

Hindrances to Salvation

Acts 24:24-25 HCSB After some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and listened to him on the subject of faith in Christ Jesus. (25) Now as he spoke about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix became afraid and replied, "Leave for now, but when I find time I'll call for you."

Introduction:

I would like to be able to say that everyone here today is saved and on their way to heaven. However, according to the Scriptures, it is highly unlikely that everyone here is saved. Now it is not because God doesn't want you to be saved – He does! The reason so many people are not saved today is because there is something in their life that "hinders" them from being saved.

Through the average individual's life, they are offered God's free gift of salvation at least once – for some it is more than once. But for one reason or the other they reject God's gift and go on about their way – headed for hell.

Here in the book of acts, several times Paul stands in judgment for what he believes and for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. I want to simply point out three different types of people in three different situations and show you what it was that kept them from being saved. Then we'll apply that to our lives. .

I. FELIX – PROCRASTINATION

Here in chapter 24, Paul has already testified before Felix of the false accusations that were against him. He was accused by the high priest and the elders for stirring up trouble in the synagogues and among the people. Several days had passed by and Felix along with his wife Drusilla had sent for the apostle Paul to hear him concerning the Faith. In other words, they called Paul and Paul preached to this man a message that brought deep conviction in his heart.

In **v.25** as Paul preached of righteousness, temperance and judgment, the Bible says that Felix was terrified. As Felix heard Paul preach the Word of God:

- His heart began to melt.
- Deep conviction set into his soul.
- The Holy Spirit of God was really working him over.
- Felix knew that everything that Paul was saying was true.

Here was a Man:

- Who was married to another man's wife.
- His very name means "pleasure".
- Who was licentious, and whose passions went unrestrained!
- He lived his life with the attitude of "Get all you can while you can! Eat, Sleep, Drink and Be Merry!"

Here was a poor depraved lost sinner who had an opportunity to sit and listen to a great man of God – yet when all was said and done, Felix allowed his love for sin to keep him from getting saved!

"Go away for now," he replied. "When it is more convenient, I'll call for you again."

How foolish! What a tragedy! Let me be clear by saying this:

- You can't get saved in a time of your convenience.
- You can't get saved when you think you're ready.

I've had many people say to me:

- I'll get saved when I get ready.
- I'll get saved when I get my life straightened out.

Listen folks, if you're going to get saved – do it now.

- **2 Corinthians 6:2 HCSB** For He says: **In an acceptable time, I heard you, and in the day of salvation, I helped you.** Look, now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation.
- **Isaiah 55:6 HCSB** Seek the LORD while He may be found; call to Him while He is near.

Sitting beside this man was his wife Drusilla. It is interesting to note that the Holy Spirit saw fit that it was mentioned that she was a Jewess. Even though she was by her first marriage a member of the Herodian family – she was still a Jewess but had forsaken her Jewish beliefs! She knew that her lifestyle was wrong. She knew that according to the Old Testament she was living in sin!

Here's what I want you to see. When Paul preached, the Bible says that Felix trembled, but it says nothing about his Jewish wife! I sincerely believe that this dear woman had hardened her heart against the truth for so long that Paul's preaching had little or no effect on her at all!

Oh what a tragic situation she was in! My friend if you ever come to the point that your heart is no longer convicted when the Word of God is being preached – you are in trouble! You see folks, the more you knowingly live in sin – the less and less the truth will be able to convict your heart.

- **Ephesians 4:19 HCSB** They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more.

II. FESTUS – FEAR OF MAN

In **chapter 24 verses 24 and 26** we can see that during the time he had spent with Festus he had surely witnessed to him. In Acts 25:19 the Bible says Paul had affirmed Jesus who Festus knew was dead to be alive. Paul had told Festus that Jesus was the Christ who rose from the dead. In Acts 25:20 we see the reply of Festus to the Gospel. Felix used Procrastination as his ticket to hell. Now Festus uses unbelief.

The Bible says in verse 20 that he doubted of such manner of questions. This man doubted his way to hell. He now resides there with all those who have died doubting the Gospel of Christ. Jesus indeed rose from the dead and this shows his rightful place as Lord.

I like the song that says they buried Him but I talked to Him today. They put him in a tomb 2000 years ago thinking him to be dead forever But I want you to know I talked to Him today. The Bible says that whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Whether you believe it or not He is the risen Lord and you will submit to Him now or you will submit to Him when He judges your sin and casts you into hell.

- **Acts 4:12 HCSB** There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved."
- **Philippians 2:10-11 HCSB (10)** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow--of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth-- **(11)** and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

III. AGRIPPA – NEVER QUITE CONVINCED (Doubt)

Finally we see a third rejection of the Gospel of Christ by a Roman politician. In **Acts 26:1-6** you can see that Agrippa had a decent knowledge of the Scriptures and the religion of the Jews. Paul tells him that he will gladly tell this "high platform politician" his testimony. Paul proceeds to tell Agrippa how he personally met the Lord on the road to Damascus. He then tells Agrippa that Christ was supposed to suffer and die and that He would be the first that should rise from the dead.

