

TRUTH FOR TODAY

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HOW SHORT MY TIME IS #3

David Cassidy, teenage idol and pop icon of the 1970's, arose to stardom in meteoric fashion. Son of singer and actor Jack Cassidy, it was perhaps only natural that he would also pursue a career in singing and acting. Cassidy landed one of the leading roles in *The Partridge Family*, an ABC network sitcom, primarily because of his looks. When producers also discovered he could sing, they knew they had a hit show on their hands. And yes, I myself was/am a fan. Cassidy, in addition to acting, had a successful solo career in music. He became an instant drawing card, selling out concerts at arenas around the world. At one time, membership in his official fan club exceeded that of Elvis Presley and the Beatles.¹

Cassidy was no exception to the Biblical rule that it is “*appointed unto men once to die*” (*Hebrews 9:27*); he passed from this life a little over a year ago on November 21, 2017 of liver failure. His daughter, Katie, was at his bedside at his passing, and revealed her father’s final words before his death: “*so much wasted time.*”²

What a sobering thought and honest admission - for one who had achieved fame, stardom, money, success and the like - to bemoan with his last breath how much time he had wasted! Perhaps we would do well to take a look back at our lives and reflect upon how much time we too have squandered!

Cassidy’s true life account is a relevant illustration of our current discussion on life’s precious commodity of time and how short it is - much too short to waste! In our study thus far, we have noted how we view and treat time, that such is often a matter of perspective, and some Biblical characters who remembered the brevity of time. Now, let’s look at the flip side, and consider some:

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS WHO IGNORED THE BREVIDITY OF TIME

Felix, to whom we are first introduced in Scripture in Acts chapter 23. His is a “rages to riches” story. Felix grew up as a slave, but eventually rose to a prominent position in the Roman government. In A.D. 52, he was made procurator (governor) of Judea. He was the first slave in history to become governor of a Roman province, and would hold this position for seven years, until Festus succeeded him.³ His wife was **Drusilla** (actually wife #3), daughter of Herod Agrippa I. When she was sixteen, Felix, with the help of a magician, persuaded her to divorce her husband and marry him! Felix married Drusilla out of ulterior motives - he hoped to win the favor of the Jews, as she was a Jew.

Needless to say, Felix was a wicked man. The historian Tacitus observed: “*He practiced every kind of cruelty and lust, wielding the power of a king with the instincts of a slave.*” He would hire thugs to murder his closest opponents; he was ruthless, conniving, and murderous - and is the one before whom Paul stood to be judged as of Acts 24.⁴

And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ (Acts 24:24).

Both Felix and Drusilla now have the opportunity - perhaps for the first time in their lives - to hear the truth, and Paul wasn't one to waste an opportunity:

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee (Acts 24:25).

The text says Paul “*reasoned*” with Felix, using the powerful Word of God, telling the

governor the truths of the Gospel. As Paul preached, two of the areas of his sermon served as a direct confrontation to the life of Felix. Paul's message included "*righteousness*," because Felix was not a righteous man, and "*temperance*" or "*self-control*." Paul's message was aimed directly at the hearts of these two individuals, as both lived lives of open sin and terrible wickedness. Felix had lost his dignity, morality, and decency; Drusilla her decency, modesty and purity. Here was a couple morally bankrupt and thoroughly evil. However, as bad as they were, they could have been saved by the Lord. The blood of the Lamb of God could have washed every sin they had ever committed away. Certainly they would have some major changing to do, including getting out of an adulterous marriage, but they could be saved. No one is beyond saving who will by faith obey Jesus!

Paul drove his lesson home by speaking of "*judgment to come*." This ungodly couple, along with the rest of humanity, will face the righteous, sin-hating God in judgment unless repentance was/is forthcoming. Paul's message had an immediate impact, as Felix "*trembled*" or became terrified. We are told that Roman rulers prided themselves in their ability to hide their emotions, yet here is a reaction Felix could not hide. Why was Felix afraid? Perhaps, for the first time, he understood the ramifications of being a lost sinner, and facing the wrath of a holy and righteous God. He came to see that he was in serious trouble with the God of heaven!

But, unfortunately and predictably, Felix ignored the brevity of time that he had. He trembled, but also procrastinated, telling Paul when he had a "*convenient season*" he would call for Paul. In essence, he's telling Paul "when I find time" I'll call. "This is a matter I need to take care of, but not now. There's plenty of time to deal with that."

The Biblical record doesn't tell us, but history says neither this man, nor his wife, ever

found the time to respond to Paul's message - time ran out on them both. Two years after hearing Paul, Felix was called back to Rome to face Nero for his brutality and harsh ways. He was discredited and removed from power. There is no indication he ever became a Christian. Drusilla died in A.D. 79 when Mount Vesuvius erupted and buried the city of Pompeii. It appears she too died lost in her sins.⁵ Though neither realized it at the time, how short their time was! As the song goes, "There's danger and death in delay." A Spanish proverb says, "The road of by and by leads to the house of never." And another, "One of these days is none of these days."⁶

The rich fool (Luke 12:13 - 21) is another who ignored the brevity of life. His profession was farming, no sin in that. One year he had a bumper crop which made him fabulously wealthy - no sin in that. His problem was selfishness and greed; he gave no thought to others or of his responsibility to God:

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater: and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry (Luke 12:17-19).

The farmer with newfound wealth now has his own selfish life planned out in detail. He thought he had years of pleasure ahead in which he could "live it up," that he had all the time in the world. "I've made my bundle, I can retire and live in the lap of luxury the rest of my days!"

Little did he know that very evening he would have an unexpected visitor - the angel of death would come calling:

But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee:

then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:20-21).

The foolish farmer's death was that very night - all his money could not lengthen his life a second. He found out the hard way just how short his time was!

REASONS WHY WE SHOULD REMEMBER THE BREVITY OF TIME

Only God knows how long we have to live; Scripture says our days are numbered. Man is of "few days" and the number of his months is "with God" (Job 14:1, 4). That being the case, our opportunities for service are limited. Since our time is short, we should not waste it, but invest it in the eternal.

Serving God is a wise investment of what time we have. Putting God first (Matthew 6:33) takes time, as does worshiping Him and assembling with the saints (Hebrews 10:25). Studying the inspired Word is a smart use of our time (1 Timothy 4:13), as is seeking the lost (Matthew 28:19-20). Estimates are that two people die per second, sixty million per year.⁷ One wonders how many of that number die lost in sin?

Restoring the erring (Galatians 6:1-2) and edifying the saved (Romans 14:19) are certainly not wastes of time, but well worth our time and effort to build up Christ's body. Strengthening our families also is responsible use of what time we have (Ephesians 5:25; 6:1-2).

May God help us to so live that we make wise use of our limited time - that we'll keep in mind how short our time actually is!

Wayne Cox

ENDNOTES

1. davidcassidy.com.
2. "David Cassidy's daughter reveals his final words" abcnews.go.com.

3. William Barclay, The Daily Bible Study Series: The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 167-168.
4. Simon J. Kistemaker, New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles, p. 826.
5. “Marcus Antonius Felix” livius.org.
6. H. G. Bohn quotegarden.com.
7. www.ecology.com/birth-death-rates/.

GOSPEL MEETING

June 28 - 30, 2019

Mel Futrell, speaker

VERONA CHURCH OF CHRIST
