

Sermon Notes for August 14th

THE DANGERS OF PROCRASTINATION

Procrastination: to put off intentionally the doing of something that should be done

As one person rightly said “Procrastination never won a race, received a promotion or changed the outcome of any situation.”

There is no value to procrastination yet everyone does it from time to time. So the first thing I want to talk about this morning is procrastination in our everyday lives. I will be the first to admit that I have been guilty of procrastination several times. For example:

All of us are guilty of this in our everyday life. For instance many times we put off going to the doctor when we should whether it be for a regular check up or for a pain that we are having. Many of us plan to build things or go certain places but we always manage to find a reason not do them.

Sometimes we suffer great heartache because of procrastination. For example some have wanted to tell their mother, father, or someone close to them how much they loved them and appreciated them but they waited too long and that person died before they had the chance. The same thing has happened to family members who were angry at one another and then one day they decide their differences aren't worth keeping them separated from each other but the decision comes too late and the person dies without ever knowing that you had forgiven them.

Procrastination has always been a problem with people and in some instances it has cost people their lives and even affected the outcome of battles. For example an incident from the American Revolution illustrates what tragedy can result from procrastination. It is reported that Colonel Rahl, commander of the British troops in Trenton, New Jersey, was playing cards when a courier brought an urgent message stating that General George Washington was crossing the Delaware River. Rahl put the letter in his pocket and didn't bother to read it until the game was finished. Then, realizing the seriousness of the

situation, he hurriedly tried to rally his men to meet the coming attack, but his procrastination was his undoing. He and many of his men were killed and the rest of the regiment was captured.

The British ambassador Nolbert Quayle said, **"Only a few minutes' delay cost him his life, his honor, and the liberty of his soldiers. Earth's history is strewn with the wrecks of half-finished plans and unexecuted resolutions. 'Tomorrow' is the excuse of the lazy and refuge of the incompetent."**

So, as we can see procrastination can be very dangerous as it can cost people their lives. Think about this for a minute, how many of us would want our fire fighters to procrastinate when our house is danger of catching fire from a nearby grassfire? How many of us would want an ambulance driver to procrastinate on getting to our home while our loved one is suffering from a heart attack? How many of us would want a police officer to procrastinate on responding to a prowler trying to break into our home? Of course all of us would say no, I wouldn't want them to procrastinate. Yet that exactly what we do over and over again. Procrastination is our enemy and if we ever want to get anything done in this life we have to learn avoid procrastination.

One sneaky way that procrastination works in our lives is that we fool ourselves into thinking that because we keep busy everyday that we are being productive. However, a person needs to examine what they are busy doing and is what they are doing really that important. For instance some people become workaholics and they stay busy everyday working which leaves them no time to do those things they should be doing like spending precious time with their husband or wife and their kids. They have little time on their hands to study their Bibles or to reach out to the lost. Even though this workaholic is busy they are procrastinating because they are neglecting those things which are more important in life. It's important to sit down and make a list either mentally or on paper and start asking ourselves what our most important priorities are in this life and then we need to make another list of what we are currently making our priority. If it doesn't match up then we need to start making some changes in our life so that we have our priorities straight.

So far we have examined procrastination in our everyday life, now I want to turn our attention to the dangers of procrastination in our Christian lives and what the Bible has to say about it.

Again just as in our everyday lives we have all been guilty of procrastinating in our spiritual lives from time to time. The first century Christians had this problem as well. For example in 2 Cor. 8 Paul does his best to encourage the congregation at Corinth to stop procrastinating. Notice what he tells them in,

2 Corinthians 8:10 **10** And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. **11** Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. **12** For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

In context Paul is talking about them taking up a collection for their brethren that needed it. You see they had promised to do it a year ago but they still hadn't done it and Paul is encouraging them to complete what they started. The key to doing this is found in verse 12, first there must be a willing mind. If this church had a willing mind to do what they said they would do then it would have already been done.

This same thing happens in congregations today. They plan on doing this or that but winds up being a bunch of empty talk because none of their plans ever get implemented.

For example, think about how many times we procrastinate in showing brotherly love for one another. How many times have we thought to ourselves well I'm going to do such and such for brother or sister so and so but we keep putting it off. Or how many times have we told ourselves I'm going to get know that Christian better but again we put it off. You see procrastination is opportunities greatest enemy because we have all had many opportunities to show our love for a fellow brother or sister but because of procrastination we never did it.

Heb 3:12 **12** See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a

sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. **13** But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

The writer expresses the importance of taking care of business today and not tomorrow. We have to realize that tomorrow may never come as James says,

James 4:13 **13** 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." **14** 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.

