

Felix - The Man Who Trembled

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[0 : 00] Again to the chapter we read in Acts chapter 24. I'm reading again at verse 22.

Well, we'll read from verse 24. After some days, Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. And he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.

And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity, I will summon you.

At the same time, he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him, often unconverted with him. So on. One of the features of Paul's life was that he never, ever wasted an opportunity of sharing the gospel and of preaching about the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you go through Paul's life and the Acts of the Apostles, you will find that Paul used every opportunity. He preached in the marketplaces.

[1 : 21] He preached in the squares. He preached in the temples. He preached in the synagogues. He preached wherever and whenever he got an opportunity. Now, one of the things that Paul prayed for in Philippians, if you'll remember, he prayed, That I might know him.

That is Jesus. That I might know him. And the power of his resurrection. And the fellowship of his sufferings. And sometimes we might be a wee bit hesitant when we pray the second part of that prayer.

That we want, we say, that I might know him and the power of his resurrection. But sometimes we can be almost a little hesitant in talking about and asking that we might know about the fellowship of his sufferings.

Because we don't know how the Lord might answer that prayer. And there's no doubt whatever the Lord answered that prayer in Paul's experiences in different ways.

And he will answer that prayer for you as well in different experiences. And one of the things that, of course, there are many things that we will never be able to share in with regard to Christ's sufferings.

[2 : 37] For instance, we cannot understand the intensity of his suffering of just meeting life as it is.

Because we're sinners and we side by nature with sin. Jesus found sin in its every shape and form repugnant and awful.

Death to Jesus was awful. Just every wrong relationship, everything that was wrong in life was awful to Jesus.

Because he was and is absolutely sinless and pure. And there was nothing about him that in any shape or form sided with sin. Although he sided with sinners and he sympathized with sinners, he was never at any point guilty of ever harboring any sin within himself.

And so he found living life. We cannot understand how hard that would have been for us. You know, there are sometimes that there are things happen in the world and that we find it distressing.

[3 : 50] Well, I think that so much of what Jesus' life was about was finding situations distressing. And again, there is the area that none of us will enter into, no Christian will enter into, is the intensity of his sufferings on the cross.

Where he was paying the penalty for our sin. So we cannot enter into the fellowship of these sufferings. But in lots of other ways it is possible that we can.

And for the Apostle Paul, one of the ways that he entered into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings was through the whole area of false accusation, of slander, of misrepresentation, of the twisting of the truth.

Because Jesus' life, everywhere he went, we mentioned that I think maybe last week, and we mentioned it often before. It was one of the things that Jesus had to put up with and bear with here, was this constant, constant misrepresentation.

Where he was called a deceiver, that he deceived the people, that whatever he did, he did through the power of darkness. That he was somebody who was given to overindulgence in wine and in food.

[5 : 11] So that there was bad press about Jesus, following him everywhere he went. Isn't it extraordinary? The only sinless man who lived in this world. And everywhere he went, there were these things being said about him.

So it's very difficult living under that. Well, this was part of the fellowship of Paul's sufferings. And it's often the part of the fellowship of Christ's suffering that the Lord's people have to endure in this world.

Because the apostle Paul, he was always, always at the receiving end of false accusations. People were always saying things about him and against him.

He was accused of being in the work for his own sake. He was accused of deceiving people. He was accused of being a heretic, of a troublemaker.

He was accused of being a legalist. He was accused of being liberal. He was accused of every conceivable thing. And sometimes there was a grain of truth, but it was twisted.

[6 : 21] And this is exactly what is happening here. And that's why Paul is here, as it were, fighting for his life. Because it's all lies. Or mostly lies.

And so this was part of what I believe was an answer to Paul's prayer in Philippians. That I might know. And the power of his resurrection.

And the fellowship of his sufferings. And so Paul is facing these serious charges, which, if they were proved against him, would result in his death.

And so Paul obviously has to really, at one level, fight for his life. And so the Jews had hired this orator, or I suppose in today's language it would be a lawyer, this man Tertullus.

And he begins by making a great oration and praising Felix. Just what a wonderful person he was. And history will show us that Felix was anything but a wonderful person.

[7 : 27] He was somebody who was very, very corrupt. Somebody who was incredibly cruel. And somebody who often worked for bribes.

His whole reign was one that, it was not in any shape or form just or right. So Tertullus' speech beforehand is just really so wrong.

But it's a kind of a, almost this kind of, just flattery. But then from verse 10, we have Paul. He's coming to speak.

And Felix listened to what Paul had to say. And as Felix listened to what Paul had to say, it became quite clear to Felix that the severity of the charge that was being brought against him wasn't accurate.

