TITLE: Velvet slippers and silk pajamas

COMPLACENCY

TEXT: Phil. 3:7-15; Heb. 12:2-3; Phil. 2:12-13

INTRODUCTION: How many of you own silk pajamas or velvet slippers? I don’t own either but in researching these items I found that silk Pajamas can be bought from anywhere between 75.00 and 350.00 dollars. Velvet slippers from between 52.00 to 150.00. Both out of my price range for sleepwear…

This morning I want to talk about what may be the #1 killer of faith and a fruitful Christian life and that is complacency.

Have you ever found yourself complacent?

**com·pla·cen·cy *n.* 1. A feeling of contentment or self-satisfaction, especially when coupled with an unawareness of danger or trouble. 2. An instance of contented self-satisfaction.**

There may be some situations in life where it is ok to be complacent, being contented or satisfied with, but not when coupled with an unawareness of danger or trouble.

But as far as our faith and our relationship with Christ go complacency can be a real killer of our faith that can lead to great trouble and even danger.

Harry Emerson Fosdick is credited with the observation that history is filled with the sound of wooden shoes climbing up the stairs and velvet slippers walking down.

The famous jockey Eddie Arcado made the same point when he confessed that he found it really tough to get up at 5 am to ride and exercise horses once he started wearing silk Pajamas.

In other words, after he had become successful as a jockey and was enjoying all the prosperity of that success, once he was at the top, he found it harder to motivate himself to go out and make the sacrifices that he made to get him there.. He found that it was easy to become complacent.

Humanly speaking, the prize tends to go to those who want it the most and work the hardest for it.

But often comfort can take over creativity. Security becomes a stronger passion than challenge.

Velvet slippers and silk pajamas don’t bring to mind such people as Daniel Boone or Lewis and Clark or Thomas Edison, do they?

Some historians have claimed that the Roman Empire fell because its people took too many baths. It fell because the people grew complacent. Contented in self-satisfaction—their comfort is what eventually led to their demise…

The sound of wooden shoes on the stairs can still be heard all over the world. Tragically, there is somewhat of a haunting feeling in the United States that we have peaked. We have reached our target, our end.

Most 19 year olds, upon applying for their first job expect not to make less than $20.00 per hour and get 5 weeks paid vacation and a lucrative retirement plan.

A senior pastor of a large Church tells of a recent seminary graduate whom he was interviewing for a ministry staff position and the young man made it clear that he would only work a 5 day, 40 hour week. And any evening work would have to be compensated for by time off during the day.

A variety of conclusions could be drawn from our present subject, however, this much is for certain: **Nothing stays won!** You don’t work and struggle for years to get a management position with your company and then when you arrive just sit back and put on the velvet slippers and silk pajamas and stop working at it….if you expect to retain that position!

The runner who gets up early to hone and improve his skill to compete and finally wins the race doesn’t stay in that place of a winner if they become complacent once they arrive and stop working at it.

It is always easier for people and nations to struggle then it is for them to arrive….

The same is true for us as a Christian in our life and relationship with God.

Out of the depths of our trials we cry out to God…but from the heights of success, it’s hard to see the need for prayer.

When life makes it easy to believe in God, it is hard to believe in God….

Part of this comes from our having to deal with people and our own attitudes at times that velvet slippers and silk pajamas are a sign, in and of themselves, that God is pleased with us and wants us to enjoy a time of ease.

Life does not always yield its secrets to the most gifted or the most talented or the best looking, but it will to those who are persistent, committed, and willing to work and not give up too soon.

Work is a therapy; struggle can be the vehicle through which lifestyle changes come about.

When life is a challenge, reaching a goal is much more appreciated.

As a Christian, there is never a time when we have arrived. For the believer, life is more like a marathon then it is a sprint. It is more about going the distance then it is just arriving at a finish line.

The Apostle Paul understood this very well. He has this to say about the subject…

**Philippians 3:7 - 15 (NIV) 7But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.****8What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ****9and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.****10I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,****11and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.**

**12Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.**

**13Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,****14I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**

**15All of us who are mature should take such a view of things.**

Paul never put on the velvet slippers and silk pajamas!

While in this life Paul never considered himself to have arrived!

He said: **13Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**

Paul was not writing this epistle as a young Christian. Someone who was new in the faith and had a long way to go…

It is believed that this letter was written by Paul when he was in prison in Rome somewhere between 59 & 61 AD.

Paul was an old man! He had lived a committed life faithful to Christ for many, many years..

It was after he had finished his missionary journeys and was in the autumn or even the winter of his life that he said:

**12Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**

Paul never thought of himself as having arrived!

