

BEING ON TIME

By Shad Williams



It was on Saturday morning, January 21, 1984 that one of the most memorable and sobering events of my life and ministry took place. I was conducting an evangelistic campaign in Illigan City on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines. At 10:00 that morning I spoke to a group of 500 high school ROTC cadets in a special assembly that had been arranged on a college campus just for the purpose of allowing our team to present the Gospel. I remember vividly the students sitting there in the bleachers that lined a concrete basketball court. They were all dressed in uniform and listened intently as I shared with them how to know Jesus. When I gave the invitation to receive Christ, about 300 of them responded. Afterward we rushed to a noon meeting of the local Rotary Club where I shared Christ with a group of businessmen, never realizing that when we returned to the college that same night for a crusade service we would hear some of the most shocking news I had ever heard.

At 7:00 in the evening we arrived at the place where we had been in the morning, and upon our arrival I realized that the mood and atmosphere of the place seemed very somber. We asked a local pastor what was going on, and then he told us the story. He said that after we left the morning meeting some of the boys stayed to play basketball during the afternoon. The goals were portable and were supposed to be weighted on the back with concrete blocks so they would not fall over, but one wasn't. During the game one of the boys threw his tee shirt up on the net of the non-weighted goal. He reached up to pull it down, and as he turned to walk away the heavy backboard fell forward, struck him in the back of the head and pushed him to the concrete. He was killed instantly.

The pastor led us over to the spot where the tragic event took place. There we found a pool of blood about four feet in diameter. Sitting on the bloodstain was an old wooden chair and on the chair was a lit candle. The flickering flame seemed to symbolize the life of that young boy. The sadness and sense of tragedy was almost overwhelming, but then the pastor told us that he knew the boy was in heaven and why. He said that the boy's name was Earl Sanchez, he was fifteen years old and at 10:30 that morning he asked Jesus to come into his heart. He was one of the 300 who responded. When young Earl Sanchez made the life-changing decision to receive what Jesus had done for him on the cross, he had no idea that in four hours his life would come to an end and he would be in eternity.

Before the crusade service started I asked our team to form a circle around that bloodstain and join me in prayer. As we held hands I looked at that flickering candle flame and my mind went back to the few days before we departed for the campaign. I remembered how severe the struggle was to even get on the plane. I remembered the spiritual battle we had been through and how I almost gave up. I recalled the Friday afternoon before our Tuesday departure. The time to leave was drawing close, we had no money, and there seemed to be absolutely nothing I could do about it. I had prayed and struggled and battled for days and had come to the point of thinking seriously about just canceling the project. I paced up and down in our den and prayed, and as I did, all of a sudden, I seemed to hear God say in my heart, "Shad, the money is there, but satan is sitting on it. Take authority in My Name and in My Word, on the ground of the cross, by the power of the shed blood of Jesus and command that it be released." I felt awkward, fearful and unsure of myself, but I did as God instructed. I stood in the middle of the floor and commanded satan in a loud voice to release our money. Then I knelt down and asked God to put His seal upon it, and as I did I sensed in my spirit that the lock had been broken and the money had been released. An assurance of God's provision flooded my heart, and I knew in my spirit that it was accomplished. I began praising God, by faith, for His unseen provision. That took place at about 2:00 in the afternoon, and at 3:00 a knock came at my kitchen door. When I opened the door, there stood a dear brother in Christ with a check in his hand. He handed it to me and said, "Shad, God told me to bring you this and I had to do it right now. So, here it is." It was the exact amount that we needed.

As we held hands and prayed around that pool of blood, I thought about how easy it would have been to give up on that project. I shuddered to think about just how close I came to doing just that so that I could get out from under the pressure of the battle. I thought about how awful it was of me to come so close to giving up on God's will simply for an apparent lack of money. Then I prayed, "Oh God, forgive me for even considering giving up. Lord, help us not only to always go, but help us to always be on time."

In the mid 1860s a young English missionary to China, James Hudson Taylor, was traveling by ship along the coast and was accompanied by a young, newly married, Chinese man named Peter. The young man was not yet saved, and Hudson Taylor was sharing Christ with him as they traveled. One day Mr. Taylor went below to his cabin to take a rest, and just as he lay down he heard some one shout, "Man overboard!" He sprang to the deck and noticed right away that it was Peter who was missing. He jumped overboard himself and began looking around frantically for his unsaved friend. Finally he spotted him. He also caught sight of two men in a small boat who were fishing with a net. He cried out to them,

"Please, there is a man over there drowning - save life, save life!" Then the fishermen called back to him, "We're busy fishing, it is not convenient." Hudson pleaded with them and they asked, "How much will you pay us?" "I'll give you five dollars." "That's not enough", they said. Hudson called out again, "I will give you all I have - about fourteen dollars." With that they rowed to the spot where Peter was, cast the net, and pulled him in on the first try. They brought him to the deck of the ship and Hudson Taylor worked to revive him, but it was too late. Peter was dead. They could have easily saved the young man - if they had been on time.

