

Putting it Off

DECADES AGO, DURING MY FORMATIVE early adult years when I was selling cameras in retail establishments, we referred to them as "be-backs." I'm sure you've met them—in fact, you have no doubt been one yourself from time to time.

The salesman has invested ten, fifteen minutes, perhaps half an hour with the customer. The critical moment arrives, there is a thoughtful pause by the one standing on the public side of the glass-topped counter, and then he says, "I need to think about it—but *I'll be back*." If the salesman is inexperienced and still wet behind the ears, he glows confidently at his fellow employees. "He'll be back. I just *know* it," he assures them. And those who are older and wiser nod their heads and offer only a wan, knowing smile. "Right," they reply flatly.

But, of course, he doesn't come back. It was just an artful way for the customer to back out of the negotiations. Or he said it in earnest, but a few minutes later changed his mind or found a better deal down the street. In any case he does not come back, and the salesman does not get his sale—or his commission.

I was reminded of those cobwebbed days of yore last weekend at our church's Craft Day, when my good wife and I were selling her homemade breads. Many would buy on the spot, but a few said, "I'll be back." Well, some did, and some didn't.

"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. But many *who are* first will be last; and *the* last, first."

Matthew 19:29-30

There are a lot of "be-backs" sitting in church pews. First there are those who do not yet have a relationship with Christ, and keep telling Him, "I'm not

ready yet. Sounds like a pretty good pitch, and I like the price, but the time isn't quite right. Don't worry, though; I'll be back."

Right.

Sometimes they come back, sometimes they don't. Many wait too long to come back and close the deal, or find a "better deal" down the street, and "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," their last chance has suddenly disappeared.

And it is too late.

Then there are those who do know Him, but like to procrastinate when it comes to nurturing their relationship with Christ. They spend a few happy minutes with Him in the church service, singing the songs and chatting with their fellow parishioners. But when they are challenged to go beyond the superficial, to dig beneath the fragile surface of their faith, they often mutter something like, "Yeah, that sounds good. Sounds like a good idea. Tell ya what—let me think about it a while and I'll get back to you. But don't worry—I'll be back."

Right.

Sometimes they do, and sometimes they don't.

The correct answer is not "maybe," or "I'll think about it," or even "I *promise* I'll be back," but a simple, direct and immediate, "Yes!"

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

James 1:22-25

