



## The Fatal Word

Sometimes the fate of empires and the destiny of individuals hinges upon the speaking of one simple word. The most profound decisions of human history have been revealed by the voicing of one word--often as not a yes or no.

Today I would like to build my message around a small English word that shall be responsible for the lingering death of millions of people all over the world. It is not the word Yes or No, although it eventually leads to a position that will decide the eternal future for vast multitudes. I'm speaking about the little four letter word wait. Although it may look and sound like a very insignificant expression, it has probably done the world more harm, and is doing more harm to the Kingdom of God than any other word.

I read from Joel 2:1, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh for it is nigh at hand." My friends, there is no more important message that can supercede this: Blow the trumpet of Zion, for the Lord's coming is at hand. But what has that to do with waiting? I find it summed up in Joel 3:14, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision." This is speaking of the time of the battle of Armageddon and the coming of the Lord-Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision.

Remember that before Jesus comes, probation closes, and when probation closes, those who are still in the valley of decision will be forever lost!! They have not meant to reject the truth, they plan sometime to accept Him, but they are still in the valley of decision and the Lord is to come! They have waited and waited and have stayed in a path of sin till sin has closed probation; Christ stands up from the judgment work in heaven and announces, "It is done," when those words ring through heaven, and the earth reverberates with that message, then never, never another heart will be touched. Then it will dawn upon a world that it is too late, too late forever; they have waited too long-that is the word that will send millions to destruction-wait.

Friends, sin is easier to cure than a cold-a cold may take weeks to get over, but sin can be discarded instantly. The wise man should know well enough the danger, for he had

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put off salvation until it was almost too late. Proverbs 27:1, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Don't plan for tomorrow; don't say, "Tomorrow I am going to give my heart to the Lord;" don't talk about tomorrow, you must decide today. Today is the day of salvation. When the light of truth shines in a person's heart, that is the time that the Lord plans to work out your ways for you. Don't wait! Boast not thyself of tomorrow, it is a solemn thing to postpone surrender. The difference between a cold and pneumonia is the word wait. You catch a common cold; when it first starts it isn't pneumonia. But the word wait introduced in a person's attitude toward a cold brings on pneumonia. Jesus says, "Come to me now." But we say, "Wait"; that postponement may result in spiritual pneumonia in our lives.

Can anyone be certain of what is going to happen tomorrow? James 4:14 "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Do you know that you will live until tomorrow? I ask the individual who has not made a full surrender, Are you sure that you will make a full surrender some other day?

Wait is the devil's most successful trap. Satan is terribly interested in every single soul who is interested in salvation. He is content as long as a man is merely interested. That man takes false comfort in the fact that the Lord knows how good his intentions are. The devil's plan ordinarily is not to get us to reject the Saviour entirely, but to neglect Him- Wait. Satan doesn't mind at all people saying, "I know I must take my stand, I know it is right, and I am going to sometime." Oh friend, it is just as serious to neglect Jesus as it is to reject Him. When we neglect Him, it shows that we do not trust Him, we do not really believe in Him.

There are very few of us who have not had some experience with this, and seen the seriousness of putting off. I find it in Paul's writings. Acts 24:25, "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have convenient season, I will call for thee." That, friends, is one of the most serious and solemn decisions that a man ever made.

Felix believed in the true God and he had had a certain amount of light. Finally Paul was called in before him and he stood up before that man, with chains about his wrists. Paul pled with Felix about the most solemn things that he could have talked about, righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; all three are of vital and eternal importance. And when Felix heard these things, he actually trembled. Many individuals come to that place, where it dawns upon them that they are in a lost condition unless they repent.

They tremble when they hear the Word of God, for they realize that it is the truth. That is the place that Felix had reached. Did he take his stand and say, "I am going to take Jesus as my Saviour to cover my sins?" No, it goes on, "I know that it is true Paul; I know what I should do, but never mind now, go your way for this time and when it is more convenient, I will call for you." In other words, Felix passed the day of surrender, because he preferred that word wait. Paul preached to him concerning the most solemn

things possible. He gave him the last warning message, but the tragedy is that Felix clung to that fatal word-wait.

Today may be the last "convenient season" in your life,-the last opportunity for you to surrender; I cannot say. There was never another season that was more convenient for Felix than when he had the truth and was under conviction. Tradition has it that a little later Felix died a most miserable death, his heart unsundered to the very end.

There is another reason why individuals do not take their stand for God and that is doubt. They can't quite understand all God's dealing with His children, they can't understand all about God, and so they wait. Friends, I have experienced doubt and I know just what it is, but I tell you this much: If you wait to have all doubt disappear before you come to Jesus, you will never come. If you wait until everything is clear, you will wait too long, for that time will never come. When you follow Jesus, you must follow Him by faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

There is another excuse that comes, we don't intend to let it stay as an excuse so long; but it just does, that is one's job. "And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed him." There's the job to think about. I have always thought the way Jesus called His disciples was most remarkable. They were out by the seashore and they saw Jesus walking along. He was walking along there, He saw Andrew and Peter (brothers). He said, "Come and follow me."

Now, you stop and think of all the excuses they might have brought in: "We must sell our business first, Jesus, and then we will come. We must be sure of some kind of an income." But no, when He called them to come, when they heard the invitation to follow Jesus, they straightway left their business and followed Him. That is why they made such good disciples. They trusted Him to take care of them.

What if Peter had said, "Well, Lord, I plan to come. I intended to follow you, but just wait." There never would have been an apostle Peter, for Jesus wants disciples who, when He calls to them, will say, "I will follow now."

Matthew 9:9 speaks of another of the disciples, "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him." Who was that? Matthew. He is the one who wrote this book of the Bible, and he is telling his own experience of how he was a clerk at the gate where taxes were collected. Jesus passed along and gave him the invitation, and said, "Come and follow me." Now think of the excuses that he might have offered to Jesus instead of himself: "Jesus, I am working here and I can't come now. Maybe later on I can get all this work arranged and everything taken care of, and then I will come to you and be one of your followers."

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No, Matthew when Jesus called him, came then. There is another excuse that he might have made, and that is an excuse that many men make nowadays, "I have worked here in this concern for 36 years, Lord, and if I just keep on for four years more I will get my pension. I am going to come and follow you and be one of your disciples, but I want to wait until I am sure of that pension first."

Friends, Jesus wanted him now-that is why He called him when He did. If Matthew had waited for four years, till he had gotten his pension, Jesus would have made up His twelve disciples; He would have completed His ministry; He would have died on the cross, and would have been raised from the dead-and it would still have been six months before Matthew would have been ready to come. But no, Jesus said, "Come now." And Matthew came.

One time a minister was invited to speak in a prison to the inmates. He was taken through the doors and to the room where the prisoners were gathered for the meeting. Before him he noticed two chairs draped in black. Two men were seated in those chairs. The minister said as he realized that he was giving those men their very last message, he preached as he had never preached before. To think of having the responsibility of bringing words of hope to a man for the very last time. What a responsibility!

As I speak to you today, I realize that some of you may be hearing your last appeal to surrender. Satan is cruel. He will cut your life short un-surrendered, if possible. God is giving you the opportunity to make your decision. If you pass this by, what hope have you?