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2700-PLUS SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS (O-TOPICS)
Compiled and Arranged Topically by Duane V. Maxey

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OBEDIENCE

1613 -- CLINGING TO FALSE SECURITIES

When the Wasp, one of America's great naval vessels in World War II, caught fire and began to sink, the sailors were ordered to abandon ship and swim away from the vessel immediately. They jumped overboard, but instead of trusting their well-tested life jackets for safety many clung to the sides of the ship. When the vessel plunged beneath the surface, these sailors were sucked down with it.

We as Christians make similar blunders in our relationship with Jesus. We tend to forget His instructions. Then when trials come, instead of relying on His promises we cling to false securities as those frightened sailors did. Or we look at our frightening circumstances and push the panic button.

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OBEDIENCE

1614 -- SAVED THROUGH INSTANT OBEDIENCE

Bible teacher Donald Grey Barnhouse (1895-1960) told the following story: A young son of a missionary couple in Zaire was playing in the yard. Suddenly the voice of the boy's father rang out from the porch, "Philip, obey me instantly! Drop to your stomach!" Immediately the youngster did as his father commanded. "Now crawl toward me as fast as you can!" The boy obeyed. "Stand up and run to me!" Philip responded unquestioningly and ran to his father's arms.

As the youngster turned to look at the tree by which he had been playing, he saw a large deadly snake hanging from one of the branches! At the first command of his father, Philip could have hesitated and asked, "Why do you want me to do that?" Or he could have casually replied, "In a minute." But his instant obedience without questioning saved his life!

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OBEDIENCE -- BLESSINGS PROMISED FOR

1615 -- IF YOU RETURNED THE QUARTER

One evening an evangelist preached with great zeal on the text, "Thou shalt not steal." He impressed upon his listeners the necessity of absolute integrity in everything. The next morning he boarded a bus and gave the driver a dollar bill for his fare. Counting his change, he found that he had received an extra quarter. Without hesitation he approached the driver and said, "You accidentally gave me too much change."

"It wasn't an accident," the driver replied. "I did it on purpose to see what you would do. Last night I was in your audience and wondered if you practiced what you preached. I made up my mind if you returned the quarter, I'd come and hear you tonight." -- Moody

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OBEDIENCE -- TO CHRIST

1616 -- OBEYING IMPLICITLY

I have stood on the deck of a ship while she was toiling up stream, with wind and water against her, and I have gone up to the man at the wheel and said: "Jack, why don't you ease her off a point or two? You see how it would relieve her." But the answer was: "No, I can't; that is the point of the compass the captain gave me, and I must keep her to it." "But man," I remonstrated, "if you keep her as she is, soon the bulwarks will be stove in, and there is every chance that under this fearful strain she may spring a leak."

"That is none of my business; it is the captain's lookout. All I have to do is to obey his orders," was the man's answer. The captain, however, understood his business, and we arrived safe in harbor. Sometimes, if we do exactly as Christ commands, it appears as if our business would be ruined, our reputation lost, as if indeed we should be totally wrecked. That, however, is the Captain's lookout. All we have to do is to implicitly obey. -- William Scott

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OBEDIENCE -- TO GOD

1617 -- RIGHTLY FREE ONLY IN OBEDIENCE

Everybody longs for freedom. But for many people its pursuit leads to bondage. The greatly loved Bible teacher Henrietta Mears knew the secret of true freedom, and she wanted her students to know it too. With young people in mind, she said, "A bird is free in the air. Place a bird in the water and he has lost his liberty. A fish is free in the water, but leave him on the sand and he perishes. He is out of his realm. So, young people, the Christian is free when he does the will of God and is obedient to God's command. This is as natural a realm for God's child as the water is for the fish, or the air for the bird."

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OBEDIENCE -- TO GOD

1618 -- STAY HERE AND KEEP THEM

A church member went to his pastor, Phillips Brooks, to tell him he was going to the Holy Land. He said that it was his intention to visit Mount Sinai. "In fact," the man told the minister, "I plan to climb to the top of that mountain and when I get there read aloud the Ten Commandments."