Again, Paul presents a risen Lord and Savior for all mankind, including the Gentiles. Paul then asks Agrippa the magic question and says, "King Agrippa, Do you believe the prophets?" Agrippa gives a sad response that is shared by many people of all kinds today. He says, "Paul, you have ALMOST persuaded me to be a Christian."

We all know that almost isn't good enough except in horseshoes and hand grenades. Almost saved is all the way lost. Almost saved is definitely going to hell. Agrippa no doubt was also under conviction of the Holy Ghost just as Felix was and instead of procrastination he just flatly rejects the gospel of Christ with an "You almost persuaded me."

All three of these men are crying out in the midst of weeping and gnashing of teeth in the place we know as Hades. They are suffering eternally for procrastinating salvation, for not believing salvation, and for flatly rejecting salvation. If you could talk to these men right now as they burn I'm sure that you would ask them "Why didn't you just get saved? There you are burning and totally deprived of hope and you will never know anything of God, eternally separated from His aid. Why didn't you just get saved?"

I ask the same question of many of you today. Why don't you just get saved? What is holding you back? What are you holding on to that would be worth an eternity in hell?

I want to give you five things I believe people are holding on to that has kept them from accepting God's free gift of salvation. This should not take long, so please bear with me and read them. Many, many local church members as well as those that are in the world will go to hell because they will reject the gift of God for one or more of these five things.

1. PRIDE: I believe that pride is the biggest sin that people have that keeps them from being saved. They are simply too proud to bow; too proud to submit to the authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

A. PRIDE IS A CHARACTERISTIC OF SATAN. The Bible says that Satan fell because of pride.

- **Isaiah 14:12-14 HCSB** Shining morning star, how you have fallen from the heavens! You destroyer of nations, you have been cut down to the ground. (13) You said to yourself: "I will ascend to the heavens; I will set up my throne above the stars of God. I will sit on the mount of the gods' assembly, in the remotest parts of the North. (14) I will ascend above the highest clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

The Bible teaches that those who are not saved or born again are the children of Satan. Children often share the characteristics of their father so this is no surprise. You and the devil have something in common and that is your stinking pride. You are worried about your reputation or what people will think and you will end up in hell because of it.

B. PRIDE IS WICKED. Listen, if God says you are wicked because of pride then you are wicked.

- **Mark 7:20-23 HCSB** Then He said, "What comes out of a person--that defiles him. (21) For from within, out of people's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, (22) adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, lewdness, stinginess, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. (23) All these evil things come from within and defile a person."

C. PRIDE WILL KEEP YOU FROM GETTING SAVED. The Bible says in

- **Psalms 10:2-6 HCSB** In arrogance the wicked relentlessly pursue the afflicted; let them be caught in the schemes they have devised. (3) For the wicked one boasts about his own cravings; the one who is greedy curses and despises the LORD. (4) In all his scheming, the wicked arrogantly thinks: "There is no accountability, since God does not exist." (5) His ways are always secure; Your lofty judgments are beyond his sight; he scoffs at all his adversaries. (6) He says to himself, "I will never be moved--from generation to generation without calamity."

Even though you are not seeking God because you are too proud to get saved I want you to know that He is seeking after you. The Bible says that Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. You are lost and if you will drop that chain of pride and turn to Him He will save you.

Just get saved. Don't hold on to your pride, it's not worth it. It's not worth an eternity in Hades and then the Lake of Fire.

2. PLEASURE: A lot of people love the pleasures of this world so much and what this world has to offer that they are not willing to live for God and get saved. People have said many times that they do not want to give up all the fun they are having in order to become some kind of Jesus Freak. The Bible says that your pleasure will not last because there is coming a pay day when you will suffer an eternity in hell for rejecting the Son of God and His righteousness as your ticket to heaven. It's not worth it.

A. PLEASURE WILL NOT SATISFY YOU. Have you ever noticed how even your best of times enjoying the pleasures of this world have to be repeated? The pleasure you got from doing something will not last and is forgotten before you know it.

- **Ecclesiastes 2:1 HCSB** I said to myself, "Go ahead, I will test you with pleasure and enjoy what is good." But it turned out to be futile.

The wisest man who ever lived (Solomon) says that the pleasures of this world are vanity. Let me say that I can proclaim with no damage to my conscience that since I got saved, born again, I am satisfied with Jesus. Pleasure will not satisfy but Jesus will.

B. PLEASURE IS SHORT-LIVED. As we said before, the pleasures of something you have or have done in this world will not last. They are soon forgotten.

