

Confronting the World

by Alistair Begg

The church must confront the world with a clear message of righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come, driven by a fear of the Lord and a desire to persuade men.

Duration: 46:41

Scripture: Psalm 25:14, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "World"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of preaching the word of God, even if it goes against the desires and preferences of the audience. He highlights the biblical model of preaching righteousness and self-control, even to those who may be in sinful relationships. The speaker also criticizes the modern approach to communication, which avoids challenging or perplexing the audience. He urges the listeners to be faithful preachers who bring God's message to people, rather than wasting time with empty words. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the fleeting nature of life and the need for people to heed the truth of God's word.

Transcript

It's been a joy to be here today. I thank you for the privilege, and I invite you to take your Bible and to turn with me to Acts chapter 24, where I'd like to turn our attention to the final verses of the chapter. And in order to set them clearly in our minds, we're going to read from verse 22.

As I read, you can follow in your own text. Acts chapter 24, verse 22, Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the way, adjourned the proceedings. When Lysias the commander comes, he said, I will decide your case.

He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard, but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs. Several days later, Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus.

As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, That's enough for now. You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you.

At the same time, he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him. When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porteous Festus, but because Felix

wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison. This is the word of God.

Will you join me in a moment of prayer? O gracious God, before we turn to the word of the Lord, we turn to you, the Lord of the Word, asking that you alone might speak, that we might be given the grace to hear, to comprehend, and to respond, so that with our Bibles open before us, we may be encountered by you, the living God. For we pray in the name of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

I'd like to share with you this evening something that has been brewing, as it were, in my mind and has been upon my heart for some days now. It's not a message that I've shared in my own congregation. It is not that I'm using you as guinea pigs in any way, but it just so happens that coincidental with my plans and my journey to come here, I've been thinking along certain lines, and my mind has been constrained in a particular direction.

And there's a very real sense in which I could preach what I'm about to share with you tonight completely without notes in any way at all, because it really is something of a burden on my heart. But I'm going to do my best to stay true to my notes in order that I might stay true to the time, and in order that you then, in turn, might be glad that I endeavored to do so. The portion of Scripture that we read just a moment ago is Luke's record of an incident which confronts us with a number of things.

On the one hand, it shows to us how possible it is for a person to be moved by the gospel message and yet to remain unchanged by it. At the same time, it provides us with an example of how the church, represented in the mighty apostle Paul, should confront the world represented by Felix and Drusilla in this case. I'm going to have to ask you to read back in your record of the Acts of the Apostles to fill in much of the context, but let me give us enough to be going on with, as it were, for the moment.

Paul, we're told here, is being held captive on a charge, which you will discover in verse 5 of the chapter, of being a troublemaker and a ringleader of the Nazarene sect. Felix, the governor before whom he has been brought, has just adjourned the proceedings, as happens so frequently in legal jurisdiction. It seems that the 20th century is not unique in protracted legal enactments, but that the first century was also marked by the same.

And here we're told that in order to await the arrival of a crucial witness by the name of Lysias, who's referred to in verse 22, Felix has decided that Paul should remain in custody. It is clear that there is a measure of freedom given to him. However, it is such that he is not free to leave, and on account of that, because he is within the precincts of Felix's control, on a particular evening, some days after the adjournment of the trial, as verse 24 tells us, Felix and his wife Drusilla decide that they will send for this man who has been causing so much trouble in the community, and indeed in the then known world.

We're not told what motivated Felix and Drusilla, and probably it is idle to speculate. It may simply be that they didn't know what to do with the evening, and so they said, why don't we bring Paul up? He speaks a good line. We'll listen to what he has to say, and then we'll send him back down to his abode for the night.

However, let it suffice to say this, that here is a couple who, from a natural perspective, would probably never have decided to attend a public meeting addressed by the former Saul of Tarsus, and in the providence of God, he gave to them a private meeting with the apostle, a meeting in which they thought they had him under control, but a meeting in which God had them all under control. God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. Enter, as it were, into the scene the mighty apostle.

He arrives, we're told, and we may surmise from the text that his posture is one of apparent weakness. After all, he is the prisoner, and they are the ones in authority. So here we have the apostle in apparent weakness, and we have Felix and Drusilla in apparent power.