Thinking this would please Dr. Brooks, the church member was surprised to hear his pastor say, "You know, I can think of something even better than that." The man responded, "You can, Pastor? And what might that be?"

Brooks replied rather bluntly, "Just this. Instead of traveling thousands of miles to read the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, why not stay right here at home and keep them?"

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OIL OF GOD'S SPIRIT -- SUPPLIED FOR A PURPOSE

1619 -- THE OIL GIVEN FOR ONE PURPOSE

The story is told of a lighthouse keeper who worked on a rocky stretch of coastline and who received his new supply of oil once a month to keep the light burning. Not being far from shore, he had frequent guests. One night a woman from the village begged some oil to keep her family warm. Another time a father asked for some to use in his lamp. Another needed some to lubricate a wheel. Since all the requests seemed legitimate, the lighthouse keeper tried to please everyone and granted them all.

Toward the end of the month he noticed that the supply of oil was very low. Soon, it was gone, and the beacon light went out. That night several ships were wrecked and lives were lost. When the authorities investigated, the man was very repentant. To his excuses and pleading their reply was: "You were given the oil for one purpose -- to keep that light burning!"

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OLD AGE

1620 -- PERSPECTIVE

How's this for a great perspective on life when you're 100 years young?

Henry Stenhouse, a 100 year old Goldsboro, N.C. eye doctor running for Congress in North Carolina's 3rd District, figures time is on his side. He calls his two opponents in today's Republican primary "capable." But, he says, "They don't have the advantage I have." What's that? "Perspective," says the man aiming to be Congress's first centenarian. The district hasn't had a GOP representative since Reconstruction, but Stenhouse is undeterred.

His platform: Stop foreign aid. End welfare. Rewrite the tax code. He calls child care "another welfare thing" and says the country would be better off if women stayed home.

Stenhouse vows not to serve more than two terms. "I don't want to be there all my life," he reasons. -- Desda Moss

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OLD AGE

1621 -- THE NIGHT TRAIN

In one of Bruce Catton's final books, *Waiting for the Morning Train*, he captured this sense of passage as only he could: "Early youth is exactly like old age: it is a time of waiting for a big trip to an unknown destination. The chief difference is that youth waits for the morning limited and age waits for the night train." -- *Reader's Digest*

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OLD AGE

1622 -- YOU LOOK REASONABLY FIT

"On Winston Churchill's seventy-fifth birthday, a photographer said, 'I hope sir, that I will shoot your picture on your hundredth birthday.' Churchill answered: 'I don't see why not, young man. You look reasonably fit and healthy'." -- *William Manchester*

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OLD AGE -- DIMNESS OF VISION

1623 -- FAMOUS FUTURE FAILURES

In the last century, Lord Kelvin, a physicist and president of Britain's prestigious Royal Society, stated that "radio has no future". He also contended that "heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible" and that "X-rays will prove to be a hoax." About the same time, a British parliamentary committee dismissed Thomas Edison's incandescent lamp as "unworthy of attention of practical or scientific men". In 1989 the director of the United States Patent Office urged President William McKinley to close down the office because "everything that can be invented has been invented."

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OLD AGE -- DIMNESS OF VISION

1624 -- THEIR LOST VISION

In a "Leadership" magazine article, Lynn Anderson described what happens when a people lose their vision. A group of pilgrims landed on the shores of America about 350 years ago. With great vision and courage they had come to settle in the new land. In the first year they established a town. In the second, they elected a town council. In the third, the government proposed building a road 5 miles westward into the wilderness. But in the fourth year the people tried to impeach the

town council because they thought such a road into the forest was a waste of public funds. Somehow these forward-looking people had lost their vision. Once able to see across oceans, they now could not look 5 miles into the wilderness.

