

“The Danger of Delay”
Acts 24:1-27
(Preached at Trinity, June 25, 2008)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. After Paul's arrest by the Romans he was taken for examination before the Sanhedrin. After Paul created a great division in the Sanhedrin over the issue of the resurrection the Romans were forced to return Paul to the Roman barracks. That night Paul received a revelation from God.
Acts 23:11 – “And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.”
2. Paul received great comfort from God. This was all ordained from God's hand. He had purposed that Paul would not only speak before the Jews, he would also speak before the Romans. And indeed it would come to pass. Paul would speak before the Roman Governor Felix, Governor Festus, and King Agrippa. The following chapters will cover Paul before these Roman officials.
3. We immediately see God's sovereign authority as He orchestrates the circumstances to accomplish His purpose. After Paul was removed from before the Sanhedrin a plot was devised by more than 40 assassins to murder Paul. After the plot was exposed the Roman captain commanded 470 Roman soldiers to give him safe passage to Caesarea. We can easily see God mightily working His plan.
4. In Caesarea Paul would stand before Felix the governor.
 - A. Felix whose full name was Marcus Antonius Felix was a former slave who gained influence through his brother Pallas. The Roman historian described him a most unflattering way, “He had the power of a king with the mind of a slave.”
 - B. He maintained order often through the use of brutality and cruelty and could easily be bribed. During his tenure crime increased greatly in Judea. His ineptitude led to his removal from office by Emperor Nero some two years after the events recorded in this chapter. .
5. Five days after Paul arrived at Caesarea the high priest Ananias came down with some of the elders of the Sanhedrin – they were continuing to seek his life. They brought with them a skilled orator by the name of Tertullus who brought the charges against Paul.
6. He began with flattering words designed to win the favor of Felix. Then he accused Paul of sedition against Rome, of violation of Jewish law, and of sacrilege. All of the charges were false. Their main motivation is exposed at the beginning of **Verse 5**
Acts 24:5 – “For we have found this man a pestilent *fellow*”
They considered Paul to be a plague.
7. Then Paul gave his defense claiming his innocence.
Acts 24:12-13 – “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: ¹³ Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.”

8. **Verses 22-27** provide us with the details surrounding the response of Felix to Paul's preaching.
- I. Felix was blessed to hear the Gospel
- A. Billions will never hear the Gospel
1. How many lived and died before Christ was born?
They perished in their sin
 2. Countless people have lived their lives not ever hearing the Gospel of Christ. Even today, there are millions of people who have not heard.
- B. It is a great blessing to hear the good news of salvation
1. It is by the mercy of God – But there is great accountability.
 2. Those who have not heard are still guilty and will still stand before God condemned – But how much sorer the punishment for those who have heard and yet hated Christ the more.
Luke 12:47-48 – “And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.⁴⁸ But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”
 3. A word to the young: You have been blessed to be born in a Christian home. Few have that privilege. God will hold you accountable.
- C. Felix was highly favored of God in having Paul bring him the Gospel
1. Paul preached the Gospel and Felix heard
Acts 24:22 – “And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of *that way*. . .”
 - a. Remember, “The Way” refers to Christianity
 - b. The Jews considered this heresy. Felix now had to make a determination for himself.
 2. He chooses to delay
Acts 24:22 – “he deferred them”
 - a. The word here is *ἀναβάλλομαι* – It means to delay or postpone
 - b. The KJV word here is good – he deferred.
 - c. During the Viet Nam war the military draft had a policy of deferment for college students. This meant you could postpone your service until you completed your education.
 - d. Felix chose to defer considering his soul until a later date and so he shut Paul up in prison.
- D. His next meeting came just a few days later
Acts 24:24 – “And after certain days”
1. This time he came with his wife, Drusilla
 2. Once again Paul brought him the Gospel of Christ.
Acts 24:24 – “he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.”
 3. This time Felix heard of his sin and was shaken
 - a. The text says he trembled. The word indicates great fear
Acts 24:25 – “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled”