Just akin to the situation in our world today. It seems that we live in a world that is all-powerful and all-mighty. The affairs and machinery of man seems to be virtually transcendent, and somewhere in the midst of it all is this thing called the church, which, of course, lives in apparent weakness.

Now, what is Paul's strategy to be? Because a door of opportunity is open to him. When the word came, and he was brought up into this opportunity, he realized now that a door had emerged through which he could walk, and where he might take his chance to do what. What should he do? Presumably, it went through his mind.

Will I seek to win them over? Will I say nice things to them in the hope that they will like me because I said nice things? And having paved the way with my genteel approach, I will then one day have an opportunity to share the gospel with them. Or perhaps through his mind went the notion of seizing the opportunity to secure his release. After all, he may have reckoned with himself that he would be far more useful to the cause of Christ if he were to get out of this bondage than if he were to stay within it.

However, it is clear from the text that neither of these possibilities, if they were even in the mind of Paul, which we can say with certainty, really were things that he might act upon. And we discover that he was single-minded in his approach. And so I want you to notice, if you're taking notes, it may be helpful for you to notice that three M's are about to come.

You'll remember that from the company, the three M approach, okay? And the first M is the word motivation, because I think we're given an inkling into the apostle's motivation. If he had been consumed with self-interest, or if he had been driven by fear, or if he had been keen to become a pal of the governor and his wife, and be invited to subsequent garden parties at the governor's palace, I put it to you that he would never, never have proceeded to discourse in the way in which he chose to do. Read on in the text and notice what he says.

Here is a man who is living out his convictions. Here is a man who is living what he wrote. For we only need to turn to 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 11 and following to discover Paul's clear statement of what motivated him in the gospel ministry.

And what we read here, we find exemplified in this little scene at the end of Acts 24. Look with me for a moment at 2 Corinthians 5. We can't dwell on it, but notice what he has to say in verse 11. He says, since then we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men.

That's a clear statement of Paul's motivational conviction in his life. We know what it is to fear God, therefore we try to persuade men. Read on in the passage and he says, we no longer regard anyone, verse 16, from a worldly point of view.

In other words, I don't care, Felix, if you're the governor or not. I don't care, Drusilla, if you're big time. I no longer look at you in terms of prestige and power.

I look at you from a perspective that is divine or is eternal, if you like. And when I look at you, I see something that drives me to persuade you of the things of Christ. He is motivated to be an ambassador, he goes on to say, having been committed, verse 19, with the message of reconciliation.

He is in no doubt whatsoever as to what will drive him in the day of opportunity. That's his motivation. Secondly, what is his methodology? Back into Acts 24, his methodology simply stated is this, that he preached, that he communicated with God's enabling truth from God that was necessary for man.

And essentially, once again, he is true to his convictions. First Corinthians and chapter 1 and verse 17, he says, for Christ did not send me to baptize. Not that he wasn't interested in baptism services.

He would have rejoiced to be here this evening. But ultimately, he saw that his responsibility was to preach the gospel. And he knew that if he were to set about that task, it would not be with words of human wisdom.

Because if he attracted people by his eloquence, it may short-circuit their discovery that the power of it all lies in the cross of Jesus Christ, and not in the ability of an individual to speak about the cross of Jesus Christ. And there's all the difference in the world. And so he goes on to say, for the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

And then he goes on to ask in this great rhetorical form, where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? He goes on to say, in the midst of all of this, we preach Christ crucified. For, he says in verse 21, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. So it's no surprise to us that if Felix and Drusilla given him an opportunity, that he would then employ the methodology in which he believed, since God had pledged himself to open eyes and unstop deaf ears and transform lives as a result of the foolish nature from the world's eyes of the very message that he proclaimed.

So his motivation is clear, his methodology is obvious, and his message is absolutely straightforward. It's no surprise to us, turn back to Acts chapter 24, to discover that he spoke to them, we're told, verse 24, about faith in Jesus Christ. So far, so good.

Faith in Jesus Christ. We can all handle that. After all, he is the apostle.

His life has been changed by Jesus Christ. And to speak of faith in Jesus Christ may mean a whole gamut of different things. But as you read on, as we look at this together, we discover that for Paul this was not some vapid, sugar-coated sermonette to tickle the ears of Felix and Drusilla, because the constituent elements of his message are then articulated for us by Luke.

He had a three-point sermon, if you like. Point number one was righteousness. Verse 25, his message was a message of righteousness.

