

THE FOLLY OF PROCRASTINATION

"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." Acts 24:25.

The text portrays a man whose career is one of interest and of warning. It pictures a man who was successful in political life. He started on the lowest rung and climbed to the top of the ladder. It was an ancient log cabin to white house story. However, he was a man of great energy and talent wielding the power of a tyrant with the temper of a slave.

Our text pictures a most interesting scene. Paul's life had been threatened in Jerusalem. Under the protection of many soldiers and horsemen Paul had been rushed to Caesarea by the Roman authorities. There, he was delivered to Felix, the Governor of Judea. He received a full hearing before Felix concerning the charges preferred against him. This text gives an account of a subsequent meeting. Felix was previously impressed by Paul. In the text, I see four things: --

I. A Distinguished Preacher.

Paul was a preacher with: --

1. A distinguished ancestry.
2. A good training.
3. A great native ability.
4. A polished education.
5. A clean moral life.
6. A remarkable conversion.
7. An apostolic call.
8. A prepared message.
9. A courageous spirit.
10. A great spiritual power.

Paul was unsurpassed in native and acquired ability. He was a good match for the greatest and proudest philosopher of his day. As a preacher, he was fearless, sympathetic, courageous, uncompromising, heroic and faithful. No audience ever had a better preacher than Paul, except those who listened to the preaching of Jesus Christ, as Paul was second only to Christ. Paul was the greatest preacher of his day and preached "the faith in Christ Jesus" -- nothing more, nothing less.

II. A Famous Audience.

1. Judge Felix, the Governor of Judea.

He was born a slave, but soon won his freedom. Through rascality he came into prominence and office. He was an unscrupulous politician and a terrible grafter. He was immoral, a licentious voluptuary, and an unjust ruler. Josephus said that he was the worst ruler who ever swayed the destinies of Judea. He was an inveterate procrastinator, an avaricious money-hunter, a cowardly, cruel and illegal judge, a crafty promoter of his own interests, and an unprincipled trampler on the rights of others.

2. Drusilla, a Jewess.

She was one of the three daughters of Herod Agrippa I. Her father murdered the Apostle James. Her great-uncle, Herod Antipas, slew John the Baptist. Her great

grandfather, Herod the Great, killed the babes of Bethlehem at the time of the birth of Jesus. Drusilla was married to Azizus, the King of Emesa, when she was only 15 years of age. A year later, she deserted him and went off with Felix. Her evil reputation was hardly less known than his. She was a woman of highly exalted birth, ripe personal beauty, deeply depraved character, manifestly trifling disposition, and palpably seared conscience. She was attractive, beautiful, graceful, immoral and shameless.

They were the two biggest sinners in the whole country. There were few crimes of which these two were not guilty. They were dishonest, cruel and immoral. Time was hanging heavily over them. They wanted some new excitement, something to amuse and entertain them and help them to pass away the time. Consequently, they sent for Paul to come and entertain them. There has been much speculation as to why they sent for Paul. Some think they did so out of sheer curiosity. Paul had been a prisoner at the bar and the attorney for the defense. In handling his case he had impressed Felix and won his admiration. Others think that Paul was summoned because of a desire for material gain. Still others assume that it was due to the fact they had hungry hearts. After all, it matters little whether they sent for Paul out of idle curiosity or a desire for material gain, or because of hungry hearts, the important thing was the fact that Paul came. Thus, a distinguished preacher addressed a famous audience composed of the two biggest sinners in the empire.

III. A Model Sermon.

This sermon gives us a good clue to Paul's idea of a gospel sermon.

1. Theme -- "The Faith in Christ Jesus"
2. Style -- Logical, personal, practical and scriptural.
He reasoned instead of ranting and beating the air.
It was comprehensive, exhaustive and sublime.
3. Divisions --
 - (1) Righteousness -- Which neither of them had.
The word righteousness has its root in the word "right". That is the divine ideal for every life.
God has certain rights in us which we are bound to respect. Next to God, man has been our greatest benefactor, and therefore society has certain rights in us. Righteousness mean the full discharge of one's duties to God and man. We need to be right with God and with man.

