

The Value of Life's Unrealized Purposes

"And it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart. Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name" (I Kings 8:17-19). The wise man, Solomon gives us insight into a principle in the life of David, which happens in the lives of most everybody. Sooner or later we deal with the hard facts that some of our greatest dreams don't come true in our lifetime. It is what Dr. George W. Truett said was the value of life's unrealized purposes. It is hard to realize value in dreams that go unfulfilled, at least those within the reach of our lifetime. So David was not granted the deep desire to build a glorious house for the God he loved. Let us observe three ways life's unrealized purposes have value:

1. They enlarge our heart.

The Bible says of Solomon, *"And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore"* (I Kings 4:29). Accompanying the wisdom God gave Solomon, was an enlarged heart. This is necessary if we are to bless lives beyond ourselves. This is most assuredly what David possessed as he prepared the way for Solomon to build the Temple.

There was an old farmer planting oak trees on his farm. His neighbor inquired, "Why are you doing this? You'll never live to see them grown." The farmer answered with a smile, "I will not, but my grandsons shall see them grown." This is the attitude of one who has an enlarged heart.

2. They are God's way of paving the path for the next generation.

David gathered the enormously expensive ingredients for the temple; so much of the financing was already taken care of by the time Solomon started building. There is sometimes a fine line between becoming a facilitating enabler and a fathering mentor. One who does everything for someone can dull the drive, but one who is a mentor can whet the appetite for becoming a doer of great deeds.

Let me let you in on some father-son moments that I enjoy. My dad marked through books he was reading with pencil. I enjoy reading his parenthetical comments. I really get a smile when I come through Dad's comments such as, "This is heresy." Sometimes he would give verses from the Bible or comments to "straighten" the author's thinking. I also enjoy reading beyond my dad's markings. It is as though Dad was saying, "Johnny, this is a good book; go further than I have with it."

3. They incorporate the transcending power from those no longer with us.

I was listening to an interview with the famous flautist, James Galway. He was telling of a time when he was traveling in the car with his wife. While listening to some classical music on the radio, he heard a flute playing with an orchestra and he began to tell his wife that the flute was being played by his hero, the French flautist, Jean-Pierre Rampal. He said as the piece was nearing the end, "I am sure that's him." He had no sooner said these words than the announcer coming to the end of the radio presentation announced they were listening to James Galway! Besides the humor this anecdote provides is the truth that those we model and imitate, we, to a degree, become. Do you believe that a great president like Theodore Roosevelt was a great person to have as the leader of our country? Do you believe that William Carey was a great man of Christian missions? Do you believe that Florence Nightingale was a harbinger of mercy? Do you believe that General Douglas McArthur was a powerful leader of armies? A leading question I might ask is, do you believe we could use their influence today? If a person studies the lives of great people, it is liable to "rub off." The Scripture says, *"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise..."* (Proverbs 13:20).

One of the most fascinating stories in American education is the Baylor story. Baylor University

was started in 1845 while Texas was still a republic, a nation of its own. Judge R.E.B. Baylor was a close personal friend of Sam Houston. To read Houston's letters to his wife telling of his admiration of Baylor is amazing. From B. H. Carroll to George Truett, old Baylor had men of depth, conviction and honor at the helm. Those old men have made the conservative Baptist what he is today. The second president of Baylor was Rufus Burleson. On November 19, 1854, he baptized Sam Houston! Burleson died in 1901 and before I tell you of something that happened just before his death, I need to say a word about the towers of Old Main. In 1887, The Old Main building was constructed with twin towers that remain as unique today as they were in the late 19th century. Should you travel through Waco on I-35 you will see the horizon of towers that show you are in Baylor country. Many of the new buildings on campus will have the architectural signature that throws back to the original twin towers of Baylor. Even the latest parking garage is constructed with towers.

After serving for nearly fifty years as Baylor's president, he realized that he was near the end and he said, "Lift me up once more to the window and let me see the towers of Baylor." They lifted him up and then laid him back on his pillow to die. From an anonymous transcript from 1940 we read these words: "To know Baylor is to feel a thrill when these two towers are seen silhouetted against the sky.... They seem to pierce the hearts of every man and woman who has ever walked the campus of the institution, and they keep watch over the lives of the students below. It is these towers that are the connecting link between the Baylor of yesterday and the modern Baylor of today."

Many orthodox Christian institutions have veered away from "...*the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*" (Jude 3). This saddens my heart. On the other hand, I am challenged when I read of old Dr. Burleson in his dying moments to keep looking up. Let us all realize the saints of old lived and died wanting to do more for God. May we keep looking up to higher standards and more accomplishments. The value of life's unrealized purposes!

- Pastor Pope -

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