

Title: The Convenient Season
Text: Acts 24: 24-27
Date: July 8, 2010
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Have you ever thought about how you would declare the gospel if you had opportunity to preach to an earthly judge? Or to someone like a police officer? One whose life's work it is to enforce the law? The apostle Paul had that opportunity with governor Felix. But truthfully, we have a similar opportunity every time we speak to any sinner.

Felix was a judge (v10.) But we see Felix was an unjust judge--guilty of extortion, of bribery (v26.) Verse 27 says after two years, when Festus came into office in Felix's place, the last thing Felix did was to use Paul to gain political favor with the unbelieving Jews. Furthermore, according to the law of God, Felix was unlawfully married to Drusilla. She was a Jewess. Not only this, but she was married to another man when Felix drew her away and married her.

This judge who sat in the judgment seat, to judge Paul was: an unrighteous judge, unbridled, intemperate, under no power but that of his sinful, lustful flesh and a judge who had no regard for THE Judge of the whole earth nor the judgment to come

In other words, Felix and Drusilla were like you who do not believe in Christ, like that old sinful flesh in every believer from which we must be saved. How often do you climb up to your own judgment seat saying, "I'm thankful I'm not like that man?" --in-equity is iniquity. Temperance is to be brought into submission to Christ by the Spirit of God--to be bridled in the inner man, to be subdued by the power of God's grace. We all must stand before the judgment seat of God. Let us serve God in true reverence.

Proposition: As Paul did with Felix, I want to reason to you out of God's word concerning righteousness, temperance and judgment to come.

Acts 24: 24:...he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25: And [Paul] reasoned-[that is, he preached] of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.

I. PAUL REASONED OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

When Paul dealt with the Jews who judged themselves to be righteous, just as Felix, just as all men do by nature--Paul began this way.

First he spoke of the vilest of sinners (Romans 1: 21-23; 28-32.) Felix might have thought as did the Jews, as do all natural men, "Well, I'm thankful I'm not like those men!" Then Paul pressed home the truth that you are like those men.

Romans 2: 1: Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

Romans 3: 9: What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 10: As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

Felix, your position of judge is a sham. Your judgment is unjust and so are you. But the LORD God is righteous. This Just Judge who "will by no means clear the guilty." Felix, you can be bribed for personal gain. Not the Righteous Judge.

2 Ch 19: 6: And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. 7: Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

Can you imagine how Felix was angered for Paul to tell this judge of the Roman law, that he was guilty in Adam and under the law of God?

B. The only way we can obtain the righteousness God is through faith in the one who offered a pleasing sacrifice unto God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 10: 5: For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. 6: But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) 7: Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

These are impossible things. Everytime a sinner is told there remains something to be done by the sinner for salvation that is an impossible thing. The righteousness of faith does not say there remains anything to be done for acceptance with God. Instead, the righteousness of faith says that Christ has come down, he has lived and died and redeemed his people from all transgressions. He has ascended to the Father and every one for whom he died is righteous in Christ at God's right hand--accepted in the beloved. When this word enters into the newly made heart through the Spirit then we hear what the righteousness of faith says.

Romans 10: 8: But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11: For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

And because of what Christ accomplished the world shall be judged by Jesus Christ.

Romans 2: 11: For there is no respect of persons with God. 12: For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;...16: In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

II. PAUL REASONED OF TEMPERANCE (self-control through submission to Christ)

Temperance is the fruit of the Spirit which causes the believer to yield, not to his sinful flesh, but we submit the rule of our life to Christ Jesus. When the Spirit of God reigns within, he subdues the sinful flesh. At least three things happens.

1. First, when God creates a sinner anew and writes the gospel of Christ in his heart, the sinner will take sides with God against all who hold to falsehood: beginning with his own sinful flesh, and all others, even when it is his dearest loved ones. (Luke 14: 26, 27.) If we continue to twist the truth, to deny the word of God, taking sides with our dearest loved ones who held to a lie or defending ourselves then we are yet intemperate and living in the dead excess of our flesh.