For Paul there was always one more mountain to climb, one more valley to cross, one more soul to save… He never just sat back and put on the velvet slippers and silk pajamas thinking that he had finally arrived.

He never allowed himself to become complacent in his faith.

Why? Because, I believe, Paul knew very well that complacency kills faith! Complacency breeds inaction! Complacency would weaken his resolve to get the job done, and when the job is snatching men from the fire of hell and delivering them safe to God through sharing the gospel message of Jesus Christ, the stakes are too high to allow oneself to become complacent.

So even in the twilight of his life Paul could make the statement……**Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**

Paul said: **I press on toward the goal to win the prize!**

Press on **= *dee-o'-ko***

**to *pursue* (literally or figuratively); by implication to *persecute:*—**

**A Synonym for persecute is to hound or harass!**

Toward**= *kat-ah'* Excellence or by any means!**

The prize that Paul is talking about is the prize of Heaven! The prize of eternity with Christ in His fulfilled Kingdom!

What Paul is saying is that he is pursuing, even persecuting, hounding, and striving toward this prize by and with all means possible.

He is determined to live excellently in order to win this prize God has laid before him.

D.L. Moody and his son Will boarded the ocean liner Spree at Southampton, England, on November 23, 1892. Moody had just finished revival meetings in London, including eight days of services in Spurgeon's Tabernacle, and now he was bound for New York. Foremost in his mind, besides seeing his family and students again, was the great campaign he was planning for the Chicago World's Exhibition the following year. On the third morning of the trip, passengers were startled by a loud crash and a shock going through the ship. Will hurried out to the deck. He quickly returned to say that the shaft of the vessel was broken. "The ship's sinking, he told his father.

The disabled ship, carrying hundreds of passengers, drifted helplessly away from the sea lanes. The vessel was taking on so much water that its pumps were useless. The crew prepared lifeboats and provisions, but they realized the small boats would soon perish in the rough seas. So they mustered passengers into a main saloon and waited, hoping to be discovered by a passing vessel.

On the second evening of their torturous wait, Moody led a prayer service that calmed many of the passengers, including himself. Although he was sure of heaven, the thought of his work ending and of never again seeing his family had unsettled him. One biographer includes another angle to the incident. Prior to the trip, a doctor had found irregularities in Moody's heart and urged him to ease his schedule; if Moody did not, he would die early. Moody determined to slow down, and while sailing homeward, decided to scale down plans for the World's Fair campaign.

During the crisis at sea, however, Moody perceived that God confronted him with a decision: Would Moody press on with all his might to deliver the gospel or would he be cautious, allowing fear to diminish his fervor? Facing death, Moody decided that if God would spare his life, he would work with "all the power that He would give me." And if he should die this year or next, that was in God's hands.

The following morning the steamer Lake Huron discovered the stranded ship and towed it one thousand miles to safety. D.L. Moody pressed on with his World's Fair campaign, six months of unceasing labor, from which, in Moody's estimate, "millions ... heard the simple gospel" and "thousands [were] genuinely converted to Christ." Moody died in the midst of his work-seven years later.

This is pressing on toward the goal to win the prize!

Moody had reason to sit back and put on the velvet slippers and silk pajamas and take life easy but if he would have done so who knows how many of those thousands that were saved at the World’s fair that year would never have come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and as a result would have spent their eternity in Hell separated from Gods love forever.

Moody, like the Apostle Paul, understood the cost of compliancy in the life of a Christian.

But it is easy to become complacent, isn’t it?

To come to that place of saying I have done enough! Now is the time for me to sit back and start to relax a little! Enjoy the good life! Start to enjoy the fruits of my labor!

This may be ok as far as life in general goes…I mean if you have worked hard all of your life and it comes time to retire then we should be able to sit back and enjoy life a little….

But to become complacent as a Christian, to start to become complacent in our relationship with God, can prove to be fatal to us spiritually….

Compliancy is a killer of faith!

I think that is why Satan uses it against us so much. To try to get us to become complacent in our relationship with God.

Two statements that have always stuck with me over the years where made by too different senior Christians. Two older Believers who I have learned a lot from over the years both now deceased.

Both statements were made late in their lives…

One once said that they didn’t feel the need to go to Sunday school or Bible Studies anymore because they knew it all anyway….They had heard it and even taught it much of their lives…

The other person once said at a Bible Study how much they enjoyed being there and that there wasn’t a time that they didn’t learn something new!

What a contrast in statements!

The contrast is between that of complacency and a striving to press on toward the goal to win the prize..

