

—Chapter 15—

MISSED THE BUS NARROWLY

However justified your reasons are, they will never bring back a wasted opportunity.

Almost Caught the Bus

As he was approaching, dejection was perceivable on Eddy's (not his real name) countenance. Something must have disheartened him. He was carrying a bag on the left hand while the other arm was hanging weightily, pulling him down as if it wasn't part of his body. His bowed head showed a collapsed spirit. He looked like he had covered tens of kilometres on foot.

I drew in breath in readiness to ask him what had gone wrong, but he spoke first, explaining what happened.

The winter weather had been harsh. The ground was frozen and it was extremely slippery, movement was difficult. He had an important appointment in town and he had to catch a particular bus to get there in good time. If he failed to get the bus, he wouldn't be able to honour the appointment at all. It would have been "better late than never", but in this case, the next bus would come well after the expiry of the scheduled appointment. Either he was going to be there in time or miss the whole appointment—"better late than never" was irrelevant.

He had woken up in good time and was well conscious that he had an important appointment. He felt that he was well on course to get to the bus stop and head for town.

There were, however, "little things" that kept on holding him back. He didn't realise that the little things were robbing him of precious time. The few seconds he spent attending to "insignificant" things soon added up to meaningful minutes. When he finally shot out from his apartment, it was already late, especially because of the bad weather.

He struggled his best, occasionally surviving some dangerous slips. He, however, kept his head up—he couldn't afford to fall. Soon he was approaching the bus-stop. The bus had come and was picking people who were already at the spot waiting for it.

He was relieved when his eyes caught with the bus driver's. According to him, the driver had seen him and would wait for him—or so he thought. Hardly three steps to make before he could jump into the bus, the doors closed and off it drove. He couldn't believe his eyes. The bus just drove off when he thought he had caught up with it. At first he thought that the driver was just tantalising him; that he would stop for him to jump in but the bus actually drove off, leaving him behind—it was close!

The pain of missing the important appointment weighed him down but not as much as the fact that he was so close to catch the bus. It is "better" to miss wide than to miss narrow. The narrower the miss, the more painful it would be. Eddy was particularly furious with the bus driver.

"Why did he do that to me?" He fumed.

According to him, the driver must have been a sadist.

“How could he drive off when he could see how I had struggled on the slippery ground to reach the bus—and hardly four seconds to enter into it?” He lamented.

Repent or Perish!

Eddy was one of my closest friends. He had a warm place in my heart. I loved him. I could share his hurt but this wasn't anything comparable to what had preoccupied my mind all along. After pouring his heart out how hurt he was, the response I gave him was nowhere sympathy-related in the situation. I was thinking of *bigger* disappointments lying ahead.

One day, a sister in the Lord at an International Students' Fellowship asked me: “I perceive that Eddy is your good friend. How comes you don't bring him to the fellowship meetings. Don't you think God will ask you, ‘Where is Eddy?’”

That was hard for me! I almost shed tears in front of her. I knew she didn't know how much I had tried my best to show Eddy the way of the Cross but he seemed to be satisfied with being a good guy generally and topping it up with an amount of “religion”. Eddy “believed” in God but didn't seem to pursue a relationship with the Saviour.

At one time, a debate ensued about whether God existed or not. He was emphatic to the affirmation of God's existence. Nevertheless, he quickly got to the defensive when the question of being born-again came up. At this point, he lost the track and even argued on the side of the “atheists”.

After he had expressed his frustrations about the bus, I responded emphatically, “That is nowhere comparable to how it will be when Christ comes back!”

The response above is like the one Christ gave to the people who came to report to Him what had happened to some Galileans. Perhaps they had intended to get some sympathy, condolence and consolation:

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were guiltier than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish”.

—Luke 13:1-5.

These people must have been surprised at the way Christ “didn't show any sympathy”. It was certainly not the answer to expect from the Lord of compassion. He went ahead and told them a parable:

A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, “For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?” “Sir”, the man replied, “leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilise it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down”.

—Luke 13:6-9.

