

## HORSES TO THOSE WHO CAN RIDE THEM

***“I will give you two thousand horses – if you are able on your part to put riders on them!”***  
Isaiah 36:8

This challenge was made by one of Sennacherib’s generals, Rabshakeh, during his speech demanding the surrender of Jerusalem.

### **A Message of Intimidation**

The Assyrians had come down upon Judah *“like a wolf on the fold.”* Rabshakeh presented a powerful piece of propaganda, laced with lies, half-truths, boasting and blasphemy. His speech was designed to demoralize and discourage God’s people and persuade them to give up all hope and surrender to the Assyrians. In his speech he insulted and taunted the representatives of King Hezekiah. One of his memorable taunts was How could they possibly resist the overwhelming military might of Assyria. Even if he, Rabshakeh, were to give them two thousand horses, it could do them no good for they had no trained cavalry to ride them.

### **A Message of Inspiration**

However, the Word of the Lord came through the prophet Isaiah: *“Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Surely I will send a spirit upon him and he shall hear a rumour and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.”* Isaiah 37:6-7

### **The Hand of God**

*“Then the Angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians, 185,000; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses - all dead. So Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed and went away, returned home and remained at Nineveh. Now it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch, his god that his sons... struck him down with a sword...”* Isaiah 37:36-38

### **An Important Insight**

However, amidst the remarkable propaganda speech by Rabshakeh is a gem of wisdom and insight. Horses for those who are able to ride them.

### **The Parable of the Talents**

This is what our Lord Jesus taught in the parable of the Talents. *“Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the Kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore He said: ‘A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘**Do business till I come.**’ But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’ ‘And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’ And the second came, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned five minas.’ Likewise he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities.’ ‘Then another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you*

did not sow.’ And he said to him, ‘Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’ ‘And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.’ (But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’) ‘For I say to you, **that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.**” Luke 19:11-27

### **Opportunity Reveals Character**

Although three men received different amounts, one ten, the other five and the third one, two of them succeeded in multiplying their gifts, but the third failed to take advantage of the opportunity and the responsibility before him. It was not lack of opportunity, or lack of ability, but lack of character that caused the third man to squander his opportunity and fail in his duty.

### **What Causes Failure?**

General Constand Viljoen, who was the head of the South African Army when I was in the infantry, addressed this issue most effectively. General Viljoen was confronted on SATV about the ruined lives of those psychological casualties suffering what they called “*the Angola Syndrome*.” After showing a clip, including interviews with emotional basket cases with long hair and overflowing ashtrays with piles of beer cans around their armchairs, the interviewer turned to General Viljoen and asked whether he felt responsible for those suffering from “*the Angola Syndrome*.”

### **Crisis Reveals Character**

General Viljoen’s answer was most insightful, he noted that those who evidenced character in times of peace are the same people who show courage in times of war. Those who are moral failures in civilian life are the same ones who become failures in the military. It is not the military, or the war, that ruined them. The severe stresses and crisis only revealed what was already there – either strength of character, or lack of character. Those who fail in war time would have failed in life anyway - the intensity of war just revealed it earlier.

### **Responsibilities Reveal Character**

When the day of Reckoning comes, those who proved themselves able by their character to make the most of the opportunities entrusted to them will be rewarded with greater gifts and new opportunities. However, those who fail to fulfill their responsibilities, and had failed to be productive because of their lack of character, will lose everything that they have.

**“For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”** Luke 19:26

### **The Industrious are Rewarded**

The world is inclined to penalise the productive and reward the parasites. However, the Lord makes it clear that His thoughts are higher than our thoughts and His ways higher than our ways. The Lord Jesus teaches in the Parable of the Talents that He will punish the unproductive and reward the productive. Lack of a work ethic will disqualify a man from mounting the horse of usefulness and influence. To whom much is given, much is required. To whom much more is given, much more is required. The more industrious will receive greater rewards. **“Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”** 2 Timothy 2:21

## **Character Determines Competence**

Horses to those who can ride them. Cars to those who can drive them. Equipment to those who can operate it. Messages to those who can deliver them. Ministries to those who can serve. Missions to those who can complete them.

## **A Message to Garcia**

In 1899, Elbert Hubbard wrote a Message to Garcia. This inspirational essay has been reprinted as a pamphlet and a book, selling over 40 million copies, being translated into 37 languages. It has also been made into two motion pictures. To take *A Message to Garcia* has become a term for taking initiative and ensuring that one's assignment is successfully completed.