Paul preached righteousness to a man whose chief business was to meet out justice. He talked to him about his failure to do his duty. How appropriate to preach to a man about his occupation! A preacher cannot do God's will by merely dealing in generalities. Felix was mastered by the lust of the flesh, lust of gold, and lust of power. He was guilty of extortion in taxation and living a life of open sin. I can visualize Paul bringing before the mind of Felix the widows whom he had defrauded of their inheritance, the fatherless children who were left to beg their bread, the many bribes that he had taken, and the false decisions he had given. He reasoned of righteousness which neither member of the audience possessed.

- (2) Self-Control -- which neither of them knew anything about.

By this is meant the power of self-government, self-restraint and self-mastery. Paul reminded them that they would not be saved until they turned from their sins to Christ. Drusilla was noted for her superlative charms and voluptuous spirit. She had been engaged to Antiochus but he learned about her character and refused to marry her. Afterwards she was wedded to a king who, though a heathen, accepted the Jewish religion in the hope of retaining her love but she deserted him and took up with Felix. Felix had long since given himself over to unbridled lust. So Paul preached to them about self-control which neither of them exhibited.

- (3) The Judgment to Come -- which was sure to catch them both.

Doubtless Paul told them that incontinence invites God's wrath; injustice would not escape judgment; and that they would have to come into judgment themselves. He made Felix think that he saw the great white throne, the books being open, and himself arraigned before his Judge. He made it clear to Felix that unless he repented of his sins, in which he stood inexcusable before God, that he would be sent to hell. He preached to them about the judgment to come which was sure to overtake them.

Thus Paul brought a three-fold message; namely, Christ crucified and righteousness by faith in Him, Christ risen and self-control by faith in Him, Christ coming again and the judgment that would befall those who rejected the faith in Him. His sermon was directly personal and intensely practical in its content.

IV. A Disappointing Result.

Preaching is divinely intended to convince the intellect, stir the sensibilities, and affect the will. Addressing Felix and Drusilla as rational beings, Paul's great object was to enlighten their minds and carry conviction to their judgments. His discourse was prepared and presented so as to meet the needs, rebuke the sins, and arouse the torpid spirits of his hearers. But still, the marvelous sermon of the distinguished preacher produced a disappointing effect. In what way was it disappointing?

1. Only one member of the audience was impressed.
2. A strange fear began to creep about his heart.
3. His sins became real to him--he was tremendously convicted.
4. He saw himself wrong in the sight of God.
5. His heart was deeply stirred--he knew his duty.
6. He was filled with fear of the judgment.
 - (1) He understood the truth.
 - (2) He feared the result.
 - (3) He knew a crisis was upon him.
7. He trembled--grew uneasy.

He was frightened, terrified, sacred, shock. He knew his sin, understood the way to be saved, knew his duty, but would not yield and receive Christ as his Saviour. He trembled but he was not converted and saved.
8. He was deeply moved.

It was the crisis hour for his soul and the zero hour of his life. He was impressed but not improved.

9. He deferred--"Go thy way for this time."
You may go for the present--give me more time. I'll not decide while I am all stirred up. The devil's last appeal is to postpone action. I must cool off. I'm too excited. He made a decision but it was the wrong one. He said, "O God, go away." "Bidding goodbye to God." No one can say that with safety. He trifled with his golden opportunity. His decision was a guilty rejection because God sent the preacher, it was rejecting Christ, resisting the Holy Spirit, and cleaving to Satan. Why did Felix defer?
- (1) He did not want to give up his sins.
He was unwilling to send Brusilla back to her lawful husband.
 - (2) He was very busy.
 - (3) He was unwilling to give up the honors of the world.

Why did he shut the door of hope in his own face?

- (1) There were political reasons.
He thought that if he would keep Paul in jail that he would gain favor with the Jews. Felix was like many cravens today who sell their souls for votes in office.
 - (2) There were financial reasons.
He hoped Paul would give him some money to release him. He was selling his soul for the sake of gaining money.
 - (3) There were social reasons.
There was not a Christian in his social circle. His associates never thought of religion, morality or eternity. He was not willing to be separated from that ungodly set.
10. He promised.
"When I have a more convenient season I will call for thee!" Those words mean by and by. Felix failed by trusting to a future season. He got over his attack of spiritual appendicitis without an operation. He cooled off. Resolutions for the future are worth nothing. He was in substance, you are right Paul, but not now. A thing that is right cannot be done too soon. Man always finds a convenient season for doing what he loves best, but if he does not find a convenient season to accept Christ and receive salvation, it is because he values other things above that. Most convenient season Felix had was when Paul was urging him to accept Christ.