

The
PROBLEM
with
PROCRASTINATION



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Dedication

This booklet is dedicated to all the people who know what they need to do but for whatever reason haven't gotten around to doing it yet.

Introduction

I've been meaning to write a booklet about procrastination for several years now, but I've been putting it off! Until now. I finally said to myself, "If you don't write this booklet now, you never will." And so at 9:17pm on a Monday night, I am sitting in my home study writing the introduction for what I hope will be a helpful resource for you on something all of us are at times guilty of...procrastinating.

A lady in our church showed me a little memento she keeps in her living room that says, "*I'm taking care of my procrastination issues; just you wait and see.*" Isn't that what we all do? We just naturally put off until *tomorrow* what we ought to do *today*.

How many projects have never been started? How many books have never been written? How many apologies have never been offered? How many diets and exercise programs have never been implemented? How many decisions for Christ have never been made? And all for the same reason...procrastination.

It wasn't that people's intentions weren't good. It wasn't like they said, "I'm never going to do that." In fact, it was just the opposite. Well-meaning people simply said to

themselves, “I need to do that. I intend to do that. And I’m going to do that. One day.” But *one day* is often slow to arrive. And sometimes, it never does.

While there are several angles I could take in addressing the subject of procrastination, I want to deal with this topic from a spiritual perspective. The application of the truths I will share is certainly broader than just the spiritual component of life, but since the spiritual part of our lives is the most important part anyway, it seems wise to put our focus there. And so, *our target audience is those who are procrastinating making a spiritual decision for God*. For some, that is a decision to get saved. For others, it is a decision to get baptized. For others, it is a decision to get active in church. For others, it is a decision to get serious about Bible reading and prayer. For others, it is a decision to start tithing. For others, it is a decision to answer God’s call to the ministry. For others, it is a decision to apologize to someone. For others, it is a decision to forgive someone who has hurt them. And for others, it is a decision to obey God in some other way.

I must confess that I have a soft place in my heart for those who are *on the fence* with spiritual matters. Their daily struggle is very

real, and at times, agonizing. Let's face it. The *fence* is not a comfortable place to sit.

I am especially tender towards the *non-church crowd*. To me, there is often something refreshing about being around them. They tend to be real, honest, and non-judgmental. Sadly, the *church crowd* is sometimes just the opposite. If we're not careful, we can be fake, hypocritical, and very judgmental. This is why the *non-church crowd* often stays away. They don't mind it that we sometimes mess up and sin. They just don't like it when we play like we're perfect. And they really don't like it when we throw stones at other people who have blown it. The *holier than thou attitude* just rubs them the wrong way. And actually, it rubs God the wrong way, too. Isn't there a story in the Bible about Jesus telling a group of religious people to feel free to throw stones at a sinner...as long as they themselves were without sin? (*see John 8:1-11*).

So as I write these pages, I do so with the *non-church crowd* in mind. Many of them know that they need to get right with God, but they haven't done it yet. Maybe they have put that decision off because of what they describe as "all the hypocrites in the church." Let me say that that's actually not a fair criticism. While I suppose there are *some* hypocrites in

every church, I personally know a multitude of Christians who aren't hypocrites at all. They are genuine people who love Jesus with all their hearts. Now don't get me wrong. They aren't perfect. No one is perfect except Jesus Himself. But they love Him, and they truly desire to please Him.

A hypocrite, by the way, isn't someone who sins. If that were the definition, everybody would be a hypocrite because everybody sins. *A hypocrite is someone who plays like he doesn't sin.* Or maybe I could say it this way: *A hypocrite is someone who plays like his sins aren't as bad as other people's sins.* Hypocrites just naturally turn people off. So when an unsaved person is postponing making a spiritual decision, it is quite easy for him to blame it on someone within the church. But when that happens, the unsaved person is actually guilty of doing what he accuses Christians of doing...being judgmental. Isn't that an interesting irony?

Having said that, I still have a very special place in my heart for people who know deep down in their hearts that they need to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, but for whatever reason keep putting that decision off. I totally understand why they look for excuses to delay that decision...even if those excuses

include criticizing those of us who *are* Christians. There is something about blaming others that takes the focus off of their own procrastination and individual responsibility.

The fact remains, though, that if they keep waiting for all of us who are Christians to be perfect, then they never will be saved. Their procrastination never will end.

So if you are one of those people who has been putting off making a spiritual decision, this booklet is for you. Whether you are part of the *non-church crowd* or the *church crowd*, this booklet is for you.

It's interesting. I preached a sermon in our church one Sunday night on procrastination, and when I gave the invitation, about twenty people came forward making decisions for the Lord. Did you pay attention to what I just said? Twenty or so people came forward on a Sunday night. In case you didn't know, the Sunday night crowd *is* the *church crowd*. In fact, the Sunday night crowd is *the most dedicated* and *the most committed part* of the *church crowd*. And from that faithful following, approximately twenty people came forward.