- **Hebrews 11:24-26 HCSB** By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (25) and chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the short-lived pleasure of sin. (26) For he considered reproach for the sake of the Messiah to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, since his attention was on the reward.

C. PLEASURE WILL SEAL YOUR FATE.

- **2 Thessalonians 2:12 HCSB (12)** so that all will be condemned--those who did not believe the truth but enjoyed unrighteousness.

The Bible says that the pleasures of sin and of this world will only last for a short season and then comes Judgment Day. You may be having pleasure in unrighteousness now but in eternity, while you are suffering the torments of hell, you will wish you could come back and receive the free gift God is offering through His Son. This gift is eternal life. Just get saved.

3. PEOPLE: The Bible says in

- **Psalms 118:8 HCSB** It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.
- **Matthew 10:34-37 HCSB** Don't assume that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. (35) For I came to turn **a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; (36) and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. (37) The person who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; the person who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.**

A lot of you who are listening to this message are going to end up in hell because of the influence people have in your lives. You may have confidence in a person who is telling you that your works are going to get you into heaven or are the reason you are saved. You may have confidence in your church or what it teaches. You may have confidence in yourself. People are a big reason that others will not receive the free gift of salvation.

A. FRIENDS- Some of you are afraid that you will lose your friends. You're right. You will lose a lot of friends when you get born again but you will find that they were not really friends anyway.

- **James 4:4 HCSB** Adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the world's friend becomes God's enemy.

I'd rather have God on my side than all the friends this world could offer. Just get saved and you will get some new friends - some REAL ONES. You will have Jesus and the Bible says that He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. You will have some church folks that will become your friends and edify and encourage you in your walk with the Lord.

B. FAMILY- I have witnessed to many people who shrug off the gospel by changing the subject to some family member or group in their family who goes to this church or follows this other belief. The people they are closest to are their excuse for not getting saved. They say "Well my grandfather was a preacher or my uncle preaches down at the Methodist church." There are other who have tight knit families and they know if they get saved that they will be an outcast to the family. They have family reunions and parties that any saved person would not fit in. I say drop them, praise God and just get saved. No human is worth going to hell over. The Bible says in

- **Matthew 10:37 HCSB** The person who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; the person who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

Just get saved and win your family to God! Then you can all enjoy that sweet reunion with the Lord by and by.

C. FOES- A lot of people think that if they get saved that it will lend their adversaries more ammunition against them. They want to hold up their reputation to their enemies. The Bible teaches that our real enemy is Satan and that we do not fight against flesh and blood but against his powers.

- **Ephesians 6:12 HCSB** For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.

Your real enemy is Satan who roams about seeking who He may destroy. He wants you to continue living for him and fulfilling his lust. By doing so you will end up in the place that was originally prepared for him – Hell!

4. PAST: A lot of people in our day seem to think that the sins they have committed in the past are too severe for them to be saved. They think that they are beyond saving.

A. PAST SINS- The Bible says that Jesus' blood paid for all our sins; past, present and future.

- **Ephesians 1:7 HCSB** In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace
Jesus' blood did not just pay for small sins but all sins.

B. PAST FAILURES- A lot of people think that because their track record is filled with failures that God cannot use them and that there is no reason to get saved and live for Him. I say just get saved and God will make a winner out of you. The Bible says in

- **2 Corinthians 5:17 HCSB (17)** Therefore if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.

That's right friend. If you will give your life to the Lord and get saved He will make you a totally new creation and all your past failures will be gone. He can make you new!

D. PAST COMMITMENTS- There are others who have even made pacts and vows with Satan and because of this they think they are beyond saving. I will say that there is no doubt they are in danger of reprobation but it may not be too late. Any pact with the devil or anyone else for that matter that would cause someone to pass up on the gift of salvation is overruled by the Word of God. The Bible says in

- **2 Peter 3:9 HCSB** The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

5. THE PRICE:

Jesus paid it all when He bled and died on the cross. He paid the sin penalty for all who will come to him. He was the propitiation for the whole world.

- **John 3:16 HCSB** "For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.
- **Romans 3:24-25 HCSB** They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (25) God presented Him as a propitiation through faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed.
- **1 John 2:1-2 HCSB** My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father--Jesus Christ the righteous One. (2) He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

CONCLUSION: There are many people who are not willing to repent and get saved. The Bible says in

- **Luke 13:3 HCSB** No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well!
- **Luke 13:5 HCSB** No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well!"

Yes, Jesus paid the price to get to heaven, but you must be willing to let it all go and turn to Him. Surrender your life to Him and He will take care of you. It's a promise. Just get saved. You'll not regret it. It's the greatest thing by far that has ever happened to me and it will be the best thing that ever happens to you no matter who you are.