In other words, he declared that God is a holy God, and therefore that man is in deep need before that holy God. In 24 14, he had already affirmed the fact that I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the way which they call a sect. And then he said this, I believe everything that agrees with the law and that is written in the prophets.

In other words, what he's saying is, I'm kind of mainstream, if you want to know, Felix. I'm not a weirdo. I've not come up with a new thing.

I'm really right down the line of the Old Testament scriptures. And what the law has proclaimed, and what the prophets have clarified, that is where I am. And so, as he discourses with them on righteousness, there is no question but that he would expound the standard of the law.

And he would have said to Felix and to Drusilla, God is a holy God. Therefore, he is a just God. God has revealed himself in a standard of righteousness in his law.

But men and women are so far short of that standard. And he possibly even would have begun to quote from the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah so often refers to this--chapter 5 and verse 16 of Isaiah--but the Lord Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness.

Now, I don't want to suggest that I know what he preached on, but I've got a suspicion that he may at least have used some of Isaiah since he was acquainted with it. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He was well versed under the tutelage of Gamaliel.

And he may even have come from Isaiah 5. He certainly would have quoted the psalmist at various points. He may even have looked into the eyes of Felix and Drusilla and said this, the Lord is righteous. He loves righteous deeds.

The upright shall behold his face. His message, point one, righteousness. Point two, self-control.

And the word here expressly refers to the control of the passions and desires. It addresses that sensual dimension of man. It addresses that whole notion of eating and drinking and being merry and just giving oneself to a profligacy that is detrimental to body and to soul.

And he may even, again, have turned to the writings of Solomon and quoted, like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control. What a word! Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control. He must have told them that the worldview of freedom was really a cage in which you'd live.

He must have told them that what the world said was genuine joy was actually to embrace the most dreadful sorrow, and how these words must have gone home to their lives. And then he came to the third part of his message, and he addressed the whole question of judgment to come. In verse 15, in his previous statement in his defense before Felix, he had said, I have the same hope in God as these men that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

He had already made that plain. Felix had already heard that. And so it would be no surprise to him, albeit an unpalatable reminder, that Paul had something to say that God was not finished yet, that there was going to be a payday one day, and that all would give an account before a God who had revealed himself in all of his righteousness.

Loved ones, I need to say to you tonight that the Bible is replete with this insistence. It is jam-solid with this insistence. It is not that we need to go and search for it with a magnifying glass.

We may open our Bibles and discover that since God is holy, since sin must be punished, he has appointed a day when he will judge the world. Psalm 1, the gateway to the Psalms, which gives us an indication of the kind of man that may enter into the experience of worship, the kind of man who has clean hands and a pure heart, is described as someone who feeds on the word and grows and is irrigated by it. And then comes the contrast in the fourth verse.

Not so the wicked, they are like the chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. Now we ought not to think that there was a cutting tone to Paul's voice.

We ought not to think for a moment that somehow he was lambasting Felix and Drusilla, that somehow he had put himself six feet above contradiction. For he couldn't. For he remembered that it was only on account of God's mercy that he himself had been relieved of the awful curse of the law, and his life had been transformed and changed.

And so when he discoursed with them about judgment to come, there wasn't an ah-ha in his voice. There was a cry in his heart. And you know, Christian in passing, if you take it upon yourself to speak of the judgment to come, first you better learn to cry.

First you better know the lostness of your own soul. First you better care passionately for those who know not Christ, otherwise still your tongue, for it will come out veerly as venom and vindictiveness. And here, as he comes to this great third point, how it must have registered up and down the spine of Felix and the lady who sat next to him.

Samuel Johnson said, My Lord has said that there will come a day when he separates the sheep from the goats, puts one to the right and one to the left, and says, Johnston, this is a certain truth which this frivolous age needs to hear. And if it was true in Johnson's day, the Lord knows it is true in our own. Now with these things fixed in the front of our minds, let's ask the question, is this the approach of the church of Jesus Christ in the final decade of the 20th century in the western world? Is this the world confronted by the church of Jesus Christ? And the answer to that question is so dreadful as ought to shame us before a holy God.

Let us examine ourselves as a part of the church before a world that watches. Let's ask the question about motivation for a moment, shall we? What did Paul, what did we say was Paul's motivation? Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men. Does the church persuade men in our generation? No, there is no persuasion.