What were their decisions? Some came forward to get saved. Others came forward to

make sure they were saved. Some had been putting off getting baptized. Others rededicated their lives to the Lord. But all of them came forward to make a decision they had been putting off. It was one of the greatest Sunday nights we have ever had at our church. On that Sunday night, many people's procrastination ended. They did what they needed to do, and they left church that night with smiles on their faces and with peace and joy in their hearts.

The same thing can happen to you. As I share some of the problems with procrastination, may God give you the courage to do what those people did on that night at church. May He help you to stop procrastinating and do what you need to do.

Five Problems With Procrastination

1. *Strictly speaking, tomorrow never gets here.*

If you've ever seen the musical, *Annie*, you know all about the theme song, *Tomorrow*. The main line in that song says, "The sun will come out tomorrow."¹ And while there is a sense in which that is true, strictly speaking, when the sun comes out *tomorrow*, tomorrow will have become *today*. You can't wake up in

the morning and say, “It’s tomorrow!” That wouldn’t be accurate. When you wake up, it’s today. And tomorrow moves another day away. In the truest sense of the word, *tomorrow* never gets here. It never arrives. So if a person continues to postpone major-life decisions until tomorrow, those decisions never will be made.

Someone has well said that “tomorrow is a day on a foolish person’s calendar.” God doesn’t tell us to make spiritual decisions *tomorrow*. God’s day is always *today*.

The Bible says, “*Now is the accepted time...now is the day of salvation*” (II Corinthians 6:2). It is dangerous to put off a spiritual decision until tomorrow when we consider the fact that tomorrow never actually gets here. This is why so many *good intentions* never become a reality.

After I graduated from high school, I went to Baylor University. I had a wonderful experience at Baylor. I received a fantastic education, and I met a lot of great people. In fact, the four years I spent in college were four of the best years of my life.

There is one thing I should have done while I was at Baylor, though, that I never did. I should have gone to the *Dr. Pepper Museum*

and taken a tour. You may not know this, but the *Dr. Pepper Museum* is located in Waco, Texas, and everybody who has ever enjoyed a nice, cold *Dr. Pepper* should tour this museum. At least that's what I always told myself. I always thought, "Before I graduate, I need to tour that museum."

But I never did. I convinced myself that I was too busy. After all, when you are a college student, there are always books to read, papers to write, projects to do, and tests to study for. I kept thinking, "When my schedule slows down, I will take the tour of the *Dr. Pepper Museum*." But my schedule never slowed down. I read books, wrote papers, did projects, and studied for tests right up until the day I graduated. And I never toured the museum. I kept waiting for a *slower tomorrow* when I would have time to go, but that *slower tomorrow* never came.

In retrospect, though, I think I actually had plenty of time to take the tour. Somehow I found time to do a lot of other things. I found time to go out to eat a lot. I found time to go to the movies. I found time to play *Pop-A-Shot* in the arcade room at Richland Mall. I found time to preach at churches all across central Texas. I found time to watch football games on the weekends and on Monday nights. But I never

found time to go to the *Dr. Pepper Museum*. I wonder why.

As I think about it even now, I think the reason is that I never really made it a priority. It was something I thought I *ought* to do, but it wasn't something I was all that *serious* about doing. I was serious about my school work. I was serious about eating. I was serious about watching football. I was serious about preaching. I was serious about playing *Pop-A-Shot* at the mall. But I wasn't all that serious about touring the *Dr. Pepper Museum*. And as a result, I never did. Maybe one day I will, but at this point in life, it just doesn't seem likely.

I think the main reason we tend to put things off until *tomorrow* is that we're not all that serious about doing them. If we were serious about doing them, we would do them today. After all, we don't put off things like *eating* and *sleeping* until tomorrow. We do those things each and every day. Why? Because we're serious about them. When it comes to spiritual matters, we need to be just as serious. A *ho-hum* attitude about touring a museum has no lasting negative consequences. A *ho-hum* attitude about the things of God does.

So if there's a spiritual decision you need to make, if there's something you know you ought

to do, if there's a step of obedience of any kind that you need to take, I encourage you to get serious about it. I encourage you to make it a priority. Do that thing! And do it today!

If you keep putting it off, it only demonstrates that whatever God is leading you to do isn't all that important to you...that you aren't all that serious about it. And that's a scary position to be in.

If you keep telling yourself that you'll do it *tomorrow*, you never will get around to it. In *Annie's* little song, tomorrow is *only* a day away. In actuality, though, tomorrow is *always* a day away. That's why *today* is God's day. That's why *now* is God's time. And that's why *procrastination* is so very dangerous.

