

The Last Straw



The Last Straw

- “There comes a point where you no longer care whether there is a light at the end of the tunnel or not. You’re just sick of being in the tunnel.” (Ranata Suzuki)
- Origin: “The last straw which breaks the camel's back” has an Old Testament sound, but it is a chimney corner scripture. It isn’t written in the Bible. The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations lists it as a mid 17th century proverb.
- “The last straw breaks the camel's back” is not true. The camel’s back is broken by the combined weight of all of the straws, foolishly placed there by poor judgment.
- The problem with beginning with poor judgment is that one simply cannot determine where to end.

The Wrong Problem

- Luke 12:13-15 - “Then one from the crowd said to Him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. 14 But He said to him, Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you? 15 And He said to them, Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

The Wrong Problem

- Jesus pointed out that the problem was not with the brother failing to divide the inheritance equitably, but with the man's greed that made him willing to feud with his brother and monopolize Jesus' time.
- We tend to focus on the wrong problem. We see the present problem and confuse it with the long range goal

The Wrong Problem

- Luke 12:16-21 - “Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops? 18 So he said, I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 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. 20 But God said to him, Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided? 21 So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

The Wrong Problem

- Prov. 24:30-31 - “I went by the field of the lazy man, And by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; 31 And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; Its surface was covered with nettles; Its stone wall was broken down.”
 - The problem is not weeds, but the owner’s laziness.
- Ecc. 10:18 - “Because of laziness the building decays, And through idleness of hands the house leaks.”
 - The problem is not the leaking house, but the owner’s neglect.

The Wrong Priority

- Less important, earthly related, time linked problems frequently interfere with our ability or willingness to see our crucial, eternal, spiritual problems
- The world's cares capture and hold our attention
 - Luke 12:22-33

The Wrong Priority

- Peter lost his faith in and focus on Christ when he fixed his attention on the wind and the waves
 - Matt. 14:28-33 - “Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water. 29 So He said, Come. And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, Lord, save me! 31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, Truly You are the Son of God.”

The Wrong Answer

- Our own problems and sins interfere with seeing the true problems of others, and even of ourselves
 - Psalm 39

The Wrong Answer

- David saw the wicked, but decided to not say anything to avoid sin. Instead of helping, it made matters worse
 - Psalm 39:1-2 - “I said, I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, While the wicked are before me. 2 I was mute with silence, I held my peace even from good; And my sorrow was stirred up.”

The Wrong Answer

- We often waste our limited time with the wrong answer
 - Psalm 39:3-6 - “My heart was hot within me; While I was musing, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue: 4 LORD, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am. 5 Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my age is as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor. 6 Surely every man walks about like a shadow; Surely they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up riches, And does not know who will gather them.”

The Wrong Answer

- David realized he chosen badly in the past and he had earned and would profit from the discipline God imposed on him.
 - Psalm 39:7-10 - “And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You. 8 Deliver me from all my transgressions; Do not make me the reproach of the foolish. 9 I was mute, I did not open my mouth, Because it was You who did it. 10 Remove Your plague from me; I am consumed by the blow of Your hand.”

The Wrong Answer

- God showed him what was unimportant
 - Psalm 39:11 - “When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty melt away like a moth; Surely every man is vapor.”
- David learned the lesson
 - Psalm 39:12-13 - “Hear my prayer, O LORD, And give ear to my cry; Do not be silent at my tears; For I am a stranger with You, A sojourner, as all my fathers were.
13 Remove Your gaze from me, that I may regain strength, Before I go away and am no more.”

The Wrong Answer

- Job's friends made the same mistake. They saw Job's misery and wrongly concluded that God was punishing Job for some sin he committed
 - Job 4:7-9 - "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off? 8 Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity And sow trouble reap the same. 9 By the blast of God they perish, And by the breath of His anger they are consumed."

The Wrong Answer

- Job erred in thinking he was being unjustly punished
 - Job 23:3-7 - “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat! 4 I would present my case before Him, And fill my mouth with arguments. 5 I would know the words which He would answer me, And understand what He would say to me. 6 Would He contend with me in His great power? No! But He would take note of me. 7 There the upright could reason with Him, And I would be delivered forever from my Judge.”

The Wrong Answer

- Elihu corrected their mistakes
 - Job 32:1-5 - “So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. 2 Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than God. 3 Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.”

The Wrong Answer

- God charged Job and his three friends, and Job was unable to answer God's questions from his own mistaken viewpoint
 - Job 40:1-5 - "Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said: 2 Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it. 3 Then Job answered the LORD and said: 4 Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. 5 Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further."

The Wrong Answer

- Job thought his suffering was the most important straw
- Job's friends thought his sins were the most important straw
- God said that His Divine purposes and His alone are the weighty matters that must be accepted

The Wrong Answer

- Job 42:1-7 - “Then Job answered the LORD and said: 2 I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. 3 You asked, Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 4 Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, I will question you, and you shall answer Me. 5 I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. 6 Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes. 7 And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.”

The Wrong Answer

- Job's suffering was neither a punishment nor the point, but a chance for God to prove His sovereignty and for Job to prove his faith.
- Job focused on the immediate problem and did not see the long range purpose

The Wrong Answer

- Heb. 12:9-11 - “Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

The Last Straw

- The last straw does not break us; it is the whole load borne with pride and not with wisdom
- Do not blame the last straw; instead, look inward at your own judgment, reasoning, faith, and endurance
- Learn to see the load and the straw with the spiritual mind, not the earthly brain
- Learn what God says is your most important focus and refuse to allow your attention to be diverted the Adversary's straws

The Last Straw

- Paul's thorn in the flesh was just a straw
 - 2Cor. 12:7-10 - "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."