Persuasion along with dogmatism is a swear word in our egalitarian day. The notion that we might invade someone's space, that we might call them to capitulate to the truth of God's word, that we might make them stand full frontal on to the craziness of their ideology, that we might on the authority of God's truth penetrate beyond the facade of their life, is a joke by and large in terms of the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ. It has not always been so.

You need only read of the 18th century revival in this great land and know that the kind of proclamation which brought such transformation was a proclamation which sought to persuade men. Why is it that we do not persuade men? I believe it is because we do not fear the Lord. You see, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.

Knowing no fear of the Lord, we persuade nobody. Why would we ever go out to persuade anyone unless we know the fear of God? Do you know the fear of God? Do you know what it is to bow before his greatness and cry out to him? Or has our God grown so small as we brought him down and made him a buddy, rather than exalted him as a king? I ask you, you're thinking people in this church tonight. Do you think the church at the end of the 20th century is motivated by a fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom and therefore persuades men? Let's think about its methodology.

Sangster, the great Methodist preacher of an earlier generation in London said, preaching is in the shadows. The world does not believe in it. That was the 19th century.

The 20th century reads like this. Preaching is in the shadows. The church does not believe in it.

We now have embraced the dialogue, the drama, the dance, the who knows what else beginning with D. And preaching is denigrated, is denied, is diminished in its significance. Men and women say you don't expect for a moment that in the 20th century man and his wife is going to sit and listen to proclamation. Well, no, not the kind of proclamation that passes for proclamation.

So much of what passes for preaching is such a sorry apology for the very issue itself. It is clear that so many have stumbled against pulpits that couldn't get a job in a decent employment agency halfway across America. And having banged against the pulpit, they think if they give a running commentary on the Bible that they became preachers.

We don't need people to give us running commentaries on the Bible. We need God to infuse people with the power of his Spirit in our day as he has done in other days. We need to ask God that the brightest and the best from our churches may become preachers.

You say what you have some vested interest in this? Yes, yes, my heart aches for a coming generation that is growing up lying on counseling benches and watching video screens and embracing dancing monkeys and has no concept of the fact that God has chosen through the foolishness of what was proclaimed to save those who would believe. When God takes up his servant, he doesn't make him just a talker. He doesn't give him the privilege of wasting everybody's time while he allows his tongue to reverberate around his mouth without much sense anywhere in the near vicinity.

He does not give anyone the luxury of standing up wasting everybody's time. The man who speaks from God better be with God and then better be concerned to bring God to man through his holy word. Anybody want to be a preacher? Anybody prepared to give up their small ambitions tonight and say, if God gives to me the privilege of using such an opportunity, I'm your man, Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, that the pulpits of this country would reverberate with the sound of the gospel. Is this the methodology of the 20th century church? Oh, I sound like a loony up here, don't I? I can hear myself speak. This is so bizarre.

And what about the message, if we get as far as that? Let's gauge the message then against the example and the model given to us by Paul. Let me ask you this question, and it's perhaps unfair in this pulpit of all places. So let's take this pulpit out of our thinking for a moment and ask the question, when is the last time you heard a message proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit that had three points to it? Point one was about righteousness, point two was about self-control, and point three was about judgment to come.

And furthermore, when's the last time you ever heard anybody suggest that they might take such an approach? And then tell me about all the people who told the individual that if ever they endeavored to do that, they would close the church down, turn everybody off, never have a ministry, never make an impact, and basically just be a general nuisance to humanity. And so having capitulated to that latter notion, man continued to present the benefits of the gospel without ever showing man his need of a savior. And so man, appealing to that within him which would like his life to be a wee bit different from what it is, says, hey, if that's all that's involved in it, give me some of that.

And so we have a vacuous presentation of God's truth, we have an equal vacuous response, and we fill our churches with unregenerate men and women, because they embraced half a gospel and became half

a Christian. And since there are no half Christians, they never became Christians. The message which Paul proclaimed was the same message that Peter proclaimed on the day of Pentecost.

If we were ever in any doubt about whether the church started off this way, we only need to read the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, Acts chapter 2 and verse 36. Therefore let all Israel be assured of this, God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. And when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, brothers, what shall we do? It's the same methodology as Jesus used with the woman at the well.