## **The War with Spain**

As tensions between the United States and Spain were moving towards war, President William McKinley asked Colonel Arthur Wagner, to make contact with Calixto Garcia, one of the leaders of the Resistance in Cuba. Colonel Wagner suggested Captain Andrew Rowan, who was entrusted with the Message to Garcia. Captain Rowan succeeded in locating Garcia in the Oriente Mountains and developing co-operation between the Resistance Movement in Cuba and the United States. Rowan received the Distinguished Service Cross for his invaluable service.

A Message to Garcia was first made into a motion picture in 1916, and in 1936, a talking picture was made on *A Message to Garcia*.

In Elbert Hubbard's essay, he points out that when President McKinley entrusted Rowan with the letter to be delivered to Garcia, Rowan proved to be loyal to the trust, he acted promptly, he concentrated his energies, and he accomplished the assignment.

## **Message to Garcia**

"No man, who has endeavoured to carry out an enterprise where many hands were needed, but has been well nigh appalled at times by the imbecility of the average man – the inability or unwillingness to concentrate on a thing and do it. Slipshod assistance, foolish inattention, dowdy indifference, and half-hearted work seem the rule; and no man succeeds, unless by a hook or crook, or threat, he forces or bribes other men to assist him; or perhaps, God in His goodness performs a miracle, and sends him an Angel of Light for an assistant. You, reader, put this matter to a test: You are sitting now in your office – six clerks are within call. Summon anyone and make this request: 'Please look in the encyclopedia and make a brief memorandum for me concerning the life of Correggio'".

"Will the clerk quietly say, 'Yes, sir, and go do the task?'

"On your life, he will not. He will look at you out of a fishy eye and ask one or more of the following questions:

Who was he?

Which encyclopedia?

Where is the encyclopedia?

Was I hired for that?

Don't you mean Bismarck?

What is the matter with Charlie doing it?

Is he dead?

Is there any hurry?

Shan't I bring you the book and let you look it up yourself?

What do you want to know for?

"I will lay you ten to one that after you have answered the questions, and explained how to find the information, and why you want it, the clerk will go off and get one of the other clerks to help him to find Correggio – and then come back and tell you there is no such man. Of course I may lose my bet, but according to the Law of Average, I will not.

"Now if you are wise you will not bother to explain to your 'assistant' that Correggio is indexed under the C's, not in the K's, but you will smile sweetly and say, never mind', and go look it up yourself.

"This incapacity for independent action, this moral stupidity, this infirmity of the will, this unwillingness to cheerfully catch hold and lift, are the things that put pure Socialism so far into the future. If men will not act for themselves, what will they do when the benefit of their effort is for all? A first-mate with knotted club seems necessary; and the dread of getting 'the bounce' Saturday night, holds many a worker in his place.

"Advertise for a secretary, and nine of out ten who apply, can neither spell nor punctuate – and do not think it necessary to.

"Can such a one write a letter to Garcia?

"You see that bookkeeper,' said the foreman to me in a large factory.

"Yes, what about him?

"Well he's a fine accountant, but if I'd send him up town on an errand, he might accomplish the errand all right, and on the other hand, might stop at four saloons on the way, and when he got to Main street, would forget what he had been sent for.

"Can such a man be entrusted to carry A Message to Garcia?

"We have recently been hearing much maudlin sympathy expressed for the 'downtrodden denizen of the sweat-shop' and the 'homeless wanderer searching for honest employment,' and with it all go many hard words for the men in power.

"Nothing is said about the employer who grows old before his time in a vain attempt to get frowsy ne'er-do-wells to do intelligent work; and his long patient striving with 'help' that does nothing but loaf when his back is turned. In every store and factory there is a constant weeding-out process going on. The employer is constantly sending away 'help' that have shown their incapacity to further the interests of the business, and others are being taken on. No matter how good times are, this sorting continues only if times are hard and work is scarce, this sorting is done finer - but out and forever out, the incompetent and unworthy go.

“It is the survival of the fittest. Self-interest prompts every employer to keep the best – those who can carry a message to Garcia.

“I know one man of really brilliant parts who has not the ability to manage a business of his own, and yet who is absolutely worthless to any one else, because he carries with him the insane suspicion that his employer is oppressing, or intending to oppress him. He cannot give orders; and he will not receive them. Should a message be given him to take to Garcia, his answer would probably be, ‘Take it yourself.’

“Tonight this man walks the streets looking for work, the wind whistling through his threadbare coat. No one who knows him dare employ him, for he is a regular fire-brand of discontent. He is impervious to reason, and the only thing that can impress him is the toe of a thick-soled boot.

“Of course, I know that one so morally deformed is no less to be pitied than a physical cripple; but in our pitying, let us drop a tear, too, for the men who are striving to carry on a great enterprise, whose working hours are not limited by the whistle, and whose hair is fast turning white through the struggle to hold in line dowdy indifference, slipshod imbecility, and the heartless ingratitude, which, but for their enterprise, would be both hungry and homeless.