But the Jews had managed, by twisting the truth to a certain extent, to show that there was something in it. So Felix thought to himself, well, I can't just dismiss Paul, but I do not believe that this charge is anywhere near as serious as it's been made out.

[8 : 39] But I'll, what I'll do is, I'll listen to it again. And I'll hear it at another time when there may be others with me. And so he put Paul in custody. He put him in a kind of like an open prison, in a house prison.

It wasn't like the main prison with the criminals. It was a place where he had a relative amount of freedom and visitors could come and go. It was like a house arrest. So he was there in that situation.

And we noticed that Felix actually hoped that by keeping Paul, that there might be bribes given. We see that at the very end, it says at verse 26, at the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul.

So he's kind of hoping, if I hold on to this man, and I know that there's a lot of people following him, they might come and say, hey, we want Paul released. And he would say, okay, this is what it costs. So you can see this is the kind of man he was. Anyway, we find that the time comes when Felix comes back down with his wife, Drusilla.

[9 : 46] And she was Jewish. She was Jewish. And that's why it says that Felix knew. Paul mentions that.

But Felix having a rather accurate knowledge of the way. So he was married to a Jewish lady. And he also, as governor, would have a fair idea of what was going on.

And so Paul, as he begins his defense, he speaks and he addresses both Felix and Drusilla.

And again, we could say that Felix was a very immodest, was his third wife. And he had broken up a marriage in order to get Drusilla. Because apparently she was an incredibly beautiful woman. History tells us that. And she was one of those who actually died in the Vesuvius eruption in 79 AD in Pompeii.

[10:44] She was one and I think a son died in that. But that's by the way. Anyway, it's interesting. We don't have an actual account of Paul's sermon.

We're given the headings. And sometimes people think this is where very often preachers have three points to a sermon. Because Felix, Paul has three, he preaches about three things. But you know, the first thing that really strikes you here about Paul is that he preaches with an absolute fearlessness. You put yourself in Paul's situation.

The sentence, if you are found guilty, you will be taken out and executed. It happened like that all the time. And this man, Felix, had the power of life and death in his hand.

And he could say to the centurion that he had said before, put Paul under house arrest. He could say to him, take him out and behead him. It was as simple as that.

[11:48] But that's one of the things that strikes you here. Paul didn't change his style or methodology or anything.

He was absolutely up front and he just preached the gospel as if his life depended on it. He wasn't in the slightest concern about watching his P's and Q's of being politically correct or anything like that.

Paul didn't say to himself, I better tone it all down. I cannot speak the way that I would speak if I was preaching in an ordinary place. I can't preach like that.

I can't preach to this man and tell him about judgment. I can't preach to this man and tell him that he will be lost unless he finds the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul didn't think like that.

Paul just told it as it was. And you know, there's always a temptation in preaching. There can be a temptation in preaching to water down the gospel.

[12:53] In this sense, you might say to yourself, I better be careful how I put this. I don't want to hurt people. Now, no preacher should ever go out with a deliberate aim of hurting people.

But you know, there's a fact in this that truth hurts. And sometimes we need to be hurt by the truth. And we need to hear what the truth says.

And it's all too easy to say, well, I better be careful. You know, a person can preach through the Bible and preach biblically and yet avoid, manage to avoid certain parts.

And that is wrong. And Paul wasn't like that. Paul was somebody who told it just as it was. And Paul, although it might have been difficult for him at one level, he was saying to himself, the man in front of me and his wife, they have immortal souls.

They need to know about the Lord Jesus Christ. And even if I'm going to lose my head over it, I'm going to tell them the way of salvation. That was Paul's way.

[14:13] And he never wavered ever from that. And neither should we. That we have to tell people the truth. Yes, and love, but to tell people the truth.

And you know, there are people today who will take umbrage at being told that they are sinners. Because we don't like being told we're sinners. Because our own self-righteousness will say, well, I'm not too bad.

I'm not a Felix. Felix, I'm not like that. I'm a decent person. At least I think I am. Well, decency is not sufficient for God.

God has his own holy law and standards. And you and I, with the best will in the world, we cannot attain to that. And that is a great problem.

And that is why it is absolutely essential that we discover and find out what the Word of God actually says to us. What the Word of God requires of us. And the remedy that the Word of God holds out for us.

[15:16] And so Paul didn't shy away from it. And neither should we. In telling the importance of finding Jesus Christ as Savior. So Paul spoke on these three things.

He spoke, first of all, on righteousness. And that is with regard to our standing before God. Our relationship to God.

What is our standing before God? And the Bible shows us very clearly that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

You and I, we cannot match up to what God requires of us. And it is an incredibly, sometimes difficult and painful thing to discover.

And that is why some people take real umbrage at being told that they in themselves are not good enough for the kingdom of God. And they will say, how dare that message be told me?