Bill Hybels once said: *You can do more through a handful of totally devoted believers than through a churchful of halfhearted ones.*

When he was in his mid-80's, the great cellist Pablo Casals kept practicing his instrument for four or five hours each day. Someone once asked him why, at his age, he still worked so hard. "*Because," he said, "I have a notion that I am making some progress."*

This is the attitude that we need to have as a Christian…

Why do we keep on pressing on? Why do we continue, regardless of our age or how long that we have been a Christian, press on toward the goal to win the prize?

Because I have a notion that I am making some progress!

I have not arrived but I am getting better, getting closer to that goal!

I am not there but I am closer then when I first begun the journey!

The Apostle Paul goes on to tell us this in**:**

**Hebrews 12:2 - 3 (NIV) 1Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.****2Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.****3Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

One word that could never be used to describe Jesus is complacent!

Jesus fought the fight of faith all the way to the cross! And it is Him who we are to fix are eyes upon as we run this race of life…

**2Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

We have talked about this before that how God has enabled us through the Holy Spirit to actually live a sanctified life free from sins dominion… That the only way that we can live a life free from sin is by keeping our eyes fixed upon Jesus!

To fix ones eyes upon Jesus is to lock our eyes upon Him. To so fixate our attention upon Him that we see nothing else!

Example: Fix your eyes on the face of Christ in this picture this morning…not just a general gaze but fix your eyes upon His face...try to see the most intimate detail….

When you do you will see little else!

That is what we are called to do spiritually as a Christian if it is our desire is to press on toward the goal to win the prize!

To so focus on Jesus that we see little else! That we make Jesus our top priority! That we make His mission our mission!

To come to the place that men such as David Livingstone came to that enabled him to say: *I will place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of Christ.*

When the Ritz-Carlton Hotels won the Malcolm Baldridge National Quality Award, Charles Swindoll had the opportunity to congratulate the owner of that outstanding organization, Mr. William Johnson, a good friend who lives in Atlanta, Georgia. Swindoll said: In typical humility and his wonderful "Southern drawl," Bill gave others the credit. He added that now that they had won this prestigious honor, they would need to work even harder to earn the respect that came with it. "Quality," he said, "is a race with no finish line."

He is correct.

Competitive excellence requires 100% all of the time. If you doubt that, try maintaining excellence by setting your standards at 92%. Or even 95%.

People figure they're doing fine so long as they get somewhere near it. Excellence gets reduced to acceptable, and before long, acceptable doesn't seem worth the sweat if you can get by with adequate. After that, mediocrity is only a breath away.

The same is true with the Christian life. We need to strive for excellence! God didn’t say for us to strive to become 92% Holy or even 95% Holy…God said be ye Holy because I am Holy!

God set the standard for Holiness as Holy as He is Holy! That is 100% Holy!

We may very well never meet that standard while in this life but that is not the point!

The point is in the striving to reach it! The point is in making the effort!

The point is that the only way that it is possible is for us to keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus and press on toward that goal!

Paul says in:

**Philippians 2:12 -13 (NIV)**

**12—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.**

This is how we work out our salvation with fear and trembling and in the process fulfill Gods will and plan for our lives and the redemption of the world in which we live!

To keep our eyes firmly fixed upon Jesus. Making Jesus the motivation of all of our action.

In June l955, Winston Churchill, who was then near the end of his life, was asked to give a commencement address at a British University. At this time he was physically infirm; he had to be helped to the podium. Then he held on to the podium for what seemed an endless amount of time.

He stood with his head down but then finally raised that great leonine head of his, and the voice that years before had called Britain back from the brink of destruction sounded publicly for the last time in history.

"Never give up. Never give up. Never give up." With that, Churchill turned and went back to his seat. There was silence, and then, as if one person, the whole audience rose to applaud him, because he was a man whose life and words were together.

Church, if you ever feel tempted to put on the velvet slippers and silk pajamas as far as you faith in Christ is concerned then remember the words of Churchill…Never give up…never give up…never give up…

For at the end of the race there awaits a prize for the faithful…. The prize of heaven and an eternity of fellowship with God.

This morning, have you allowed complacency to slip into your life and relationship with the Lord? Have you started to wane in your desire to please God and be used by Him to reach the lost that are in your part of the world?

If so then I encourage you to hear the message from the great cloud of witness that Paul speaks about in Hebrews chapter 12….The message that their lives speak forth to us today…Church, Never give up! Never give up! Never give up!

**Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, fix your eyes upon Jesus and then simply press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called you heavenward in Christ Jesus.**