Christ could understand the pain that these people underwent as a result of the kind of death that befell their acquaintances. He was known to be compassionate. His response on this occasion was, however, sort of telling these people that if the kind of death they were reporting shook them that much, how much more would they be shaken—for eternity—if they didn't repent and got

reconciled with God? He was kind of telling them, ‘If you think this is a terrible pain, wait until you realise what it is to miss your way to heaven’.

“I perceive that Eddy is your good friend. How comes you don’t bring him to the fellowship meetings. Don’t you think God will ask you, ‘Where is Eddy?’”

If you were among these people, you wouldn’t gamble on this one, especially after hearing it from the Lord of compassion, would you? Well it is still the same today.

What I told my friend, in other words, was that if he thought he was frustrated to have narrowly missed a bus for an earthly appointment with man, it will be incomparably worse for those who would (narrowly) miss the “bus” for an eternal appointment with God.

The parable of the fig tree (Lk. 13:6-9; Matt. 21:19) shows that we will not remain unresponsive to God forever. A time is coming when God will “demand” a “fruit” of regeneration from us—whether in or out of season. He would cut down those of us who have no fruit. The very time that we are buying is already on a count-down. For many, the problem is that they wouldn’t know even when they are squandering their last precious chance like one of the thieves with whom Christ was crucified (Lk. 23:39).

Waiting at the Bus Stop or Still Holding With Things?

Just about the time I started writing this book, I had a terrible dream. It was such a bad dream that immediately I woke up, I literally protested to God.

We were at one of the beaches alongside Lake Victoria, in Kenya. We had gone fishing with my two sons. We had been there for quite a while but we hadn’t caught any fish. We stopped fishing and started admiring shells in the water. Abruptly, it occurred to me that we should be gone.

Just as I was walking out of the water, I spotted some groundnuts (still in their pods) in the clear water. I wondered who had dropped them there. I reached out and picked one. When I broke it open, the pod had nothing inside. I wanted to check the others—I happened to like groundnuts. I, however, felt some “heaviness in the air”—I felt very uneasy. The urge to leave the water was so strong. I started walking away and thought that my sons were following behind me. About six steps away from the water, I turned to see if my boys were actually following. They were not. They were still in the water—admiring things, their back to the lake. I called them and urged them that it was time to go.

Looking further into the lake, I saw a crocodile, slightly submerged in the water and moving at a supersonic speed towards my boys.

I shouted at the top of my voice calling them to get out of the water at once and come to me—running! I shouted again, and again, telling them to run for their life. They never moved, they instead asked for more time—just a moment to check the things they were preoccupied with.

“You don’t understand, I say come out of the water at once—run!” I desperately commanded one more time.

It was already late! The crocodile had reached my elder boy. I shouted one more time in terror and despair. It was the kind of a shout that would wake one up from sleep. I woke up just as the crocodile was stretching to pounce on my child.

Usually when I have a terrible dream, the first thing I do when I wake up is, “Thank God, it was *just* a dream!” Not this time. The dream was so traumatising, one of the worst I have had. It is a terrible thing watching helplessly as a crocodile makes the last move on your child.

When I woke up, I immediately protested, “You know I don’t like a nightmare like this. Why did You allow it?” I was so awake it was as though I had not been sleeping a while ago.

Since I was wide awake, I realised how this dream was “real”. It was not a far-fetched dream. One of the reasons this dream disturbed me a while was that it has, time and again, been a reality to some people. Many people have watched helplessly as their loved ones are ravaged by a wild animal or a calamity. It was like I had just experienced it. This made me contemplate over the *reality* of the unexpected disasters that can happen when we least expect them.

This was one of the occasions that I would say God answered me promptly. No sooner had I “protested” about the dream than the answer was there:

The pain you felt is not even comparable to the pain I feel when I call My children to Me and instead of letting go of the things they are preoccupied with and run to Me, they still hold on things while still asking for more time to continue being in the wrong place. The result is that the enemy catches up with them. They end up being devoured.

God emphasised that some of His children are in the wrong places—they are in the territory of the enemy where he (the enemy) can easily reach them. Despite His call that they steer clear of the territory of the enemy, they allow themselves to be lured by things that are *empty* like the pods that distracted me as I was marching out of the water. They hope to get things in them but instead, they just expose themselves to serious danger.

