

The Danger of Procrastination

Acts 24:22-27; Luke 11:28

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Procrastinating and delaying to obey God's commands may have very serious consequences in your life and mine.

Lot procrastinated and lingered when the angels warned him of the destruction that God was to bring upon Sodom (Genesis 19:15-16). When Lot delayed leaving Sodom, his family had reason to doubt whether the city was so near to destruction as the angels said. If Lot himself did not act immediately to remove himself, why should anyone take him seriously? How can such danger and near destruction be reconciled with lingering, procrastinating, and delaying?

O, dear ones, think not for a moment that your procrastination to do the will of God is such an inconsequential or minor issue to God. It is not inconsequential because it reveals a halting and a second-guessing when it comes to your love and obedience to God's good and holy commandments.

Do you parents like to see your children put off and procrastinate in doing what you have told them to do? Do you find it commendable and honorable for them to hear your will and then to wait and wait and wait till they feel like it before they finally take what you have told them seriously? They may not actively scorn you to your face and say, "No, I will not do it!" But they have passively resisted you, when they think they can obey you when it is convenient for them to do so.

How often is this true in your Christian life? The way of the cross is not obedience when you feel like it, or when it is convenient. The way of the cross is, "Not my will, but thine be done." From our text today, we shall see this all too common sin of procrastination displayed in the life of Felix, the Roman governor. The main points from our text this Lord's Day are: (1) Felix the Procrastinator (Acts 24:22-25); (2) Felix the Lover of Money (Acts 24:26-27).

I. Felix the Procrastinator (Acts 24:22-25).

A. Paul had been falsely charged by the Jewish Sanhedrin on four counts before Felix, the Roman governor (Acts 24:1-9). Paul justly defended himself against each of these false accusations in Acts 24:10-21: (1) I am not pestilent; (2) I am not seditious; (3) I am not sectarian; and (4) I am not sacrilegious. Paul turned these accusations brought against him against the Jews as we saw last Lord's Day. And finally Paul declared to Felix that the Jews had no case against him because they had brought no witnesses against him. He was innocent of all charges.

B. Now the verdict rests in the hands of Felix (Acts 24:22-23). Here is the first instance of procrastination on the part of Felix.

1. He procrastinates making a final judgment. He delays rendering an official verdict. He says in effect, "There is nothing that the Jews have brought against you, Paul, that condemns you, but I am going to defer and delay until I've talked with Lysias (the Roman commander that had saved his life three times) when he comes from Jerusalem to Caesarea." The only problem is that Paul remained there in Caesarea in Roman custody for two years (Acts 24:27), and we never read anything about a meeting that Felix had with Lysias.

2. You will recall that Lysias had already sent Felix a written report that accompanied Paul (Acts 23:25-30), which made clear that Paul had done nothing worthy of judgment. The only issues Lysias

could discern that were controverted were of a religious nature (into which the Romans did not care to wade).

3. The words of Felix were intended to defer, delay, and procrastinate having to make a clear and final judgment because it was to the advantage of Felix to leave the matter in limbo. In so doing, the Jews could not rant and rave against Felix for having officially exonerated Paul of all charges (whom they considered to be public enemy #1). This is the problem with procrastination—it is more interested in one's own comfort, security, position, name, and approval than it is in doing what is right and just before God. Because delaying justice was to the benefit of Felix, he chose to procrastinate. This was the first instance of procrastination and delay on the part of Felix.

4. At the same time, we see in Acts 24:23 that Felix treated Paul with rare privileges while he was in custody (because he knew Paul was a Roman citizen and because he knew Paul was innocent of any crime). Paul was not incarcerated in the cell with the other prisoners, but was under house arrest with his own personal centurion at his disposal for his safety and for his needs—even allowing Paul to entertain guests for his comfort and encouragement. Paul was in custody, but he was treated like a VIP. No doubt the brethren in Caesarea—Cornelius (Acts 10) and Philip (Acts 21:8)—as well as Luke and others, who had been traveling with Paul, ministered to him.

