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MISSING IN ACTION

Judges 5:28

INTRODUCTION:

During World War II, I received a letter from a man in Illinois, in which Mr. Roy told, about his son being missing in action. It turned out that his son was a prisoner. And this was a rough experience for the family.

We are (familiar with news of this kind over the radio, and in the newspaper, about brave men of recent days - pilots who have been shot down in the war - captured or either lost in the jungle.

In our own area, you remember the (two teenagers) who went off on a camping trip - thought they would drop out. And mothers and grandmothers were worried. Now we could search the newspapers and the magazines for many such good (stories) to tell you about this. But there is one that is good in the (Scripture).

Note the story - Judges 5:28.

1st Her (son) had gone to war. Like some of the mothers and fathers who are here in this service.

Second, she was waiting for his return. She wants a letter and she wanted to get regular news about him. And she was hoping that nothing would happen to him just like people today.

Third, bad news arrives. He is missing in action. That could mean that he might be lost from his group. Second, he might have been captured. Third, he might be dead.

Fourth mother's (love never fades) She cries and hopes that he will soon come. She tarries - this is a sad picture - waiting for someone who will never come. The Bible says she looked. And this means as she looked out, she (bent forward) eagerly looking. Her (son) had been accustomed to return as a conqueror. And doubtless she thought that he would so return now. But her thoughts seemed to have troubled her. She must have heard something of the reports, that went through the land.

Another thing that disturbed her, the (time) for returning was fully come. There was no appearance of her son. Nor was there any tidings from the battle-field that she could rely on.

From the (upper, airy room), standing at the window where she had a commanding view of the road, out into the great distance - she looks keenly and listens. But no object is seen. The rolling of the chariot wheels are not heard. There is no triumphant procession filling up the scene. All is (silent)

She (cries through the lattice) - now that speaks of an anxious heart. That is the cry of one who cares. One who acknowledges. (Why) did his chariot delay his coming. (Why) tarries the wheels of that chariot. The lattice is opened to which the cool air is admitted.

This cry denotes that here is (impatience) - is he never coming. Why does he linger. How could she fail to be anxious. Can it be possible that there has been a mountain slide and some stones have rolled across the path, the road. Or could it be that his chariot has lost a wheel.

V. (29) - Her (wise ladies) suggest the account for the delay. It is caused by victory they say, not by defeat. What else in all of reason could it be.

He has a vast army and it could not be otherwise. Whatever thoughts could they entertain. He is now taking an unusual quantity of spoil from the down-trodden people. He is now searching the bodies of the slain. He is robbing the homes of their treasurers.

Now while these females speak of these corrupt things, it reveals their age and their times. It is a very sad picture that we have before us. Sisera's mother waiting, sitting, watching wearily for the coming of one who has already met with death in the tent of Heber's wife. She was waiting for one that would never return. Vainly waiting for the dead. The cause of her vain waiting is the cause of why so many still wait in vain. The want of a knowledge of the truth. A messenger of doom arrives - and brief but terrible is his report. The great battle is lost. Sisera's mighty army is destroyed. Sisera met a tragic death, at the hands of a woman. And she had put him to death in her tent - and so the curtain falls. Judges 14:18-24.

Now this has significance for us today in three or four ways. I think it has ¹physical significance, ²spiritual significance, ³personal significance, and eternal significance for each person who is here.

✓ I. (PHYSICAL) SIGNIFICANCE

Absent (in the flesh) from the occupied or accustomed place.

The parable of the sheep that was lost to the fold was out of his customary place - his usual safe place.

The parable of the coin was lost to usefulness - and was missing from its usual place and hence was physically lost. Missing in action.

Now this is what (President Kennedy) said about so many of this generation being missing. "We are endanger of losing our will to fight. To sacrifice, to endure. The slow corrosion of luxury is beginning to show."

When we think about (American) forebearers facing the frontier, surviving a Civil War, and two World Wars. Toiling through drought and depression. Then we see how the (late) President was right in his assessment - of (signs) showing up and people dropping out, getting out of the action. No longer does a girl want to strain to become a beauty queen. We'd (rather) drop out than to dig in.

(Al Capp), who originally was the author of comic strip Lil Abner said that he never dreamed that Lil Abner would actually become life - in which men and women would goof off - would want to stop the world so that they could get off - and be missing in action.

