

Born to Win

Leadership in Crisis

by: Ronald L. Dart

By now, everyone realizes that we have a leadership crisis. And it's not only in our country, it's in the world at large. And I wonder, how did we get to this place; where does leadership come from...and more importantly, where does it go?

I believe that leadership is a gift from God. And if you want to spare me a little time, I'll explain to you why I think that.

First: two statements about gifts from God—one of them from the Apostle James, the other from the Psalms. The Apostle James said this in James 1, verse 17:

James 1

KJV

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

So we don't need to look anywhere else for good, perfect gifts that come into the world—they come from God. The Psalm is 68:18, which says this:

Psalm 68

KJV

¹⁸ Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: *[This is taken by many commentators to be a reference to Christ.]* thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.

¹⁹ Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.

Now, for some reason we would tend to assume that God only gives his gifts to people who deserve them. Right? We would think that God would give a gift to a *righteous* man. I used to think that. I would have told you that God gave his gifts to *Christian* people, and to *good* Christian people, at that—he didn't just give them willy-nilly to anybody. But the Psalmist says that he gives his gifts to the rebellious *also*. Now, what are we to make of that?

Well, we know that God causes it to rain on the just and the unjust. He doesn't make the rain run down the property line, with one man's field getting a good wetting-down and the other man's field getting dry and dusty, right? That the good man's field get the rain, the evil man's field gets a drought? No, it doesn't work that way. That would be a very effective technique for promoting righteousness, but God doesn't work that way.

Now, there's a curious incident in the gospel accounts that I think may give us a hint as to the mind of God, and the working of God, and to this very complicated subject I'm talking to you about.

John 5

KJV

² Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep *market* a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

(Bethesda, by the way, is the name of the major naval hospital in Washington, D.C., and it's connected to this Pool of Bethesda where people were healed. There's an irony in it that may pass over some people.) But, anyway, at this pool there was always:

John 5

KJV

³ In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

⁴ For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, [...]

This is John telling us this, and not that it is *rumored* that it happened. John tells us *this is what happened*.

John 5

KJV

⁴ For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: [...]

I don't know how—I guess he just stuck his hand in it and stirred it.

John 5

KJV

⁴ [...] whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

Now, you'll have to admit this is a strange story. It's an odd thing, to consider this, because the guy that got healed on this occasion would *not* be the most righteous man of those waiting around the pool; it would not be the most deserving; it would not be the most crippled. Because, in fact, in most cases it would be the *least* crippled man who was healed, right? Because the most crippled man couldn't get there.

This establishes something profound, if you can see it. What it establishes is that God's gifts are not given for merit. They're not given because you deserve them; they're not given because you're better than someone else; they're not given because you're smarter, brighter, wittier, or anything of the sort. In fact, the implication of this is that God's gifts are given at random.

Now, what are these gifts? What form do they take? And why in the world would God give them this way? Stay with me, and I'll explain that after I come back.

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Well, last night I went to a concert by the Aspen Wind Quintet. The first piece they played was by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The second piece was composed by a member of the quintet, and it was really very good. Very good, indeed, but the man had more nerve than I did. I mean, to put your own

composition right after Mozart? The piece by Mozart—well, that was *pure genius*.

I don't know if you saw the movie *Amadeus* or not, but it was about the life of Mozart (or a part of the life of Mozart) and it developed an interesting theme as a man named Salieri, I believe, a court musician who has worked hard all his life, has studied diligently, and he is a composer. He has asked God to bless his works and has made certain promises to God if God would give it to him—that he would *always* glorify God with his music.

And along comes the young Mozart, who is crude and vulgar and hardly religious, but a man who plainly has received the gift that Salieri wanted so very much—and Mozart had the gift *as a child*! It seems he was born with it—that God, at random, decided to drop this gift that Mozart had on this kid and bypassed all sorts of devoted, deserving, hard-working people.

And Salieri came to hate God because he thought that God had been unfair. And it would *seem* so. Some, thinking that God could not possibly give such a gift to a crude and vulgar man, and yet seeing the miraculous genius of the man, have actually argued in some cases that the gift that Mozart and other men like him had was demonic. It's just not possible for a normal human being to have that gift. So maybe a demon has come upon him and a demon has given him this gift of music.

But remember what James said? “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” There's *nothing* in the Bible to suggest that demonic powers can convey gifts like that which Mozart had, and there's *everything* to suggest that they cannot. God gives gifts to men. And remember what the Psalmist said? “God gives gifts to men—and the rebellious also.”

When the angel stirred the waters at Bethesda and healed the first poor devil that entered the pool, he gave periodic testimony to the gifts of God. And when you listen to Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, you encounter a great gift of God—given to a man who was deaf and couldn't hear it *himself*.

Now, why does God do this? Are you ready to look a gift horse in the mouth? Why does *anyone* give a gift?