Like my boys asking for a moment to continue admiring the shells, many of God’s children don’t notice that it is time to run for their dear life and get to the Father—at once!

If my sons saw what I had seen, they would have quickly run out of water without waiting that I shout at them. I was seeing what they were not seeing. God is always seeing things that we aren’t in a position to see. We may understand later why He called us out from what we thought was fun. God doesn’t intend that we see danger first before we heed His call. We must believe that He has our interest at heart.

God is speaking to someone and saying, ‘Let go and come to Me quickly. Not a second to wait—soon it would be too late! The time is NOW!’

Think through the places you usually hang out in; think how “exposed” to danger you may be in some of these places. A good way of looking at it also includes the “timing”. Sometimes the danger in a place is not defined by “the place” *per se*. Sometimes it is the timing that makes a place dangerous. Being at the “right place” at the “wrong time” would change the “right place” into a “wrong place”. Timing is very important. I must also point out that the timing we are talking about here is not only the clock or season. It also includes the sharpness to tap the voice of God within you. When God calls you out of a place, it is “time” to let go whether it is morning, evening or night; it is time to escape whether it is autumn or summer, *etc.*

The enemy knew that I liked groundnuts. In the dream, he tried to lure me into staying a little longer in the water. Though I was willing to check on the pods, they were empty. The enemy uses what we like most as a bait to keep us at the “wrong place”—his territory. As long as he keeps us at his territory, he can get us anytime he wishes. Alternatively, he may keep us at the “wrong place” not to hurt us—at least for a moment—but to keep us away from the “right place” where we could feed our spirit. His intention is that if he can’t destroy us immediately, he would want to keep us away from our Father as much as he possibly could. This is how some places or situations might not seem to pose any immediate danger but they would be enough to keep us away from the “right place”.

Like the bus that only picks the people who are already at the waiting place, Christ will only take with Him people who are *ready*. For people who desire to follow Christ, it is not the *big* sins

that pose great danger. To the contrary, it is the “little things” like being in the “wrong places”; it is the stubbornness as they hold to things that would distract their devotion.

When I woke up, I immediately protested, “You know I don’t like a nightmare like this. Why did You allow it?” I was so awake it was as though I had not been sleeping a while ago.

The Bible says, “... he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to *those who are waiting* for him” (Heb. 9:28—italics for emphasis). And again, it is recorded in Hebrews 10:37, “For in just a very little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay”. In Revelation 16:15, the Bible says, “Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.”

The point here is that Christ is not coming to wait for people to repent. He is coming for the people who are *ready* and are *waiting* for Him. Waiting for the Lord, just like waiting for a bus, constitutes being at the right place at the right time. But unlike the bus where *place* and *time* has the literal application, in Christ’s case it involves being in the right *condition*.

Genuine Excuses for Missing the Bus?

In Luke 14:15-24, Jesus tells the parable of the great banquet. This parable was prompted by someone who was at the table with Him and kind of got a foretaste of the pending feast in the kingdom of God. The man said that blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God. Jesus replied by telling a parable:

A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready’. “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, “I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me”. Another said, “I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me”. Still another said, “I just got married, so I can’t come”. The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, “Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame”. “Sir,” the servant said, “what you ordered has been done, but there is still room”. Then the master told his servant, “Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet”.

—vs. 16-24.

In our daily interactions, we usually give and receive excuses. Some cases are “excusable” others are not. (When I say some cases are not excusable I don’t mean unforgivable—the two must not be confused). However hard we try not to make or accept excuses, it is not humanly possible not to make and accept an excuse or two. There is, however, *one* excuse that must not be made—eternal excuse. There is no justifiable excuse not to come to Jesus when He calls. If it were me, I would have definitely excused the person who got married and wanted to be with his bride. May be he

could have taken his bride with him to the feast. Jesus finalised the parable with a rare finality: “I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet”.

