



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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Jump Start # 1693

Acts 24:25 "But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, 'God away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you.'"

Our verse finds the apostle Paul in prison. The apostle had been arrested once again for preaching that Jesus was the Christ, which means the Messiah. The Jews were fed up with him and that message. They brought charges against Paul to the Roman governor Felix. After a few days, Felix summons Paul and allowed him to speak about the faith in Christ Jesus. This is where our verse is found.

Notice from Paul's perspective:

1. He didn't small talk nor avoid the topic of why he was arrested. He preached Christ to Felix.
2. He didn't try to make all of this one big misunderstanding. He didn't try to find a way to get out of prison. He didn't make this about himself.
3. He didn't say things to make Felix feel good. He didn't drop names. He didn't butter Felix up.

Notice the perspective of the message:

The text identifies three things that Paul talked about, righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.

1. He didn't talk about how nice Heaven will be, nor paint a picture that we will all be there.
2. He didn't avoid talking about application. These three things were missing in Felix's life. Roman governors were not known to be righteous. Immoral, yes. Ruthless, yes. Corrupt, yes. But, righteous, no. They were not known to have self-control. Anger and hastily made decisions were common. And a coming judgment is something that this Roman would not have thought about. His biggest fear was keeping Rome off his back and his next move up the political ladder.
3. The message was exactly what Felix needed to hear. It prompted a personal response. It wasn't theories and logic and ideas. It was a message that landed on his front porch.

(OVER)

Notice Felix's perspective:

1. He became frightened. I doubt he expected that. Had he known that he would not have called Paul in. He was expecting a nice message that was probably boring. Instead he was hit with righteousness, self-control and the coming judgment.
2. He sent Paul away with the thought, "when I find time I will summon you." He never did find the time. The next verse tells us that two years past. In two years he never found the time. Then he was replaced. He moved on. He didn't find the time.

This one verse speaks volumes about what we expect and what ought to be preached while in worship services. Some go to church on Sunday because that's what nice people do. They give up an hour and they want the benefit of a nice message, a pat on the back and an encouraging message to keep it up. And for many, this is exactly what they get. Week after week, it's "You're ok and I'm ok." If that's the case, why even go? Are we simply needing our egos built up? Do we feel that God is saying the same thing that the preacher is saying? What good people we are. What a nice crowd this morning. What nice, nice, nice things.

Paul didn't do that. He told Felix what would help him with God. He told Felix what would prepare him for Heaven. He told him the truth. Righteousness, self-control and being judged by God are life altering messages. Those things would prompt changes. Those things would make a person move closer to God. Felix became frightened. It wasn't the message he wanted. He never came back. Some will do that today. They come wanting to laugh. They come wanting to hear nice things. When they are challenged. When the message is too personal, some stop coming. Some get mad. Some find another place and another preacher that will say nice things. The "ear tickling" preaching is still very comforting and popular today. The line is long to hear such preachers. They are viewed as great. They entertain. They make people feel good. They know just how to win a crowd. But righteousness, self-control and a coming judgment don't make it into their sermons. Too stiff. Too much doctrine. Too negative. Too demanding. Crowds won't like it. It might even scare some.

Paul told Felix what he needed. Felix didn't want to hear that. When I find the time, I will summon you. When I'm not so busy, I'll come to church. When things slow down, I'll visit. The response of Felix is repeated every week. It's an easy excuse, just like a soft bed. It's easy to get into it, but hard to get out. It takes effort. It takes will power. It takes an understanding that I need God's message. I need to be righteous. I need self-control. I need to know that I will be judged by God.

Help us to have the heart that when I am scared, I will continue on with the Lord. When I must change, I will continue on with the Lord. When I hear a message that is personal and it bothers me, I will continue on with the Lord.

Finding time...there is no such thing. Everyone has the same amount. There is no bank that you can go to and borrow more time. You can stock pile some time for another day. We all have the same. The professional and the student. The young mother and the retired person. Same amount. Everyday. It doesn't change. There are not some days that we get a few more hours. Nope. Finding time, really means, priorities. It means adjusting schedules. It means doing what you want to do. You find time to watch the shows you love on TV. You find time to text, email and keep up with others. We can waste time by doing a bunch of nothing or being so disorganized that we can't find anything. But listening to God's message, it's not about finding time for that, it's about wanting to. If you want to, you will.

Felix didn't want to. And he didn't. And unless there was something that we don't know about, he went on his way, busy in the Roman political system and died and never believed in Christ. And thousands are doing the same thing today. Too busy for God. Don't want to change. Don't want commitment. They live busy lives and one day they die. They die never believing in Christ.

Paul and Felix and four words: righteousness, self-control, coming judgment. Paul spoke the truth. Felix ran in fear. And we are left wondering what we would do. Would we say what Paul said? Would we run like Felix did?

You and me and four words: righteousness, self-control, coming judgment.