



Sermon Series Notes

“Conviction without Conversion” (Acts 24)

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Intro: Some Jews from the province of Asia have stirred up the crowd after seeing Paul at the temple in Jerusalem, assuming that he had taken Trophimus the Ephesian, an uncircumcised Gentile, into the temple area with him. This would have been a violation of Jewish law, and would have defiled the temple. This was a serious matter. So a mob forms, and they are beating Paul, intending to kill him. He is saved when some Roman soldiers show up on the scene. They arrest Paul, and while Paul is in custody, some Jews plot his assassination. But Paul's nephew learns of their plans, informs Uncle Paul, who tells him to inform the Roman commander. What follows is absolutely fascinating to me. Read 23:22-24. If it happened in our day Paul would have the best military escort and would be riding in a government issued bullet proof limo or SUV!

Acts 9:15-16...This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles **and their kings** and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.

I don't know how God does it without violating man's free will, but He somehow orchestrates the circumstances of our lives in order to fulfill His perfect will.

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

What is God's ultimate purpose for us in this life?

Acts 1:8...and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea & Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

1 Tim.2:4...who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Shadrach, Meshech & Abednego went into a fiery furnace, but in doing so became a tremendous witness to King Nebuchadnezzar, and the people of ancient Babylon.

Daniel was thrown into a lion's den, and as a result became a great witness to King Darius, and the people of the world in that day (Daniel 6:25-27).

Gal.4:13 It was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you.

See II Tim.2:8-10

In chapters 24-26 of Acts Paul will stand before three powerful Gentile leaders and testify for Jesus Christ. God sends Paul to them because he loves them. They are all pagan to the core, as we will see. But as Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor." And, "The son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

II Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Note Acts 26:17b-18, expound; Those who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are spiritually blind. They are also citizens of the kingdom of darkness.

Col.1:12-13...giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son...

II Tim.2:26...that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

God wants to forgive us of all our sins, but he can only do so if we repent and receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

So, Paul is sent safely to Caesarea to stand trial before Governor Felix.

24:1-2 That's a "suck up" if there ever was one! Felix was a terrible ruler. More on that in a bit.

24:25 One translation says Felix "trembled." It's the same word used of the women who entered the empty tomb of Jesus and saw two angels (Luke 24:4-5). It's the same word used to describe the disciples' response to the resurrected Jesus walking through the wall and greeting them. They thought he was a ghost! (Luke 24:36-37).

Why was Felix so afraid? Because he knew he was guilty, and he believed Paul's words about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come. He knew he needed forgiveness, and Paul tells him that Jesus is the answer (v.24).

We are not given the details of Paul's discourse, but based on the Scriptures, and of course Paul's NT letters, I can make a pretty good guess at what it would have been like.

Did Paul perhaps recite the Ten Commandments? Paul writes in Romans 3:20 that through the law we become conscious of our sin.

Isn't it interesting that we have government leaders in America who don't want the Ten Commandments publicly displayed? Could it have something to do with not wanting to be confronted with our sin? No other gods before me, adultery, false testimony, murder, stealing, covetousness.

John the Baptist said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother Philip's wife." This was intended to bring conviction, that he might repent and receive forgiveness through Christ. Rom.3:23; 6:23.

Self-control

- Titus 2:11-14...the grace of God has appeared to all me. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions...
- Self-control in regard to resisting sin and living a righteous life is evidence of relationship with God; Joseph and Potiphar's wife, etc.
- See Acts 24:16
- Felix does not have a clear conscience

The judgment to come

- Heb.9:27
- The Great White Throne Judgment (see Rev.20:11-15)
- Eccl.3:11; God has placed within every human being a knowledge that death is not the end of life, that we will live forever somewhere.

One of the lessons we glean from this text is Paul's willingness to speak truth, not matter Felix's response, no matter what the cost in doing so. It takes courage to speak truth, but truth is the only thing that will really help anyone. God is not seeker sensitive, he is truth sensitive. The prophets of the OT spoke truth, and most of the time their message was rejected. Many of them suffered greatly, even to the point of death.

Hosea 9:7 The days of punishment are coming, the days of reckoning are at hand. Let Israel know this. Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired person a maniac. (see v.8)

That's the way I was looked at when a few years ago I lovingly encouraged a sales attendant at International Mall to stop living in sin with her live in boyfriend. I was shocked to be treated the same way by a relative of mine when I confronted them about living in sin with her live in boyfriend.

See I Kings 22; Isa.30:8-13

My job is not to change people's hearts. I cannot do that, as much as I sometimes wish I could. My job is not to save anyone. I cannot do that. My job is to be a witness for Christ, to stand for and proclaim truth, in hopes that people might repent, find forgiveness in Christ, and be saved.

Pic of Antonius Felix

The historian Tacitus said Felix was cruel. His cruelty did him no favors with those he ruled. Under Felix's rule there was a breakdown of law and order, with armed hostility between rival factions of Jews. He used a dispute between the Jews & Syrians of Caesarea as a pretext to murder and plunder them. It was for this reason that Nero called him back to Rome and had him replaced by Porcius Festus.

History also, as well as our text, records for us that Felix loved bribes, so he obviously loved money. Paul wrote in I Tim.6:10 that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in Col.3:5 that greed is idolatry.

Jesus said that no one could serve God and money. And of course the tenth commandment forbids covetousness.

We also know from historical record that Felix was licentious. He was married three times. His first wife was named Drusilla, the daughter of Cleopatra II, (daughter of Mark Antony & Cleopatra). His second wife was Drusilla of Judea, daughter of Herod Agrippa I. She divorced her husband Gaius in order to marry Felix. Two years after the events of this chapter, she was on a shopping spree in Europe when Mt. Vesuvius exploded. She was caught in the lava of the volcano and died tragically. She was 21 years old. We know he married a third time but history has no details of this marriage. But we know he was an immoral man when it came to women.

And of course, he was a politician, and a very dishonest one. And despite the deep conviction and fear he experienced in response to Paul's words, he remained a dishonest politician. Felix resisted the Holy Spirit, and for years continued to resist the Holy Spirit.

Felix reminds me of another ruler of the Gentiles who repeatedly resisted the Holy Spirit. His name is Pilate. See John 18:33-38; 19:1-16; Matt.27:19, 24.

Heb.3 & 4