In San Francisco, New York's East Village, London's King Street - a reckless way of life has been offered as an escape. Boys and girls alike follow the examples of new heroes and they become trapped in this.

Now (years) ago we called them ~~gypsies~~. And then they were called ~~hobos~~. With a banjo singing songs. They bummed rides on freight trains, hitch-hiked and drifted. They were professional thieves. They were tired of social pressures.

(Sam Cole), the king of the hobos, traveled through all but 17 of the world's countries. "He said working was for horses. And he preached good will and brotherhood. He took odd jobs - but mostly he sponged. Everywhere he went he said he met droves of people who were fed up with working just to pay off the

loan companies. His advise - (drop out) Vanish.

They have similiar ancestors in the Beat-nick and in the Hip-Talk.

If only they had begun with the program in which God initiated in the first and second commandment. Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and thy neighbor was thyself.

But thousands drop out and live from hand to mouth, on money from home - on money they make on occasional jobs, pan-handling and free-loading. Communicating through their bodies - please touch. This becomes a way of life.

But they are like sheep without a shepherd - involved in a quest for the meaning of life. Searching for somebody to give them an answer which has authority in it. And yet rejecting all of life.

In the Greek and Roman time, quite often a 20 year old youth was an officer, commanding an army of a soldier conquoring the empire. Alexander the Great was only 21 when he conquored the Balkans. He was only 24 when he established the city of Alexandria in Egypt. By the time young American doctors hang out their shingles - Alexander had conquored most of the ancient world. Ivan the Terrible was 17 when he forced his nobles to crown him Zar of all Russia. Joan of Arc was only 17 when her army captured Orleans. During the Middle Ages, youth 10 years old, became household knights and nobles - or either had already started as an apprentice in a trade. There was no difference in the Mid-Evil dress which distinguished the child from the adult. The child could walk and talk - he entered the adult world.

But social conditions improved and changed, and families became able to get along without the earnings of their children. And with leisure time and with full purses the fathers were able to send their bright off-springs to college. And usually it paid off financially and the kids loved it. But our wish to stay as immature as little children is a fancy dream. Today, home provides little work, chores are a thing of the past. When most people talk about work, they down-grade it, with reference to long hours and low pay, and short vacations. Unless a person usually comes from the farm, the image of honest toil is considerably tarnished. Because one has to be an expert at leisure, water skiing, dancing, T. V. watching, etc.

So physically this has a significance for us today. We are becoming a generation of people who are missing in action.

✓ II. SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

Now I'll let you use your (imagination) a great deal at this point. But here is a young (son) who goes and lives in Florida and he drops out at the age of 17. He rebells against everything his parents stood for. Leaving home, he went to California. He was broke, he was lonely, he was discouraged. He tried drugs and drink. He was hitch-hiking one day when a truck stopped. Three fellows in a truck. When they (asked) where he was going, he answered, no where. Then they said, get in. And they stopped because they sensed that this young man had a need. They took him in, they loved him. They provided for him. And they led him to an experience with Christ. That boy's life was completely (transformed). He went back to his parents. He married a Christian girl and is now attending a university. A new creature in Christ Jesus. He is no longer missing in action spiritually but he has found what he needs.

So many times, concerning preaching, this happens. The preacher preaches on (some sin) and then the person who hears it, his chair or pew is vacant. He becomes one missing in action because he doesn't like it.

The Woman's Missionary Union - when the women plan a certain program - and here is a woman who didn't like it. And then she didn't like the course they were traveling - and so she bailed out. And she becomes one missing in action.

Here's the (Sunday School) - a great arm for Bible Teaching. But because of some little incident in the Sunday School, or maybe a teacher who is very abrupt and who does not convey the love of Christ through his actions. This person may say, well, I'll drop out. And so he becomes one missing in action.

Some have been (missing from church) action so many years and have been eating K-ration Gospel. They are now spiritual wrecks. And this has a very vital significance for you spiritually. Are you missing in action in the church.

III. PERSONAL SIGNIFICANCE

First (have) you been missing in action.

(Has) sin put you out of action. Has sin silenced your testimony.

(Some) think that win or lose, faithful or unfaithful, the Lord is going to greet them in Heaven, "well done", my good and gracious servant. Matt. 25:19-24.

The (verdict) of missing in action is on you. Now it says something - (when) you are missing in action - this says something for you.

~~First~~, it (tells God) that you (care nothing) for his church.

~~Second~~, it (tells God) that (sin has captured) your life.

