

The Danger of Procrastination

The Bible says that all of us have sinned and all deserve punishment (Romans 3:23; 6:23), but it also assures us that Jesus Christ has died to pay the penalty incurred by our sins (Romans 3:24-25). Those who accept this message of Good News receive complete pardon when they believe the Gospel, repent of their sins, and identify with God's people in Christian baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). But many people procrastinate when it comes to the matter of their eternal salvation. Procrastination is the act of putting off until a future time; it means to habitually postpone. There are four urgent, pressing reasons why no person should ever say "Tomorrow" or "Sometime later" when faced with a decision about preparation for the life to come.

1. The Holy Spirit Calls Today

The message of the Holy Spirit to every lost soul is "Be saved today." The devil says, "Wait and put it off until tomorrow." God says, "Come and come right now." The Bible says, "Today if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 3:15).

One thing sure—the day of grace is still open for each one reading this message. The Saviour pleads with individuals to come to Him now. God's Holy Spirit calls now. The Spirit of God seeks people who are lost and convicts them, and warns them, and strives with them—in order that they might be saved. But remember that God's Spirit *will not always call*. He may not call tomorrow. The Bible says, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6). And in another place, God says, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Genesis 6:3). This flatly says that God may not always call.

Aaron Burr was the third vice-president of the United States. He was a brilliant student at Princeton University at age nineteen. A revival broke out on campus in those days, and Aaron was deeply convicted. He went to one of his teachers and told him his dilemma. The teacher gave him a Bible and told him to go back to his room and settle the matter with God on his knees. Aaron tried to shake off the conviction. He went back to his room all right, but in desperation he cried out, "God, if you let me alone, I'll promise to let you alone." And later Aaron said it was at that moment that all conviction left him. Years later, a good friend tried to introduce him to the Saviour, but the cold sweat poured out of his forehead as he recounted to his friend how at the age of nineteen he had asked God to let him alone. It was then that he said, "I never had one slight feeling ever since that I should become a child of God."

So many have the idea that they can get saved whenever they get ready. But the fact is that you'll get saved when the Spirit of God draws, and if He has called you for the last time, you'll never get saved. The poet says,

"There's a line that is drawn by rejecting the Lord,
where the call of the Spirit is lost;
as you hurry along with the pleasure-mad throng,
have you counted, have you counted the cost?"

To say “yes” to Jesus means life; to say “no” means death. God Almighty draws a deadline across every sinner’s path. On one side there’s hope; on the other side there’s death! The Holy Spirit calls today, and if you trifle with the call of the Spirit, He may never strive with you again.

2. The Heart Constantly Gets Harder

The heart of every man and woman and boy and girl becomes more and more hardened every time he puts off the Gospel invitation. The Bible says, “Exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13).

The hardening of the heart is one of the most terrible calamities that can come upon the lost sinner on this side of eternal destruction in Hell. One reason why the great majority of those who are saved have been saved in childhood and youth, is simply because the child has the advantage of a tender heart. The child has a tender conscience that grieves over sin. The child is easily moved by the fear of punishment. The child knows that it is dangerous to go on in sin. But one who continues in sin, and ignores the call of the Spirit of God, will find that his heart becomes calloused and hardened and accustomed to sin.

Every brazen infidel was once a tender-hearted child who may have trembled at the very thought of his sin, but delay over the years has hardened his heart. Every drunkard was once a pure and innocent child, likely beloved by his parents, and promising for the future. Every pointed prostitute was once a sweet-faced little girl (precious and gentle), with holy possibilities, but now the passing days of unrebuked sin in her life have led to an indifference about holy matters.