C. The second instance of procrastination on the part of Felix is found in Acts 24:24-25.

1. Felix brings his wife Drusilla, a Jewess, to hear this most notable Christian minister and prisoner (who also is a Jew). No doubt the fame of Paul was well known by this time, and likely Drusilla desired to satisfy her curiosity about Paul. We have learned in previous sermons that Felix was not of man of good character—he was known to be cruel, unjust, and corrupt. More of his infamous character was likewise associated with Drusilla. Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa (who suffered death by way of a notable judgment from God in Acts 12:23). Drusilla was first married to Azizus, king of Emesa (a province in Syria). Felix seduced Drusilla (a beautiful young girl yet in her teens) from her husband, and they entered into this unlawful marriage (perhaps they were just returning from their honeymoon when Paul was brought before them here in Acts 24:24).

2. As we might expect, Paul does not allow this God-ordained opportunity to pass without discoursing with them about “the faith in Christ”. Paul used this time to address the truth concerning Jesus Christ—His incarnation, life, ministry in doctrine and miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension in fulfillment of Old Testament Scriptures. This is the objective faith and truth to be believed, but also Paul explained that Jesus Christ must be received by faith alone. This is the gospel (good news) because all men are under the condemnation of God due to their sin against God. There is no other way to be right and justified in God's sight, for Paul points Felix and Drusilla to the very standards of God's Law that they had specifically broken.

a. **Righteousness.** Felix and Drusilla were not righteous before God because they had violated God's holy commandments of righteousness as have we all (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:10-12; Titus 3:5). There is no hope for us while we see ourselves as righteous, good, and able to do anything that will make us acceptable before God. For you see, Jesus did not come to save the righteous, but sinners (Luke 5:32). If you have anything in which you believe you can boast about before God, you are looking to yourself rather than to Christ alone to save you (“That no flesh should glory in his presence” 1 Corinthians 1:29). So Paul first sets out to demonstrate to Felix and Drusilla that they are not righteous, but are sinners before God. Jesus alone is righteous. Look to Him alone.

b. **Temperance.** Paul gives to Felix and Drusilla a notable example of their unrighteousness before God—they have not lived a life of temperance (or self-control). They have committed adultery and sought to satisfy the lusts of the flesh in destroying a previous marriage in order to enjoy the pleasures of life for a season. Rather than showing godly restraint in sexual intimacy, they had been consumed in thoughts, words, and deeds with unbridled passions. Jesus said that to lust after one to whom you are not married is to commit adultery with that one in your heart (Matthew 5:27-28). The world knows that sex sells,

and so wherever you turn, the world, the flesh, and the devil are setting before your eyes and ears unlawful temptations to gratify the sexual desires within you. This battle in us all must be overcome first in the heart and mind through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (this lust died with Christ—it is a dead corpse—do not carry it around with you—leave it on the cross—you are a new man or woman in Jesus Christ). Do you believe this? Do you want to be delivered from these temptations? Do you fill your heart and mind with God’s Word and prayer? Are you willing to fight the good fight of faith against these temptations? Do you flee these temptations or do you flirt with them? Remember Joseph and flee temptation (don’t procrastinate) lest you be swallowed by it. So Paul boldly shows Felix and Drusilla their unrighteousness in revealing their lack of self-control in the area.

c. **Judgement to Come.** Finally, Paul confronts Felix and Drusilla with what awaits all sinners apart from faith in the Righteous One—Jesus Christ: Judgment and everlasting punishment in the torments of hell. God is always good, even when He judges the wicked for their sin; for God is righteous and cannot be bought off (by tears, by boasting, by ignorance, or by works). Would we not consider a judge who accepts a bribe or judges certain people by a different standard to be corrupt? And would we not consider a judge who judges everyone by the same standard of the law to be a good and just judge? This is why God is good when He judges. He is not prejudiced. He is perfectly just, and no one will be able to justly accuse Him of being unfair in judgment. His justice is especially seen as good in that He judged His only begotten Son for elect sinners chosen in Christ Jesus before the world began. It is not because you are better or more deserving than those who suffer God’s judgment in hell. It is because (and only because) Jesus bore your sin and your judgment, and you by faith are clinging to Jesus Christ your sin-bearer and judgment-bearer alone. Our only boast is in the cross of Jesus Christ. So Paul concludes his discourse with Felix and Drusilla in making clear to them what they deserve—which brings them back to why they can only be saved through “faith in Christ” (Acts 24:24).

