

24 THE DEADLINE DISEASE

Proverbs 13:19 A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul...

Ecclesiastes 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might...

Mark 7:37 And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well..."

Most of us procrastinate to some degree over some things sometimes. The 'deadline disease' is the pernicious habit of leaving things that need to be done, undone until the last minute. There is no real desire to do, only the dread to meet the deadline. We do it only because we have to. Much of what people do daily are undertaken on this basis. Without deadlines, things do not get done.

The things we tend to put off doing are usually those that are mundane or unpleasant. The things we readily do without any prodding or pushing are those that we like and enjoy. Clearly there are many things in life which we need to do but would rather not if we had a choice. There is not very much we can practically do to make them more exciting or pleasurable, so the cure must lie elsewhere.

This base impulse to put off doing needs to be replaced by a higher habit of doing it now. Entrenched habits and mindsets are not easily uprooted. It is a discipline that needs to be instilled so that immediate action, not procrastination, becomes the norm rather than the exception. The default disposition has to be reversed, so that our instinctive reaction to a task at hand is to get it done immediately. On the other hand, to leave it till later would now take some considering. The natural question is no longer "why must I do it now?" but "why should I do it later?" To make this radical revamp of our attitude towards procrastination and action, we need to be ruthless in applying it to every task that comes along, without selecting or justifying any. Keep at it until you possess the principle of not leaving till tomorrow what you can do today.

A basic psychological need in life is the accomplishment need. It applies not only to big projects but also small chores. Accomplishing is simply completing a task well. If there is no sense of accomplishment, fulfilment and motivation starts to leak. Passive participation or going through the motion may get a job done, but there can be no accomplishment if the will is not actively engaged. Accomplishing the first small step generates motivation for the next. There is a multiplier effect on motivation so that it gets stronger rather than weaker with doing more.

Let us not be afraid of or averse to whatever task we find before us. Wherever Jesus went, He was pressed with crowds and the needs of humanity. Yet He never turned them away but met them with compassion for the multitudes, while maintaining communion with the Father. As "*He has done all things well*" (Mark 7:37), so let us do likewise with timely and quality work.