[16:16] I am good enough. God has to accept me. No, it is not. It is not that God picks and chooses people. We are all, by nature, under condemnation, under the wrath of God.

And we are, by nature, hell bound. That is how the Bible shows. And that is where our helplessness lies. Because in and of ourselves we cannot do anything about it.

And rather than taking umbrage about hearing something like this, we should be thankful that we have been told. It is no mercy to tell somebody that they are dying and that they are going to go to hell.

But that there is a way of salvation and showing them that way of salvation. That is a kindness. It is no mercy not to tell. It is important that people will hear the message of the truth.

And so we need to be told that we are, by nature, that we are lost. But the wonderful thing about the gospel is that it tells us that there is a remedy.

[17:32] That there is a way. And Jesus has done it all. And there is this amazing transaction. This deal has been done. Where Jesus says, right, here is the deal.

I will take all your sin. Every sin. Every sin. Of your thought. Of your word. Of your deed. Everything. I will take it all. And I will transfer my perfect righteousness to your account.

There are two accounts. Your account. My account. And God looks at these accounts. As you are by nature, your account is black. It is just full of unrighteousness and sin.

My account is perfect. But I am prepared to transfer that. So that your account will look lovely and clear.

And my account is dirty and filthy. And that is what took place on Calvary. Where Jesus Christ took ours. He took all our sin upon himself.

[18:39] And this is what happens. In salvation. When you come to faith in Jesus Christ. That is what you are receiving. You are receiving the work of Jesus on the cross.

And that is why Jesus has come into this world. He came to seek and to save sinners. To seek and to save those who are lost. If you are lost here tonight. It is for you Jesus came.

It did not come for the righteous. But for sinners. And that qualifies you for salvation. And so go to him tonight and say. Lord I need salvation.

I need to be saved. And that is why you came. You love to save. This is your great work. And so this is his great transaction.

And that is what the Apostle Paul was preaching about. This great transaction that took place. Christ's righteousness. Made over to us.

[19:37] And it's. This affects our standing before God. And very simply it is this. As God looks at a Christian. He looks at them.

Through Jesus. He doesn't look at us. Apart from Jesus. So as he looks at us. He is looking. Through Jesus.

Looking through Jesus' perfection. Through Jesus' righteousness. And he says of us. This is in legal terms. That man.

That woman. That boy. That girl. Absolutely righteous. In my sight. Because of what my son has done. All these sins. Have been paid for.

The debt. Is wiped clean. Now that. Is what Paul was preaching about. About the righteousness. But then he also preached about self-control.

[20:34] And this affects our life. As we live it. In relation to God. And in relation to other people. And there's no doubt. That Paul would have struck. At the very heart. Of Felix.

Because if there was any man. Whose life. Was not lived by self-control. He lived. With all the excesses of life. And he lived with. Corruption.

And he lived with immorality. And he lived with cruelty. And you can read all about his life. If you go into history. And. So. Paul.

Paul just hammered in. And told him the importance. Of self-control in life. God requires that. Of each and every one of us. Self-control.

With regard to the way we live. And how we interact with one another. There has to be. And we need. We need pray. We need to pray. And we need grace for that.

[21 : 30] Self-control. In the way we speak. How many fallouts. Would be avoided. If there was self-control.

In our speech. Far too often. There isn't. Words. Words go. Words fly. Anger. No self-control. Anger. Wrong words. And then. There's afterwards. There's chaos. What a different world there would be. If there was self-control.

In what we. Say. And what we do. But even in the way we think. Because. Be quite sure of this. What's going on in your mind.

Becomes action. Very often. In fact. God measures. Who we are. By what we're thinking. As a person.

[22 : 23] Thinks in their heart. So is that person. That's what the Bible says. Do you want. God says. Do I want to know the real you. Well I'll tell you how I'll find out. I look within you.

That's the real you. What's hidden away from everybody else. Or we can put on a front before people. We can't before God. God sees us. Every single thing.

Our motives. Why we do what we do. Our thought life. You know we can sit in judgment on other people. And we can look at outward sins.

And we can be saying. Oh that's terrible. And God is looking at you. And looking at me. As he sees a cesspool. Of thoughts that are just terrible. Thoughts of destruction.

And hatred. And anger. And all sorts of things going on. And God is saying. How can you judge. That person. When you. Are thinking like that. Because as a person thinks in their heart.

[23 : 19] That is how they are. So you see the importance of self-control. And that's why we're told in many places in the scripture. For instance in Philipians.

Think on the things. That are lovely. That are good. That are right. Because we can't leave our minds. Just as a vacuum of emptiness. We have to think on things.

