

Righteousness, Self-Control, and the Coming Judgement

Introduction

The Text

A. As you're turning to [Acts 24](#), let me quickly remind you where we are in the narrative . . .

1. Because of the threat of conspiracy and the desire of these Jews to draw out and assassinate Paul, the Roman authorities there in Jerusalem decided to secretly and hastily usher the apostle up to Caesarea.
2. Caesarea was a city located along the eastern Mediterranean coast and the seat of the Roman government there in Judea. As such, the governor himself, named Felix at the time, would lodge there in Herod's old castle.
3. And he becomes a main player in the chapter we now have before us. He's got Paul in custody and he's willing to hear his case, but, in order to effectively do that, he's waiting for Paul's accusers to arrive.

B. That's where we pick it up in [v. 1](#) . . .

¹ And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul.

² And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: "Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation,³ in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. ⁴ But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. ⁵ For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. ⁶ He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. ⁸ By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him."

⁹ The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so.

¹⁰ And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. ¹¹ You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, ¹² and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city. ¹³ Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. ¹⁴ But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, ¹⁵ having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. ¹⁶ So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. ¹⁷ Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. ¹⁸ While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— ¹⁹ they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. ²⁰ Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood

before the council,²¹ other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: ‘It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.’”

²² But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off, saying, “When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case.”²³ Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs.

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.²⁵ And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, “Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.”²⁶ At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him.²⁷ When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison. (Acts 24:1-27)

Focusing In

A. I should say at the beginning here that, because much of this chapter seems a bit of a rerun of things we’ve seen before—with Paul being falsely accused by these Jews and then forced to offer a defense for himself and all this—I’ve thought it best to focus in this morning on that portion of our text that offers us something new to consider.

1. In particular, I want to look at [vv. 22-27](#), where we’re given this compelling window into Paul’s ongoing relations with the governor Felix and even with Felix’ wife Drusilla who, as Luke tells us, interestingly enough, was herself a Jew ([v. 24](#)).
2. But dialing things in even tighter than this, I’m especially interested in looking with you this morning at those three key topics that Luke says composed the essence of Paul’s discussion with them there in [v. 25](#). We’re told that he “[reasoned \[with them\] about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment . . .](#)” Righteousness. Self-control. Coming judgment.

B. What might this discussion have been like? What sorts of things would he have said here?

1. Borrowing from the rest of Scripture and especially from the catalogue of Paul’s letters, I’m going to attempt to fill this out a bit more for us.
2. I’d like to imagine what he might have said and why and what it means for us.
 - a. When we look at these topics as they’re addressed elsewhere by Paul, we can see that there is both a negative and a positive side to them.
 - b. They cut in two directions.
 - c. They form the essence of what we might call both the bad news and the good news of the Christian message.
 - i. The gospel, after all, includes both an indictment of everyone everywhere for our sin AND an invitation for us to turn from that sin and find forgiveness and salvation in the person and work of Jesus.

(1) It’s a message that’s both startlingly bad at its beginning and unimaginably good by its end.

C. So that's what I want to look at with you this morning . . .

1. I want to take these three ideas—"righteousness", "self-control", and "coming judgment"—and consider them with you, first in their more negative sense, and then in their more positive sense.
2. We'll make our way through three headings in particular: (1) The Bad News; (2) The Good News; and (3) The Pivotal Choice that lay before us.

(1) The Bad News

A. Let's consider how Paul might use these three ideas to cut in a way that's hard, at least at first . . .

"Righteousness"

The Moral Law

A. What would it mean for Paul to reason with Felix and Drusilla about "righteousness"?

1. Well, I think it must have first included some discussion about the moral law of God.
 - a. This is the standard of justice, of righteousness, which God has woven into the fabric of the universe—indeed, even into the fabric of our own souls.

B. When it comes to determining where we stand in this, it is not sufficient for us to measure ourselves against others, as if being a little "better" than a fellow sinner makes us fully righteous.

1. No. However crazy it sounds, we are to measure ourselves against God himself—his holiness, his righteousness.

C. The Ten Commandments as they were given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai were not some arbitrary list of rules chosen at random by God to enforce upon us. They are the very transcription of his character:

1. We are not to kill because he is the author of life, not death.
2. We are not to commit adultery—because God is ever always our faithful bridegroom.
3. We are not to steal—because he is the giver, not taker, of all good things.
4. We are to tell the truth—because God himself cannot tell a lie.