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OLD AGE -- EXAMPLES OF VIGOROUS

1625 -- FOR WHOM THE WORLD STANDS ASIDE

"The world stands aside," said David Jordan, "to let anyone pass who knows where he is going." This applies to those, who learn where they are going late in life as well as for the young. At age 53, Margaret Thatcher became Britain's first female prime minister. At 64, Francis Chichester sailed alone around the world in a 53-foot yacht. At 65, Winston Churchill became British prime minister for the first time and started the epic struggle against Hitler. At 72, Golda Meir became prime minister of Israel. At 75, Ed Delano of California bicycled 3100 miles in 33 days to attend his 50th college reunion in Worcester, Massachusetts. At 76, Cardinal Angelo Roncalli became Pope John XXIII and inaugurated major changes in his church. At 80, Grandma Moses, who had started painting in her late 70s, had her first one-woman exhibit. At 81, Benjamin Franklin skillfully mediated between disagreeing factions at the U. S. Constitutional Convention. At 80, Winston Churchill returned to the House of Commons as a member of parliament and also exhibited 62 of his paintings. At 96, George C. Selbach scored a 110-yard hole-in-one at Indian River, Michigan. And on his 100th birthday, ragtime pianist Eubie Blake exclaimed, "If I'd known I was going to live this long, I'd have taken better care of myself."

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OLD AGE -- EXAMPLES OF VIGOROUS

1626 -- THE SAME OFFENSE IN 1847

This Gem of the Day came from Lorin Hess of Salt Lake City. It was seen in Modern Maturity magazine: A preppy-looking man was arrested for peddling "Fountain of Youth" pills that promised to reverse the aging process. When he came before the judge, His Honor was outraged at such a scam and asked if the man had a record of prior arrests. "Yes, indeed," said the prosecutor, referring to her notes. "He was arrested for the same offense in 1981, 1965, 1942, 1908, 1873, 1847..."

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OLD AGE -- FEEBLENESS IN

1627 -- ADAMS' FRAIL TENEMENT

In 1846 former president John Quincy Adams suffered a stroke. Although he returned to Congress the following year, his health was clearly failing. Daniel Webster described his last

meeting with Adams: "Someone, a friend of his came in and made particular inquiry of his health. Adams answered, 'I inhabit a weak, frail, decayed tenement; battered by the winds and broken in upon by the storms, and, from all I can learn, the landlord does not intend to repair.'"

For most people, the approach of death is signaled by failures in mind and body. Once young and vigorous men and women watch helplessly as their aging bodies fail. But death did not claim Jesus Christ as a helpless victim. Instead, Jesus set His face toward Jerusalem and journeyed to the place where He would overcome death.

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OLD AGE -- FEEBLENESS IN

1628 -- OLD FOLKS

The preacher came to call the other day. He said at my age I should be thinking about the hereafter. I told him, oh, I do all the time. No matter where I am, in the parlor, upstairs, in the kitchen, or down in the basement, I ask myself, "Now, what am I here after?" -- Village Meadows Gazette

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OLD TESTAMENT

1629 -- A CHAPTER FOR CHRISTIANS

A young converted Jewess, daughter of a New York rabbi, tells this story:

My father taught me to read the Bible in Hebrew when a young child. We began at Genesis. When we came to Isaiah he skipped the fifty-third chapter. I asked him why. He said it was not necessary for Jews to read that chapter. I became more curious. I asked him who it was for, and he said Christians. I asked him what the Christian Bible was doing in our Bible. He became very angry and told me to keep quiet. He said again it was not necessary to read it.

I wondered why God would put unnecessary things in the Bible. I copied the fifty-third chapter on paper and carried it in my stocking for two years until I came to America -- the free country. I looked at it at night and every chance I could without being seen. I took better care of that paper than people do of money.

Through reading this wonderful chapter I was led to accept Christ as my Saviour. I was walking in New York one day and heard a lady reading this chapter. She explained that it referred to Jesus Christ. It satisfied me completely. -- Sunday School Times

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OMNIPRESENCE

1630 -- AT THE PASSING OF WESLEY'S MOTHER

When Susanna Wesley was on her deathbed, she gathered her children around her. As she neared the end and was about to be called home to Glory, she admonished them not to weep but rather to "sing a hymn of praise." Then with her last breath she reminded them that the greatest comfort we have in any circumstance is the fact that "God is with us"!

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OMNIPRESENCE

1631 -- WHERE IS GOD?