3. Felix was under such conviction that we read that he “trembled” (Acts 24:25). Quite literally the Greek text reads, “Felix having become terrified.” A sudden panic from God as to what awaited Felix fell upon him. Did he turn in faith to Jesus Christ? Did he repent? Did he confess his sin? No, he procrastinated and said, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25). Felix was so struck with the terror of God’s judgment, and rather than trusting in the Lord and repenting of his sin, he put it off to a more convenient time. We have no reason to conclude that a more convenient time ever came in which he fell upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. The procrastination of Felix was catastrophic—it was his destruction, not his salvation.

a. Dear ones, what excuses are you making for your procrastination today in not doing what God commands you to do as a husband, as a wife, as children, as parents, as Christians, or as a lost sinner (like Felix)? Perhaps you procrastinate in doing God’s will because it is hard and not pleasant or comfortable; because you are lazy and do not want to exert the holy effort; because you are fearful of the consequences in believing and doing what is right before God; because you are forgetful (because you do not follow the Lord when He impresses it upon your mind and heart, you soon fill the mind and heart with the things you enjoy and forget what God calls you to do).

b. Whatever the excuse you make for your procrastination, you know in your heart that that is all it is—an excuse. Dear ones, it is a sin to delay doing the will of God. In the Lord’s Prayer, we are taught to pray, “Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* says this petition means:

That God, by his grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things, as the angels do in heaven.

c. Dear ones, though we fail and falter in our loving obedience to the Lord, ought

we not to earnestly pray that God would deliver us from our procrastinating excuses as to why we should wait to do what the Lord commands to do? The angels are our pattern—they do not linger like Lot when the Lord speaks—they love to do the will of God and go forth to do it when commanded. Like the Lord Jesus, our first thoughts and words ought to be: “Not my will but thine be done.” Dear ones, if you do not think this is important, why do you discipline and correct your children for waiting until they feel like obeying you? It is not those who hear the truth that are blessed. It is not even those who are convicted about the truth that are blessed. It is those who hear, are convicted, and go forth in love to Jesus Christ to do the truth (Luke 11:28). When we keep saying, “I’ll obey the Lord and do what He commands tomorrow”, many have found (like Felix) that a convenient tomorrow never comes. And those delays can be devastating as Lot found out and as Felix no doubt found out at his death.

II. Felix the Lover of Money (Acts 24:26-27).

A. Felix did send for Paul on other occasions in the future, but we never read that he was again terrified at the thought of God’s judgment as he was on that earlier occasion. In fact, we read (Acts 24:26) that his motivation in sending for Paul was to seek to bribe him with his freedom in exchange for some financial settlement (that might have been collected from the brethren on his behalf). Paul would not satisfy the covetousness of Felix even if it meant his bondage. This was the character of Felix, the governor. His procrastination did not lead him to repentance, but led him further into sin and judgment (and that is true of all of us as well). Waiting to be obedient and submissive to the lordship of Jesus Christ will not make obedience easier, but harder.

B. Felix was replaced by Porcius Festus two years later, for his corruption, covetousness, injustice, and cruelty. But he kept Paul in custody, not out of justice, but out of a mercenary spirit to gain some favorable report from the Jews (who hated Paul). The procrastinator is not thinking about the Lord, but always about himself/herself and that is why he/she delays, waits, and procrastinates in following Christ.

C. Application

1. In Haggai 1, God speaks through the Prophet Haggai in rebuking His people, because they had procrastinated and delayed rebuilding the Temple saying, “The time is not come.” God says in effect, “You have all the time in the world to build your own houses and your own kingdom, but what about my house and my kingdom? My blessing is not upon you because of your procrastination.” Dear ones, God is speaking to you today by His Spirit to return to your first love, to do the former deeds for Christ that you did when your love for Him was hot, and to press forward (not retreat) in believing, hungering and thirsting for Him, and practicing the doctrine, worship, and commandments of the Lord Jesus. Procrastination is the tool of the enemy to make you ineffective. Learn to hate procrastination in your life, repent of it, eye the mercy of God, and never give up (no matter how many times you fall).

2. In Matthew 25, Jesus addresses a parable to us about being ready for His coming (whether at death or His Second Coming). There were five wise virgins and five foolish virgins—all members of the Visible Church. What made the five foolish virgins foolish? They procrastinated. They delayed. They didn’t bring enough oil. They thought they could wait until it was necessary. But they waited till it was too late. Dear ones, do not sit there and think you can wait to trust in Christ, to repent of sin, to go to a brother, or to be the husband/wife God calls you to be. Tomorrow may be too late. Fall upon Christ’s mercy right now! Today is the day of salvation!

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