

## BOASTING TOO SOON

**“One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off” (1 Ki. 20:11).**

These words of Ahab to Benhadad are merely common sense. Only God knows the future. Goliath, for example, put on his armor fully confident that he would be victorious regardless of who he fought. When he realized that his opponent was only a boy he was even more arrogant. He cursed David by his gods, looked down at him and shouted: **“Come here . . . and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field” (1 Sam. 17:44).** Goliath was wrong! In only a few minutes he would be dead and David would remove his head. Goliath did not boast when he took off his armor for and someone else took it off for him. Obviously, he boasted too soon.

History provides a great many examples of this principle. Let us consider the epoch story of the great ship Vasa constructed by King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. Between 1611 and 1718 Sweden was the dominant power in the Baltic, eventually gaining territory that encompassed the Baltic on all sides. His navy, however, had recently suffered several severe setbacks. In 1625, a squadron cruising in the Bay of Riga was caught in a storm and ten ships ran aground and were wrecked. In the Battle of Oliwa in 1627, a Swedish squadron was outmaneuvered and defeated by a Polish force and two more large ships were lost. In 1628, three other large ships were lost in less than a month.

It is in this historical context that King Adolphus ordered the building of the Vasa. She would be a huge ship 226 feet long, 39 feet wide and 172 feet high. She would be fitted with ten sails and 64 bronze cannons, making her the most powerfully armed warship in the world. No expense was spared and the finished product was garnished with hundreds of painted and gilded wooden sculptures.

Thus it was that on the sunny afternoon of Aug. 10, 1628 she set sail on her maiden voyage. Naturally it was done with great boasting, pomp and ceremony. The ship was ready. The ballast, the cannons, and the ammunition were all safely stored. The crew of 150 had even invited their families to witness this historic event. Foreign dignitaries lined the shore with hundreds of spectators.

THE BOASTING, HOWEVER, WAS AS BIT TOO SOON. In only 30 minutes the top heavy ship was hit by a gust of wind and immediately tipped over and sank to the bottom of the sea. The maiden voyage was only half an hour long and covered only eight tenths of a mile. Fortunately the sea was only 104 feet deep and the mast of the ship was 172 feet high. This enabled most of the crew to cling to the rigging and survive. Unfortunately, 30 crew members were trapped inside and went down with the ship. 333 years later the ship was raised from the deep and is now on display in the Vasa Museum. It is a sober reminder to remain humble and not to boast too soon!

**“Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.” (Ja. 4:13-17)**

Jesus once told the story of a rich farmer who was blessed with a bumper crop. Instead of sharing his abundance with others, however, he determined to build bigger barns and keep it for himself. He said: **“This will I do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of goods laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry’” (Lk. 12:18, 19).** He boasted too soon! Jesus said he was a fool for that very night he died and all of “his” possessions were left to someone else. We can only live another day and do anything “if the Lord wills”.

Jeremiah put it like this: **“This is what the Lord says:“Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord.” (Jer. 9:23, 24).**