He was just a little lad, and on a Sabbath day was wandering home from Sunday school, and was dawdling on his way. He scuffed his shoes into the grass; he found a caterpillar; he found a fluffy milkweed pod and blew out all the "filler". A bird's nest in the tree overhead, so wisely placed and high, was just another wonder that caught his eager eye. A neighbor watched his zig-zag course and hailed him from the lawn, asked him where he had been that day and what was going on. "Oh, I've been to Sunday school" -- he carefully turned the sod and found a snail beneath it -- "I've learned a lot of God." "A very fine way," the neighbor said, "for a boy to spend his time. If you'll tell me where God is, I'll give you a brand new dime." Quick as a flash his answer came, nor were his accents faint. "I'll give you a dollar, Mister, if you'll tell me where God ain't."

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OMNISCIENCE -- OF GOD

1632 -- NOTHING HIDDEN

There is a story of a photographer who went to the docks to take a picture of the "The Great Eastern". Its hull was black, having been coated with tar. That same day the man went to his own darkroom to develop the film and print it. As the picture of the ship began to take form, the word "Lewis" appeared on the hull. Immediately the photographer returned to the wharf to see whether that name actually was on the vessel. But it wasn't visible. Astonished, he contacted the office of the shipping company and inquired about this strange phenomenon. He was told that the word "Lewis" could be found underneath the tar. The camera's powerful lens and the sensitive film had picked it up. In the incident recorded in Luke 7, the Lord was thoroughly aware that the woman who had come to anoint His feet in the Pharisee's house had led a wicked life. He did not ignore her past but tactfully referred to her sin and then forgave it. Nothing was hidden from His eye.

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OPPORTUNITY -- LOST

1633 -- A BLUNDER OF EDISON

A General Electric ad raises the question: "What was Thomas Edison's biggest blunder?" The ad reveals that Edison opposed the theory of alternating current developed by Charles Steinmetz. The ad concludes by stating that Steinmetz was almost refused admission at Ellis Island as an unfit immigrant. That would indeed have been a tragedy. A greater tragedy, however, takes place all the time. People turn Christ away on the doorstep of their lives because they do not want Him to reign over their lives. And just think of the light that He brings for our darkness!

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OPPORTUNITY -- LOST

1634 -- A DECEITFUL DOUBLE VISION

Be not like the foolish drunkard, who, staggering home one night, saw his candle lit for him. "Two candles!" said he, for his drunkenness made him see double. "I will blow out one." As he blew it out, in a moment he was in the dark. Many a man sees double through the drunkenness of sin. He thinks that he has one life to sow his wild oats in, and then the last part of his life in which to turn to God. So, like a fool, he blows out the only candle that he has, and in the dark he will have to lie down forever. -- W. Wyatt Gill

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OPPORTUNITY -- LOST

1635 -- HE OFFENDED THE QUEEN

An artist solicited permission to paint a portrait of the queen. The favor was granted, and the favor was great, for it would make the fortune of the man. A place was fixed and a time. At the fixed place and time, the queen appeared but the artist was not there. He was not ready yet. When he did arrive, a message was communicated to him that Her Majesty had departed and would not return. Such is the tale. The King eternal consented to meet man. He fixed in his covenant and promised in his Word the object time and place of the meeting. It is for salvation; it is in Christ; it is now. He has been true to his own appointment, but how often it is otherwise with man. -- Arnot

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OPPORTUNITY -- LOST

1636 -- IF ONLY I HAD!

A man was appointed to take care of a railroad drawbridge. By and by a friend came with his boat and said to the man, "Run off the bridge and I will get my boat through before the cars come." "I can not do it," said he; "my orders are strict." Soon another man, an intimate friend came and he over-persuaded him and he ran the bridge off; and just as it was balanced on the pier the whistle of the lightning train came screaming around the curve. The bridge tender saw the

inevitable fate. What could he do but stand and gaze at the fearful and the fatal mistake of his life. Just as the lightning train came crashing over the bridge making the fatal plunge, that man was heard to cry out "If I only had!" -- and then his reason was dethroned.

