How To Overcome Procrastination
Proverbs 27:1 (NKJV)

Please turn with me to our scripture text this evening in James 4, verse 17.

PROVERBS 27:1  Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.

PRAYER

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INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION

One day a farm boy accidentally turned a wagon load of corn over on the road. The farmer who lived next door happened to come by and see the predicament the young man was in. He said to the young man, "Why don't you just forget about that wagon for awhile and come have dinner with me and the misses, and then I'll help you with the wagon."

The farm boy said, "That's mighty nice of you, but I don't think my Pa would like that very much."


The farm boy said, "Well, OKAY, but Pa ain't gonna like it."

After a hearty dinner, the farm boy thanked his gracious host and said, "I feel a lot better now that I ate, but I know Pa is gonna be really upset with me."

The old farmer said, "Don't be so hard on yourself son. By the way, where is your Pa?"

"He's under the wagon" said the farm boy.

In this evening's message I would like to deal with a subject we rarely hear
preached about and that is the subject of procrastination.

I've been intending to preach a sermon on “procrastination” for years now, but for some reason or another I just kept putting it off.

As Mark Twain used to say, “Why put off until tomorrow what you can put off until the day after tomorrow.”

If we are completely honest, we are all guilty of procrastinating from time to time. Let's face it, there are certain tasks that are just really hard to get motivated to do like:

Cleaning out a closet or a storage room...........or going through stacks of old newspapers and magazines..............or returning phone calls to people you dread talking to...........picking up sticks out of the yard.

When we procrastinate doing boring or mundane jobs its usually no “big deal,” but the thought that these things need to be done will nag us until we do them.

But sometimes we procrastinate when it comes to doing some really important things such as: going to the doctor for a checkup...........or doing our taxes...........or writing out our will...........or changing the oil on the car...........paying bills...........or starting on that diet or exercise program.

When we procrastinate on these kinds of things it can prove to be very costly to our health or our wallet or both.

And there's times when we procrastinate when it comes to important spiritual matters, such as reading our Bible or spending time in prayer or giving up a sinful habit or talking to loved ones or friends about Christ...........or even accepting Christ and being baptized.

Procrastinating on important spiritual matters can not only have a serious effect on our relationship with God, it can even have eternal consequences.

**WHY DO WE PROCRASTINATE**
Do you know if you are a “chronic” procrastinator, there's a good chance you have always been a procrastinator?

Think back to when you were a kid. Did you “put off” doing chores your mom and dad gave you to do? When you were in school, did you “put off doing your homework until just before bed time? Did you “put off” writing term papers until the night before it was due? Did you “put off” studying for exams until the night before you took the test?

Herein lies the hidden danger with procrastinating. We start out procrastinating on little things and eventually it becomes an ingrained part of our lives and we start procrastinating on bigger, more important matters.

The Bible gives us five reasons why we procrastinate.

(1) One reason could be because we are INDECISIVE.

James 1:6-8 (NKJV) But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the LORD; he is double-minded man (indecisive) unstable in all his ways.

(2) Another reason could be because we are a PERFECTIONIST.

Ecclesiastes 11:4 (NKJV) He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.

Now what does that mean? It means if you wait for perfect conditions you'll never get anything done! You'll just keep putting things off!

(3) Another reason we sometimes procrastinate is out of FEAR.

Proverbs 29:25 (NKJV) The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.

Have you procrastinated on making that dentist appointment because you are afraid of dentists? Have you procrastinated on getting that physical checkup because you are afraid of what the doctor might tell you? If you will carefully examine the things you procrastinate on most often, chances are its because of fear.
Another reason people sometimes procrastinate is out of \textbf{ANGER}.

\textit{Proverbs 18:9 (NKJV)} \textit{He who is slothful in his work is a brother to him who is a great destroyer.}

Procrastination is a way to “get back at” people we’re angry with. It is a way of “taking control” over those people we are angry with.

When kids procrastinate on cleaning their room, quite often it is an act of anger towards a parent. It is a way of keeping the parent from being in control.

It is quite common for an elderly parent to get upset with an adult son or daughter for putting some pressure on them to go see a doctor. And the way they take control of the situation is to procrastinate on whatever it is the son or daughter has asked them to do.

One other reason why people procrastinate is out of \textbf{LAZINESS}.

\textit{Proverbs 13:4 (NKJV)} \textit{The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing.}

Some people become chronic procrastinators simply because they just don't want to do any more than they just absolutely have to do. They are content with “status quo;” they are perfectly happy with mediocrity.

In a sense, procrastinators are “escape artists.” When there is something they dread doing or simply don't want to do, the first thing they will do is \textbf{look for an ESCAPE}. A procrastinator generally has \textbf{more excuses} than Daisy has BB's.

For the remainder of the message I would like to answer two important questions.

\textbf{First.........}
I. What Does The Bible Say About Procrastination?

1. First let me say you will not find the word procrastinate or procrastination in the Bible.

2. However, we do find several examples of “procrastinators” in the scriptures.

*In Joshua 24 Joshua confronted the Children of Israel about their unwillingness to let go of the false gods they had grown attached to while they were in Egypt. They knew they needed to give up those gods, but they just kept procrastinating.

Well one day Joshua put an ultimatum before the Children of Israel, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

*In I Kings 18 we read of a similar challenge Elijah put before the Children of Israel. After they inhabited the land of Israel they began worshiping Baal. In spite of all the warnings issued through the prophet Elijah, the people just kept procrastinating.

Well one day Elijah gathered the Children of Israel together on Mount Carmel and he spoke these words: “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is GOD, follow HIM; but if Baal, follow him. But the people answered not a word.”