Earlier, in Luke 9:59-62, Jesus had taught people who had expressed a desire to follow Him what it means and costs to follow Him:

He said to another man, “Follow me”. But the man replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father”. Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God”. Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good bye to my family”. Jesus replied, “No-one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God”.

Some of the excuses above are humanly reasonable, socially realistic and arguably acceptable. When the Lord rendered them insignificant when they are weighed against making a decision in favour of eternal matters, it is clear how important our heavenly heritage is. There will never ever be an excuse exchangeable with the heavenly heritage.

What does it matter if I have a genuine excuse to have missed the bus? The point is that I would lose out. My good reasons wouldn't make the bus wait for me. Look at it this way: Suppose I was going to catch a bus but I realise, just when I was leaving, that I haven't taken the fare for the bus. I go back to the house and start looking for the money.

It is obvious that I wouldn't be allowed to travel without paying the bus fare. This means that the idea of looking for the fare for the journey is commendable. But which bus would wait at the bus-stop for people who are still searching for their fares at home? With or without “good reason” for failing to be at the waiting place in time, it wouldn't help anything. The bus would come and go. The good excuses wouldn't help anything.

People usually have what look genuine excuses not to follow Christ. While it is “acceptable” that once in a while one can make an excuse or two, it must be emphasised that there is no acceptable excuse for not accepting to follow Christ. The main teaching in Luke 9:59-62 may not be the occasional excuses we make—although we should be strongly advised against this. The main teaching here is that following Christ is a radical thing to do. It means literally tearing away from relationships both material and personal, especially if those relationships have a compelling demand in our hearts and posing to compete Christ in claiming our allegiance.

Another fundamental teaching in this area is that following Christ is radical as far as time and place are concerned. This is to say, it must not be postponed for another day and it must not be preferred in a convenient place.

I remember three people whose surrender to Christ was impressive. I had gone to check on a friend in a neighbouring school. When I entered the school's staff-room, my friend wasn't there but I met a female teacher sitting and reading a book. She was an acquaintance. I started sharing with her about Christ. After about five to ten minutes of sharing, she was on her knees. I didn't ask her to kneel. She never cared about her pupils who kept on coming in and going out of the staff-room. She asked the Lord Jesus to come into her life.

The second was a colleague. One day, we were in the staff-room with other colleagues—talking. Kolleo (not his real name) came into the staff-room—crying.

Until that moment, he didn't look like someone who could be caught up in such an emotion. It was such a perplexing situation. Our culture didn't allow men to publicly show that kind of emotion. To say that a teacher crying in the presence of students was unimaginable, is an understatement.

At first, we thought that he had received bad news, probably losing a loved one or something of the sort. In between his sobs he was mumbling some almost incoherent words. Nevertheless, we quickly added the few words we managed to pick and realised that it was something to do with his

spiritual destiny. A brother in the Lord and I quickly whisked him away from the staff-room to “save his face” from the students who were beginning to be curious and bewildered, peeping through the staff-room windows. We took him to a field nearby. He told us how the reality of Christ had hit him and revealed to him how he had been resisting his own salvation. It was much more than anything he could be “dignified” about.

We led Kolleo through a confession prayer. He invited Christ into His life. The mood quickly changed and all of us burst out laughing. It was such a long haughty laugh. He quickly realised the joy that filled his inner man. He had begun a new life.

Kolleo risked disgrace before his students when he realised the wrong way he had gone with his life when the Lord Jesus had always called Him to Himself. When it finally hit him, he never waited for “a convenient place and time”.

The third case is my cousin, Damaris. I had gone to visit her where she was married. As she was escorting me to take a bus back home, I decided to try one more time. I had been witnessing to her but she hadn’t accepted the Lord. I was sweetly surprised when she went down on her knees at the road side. Again, like the female teacher, I never asked her to kneel. She never minded the people who were passing by. We prayed together at the road-side and she received Christ into her life.

From her religious background, my cousin believed that when one was being prayed for, one had to kneel. She didn’t have to but when she knelt on the rough gravel, I didn’t ask her to stand. It was a sweet site to see that she had surrendered enough to kneel at a place that wasn’t “convenient” for that kind of thing. To me, it was a good sign of surrender.