He was taken to an asylum; and long, long years, it is said, before his death he paced the halls and rooms of that asylum wringing his hands and crying "If I only had! If I only had! If I only had! If I only had!" -- evidently meaning, "If I only had done as I knew I ought to do -- kept the bridge closed -- all would have been well." I thought many a man will spend eternity crying, "If I only had! If I only had!" I wonder if I speak to one young man or old man or lady in this congregation who tonight by this Bible sees your soul, of immense worth, and will forever in despair crying, "If I only had! Oh! that memorable night when I heard Mr. Graves speak on the worth of the soul and I believed it, -- If I only had given my heart to Jesus!" I wonder if I speak to one in this house tonight who will forever be crying out with the screams of the damned, "If I only had! If I only had!" -- Albert P. Graves

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OPPORTUNITY -- LOST

1637 -- LOST OPPORTUNITY

A man was sitting at twilight dreaming in his easy chair. He thought he saw the figure of a beautiful being glide into the room and approach him with outstretched hands. He gazed upon the angelic creature and was filled with delight at her graceful movements and the radiance that shone about her. He wondered greatly what was the meaning of this apparition, but made no motion himself until he saw the figure begin to draw back and gradually to fade from his sight. Then he came suddenly to the consciousness that he was about to lose entirely the presence of this bright being and, springing from his chair, he sought to detain her. But the form vanished, and when he called out to her to return a voice replied sadly, "You should have held me while I was there. My name is Lost Opportunity. I can never come again." -- S. S. Lesson Illustrator

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OPPORTUNITY -- LOST

1638 -- MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

Scientific measurements indicate that we are moving even when we are standing still. Continental land masses sit on enormous slabs of rock that slide very slowly at the rate of 1 to 8 inches per year. America is gradually moving westward, away from Europe, at the rate of 3 inches per year.

Our Milky Way galaxy is hurtling through space at 375 miles per second or 1.3 million miles per hour. But that's not all. Within our own galaxy the sun and its solar system are zooming along at 12.4 miles per second (43,000 mph) in the direction of the star Vega in the constellation Lyra.

Just as we are hurtling through the heavens at unimaginable speeds, so too we are moving from here to eternity. Our days and opportunities to live for the Lord pass so rapidly that we cannot afford to waste time.

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OPPORTUNITY -- LOST

1639 -- OPPORTUNITY PASSES

Acts of kindness, words of appreciation, ministries of affection, have their "Now," their "Today," and to say "When I have a more convenient season" to these great opportunities is to bid them depart from you.

I did not know how short your day would be!
I had you safe, and words could wait awhile.
And yet, your eyes begged tenderness of me
Behind their smile.

And now, for you so dark, so long, is night!
I speak, but on my knees, unheard alone.
What words were these to make a short day bright,
If I had known! Ah, love, if I had known!

* * *

OPPORTUNITY -- LOST

1640 -- SOLIDIFIED

I was driving down a bumpy country road when I saw a bag of cement beside the road. It appeared to have fallen off a delivery truck as it hit one of the bumps in the rough road. Being a person who does not like to see anything wasted, I stopped to pick up the lost bag of cement. When I reached down to pick up this heavy bag, to my surprise, I discovered it was not soft and limber, as I had expected but had solidified into an immovable piece of cement. Often our lives are like that bag of cement. They take on shapes that were not intended and become hardened in that shape. That bag of cement was meant to become a part of some beautiful structure but, because it did not reach its place of service, it became a useless rock in the form of a bag of cement. God wants to make something beautiful of your life. Don't let this purpose be thwarted by a bump in the road of life.

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OPPORTUNITY -- LOST

1641 -- THE LAST CHANCE

A man in Massachusetts had an unreasonable grudge against his minister that lasted twenty-five years. But at last the hand of death knocked at the door of the parishioner, and he sent for his pastor. The good man hastily obeyed the summons with a solemn delight, as his being thus called showed a mellowing of the heart of the dying man, which promised reconciliation both with heaven and himself. "You sent for me?" he said, as he approached the bedside. "Yes," answered the dying man, whose breath was now short and difficult. "I have but a few hours to live, and I sent for you to say that this is your last your last chance to apologize!"