2. *We haven't been promised another day.*

Not only does tomorrow never really get here, but we haven't been promised another day beyond the one we are now experiencing. It's one thing to say that when we wake up tomorrow that *tomorrow* will be *today*. It's another thing to say that we may never wake up again. And that's what I'm saying now.

That's why the Bible says, "*Do not boast about tomorrow*" (*Proverbs 27:1*). As we are

thinking about our lives, we need to be very careful when we start talking about all the things we are going to do tomorrow. We have no guarantee that we will live to see another day. We have no promise that our plans will ever come to pass.

The Bible goes on to say, “*Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away*” (James 4:13-14).

Life is like a vapor. On a cold day, we can step outside and see our breath. But we can only see it for a second or two and then it’s gone. And that’s how the Bible describes our lives. We are *here* one moment and *gone* the next. At best, life is brief.

This doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t plan for the future. Pastor John MacArthur points out that the Bible “does not condemn wise business planning, but rather planning that leaves out God.”² In other words, as we plan for the future, we should do so with God in mind. And we should do so knowing that we might meet Him *sooner rather than later*. Since life is like

a vapor, then ours could vanish away at any moment.

This is another reason why procrastination is so dangerous. If we put off making important decisions for too long, we won't be here to make them. It will be too late. We will be gone.

For those of us living in southeast Texas, *Hurricane Harvey* is still fresh on our minds. All of us were affected by that storm in one way or another, but my heart goes out to those whose homes were flooded and whose lives were devastated. My heart is especially heavy for those who lost loved ones during the storm. I spoke at a memorial service a few days ago for a forty-five year old man who had a heart attack and died during the flood. Evidently the stress of it all was more than his heart could take. He had attended our church for about a year. His family members are some of my dearest friends. My heart breaks for them.

Anytime a major hurricane gets into the Gulf of Mexico, the authorities begin telling us to *prepare for the worst and hope for the best*. This was certainly true with *Hurricane Harvey*. Since the main threat for the Houston area was rain, not wind, we were told *not* to evacuate but to have enough supplies at home to last for

several days. We were told that streets would flood and that stores would most likely be closed.

So two days before the storm hit, I went to the grocery store to buy some food and bottled water. I was shocked to look on the water shelves and see absolutely no water at all. So I called another store and asked if they had any water. I was told they didn't. They were out, too. It was a helpless feeling not knowing where I might find some water. I called another store, and they said that they still had water. So I drove there as quickly as I could. But as I did, I thought to myself, "What would I do if this store runs out of water before I get there? Where would I go?" Thankfully, they still had some water, and I was able to purchase what I needed.

But as that shopping excursion unfolded, I thought to myself, "I waited too long. Now it's too late. I thought I had plenty of time. Now getting water isn't easy."

I fear that many people will step out into eternity saying something similar, "I waited too long. Now it's too late. I thought I had plenty of time. And now the opportunity to be saved has passed."

I get chills even writing those words. Can you imagine how horrible it would be to die without being ready to meet God? That's why the Bible says, "*Prepare to meet your God*" (Amos 4:12). And we have to prepare *today*. Because *tomorrow* hasn't been promised to us. Our lives are like a vapor. And vapors don't last long.

I think of a story Jesus told about a certain rich man. Listen to these words of our Lord, "*Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.' And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.' And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'"* (Luke 12:16-20).

Isn't that interesting? This man had so much money, so many possessions, such an abundance of crops that he planned on building even bigger barns to store everything away. And yet his plans never became a reality. He

died before his next *tomorrow*. Tomorrow never arrived.

One of the greatest preachers who ever lived was a man named Dwight L. Moody. God used him to shake two continents (North America and Europe) for Jesus Christ. In his ministry, he saw multiplied thousands of people make decisions for the Lord. He was a wonderful Christian and an anointed preacher.

On Sunday night, October 8, 1871, he was preaching to a huge congregation in Chicago. His Scripture passage was this: “*What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?*” (*Matthew 27:22, KJV*). At the end of his sermon, he said these words to his listeners:

*“I wish you would take this text home with you and turn it over in your minds during the week, and next Sabbath we will come to Calvary and the Cross, and we will decide what to do with Jesus of Nazareth.”*³

At the conclusion of the sermon, Moody’s singing evangelist, Ira Sankey, began to lead the congregation to sing the final hymn. But during that song, the sound of sirens from fire engines began to be heard throughout the church and throughout the city.

By morning, the *Great Chicago Fire* had ravaged much of the city. Many had died. Many who had heard Moody preach that night had died before the next morning. They never had a chance to make their decisions for Christ. Moody had given them a week to think about it. But they didn't live that long.

For the remainder of his life, the great preacher never got over that experience. Until the day of his death, he deeply regretted that he had given his audience a week to think about making a decision for Christ instead of urging them to respond *then* and *there* that night.

