case in your life.
- J. Don't tell the messenger to go away.

III. The Gadarenes asked Jesus to leave (Mark 5:1-17).

- A. The morning after Jesus calmed the Sea of Galilee, He and His disciples arrived on the other side in the country of the Gadarenes.
1. This was an area that was Jewish.
 2. However, many of the Jews in that area had been influenced by the Greek culture.
- B. When Jesus and the disciples came out of the boat a man possessed by a legion of demons came to him.
1. This man had long lived in the area and plagued the people of that region because he could not be controlled.
 2. The demons attested to who Jesus was, calling Him the Son of the Most High.

C. Jesus cast the demons out of the man and they were allowed to go into a herd of swine.

1. We know that the swine ran off the edge of a cliff and were destroyed in the sea.

2. The ones keeping the swine ran into the city and told the people what had taken place, which caused them to come out and see Jesus.

D. What happened next has always amazed me.

1. Here were people who were in a covenant relationship with God, having been born Jews.

2. These were people who should have been looking for the Messiah.

3. Even if they hadn't been, standing in front of them in his right mind was a man who had terrorized them.

4. Not only that, this was a man who had probably been known to many of them before becoming possessed.

5. Jesus had healed that man.

6. Their reaction should have been that of great joy and expressions of their appreciation to Jesus for healing the man and helping them.

7. That's not what happened is it?

8. They pleaded with Jesus to leave.

E. They had the Messiah right there in front of them and they asked Him to leave.

F. I doubt any of us who are in a right relationship with Jesus would ever do that intentionally the way these people did.

G. But, how many of us do this unintentionally?

H. You might be asking, "How in the world can we do that"?

1. What are we doing when we willfully commit sin?

2. What are we doing when we drink alcohol?

3. What are we doing when we lie?

4. What are we doing when we use profane language?

5. What are we doing when we fail to heed the commands of the Lord to be evangelistic?

6. What are we doing when we seek things of the world first instead of His kingdom?

7. What are we doing when we fail to give as we've been prospered?

I. I truly don't believe any of us would look Jesus in the eye and plead with Him to depart from us, but that is exactly what we do when we choose to sin over staying faithful to Him.

J. Those people missed the opportunity to have the Lord in their midst and for Him to do great things in their lives.

K. We miss that opportunity as children of God when we choose sin over our Savior.