A Sad Memorial

Acts 24:24-25  And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 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.

A memorial: A lasting testimony.

- On the second anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks on the United States at 8:46 a.m., New York City paused in silence to commemorate the time the first hijacked plane hit one of the World Trade Center's towers.
- Afterwards in a simple but moving ceremony that commemorated the past but looked to the future, children read the names of the 2,798 people who died in the terrorist attack on New York.
- The ceremony paused four times -- twice to mark the times the two planes hit the towers -- and twice to mark the times the towers fell.
- Churches and fire stations around the city tolled their bells.
- While the names were read, family members descended the ramp to the site and laid flowers in two small rectangular reflecting pools representing the footprints of the 110-story twin towers that were destroyed.
- The sorrowful litany of names was read by 200 children and young adults.
- Two by two, the children stood and read at the simple podium in the deep pit at Ground Zero, each ending with the name of his or her father, mother, brother, uncle, grandfather, or other relative who died that day two years ago.
- Each name is a memorial to a life.
- Each represents a father or mother, a husband or wife, a friend, a loved one, all are lives that were cut short.
- The list of names has now been engraved in granite as a lasting memorial to the people who died on that fateful day.
- The memorial is a final epitaph to the lives it represents.
- One last statement that identifies everything they were with what they have become, the heroes of Sept 11th.
- The memorial to the victims of 9/11 joins a distinguished league of monuments that commemorate the history of our nation.
- Its companions are the famous statue of the five marines raising the flag on Iwo Jima, a memorial to the sacrifices made for liberty and freedom.
- The Vietnam Memorial, another granite wall engraved with the names of all of the war dead as a memorial to the tremendous loss of life.
- The famous statue that stands in the New York Harbor as a memorial to the majesty of Liberty.
- These are grand memorials, but I want to talk to you about another memorial.
- Its not one you can go and visit yet it also stands as an eternal monument to a life.
- It is the sad memorial to the life of Felix, governor of Judah.
• It has been erected upon the spiritual grave of a soul and is a forever reminder of the grave danger of spiritual procrastination.
• Engraved in that eternal memorial are two simple words, “Felix trembled.”
• Felix merely trembled, he did not repent.
• Felix was a victim, not of terrorist attacks, not of war, but of tomorrow.
• If today has slain it’s thousands, then tomorrow has slain it’s ten thousands.
• He represents those who were touched but not changed, stirred but not persuaded…
• Paul preached his heart to Felix, but Felix only trembled in response.
• He trembled and said tomorrow, when God said Today.
• I am reminded of 2 Corinthians 6:2 Where Paul remembers the words of God:
  • “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.”
• Today is the day of salvation
• Yet many will miss it because they are willing victims of tomorrow.
• Tomorrow, I will change.
• Tomorrow, I will break the habit.
• Tomorrow, I will repent.
• Tomorrow, I will pray
• Tomorrow, I will fast.
• Tomorrow, I will find a talent to devote to God.
• Tomorrow, I will allow God to use my life in the way that he wants.
• Tomorrow, when I am older and more mature, I will find time for God.
• Tomorrow I will dedicate my life to him.
• Tomorrow I will become what he wants me to be.
• Tomorrow, Tomorrow, Tomorrow.
When you choose to live as a prisoner of tomorrow
• You stand powerless to act in today.
• You may tremble as conviction moves your heart.
• But you find yourself powerless to respond.
• Tomorrow dampens the voice of God today.
• Tomorrow shrugs off today’s call
• Tomorrow Never Comes!
• I remember when Rocklan was just a child, he struggled with the concept of tomorrow.
  • Daddy, is this tomorrow “Is this tomorrow?”
  • No, son, this is today.
  • But Daddy, you said last night that “tomorrow would be the day after this night.”
  • And this is the day after last night.
  • Patiently I explained the concept.
  • Today is always today.
  • Tomorrow is always some future day that will never arrive.
• That’s why the scripture is so adamant: Today is the day of Salvation
• This is the day of your memorial.
• Felix’s tomorrows are never recorded.
• His life was memorialized on the day he said tomorrow.
• He will always be remembered as the man who trembled and said tomorrow!
• You need to break free from tomorrow!

Who Was Felix?

