

22nd November 2023

Appointment

**“I give it as my deliberate and solemn conviction
that the individual who is habitually tardy in meeting an appointment,
will never be respected or successful in life.”**

Wilbur Fisk, *The Massachusetts Teacher* (1850)

My dentist has a new appointment system. You phone (or pop into the clinic if you're close by) to fix the appointment. If you do it in person, before you leave there's a paper copy of the details in your hand. By the time you're home, there's an email and a text waiting for you, confirming the appointment – *and* it finds its way magically into your electronic calendar. A week before the appointment is due, you get a text message asking you to confirm you're still planning to attend – and to remind you that you'll be billed if you don't turn up. And, on the day, you get a reminder, an hour before, that you should be on your way. I *love* it – given that I believe Wilbur Fisk's conviction quoted above to be *absolutely* true!

I came across the word “appointment” in a bible reading in church recently. It was from *The Message* translation, in a dialogue between King Saul and the prophet Samuel. The young King Saul is brash and headstrong. But he's in trouble. His army is failing in their fight against the Philistines. So Saul turns to God for help, in this case making a burnt offering to God. Samuel is incredulous. “What on earth are you doing, man?” he asks. And when King Saul indicates that he felt obliged to come to God in his hour of need, Samuel offers him this withering rebuke:

That was a fool thing to do. If you had kept the appointment that your GOD commanded, by now GOD would have set a firm and lasting foundation under your kingly rule ... As it is, your kingly rule is already falling to pieces ... And all because you didn't keep your appointment with GOD!

Over the years, I've seen too many people who, like Saul, turn to God when it suits them, especially when they're in trouble, expecting God to intervene with beneficence when they request it. God had got short shrift till they decided to call on his Grace and Mercy. Perhaps they would have been better having a “firm and lasting foundation”, built on appointments with God on a regular basis, and not leave it till the last minute – or, indeed, fail to turn up at all! Now, that *would* be “a fool thing to do.”

A prayer for today

Time for my appointment, Lord? Good! And I'll fix another one very soon ... Amen

An original reflection © Tom Gordon

Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>