Moody, though, to his credit, learned from his mistake, and he never repeated it again. He shared how that experience changed his perspective and made him a more urgent preacher:

“I have never since dared to give an audience a week to think of their salvation. If they were lost they might rise up in judgment against me. I have never seen that congregation since. I will never meet those people until I meet them in another world. But I want to tell you of one lesson that I learned that night which I have never forgotten, and that is, when I preach, to press

Christ upon the people then and there and try to bring them to a decision on the spot. I would rather have that right hand (meaning his own hand) cut off than to give an audience a week now to decide what to do with Jesus.”⁴

Moody learned his lesson, and we would be wise to benefit from his experience. We should never put off until tomorrow what we *can* and *should* do today.

3. *God’s Spirit may not be convicting you tomorrow like He is today.*

There is, of course, a good chance that today won’t be your last day on earth. Unless Jesus comes first, you will, of course, die one day. But, in all honesty, it probably won’t be today. You will probably live to see another day. The odds are on your side!

But here’s the problem: *Even if you do live to see another day, or several more days, or many more days, God’s Spirit may not be dealing with you like He is right now.* Think about what is happening at this moment. You are actually reading a booklet about making a decision for God. He is, no doubt, speaking to your heart. He may never convict you again

like He is convicting you now. This is your time. Today is your day.

There's a verse in the Old Testament that is both serious and sobering. God is the One speaking, and He said, "*My Spirit shall not strive with man forever*" (*Genesis 6:3*). Think about that. God is saying that He won't always deal with us. He won't always be patient with us. He won't always convict us. He won't always draw us to Himself. That is why it is so dangerous to procrastinate making a spiritual decision...especially when the convicting power of the Holy Spirit is heavy upon us.

I heard a story years ago that deeply impacted me. I wish I could remember all the specific details, but thankfully I can at least remember enough to make the point.

There was a man who got under conviction every time he went to church. The pastor's sermons consistently spoke to him. And when the invitation was given to come forward and receive Christ, the Holy Spirit convicted him in a way that only the Holy Spirit can. He convicted him of his sins, of his need for forgiveness and salvation, and of God's willingness to forgive him and save him. The Spirit of God, each time the invitation was

given, impressed upon that man his desperate need for Christ.

If you are saved, you can remember what that feeling is like. You can remember when the Holy Spirit convicted you of your sins and of your need for Christ. I can remember when that happened to me. And what did we do? We repented of our sins. We asked Jesus to save us. And we trusted Him to do it. We were miserable, utterly miserable, until we got that settled.

Well, this man I heard about kept postponing getting that settled. He kept putting it off. As a result, his misery never really went away. And every time he went to church it only got worse. God was making him miserable in his unsaved condition so he would turn to Jesus and be saved. But the man refused to do that. He refused to humble himself. He refused to repent of his sins. He refused to turn to Jesus. He refused to get saved.

Then, one day, he prayed a prayer to God that changed all of that. Instead of praying for grace, mercy, forgiveness, and salvation, he prayed this, "God, every time I come to church I feel miserable. I get convicted of my sins. I become aware of my need for Christ. I become aware of my own lostness. And I just get

miserable. Now God, I know You want me to come to church. And I want to keep coming because I learn a lot. I meet a lot of wonderful people. But these miserable feelings I get every Sunday are more than I can bear. So I'll make a deal with You. If You'll stop convicting me of my sins and making me feel so miserable, then I'll keep coming to church. But if You keep convicting me every time I come, I can't attend anymore. I can't take this. Please, God, stop convicting me."

Do you know what happened after that man prayed that prayer? I'll tell you exactly what happened. God answered it. God answered that man's prayer. God never convicted him again.

The next Sunday when he went to church, everything was different. The pastor's sermon was interesting enough, but it didn't really resonate with him like it used to. And when the invitation was given, do you know what that man felt? I'll tell you. He felt absolutely nothing. No conviction. No misery. No accelerated heartbeats. No sweaty palms. No nervousness. He felt nothing. Why? Because God had answered his prayer. God had left him alone. And God never convicted him again.

What a tragic story. But what a clear illustration of the verse I shared with you a moment ago, “*My Spirit shall not strive with man forever*” (Genesis 6:3).

You see, if God’s Spirit ceases to strive with a person, if God’s Spirit stops convicting a person, then that person can’t be saved. Jesus said it this way, “*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him*” (John 6:44). So if the Father stops *drawing* a person, there is no hope.

The only way we can get saved is by running to Jesus. But we can’t run to Him unless we are convicted to do so. Without that conviction, a person cannot be saved.

Do you understand what I’m saying? A person could live to be over a hundred years of age, but if the Holy Spirit stops convicting him of his need for Christ, he cannot be saved. It’s really very simple: *No conviction means no salvation*. And since God has said that He would not always strive with man, that He would not always deal with man, that He would not always convict man, we are wise to respond to His initial dealings with us. And we are skating on thin ice when we ignore them.

