

Hearts Fit for the Journey

The Sin of Doing Nothing

Overcoming Laziness

I. Introduction

A. *Laziness*

1. **Scott Peck, a social scientist, said, “Laziness is a major cause of evil, a primary cause of psychological illness and the main reason Americans are increasingly failing at human relations”**
2. **The subject for our lesson today is sloth, which someone said sounds like a word to describe one who sat too long in a tub**
3. **Sloth—laziness—Prov.26:13-16**
4. **Some may ask; will all of the things wrong with our world, with all of our human frailties and weaknesses; why preach on laziness?**
5. **I am glad you asked**
 - a. **It is a subject that needs to be preached on because it is one of the major reasons so many people are unhappy and failing to enjoy the journey God has set before them**
 - b. **It is one of the major contributing factors that is keeping us from being what God wants us to be**
 - c. **God desires to take us and mold us into the people He wants us to be, but laziness on our part often prevents Him from being able to do so**

B. Did you know that slothfulness or laziness is one of the few sins for which we are specifically commanded to withdraw fellowship?

1. **Are we really interested in restoring the NT pattern of Christianity? Are we?**

2. **One of our texts that we shall consider this morning specifically states that those who are lazy and unwilling to work should be noted and excluded from our list of fellowship so that they might be ashamed**
3. **Would we be willing to do such or do we think we have a better way of dealing with such sins than God does?**
4. **From the study of the Bible it is quite apparent that God felt that this human weakness was something that warranted our attention—as such it is condemned in both the Old and New Testament**
5. **Physical laziness is condemned—2 Thess.3:10-16**
 - a. **Dr. S.I. McMillen, in the book *None of These Diseases* says, “We do not understand the chemistry involved, but it is a well-recognized fact that physical work has both a preventative and curative factors in a number of mental and physical disorders”**
 - b. **There is great benefit in an honest day’s hard work—something I am afraid many in my generation have lost sight of**
6. **Spiritual laziness, i.e. the lack of growth is condemned—Heb.5:12-6:3**
 - a. **The Hebrew writer exhorts us to press on to maturity instead of remaining a 1st principles Christian**
 - b. **It is sad to see a Christian of 20 or 30 years who still knows little more of the Bible than the plan of salvation**
 - c. **Brethren that is not the way God has designed the Christian life to be, but Christian growth and maturity take time and effort and frankly some Christians are just too lazy to give it**
 - d. **In the book *Seven Deadly Sins*, laziness is found in chapter 1**
 - e. **In our lesson today we shall focus primarily on this latter form of laziness—Spiritual Laziness**

C. Preaching on laziness may not be a popular subject and in fact may be thought by some to be a waste of time

- 1. In fact I do not recall ever having heard a sermon on laziness**
- 2. However, as we consider this topic, I am convinced that we will come to understand how destructive laziness can be and hopefully then how we can overcome it**
- 3. Thus, let us consider:**
 - a. The Destructive Nature of Laziness**
 - b. How Laziness can be Overcome**

II. The Destructive Nature of Laziness

A. Laziness destroys love

- 1. Laziness prevents happy homes and threatens church unity**
- 2. How? By preventing us from putting in the effort required to nurture and sustain those relationships**
- 3. It is laziness that often prevents us from making the effort to love and forgive**
- 4. We simply cannot be lazy and love one another in the family, in the church and in the world**
- 5. You can't claim to love someone and not be willing to:**
 - a. Work with them**
 - b. Help them solve differences**
 - c. Assist them with their faults and shortcomings**
- 6. True biblical love demands and requires commitment and work**
 - a. Love is not just some a warm and fuzzy feeling**
 - b. It is work, it is a discipline and one must labor to love**
 - c. Love does not happen by accident or without effort**
 - d. We must realize this if we are going to see real love in our homes and in our churches**

7. 1 Cor.13:4-8

a. Can a lazy person really love his spouse, his children, his neighbor, his brother in Christ and especially his enemy?

b. I think not

8. Love is a verb and it requires effort and the sad fact is that sometimes we are simply too lazy to love as we should

a. We are not willing to work to keep our marriages together

b. We are not willing to put in the effort to discipline our children

c. We are not willing to sacrifice for unity in our churches and the brotherhood at large

d. We are not willing to be inconvenienced to confront our neighbors with the gospel of Jesus Christ

9. Why? Sadly the answer is just plain laziness—they require more effort and sacrifice than we are willing to make

10. Laziness causes us to set in our recliners instead of building meaningful relationships with our spouses, our children, our brethren and those that are lost—it destroys our ability to love

B. Laziness destroys our desire to become God's person

1. “Laziness keeps us on the wrong side of repentance”

2. In Luke 3:8, we find John the Baptist demanding evidence of a changed life

a. Repentance leads to changed lives

b. But repentance demands effort

c. It requires diligence and effort—2 things not often associated with the lazy

d. “Lazy people don't walk church aisles”

i. Sin is easy, godliness is demanding

- ii. Sin is easy, Christianity is a discipline*
- iii. Sin is easy, Christ demands perseverance*
- iv. Sin is easy, being God's person requires a sustained effort that the spiritually lazy just are not willing to give*

