



OVERCOMING THE SOMEDAY SYNDROME
Philippians 3:12-16, 4:12-13, Matthew 2:1-12

“It was the best of times – it was the worst of times – it was the season of light – it was the season of darkness – it was the spring of hope – it was the winter of despair.” Those words describe so accurately this past year for so many of God’s children were actually written in 1859 by Charles Dickens in his landmark novel – **THE TALE OF TWO CITIES**.

This past week brought a strange and difficult year to an end. As this year ends, we have many questions and few answers.

- A. Where is the world’s economy headed?
 - a. Because we buy and sell to a world market - what happens in economies in China and India and the rest of the world affects what happens in our economy.
 - b. If serious problems continue in major world markets in 2009 how will that affect our country? How will it affect our personal lives?
- B. What world consequences will be produced by national hatreds in 2009?
- C. What will we experience because of the new administration and political change in Washington, D. C.?

For the wise men and the Apostle Paul in our scripture lessons today it was also the best of times and the worst of times. For the wise men it was a time of great excitement. They see a sign in the skies – and follow it. Yet a sign is only a sign. They have a great choice to make. Do they really admit their need of a Savior – or report back to King Herod? Will they continue to be enamored and blinded by the torches and candles of the world – or will they allow the heavenly light to lead them in a new and greater direction? The birth of Christ (the Messiah) caused King Herod and all of Jerusalem to be disturbed as we learned from **Matthew 2:3**.¹

The Apostle Paul who writes these words to the church of Philippi and other letters as well often found himself confined to a jail cell – or under house arrest – the worst of times.

However, he turned to almighty God to keep his eyes open to the greater and larger horizon – often only seen by the eyes of faith. Paul knew what the goal of his ministry and mission was. He knew what his spiritual gifts were. A goal is like a magnet. When we focus on it – it draws us to it. Time then was in God’s hand and plans – and not in someone else’s hands and timing. So he employed his spiritual gifts to the glory of God rather than sitting back and allowing them to become rusty. Here we see that the apostle Paul would not allow himself to get in a spiritual rut. He prepares for his legal defense. He witnesses to the Roman guards (they are a captive audience). He receives guests from Philippi. He writes this thank you notes – the book of Philippians. He does not suffer from ‘the Someday Syndrome’ better known as SS.

In their book **ONE MONTH TO LIVE: THIRTY DAYS TO A NO-REGRETS LIFE**, Kerry and Chris Shook share helpful solutions for overcoming the ‘Someday Syndrome.’ The Someday Syndrome (SS) is a spiritual malady that causes us to settle for comfort and safety rather than God’s purpose for our lives. People of all ages and backgrounds suffer from this syndrome and it can be contagious. It is fairly easy to spot SS in others but we often fail to diagnose this problem in ourselves. A quick way to tell if you have SS is to see how you react to the following statements:

- “When I make more money, I’m going to start spending more time with my family”
- “When my schedule slows down I’m going to get involved at church.”
- Someday I’m going to get serious about getting in shape.”
- “When I retire I’m going to enjoy life.”
- “Someday I’m going to start reading my Bible.”
- “Someday I’m going to get serious about my faith.
- Someday I would like to go on a mission trip.”

If you can identify with two or more of these statements, you probably have Someday Syndrome. If you have ever verbalized any of these statements to others you definitely have SS and are probably contagious.

People who have SS are prone to mediocrity and apathy. They often complain about boredom but are unwilling to take risks or do hard things. They frequently blame others – even God for their bland existence and general unhappiness. SS causes frustration, emptiness, disappointment and results in endless comparisons with others.

If you and I want to prevent Someday syndrome from taking hold in our lives this next year, we need to make some important decisions right now. We need to come to terms with the fact that life is short and we only have a limited number of tomorrows. Why should we wait until someday to get in shape, get involved, or finish a degree? Why not begin today?” Why do we allow ourselves to become paralyzed by fear, doubt, and indecision?” Today is the best day to begin turning things around.²

This past week as I was thumbing through my junk mail – I received two pieces – one of which offered the captivating guarantee of providing me all the wisdom I would need to make 2009 the best year ever.

Since it was addressed to **Occupant** I quickly tossed it. The other was addressed to **Current Resident** and offered “a new you in the New Year.” I tossed that.

Well, today we will not turn to junk mail – but to God’s word – for instruction to overcome SS – and claim God’s best for our lives – even in the worst of times.

FIRST, IF YOU WANT TO OVERCOME THE SOMEDAY SYNDROME YOU MUST HAVE A PRIORITY.

We sometimes miss the great opportunities of life because we get sidetracked. I once heard the tale of a talented bloodhound in England that started a hunt by chasing a full grown male deer. During the chase a fox crossed his path, so he began now to chase the fox. A rabbit crossed his hunting path, so he began to chase the rabbit. After chasing the rabbit for awhile, a tiny field mouse crossed his path, and he chased the mouse to the corner of a farmer’s barn. The bloodhound had begun the hunt chasing a prized male deer for his master and wound up barking at a tiny mouse.