There is a point out there somewhere, I don't know where it is, but there is a point out there where God will stop convicting you. I hope it's a long way off, but it may not be. Only God knows where that point is. But mark it down: *There is a point out there where God convicts a person for the last time.* That's what He meant when He said, "*My Spirit shall not strive with man forever*" (*Genesis 6:3*). God is a gentleman. And as a gentleman, He will only be told "No" so many times before He stops knocking on your heart's door. God doesn't want to be where He isn't wanted.

In the Niagara River, there is a *point of no return*. If you cross that line, you will go over the Niagara Falls. The current is so strong that you cannot turn back. You are doomed if you cross that line. It's literally called, *The Point of No Return*.

In the spiritual life, there is likewise a *point of no return*. A poet called it, *The Hidden Line*. Listen to these words:

The Hidden Line

*There is a time, we know not when,
A point we know not where,
That marks the destiny of men
To glory or despair.*

*There is a line by us unseen,
That crosses every path;
The hidden boundary between
God's patience and His wrath.⁵*

I plead with you today, whatever you do, don't cross that line with God. If He is knocking on your heart's door, open it, and let Him in. Answer the door while He is still knocking, because if you say "No" long enough, one day He will stop knocking. And when that happens, salvation will no longer be possible.

4. *Even if God does deal with you tomorrow, your mind and your heart may not be as receptive as they are today.*

It is a dangerous thing to shun the convicting power of God. As we have just seen, His conviction will one day end. But there is another side of that coin. His conviction may continue, but your spirit may no longer be able to recognize it.

That is why the Bible says, "*Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts*" (Hebrews 3:7-8). A person hardens his heart by rejecting the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Every time God impresses upon your heart to do something and you refuse to do it, your

heart gets a little bit harder. And if you continue to resist the Spirit's pleadings, your heart will one day become completely hardened. You will lose your ability to discern spiritual things.

The classic example of this in the Bible is the Pharaoh described in the book of Exodus. As the ruler of Egypt, Pharaoh possessed incredible power, and he was a ruthless leader. He had made life miserable for the Israelites who were living there. So God sent Moses to liberate the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage. God gave Moses clear instructions to appear before Pharaoh and declare to him, "*The LORD God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness'*" (Exodus 7:16). Moses and his brother, Aaron, faithfully delivered this message from God to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go. And as a result, God sent ten plagues on the land of Egypt.

Throughout the biblical account of this particular Pharaoh (*see Exodus 1-14*), we read some interesting things about Pharaoh's heart. We read that it continued to grow harder and harder. Every time he refused to obey God, his heart hardened by another degree. By the time the story ends, his *hard heart* had cost him his

life (*see Exodus 14*). Here was a man who had every imaginable opportunity to obey the promptings of God. But he refused. He hardened his heart. And he lost any and all ability to discern spiritual things.

It is interesting, as you read the narrative in Exodus, that on several occasions the Bible reveals that *Pharaoh hardened his own heart* while at other times we read that *God hardened Pharaoh's heart*. What does that mean? Why would God harden anyone's heart?

Perhaps Bible scholar Matthew Henry summed it up best. He observed that there came a time when "God justly gave him up to his own heart's lusts."⁶ In other words, God just let Pharaoh's heart go in the direction it wanted to go.

I personally find it most intriguing that every time we read that *God hardened Pharaoh's heart* that Pharaoh at that same time had an opportunity to obey. His heart was hardened because he refused to do so. So there is a sense in which *God hardened Pharaoh's heart* by giving him opportunity after opportunity to do the right thing, and *Pharaoh hardened his own heart* by refusing to obey. Every time he refused to obey, his heart got a little bit harder.

Here we learn an important truth about God: *He will never force us to go against our own will.* Pharaoh wanted to disobey God, and God didn't make him obey. And He won't make you obey either. You have a free will. And while God reveals truth to us, convicts us of sin, draws us to Himself, and waits patiently for us to obey, He never forces us to do something we don't want to do. Even when we read that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, we have to remember that *God never hardened Pharaoh's heart against Pharaoh's will.* Just the opposite. God simply let Pharaoh do what he really wanted to do.

A *hardening heart* is not a healthy heart. That's for sure. Both physically and spiritually, we need *tender hearts*. The scary thing about a hardening spiritual heart is that eventually it can *set* in a hardened condition.

In *Jeremiah 18:1-6*, we read that God is the Potter, and we are the clay. He holds us in His hands. He gently molds us into the people He wants us to be. Sometimes we become "*marred*" in His hands (*Jeremiah 18:4*). But He doesn't give up on us. He doesn't throw away the clay. He just keeps working with us, molding us, and shaping us into the image He wants us to be. It is a beautiful passage of

Scripture. God is a loving and patient Potter. How comforting.

