



It's Too Late

Luke 9:62 NIV

Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Is It Too Late for You?

One year my dad took our family on a camping trip and we were going north on Highway 5 which is a straight and fast paced Interstate. It also was very hot as we were driving in the middle of the summer with no air conditioning and that part of California gets "toasty" in July. Dad had taken a look at a map and saw that there was a shortcut that led to the coast where our campground was. It was a shorter distance than the primary route and would get us out of the heat sooner, so my dad decided to take this road. It was winding and the fastest you could go was thirty miles per hour on it. What my dad thought was a short-cut ended up taking two hours more than if we had taken the longer route. I was complaining about feeling like I was going to vomit because of all the curves, and I am sure my little brother was not doing much better. I still wonder how long it was before my dad decided he had made a mistake. At some point I am sure he thought about just going back and taking the easier route, but perhaps there came a spot in the journey when he felt like he had already gone too far; that it was too late to return to the original route.

You have probably had times like that too where you decided that you had gone too far to take a different road. Perhaps it was with your degree or maybe a career choice or even a relationship. We all have them, moments when we consider making changes in life, but it seems like we have invested too much to change course. It could be that right now you are thinking about making a right turn, considering going in a different direction. There are all sorts of big and small changes we can make in our lives, some can be for the good, others could be disastrous. Today we will consider one particular decision to make and what it might mean for you.

Perhaps you have read the Biblical account of Samson and his fascinating life story. He was given a special calling, even before he was born, to serve as an important part of God's plan to give Israel its independence from foreign oppressors. He never lived up to his promise although he was supernaturally strong and a magnificent fighter. His fatal flaw was his lust for women who had no loyalty to him or his values. God had told his parents that he was not to cut his hair because his great strength would be lost if he did. When a Philistine woman, who was secretly working for the leaders of Philistia, Israel's mortal enemies, became Samson's lover, she tricked him into giving her the secret to his God given strength. After she lured him to sleep, Delilah had the Philistines come into her room and shave off Samson's hair. With his strength gone, Samson was easily captured, his eyes poked out and he was put in chains and imprisoned.

Not long after, Samson was brought out like a circus animal to perform in front of a great crowd of Philistines partying in the temple of their idol god Dagon. As he stood in front of the people, Samson came up with a plan. He asked the guard to position him right next to the main supporting pillars that held up the roof. Three thousand Philistine men and women were crowded into the temple complex, many on top of the roof. **Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "O Sovereign Lord, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes." Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus, he killed many more when he died than while he lived.** (Judges 16:28-30 NIV)

At some point, Samson made a decision about where he was going in life...or more literally, in death. Perhaps, as he sat in his prison cell, blinded and without his great strength, he decided that it was too late for him to build a future and do the sorts of things most people do with their lives. He felt that his time had come to die in a flame of glory. So, believing there was no turning back in his suicide mission to kill as many Philistines as possible, he turned to God for help and in a miraculous way, Samson's strength returned to him in a short burst of power. In a flash, Samson ended his own life and those of three thousand of his enemies.

We cannot condone Samson's actions and we are not trying to justify his decision, but we can reflect on the crossroads where he found himself. Every life course comes to a point when we choose whether or not we will continue on it. In Samson's case, it was his fierce determination to gain vengeance. He came to the conclusion that his hatred of the Philistine people could not be halted and so he pressed on to the end. Someone else comes to mind, someone who also decided to keep going, that it was too late for him to change. Perhaps you aren't familiar with this person's crossroads, but it was a critical one for him. Silas was a co-worker of the Apostle Paul's and went with him on his second missionary journey. On that trip, he and Paul were arrested and beaten in Philippi and thrown in prison. After they both were miraculously delivered from the prison, the church of Philippi felt it best for Paul and Silas to be brought to Berea where it was safer. However, the peace did not last long as trouble followed them. **When the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, they went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up. The brothers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea.** (Acts 17:13-14 NIV)

We can't say why Silas along with Timothy stayed behind in Berea where trouble brewed, and Paul was whisked away. Perhaps the Jews were not concerned with Silas or Timothy and they did not feel they needed to bother with them. We must say though that Silas knew how terrifying the persecution could get and what a great risk he was taking being on this missionary journey. Eventually, Silas and Timothy rejoined Paul in Macedonia. **When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.** (Acts 18:5 NIV) During this time between when Silas was in Berea and then later met back up with Paul in Macedonia, Silas must have thought about whether he should continue the missionary ministry with Paul. He easily could have talked himself into heading back home and perhaps he thought about it. At this point though, as he considered abandoning the work with Paul, he concluded that he had already gone too far; it was too late to turn back. Silas was invested in God and the work Christ had for him.

I remember once thinking about my lack of success in what I was doing and how difficult it was. God was silent and I didn't feel any real warmth from the Spirit. As I pondered quitting, I remembered back when Mary Jo and I had two boys and no girls. For five years we had tried to have one more child, in particular a girl and weren't able. One Sunday afternoon, with a voice as clear as a bell speaking to me in my head, the Lord told me that in nine months we would have a daughter. Exactly nine months later Rachel was born. It

dawned on me in that brief moment of clarity, I could not turn back now. It was either Christ or nothing. I had come too far with God to quit.

You have a will; your will is all of you engaged with what you decide. And as for every other person with that will, it is you who must decide if Christ is the sovereign king of your heart. Many, like Samson decide not. But, perhaps like Silas, you have thought this through, and you have gone too far with Christ to turn back now. No one can make this call, but you. The Lord won't do it, this requires your will to choose. If Christ is your Savior, will He be your Lord? Is He going to be in charge of what you do and how you approach your life? Peter's response to Jesus when the Lord asked the disciples if they too would leave Him was succinct and unequivocal. **"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."** (John 6:68-69 NIV) Do you agree with Peter. Is He the only one who has for you eternal life? Have you made it clear that is what you think, that the salvation of Jesus is what determines how you will live your life? Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your next step, of the one after that? Does He decide for you the road you take?