

Convenience or Commitment?

January 13, 2008

Icebreaker: *What is one thing you do just because it is convenient? What is one thing you do because you are committed?*

We left Paul in Caesarea awaiting trial before governor Felix. Remember the words the Lord spoke to Paul in Acts 23:11 right after he had been rescued from the angry mob, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify in Rome.” This trial in Caesarea takes Paul one step closer to Rome. Before he can get to Rome there is work to be done—he must give his testimony concerning Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the dead.

Acts 24:1-9

What do the Jewish leaders and their lawyer praise to “butter up” Felix?

- They praise him
- They praise the peace he has brought

What accusations do they have against Paul?

- He is violating the peace Felix has worked hard to preserve
- Troublemaker, stirs up riots, desecrated the temple (remember, they thought he had brought Gentiles in the temple).

Acts 24:10-21

Paul tells the truth. He defends his actions and his beliefs. He comes back to the central message of his preaching—the resurrection of the dead. Paul makes it clear that our belief in the resurrection should influence the way we live. *In verse 16 what does Paul say he does because of his belief in the resurrection?*

- He tries to keep a clear conscience before God and all people.
- That even includes trying to keep a clear conscience before his accusers.

Why is it important for Christians to maintain integrity and a clear conscience to the best of our ability?

- We are held to a higher standard of behavior than the world.

Paul makes the point that those who rallied the crowd against him in the temple were not even present to testify. If you remember back to **Acts 21:27** it was Jews from the province of Asia who stirred up the crowd. Paul is asking where the witnesses are for Felix to cross examine.

Acts 24:22-27

The case comes to a close for the time being and Paul is placed under house arrest. Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way (that is a name for the Christians at the time), and his wife Drusilla who was Jewish and related to Herod Agrippa were probably curious to learn more about the Christian movement. Paul talked

about the Christian movement but also mentioned some application that may have hit too close to home for Felix who had taken Drusilla to be his third wife, stealing her away from her husband when she was 16. *What three things Paul mentioned made Felix “afraid”?*

- Righteousness
- Self-control
- Judgment to come

How does our future resurrection encourage us to live with righteousness and self-control?

- We know that judgment awaits us
- God has called us to be holy
- Grace is essential but it doesn't make doing righteous things any less important.

What was Felix response to Paul's message?

- He was afraid and said he would call him when it was more convenient

The righteous thing to do is not always the most convenient. *When are times living righteously is inconvenient?*

- Telling the truth is not always convenient
- Serving others is not always convenient
- Repentance is not always convenient
- Taking up our cross and following Jesus is not always convenient

If we are waiting on Jesus to be convenient we may be waiting a long time.

Why is commitment essential in our Christian walk?

- There are times we have to do the tough things—we have to be committed to our cause.

The resurrection helps us be committed because we know there is more to the story than just doing the easy thing.

What would you say to someone who said Christianity was just “too inconvenient?”

There is a huge contrast between Paul, who was committed even to the point of death and was on trial because of his beliefs about Jesus and Felix who was looking for the easy way out.

The question for us is this, *“How are we to remain committed to Christ in a world that pushes convenience on us?”*

Application

What parts of your life need a little more commitment to Christ?

When have you settled for convenience over commitment?

Who do you know who could use some encouragement because they are at a tough spot and need to be reminded to stay strong and committed to Christ?