2. Also, when the Spirit of God reveals that in Christ, we are risen with Christ, alive unto God and dead to sin, the believer desires to yield our whole selves as servants of righteousness and no longer as servants of sin (Romans 6)

3. Lastly, this fruit of the Holy Spirit is grown in us as we grow in the knowledge of Christ. Turn to 2 Peter 1: 1-11 and notice that we begin by the power of God through knowledge of Jesus Christ, we are grown through the power of God through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and as we walk in the Spirit looking to Christ he grows us in grace so that we are never without a knowledge of Jesus Christ. And notice this word diligence. Now turn to Hebrews 12: 14:

Hebrews 12: 14: Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

Where do I "look diligently"? Peter said it multiple times and hear the Hebrew writer says looking diligently. Where do I digently look? Peter said this faith was given and is multiplied through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Look back to Hebrews 12: 2:

Hebrews 12: 2: Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The more Light we are given, the more we walk in that Light by the grace of God, the more we behold that Christ is our Peace and Holiness with God and thus the more he settles and subdues our old man so that he grows us in this fruit of temperance. But the more we look to ourselves or to others for peace or for holiness, the more we are sure to find a "root of bitterness springing up." So Paul declares that he endeavors to keep his body in subjection to Christ.

Illustration: Paul gives the example of a runner or a boxer.

1 Corinthians 9: 25: And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26: I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: [subjection to Christ] lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

What is this which we strive to obtain? It is not redemption, Christ obtained eternal redemption for us; it is ot mercy, the believer has obtained mercy from God; it is not faith, Peter says we have obtained like precious faith through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ; in Christ we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Eph 1: 11.) The mark we are striving for is the prize of our Lord calling us home. The desire of every believer is to **"be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"** (Php 3: 9.)

Temperance is the virtue which makes a believer no longer strive against men to be rich, to make a name for himself among men, to build up his estate in this world, to leave a legacy which men will simply forget in short time, but the power of God makes the believer walk through this world under the rule of his Lord, looking diligently unto Christ, seeking to be found in him when he comes.

III. PAUL REASONED OF JUDGMENT TO COME

2 Corinthians 5: 8: We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 9: Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. 10: For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 11: Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;

What is this labor whereby we desire to accepted of God?

John 6:27: Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

Hebrews 4:11: Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

Believer's labor against the old man of our flesh (Gal 5: 17); we glory in heart, not in appearance; we walk by faith, not by sight; we are constrained by the love of Christ for us in the heart made new; we labor to give no offense in anything that the ministry be not blamed; we labor being confident that we are accepted in the beloved; we labor constraining sinners to be reconciled to God. Read 2 Corinthians 5 and notice these things. These are the good things done in our body due to regeneration and the work of the Spirit in bringing us into the free justification of Christ, wherein we rest. We will either be judged in Christ. Or we will be judged of the things of that unregenerate, unrenewed man by which men shall stand condemned

2 Corinthians 5: 11: Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;

Paul persuaded Felix to repent and believe on Christ: to walk no more after the flesh but after the Spirit

IV. FELIX'S RESPONSE--

Felix Trembled (Acts 24: 25.)

Felix was probably angry. Felix knew he did not possess the righteousness of God through faith in Christ. He knew he had not been brought into subjection to Christ for the lust of his flesh ruled him. He trembled at the thought of one day facing God in judgment without Christ.

But he sent Paul away (Acts 24: 25.)

And answered, Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee

Application:

It will do you no good to know that you are a sinner, to know that you need the Savior, to know that you must be washed in his blood and robed in his righteousness, unless you actually believe on Christ, trusting his blood and his righteousness alone to give you acceptance with the holy Lord God.

Is the gospel a gospel of convenience to us? Was it convenient for God to give his only begotten Son? Was it convenient for the Son of God to humble himself, make himself of no reputation and come in the likeness of sinful flesh? Was the death of the cross convenient? Was it convenient for the children of Israel in the days of Moses to travel that long distance to the place God promised to meet with them? Was it convenient for David to purchase the threshing floor because he would not sacrifice that which cost him nothing? Was it convenient for the widow giving all she had? Was it convenient for Paul to be beaten and imprisoned simply so he could preach the gospel to needy sinners like us?

If we call on God merely when we have a convenient season we never will. Today is the day of salvation! Call on him while he may be found.

If our worship of God is just when we have a convenient season then we haven't worshipped God.

If we give of ourselves and our service just what's available when we are not doing all the pleasurable things we love to waste our time on then we are not serving God.

Romans 12:1: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

THIS IS THE CONVENIENT SEASON!

AMEN!