3. **Tony Campolo tells the following story about a woman whom he was providing counseling but who seemed to be getting worse instead of better**
 - a. **On her 3rd visit he finally asked here is she was having an affair**
 - b. **She admitted that she was and began to cry uncontrollably**
 - c. **He responded that he was aware of her strict spiritual upbringing and that there was no wonder she was depressed and physically ill**
 - d. **He told her that she must stop this affair, stop violating her conscience because it will make you sick every time**
 - e. **She responded that doing so was simply too difficult, too painful and that she just could not do it**
 - f. **Now you can call it what you want to, but the fact of the matters is that this woman was just too spiritually lazy to do what she knew was right, too lazy to get rid of this sinful relationship, too lazy to become what God wanted her to become**
 - g. **Are some of us?**
4. **Becoming God's person is never easy, it is not for the spiritual lazy, it is hard work**
5. **It requires that we change our priorities and filter everything in our lives through the command to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Mt.6:33)**
6. **What do we do?**
 - a. **When we don't have time to do the things we know we ought to do, the things we in fact must do**
 - b. **We have to reprioritize our lives**
 - c. **We have to put first things first and then work to achieve them**
 - d. **No wonder Paul said we must "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling" (Ph.2:12)**

e. **Becoming what God wants us to be is hard work and it just cannot be accomplished by the spiritually lazy**

7. **Are we willing to work to become what God wants us to be; or is it just too much effort for us to make?**

C. Laziness destroys success and results in failure

1. **A retired gentleman walked into the preacher's office lamenting the fact that he had missed a great opportunity when he was younger**

a. **He said, "When I was younger I had a great chance to become a missionary, a chance to really do something significant in the Lord's church; but I didn't**

b. **I kept putting it off thinking one day I would, but you know that day never came**

c. **Now its too late I have retired and there is no time and he went on to say**

d. **I don't have time to go on campaigns**

i. *I am tied up in my investments and rental properties*

ii. *I am in 2 golf associations*

iii. *I don't even have time to visit the hospitals and nursing homes*

iv. *I don't have time for Bible study or prayer*

v. *I don't have time to equip myself to serve as an elder*

vi. *You know, if I could go back 30-40 years, I might just become a missionary*

vii. *Who was he kidding; only himself really*

viii. *It is not that he did not have time, it is that he did not use the time he had to the best of his ability*

- 2. What we have witnessed in this situation is procrastination and procrastination is just another form of laziness**
- 3. Procrastination is a favorite of the slothful or lazy**
- 4. James said, “To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (Jm.4:17)**
- 5. It is impossible to know that number of people:**
 - a. Who intended to obey the gospel or to repent and change their lives**
 - b. Who intended to find a place of service in the Lord’s church**
 - c. Who intended to give up that favorite sin in their lives**
 - d. Who intended to work on their relationships with their spouse, their children, their brethren, their lost friends and neighbors**
 - e. Who intended to read more, pray more, give more and serve more**
- 6. It is impossible to know the number of people who intended to do all these good things and more and yet never did**
- 7. King Agrippa told Paul he was almost persuaded to be saved and Festus told Paul to “Go away until they had a more convenient time”**
- 8. We sing the song all the time**
 - a. Almost persuaded now to believe, almost persuaded Christ to receive**
 - b. Seems now some soul to say, go spirit go they way, some more convenient day, on thee I’ll call**
 - c. Almost is but to fail, sad, sad that bitter wail almost; but lost**
 - d. A preacher was once told by a man that he would have liked to become a preacher, but studying the Bible was just too much work**

9. **Friends, laziness will result in failure every time and putting off what we know we ought to do or could do is nothing more than spiritual laziness and it is condemned in the Bible**

III. How Do We Overcome Laziness?

A. We must decide to get off the couch—whether symbolically or literally

1. **We will never change our lives until we change our heart or our “want to”**
2. **We must decide to stop being spiritually lazy, we must decide to work for the Lord in all areas of our life**
3. **God has prepared us for good works that we should walk in them—so lets get off the couches of our lives and start doing so**
4. **Laziness makes us groggy, it wastes our lives watching mindless television shows or endlessly surfing the web—and you know what I am talking about**
5. **The Word of God leads us to good works, the devil poisons us with laziness**
6. **Thus, we must decide which we will follow—make the decision to do what is right and lets stop being lazy**

B. We must stop procrastinating

1. **It is no good to put off to tomorrow what we know we can and should do today**
2. **“Procrastination is the favorite sport of the lazy” (Caselman)**
3. **They mean to do better**
4. **They had good intentions**
5. **They do not intend to waste their lives, but they do because they are forever putting things off till tomorrow**
6. **Listen as I put two of Paul’s well known admonitions together**

- a. **“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, behold now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation” (Ph.2:12, 2 Cor.6:2)**
- b. **You see, we must surrender to God’s will for our lives**
- c. **When the Lord places good thoughts in our minds and good deeds in our paths, don’t put them off until tomorrow, act on them today**

C. We must overcome our fear of failure

- 1. **I find that a lot of spiritual laziness and procrastination are the direct result of a fear of failure**
- 2. **Yes, there will be times when we fail, but if we let that fear control us we will never do anything and I believe that this is worse in the eyes of God**
- 3. **If we fail God will forgive us, if we are successful God will bless us**
- 4. **But if we do nothing God will say, as He did to the one talent man, “You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not gathered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest” (Mt.25:26-27)**
- 5. **If you look back at verse 25 you will see what led him to be classified as a wicked and lazy servant—it was FEAR**
- 6. **John Greenleaf Whittier wrote:**
 - a. **For all sad words of tongue or pen**
 - b. **The saddest are these, it might have been**
 - c. **Don’t let this become the essence of you life**
 - d. **Choose to do what you can when you can and if you fail you fail, ask God for forgiveness and try again**
 - e. **7. Christianity is not a spectator sport—we have to get in the game—we have to work hard for the Lord**
 - f. **Will you?**