What Elijah was asking them was this: “How long are you going to keep procrastinating?” “How long are you going to keep putting off this important matter?”
* We find another classic example of procrastination in Jesus’ Parable of The Great Supper in Luke chapter 14.

In that parable God extended the invitation to man to partake of His wonderful blessings. Those who had been invited started making all kinds of excuses:

- One procrastinator said he couldn't accept the invitation because he had bought a piece of land he needed to tend to. (Luke 14:18)

- Another procrastinator said he couldn't accept the invitation because he had just bought five oxen and needed to go “test them out” in the field. (Lk. 14:19)

- A third procrastinator refused the invitation because he had a wife and kids at home to look after. (Lk. 14:20)

Excuses, excuses, excuses! That's what procrastinators do!

* We find yet another procrastinator over in the Book of Acts, chapter 26.

His name was King Agrippa. The apostle Paul had shared the good news of salvation with King Agrippa. And when he was done, Paul asked him a question:

v. 27 “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.”

Then in verse 28, King Agrippa gave his familiar response, “Paul, you ALMOST PERSUADE me to become a Christian.”

The key word in his response is that word “ALMOST.” In other words, “Paul, I’m about this close to becoming a Christian, but I’m not there yet. I think I’ll put this matter off until tomorrow.” The sad truth is, we never read any where in the New Testament where King Agrippa ever accepted Christ, leading us to believe he “put it off” and “put it off” all the way to his dying day, and he entered into a Christ-less eternity.
3. The Bible teaches us three truths about PROCRASTINATION:

(A) First, the Bible teaches us procrastination is a SERIOUS problem.

We tend to make light of procrastination as though its no big deal, but from a scriptural standpoint, procrastination is "a big deal."

You see, procrastination has to do with our stewardship of TIME. God is the "Giver" of time. "This is the day that the LORD has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it."

The scriptures teach us that time is FLEETING.

James 4:13 (NKJV) says, "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."

Psalm 103:15,16 (NKJV) As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.

Each day, God deposits 24 hours into our "time bank." That is 1,440 minutes or 86,400 seconds. We cannot carry the gift of time from one day into the next. Once the day has ended, that allotted time is gone forever. We can't go back and capture those moments.

So when we "procrastinate" we are forfeiting precious time that we can never get back.

PROCRASTINATION IS NOT ONLY A SERIOUS PROBLEM..........

(B) Next, the Bible teaches us that procrastination is A
SPIRITUAL PROBLEM.

In **GALATIANS 5:22,23 (NKJV)** the apostle Paul lists “the fruit of the Spirit.” He writes: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and **self-control**. Against such there is no law.”

Chronic procrastination reveals a lack of **SELF-CONTROL** when it comes to how we use our time. When we keep putting things off and putting them off, especially important things, it reveals an area of our life that we haven’t yielded to the control of the Holy Spirit.

(C) **Next, the Bible teaches us that procrastination is A SIN PROBLEM.**

How is procrastinating a sin you ask? **It is a sin of PRESUMPTION.**

**PSALM 19:13 (NKJV)** *Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.*

If I “presume” something it means that I accept something as virtually certain even though I don’t have any proof.

When I procrastinate, I am presuming that tomorrow will come, even though I don’t have any proof or guarantee that it will. As a matter-of-fact, scripturally speaking, **NONE OF US HAS ANY PROMISE OF TOMORROW.**

Remember that scripture I read at the outset of the message?

**PROVERBS 27:1** Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.

That brings us to the second question I would like to answer and that is......
II. What Can I Do To Overcome Procrastination?

(A) One key to overcoming procrastination is to **view it as a sin**.

*James 4:17 (NKJV)*  Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

As long as we view procrastination as “a fault” or “a weakness,” we will never do anything about it. If we are to ever overcome it, we must view it the way **GOD** views it, and that is that procrastination is a sin. **It is a sin of presumption.** It is to live our lives as though tomorrow is a certainty, when the scriptures teach the opposite.

(B) Another key to overcoming procrastination is to **value time**.

*Psalm 90:10, 12 (NKJV)*  The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow. So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

The way to “count our days” is to “make our days **count**.”

Each day is a **gift** from God; and what we do with each day is our **gift** to God.

(C) Another key to overcoming procrastination is to remember God **rewards diligence, not laziness**.

*Colossians 3:17 (NKJV)*  And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the **LORD JESUS**, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

You and I should desire to honor Christ by being diligent each and every day. May we not be like the world. May we not be guilty of “killing time” or “wasting time,” but rather being as productive as we can possibly be each day.

Will we get everything done we set out to do each day? Probably not! But may we know the satisfaction of honoring Christ each day by being as productive as we can be.
I want to end on a personal note. Like some of you, I have to confess that I have been guilty of procrastinating more times than I care to remember. And I assure you, the Spirit brought me under conviction through this message before I ever shared with you.

Several weeks ago I went to see someone that I had put off seeing for quite some time. I can't tell you the number of nights I went to bed thinking, “I need to go see them........I need to go see them.” But then I would awaken the following morning and find things to do to avoid going to see them.

Every time I would start to go to their house it was like this little voice inside me kept saying, “You’ve put it off this long, one more day isn’t going to hurt.” Well that “one more day” turned into weeks and the weeks turned into two or three months. After putting it off that long, I was certain the people were angry with me and wouldn’t want to see me now any way.

Well to make a long story short, I finally went to see them and all the fears behind my procrastination were for naught. They weren’t angry with me. In fact they were thrilled that I came to see them. When I drove away from there, the Lord gave me such a sense of peace, and I wondered to myself, “why had I put this matter off for so long?”

What have you been “putting off?” What is on your “good intentions” list that you have postponed time and time again? If you knew God would bless you with an overwhelming sense of peace, would you stop procrastinating and take care of the important matter today?

“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”