

WHY NOT TONIGHT?

Introduction

- A. Text: **Ac. 16:33**.
- B. The person is lost who drifts away from the truth because of neglect - **Hb. 2:1-3**.
- C. One might neglect the gospel in many ways, but one way is to be aware of some action we have to take to be saved from our sins and to postpone doing it.
- D. This lesson is not addressed to the person whose problem is *unbelief*, but rather to the person whose problem is *procrastination*.
- E. If there is something we need to do about our relationship to God and we have not yet done it, the question of this hour is: *why not tonight?*

I. THE CAUSE OF WAITING

- A. We need to ask ourselves what is *hindering* us from seeking God's forgiveness. Cf. **Ac. 8:36; 22:16**. What would it take to move us?
- B. The basic reason why we wait may be this: *we are waiting for a "bargain."*
 - 1. Having either overestimated what our obedience will "cost" or underestimated what our salvation is "worth," we somehow think that the situation will change later such that the equation will be altered.
 - 2. We are thinking of this as a negotiable transaction in which there is something to be gained by waiting.
 - 3. We are thinking like the addict who puts off quitting his habit because he thinks he can negotiate the transaction on better terms later.
- C. But the basic terms of salvation do not change.
- D. *Why not obey the Lord tonight?*

II. THE EFFECTS OF WAITING

- A. It is a most serious thing to disregard our conscience - **Jas. 4:17**. Cf. **Lk. 12:41-48; Rom. 14:23**.
- B. Three things will eventually happen if we delay obeying the Lord's invitation:
 - 1. The Lord will abandon us - **Rom. 1:24-26; 2 Thess. 2:9-12**.
 - 2. The people closest to us will quit respecting us.
 - 3. We will become incapable of respecting ourselves.
- C. There is nothing so debilitating as the indefinite hanging-on of an undone duty.
- D. *Why not obey the Lord tonight?*

III. THE SHAME OF WAITING

- A. The Lord is tenderly affectioned toward us. Cf. **Mt. 23:37-39**.

- B. What must the Lord Himself think of those who put off answering His invitation? Cf. **Lk. 9:57-62**.
- C. He died for us, and if we postpone our duty toward Him, we demonstrate our unworthiness of Him - **Mt. 16:24-26**. Cf. **10:32-39**.
- D. When all is said and done, it is the love of Christ that "constrains" us - **2 Cor. 5:14,15**.
- E. *Why not obey the Lord tonight?*

IV. THE RISK OF WAITING

- A. The Lord graciously grants us opportunity to obey Him — *but not unlimited opportunity* - **Isa. 55:6**. Cf. **Jn. 7:34; 8:21; 2 Cor. 6:1,2; Hb. 3:12-15**.
- B. Jesus made a point of much practical importance in **Mt. 5:25,26**.
- C. When the people of Israel finally decided to obey God in conquering the Promised Land, they found it was too late - **Num. 14:39-45**.
- D. With each delay in our obedience, we run the greater risk of our time running out — we simply do not know "what will happen tomorrow" (**Jas. 4:14**).
 - 1. "Too late" is the bitter cry of the lost - **Mt. 25:1-13**.
 - 2. "'Almost persuaded', harvest is past! 'Almost persuaded', doom comes at last! 'Almost' cannot avail, 'almost' is but to fail. Sad, sad that bitter wail: 'Almost', but lost" (P. P. Bliss).
- E. *Why not obey the Lord tonight?*

Conclusion

- A. A popular ad campaign for Nike brand athletic shoes used to say: "Just Do It." Concerning the Lord's will, do we have the character and integrity to do that?
 - 1. ***Do you need to repent of some private sin?*** Then you need to do that *tonight* - **Lk. 13:3**.
 - 2. ***Do you need to mend a broken relationship and be reconciled to another person?*** Then you need to do that *tonight* - **Mt. 5:23,24**.
 - 3. ***Do you need to make some public acknowledgment to the congregation?*** Then you need to do that *tonight* - **Jas. 5:16**.
 - 4. ***Have you never obeyed the gospel?*** Then you need to do that *tonight* - **Rom. 10:9,10; Ac. 2:38**. Cf. **Ac. 16:33**.
- B. "Why not tonight" may refer to *two different things*.
 - 1. The Lord has invited us to receive His forgiveness — and we may well ask, "Why not tonight?"
 - 2. But the Lord has also promised to return to bring this world to an end — and it is sobering to ask, "Why not tonight?"
- C. Are we ready for the Lord to return? Cf. **Lk. 12:35-40**.
- D. The Lord tenderly implores us to obey the gospel - **Mt. 11:28-30**. Cf. **Rev. 22:17**.
- E. *Why not tonight?*