Tomorrow Never Comes

Salvation is an urgent thing. Following Christ must not be postponed to another day. I once read a story of three people who read a sign near a five star hotel. These people were poor that they couldn’t even think of stepping into the hotel. The sign read: “Free coffee tomorrow”. They went and borrowed clothes so that they could look presentable enough to match the aura of that hotel. Otherwise, if they would go there in their ragged clothes, they would risk being turned away by the security guard. They went the following day, excited that finally they would see the inside of this magnificent hotel. When they reached the door, the security guard asked which section they had wanted to go to so that he could direct them. They told him that they were going to the section where free coffee was being served.

The security guard asked them where they got the idea of free coffee. They replied that they read about it from a signboard at the road junction to the hotel.

The security guard asked them if they “really” knew how to read. Insisting that they of course knew how to read and that they read right, the guard told them to go and confirm on the signboard if there was truly a “free coffee today”. They went and *confirmed*, “Free Coffee Tomorrow!” The sign still remained with the information of the previous day. They went back to the guard and reported what they had read. He confirmed to them, “Gentlemen! Today is “today” not “tomorrow”—go and come back tomorrow. Remember to check the signboard before you come in”. Determined to have an opportunity to enter this wonderful hotel, they went back the following day and checked on the signboard, it was still reading, “Free Coffee Tomorrow!” Dejected and frustrated, they concluded, “Tomorrow never comes!”

The only things we will be able to count on are those things that we do “today”. The syndrome of postponement is so powerful that once we embrace it, it becomes endless.

Why is it that tomorrow never comes? Tomorrow never comes because when it does, it changes its name to “today”. When one faces the day called “today”, he feels that he never said he would do whatever he had wanted to do “today” but “tomorrow”. He will continue thinking about tomorrow.

Willing Bride But Not Ready for Wedding

A lady accepted a marriage proposal. After some time of courtship, they began arrangements for the wedding. As the time drew near and the final touches were being made, she became reluctant. It wasn't because she was changing her mind about marrying the man. It was because she needed more time. The man tried to find out if there was any "reason" for this. It turned out that there was no reason but an emotional anxiety in the lady. She suggested that it would be a good idea to postpone the wedding because she wasn't "ready".

The man accepted and the wedding was postponed for the next four months. When the time approached again, the lady asked that they postpone it for another three months. This time she promised that they would get married. The man accepted again. Two months to go and she started introducing another desire to postpone, wondering why the man was so much in a hurry to marry her. They had known one another for four years and courted for 2 years. When she suggested that the wedding be postponed for the third time, the man was deeply hurt and was no longer sure if this lady would ever marry him. He decided to look for someone else who wanted to be married. It ended there.

When the lady realised the mistake she had made and a husband-to-be she had lost, it was too late. Her attempts to win him back did not only add to emotional and social pains to her and the man but also to the people who knew them. The man was already in a relationship. She promised him that if he accepted that they revive their engagement, she would marry him at his whim. Too late!

There are many people who have missed their wedding altogether—including the eternal wedding—because of procrastination. I pray that you don't become one of them.

That is how it is with many people out there. Many are willing to have a relationship with Christ. They have accepted His invitation to the grand wedding of eternal marriage. They are, however, not *ready for the wedding*. Willingness is not enough if it doesn't practically and promptly set us to make ourselves ready for the wedding. The Lord Jesus Himself noted this kind of scenario in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1-13.

In this parable, the Lord Jesus touches on three fundamental elements that define preparation and readiness: *place*; *time* and "*stuff*". The most important lesson here is *readiness*. We are being warned not to be complacent with *willingness*. There are people that are "satisfied" with being positive about the things of God but have not got themselves to the right place at the right time and with the right "stuff".

We must remember that all the girls were willing and expecting to be in the wedding feast. When the five foolish girls came to knock at the door, seeking to enter the feast, it was too late. They were knocking at the wrong time; they were not at the "right place" when the bridegroom came and they didn't have the right stuff to back their commitment of waiting for the bridegroom, namely, the oil to keep on lighting their hope.

Tomorrow never comes because when it does, it changes its name to "today".

