**When I Have A Convenient Time**

**Introduction:**

How many of us have been guilty of putting something off? While some tasks we put off are unimportant, others are of much greater consequence. Such is the decision to become a Christian. Listen to the following story.

“The story is told that Satan once held a conference with his demons. He announced his concern about the number becoming Christians and asked if any had a suggestion on how they might slow the trend. One demon said, “We could tell people there is no heaven, so there is no need for them to become Christians.” “No, that won’t work,” said Satan. “All who believe in God know there is something beyond this life – an existence with God Himself.” Another demon spoke up: “We could tell people there is no hell, so they have nothing to worry about if they don’t become Christians.” Satan sighed. “That won’t work either. Anyone who looks at the injustice in the world knows that there has to be a time when everything is made right.” Finally, one demon suggested, “We could tell people that they should become Christians, that there is a heaven and a hell – but that there is no hurry.” Satan laughed and said, “Perfect! That will cause more to be lost than any other message we cold preach!” The story is fiction, but the message is not: The idea that “there is no hurry” has sent millions to face God unprepared. **Source Unknown**

We will learn from today’s lesson that waiting can be very dangerous.

**Text:** Acts 24:22-27

**Body:**

1. **The Audience** Acts 24:22-24 “But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, ‘When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on you case.’ 23 So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him. 24 And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.” NKJV

Felix was born a slave in the household of Antonia, the mother of Claudius, who would one day become the Roman emperor. Felix became a favorite of Claudius and was later appointed governor of Judea. He was a cruel and corrupt ruler who allowed lust to control him. Drusilla was Felix’s third wife. She was already married when Felix lured her away from her husband at about the age of sixteen. She was a member of the infamous Herod family. Her father, Herod Agrippa I had murdered the apostle James. Her great-uncle Herod Antipas had killed John the Baptist. Her great-grandfather Herod the Great had killed the babies of Bethlehem in a futile attempt to kill the baby Jesus. She was Jewish on her mother’s side. She was a woman of great beauty outwardly, but lacked beauty inwardly. Felix and Drusilla arrived in Caesarea, where Paul had been sent, and desired to have an interview with Paul. It appears that they both wanted to learn more about “the faith.” Paul had apparently made an impression on Felix at the trial. Acts 24:22-23

1. **The Message** Acts 24:25 “Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.’ ” NKJV Many men in Paul’s situation might have tried to win their approval or applause. Maybe he could have talked about his many travels over the country, people that he had met, or wonders he had seen. Possibly he could have pleaded with them to have him released or noted his terrible condition while chained, . . . Not Paul, he “reasoned” with them concerning the most important thing in the world, the destiny of their souls. No doubt Paul talked of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and of salvation in Him. (Acts 4:12) “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” NKJV Paul knew the importance of persuading men to become a Christian. (II Corinthians 5:11a) “Knowing therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men…” NKJV Paul couldn’t just leave Felix and Drusilla alone; he “had” to say something. Paul’s message went beyond the “basics” of the faith. A belief in Jesus brings with it demand and sacrifices.
2. Righteousness Felix and Drusilla were known for corruption and injustice. Several aspects:
3. Right doing (Psalm 119:172b) “For all your commandments are righteousness.” (I John 3:7b) “He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.” NKJV This would include being fair, honest, and just in dealings with others. This was unfamiliar territory for these two.
4. The righteousness God desires is that found in Christ, based upon “the faith.” (Philippians 3:9) “and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;” NKJV These two needed to be convinced that they were sinners and lost! This needed to be a very personal message.
5. Self-control Felix and Drusilla were people who followed and fulfilled their lustful desires. It was necessary for them to hear that self-control was essential. Self-discipline and inner strength are needed to master one’s desires. (Galatians 5:24) “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” NKJV Self-control is both a fruit of the Spirit and one of Christian graces. Felix and Drusilla needed to exercise restraint in their conduct, their sexual lives in particular. Recall that they had no right to be married to one another in the first place. John the Baptist preached a similar message to Drusilla’s great uncle and it cost him his life. This was a message they desperately needed to hear. Paul did not hesitate, either. Sin must be preached against regardless of where or in whom it lives!
6. Judgment to Come While Paul stood before Felix and Drusilla now, one day they would both have to stand before Christ and give an account of how they had lived their lives. (II Corinthians 5:10) “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the thing done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” NKJV He most surely pointed out the future of those who sin willfully. (Hebrews 10:26-27, 31) “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. 31 It is a fearful thing, to fall into the hands of the living God.” NKJV
7. **The Response** Acts 24:25b-26 “Felix was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.’ Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.” NKJV

Paul’s message terrified Felix. Apparently Drusilla was not affected at all. His conscience was pricked at least a little. He glimpsed his future and was scared, petrified! Felix believed enough to be afraid, but not enough to obey the gospel message. His fear wasn’t powerful enough to cause him to repent, to change his ways and turn to God. (James 2:19b) “Even the demons believe – and tremble!” NKJV Convenient – It was thought that “later” would be a better time. But for Felix, the opportunity was gone. Even though he talked with Paul many times later, it wasn’t for spiritual reasons. His heart had become hardened.

Acts 24:27 “But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.” NKJV

**Invitation:**

In many ways, all of us are on trial today. Whether or not you are allowed entrance into heaven depends upon your response to the gospel message. Will you:

1. Refuse to obey
2. Put it off and wait for another opportunity
3. Obey it by believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized Remember that “one day will be your last day to obey the gospel.” This may be that day!

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