The question we must first address, this morning is this: Who was Felix?
• Felix was the governor of Judea during the days of Roman authority.
• He was born Antonius Cladius, a Greek subject.
• Early in his life he was a slave but he was made a free man by the emperor Claudius.
• Luke gives us one of the most graphic biblical descriptions of this ruler but does not judge his character.
• However, Jewish historians wrote much about this evil ruler.
• They were graphic about the actions of Felix, even anticipating the day of judgment for Felix.
• When Luke paints Felix, he is found in royalty but it was not always that way.
• He had formerly been a slave, his freedom was purchased for him.
• In that day citizenship in the Roman empire could be purchased at a price.
• As a boy, Felix was a slave for a very powerful family.
• He became the closest companion to their son who was destined to rule Rome.
• In an act of kindness they gave Felix the gift of citizenship and freedom.
• In exchange he gave himself to a life of service to their son.
• The Roman historian, Tacitus, said of Felix that, even after his rise to power, prestige and royalty, “he reveled in cruelty and lust.”
• It was said that “he wielded the power of a King with the mind of a Slave.”
• And, mark my words, Felix may have worn the robes of royalty, but he was, indeed a slave.
• He was a slave to his own lust.
• His third wife was Drusilla, who visits Pal with him in our text.
• Drusilla will serve as a case in pint in regards to the bondage of Felix.
• Drusilla was married at fourteen to her first husband.
• Drusilla was the youngest of three daughters of Herod Agrippa I, the ruler who had James put to death.
• It was her father’s uncle, Herod Antipas, who had John the Baptist beheaded on the wish of his wife.
• It was her great grandfather, Herod the Great, who was in power at the time of the birth of Jesus, being responsible for the death of the children in the effort to eliminate the Messiah.
• And Felix was absolutely smitten by her.
• He was so enslaved to his own lusts, that he lacked all sense of self control
• He would stop at nothing to make her his wife.
• The Historians give great admiration to her beauty.
But Felix, smitten by her beauty, resorted to the sorcery of a magician to assist him in seducing her away from her first husband, Azizus, King of Emesa.

Putting aside his former wife, he purposed to make another man’s wife his own.

This is the truth about Felix.

Even though he was rescued from the chains of slavery, even though he had ascended the throne as royalty.

There was little change in his character.

His kingly crown only disguised a slave’s mind.

His kingly robes only covered the heart of the slave.

Rescued from slavery but still in chains.

A slave to the evil appetites that remained hidden but not harnessed.

There are men who live today who are bound in chains... on the inside.

No one can see their chains, no one hears their rattle, no man can see the angry scars, the chains leave upon the soul, chains where no eyes venture nevertheless they still exist.

The chains that bind men and women.

Paul

Perhaps it was this understanding that motivated Paul to pour his heart out as he preached to Felix on that fateful day.

He knew Felix and Drusilla, he knew their yesterdays.

He knew the power that the chains of bondage could use to enslave the soul.

But he also knew that there was liberty given by the Spirit of the Lord (II Corinthians 3:17)

His was the voice of Freedom

Freedom from yesterday, freedom from tomorrow!

Freedom over sin, Freedom to be made brand new.

In light of such freedom no man can afford to merely tremble and not be changed by the power of the Holy Ghost.

What Made Felix Tremble?

Paul’s message brought discomfort to the soul of Felix.

What caused Felix to tremble?

He was arrayed in royal robes, Paul was the prisoner bound in iron chains.

Felix had the facade of a successful life, money, position, power a beautiful wife by his side.

The preached Word of God cuts through the facades and speaks to the real issues of the heart.

The reality, Paul was free but Felix was in chains.

Paul’s message exposed the chains of bondage that were still wrapped around the souls of Felix and Drusilla.

Paul did not reduce the message of the Gospel for Felix and his mistress on that day.

This great ambassador in chains did not waste his words on flattery but rather preached the truth of God, summed up in three words:

Rightousness, Temperance and Judgement.
The First Topic of Paul’s Sermon -- Righteousness

The first topic of Paul’s sermon that day was righteousness.