The question is, if the Lord tarries, how long will we wait without our *stuff* getting sapped? Will He find us waiting at the right place? Will He find us gone to look for *things* some of which are purportedly to help us *fit* in the feast? It is unsettling to note here that the girls who were gone when the bridegroom came didn't go to look for depraved things—the oil was necessary for

lighting. As we saw earlier, there is no justified excuse not to be at the right place, the importance of what we have been preoccupied with notwithstanding.

I believe that the girls who were closed out were not *far* from the venue of the feast. They must have gone to fetch oil just in the neighbourhood. The way they missed the feast must have been as narrow as Eddy's missing the bus. Some among us will miss the final feast not because they were *far*.

I believe the parable of the ten virgins addresses those of us who are in the church but still *walk out into the world to pick a thing or two*. Unless we are keen, we may be leaving some things back in the world that we occasionally go back to get. Like my friend, he missed the bus because anytime he wanted to leave, he would remember that he was forgetting something. He would then go back to get it and minutes kept on going.

Last Minute Redemption Attempt Was Unheeded By a Lady

The worst position to be in is when God is speaking and we are either not paying attention or failing to recognise His voice.

The Israelites were about to cross the Red Sea. Moses, God's spokesman, said, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again" (Ex. 14:13). The Egyptians, blinded by their own interests, didn't hear this. If only they heard it, they wouldn't have entered the sea. They would have instead retreated and even pleaded with God to spare them.

Two strangers had just knocked at a door when a young woman opened. They had been strolling along the road when they felt an urge to witness to somebody. They were led to *this* particular house.

Just as they were beginning to engage the lady into a conversation, a car pulled near the house and she was on her way to enter the car. They told her that they were servants of God and that God had sent them to her with an urgent message.

When she heard that these people were servants of God, she quickly knew that whatever the message they claimed to have, it wouldn't be in line with the date for which the car had pulled next to her door. She excused herself and told these people that she wasn't interested in religious stuff and that she had a date. The date was more important to her than the message from God. What a folly!

The woman and her "date" drove off towards the junction to the main road. A trailer was approaching as they attempted to enter the main road. That was the furthest they came with their life. Forgetting to yield or perhaps misjudging the distance and the pace of the oncoming trailer, they entered the main road. The trailer hit their car. They were crushed at the junction—instantly pronounced dead at the spot—both of them. If only she had attempted to listen even if she wasn't going to accept their message! By walking away from the servants of God, this woman and her boyfriend stepped out of life into death—when they least expected it.

The Syndrome of Blaming Others

Back to my friend who missed the bus. He was furious with the bus driver. He blamed him for having left him when he was actually not far off. But somewhere in his sub-consciousness, he knew that the bus driver couldn't have left him if he was found waiting at the bus stop. People who were there waiting were all taken. Not one of them was left. It was his fault to have been late to get to the bus stop.

It is true that we need to give rules some human face. It would have been commendable for the bus driver to wait for my friend if he wasn't that far off. This however was to count on his good will

and wasn't something that ought to have been demanded. When Eddy started blaming the bus driver, it was as though he had a right to be late and still expect the bus driver to wait for him. The bus driver didn't have the responsibility to wait for people who were late. Instead of being bitter, this kind of experience ought to have inculcated in him a lesson so that he would be careful next time to be early if he would catch the bus.

How often do we fail to execute our responsibilities but instead excuse our irresponsibilities?

The act of blaming others for our mistakes started from the very beginning and it has robbed mankind a lot. Adam blamed Eve who gave him the forbidden fruit—and rightly so—but this didn't help him. Eve didn't even need to persuade him to eat the fruit. Adam made no effort to resist.

Eve, on her part, blamed the serpent for having deceived her into eating the forbidden fruit—and rightly so—but, like Adam, this didn't help a thing. The effort she made to tell the serpent that the fruit was forbidden wasn't enough.

This story about Adam, Eve and the serpent is told in Genesis 3:1-19. It is true that the serpent deceived the woman to eat the forbidden fruit. It is also true that the man ate after he was asked to do so by his wife. At first, it looked like it was working when God followed the lead of the origin of deception. He however came back to them and pronounced curses upon them.