Again, not in judgment, again not in condemnation, but as he seizes the opportunity to speak with her concerning living water and the realities of eternity, he asks her, why don't you go call your husband and come back? And the lady says, I have no husband. And Jesus said, you're right when you say you have no husband. The fact is you've had five husbands, and the man you've got tonight is not your husband.

Meanwhile, the church continues to diminish the truths and convictions of Christ, the head of the church, and fills itself up and fails to recognize that the blow which strikes beneath the armor of the sinner is a blow which first shows him his need of a Savior. Tonight, I ask you again, is this the message of the twentieth-century church? We need the cry of the prophet to sound out again in this great nation. Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, nor the strong man boast in his strength, or the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he knows me, the living God.

In other words, if you think, says the prophet, that life is about brains, about bodies, and about bucks, then you're all wrong. And if you are giving your life to being brainier, to being bonnier, to being full of bucks, then you're up an absolute gumtree. And on the authority of God's word, I need to tell you that tonight.

You better take care of business, Mr. Businessman, before it's too late. Eighty-six proof anesthetic crutches prop you to the top, where the smiles are all synthetic, and the ulcers never stop. When they take the final inventory, yours will be the same sad story everywhere.

No one will really care, no one more lonely than this wretched businessman. You better take care of business, before it's too late. The people in my church say, Alistair, don't say these things.

We have a lot of business people in our church. They'll never come back. Fine, fine.

But as they go, they'll go knowing this, they need a savior. I'd rather they went resentful, knowing they needed a savior, than they stayed happy, never to discover, and to go to a lost eternity, to get a big coach party full of the happy jacks and roll them all off into oblivion. If it is time for judgment to begin at the house of God, what will become of those who are not a part of his family? My time is gone.

I say to you tonight, the crying need of the hour is for revival within the church. Revival within the church. I believe when that comes, it will break us in our pride.

The pride that has allowed us to embrace methodologies which are man-centered rather than God-honoring. The pride which allows us to look in the face of 2 Corinthians 10, where Paul says, the methods of our warfare are not the methodologies that the world uses. We don't fight in the same way, but we have divine power to bring down strongholds.

And what are those divine powers? What are those weapons? Ephesians 6 tells us they are prayer and the proclamation of the Word of God. I don't say it with a spirit of condemnation tonight, as God knows my

heart, but it is the deep conviction of my spirit that by and large the church in the West has laid down the weapons supplied by the commanding officer and therefore has been forced to take up other weapons. It is not that the church does not confront the world, it is that the church confronts the world in the wrong way and on the wrong issues.

So we have a politicized church. Our radio airwaves, even on Christian radio, are filled to overflowing of political agendas. Political agendas.

How we may save America for Jesus Christ. And it's all political loved ones. Write to this man, write to this lady, hurry up over here, go over there, get your banners, get in your buses, be here, be there.

I listened to it, I turned it off, I said, God, how come you never mentioned this in your Bible? If it is so important, it's politicized on the one hand, it's psychologized on the other hand. The gurus of the final decade in the 20th century wear long white coats and carry very small Bibles, if at all. And the most ridiculous notion that you could ever suggest is that a sin sick soul may be able to find cleansing, forgiveness, freedom from guilt, and become a brand new creation in Jesus Christ, through someone who has given their life to the cause of Christ, opening the scriptures to them and introducing them to the joy and liberty and power of God in Jesus Christ.

What a bunch of psychological hogwash is the pig's will of our day. May God, in his mercy, forgive us. So we are politicized, we are psychologized, and we are trivialized.

It's trivial, it's trivial pursuit. We even have a biblical trivial pursuit, as if ever studying the Bible could be a trivial pursuit, for goodness sake. Let's all come over to the house and we'll have a game of trivial pursuit.

What will we use as the source? The Bible. Now I understand what it means, don't go and burn your trivial pursuits for goodness sake. I'm just making the point that in the minds of men, it just seems to fit.

Oh yes, that's a trivial way to spend an evening. Now, I say to you again, my time is gone, to encourage you. But not completely gone, because listen, some of you are out there saying, listen, Begg's wheels fell off his wagon.

It's obviously clear that this is his last visit. He's completely lost it now. If he was at all thinking, he would realize that the kind of thing he's saying was fine for the reformers, and fine for Whitefield, and fine for Wesley, and fine for Brainerd, and fine for Jonathan Edwards, and fine for the Apostle Paul.