D. To be righteous, then, is to be like the one in whose image we've been made, through and through.

1. And here's what Paul says all over his letters: No one gets there. No, not one!
2. Rom. 3:9-12: "⁹ [W]e have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.'"

Scripture and Conscience

- A. In Felix' case, it does seem he may have already had some knowledge of the Scriptures and God's law and what he requires of man.
1. So Luke tells us in [v. 22](#) of our text that he had "a rather accurate knowledge of the Way" Perhaps from his Jewish wife. Perhaps from some other source.
 - a. Whatever the case, he knew something of the matter.
- B. But even if he didn't, in his letters, Paul makes it plain that the law of God is, in fact, written on the heart of every person. To be made in God's image, among other things, means we can't shake a deep inward sense of God's law.
1. So Paul writes in [Rom. 2:14-15a](#): "¹⁴ [W]hen Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness"
 2. Paul already talked about the idea of "conscience" up in [Acts 24:16](#) and I think the idea is wonderfully relevant here.
 - a. After all, conscience, as you likely know, is a composite of two words: [con](#) ("with") + [science](#) ("knowledge") = "with knowledge."
 - b. It's very similar in the original Greek in which the NT is written: [suneidēsis](#) → [sun](#) ("with") + [eidos](#) ("sight") = "with sight."
 - i. The meaning is essentially the same: We have knowledge of, we have sight of, God's moral law. It's written on our hearts, stamped upon our nature, as it were.
 - ii. We may not abide by it. But we certainly know it.
- C. This is essentially the point of C.S. Lewis' opening chapter in his well-known, well-regarded book [Mere Christianity](#). I've never forgotten the way he gets into the discussion and I thought, if you'll permit me to read a rather lengthy section of it, I'd like to read it to you now . . .
1. The chapter is titled "The Law of Human Nature" and here's what he begins: "Everyone has heard people quarrelling. Sometimes it sounds funny and sometimes it sounds merely unpleasant; but however it sounds, I believe we can learn something very important from listening to the kind of things they say. They say things like this: 'How'd you like it if anyone did the same to you?' — 'That's my seat, I was there first' — 'Leave him alone, he isn't doing you any harm' — 'Why should you shove in first?' — 'Give me a bit of your orange, I gave you a bit of mine' — 'Come on, you promised.' People say things like that every day, educated people as well as uneducated, and children as well as grownups. Now what interests me about all these remarks is that the man who makes them is not merely saying that the other man's behaviour does not happen to please him. He is appealing to some kind of standard of behaviour which he expects the other man to know about. And the other man very seldom

replies: 'To hell with your standard.' Nearly always he tries to make out that what he has been doing does not really go against the standard, or that if it does there is some special excuse. He pretends there is some special reason in this particular case why the person who took the seat first should not keep it, or that things were quite different when he was given the bit of orange, or that something has turned up which lets him off keeping his promise. It looks, in fact, very much as if both parties had in mind some kind of Law or Rule of fair play or decent behaviour or morality or whatever you like to call it, about which they really agreed. And they have. If they had not, they might, of course, fight like animals, but they could not quarrel in the human sense of the word. Quarrelling means trying to show that the other man is in the wrong. And there would be no sense in trying to do that unless you and he had some sort of agreement as to what Right and Wrong are; just as there would be no sense in saying that a footballer had committed a foul unless there was some agreement about the rules of football.

. . . [T]he most remarkable thing is this. Whenever you find a man who says he does not believe in a real Right and Wrong, you will find the same man going back on this a moment later. He may break his promise to you, but if you try breaking one to him he will be complaining "It's not fair" before you can say Jack Robinson. . . . Have they not [then] let the cat out of the bag and shown that, whatever they say, they really know the Law of Nature just like anyone else?

It seems, then, we are forced to believe in a real Right and Wrong. People may be sometimes mistaken about them, just as people sometimes get their sums wrong; but they are not a matter of mere taste and opinion any more than the multiplication table. Now if we are agreed about that, I go on to my next point, which is this. None of us are really keeping the Law of Nature."

He goes on to make his case for that, but then he comes out at the end and concludes as follows: "These, then, are the two points I wanted to make. First, that human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it. Secondly, that they do not in fact behave in that way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it" (3-4, 6-8).

- a. I imagine this was the sort of thing Paul was driving at with Felix and Drusilla here with his discussion of "righteousness."
- b. But it puts us all on the hook, doesn't it?

