

The Greatest Scoundrel in Government Who Called for the Gospel Preacher

by Ian Paisley

The sermon highlights the consequences of rejecting God's offer of mercy and the importance of hearing the gospel before it's too late.

Duration: 30:16

Scripture: Acts 24:10-12, Acts 24:24-25, Acts 24:27

Topics: "Delayed Salvation", "Godly Righteousness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses a court case between Felix and Paul. Felix, a powerful and respected man in the world, is contrasted with Paul, who is chained and considered a slave. Despite their different positions, it is Paul who stands firm in his faith and righteousness. When Paul preaches about righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix is struck with fear and trembles. However, instead of repenting, Felix chooses to ignore the gospel and continue in his evil ways. The sermon emphasizes the importance of not delaying salvation and warns against the folly of rejecting God's truth.

Transcript

We're going to turn in the Holy Scriptures to a portion in Acts chapter 24, the twenty-fourth chapter of the book of the Acts. You'll find authorized versions of the Holy Scripture in your pew. Pick them up and turn over to the book of the Acts.

We have the first four Gospels in the New Testament, and then we come to the book of the Acts. And we're reading at chapter 24, and we're reading from verse 10. Paul before Felix, the Roman governor.

Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, because that thou mayest understand that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city. Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

For this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, I so worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets, and of hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And

herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men. Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation and offering, whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude nor with tumult.

Who ought to have been here before thee and object, if they have ought, or else let these see him here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, when I stood before the council. Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question by you this day. And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the utmost of your matter.

And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, to let him of liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him. 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. 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. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him. Wherefore he sent for him the optimizer and communed with him.

But after two years, Portius Festus came into Felix's room. And Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound. Amen.

And God will bless the reading of his infallible books to our hearts and seed it with his divine and blessed seed. I take the promised Holy Ghost, the blessed power of Pentecost, to fill me to the uttermost. I take, thank God, he undertakes for me.

And the people of God said, Amen. You may be seated. I want to read with you two verses from this twenty-fourth chapter of the book of Acts.

They are verses twenty-four and twenty-five. And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Priscilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 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. I have named the title of this gospel sermon, the greatest scoundrel in government who called for the gospel preacher. The greatest scoundrel in government in that age was this German, this Roman head of Caesar's army.

A cruel, brutal, licentious profligate. But he called to Paul, what to do? To hear him concerning his faith in Christ. Paul preached, endured with the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

And before long, this vile sinner, Felix, was trembling. And he cut the sermon of Paul quickly to an end. And he said, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

John Bunyan, of Pilgrim's Progress fame, wrote a book called The Life and Death of Mr. Badman. It was suggested at that time that Mr. Badman was none other than Judge Jeffreys. The bloody monster who, in the pay of James II, became the killer of multitudes in the Monmouth Rebellion.

But without doubt, Felix, there's no controversy about it, was a Mr. Very Badman in the days of the apostles. Let us look for a moment at his character. The character of this man has been left by the

penmanship of all the historians of the day.

Josephus, the great Jewish historian, and his Roman contemporaries, and Luke, the author of the Gospel, all bore witness to Felix and the wickedness of his character. He was a man unprincipled in the manner in which he accompanied the goals upon which he had set his heart. He was ready alike for personal ambition to use any rule that he could use.

Whether it was bribery, corruption, falsehood, assassination, or any other form of torment and cruelty, he was a sensualist, a profligate. He was a coward. He was not insensible to the condemnation of his conscience.

He sat there and listened to the preaching of the apostle Paul, but refused to repent of his well-known filth and of his well-known wickedness. He hoped that Paul's friends would bribe him, so he went and sent for Paul the offender and communed with him. Felix was a reprobate because Paul gave him no gold when he left office, summoned back to Rome to answer for his many crimes.

Felix saw to it that Paul would suffer, so Paul remained a prisoner in chains. While Felix left for Rome to stand trial. So much for his character.

What about his convictions? Having glanced at his character, let's take a sight of them. The fact that one day he would stand before his maker, and would be inspected by God's omnipotent and flaming eye, made him tremble. Acts 24, verse 25.

And as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, judgment to come, Felix trembled and answered, Go thy way, for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. He could not bear the bitterness of an evil conscience, stung by the gospel truth that Paul was preaching. But he soon returned to pursuit of his evil doings.

He escaped to hide behind the cover of what he called a convenient time. The convenient time was really a more sinful time. When without a troubled conscience, he could plunge back into the filth of a reprobate heart and reprobate habits.

His sending for Paul was but a smokescreen to help him as he sought the damning bribe from his prisoner. Let's look at another man who was just as vile, the jailer of Philippi. Both these wicked sinners trembled before the preaching of the Philippian jailer.

Trembled, but he yielded to the gospel. He refused to stick to his sins as Felix did. But rather he cried out, What must I do to be saved? Felix dismissed Paul, but the Philippian jailer clung to Paul and obeyed his exhortation.

Felix rejoined his evil club of fellow sinners. While in contrast, the Philippian jailer was baptized and joined the communion of the church. Felix went to hell with the woman which history records he so sinfully lived.

The Philippian jailer went to heaven, but he took his whole family with him. Having summarized Felix's condemnation and damnation, let me call you to reflect upon the lesson we need to hear and hearken to in this solemn historical narrative. Circumstances which you did not plan have brought you face to face in this meeting house tonight with the eternal truth of the everlasting saving gospel of Christ.

Felix did not plan meeting Paul, but in the providence of God he met the greatest human preacher of the first century. Felix was a scoundrel, but in the providence of God he had the opportunity to hear the words of eternal life. He was a fevered man.

He was a privileged sinner. He was a whosoever whom Christ could see. Oh the mercy of God, but Felix had no regard for it.