There is a line in the movie *Chariots of Fire* which I *always* remember. (It just hit me like a ton of bricks when I saw the movie the first time. And I saw it again not long ago and was moved by it again.) The young Scottish missionary (who is the star of the movie) who is preparing to run in the Olympics is getting a little bit of flak from his friends about doing something so worldly. It would be far better for him to go ahead and get out in the mission field and get to work. Why is he fooling around with the Olympics? Why is he trying to run this way? And he answered and said, “God made me fast. I run for his pleasure.”

You know, it may be hard to imagine God watching a track meet, but why not? You and I enjoy watching men strive for the mastery in a sport and we are made in the image of God. And God gives some men strong bodies. God gives some men fast bodies. And here was a young man who was very fast and who wanted to run for the pleasure of God. I had almost understood the idea of running for the *honor* of God, but to run for his *pleasure* was a new thought.

Now, if that's hard for you, is it hard to imagine God listening to Handel's *Messiah*? Is it hard to imagine him listening to Mendelssohn's *Elijah*? Is it hard to imagine him listening to some of Mozart's greatest music? Actually, I think it is very kind of God to share these gifts with us. And they seem to fall *at random* on the children of men.

So, you may ask me now, what does all this have to do with leadership? Well, I think leadership is one of those gifts that God rains down at random among men. And there's a prophecy in Isaiah that gives a hint. It's found in the third chapter:

Isaiah 3

AKJV

¹ For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, does take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water.

Well, Jerusalem and Judah have become rebellious; they have forgotten God; they have drifted away from God; they have become immoral and corrupt, and God says, “Well, the time has come to administer a little chastisement.” So we’re going to do without bread and we’re going to do without water for a while, but that’s not where he stopped.

Isaiah 3

AKJV

¹ For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, does take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water.

² The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient,

³ The captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counselor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.

Now, this is a devastating blow to a country because their mighty men, their men of war—this is your general, the joint chiefs of staff chairmen, the people who actually control your armies. And “your judges”, he said—he’s going to take away the wisdom from judges, he’s going to take away the gift of prophecy, the prudent, the ancient, the honorable man, the great speaker. How does he do it? Simple. He stops handing down the gifts that enable men to *do* these things. He said, as a result:

Isaiah 3

AKJV

⁴ And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.

⁵ And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbor: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honorable.

Now, if you haven’t picked up on this, this is a description of a nation with a leadership *crisis*. And they got there because of a loss of moral character. And God said, “As a result of that you’re going to lose the gifts of leadership.” Now, we need to understand this. It is interesting that we refer to men who have the gift of leadership as “charismatic”. The word “charismatic” comes from the Greek and means “anointed”, and it may be a very appropriate choice of words because there are men on this earth who have that kind of power—it’s amazing, they almost *radiate* that kind of power when you’re close to them and when you’re talking to them. The men who have it have incredible powers of persuasion. They have a knack for making people like them, of making people want to do things for them, of making people want to please them—in fact, often times, of getting people to do things that they don’t *really* want to do, but they do it because of the powers of persuasion of a man who has *charisma*.

I have met a few people like this in my time. They are remarkable people. One of them was probably the best salesman I have ever known. They are people you can’t help liking. You want to buy things from them. You want to be with them. You want to be talking with them and exchanging ideas with them. You like to be around people like this.

Some of these men use these gifts to persuade men in the ways of peace. They use their gift to marshal great armies together to defeat enemies like Hitler and Stalin. Some men use them to pull a nation out of depression and to give people hope.

Others? Others use them for seduction. And there are many kinds of seduction. They use their great

power to seduce young girls, or they use that power to amass *huge* fortunes, or to steal money from the weak in all manner of use for the self, or—like Hitler, like Stalin, like Mussolini—they use that great power to control and to destroy.

The great men of generations past are men who had this gift and used it for the greater good instead of for their own lusts. The great failures are men who used their gift of God to *feed their own appetites*.

God gives this gift for the good of mankind, but it does not fall on everyone—only a select few—and if the few to whom this great gift is given use it for evil...then our end is at hand.

Hitler was a man like that. Hitler was *enormously charismatic*; he was a powerful persuader. He had a knack for pulling people around him who would follow him no matter what, no matter where he wanted to go. But they *were* evil men. Hitler was a man who had a gift, a charisma. But then, so was Winston Churchill; so was Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Now, in history, what if the balance had been different? What if, instead of Franklin Roosevelt, we had say, Joseph Kennedy, as president? And what if, instead of Winston, Britain had continued with Neville Chamberlain into World War II? Winston Churchill said, early on in the war, that it was a very close-run thing whether Britain was going to survive or not. Without the kind of charisma that Winston Churchill had, without the kind of charisma that Franklin Delano Roosevelt had—to be able to pull American into this thing—the world would be a very different place today.

So do you suppose we should care about the character of the most powerful man in the world? That we would be willing to put a man in charge of a nuclear arsenal that, while he was able and intelligent and active, charismatic, lovable, did not have the character needed to have that kind of power?

Let me tell you about another man in history who had this gift, that fell upon him from heaven. He was, in his day, the most powerful man in the world. His name was David, the son of Jesse, and you'll find his story in the first book of Samuel in the Bible. You ought to read it from front to back because he was truly a remarkable man.