"Self-Control"

Contextualizing for His Audience

A. But what about "self-control"?

1. This particular note, I'd like to think, was Paul's way of contextualizing for his audience.
 - a. For, given what we know of Felix from the historians of antiquity, he was strikingly lacking in this very quality.

B. This was evident in his public life:

1. His administration was notorious for its corruption, repression, and cruelty.

2. He was known for being “utterly merciless in crushing opposition” (NBD).
3. Unrest increased under his rule, because, as the Roman historian Tacitus tells us, he exercised his authority with “with savagery and lust” (Hist. 5.9).
4. This all really precipitated the Jewish revolt that would come later in the 60s and ultimately lead to the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D.
5. It’s why the emperor Nero recalled him and replaced him with Festus as we saw at the end of our chapter (v. 27). Things were clearly out of his hand because of how heavy his hand was.

a. He lacked, in other words, self-control. And it came back to bite him.

C. But such a thing was also plain in his personal life:

1. Take, for example, his marriage to Drusilla.
 - a. She was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I and, therefore, the sister of Herod Agrippa II (who we’ll meet in the next chapter [Acts 25:13]).
 - b. And here’s the thing: she was already married to another king over a small region in Syria.
 - c. But that didn’t stop Felix. The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that Drusilla was stunningly beautiful and Felix had to have her. So he solicited a friend to play the part of a magician and manipulate her into leaving the one for the other.
 - d. And, in so doing, as Josephus puts it, he seduced her into “transgress[ing] the laws of her forefathers” (Antiq. 20:143) by committing adultery with him.
2. We see other examples of this sort of thing playing out on a personal level right here in our text . . .
 - a. In v. 26 we’re told that, even while he was discussing such grave and important matters with Paul, he was really, in his heart of hearts, just hoping to get a bribe from him. He thought maybe Paul would offer him some money under the table in exchange for his release.
 - b. And then in v. 27 we see that he was willing to keep Paul unnecessarily imprisoned to try to curry favor with the Jews.

D. If I were to boil all this down for us, it does seem like it’s the same common culprits we come to expect whenever there’s corruption of authority and things.

1. He’s after sex, money, and power. It’s a tale as old as time.
2. But at the bottom of it all for Felix was a lack of self-control.

E. Paul is here then, as they say, “going for kill.”

1. With his discussion of “righteousness” he was setting the hook.
2. As he transitions now to talk about “self-control”, he’s trying to reel him in: “This is a serious problem. You can rule all these people, but you can’t rule yourself.”

Concentration of Sin

- A. Every now and then, I will dip into Oswald Chambers' famous little devotional *My Utmost for His Highest*. And whenever I do, no matter how many times I've read it, I always seems to come out with some fresh new insight. And what I read the other day seems relevant on this point now.
- B. He's reflecting on that time Isaiah is brought into the presence of God and he falls back crying out: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips . . ." (Isa. 6:5). And here's what he says . . .
1. "When the Lord appeared to Isaiah in a vision, Isaiah was convicted by a sense of his sinfulness (Isaiah 6:1—5). This conviction wasn't vague or indefinite; the Lord revealed to Isaiah the exact nature of his sin, showing him that he was 'a man of unclean lips.'
A sure sign that I am in the presence of God is this lack of vagueness about sin. I realize I am a sinner not in a general sense but in a particular sense. I understand that there is a concentration of sin in a specific area of my life. It's easy to say, 'Oh, yes, I know I am a sinner.' But I can't get away with a vague statement like this when I am with God" (July 3).
- C. If God were coming after you this morning, as I believe he is; if God were to bring you into the unrelenting light of his holy presence—what would it be for you?
1. "Woe is me! For I am a man of unclean eyes—I keep looking where I shouldn't, clicking on what I shouldn't, watching what I shouldn't."
 2. "Woe is me! For I am a woman of unclean ears—I love listening to the latest gossip. I lean in when others are being torn down. And I'll even add my own slander on occasion."
 - a. For Felix it was self-control. For Isaiah it was his mouth. For you . . . ?

"Coming Judgment"

The King of Kings

- A. But Paul doesn't stop there. He goes on to discuss the "coming judgment."
1. He's set the hook. He's reeled him in. Now he's trying to get him in the net and in the boat.
 2. He's getting as honest, as earnest, with Felix and Drusilla as he can.
- B. And you can imagine how startling this idea would be, especially for Felix.
1. This is a man who's likely grown a bit intoxicated with his authority.
 2. You see the sort of power he could wield just by the way he conducts himself in this courtroom, as it were. Did you notice? People don't speak, whether from the side of the accusers (plaintiff) or from the side of the defendant, without his explicit approval.
 - a. So before Tertullus, the spokesman for the Jews (v. 1), could only begin his remarks "when he had been summoned . . ." (v. 2) by Felix.
 - b. It's the same for Paul. He is only permitted to make his defense once Felix from his chair "nodded to him to speak" (v. 10).
 - i. The whole room is in his sway. These peoples' lives are in his hands.

