

# Spiritual Procrastination

**Opening text: Acts 24:22-25**

**V. 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."*

## I

**Context:** Paul had been imprisoned and went on trial for preaching the gospel. We see him here in this chapter making his defence before Felix, the Roman governor. Felix was a man used to making decisions - important decisions. After all, he was a Governor, someone in the highest ranks of leadership.

**However, when he heard about faith in Christ, he could not make the most important decision of his life. He postponed it.**

*"Go away for now"* - **now** is a gift from God, never to be taken for granted or underestimated.

*"When I have a convenient **time**"* - he felt the deep conviction of the Holy Spirit, the fear of God coming upon him, however he put off a very important decision (that is what I call spiritual procrastination). He assumed that time was his to control. He might have been a "Governor", but no man governs time.

**V.22** - *But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the Way, he **adjourned the proceedings** and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a **decision** on your case."*

This is what I call "spiritual procrastination".

**Procrastination:** the action of delaying or postponing something. To be slow or late about doing something that should be done.

This is a very important topic, because spiritual procrastination can ultimately keep people from Heaven.

**2 Corinthians 6:2b** - ... *now* is the day of salvation!

Interestingly even people who already believe in Jesus are also not immune to spiritual procrastination – and that will ultimately keep them from enjoying the fullness of all that God had for them in this life. A lot of the things on our "new year's resolution lists" are actually things that fall into this category - things we have delayed or postponed, decisions or things we have neglected to do.

## II

Let us look now at another passage where Paul is now being judged by King Agrippa and presents his defence one more time.

## Acts 26:6-8, 24-30

V.28 - “you almost persuade me to become a Christian”.

**Almost:** almost there, very close. *Almost* is a sad word in any man’s dictionary. It is a word that normally means ‘next time’, ‘just about’. It is a word about indecision and missed opportunities. *Almost* is never the same as *certainly*. *Next time* is never the same as *this time*.

### III

## 5 reasons behind spiritual procrastination

There at least 5 things that keep people from making the kind of spiritual decisions that will ultimately bring blessing into their lives:

### 1. The false perception (the assumption) that we control time.

“When I have a more convenient time”. Felix could control a lot of things as a Governor, but not time.

a) The only thing we control is now, the only thing we have guaranteed is today.

**James 4:13-15** - 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”; <sup>14</sup> 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.

**2 Corinthians 6:2** – For He says: “In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Now is a gift from God.

b) Time happens to every man - it ‘happens’ but no one controls time.

**Ecclesiastes 9:11b-12** - ... “**But time and chance happen to them all.** <sup>12</sup> For man also does not know his time: like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them.”

**Psalms 31:15** - My times are in Your hand...

That is why Joshua said:

**Joshua 24:15** “Choose this day whom you are going to serve”.

### 2. Disobedience

**Psalm 95:7-8** - *For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice: 8 “Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness.*

I have seen that with people for instance in the area of forgiveness. They find it hard to forgive *today*. That is why the Bible says ‘*do not let the sun go down on your wrath*’ (Ephesians 4:26) – in other words forgive today!

Jonah was also a case of delayed obedience (which is the same as disobedience).

### **3. Fear**

Israel feared Goliath. They went through 40 days of indecision.

In the days of Elijah people feared Jezebel, Ahab and Baal. Elijah got impatient with their lack of decision:

**1 Kings 18:21** - *And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people answered him not a word.*

Such indecision! Their spiritual procrastination motivated by fear led them to bondage.

### **4. Misaligned priorities**

We can put off important spiritual decisions sometimes because of wrong priorities.

**Haggai 1:2-5** – they put off the construction of the house of God because it was not a priority for them. Their own houses were the priority.

V. 6-7 shows us the consequences.

### **5. Complacency**

For instance, although the early church was told to go into all the world and preach, remained in Jerusalem and postponed that decision for almost 40 years, until the persecution of Steven.

**John 4:35** - *Do you not say, “There are still four months and then comes the harvest”? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!*

“Do you not say” - This was a popular proverb in those days: “*there are still 4 months to the harvest*”. The proverb meant: *we still have time, we don’t need to do it now, we can do it later*. That expression describes well the idea of spiritual procrastination.

Jesus confronted procrastination by saying, “*lift up your eyes and look at the fields for they are already white for the harvest*”. What a tragedy it would be for a sleepy farmer to let the harvest rot in the field because he could not bring himself to do the work.

**V.36** – *And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.*

There are eternal consequences for the decisions we make today and for the opportunities we seize now.

### **Conclusion**

I love the story of the Ethiopian man in Acts 8 who heard the gospel from Philip and responded so promptly:

**Acts 8:36** - *“look here is some water, what keeps me from being baptised?”*

This is an example of what the opposite of spiritual procrastination is.

As we start another year, may we be people who respond and obey promptly, people of action and not indecision. May we understand the gift of today and seize everything God has for us now.

May we not postpone the decision to walk with God this year, like never before,

- to be on fire for God now,
- to be revived now,

May we never be like Pharaoh who postponed his decision to let God’s people go and ended up sleeping another night with the frogs. Lets’ go into this new year letting go now of anything that would oppress us, any unforgiveness, any resentment, any addiction etc. Choose this day to follow all God has for you in 2023 without hesitation.