We must train ourselves to have a willing mind to do what needs to be done today to show love toward our brethren. This same concept applies to reaching out to the lost. Jesus said,

Matthew 28:19 **"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.**

There is no room for procrastination in the word "go". Our main purpose as a Christian is to try and lead others to Christ and we do this by our words and our deeds, as Jesus says in,

Matthew 5:16 **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**

Unfortunately, we procrastinate in this area. How many opportunities have wasted to tell someone about God because we convinced ourselves that we would talk to them another day? Procrastinating in this area is very dangerous for those around us because what you might have said or done can possibly make the difference between that person being lost or saved. I know its difficult for us to muster up the courage to talk to people but we have to learn to overcome that fear because their soul is at stake. Notice what Paul says about this in,

2 Corinthians 5:11 Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others.

Paul didn't want anyone to have to face the wrath of God and so he always did his best to tell everyone about God and what happens if you do not accept him. He expresses this to the Ephesians Elders in,

Acts 20:26 "Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*.²⁷ "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

It is imperative that we learn to be like Paul in this instance and make sure that we teach all the truth and not just part of it. Not only must we teach it we must live it. We cannot successfully lead people to Christ if we procrastinate when it comes to our example. People are always watching us and so we have to be careful that we live what we teach. Notice what Paul says about this in,

Philippians 2:14 Do all things without complaining and disputing,¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

Another area that we procrastinate in is found in,

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

When someone falls away from the Lord we are suppose to jump to action and do what we can do to restore them, however many times we fail to act and instead we put it off and we simply make plans about talking to this person. This should not be the case because the longer we wait the farther they are going to drift away. It can get to the point where we will never be able to reach them again.

Now I know it can be scary talking to those who have fallen away but

we must try because God wants them to come back home so that they can be restored to his fold.

Another area that we procrastinate in is our prayer life and this can become very dangerous as Jesus says in,

Matthew 26:41 "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak."

When we procrastinate in our prayer life we are opening ourselves up to temptation and we will find ourselves growing further and further away from God. It is a real shame when we get to the point in our lives when we can't find the time to talk to our God. When we fail to pray as we should we show a lack of trust and a lack of love toward our father in heaven. We need all the help we can get to deal the problems that life throws our way so let us never procrastinate in our prayer life.

Procrastination is very dangerous because it can make the difference between us making it to heaven or spending eternity in hell. Jesus makes the very clear in,

Matthew 24:46 46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. **47** Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. **48** But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' **49** and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. **50** The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. **51** He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus is talking about the 2nd coming here and he is saying in these verses that when he comes those who are serving him will be rewarded but those who are procrastinating because they think they have plenty of time before that occurs are going to be treated like the hypocrite who will be cast into the fiery lake. Jesus reemphasizes this same concept in next chapter with the parable of the 10 virgins and the parable about the talents. So let us always strive not to procrastinate in our Christianity or it could lead us to spiritual death.

Now our third and final point this morning has to do with how some play the dangerous game of procrastination when it comes to obeying the gospel and becoming a Christian. Too many people have the attitude of Felix as we read in,

Acts 24:24 And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. ²⁵ Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."

Felix was interested in hearing about Jesus because of Paul's faith in him. But as soon as Paul started talking about how a person has to live a righteous life and exercise self-control this was beginning to seem like too much trouble to Felix. Then when Paul started teaching him about what will happen at the final judgment day it scares Felix and he doesn't want to think about such things nor does he want to make any changes in his lifestyle so he procrastinates and as far as we know he never became a Christian.

This is the typical attitude of many sinners today. They want to put off obeying the gospel because they are not ready to make that kind of commitment. They don't want to know about details they just want to think that there is a loving God that will save them no matter what, but this simply is not the case. One thing we as humans are great at is making excuses for why we shouldn't obey God today. In fact this is illustrated by Jesus with a parable in,

Luke 14:15 Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed *is* he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" ¹⁶ Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, ¹⁷ "and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' ¹⁸ "But they all with one *accord* began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' ¹⁹ "And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' ²⁰

"Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'²¹ "So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here *the* poor and *the* maimed and *the* lame and *the* blind.'²² "And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.'²³ "Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled.'²⁴ 'For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'

From this parable we can see that some who are invited to accept God's saving grace will make up all kinds of excuses for why they cannot accept His grace. Then it talks about those who were invited and they did accept it and they were allowed the privilege to dine with the master and those who choose of their own free will to procrastinate will never be allowed to taste the Master's supper. Does this apply to you this morning? Have you been putting off becoming a Christian because you are not ready to make the commitment to serve God with your whole mind, heart and soul? Don't you think its time that you stop gambling with your soul and thinking that you will always have tomorrow. Peter tells us,

2 Peter 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;¹¹ for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Paul also stresses the importance of obeying the gospel call today in,

2 Corinthians 6:2 Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.