Oh the danger of hardened hearts! Those innocent little children born into the world with bright eyes, happy smiles, and a sweet disposition—gradually become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. And each day they put off the call of the Spirit, there is less and less concern for the things of God, and more and more concern for the things of the world—and their hearts become more and more hardened. If you are reading this message, and you are past twenty years of age—your chances for getting saved are growing smaller indeed. Five-sixths of all decisions for Christ are made before twenty, and only about one out of a thousand becomes a child of God after reaching the age of thirty. It is not impossible to be saved in an old age, but it is unusual. God can save regardless of age. If you are a hardened sinner, a drunkard in the gutter, a prostitute, a church member who has gone back on God, a basically good person but uncommitted to Christ—remember that Jesus died for you and now He wants you to live for Him. There is a new life of joy awaiting you, but you have to give Jesus the consent of your will. The longer you wait to give your heart to Jesus, the more difficult the decision will become. The heart becomes a little more calloused every time you say “no” to Jesus.

3. The Growing Nearness of Christ’s Coming

There is not a single event prophesied in the Bible which must come to pass before Jesus returns. Not another war needs to be declared. Not another sermon needs to be preached. Not another prophecy needs to be fulfilled. As far as can be told from the Scriptures, Jesus may come at any moment to catch up His Bride (the Church). It is true that many don’t believe He is coming back, but the fact still remains

that each passing day brings us one day closer to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The angels said at the time of His ascension, “This same Jesus who is taken up from you, shall so come again” (Acts 1:11).

There will be a resurrection when Christ returns. The bodies of those who sleep in Jesus, will rise from their graves and then those who are alive (in Christ) will be “caught up together with them” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Those who are unsaved will be left behind here on earth when Jesus comes. They will go into a time of trouble and sorrow such as this world has never seen before nor will ever see again (Matthew 24:21). Only God knows the misery and the agony of those awful days. People will desire to die, but death will flee from them. An unknown poet says:

When the great plants of our cities,
Shall have turned out their last finished work,
And the merchants have sold their last order
And dismissed every last tired clerk;
When the banks have raked in their last dollar,
And have paid out their last dividend;
When the Judge of the earth says, “Closed for the night,”
And calls for a balance—what then?

God’s timetable is set. The hour is getting late. Your chances of ever getting saved are growing fainter with the benediction of every Gospel service. Jesus may return at any moment—and this is another urgent, pressing reason why you should not spend another day apart from simple faith in Jesus Christ.

4. The Uncertainty of Life/The Certainty of Death

The Bible says, “[Come] now, ye that say today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow; for what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (James 4:13-14). It is silly for any person to say that he knows what will happen tomorrow. How do you know you’ll buy and sell tomorrow? How do you know you’ll go to work tomorrow morning? How do you know you’ll get home safely on your next trip? One person dies every second and your turn may be coming very soon. The death-angel might well appear to you before this day is completed and say, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee” (Luke 12:20).

Time flies by very rapidly. It seems but yesterday that I was a child, walking barefooted through the fields with the carefree abandon of childhood. Then came youth with its mingled joys, and then I suddenly crossed the bridge into adulthood, and the time seems to have gone so fast that I still often have trouble getting myself to believe that I’ve grown up and that I’ve become an adult. And the years seem to move with increasing speed as I plunge toward old age.

The Bible says, “As for man, his days are as grass, as a flower of the field; . . . the wind passeth over it, and it is gone” (Psalm 103:15-16). Your life—which seems so well established and so important today—is really only like a fragile blade of grass. You may boast of your good health and your long years of sound life, but every one of us has an inescapable appointment with death. Your body, which today is

active and energetic, will someday become cold and still. Your strength and your voice and your senses will be gone forever! Your physical frame will disintegrate and return to the dust of the earth! I beg you to set your house in order today so that you'll be prepared for that moment when you breathe your last mortal breath. There's no tomorrow-salvation with God. The Bible says, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). God wants to reason with you about your salvation, and He wants to do it today—because tomorrow may be too late.

If you are not a child of God today, there is likely only one thing standing in your way. I don't know what it is. It may be intellectual pride, some selfish ambition, or some worldly pleasure. But whatever it is, you are right now at the place where the road parts. You are going to make a choice today. You will either choose for Jesus, or against Him. He stands ready to inscribe your name in the Book of Life if you'll only call on Him. Today you still have a chance. Don't throw it away. Won't you hear His voice, and turn to Him, and live eternally in His presence?

-Harold S. Martin

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