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OPPORTUNITY -- LOST

1642 -- UNMOVED IN HIGH TIDE

During my meeting in Augusta Ga., a few years ago, at an hour like this, when I had reached the last service of the series and was just closing it, an old minister, one of the pastors, stepped to the front and said, "Brother Jones, before you pronounce the benediction, let me say a word." I said: "Go on, my brother; you always have the right of way in my meetings." The venerable old preacher looked like a veritable prophet of God as he stood before the great audience.

He threw his forefinger out over the audience three times before he spoke, and then in the deepest emotion he said: "My brethren, this scene tonight reminds me of the scene in my boyhood days. My father's home was on the beach, and every morning when I came out on the porch to wash my face and hands my eyes swept the beach. One morning, as I looked up and down the beach, I saw that the storm of the night before had driven ashore an old ship that had been unloaded and deserted. I picked up my little cap and ran down to the beach and stood beside the old ship, as it lay careened on one side, high and dry on the sand. I looked upon it with boyish sympathy, and said: 'Poor old ship, I wonder if you will ever go out to sea again?'

"I waited anxiously for the spring tide. As the waters came out farther and farther, and higher and higher on the old ship, I ran down to the shore. When I saw the old ship moving under the pressure of the waves, I threw up my little cap and said: 'Go out, old ship; go out, old ship; this is the high tide. You better go out with this tide, or you will fall to pieces on the shore.' But the spring tide receded and the old ship was left again, high and dry. I said: 'Poor old ship, you ought to have gone out with that tide.'

"I waited anxiously for the full tide to come in. I ran down to the shore to watch the ship. I saw the high, full tide come out around the old ship. I watched the water get higher and higher, until the ship began to move under its tide. I waved my little cap again and said: 'Please old ship, go out. This is the highest tide you will ever see. Go out, old ship, go out with this tide.' But the waters receded, and the old ship was left again on the sand.

"I arose one morning after a stormy night. I stepped out on the porch and, as my eyes swept the shore, I saw that the old ship had crumbled into ten thousand pieces the night before. I ran down to the shore, and looking at the wreck said: 'Poor old ship. I told you so. You ought to have gone out with that tide.'

"My brethren, how like that picture is the scene of the last night of these services! I have sat here and watched the tide of God's love and mercy come over this audience night after night, and as the tide has risen higher and higher, I have said in my heart, 'Go out, old sinner, go out with this tide.' I have seen you moved to tears under the influence of the gracious services, and as the tide rolled higher and higher, I have cried in my heart again: 'Go out, old sinner, with this tide, go out.' But the services have closed and you did not move.

"I have watched the tide rise in the next service; I have seen you moved under its influence, and again I have cried in my heart: 'Go out, old sinner, go out with this tide, go out. But the tide has receded again, and you have not moved. And now, we have come to the last service, and I have watched the tide rise higher and higher, until I have said in my heart, "This is the highest tide that ever struck Augusta. Go out, old sinner, go out with this tide, or you will be left to be shattered by the storm of death forever. God help you go out with this tide. Go out with this tide." -- Sam Jones

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OPPORTUNITY -- LOST

1643 -- WAIT OUTSIDE!

Alas! how many will, when too late, regret their neglect of, or contempt for Christ! A Few years ago, the Prime Minister of England stepped across Downing Street with a friend, who wanted some information from one of the Government officials. They entered the particular office, and on inquired for the Head of the Department. They were curtly told to "wait" by an insolent young clerk, who did not even look up from his newspaper. Presently, he added the order to "wait outside."

When the principal official returned, he was thunderstruck to find the Head of the Government sitting with his friend on the steps of the stone staircase. Equally surprised was the clerk, when, to his dismay, he learned by his dismissal the result of his careless insolence.