A couple of years ago Sheila and I were on a campaign in Kenya, and when we returned home a dear sister in Christ that attends our church told us a story. She said that one night while we were away, God woke her up at 4:00 and told her to get out of bed and pray for our safety and protection. She said that she had no idea what it was about, but she knew she had to do it. So she obeyed the Holy Spirit, got on her knees beside her bed, and prayed until she sensed that we were safe. In looking back over the calendar and the schedule of meetings we realized that at the precise time she was praying we had gotten into a very dangerous situation that could have cost us our lives and God delivered us without incident. Do you think it was coincidental that that lady was led to pray at the very moment we needed God's supernatural protection? No way! Not only was she obedient, but she was right on time!

Dear Christian, there are two essential elements in our walk with God - His WILL and His TIMING. They go together. It is important to remember that as Believers we live in two worlds at the same time - the natural physical world and the supernatural, spiritual world. Sometimes the will of God revealed to us from the spiritual world does not "make sense" to our natural intellect and His timing does not seem to conveniently coincide with our schedule or routine. Regardless of all that, however, the time to obey God is immediately. I used to tell my kids that "DELAYED obedience is DIS-obedience", and disobedience costs every time. It costs you, it costs the Kingdom of God, and it costs the one whom God is seeking to bless through your obedience. Dear Christian, we must take the time to know the will of God and we must be sensitive to His timing. It is simply part of being a Spirit-led, Spirit filled Child of God.

About a month ago I woke up at about 3:30 in the morning, and as soon as I did, the Holy Spirit told me to get up and meet with the "Committee". I had gone to bed late and was tired. But I knew it would cost me if I did not get up and attend the meeting. So I got up and went into the study and started to sit down in my rocker where I normally sit and pray. The Holy Spirit very clearly said, "No, go upstairs." I reached for my large Bible and then He said, "No, take the small one." I then reached for my Oswald Chambers devotional and He said, "No, you don't need that - take your prayer list and a pen." So I stuck the prayer list in the Bible and went upstairs. I knelt to pray, and as I did I opened the Bible to the place where I had inserted the prayer list. My eyes fell upon a verse of Scripture that God powerfully used to communicate with me and instruct me. As I knelt, my attention was drawn to a painting on the wall that God used to speak to me concerning spiritual warfare. Then He took me to the list. When I arose from my knees it was now daylight and I knew that many things had been settled. A tremendous breakthrough had been experienced that would not have happened had I not met with God at THAT time, in THAT place, and in THAT way. An assurance concerning the will of God about many things was arrived at in my heart that morning and is intact at this very moment. I am convinced that I have that assurance because I was on time to get it - and, I could have easily missed it.

Dear Christian friend, are you on time? Is God calling you to meet with Him for worship and fellowship in the first hours of the day? I assure you He is. Are you obedient to His voice? Are you faithfully getting up and meeting with the only "Committee" (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) that can give you dead-on accurate instruction and guidance for your life? Has God told you to go and share Christ with some one? Have you done it? Are you on time? A friend of mine told me that a few weeks ago he was attending a golf tournament and God told him to witness to a man there and do it right now. My friend testified that he fully intended to do it, but he hesitated. While he hesitated the man had a heart attack and died. The opportunity was lost and it cost everyone.

Has God told you to give? Have you done it? Are you on time? Are you hesitating and waiting until you "can afford it"? What has God prompted you in your heart to give - money, stocks, car, clothes, house, jewelry, what? Does it "make sense"? Probably not. Is it convenient? Likely not. Does it conform to "good business sense"? Doubtful. Will it tax your emotions to let go of it? Possibly. Is it God's will? Yes - if there is a persistency in your spirit that just will not go away. If you feel disturbed by resisting God's apparent leading, then it is very likely the will of God. The sooner you obey, the sooner you will experience the peace and joy of God that always comes as a confirmation of His will. Just do it, and for the sake of His Kingdom - be on time.

Dear friend, hesitation is unbelief, the thing God hates most. The word "doubt" in Mark 11:23 means "to hesitate". The word "believe" means to "act". The passage tells us that if we will not hesitate, but act upon the will of God, then the thing we are asking for will come to pass. Get alone with God and allow Him to speak to you, and when He does, obey Him immediately. Whatever the cost of obedience, it will not be nearly the cost of disobedience. If God says go - go NOW. If He says give - give NOW. If He says pray - pray NOW. If He says witness - witness NOW. If He says get up and worship Me - get up NOW. A very simple rule for the successful, God-honoring Christian life is to know what God says, do it, and be on time.