

The Consequences of Procrastination

The term "procrastinate" is defined: "to put off doing something until a future time" -- "to defer, postpone." And of course, the word "consequences" simply means that which follows or results from a certain course or action.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions, someone has said. One of the easiest things to do is to plan and promise to do what is right and good, but when the time comes to fulfill the plan, something always happens and we do not get it done. Almost everyone intends to do right, straighten up and repent before he dies, but we always want to wait until tomorrow or some future convenient time.

The young people feel they must "sow their wild oats," because "we live but once." The middle-aged think they must work and make all the money they can while they are in their productive years, because the time will come when they cannot do so. "We must make hay while the sun shines, you know." The aged think they must enjoy a few years of retirement and fun before they settle down to seriously practicing religion. The cycle continues with every generation and every segment of our society. But we do not reckon with the fact that there is a judgment to which every one of us must give an account. This judgment is based upon our language (Matt. 12:34), upon our deeds done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10), and upon our works (Rev. 20:12).

The normal and almost natural schemes devised by man to defer his responsible and religious conduct to some future time while he imbibes the pleasures of sin for a season are all totally absurd. Men and women die at all ages, and many of them suddenly. Eventually all of us die (Heb. 9:27). When death overtakes one at any age, his activity on earth ceases, and his intended good is never done. The Lord said, "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh (Matt. 25:13).

In Luke 12, Jesus spoke a parable stating that a certain rich man increased abundantly from his labors. He planned to pull down his barns and to build greater ones. And having filled these new barns, he would say to himself: "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:19-21).

The man in this parable made a number of fatal mistakes, one of which was to defer or ignore his present duty to God while he made all provisions for his present and future physical needs. The apostle Paul was called before Felix and Drusilla because they wanted to "hear him concerning the faith in Christ." As the apostle reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix reacted by trembling, no doubt at the realization of the consequences he must pay if he continued to pursue his present course of life. But in this he responded: "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25). Three important facts are to be noted in this verse: Felix listened and understood what Paul said. He understood his course of life was out of harmony with what Paul preached and understood the consequences if he continued, thus he trembled. Finally, he gave the indication that at some "convenient season" he would hear again with a view to changing his life. All evidence indicated that Felix did what most people do today: he procrastinated until it was too late.

The plans to ignore the will of God in one's course of life, with the built-in plan to someday repent and reform, always results in leaving this life without God.

- by H.E. Phillips

Limping Between the Two

When Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel he also presented a challenge to the children of Israel. He said, "How long go ye limping between the two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). God has always expected His people to declare themselves. This same challenge needs to be presented to those who would identify themselves as the people of God today. If we are going to serve Jehovah then let's do so. There is no room in the kingdom of God for half-hearted, lukewarm service (See Revelation 3:14-19). To those members of the body of Christ who are not faithful in their service to the Lord, we

ask, "How long go ye limping between the two sides?"

- by James Hahn

Temptation: Jesus' and Ours

The account of Jesus' temptation by Satan is very important for us to study. First, it teaches that He was subject to temptation, "in all points ... like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). It is great to know that Jesus understands the things we face. Why? Because He has been there.

Second we learn that, though tempted, He "did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22). This gives us the satisfaction of having a perfect sacrifice for our sins -- and a greater gift than that has never been given.

But, again, studying the actual record of His temptation (Matthew 4:1-11) we learn how Jesus overcame His temptations. Each time Satan approached Him, Jesus replied, "It is written". His strength against temptation was the Scriptures, and it must be our strength as well.

Finally, consider a fact that is often overlooked. Matthew says "then the devil leaveth him" (4:11) and we might assume that now Jesus would need to deal with him no more. Not so! Luke says the devil "departed from him for a season" (4:13), or as one version has it, "he left him until an opportune time". Our point is simply this: as long as Jesus walked upon the earth it was necessary for Him to resist Satan. Satan was looking for every "opportunity" to tempt Him. What does this tell us? It demonstrates that we can never let down our guard -- that we must always be ready to "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:16).

- by Greg Gwin