But in *Jeremiah 19*, we read about another piece of clay. This isn't clay that is being molded and shaped by God. This is a piece of clay that has hardened and *set*. God used this piece of clay, a flask, as a visual aid for His wayward and rebellious people. God told Jeremiah to "*break the flask*" and to say to the people, "*Even so I will break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot be made whole again*" (*Jeremiah 19:10-11*). With clay, there comes a time when it hardens. At that point, nothing can be done to change it. What is true with clay is true with people. Neither stays *moldable* forever.

Is God speaking to you today? Is He convicting you of something you need to do? If so, cooperate with Him. Make the decision you know you need to make. Make it while your heart is still *moldable*. Make it before your heart hardens and permanently *sets*.

In the Book of Acts, we read about the apostle Paul being a prisoner in Caesarea for his faithful witness for Christ. While there, he had an opportunity to share the good news of salvation with the governor, Felix, and Felix's wife, Drusilla. As Paul explained the need to

repent of sin and receive Christ personally, the Bible says that “*Felix was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you’*” (Acts 24:25). Can you imagine anyone telling the apostle Paul to go away? Can you imagine anyone telling the apostle Paul that this wasn’t a good time to talk about life, death, and eternity? This may be the clearest example of procrastination in all the Bible. Paul’s message about sin, death, judgment, and eternity made Felix and Drusilla uncomfortable. They didn’t like the thought of confessing their sins and surrendering their lives to Christ. So they put that decision off until they had “*a convenient time.*”

As far as we know, though, that “*convenient time*” never came. As far as we know, Felix and Drusilla never received Christ. As far as we know, they are in a place called *Hades* now. (*Hades*, by the way, is the place where non-Christians go immediately after they die. It’s like a *pre-hell*. It is a place of punishment, torment, and agony. We read about it in *Luke 16:19-31*. Non-Christians will actually be sentenced to *hell* after the final judgment. We read about that in *Revelation 20:11-15*).

Use your imagination. What do you think those two, Felix and Drusilla, are thinking

about right now in *Hades*? How many times have they thought to themselves:

“If we could only turn back time. If we could only go back to Caesarea. If we could only return to that conversation with Paul. He gave us a chance to be saved. We felt uncomfortable. We put it off until a more convenient time. But that time never came. We never again got that close to thinking about salvation and eternal life. And now it’s too late.”

How tragic. How horrible. How terribly sad. If it is true that Felix and Drusilla never got saved, and as far as we know it is, it’s because they hardened their hearts when they were confronted with spiritual things. Forgiveness was within their reach. Salvation was within their grasp. But they put it off. And they never got that close to heaven again.

Please don’t let that happen to you. If Jesus is knocking on your heart’s door, open it! Open it while you can still hear Him knocking. You may never get this close to salvation again. This might be your last chance to get right with God.

5. If you put off until tomorrow what you ought to do today, you postpone God's blessings and prolong your agony.

Let's play like God is leading you to do something. Perhaps to get saved. Perhaps to get baptized. Perhaps to become a preacher. Perhaps to apologize to someone. Perhaps to forgive someone. Perhaps to tithe. Perhaps to get serious about church. And let's play like you had the ability to look way out into your future and identify a time, say twenty years from now, when you would make that decision. And let's play like you had the ability to know for sure that you would indeed make that decision. And let's play like in twenty years you actually made that decision and did the right thing.

Now first of all, no one has that ability. No one can look out into the future like that. We were only *playing like*. But even if you could see that far into the future, even if you could know that you would eventually do what God wants you to do, let me ask you some questions: *Why would you wait twenty years? Why would you postpone God's blessings on your life? Why would you prolong your agony for twenty more years? Why would you continue to wrestle with something that you*

know you're eventually going to do? It just doesn't make sense to me.

If we could return to Pharaoh for a moment, we might gain an additional insight into what I am saying. One of the plagues God sent on the Egyptians was frogs. God filled the country of Egypt with frogs (*see Exodus 8:1-15*). There were frogs in people's houses, frogs in their beds, frogs in their ovens, and frogs in their bowls. *Here a frog, there a frog, everywhere a frog, frog!* Frogs were all over the place!

So Pharaoh begged Moses to ask God to remove the frogs. He knew that God would answer Moses' prayer. So Moses asked Pharaoh when he wanted the frogs to be gone. You would think Pharaoh would have said, "Immediately. Right now. As soon as possible." But that's not what Pharaoh said. Instead of saying that he wanted the frogs to be gone immediately, he said that he wanted the frogs to be gone, "*Tomorrow*" (*Exodus 8:10*).