- The state of living right is of utmost importance to everyman, whether king or pauper.
- To recognize the need for righteousness is to come to terms with the fact that we do not live our lives for ourselves but that we are subject to the scrutiny of God.
- He sees us as we really are!
- The call to right living is a call to please God.
- It is a call that transcends social and economical status.
- It is a call to morality, honesty, and integrity in your dealings with others and a call to honesty, reverence and respect in your dealings with God.
- If you choose to live righteously, you must choose to recognize God.
- If you recognize God you can no longer ignore him.
- You must judge yourself in light of His righteousness.
- Felix could not stand with head held high at the initial onslaught of the word of God.
- His throne could elevate him above men but it could not elevate him above God.
- His robes could hide his heart but they were loose rags to the peering eyes of God.

The Second Point of Paul’s Sermon -- Temperance

- The second topic that Paul began to preach of was that of temperance -- self control --.
- The very presence of Drusilla by the side of Felix was proof of how he had failed in this particular virtue.
- Still a slave to his passions.
- Paul reasoned with Felix concerning his earthly actions.
- Temperance is more than just self-control.
- It is the virtue of self-restraint, self-command, and much added discipline.
- Temperance is the holding of the reins of the conduct in the hand of the will.
- There is not enough earthly power in the essence of man to maintain a true state of temperance.
- This can only come from the man who walks in the Spirit and does not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Romans 8).
- It was the absence of this particular virtue that introduced man to the downward spiral of sin in the Garden of Eden.
- Temperance is about knowing your limitations.
- It is a great help to know that man originated in sin and that his life forever remains short of the glory of God.
- Much of the failure of man comes because he fails to recognize the limitations and shortcomings of the flesh.
- Man has the ability to introduce a space shuttle in the earth’s atmosphere into the realms of space,
- he may transplant a heart to replace a diseased one,
- he can manufacture massive weapons of defense,
he can travel by air, land, and sea
but he cannot save himself.
That knowledge demands that a man turn to God for help in controlling himself.
The driving point of the message of temperance is to bring man to the place of recognizing, I can’t do this on my own.
My best righteousness will be as filthy rags in the sight of God.
I need God!
So it was that Paul delivered to Felix the message, though you recognize the need for a change, you can’t change yourself!
As the word of God appealed to Felix’s heart he had to recognize his own need of a savior.
As he saw his need he came face to face with Jesus!

The Third Point of Paul’s Sermon -- Judgment

The third point of Paul’s sermon was the most chilling of all.
The subject of the judgment should bring every man to a place of self-evaluation.
As Felix sat that day in the presence of Jesus, all the facades of the role-playing were stripped away.
When men stand in the presence of Jesus, their character is revealed to the judgment of God.
When the Lord steps into the room his presence brings Joy to the worshiper and conviction to the sinner.
Paul engaged Felix with the concept that the judgment is a certain thing.
We cannot escape God’s judgment in our own devices.
We can reason it away, but our reasoning doesn’t affect God’s judgment.
We can make feeble excuses, but excuses will not turn away the judgment of God
Judgment is sure, It is given to every man, once to die then to face judgment.

The Effect of the Sermon

As Felix and Drusilla listened to Paul’s impassioned plea, the Word of God began to impact their lives.
What Drusilla thought of it is not recorded.
As far as Drusilla is concerned an unbroken silence will encompass her until the trumpet sounds.
However, for Felix no such luxury has been reserved.
His response is forever locked within the verses of Scripture.
Felix heard the anointed words that echoed through his spirit on that day.
He recognized his own lack of righteousness; he came to terms with his need for a savior.
He encountered Jesus Christ in the words of the apostle Paul.
He had his imagination kindled by the fire of the Spirit, for he saw the judgment in its ghostly grandeur.
He saw the Judge at the Great White Throne, whose eyes will be like flaming fires.
• He saw the vast multitudes of people, himself included.
• All of the hideous wickedness of his guilty soul was exposed before the throne of judgment.
• Felix could not stand with head held high at the initial onslaught of the word of God.
• His throne could elevate him above men but it could not elevate him above God.
• His robes may have hidden the sin in his heart but they were powerless to turn away the piercing truth of the preached word of God.
• Felix was touched.
• Felix was moved.
• And Felix resisted the tug of God’s love and Mercy upon his heart.
• His memorial was forever constructed in the words, “Felix Trembled.”
• He trembled but he pushed it off.
• He trembled but he stilled himself against the conviction.
• He trembled but he didn’t respond.
• He decided to wait until tomorrow.
• “Go thy way, for this time; and when I have a convenient season I will call thee unto me.”
• Scripture records that Paul would again go to the courts of Felix but only for Felix to attempt to gain his money.
• The epistles to the Corinthians and Philippians both document that there were several churches who would periodically send money to Paul in his last days.
• Felix, unable to respond to the Gospel message found his soul pierced through many times over for the love of money.
• He never found a convenient season.

