

What Are You Waiting For? (O Come to the Altar); Acts 22:16

- I. Procrastination
 - a. My mother use to tell me (all the time) that I procrastinate – my wife would probably say the same thing
 - b. My mother once told me she was going to give me a book on procrastination – I told her I would read it tomorrow
 - c. Normally, when we procrastinate, all the little things that should have been accomplished pile up into big things (that still need to be accomplished)
 - d. Then, as the big things pile up, we become overwhelmed
- II. Overwhelmed
 - a. This year alone has provided a lot of big things that could easily overwhelm us
 - b. The fear of death, while always on the fringe of our vision, is particularly present this year
 - i. Acts 14:1–3 (ESV); ¹ Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. ² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³ So they **remained for a long time**, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.
 - ii. When the rulers, Gentiles, and Jews of Iconium tried to stone Paul and Barnabas, they fled to Lystra
 - iii. Paul heals a man crippled from birth and the people call him Zeus and Barnabas Hermes
 - iv. But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium to finish what they started in Iconium
 - v. Acts 14:19–20 (ESV); ¹⁹ But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. ²⁰ But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.
 - vi. It seems like Paul is pretty much in control, unconcerned about his death – it seems like nothing could shake him
 - vii. Look at just some of Paul’s suffering – after reading this it doesn’t seem like he is overwhelmed at all!
 - viii. 2 Corinthians 11:23–27 (ESV); ²³ Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴ Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger

from false brothers; ²⁷ in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

- c. Now, let's take a closer look
 - i. 2 Corinthians 1:8–9 (ESV); ⁸ For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.
 - ii. For us to think that all the things that happened to Paul did not affect him is silly
 - iii. It seems to me that Paul was overwhelmed
 - 1. Coffman thinks that this is some other event not recorded for us
 - 2. Romans 16:3–4 (ESV); ³ Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴ who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.
 - iv. In recounting this to us Paul uses this event to remind us that we are to rely on God
 - v. And, if you don't have God to rely on, you are truly overwhelmed!
- d. God provides us with the answer to being overwhelmed – being overjoyed

III. Overjoyed

- a. Rejoice always (1 Thessalonians 5:16)
- b. A state of well-being
- c. That seems to stand in stark contrast with Paul's suffering – and our suffering as well
- d. Our 'state of well-being' is not physical, but spiritual
 - i. 2 Corinthians 4:16–18 (ESV); ¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
 - ii. Romans 8:17–18 (ESV); ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. ¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
 - iii. We rejoice, we count it all joy because our spirit, our eternal soul has life everlasting in the very presence of God
- e. It is the Gospel that provides our joy
 - i. The Gospel is the power of God for our salvation
 - ii. It is the Gospel that provides our eternal life
 - iii. Romans 6:22–23 (ESV); ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - iv. It is the Gospel that teaches how to live lives centered on love and service

- v. Colossians 1:9–14 (ESV); ⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
- f. We should be overjoyed with all aspects of our lives, giving thanks to the Father in every circumstance

IV. O Come to the Altar

- a. Are you overwhelmed? Jesus is calling
- b. Come today, there is no reason to wait – Jesus is calling
- c. Bring your sorrows and trade them for Joy – Jesus is calling