“Have I put the matter too strongly? Possibly I have; but when all the world has gone a-slumming I wish to speak a word of sympathy for the man who succeeds – the man who, against great odds has directed the efforts of others, and having succeeded, finds there’s nothing in it nothing but bare board and clothes.

“I have carried a dinner pail and worked for a day’s wages, and I have also been an employer of labour, and I know there is something to be said on both sides. There is no excellence, per se, in poverty; rags are no recommendation; and all employers are not rapacious and high-handed, any more than all poor men are virtuous.

“My heart goes out to the man who does his work when the ‘boss’ is away, as well as when he is at home. The man who, when given a letter for Garcia, quietly takes the message without asking any idiotic questions, and with no lurking intention of chucking it into the nearest sewer, or of doing aught else but deliver it, never gets ‘laid off’, nor has to go on a strike for higher wages. Civilisation is one long anxious search for just such individuals. Anything such a person asks shall be granted; his kind is so rare that no employer can afford to let him go. He is wanted in every city, town and village – in every office, shop, store and factory. The world cries out for such: he is needed and needed badly – the man who can carry A Message to Garcia.”

### **Attitude Determines Achievement**

Places of importance are waiting for the man who can fill them. Achievements are waiting for those with the character to accomplish them. You must make yourself worthy, prepared, ready, and fit. Victory loves preparation. Your attitude will determine your achievements.

### **Do You Make Excuses? or Do You Make a Plan?**

Anyone can make excuses for why it was not done. People of character make a plan, adapt, innovate, overcome and persevere to accomplish the task.

### **Your Decisions Determine your Destiny**

Every decision you make helps to shape your destiny. Every temptation you resist makes the next temptation easier to resist. Every temptation you give into makes the next temptation easier to give into and harder to resist. Every decision we make makes us more a creature of

Heaven or of hell. Every decision we make sets us further down the narrow path to life or down the broad way to destruction.

### **Alexander and Bucephalus**

Alexander the Great was not only one of the most accomplished military commanders in history, he was also a fine horseman. One day as a youth, he saw a beautiful black horse, Bucephalus about to be rejected by the king's officers because he plunged and reared and kicked about when anyone tried to ride him. Alexander requested to be allowed to ride the horse. After speaking soothingly to the horse and calming him down, he turned him and then speaking reassuringly to him, vaulted gracefully onto his back and then, in full control, cantered about to the admiration of King Philip and his officers. Alexander had noted that the sun was behind the horse and the horse was being startled by his own shadow.

### **Self Control**

On one of his military campaigns, in India, Alexander was struck by an arrow. As his men were about to operate on him to remove the shaft, they firmly gripped his arms to hold him while the excruciatingly painful operation was performed. Alexander dismissed them, saying, *"There is no need to hold him who is able to hold himself."*

### **Violated Law Breaks Us**

It is not so much that we break God's Law, as God's Law breaks those who violate it. The Law of God is like gravity, it's not just a good idea – it's the Law. If you wander off the side of Table Mountain and try to defy the law of gravity, you will lose. It's not the fall, it's the sudden stop at the end that kills you. You cannot violate the law of gravity without harming yourself. Similarly, no one can break God's Law without harming themselves and their eternal destiny.

### **Squandered Opportunities**

Those who would control others must first learn to control themselves. Self-discipline is essential to effectiveness and productivity in life. Where opportunity is the most abundant, there temptation is the most seductive and powerful. It is incredible how universities have moved from being places of great learning and advancement to such cesspools of temptation, debauchery and frivolity. So many who go to university seem oblivious to the Scriptures which are written over the gates and doorways of many an institute of higher learning: ***"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."***, ***"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."*** And *"Let only the earnest, thoughtful and reverend enter here."* Yet many will testify how they squandered their great opportunities while studying at universities by indulging in a never ending series of parties, drunkenness and time-wasting diversion. Libraries of wisdom were ignored as many students disqualified themselves from the school of life by ignoring precious opportunities for advancement in favour of frivolous time-wasting.

### **Indulgence Disqualifies**

If yielded to, the temptations of the flesh will disqualify a man from riding the horses of influence and usefulness.

### **Study to Succeed**

That is why the Scriptures command us to study to show ourselves approved unto God. We need to be prepared for every good work. When Gary Player was the world's golfing champion, someone commented to him: *"You're lucky!"* Gary Player responded: *"Yes, and the harder I practice the luckier I get."*

## **Seize Opportunities**

There are horses for those who can ride them. There are ministries to those who are prepared to serve. Messages to those who can deliver them. Missions to those who can complete them. When it comes to talents and opportunities: *“Use it or lose it!”*

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