~~Third~~, it (tells God) that you are (dead spiritually) and perhaps you have never had a new birth.

Phil. 4:18 -

What you need is what a teen-aged girl experienced. She was beautiful. Everything was beautiful except her life. Her long blond hair dangled down over her smock and it draped her body. But she was dragging around bare-footed with the idea that the place was draped with love. And I can't get over it. Everyone seems to love each other. Now that was before she met Christ. But later on, she met Jesus Christ. And looking back, she said, God has been looking for me all of my life. And tonight he has finally found me. We should have hitched up years ago.

The awareness of being lost. The deep craving for identity in her life. It had personal significance when she came to know the truth. You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. John 8:32.

For the son of man is come to seek, to save that which is lost. Luke 19:10.

Now this is (exactly) what happened to Jonah. His experience had personal significance for him. Here he was missing in action - (supposed to be preaching) at Nineveh. But here he is resting in the belly of (a whale). Missing in action when he should have been preaching at Nineveh. And this had personal significance for Jonah.

IV. ETERNAL SIGNIFICANCE

I ^{have} talked about physical, spiritual, and personal = missing in action. Now we close by talking about (the) eternal aspect of it.

First, missing in action (in war) is horrible. It was a tragic thing that that mother looked through the window while her son was missing in action in the war.

Second the most miserable thing is for a man to be missing from God. This is much worse.

Consider the illustration of the rich man in Hell. Missing that which was eternal. And missing in action at this point certainly has vital meaning for a man.

Think about the ten virgins. When the show-down came, and when the door was shut. Five of them were missing eternally - and they missed out on eternity.

How about you today. Some day the newspaper is going to read - so and so died. It will give your name, your address, your age. And may say a few things about you or some of your relatives. But the thing about that announcement is going (to be forever). That is an eternal announcement. It has eternity attached to it and you are going to be missing in action forever.

A young woman who had difficulty with alcohol, but conquered it, on her way to a television studio called a taxi. The driver leaned back in his seat and said to the passenger, New York is like Hell. It is a horrible place to

live. Everybody is at everybody else's throat, competition is killing, it is confusing. // The worst confounded.

The young woman said, I don't blame you driver for feeling that way. I used to think like that myself a while ago.

// Why don't you think that way now, he asked.

Well, she replied, // I've made a discovery that has given me the strength to be able to take New York.

The driver glanced back with suspicion - what do you mean. Now don't start telling me that you've got religion.

// I don't care how you describe it she said, but I have something deep within me. It keeps me calm and untroubled even in New York.

// What have you got - he asked her.

She answered, each day I read in my Bible where I left off the previous day. I read on until I get a verse that offers help for the new day. This I copy out and carry with me. I find it inspiring.

// Did you get a verse this morning - he asked, with increasing interest.

// Yes, I did, she said. Now that I think of it - it seems to have been sent for you more than for me.

// Well, let me hear it anyway, he remarked.

She reached into her purse and took out a slip of paper. And just before reading it she said, you spoke of New York being confusion worse confounded. Listen to this - "God is not the author of confusion but of peace". I Cor. 14:33.

"Let me see that thing", said the driver, as he reached back for the slip of paper. He held it in his right hand as it rested against the wheel. And every now and then he glanced at it. When they reached their destination, she paid him, and then passed him a tip. He brushed the tip aside saying, I couldn't take a tip from you - you have given me something this morning - more than all the tips that I will collect today.

If we are to remain steadfast in our allegiance to the highest, like this young woman, we should daily require (inner renewal) and the Bible is an unfailing reservoir of spiritual power. At this source we may constantly renew our strength. And this is something that must take place in a man's heart day by day.

Now (no man wants) to be missing in action. When it comes to the next world and the next life. Phil. 1:23. Paul says, I am in a straight - between two - having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better.

I remember (Dr. Alderidge), a wonderful Christian man saying that his (mother) died when he was seven years of age. He said that he would never forget that - it would never leave him. He could never get away from it. He said, especially the last two hours. He said he had two brothers - one was four years old and the other two. And the children were called in from across the street. They were invited to come into the sick room and there at seven years of age he dropped on his knees and kissed his mother. She said, "God save my boy".

They were the last words she ever spoke. Presently, his father, who was a physician said - "she's gone."

"Missing here - but present with God."

This text ought to say something to your heart. Will you be missing in action or will you be present with God,