Isn't that strange? Pharaoh chose to spend another night with the frogs. Pastor John Osteen used to preach a sermon called: *One More Night With the Frogs*. That's what Pharaoh asked for, and that's what Pharaoh got. And that's what many people do in this day and time. Instead of making a spiritual decision

today, they put it off until *tomorrow*. And they live with the frogs all night long. They delay the blessings of God that always follow obedience. And they postpone their own happiness, freedom, joy, and peace. In so doing, they prolong their own agony. Procrastination is a silly thing if you think about it. And yet so many people do it.

Years ago, I heard a fictitious story about a meeting some demons were having about how to prevent people from receiving Christ and being saved. This was their assignment from the devil. One of the demons said, "I have an idea. Let's tell the people on earth that there's no God." The other demons liked that idea, so they presented it to the devil. The devil said, "No, that won't work. People can look at the sky, the sun, the moon, and the stars and figure out that there's a Creator, a God. There will be some who won't believe in God, but everybody else will."

The demons went back to their meeting room and started discussing other possibilities. One of them said, "Let's tell the people on earth that the resurrection of Jesus isn't real." This idea got some immediate traction, so they presented it to the devil. He said, "No, that won't work either. Too many of His followers saw Him after the resurrection. Many of them

went on to die for their faith. People don't die for something they know to be a lie. They died because they knew Jesus rose from the grave. Like it or not, His resurrection is a fact of history."

So the demons went back to their meeting room again. They sat in silence for a long time. Then one of the demons said, "I have an idea. Let's tell the people that there's really no such thing as sin. Let's convince them that moral absolutes don't exist and that nothing is really wrong as long as you don't hurt anybody." This idea got a huge amount of support, so the demons once again went to share their idea with the devil. When he heard it, he said, "Well, that idea is the best one yet. A lot of people will fall for that one. It sounds so non-judgmental and free-spirited that many people will buy into it. But it's still not the best idea. Most people know that sin is a real thing. They have consciences. They have the Bible. The Holy Spirit convicts them. A lot of people will fall for this lie, but not everybody will."

So the devil sent the demons back for one more meeting. He said, "You have one last chance to come up with a lie that will keep the people on earth from getting saved." When they reassembled in their meeting room, the demons were out of ideas. They couldn't think

of anything. And then a demon who was sitting in the back of the room spoke up and said, “I know what we can tell them. I know what we can say. The devil was right. We’re never going to get a big following if we spend all of our time trying to convince the people on earth that there’s no God, or no resurrection, or no such thing as sin. So instead, let’s just tell the people this, ‘There’s no hurry. You can get right with God whenever you want to.’” When the other demons heard this idea they were elated. They said, “That’s it. The people know there’s a God. The resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact. And most all of the people, deep down, know they have sinned. But, if we can just convince them that there’s no hurry when it comes to spiritual decisions then we can dupe them into an attitude of procrastination and ultimately lull them into hell. And this lie will work right along with their basic human nature that just naturally puts things off.” They presented their idea to the devil, and he loved it. The devil said, “That’s our new strategy. Don’t spend all of your time telling the people that there’s no God. Don’t spend all of your time telling the people that there’s no resurrection. Don’t spend all of your time telling the people that there’s no such thing as sin. Just tell them that when it comes to spiritual decisions that *there’s no hurry...*they can get around to it later.”

That may be a fictitious story, but there's a lot of truth in it. The lie that there's no hurry when it comes to spiritual matters may have led to more casualties than all the other lies of the devil combined. I urge you, don't fall for it. Procrastination is the devil's lie. Procrastination is never of God. God's day is always *today*. God's time is always *now*.

The Cure For Procrastination

As I have tried to demonstrate, procrastination is a serious problem. Procrastinating is a dangerous thing to do. And it can have devastating consequences.

But there is some *good news* about procrastination. There is a cure for it! There is something you can do about it. You can put procrastination behind you and move on with the rest of your life.

The solution is simple. The cure is guaranteed. You might be wondering what you have to do. Well, that's just it. You do the thing you have been putting off. And you do it right now.

I never will forget an experience I had at church after preaching one night at our

Wednesday night service. The service had ended, and I was talking to a few people at the front of the church. In my peripheral vision, I noticed a man toward the back of the Worship Center who was pacing back and forth and looking at me. I didn't recognize the man, but I knew in my spirit that he wanted to talk to me. So I sped up some of the conversations I was involved in, and I motioned for him to come to me. He did, and he said that he really needed to talk to me. I talked to him for a couple of minutes, and then I said, "Look, let's set an appointment for tomorrow afternoon. Come by the office at 3:00pm. We will have plenty of time to talk, and we won't be interrupted." He agreed, and we told each other that we looked forward to chatting the next day.