- b. He heard of sin, condemnation, and judgment.
Hebrews 10:31 – “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*”
 - 4. What did Felix do about his fear? Again, he deferred.
“Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”
 - E. Over and over Felix sent for Paul
 - 1. Over and over Paul taught him of Christ
Acts 24:26 – “wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.”
The word means to talk or converse. In other words there was dialogue. Paul would teach, Felix would ask Paul questions and Paul would answer.
 - 2. This happened on numerous occasions. “he sent for him the oftener”
 - 3. And over and over he deferred. He postponed dealing with the matter of his sin.
 - F. The Bible gives us several examples of such foolish delay – missed opportunities
 - 1. Pharaoh was given many opportunities to repent of his sin – yet he delayed and perished in his sin.
 - 2. Judas Iscariot was in the presence of Christ for over three years. He heard Him teach, he witnessed His miracles, yet he delayed examining the need of his own soul – he delayed to his own damnation.
 - 3. Jesus told a parable of the danger of delay – the parable of the foolish virgins in **Mat. 25:1-12** –
Five virgins brought oil for their lamp and trimmed the wicks. The other five had not purchased oil but rather delayed. When the bridegroom arrived they were unprepared. They had much opportunity but they delayed until it was too late.
- II. What were the reasons for the delay of Felix?
- A. He wouldn’t deal with the issue of his sin
 - 1. Paul taught clearly of sin and judgment. Felix understood and trembled. Yet, Felix would not turn from his sin.
 - 2. Lost men love their sin. They are held captive by sin but it is a willing captivity. Sin is their sweetheart.
 - 3. They may hear of condemnation, yet they are not willing to part with their sin.
 - 4. Repentance is essential to salvation, yet most will not turn.
 - a. For some they deny their sin. These are self-righteous.
 - b. For others, like Felix, they know of their sin and condemnation and they are fearful – yet they will not forsake their sin.
 - 5. True repentance demands both a sorrow of sin and a hatred of sin
 - a. It demands sorrow because sin is offensive to God. This demands a transformed heart – a heart to love God.
 - b. It demands a hatred of sin because we see the vileness of it.
 - c. Felix only saw the condemnation of sin. He was not sorry for his sin nor did he despise his sin.
 - 6. Felix continued to delay thinking tomorrow would be a better time

- B. He could not forsake his love of this world
1. Felix loved money. He often took bribes. He was hoping to receive money from Paul
Acts 24:26 – “He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.”
 2. This was the same problem Judas Iscariot had. It was the same problem of the Rich Young Ruler.
 3. This is the problem of millions and millions – even religious folk
Matthew 13:22 – “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.”
1 Timothy 6:10 – “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”
 4. Most people today are too distracted by material things to give serious attention to their souls and eternity. Perhaps later.
- C. He could not forsake his love for the favor of others
1. Not only did Felix keep Paul imprisoned because of his love of money, he also was seeking the favor of the Jews.
 2. It has now been two full years. Felix has heard Paul many times and yet he continued to delay receiving Christ. To turn to Christ would mean turning from his wicked ways and it would demand releasing Paul. This he could not do for fear of the Jews.
Acts 24:27 – “But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.”
 3. Many today fear what others might think if they began to follow Christ.
Matthew 10:33 – “But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”

III. The deadline will come

- A. There is an approaching deadline for all men
1. Every tick of the clock, every beat of our heart brings us one step closer.
 2. Delay is deadly. It is presumption that you will be here the next second.
 3. Death is a certainty for all
Job 7:1 – “*Is there* not an appointed time to man upon earth? *are not* his days also like the days of an hireling?”
Genesis 3:19 – “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return.”
Psalms 89:48 – “What man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?”
 4. There is also the return of Christ
Matthew 24:43-44 – “But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. ⁴⁴ Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

- B. All men are already under God's condemnation
1. Felix knew this and trembled – yet he delayed
 2. Our existence upon the earth is by mercy – we deserve to be in hell this very moment.
 3. Every moment on earth is temporary – delay of repentance is the height of folly.

Conclusion:

1. Felix delayed to the destruction of his soul. All indication is he is in hell tonight – and great is his condemnation.
2. How many times did he hear? How many times did his conscience slay him. And yet he delayed.
3. Satan's great lie is there is still time. Tomorrow will come.
Someone has said, "Too Late" will be written on the gates of hell
1 Thessalonians 5:3 – "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."
4. Matthew Henry – "We should be alarmed if we were not sure to live a month and yet we are careless though we are not sure to live a day."
5. Listen to the great charge from Scripture: Thus saith the Lord:
Hebrews 3:7 - "Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts"
2 Corinthians 6:2 – "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)"