Just like the case of Adam and Eve, we sometimes make it so “easy” for others to deceive us.

Blaming others may seem to work. It may bring an instant feeling of an escape, but this is very temporary indeed. The story of Adam and Eve, and probably from experience for some people, show that we are not innocent if we allow ourselves to be deceived. Things would have been completely different if instead of the first human couple passing the baton, they took the responsibility and sought forgiveness. Adam blaming Eve and Eve blaming the serpent was such a temporary relief. It would also have been a different case if God said, ‘You are My children and I am aware that you were innocent. You just happened to have fallen victims of the circumstantial manipulation and deception of by the evil serpent. I made a mistake by allowing Him to come close to you. Now! Step aside and see how I'll deal with the liar. I'll make him know that I don't allow anyone to get away with taking my children for a ride!’

Blaming others makes it difficult to learn from a mistake; it leads to laxity when it comes to taking responsibility for our own actions and guarding against misleadings by others.

In 1 Samuel 13:5-13 King Saul was in an imminent war with the Philistines. Prophet Samuel ought to have come within seven days to offer a burnt offering. When he looked at the multitude of the Philistines who had camped at Mich'mash in readiness to attack Israel, he couldn't hold his anxiety. His fretfulness was worsened when his soldiers started deserting him. He offered a burnt offering when he was not allowed to do so. When Samuel asked him what he had done, he neither showed any remorse nor asked for forgiveness. He instead blamed the people that had begun deserting him and Samuel who didn't turn up at the appointed time. He was right, Samuel was actually late and the people were also deserting him while at the same time, the Philistines stood ready to attack. Asked why he burnt a sacrifice when he wasn't an ordained priest, he rightly explained the predicament in which he was. He put appropriately and accordingly distributed the blame. It never helped nonetheless.

In another case (1 Sam. 15:1-16), he (King Saul) had been instructed to carry out an annihilation against the Amalekites. He and his army spared King Agag and took plunder of the best things. When he was once more confronted by Samuel, he blamed the soldiers for having taken the loot—and wrongly so. He was in charge being the Commander-in-Chief. There was no way the soldiers could defy him and take the plunder all the same. It was a blunder to allow the soldiers plunder. He ended up *paying* the penalty for his disobedience.

Blaming others, whether rightly or wrongly so, gives a false sense of innocence and security. It pushes personal responsibility away. The consequence of this is that a person becomes “careless” and may not be keen on taking control of his actions. Blaming others makes it difficult to learn from a mistake; it leads to laxity when it comes to taking responsibility for our own actions and guarding against misleadings by others. If we know that we are responsible for what we *allow* ourselves to be influenced into, we would be more vigilant about what we get ourselves involved with.

It is time we learn to take responsibility over our actions and stop blaming others even if it is true that they misled us. Taking responsibility would consequently lead us to act accordingly—repent and brace ourselves to do better next time. It is also a way of keeping at bay the syndrome of projection—avenging our hurt on others and looking for every opportunity to make excuses. Taking responsibility makes people watch out on influences that might backfire.

It was a blunder to allow the soldiers plunder. He ended up paying the penalty for his disobedience.

Reflections and Questions to Ponder

1. *What are some of the “empty pods” that we are likely to be preoccupied with and which might make us stay longer at the “enemy’s territory”?*
2. *Have you ever watched a football match and saw how narrowly a player missed to score? What would be the result of “half goals”? What do narrow misses teach us about possibilities of missing to score in the spiritual match? What are some of the scriptures that show how and why some people will actually miss heaven very narrowly? What are you going to do not to be the person to lose in this way?*
3. *Have you ever blamed others for what may turn out to have been your mistake? Are there occasions when you have blamed others—and rightly so—but the main issue was not that they misled you but that you allowed yourself to be misled? What are the dangers when we become habitual “baton-passers”?*
4. *Are there things that you have been postponing of which it would be advisable to take up immediately, perhaps today—now?*
5. *God is seeing what we aren’t seeing. Why is the knowledge of this important when God calls us out of what we seem to be enjoying?*