- ii. And, of course, because he's the judge.
- C. But here's the thing. Paul is saying this judge will one day be judged: "As I've stood before you, you will stand before him. You may conduct yourself like a king. But you will answer to the 'King of kings' (i.e. [Rev. 19:16](#)) soon enough!"
- 1. That's why, when John is describing the last day judgment, he talks specifically about how these kings of the earth—these guys who seemingly had it all during their lives—will respond. Do you remember? It's a terrifying scene.
 - a. " ¹² When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, ¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. ¹⁴ The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ calling to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?' " (Rev. 6:12-17).
- D. Listen, so often we live like we're kings, don't we?
- 1. We like to think that we're in charge, that we control our destiny, that we call the shots, that we're accountable to no one.
 - 2. But we're not as majestic or powerful or substantial as we like to imagine.
 - a. And there will come a day when we will have to face the true King and give account of our lives to him. It's a "coming judgment."

(2) The Good News

"Faith in Christ Jesus"

- A. Now we've seen the hard take on it all. Where's the pleasant angle? Where's the "good news" in all this?
- B. Before I run back through those key words again, let me show you why I think we're right to do so—to imagine that Paul didn't just leave Felix and Drusilla here dangling by a cobweb's thread over the fires of hell, as it were, but that he was trying to awaken them, to lead them away from condemnation and damnation to something better . . . to Jesus.
- C. I wonder if you saw how Luke framed this whole discussion about righteousness, self-control, and coming judgment in the verse just prior to that one, [v. 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." There it is!

1. He's not just reasoning "about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment" (v. 25) in and of themselves.
 2. He's reasoning about those things as they are to be understood ultimately in light of the person and work of Jesus—who is the "Christ", the anointed one, the King himself!
 - a. The point isn't to leave them dangling over the flames of hell.
 - b. It's lead them to "faith in Christ Jesus" and to the bright halls of heaven that await them if they only would.
- D. With this in view, now these words take on their positive sense. Now, seen in light of Christ, we truly have good news.
1. As John Stott puts it: "In this case the three topics of conversation were what are sometimes called the 'three tenses of salvation', namely how to be justified or pronounced righteous by God, how to overcome temptation and gain self-mastery, and how to escape the awful final judgment of God" (BST).
 2. We might say, in theological terms, that these three topics now refer to justification, sanctification, and glorification.
- E. Let me quickly take you through them again one-by-one . . .

"Righteousness"

- A. Regarding righteousness, earlier we read from Paul in [Rom. 3](#), how no one is righteous in and of themselves, no not one.
1. But that's not where his conversation ends. He doesn't stop with that.
 2. No! He's trying to move us from self-righteousness, which is a pipe dream, to Christ-righteousness, which is God's provision for us in the gospel to be received by grace through faith.
 - a. The only reason he drives a nail in the coffin of that former idea is so he can drive us onward towards the latter.
- B. So in [Rom. 3:21-25](#) he goes on to write: " ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."
1. What is he saying here? Well, it's essentially this: Because we couldn't get ourselves back up to God, God determined in his Son to come down to us.
 - a. God put him forward as a "propitiation by his blood"—a wrath-bearing, sin-atoning, God-appeasing sacrifice.

- i. He gets my sin with all its bitter consequence.
 - ii. And I get his righteousness with all its glorious reward.
- C. Returning to that scene with Isaiah in the presence of God, under conviction, this is what God does next with him. Do you remember?
 - 1. After convicting him of his sin, he proceeds to cancel the debt of it, to cover it, to cleanse it.
 - 2. And how does he do that? He takes a coal from the altar (picturing propitiation, an atoning sacrifice) and he touches the prophet's lips with it: "[Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for](#)" (Isa. 6:7).
- D. What you can't do for yourself, God has done for you in Christ. Stop trying to work out your own righteousness and receive freely that which he has already worked for you.