In earthly things, men bitterly regret "chances" lost or thrown away, and yet we treat with indifference our opportunities in the spiritual life. With slow and sorrowful steps the compassionate Savior obeyed these requests, and departed from those souls whom He would have so gladly blessed. -- W. Hardman

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OPPORTUNITY -- RESPONSIBILITY ACCORDING TO

1644 -- A STATEMENT OF GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these. -- George Washington Carver

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OPPORTUNITY -- SEIZING

1645 -- LAST CHANCE

He was a young cragsman away in the North; and one day, when gathering sea birds eggs, he let himself down by a rope over the brow of a precipice to a ledge far below. As he stood on that ledge the rope slipped and there it swung far out above the abyss. It swung towards him again. Suddenly he realized that when the rope returned in his direction the first time it would then be nearer to his reach than it ever would be again -- and that would not be very near. What was to be done? Yonder slowly the rope came back. If he lost this chance, the next would be worse. He braced himself for the spring: he leaped and laid hold of the rope; and he nigh fainted on the ledge as he bound himself again firmly to the rope to be swung up.

Christ has been near you, perhaps many a time nearer to you, than He has been tonight. I do not deny that but this is God's truth: that Christ is nearer to you now than He ever will be again. If you let Him go, there is less chance, less hope for you, tomorrow than to night. -- John Robertson

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OPPORTUNITY -- SEIZING

1646 -- NOT SATISFIED WITH STATUS QUO

Johann Gutenberg was not satisfied with the status Quo. What did he do? He simply combined two previously unconnected ideas to create an innovation. He refused to limit his thinking to the singular purpose of the wine press or to the solitary use of the coin punch. One day he entertained an idea no one else had ever thought of: "What if I took a bunch of coin punches and put them under the force of the wine press so that they left their images on paper instead of metal?" From that womb the printing press was born. What limits in your thinking is God challenging today?

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OPPORTUNITY -- SEIZING

1647 -- ONCE A SHOESHINE BOY

Often people of Asian, African, and Spanish minority groups have been taught that they are genetically and intellectually inferior. Now that's a farce, a mask, a lie! If people say that one race is superior or inferior to another, don't you believe it! A good friend of mine, a black man named George Johnson, has experienced racism. He grew up in Chicago, polishing shoes in a barber shop. George used to hear his black friends say, "I wish I could straighten my hair." One day while George was shining a man's shoes, he asked him, "What do you do?" "I'm a chemist," the man replied. "What do chemists do?" George asked. "I mix things," the man explained. "Do you think you could mix something that would straighten my hair?" The chemist said, "Maybe I can put something together." He did. George tried it on his hair and it worked. He bottled the product and sold it to some of his friends and a few stores. Soon he built a sales force to sell "Ultra-Sheen". Today, George Johnson's personal fortune is over several million dollars. That's not bad for someone who was once a shoeshine boy. -- Robert Schuller

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OPPORTUNITY -- SEIZING

1648 -- ONLY ONE MATCH, ONE OPPORTUNITY

I was crossing the Atlantic a short time ago, and one night I and some of the passengers were talking to the captain, when he told us of an incident that had occurred to him in that neighborhood some years previously. He was in command of a vessel, which had got thus far on her voyage, when the screw broke, and the engineer withdrew the shaft with the intention of repairing it; but the water rushed in through the hole, the bulkhead was not closed in time, and in a few minutes the ship began to sink. The boats were got out, the captain stepping into one laden to the gunwale. The night was dark, and the sea so rough that it seemed impossible for the boat to stay afloat. After a while, they saw the lights of an approaching steamer; but how could they signal it?

They made search in the boat, and found a battered lantern with an inch or two of candle in it. Then they tried to find a match. Every man felt in his pockets, but in vain. Not a match was to be found. The captain bade them search again, and at last, out of some corner, one match was produced. The man who found it handed it to the mate; the mate passed it to another officer, and he gave it to the captain. The sailors clustered round him, holding out their jackets to keep off the wind, and they watched him with anxiety. The captain said he had faced many a difficulty and danger, but had never felt such responsibility as at that moment when he had to strike the match, but he did it. The lantern was lighted, and when it was waved to and fro the ship saw the signal, altered its course, and picked them up.