But think on the things. That are good. And so Paul preached on this. And then he preached finally on judgment. The coming judgment. And that was a solemn prospect.

Because Paul is saying. There's going to come a time of judgment. It's appointed unto all. Once to die. And after death. The judgment. And it will be required of us. How we lived. How we conducted ourselves.

Did we help? Did we hinder? Did we do good? Or did we do evil? The most important. Do we have Christ? Or do we have not? Do we not? And Paul back in Acts chapter 17.

[24 : 21] Tells us. About this judgment. And he says. God has appointed a day. In which he will judge the world. And he's also told us.

The measurement of that judgment. It's in righteousness. So just as the day of our death. Is appointed. There is already appointed.

A day of judgment. It's not something that God will. Decide on later on. It's already appointed. And so. It is so important. That we have.

The Lord Jesus Christ. Because. You might be saying to yourself. Tonight. I have loads of reasons. Why I'm not a Christian. Well. Let me tell you. Not one of them.

Will stick on that day. Not one. Doesn't matter what excuses. Or what reasons we have. For remaining. Outside the kingdom. God will not accept.

[25 : 16] Any single one of them. And when Paul preached like this. It tells us that Felix. Became alarmed. Literally. He became terrified. You see.

Felix was a judge himself. And Felix knew. Exactly what Paul was saying. Felix knew. What it was. To be a judge. And to have the power of life.

And death in his hand. Because he could. In an instant. Condemn somebody. Or in an instant. Set somebody free. See. See. See. See. See. See. See. See.

And he honed in. Exactly. On what the apostle Paul was saying. And so he was terrified. But you know. The man who was terrified. Also procrastinated.

He put off. And that was the solemn. And the sad thing about this man. Because he said. When I get an opportunity. Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity.

[26 : 11] I will summon you. And you know. So. So many people. Do exactly the same thing. They are stirred by the gospel. They are challenged by the message of the truth.

It comes in close. And they say. Hey. This is getting a wee bit close. For comfort. I will sort. I will look. I will think about this later. Think about this another time. Another day. Another opportunity.

We don't know. If we will get another opportunity. You know. How we often say. One of these days. One of these days. You know. That one of these days.

Often turns into none of these days. Not just with regard to salvation. It is true about a lot of things. Things that we are going to do. And we say. Oh. One of these days. One of these days.

One of these days never comes. And tragically. Sometimes. One of these days never comes. For some people. With regard to salvation.

[27 : 10] You make absolutely sure. That one of these days. Never becomes none of these days. For you. To be so near.

And so far. Home in. On what Jesus has done. He has done everything. Because you can't do it. I can't do it. I can't save myself.

I can't save you. You can't save yourself. You can't save me. Only Jesus saves. And tonight he says. If you are unsaved. I am here for you.

Will you ask him. Lord. Save me. Let us pray. Oh Lord. We pray to bless us. And we pray. That as we have come under your word again.

That the reality of it. May sink into our heart. May we realize. That we are face to face. With huge truths. Eternal truths. Truths that.

[28 : 06] Either make us. Or break us. Because. Your word. Is either a savor of life unto life. Or death unto death. We pray that we might not harden. Under the truth.

But that our hearts will be softened. Oh Lord. Do us good. We pray. Cleanse us from our every sin. Take us to our home safely. We ask. And forgive us for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Amen. We're going to conclude. Our service. Is singing to God's praise. From Psalm 2.

And this is from Sing Psalms. Psalm number 2. Tunis Duke Street. And it's on page 2. Verses 7 to the end.

The king then solemnly declares. I will proclaim the Lord's decree. Today your father I become. You are my son. He said to me. Ask me and for your heritage.

[29 : 06] Shall give you nations near and far. You'll break them with an iron rod. And smash them like a potter's jar. Now therefore kings. Through wisdom find.

You judges of the earth. Give ear. With reverence come and serve the Lord. Bow down with joy. And trembling fear. Pay homage to the royal son.

Lest you in wrath aside. Our thrust. For swiftly can his anger blaze. Blessed are all who in him trust. Psalm 2 from 7 to the end.

Tunis Duke Street. The king then solemnly declares.

I will proclaim the Lord's decree. Today your father I become.

[30 : 09] You are my son. He said to me.

Ask me and for your heritage. I'll give you nations.

From here and far. You'll break them with an iron rod.

And smash them like a potter's jar. Now therefore kings.

Through wisdom find. You judges of the earth.

[31 : 13] Give ear. With reverence come and serve the Lord.

Bow down with joy. And trembling fear. Pay homage to the royal son.

Lest you in wrath aside our throne. For swiftly can his anger blaze.

Blessed are all who in him trust. Now may the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore.

Amen. So let's see. My friends are all andmore policy. For thanks to the Board of Teachers.