He was a merciless brute, but he found no mercy although it was offered to him. He heard the word which could have made him wise unto salvation by faith in Christ, but he turned his back on it. Here in this short court case, two men stand face to face.

One was Felix. By the standards of the world he was a fevered man. The other was Paul.

By the standards of the world he was a flayed man. Felix is clothed in courtly robes. Paul is tied by chains.

Felix is on the throne. Paul is in the throne. Felix was commended.

Paul was condemned. Felix was applauded. Paul was attacked.

Felix was the master. Paul was the slave. Felix was struck with fear.

Paul was strengthened. Felix trembled. Paul was the master of the situation.

Felix chose the evil. Paul chose excellency. Felix was trapped.

Paul was triumphant. Felix was selfish. But let us not forget that one day Paul was just as wicked a sinner as Felix was.

Poor, lost, hell deserving, murderous wretch Paul was. On his own confession he labels himself the chief of sinners. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abide.

There was a time when Paul trembled as Felix did. On the Damascus road when he met his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we read in Acts chapter 9, verse 6, And he trembling. Paul's trembling led him to heaven.

While Felix's unbelief trembling, Felix we have enshrouded in darkness. While the apostle Paul was enshrouded. Annas told him of the Lord.

And the Lord told Annas to tell the trembling Paul that God was going to do something to him. That he appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest. And it sent me that thou mightest receive my sight and be filled.

And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scaled. And he received sight forthwith and arose and was baptized. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the conversion of Saul of Tarshish.

Was to shake the whole Roman world. It was to be stamped with great suffering. But with great success.

What path are you going to walk tonight? The path of success or the path of the reprobate Felix? What a difference it would have been if Felix had followed Paul to Christ's cross. But alas he followed Satan the deceiver to hell. We leave him giving vent in a lost eternity to the sighs from hell and the groans of the

damned.

We would pray with Charles Wesley. Is here a soul that knows thee not? Nor feels his want of thee? A stranger to the blood which bought his pardon on the tree? Convince him now of unbelief. His desperate state explained.

And fill his heart with sacred grief and penitential pain. Speak with that voice that wakes the dead. And bid this sleep arise.

And bid his guilty conscience dread the death that never died. Paul was an old time faithful preacher. He was given one opportunity.

He took it to the full. And he preached to Felix until he trembled. But he trembled as an almost persuaded man.

But afterwards as an altogether damned man. His theme was a telling theme. Felix was the target.

He turned the incestuous Felix inside out. He reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come. Every stab of the sword of the spirit which he wielded touched the quick of Felix hardened and darkened conscience.

Paul had him disarmed and trembling through the power of the preaching word. But Felix stopped the sermon. Crying out some more convenient day on thee.

He had his opportunity. But he cast it away. And by so doing sealed his soul for the everlasting burnings of everlasting hell fire.

The convenient day never came. Paul went in his way to heaven. Felix went in his way to hell.

The faithful preacher had delivered his soul. The faithless Felix had sealed his doom. By the side of Felix sat Drusilla.

Who was she? She was a Jewess. This Drusilla was the daughter of the great king Herod Agrippa. She was a woman noted for her beauty but for her unbridled uncleanness.

She had been once allied to Antiochus who upon the death of Herod refused to marry her. She then married Assisus the king of the Ammonites. Who though a heathen was so fond of her that he submitted to the most rigorous rights of the Jewish religion in order to obtain her hand in marriage.

His love was but ill-requited. For the little time she deserted him. And at the instigation of Felix and was at the time of Paul's address living as a wife of this lascivious man.

We may easily understand then why Paul fixing his stern eye on Drusilla. Reason concerning her immoral lusts. Publicly rebuke both her and Felix for their shameless lusts in which they were publicly living.

And then you may imagine since there was now a court sitting and Felix was a judge and Paul was a prisoner. How strikingly appropriate it was for Paul to preach upon the judgment to come. That sermon of Paul's was a pre-dealing of the great judgment day.

When both Felix and Drusilla would be parted from one another forever. To bear the whiplash of eternal judgment in the place called hell. With hardened hearts they both left the courthouse that day not only

doomed but bound.

Felix had made a colossal mistake as did his vile partner. They both reckoned on time that was not theirs. They trusted in what would never come.

Remember this the young may die but the old must die. To die in your youth is death before the fight really begins. But to die in your old age is to die in the height of the battle.

The old man who puts off salvation is the greatest fool of all. A grey headed man who goes to hell rejecting the Son of God is the fool of all. Listen tonight dear sinner friend.

Don't listen to the devil's lie. Listen. Don't listen to that whisper time enough yet.

I am reminded of the words of God in Proverbs chapter 1. Because I have called and ye have refused. I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded it. But ye have said it not by counsel and would none of my reproof.

I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation.

And your destruction cometh as a whirlwind. When distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then thou shalt seek me early but they will not find me.

For that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would have none of my counsel. They despised all my reproof.

Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way. And be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them.

And the prosperity of fools. But listen to the last of that chapter in Proverbs 1. But whosoever hearteneth unto me shall dwell safely from fear. What a plea.

What a promise. What a peace. Is that plea yours? Is that promise yours? Is that peace yours? Lay these things to your heart dear sinner friend.

Remember God judges both. May you not be found with Felix and Drusilla. On the road and doom of hell.

But may you be found with Paul the apostle. And peace and happiness. Amen.

Let's bow our heads. Heavenly Father bless the solemn preaching and warning note of the gospel. Write it in the innards of men's hearts and minds and souls.

May they not escape from it. May they not only tremble but may they turn and seek the Lord. And call upon Him.

Hear this our prayer. For Jesus' sake. And the people of God's sake.

Amen.

Source:

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