Now, what gave such value to that match? It was the only one. Your life is your only one in this world. Misdirected, so as to cause your soul to be lost, you have no other in which to remedy the error. -- Henry Drummond

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OPPORTUNITY -- SEIZING

1649 -- THEY SAW OPPORTUNITY

Leo Gerstenzang thought of "Q-Tips" when he saw his wife trying to clean their baby's ears with toothpicks and cotton. Otto Diffenbach came up with the cellophane soda straws when he twisted the wrapper from a cigarette pack and saw he had created a tube. King C. Gillette had been looking for a throw-away product ever since having a conversation with the inventor of pop bottle caps. When he found his razor dull, he thought of the safety razor with disposable blades. Ole Evinrude got angry when the ice cream in his rowboat melted before he got to his island picnic spot and invented the outboard motor. Ralph Schneider decided to form Diners Club one night after he lost his wallet. Charles Strite was fuming at the burnt toast in the factory lunchroom where he worked and thought up the automatic toaster. -- Karl Vesper

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OPPORTUNITY -- SEIZING

1650 -- WHITE FLAGS

When the old Romans used to attack a city, it was sometimes their custom to set up at the gate a white flag, and if the garrison surrendered while that white flag was there, their lives were spared. After that, the black flag was put up, and then every man was put to the sword. The white flag is up today; perhaps tomorrow the black flag will be elevated upon the pole of the law; and then there is no repentance or salvation either in this world, or in that which is to come. -- C. H. Spurgeon

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ORGANIZATION -- WRONG USE OF

1651 -- ORGANIZED, BUT DEAD

"I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead." Revelation 3:1 A German soldier was wounded. He was ordered to go to the military hospital for treatment. When he arrived at the large and imposing building, he saw two doors, one marked, "For the slightly wounded," and the other, "For the seriously wounded." He entered through the first door and found himself going down a long hall. At the end of it were two more doors, one marked, "For officers" and the other, "For non-officers." He entered through the latter and found himself going down another long hall. At the end of it were two more doors, one marked, "For party members" and the other, "For non-party members." He took the second door, and when he opened it he found himself out on the street. When the soldier returned home, his mother asked him, "How did you get along at the hospital?" "Well, Mother," he replied, "to tell the truth, the people there didn't do anything for me, but you ought to see the tremendous organization they have!" -- John Seamands

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OGANIZATION -- WRONG USE OF

1652 -- THE ORGANIZATION DID NOTHING

In his book Harvest of Humanity, John Seamands told this story: "A German soldier was wounded. He was ordered to go to the military hospital for treatment. When he arrived at the large and imposing building, he saw two doors, one marked, 'For the slightly wounded,' and the other, 'For the seriously wounded'. 'He entered through the first door and found himself going down a long hall'. At the end of it were two more doors, one marked, 'For officer' and the other, 'For non-officers'. He entered through the latter and found himself going down another long hall. At the end of it were two more doors, one marked, 'For party members' and the other, 'For non-party members'. He took the second door, and when he opened it he found himself out on the street.'

'When the soldier returned home, his mother asked him, 'How did you get along at the hospital?' 'Well, Mother,' he replied, 'to tell the truth, the people there didn't do anything for me, but you ought to see the tremendous organization they have!'" The soldier's comment describes many churches in our day: really organized, but accomplishing little.

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OVERCOMING

1653 -- HOW THE CALLIOPE ESCAPED

In a shipping disaster at Samoa the way in which the British man-of-war "Calliope" escaped is suggestive. Her machinery was very powerful and just as she was about to strike the reef she raised her anchors and in the face of the terrible storm streamed out of the harbor and into the open sea where she safely outrode the storm. So in the Christian life there are times when safety is only to be found in like decisiveness and boldness. "Strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inner man," the soul must bravely go forth to meet its spiritual foes and boldly attack them. -- C. M. Hawkins

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OVERCOMING

1654 -- NOT TO COUNT, BUT TO CONQUER

A captain once rushed into the presence of the general in hot haste, and said, "General, we can never fight them, they are so numerous; we can never conquer them." "Captain," said the general coolly, "we are not here to count them, but we are here to conquer them, and conquer them we must." And conquer them they did. -- Ossian Davies

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THE END