

Wil Owens

Warnings for the Impulsive and Procrastinating Disciple; Matt 8:18-22

GPBC

4.7.19

Introduction – An impulsive action is one that is taken too quickly. It's when we do something in haste without really thinking through the ramifications or options. Stores and advertisers are trained to prey on the impulsive shopper. To present such a deal, such a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, such a discount, that you would be unwise to not purchase this item immediately, or sign up for this plan right here and now, right on the spot, make the decision right now and I will save you money, but if you come back tomorrow after you have had time to think it through, this deal will be over. And the impulsive buyer will fall for the marketing ploy without thinking through the immediate financial effects or the options of other products.

But then there is the procrastinator. He's not too quick to react, he's too slow to react. He puts off until tomorrow what he really should have done today. He loses many opportunities to seize the day. Maybe he's too fearful that a better offer will come along. Maybe he's not disciplined enough to make commitments. Maybe he's too lazy to step up to the open door. Whatever the reason, he keeps putting off the opportunities before him until they finally pass him by.

What's interesting is that both the impulsive and the procrastinator end up living with regret. One regrets acting too quickly; the other regrets not acting at all. The text before us this morning demonstrates that the pitfalls of being impulsive or of being a procrastinator can also interrupt our spiritual lives and discipleship.

- I. A Presumption of Self-Confidence (vv18-20)
 - a. The scribe in v19 has erred on the side of being too impulsive. His declaration to Jesus that he will follow Him wherever He goes has been made too hasty. He hasn't thought through what it means to be a disciple of Christ. He hasn't considered the cost of discipleship. He hasn't properly or adequately weighed the ramifications or the personal sacrifices that come along with following Jesus.
 - b. The scribe is caught up in the moment and the fanfare of the present. Jesus has been healing many people. Crowds are following Him wherever He goes. People want to be where Jesus is, they want to

hear what Jesus says, they want to see the miracles that Jesus performs. So the scribe jumps to the conclusion that being a follower of Jesus is the good life. This is where the action is. This is where people love you and respect you and want to revere you. I want to be in on the action, or so he thinks.

- c. What the scribe had failed to consider in his haste to join the popular movement was that there is a cost involved when you follow Jesus.
 - i. Matt 16:24 – If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
 - ii. You see what the scribe failed to see is that following Jesus is not about winning the cheers of the crowds, its about taking up a cross.
 - iii. Jesus quickly informs this impulsive follower that the first cross he would have to take up would be the loss of material comforts. As a scribe, he is used to having the respect of people and living a comfortable life. Jesus says, “I don’t have a home.”
 - iv. But that wouldn’t be the only cross for the scribe. Jesus would not only experience the cheers of the crowds, He would also experience the jeers and the hatred and eventually death. That’s not exactly what the scribe had in mind when he declared that he would follow Jesus wherever He goes!
- d. I had a friend tell me, “I tried the Jesus thing. It didn’t work for me.” Impulsive. Jumped on board when others were jumping on board and then realized it wasn’t what he thought it would be. It was hard. It wasn’t easy to stand for truth. There are sacrifices to be made to have life.
- e. Dear friends, this is why you see some people make decisions for Christ, begin coming to church, and then in a just a month or so, you never see them in church again. Impulsive. Failed to consider the cost. Thought following Jesus would bring instant earthly gain and gratification. Failed to see that following Jesus gratifies the soul not the ego. A decision for Christ that does not produce a life for Christ is a false decision. It is not true, saving faith.
- f. Of course, we may need to ask the opposite question today. If following Christ means taking up a cross, if embracing Christ includes a cost, has it cost us anything to be a follower of Christ? If it hasn’t,

maybe we're not following Christ. Maybe we're hanging around spiritual things and have not truly tasted them.

- g. At the bottom of the scribe's impulsive declaration though is his presumption of self-confidence. He says, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go," without knowing that Jesus was going to the cross.
 - h. Jesus died to give us life, but we in turn die to have that everlasting, ever-joyful, ever-satisfying life. We die to ourselves. We die to this world. We die to our sin. We die to the boasting and exalting of ourselves. We die to our agenda. We die. It costs to follow Him. But the joy of salvation is that true, abundant, and eternal life is found when we die to this life.
- II. An Assumption of Autonomy (vv21-22)
- a. Now let's be clear about what is happening in this passage before we charge Jesus with being too harsh and unsympathetic! BTW – just a principle for our Bible reading and study, if our reaction to the words or actions of God in the Bible is that we think that God is somehow in the wrong, we need to stop and do a heart check.
 - i. God is never wrong. Jesus is never too harsh. The problem is not with God or with Scripture, the problem is with us. We don't fully understand the meaning of the text, the language of the text, or the cultural context of Jesus' day. Or probably we don't have eyes to see or a heart to understand and we need the Spirit's help.
 - ii. We don't stand over Scripture to analyze and critique and judge. We stand under the Scripture to see and taste and delight and believe.
 - b. At first glance we may think, "What could be wrong with burying your father? Surely that is the honorable thing to do? Why doesn't Jesus allow this man to honor his father?" That's when we need to stop and ask the Spirit to help us see what we're missing.
 - c. Here's a few considerations we need to bring to these verses.
 - i. Remember Jesus reads hearts, He doesn't just hear words as we do. Jesus knows there's more going on here than holding a funeral. This disciple is procrastinating on the call to follow Christ. He's putting it off until later, and he believes he's come

up with a pretty good excuse that surely no one would disagree with!

- ii. It's probably not the case that the father has already passed away and Jesus refuses this man a time of grief and mourning. His father is probably ill and the man believes his father will pass away. What he's really saying to Jesus is that as soon as he has all his tasks and duties in order, then he'll follow Jesus. The root of this man's procrastination is his assumption that he remains autonomous in following Jesus. He decides the time. He decides the level of commitment. His discipleship is up to him.
- iii. The procrastinator has fallen into the same error as the impulsive scribe. He fails to consider the cost. Matt 16:24 – If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
- iv. You see the impulsive scribe failed to understand that following Jesus means taking up a cross – he presumed his self-confidence. The procrastinator failed to understand that following Jesus means denying yourself – he assumed his autonomy.
 - v. He wanted to follow Jesus according to his terms and conditions and not according to losing all to have Christ!
- d. Jesus' response was simply to say, "Nothing is more important or more valuable or more worthwhile than following Me!" Don't hesitate. Don't waver. Don't delay. Follow Christ!

Conclusion – Don't presume your self-confidence and hastily decide to be a disciple. Following Jesus will be costly in this life. On the other hand, don't assume your autonomy and delay following Christ until everything fits your timing and agenda. God's call comes in His time, not ours.

You might be thinking, "So why would anyone follow Christ?" Because He is life! He is salvation! In Him we are forgiven and made new and made whole and made right with God and fit for eternal joy! If you don't follow Christ, you not only choose the lesser, you choose death! You see the joy is in this: the reward far outweighs the cost! Don't jump – but don't wait – follow Him today!