He was actually the *second* king of Israel. Saul, who was king before him, had the same kind of charisma, in fact. God selected him initially because he had the gift. And he then, in addition to the gift, gave him his spirit. It came upon Saul in such strength that Saul even prophesied. But the problem with Saul was that he was very much into himself, and the decisions he made were very self-centered decisions. And on two separate occasions—with very clear instructions about what he was supposed to do directly from God—he went his own way and did his own thing. He abused the gift that he had.

The result was that the spirit of God departed from Saul and left him a mental wreck. Saul, even though the spirit of God had departed from him, still had the charisma. He still had the gift, but he was crazy. And so it is that the gift without the balance—without the character—is a recipe for disaster. Saul, in his last days, was not unlike Hitler, in a way. Because, in the initial stages of Hitler, he was a very charismatic man, he was quite a leader, he made the trains run on time. You may forget this from time to time, but Hitler came to power in a democratic election; the people of Germany chose him. So Saul, just like Hitler, became *crazy*.

Now, David was a man whom Samuel described as being “of beautiful countenance”, and this oftentimes goes with the men who have the gift. They have the gift in all of its different forms and all of its packages and all of its attributes. They're intelligent; they're good-looking; they have the style; they have the communication; they have the persuasion.

David had the gift of leadership—the personal charisma. He had the knack for making men (and women) love him. He had courage. He had faith. And David inspired the loyalty of gifted men. There is a passage in 2 Samuel that illustrates, I think, in a way, what I mean. It's in chapter 23, and it begins with, of all things, the last words of David:

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

¹ Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said,

² The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue.

³ The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me, He that rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

Well, isn't that the truth. David saw that. He saw that with sterling clarity. He that rules over men must be just, and he must rule in the fear of God. And David went on to say:

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

⁴ [The man like that] shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

⁵ Although my house be not so with God; yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

You know, David was a man of great honesty. And while he had not always measured up, he knew what God required, and he knew that he *had not*. And he didn't try to pretend. There was no "spin" in David. He realized that God requires that a man who rules over men has to be just, and he also knew that he had not always been.

This statement is followed by a roster of David's "mighty men" and their exploits. You might want to read this sometime because it's really fascinating. You can oftentimes tell a lot about a man by the men he attracts, by the quality of men who follow him, by how loyal they are, by what they will do. David's men? Well, they are a remarkable group of people. In verse 8 of chapter 23:

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

⁸ These be the names of the mighty men whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite: he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time.

Now, you know that 800 men would overpower *one* man, no matter how good he was, and this was probably talking about a battle. Battles back in those days were a series of one-on-one conflicts. In other words, the armies rushed at one another and men fought one another one-on-one. And when you knocked this man down, you went and helped somebody else with the man that *he* was fighting. And what this is saying is that this man, in the course of one day's battle, managed to kill 800 of the enemy.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

⁹ And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away:

¹⁰ He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword: and the LORD worked a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil.

Because *this* man led them in the battle. These were men with the bark on. These were warriors of the first water-strong, fearless, and *absolutely devoted* to David.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

¹¹ And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentils: and the people fled from the Philistines.

¹² But he stood in the middle of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD worked a great victory.

One man against a troop of men.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

¹³ And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest time to the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim.

¹⁴ And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

Bethlehem, remember, is the city of David. It's *his* place.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

¹⁵ And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!

He was just reminiscing by the campfire, “Boy, that’s good, sweet water down there!”

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

¹⁶ And the three mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: [...]

That’s the kind of men that David had. But look at the kind of man David is once they brought him the water.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

¹⁶ [...] nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out to the LORD.

¹⁷ And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men.

And you can see the character of this man—who was not selfish, who was not self-oriented—who poured out this water. Bear in mind that these are three guys. David had a *whole platoon* of these men. Think of what kind of man it took to *lead* men like *these*.

The whole kingdom loved David. He was the darling of everybody. The man must have had an *incredible* charisma, but he abused it in the case of Bathsheba, another man’s wife. He called, she came.

She could not resist the charisma, the power of the man David. It was a *terrible* lapse of character on David's part. And he even tried to cover it up. And in the covering of it up, he *killed* an innocent, brave man—one of those 30 who were totally loyal to him.

It was a shameful act, and it was *known*—it was known all through the palace, it was known in the army—what he did. And God sent his own version of a special prosecutor: Nathan the prophet. Nathan came to David and accused him of what he had done, and David was *all through* covering up, and he said:

2 Samuel 12

AKJV

¹³ [...] I have sinned against the LORD. [...]

And he wrote the magnificent 51st Psalm, in which he says to god:

Psalm 151

AKJV

⁶ Behold, you desire truth in the inward parts[.]

In the end, Israel had a man who, in spite of his sins and in spite of his mistakes, had the *character* to own up to what he had done—to repent. David was a winner. Saul was a loser, and he stands as a perpetual reminder of what can happen when charisma goes bad. I'm astonished at how people will follow a leader wherever he takes them without any consideration of his character or his morals. They'll follow him wherever he goes...even to hell.

Until next time, this is Ronald Dart.

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