"Self-Control"

- A. And the interesting thing is, do you want to know what happens when you are justified, counted righteous, by grace through faith in Christ?
 - 1. As you are counted righteous in position, little by little, you become more righteous in practice. You grow in godliness.
 - 2. With justification God gets the legal stuff out of the way, all so he can come into our lives by the Holy Spirit and begin to renovate our nature. Grace doesn't just cover us, it changes us. We're not perfect, but we're not the same either.
- B. That's why Paul, in [Gal. 5](#), refers to "[self-control](#)" for example, not as a work of the flesh, but as part of "[the fruit of the Spirit](#)" (vv. 22-23). It's not something you have to strain and sweat to produce. It's something that starts to come by the Spirit from a renewed heart. You get the Spirit, and you start to grow in self-control.
 - 1. Because you don't just get Jesus' righteous record.
 - 2. You get a relationship with him, and he's changing you, conforming you to himself.
 - a. Justification leads to sanctification. Righteousness to self-control.

"Coming Judgment"

- A. And all of this leads to the "[coming judgment](#)"—only now, because of Christ, it's no longer a terrifying prospect, but the very climax of our redemption!
- B. The cross is the judgement day come early for Jesus so that the judgment day can go well for me.
 - 1. As the author of Hebrews puts it: "[Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him](#)" (Heb. 9:28).
 - 2. There is no double jeopardy in the kingdom of heaven.

- a. If God has already dealt with your sin in Jesus on the cross, he's not going to come looking to deal with it again in you.
 - i. The debt has already been paid. The wrath has already been poured out. The sin has already been wiped away.
 - ii. Therefore, you have nothing to fear come judgment day.
- C. It's a fascinating thing, and it's long moved me. Do you remember the question those "kings of the earth" left hanging in the air back in [Rev. 6](#) when judgment day came for them?
 - 1. " ¹⁶ [H]ide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (vv. 16-17).
 - 2. Well, their question is answered just a few verses later. So John continues: " ⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Rev. 7:9-10).
 - a. They are not alarmed. They are not dismayed. They are not crying out for the rocks to bash their faces in lest they face God's wrath.
 - b. No. They are "standing". And they are singing.
 - 3. How?!
 - a. Well, they say it there don't they? "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" "We are standing and singing because we have been saved by our God and by the Lamb who was slain for us on that cross."
 - b. As [v. 14](#) goes on to say, these are the folks who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."
 - 4. Their sin has been run through wash and spin cycle of Calvary. Has yours?
- D. I suppose that leads us to the last thing I'd want to say . . .

(3) The Pivotal Choice

Alarmed but Unchanged

- A. Did you notice how Felix responds to all this talk of righteousness, self-control, the coming judgement, faith in Christ Jesus?
 - 1. What does Luke say there in [v. 25](#)? He "was alarmed . . ." He was afraid, startled, terrified.
 - a. The word there in the Greek, it's used to describe people's response to a great and terrible earthquake in [Rev. 11:13](#): "[A]t that hour there was a great earthquake, and

a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified”

- B. Felix could feel the ground shaking beneath him. He’s coming under conviction. He sees the perilous state of his own soul. What would he do?
 - 1. What a tragedy it is to keep reading here. What would he do? Shrug it off and go back to normal. “Felix was alarmed and said, ‘Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity [or ‘when I find the time’] I will summon you’” (v. 25).
 - a. And if you keep reading, you see that he goes right back to chasing money and power and whatever else.
 - b. He never “found the time” it seems, to truly deal with the things that the Holy Spirit was impressing upon him in those moments.
 - i. He shrugged it off. He kicked the can. He pushed it back.
- C. I’m aware that some of us may be handling God in this way.
 - 1. We come to church. We sit around the people of God and listen to the Word of God. We feel some of the conviction, some of the warning of the Spirit. We may even sense some of the love of God for us in Jesus.
 - 2. But we don’t let it change us. We don’t repent and believe. We don’t turn and trust. We just go right along on the same way we’ve always gone.

“Today!”

- A. We must all beware of trifling with the Spirit of God!
 - 1. As the author of Hebrews exhorts us: “¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. ¹⁵ As it is said, ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts . . .’” (Heb. 3:12-15).
- B. We don’t exactly know what came of Felix. But we do know something about what came of Drusilla, his wife?
 - 1. Josephus tells us that some years after this encounter with Paul, she was with her son on a trip, likely visiting Pompeii, when Vesuvius blew its top. As he puts it: they both “perished at the conflagration of the mountain Vesuvius” (Antiq. 20:144).
 - 2. She never “found the time” and then she was out of time.
- C. “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” . . . but come—come to Jesus, whether for the first time or the thousandth time!