He turned to walk out of the Worship Center, and I returned to the conversations I was having with the other people. About five minutes later, I saw him again. He had returned to the Worship Center and was once again pacing back and forth in the back of the room. I thought maybe he needed to change our appointment from 3:00pm to 4:00pm or something like that, so I again motioned for him to come my way. I said, "Is everything okay?" He said, "No, it's not. I can't wait until tomorrow at 3:00pm. I've been questioning my salvation for years now, and I have to get this

settled tonight.” When I sensed his utter desperation, I completely got out of all my other conversations and devoted my full attention to him. We sat on the front row of the church and talked for about thirty minutes. After that, he prayed to be saved. He asked Jesus to save him, and he trusted Jesus to do it. It was wonderful! Our visit was better than the worship service had been.

I later thought to myself, “That’s how you deal with procrastination. You tell the preacher that you can’t wait until 3:00pm the next day. You tell him that you want to get saved right now.”

I wonder how many people will end up in hell who never intended to go there. I’m talking about people who believed in God. People who believed in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. People who knew they were sinners. People who knew they needed to be saved. People who planned on being saved. But people who, for whatever reason, never got around to it. How tragic. How horrible. How terribly sad.

I plead with you today. Don’t be in that group. Don’t put off the most important decision in life. I would encourage you not to put off *any* decision that you know you need to

make. If you need to go on a diet, then go on a diet. If you need to start exercising, then start exercising. If you need to clean out your closet, then clean out your closet. If you need to apologize to someone, then apologize. I encourage you to do those things within the next twenty-four hours. But when it comes to *a spiritual decision*, especially the decision *to get saved*, I don't merely *encourage* you to get saved, I am *pleading* with you to get saved. If you postpone cleaning out your closet, you'll just have to keep living with a dirty closet. But if you postpone getting saved, you may pay for that delay for all eternity.

As we come to the end of our time together, I want to share a Bible verse with you. The Scripture says, "*Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near*" (Isaiah 55:6). That verse is saying there is coming a day when God won't be able to be found. There is coming a time when God won't be near. That is a terrifying thought.

But the good news is this: *He can be found today. He is near now.* And since He is, you should call on His name and ask Him to save you. The Bible says that "*whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved*" (Romans 10:13). That's a tremendous promise, and that word "*whoever*" includes you!

So if you would like to stop putting off the most important decision in life, if you would like to reach out in faith to Jesus, then pray this prayer now:

“Dear Jesus,

I can't put this off another day. I need to be saved. And so I'm coming to You right now seeking salvation.

I ask You now to come into my heart, forgive me of my sins, and save me. I need a new beginning. I need a fresh start.

And as I ask You to save me, I trust You to do it. I trust You to do what I have asked You to do.

Welcome to my heart. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be.

*In Your Name I pray,
Amen.”*

Friend, if you just prayed that prayer and trusted Christ to save you, congratulations! Welcome to the family of God. You just dealt with procrastination *head-on*, and you won!

Now keep doing that in every area of your life. You have other steps you need to take.

You need to confess Christ publicly. Do it! You need to get baptized. Do it! You need to read your Bible and pray everyday. Do it! You need to share Christ with others. Do it! You need to get active in a good church. Do it! Whatever God leads you to do, do it immediately! Blessings await you!

Don't make excuses. And don't let your feelings and your emotions get in the way. We can't always trust our feelings. They're not the best motivator for doing what's right. When I was a teenager, I heard Pastor Richard Jackson, a godly man and a lifelong mentor to me, say something I never have forgotten. He said, "Do what's right *because it's right* until it feels right." What great wisdom!

There are a lot of times when we just don't *feel* like doing what's right. At least that's true for me. But when we put our feelings aside and try our best to do what's right anyway, it's only a matter of time until we *feel* glad that we obeyed the Lord's leading and did the right thing. We never regret doing what's right.

Someone once said that "delayed obedience is disobedience." Let's not be guilty of that sin. When we know what we need to do, we are wise to do it as quickly as possible. So let's put

procrastination behind us once and for all. And let's not spend another night with the frogs!

¹ Martin Charnin (lyricist) and Charles Strouse (composer), "Tomorrow," 1977, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomorrow_\(song_from_Annie\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomorrow_(song_from_Annie)) (accessed 10/4/2017).

² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 1997, p. 1933.

³ Dr. Stephen Flick, Christian Heritage Fellowship, "D. L. Moody's Lost Opportunity," <https://christianheritagefellowship.com/d-l-moodys-lost-opportunity/> (accessed 10/18/17).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Joseph Addison Alexander, "The Hidden Line" (The Destiny of Men), Poetry by Christian Poets of the Past, http://www.cavaliersonly.com/poetry_by_christian_poets_of_the_past/the_hidden_line_the_destiny_of_men_by_joseph_addison_alexander (accessed 10/4/17).

⁶ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary in One Volume*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1961, p. 81.

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