The Apostle Paul knew his number one priority was to live his life to the honor and glory of God by preaching the Gospel. However, we know that Paul was not in a plush hotel room but in prison. He received a report that all was not well at the church in Philippi. His very life could be ended at any moment. And the list goes on. However, the Apostle Paul would not allow anything to cross his path that would deter him from his priority. Paul knew that his new life was a gift from God. His life was to be lived for his master. Nothing would deter him from that priority!

I once ran across a news release from a business firm called White Laboratory which reported that almost 98% of the atoms found in your body today were not present one year ago.

In one sense you were a new person on January 1, 2009, compared to who you were on January 1, 2008. The Bible also talks about a God “who can make ALL things new.” Paul declares in other portions of his writing that “if any person is in Christ Jesus, they are a new creation.” Yes, the Bible talks a great deal about us being a new people, but it doesn’t have anything to do with atoms in our physical bodies. We are new people when we have the mind and attitude of Jesus Christ living inside us. This is the priority that the Apostle Paul urged the Christians at Philippi to adopt for the living out of their faith. This is why Paul writes, “This one thing I do.” This is why Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount that we are to seek his kingdom first, and then the rest of our lives and priorities will fall into order.

Do not lose your priority of life! You are living for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Spend your time in 2009 doing one thing best for Christ and his church and then let all the other items fall into place.

Christ's spirit lives best in his disciples who say, "This I will do," rather than, "Something ought to be done around this place." Pick a biblical priority and then work it out with all the energy and gusto you have. Put your hand to the plow and don't look back.

SECONDLY, MOVE FORWARD – NOT BACKWARD.

Paul writes, "Forgetting what lies behind, I strain forward to what is ahead."

If you have ever been to a circus, you've no doubt seen the huge bull elephants chained to a peg in the ground. Perhaps it has occurred to you that the elephant could easily pull the peg out of the ground and escape. However, he does not try. As a baby elephant he was tied to a huge stake that he could not pull out of the ground. Weeks of pulling and tugging only wore a trench around the stake, and finally, he gave up.

Now that he is full-grown, with great strength and the physical ability to pull the peg out of the ground, he remembers only the futility of past efforts and does not even attempt to escape. He is conditioned to failure.

Notice Paul says we are to "forget what lies behind." Everybody could benefit from having a good mental trash basket. We are to confess our sins and place them under the blood of Jesus - knowing we have been freed from their condemnation and power. Jesus can clean the slate (the blackboard of our lives) and propel us to work for righteousness, rather than unrighteousness. Forget both your sins and successes in 2008 and begin 2009 anew with God.

The three wise men don't return to King Herod – but move forward in the new direction God led them in. They not only sought a savior – they actually followed him.

Have you ever noticed that your car's windshield is fifty times larger than your rear view mirror? It is quite simple – we are to spend 50 times as much energy and time looking forward than looking backwards. When you drive on Route 30 or Route 23, it is good to occasionally check your rear view mirror to see what is behind you, but it is dangerous to drive using only your rear view mirror. If you live mentally and spiritually only looking backwards, you will never get started to run the good race and to fight the good fight. Why sing, "Guide me O Thou great Jehovah," and when God actually guides us, we choose not to listen or move.

THIRDLY, WE SEE THE POWER OF A DEDICATED AND SANCTIFIED LIFE.

Paul said, "Press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Paul always had this eternal perspective to everyday life. He placed himself in the hands of God. Whether it was the best of times – or the worst of times – he pressed on.

He could not change his outward circumstances – but he made sure they did not change him. He would let nothing crush his spirit. He had joined his life to a cause

much greater than himself. This is what allowed Paul to be faithful and content regardless of the circumstances he faced. The choices he made in every given circumstance made an important difference. So Paul refused to bow down to the Someday Syndrome. He kept his eye fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

In a few moments we will come to this communion table to eat the bread – drink the cup. As we begin another year – hear these words, “Behold, the old has passed away – and I will make all things new.”

Here our Lord in word and deed gives us strength and courage to follow him in a new direction.

Here our Lord will strengthen our faith for every challenge – and grant us his presence in both good and bad circumstances. Here we are reminded “I can do all things through him (Christ) who strengthens me.” This will defeat the Someday Syndrome every time. Let us go forward in 2009.

Amen and amen.

Reverend Eric S. Ritz
January 4, 2009 – preached at both services
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ENDNOTES

¹William Sloane Coffin, **COLLECTED SERMONS FROM RIVERSIDE**, volume 2, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 2008, pages 109-110.

² John Schmidt, **The Messenger**, “**The Pastor’s Column**,” Frazer United Methodist Church, December 28, 2008.