ALMOST PERSUADED . . . (Close)

• There are people who still are “almost persuaded.”
• People who will argue with God and rationalize their own failures.
• People who will make excuses in the face of conviction.
• The human reasoning of the soul will bring on hesitation when God calls.
• That hesitation will leave you trembling just as Felix did.
• Trembling without responding.
• I am a firm believer that many stand where Felix stood, at the threshold of salvation.
• An unexplainable longing deep within the soul is touched by the merciful word of God.
• Something in the heart causes a man or woman to grow curious, to want to hear more, to desire to experience this grace and truth.
• Then comes the dilemma, the cost of conversion, the price that must be paid to become a Christian.
• There is sin and lust that must be given up.
• There are certain compromises that you have made with your flesh and with this world that must be refused.
• There is a love of money that must be overcome.
All too often, those that are troubled in their conscience, those who tremble in their spirit as they come face to face with the love of God, stop short when a decision is demanded of them.

The tragic truth, this morning, is that the Spirit will not always strive with such people.

God spoke and Felix trembled but refused to repent.

Turning away, he said, I’ll wait for another day!

He was a prisoner of tomorrow.

Can I humbly tell you this morning that today is the day of salvation.

Don’t be a prisoner of tomorrow, for tomorrow will never come.

More than a century ago DL Moody was doing a Sunday night preaching series on the life of Christ.

On the fifth Sunday night, October 8th, he preached to the largest congregation that he had ever addressed in that city, having taken for his text, “What shall I do with Jesus which is called the Christ?”

After preaching there was a great sweeping spirit of conviction that seized the house.

DL Moody sensed this, but he also knew that next week’s message would be the climax of the series as he taught on the cross.

Rather than having an alter call that night he told the people to go home and ponder in their hearts the question, what will I do with Jesus.

Then he encouraged them to come again next Sunday when we will go together to the cross and you can answer that question.

Later in his life Moody lamented,

“What a mistake! I have never dared to give an audience a week to think of their salvation since.

If they were lost they might rise up in judgement against me…

I have never seen that congregation since.

I have worked hard to keep back the tears today…

I want to tell you the lesson I learned that night, which I have never forgotten,

and that is, when I preach, to press Christ upon the people then and there, and try to bring them to a decision on the spot.

I would rather have my right hand cut off than to give an audience a week to decide what to do with Jesus.”

What happened to traumatize the great evangelist so deeply that he determined never to preach again without giving a direct and bold alter call?

The Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

As he preached that night, Chicago was burning.

In just a few hours the building where he had been preaching was reduced to ashes.

He never saw those people again.

He had missed his opportunity to invite them to Christ.

If you tremble in response to the Gospel message today, you must do more.
• None of us knows what tomorrow might bring, but I can declare to you that today is the day of Salvation.
• If this is your last chance to hear the gospel,
• If this is your last chance to feel the tug of conviction on your heart,
• If you leave this place today and never again sit under the anointing of the Holy Ghost, what will your memorial be?
• It must be more than just, “Felix Trembled” but waited for a more convenient time.
• As far as we know, the word of God never stirred the soul of Felix again.
• Never again did he feel the challenge to repent of his sins.
• Never again did he feel the tug of God’s spirit upon his heart.
• From that moment on, he was a walking “dead man” having sinned away the last chance for eternal life.
• It is a dangerous thing to reject the Holy Ghost.
• It is a dangerous thing to turn away from the calling of God.
• When you can feel his ouch, when you can feel that gentle tug of his spirit, you simply must respond.
• You can’t afford to wait until tomorrow.
• You can’t afford to wait for another opportunity.
• Today, as the Holy Ghost moves through this house, you are constructing your memorial.
• It must be more than the memorial that Felix left behind.
• It must be more than simply, “He trembled under the anointing of God but didn’t respond.”
• It must be He responded,
• It must be She was changed,
• It must be God touched his life,
• It must be She was never the same.
• The question this morning is simple:
• What will your memorial be?