But nobody in their right mind would ever begin to proclaim this threefold message to 20th century man. After all, we look back and I'm sure we say to ourselves, Felix and Drusilla, they were prepared for this kind of stuff. That's where you're dead wrong.

Do you know that Felix was a twin? His brother's name was Pallas. They were brought up in a slave home, and they crawled their way out literally and metaphorically. Pallas was the brighter of the two.

Managed by graft to ingratiate himself in the systems of his day, political and economic. And because he was so good at it, it gave a leg up to his brother Felix. And he would bring Felix on board as he created the doors of opportunity.

So Felix had arrived in the governorship, not because of anything innately in his character which commended him, but largely as a result of graft and a lack of integrity. And did he exercise his

governorship in a way that was commendable to man? No. Read the historians and you will find, for example, in Josephus, quote, with savagery and lust, he exercised the powers of a king with the disposition of a slave.

Furthermore, the lady who was his wife, because he was really well set out, he had power, he had financial security, he had status, and he had a beautiful woman on his arm. But the lady who was on his arm, he had stolen from her husband using an elaborate scheme involving a Cypriot magician by the name of Simon, who had got her out of the family home. And then Felix had seduced her and had taken her into his home.

And so they sat together in apparent power and a little man walked in and talked to them about self-control. Drusilla had a family background unlike most. It was her father who killed James.

It was her great uncle who slew John the Baptist. It was her great grandfather who ordered the murder of the babes in Bethlehem at the time of the birth of Jesus Christ. And into her life comes a man and speaks to her about righteousness.

So for those of you who say, oh well that's fine for the first century. Paul was okay, those folks were well prepared for that. They were not prepared for that.

The last thing the world you want, if you're sitting in an adulterous relationship tonight, is for some wee guy to come and talk to you about self-control. The last thing in the world that any of us want, as we deny God's law and his control of our life, is for somebody to come and speak to us of righteousness. But that's what Paul did, and that's the biblical model, and that's the hope of the church.

Felix, we're told, was acquainted with the way. He knew about this Christian stuff. He was attentive to the message, and he was afraid of its impact.

Neil Postman, in his little book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, says if you want to be successful in proclamation at this point in the 20th century, especially if you use the electronic media at all, he says there are three cardinal laws. Law number one, thou shalt have no prerequisites. Law number two, thou shalt induce no perplexity.

Law number three, thou shalt avoid exposition like the 10 plagues of Egypt. I thank God tonight that he has put it in my heart with such conviction that I am happy with consistency and regularity to explode every rule that Postman accounts for. But I say with sadness tonight, I stand with a few, and I don't draw attention myself in this in any sense of self-congratulation.

I feel at least that I stand with a minority, with our voices crying out, into the night. Felix means Mr. Happy. Did you know that? His name means happy, and everybody thought he was happy, because he had it all, but he had nothing.

And I want to end by asking you this question. Are there any Mr. Happys here tonight? Any Miss Happys? And as I have spoken to you, as Paul spoke to them concerning righteousness, you know in your heart that you are a sinner before God. As I have spoken to you of self-control, you know that you cannot control your passions.

And as I have spoken to you of judgment to come, you know in your heart that God has set a day when he will judge each one of us. Question, what are you going to do? Felix wrote, do you know what he said?

Read it in the text. That's enough for now, Paul.

You bet it was. When I find a convenient season, I will send for you. And although we're told that he sent for him in the next two years with frequency, and they talked with one another, there is no record given us by Luke ever of the day of opportunity dawning in Felix's life again.

And fearing that he would lose what he had if he were to take what Paul proclaimed, he rejected what Paul proclaimed, and he lost all that he had. In secular history, I discovered, searched for this, and found it. Secular history records that Felix and Drusilla had a son.

And in AD 79, in Pompeii, Drusilla and her son in his 20s were spending the evening in a gala celebration, a dramatic banquet, a great embracing of all that the then known world had to offer. And as, in the splendor of that moment, they danced the night away, in the distance there began a rumbling as Vesuvius engulfed Drusilla and her son along with Pompeii. And in a moment, they went from laughter to judgment.

And I say to you tonight, dear ones, in a moment any one of us may go from laughter to judgment. This is a vital truth which this frivolous age needs desperately to heed. Shall we pray? Lord, grant that the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts may, in the light of eternity, be found acceptable in your sight, for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

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