**A Roman Governor Trembles at Righteousness**

In about 58 AD, the apostle Paul found himself imprisoned in the city of Caesarea on the coast of the Mediterranean. He had been rescued from a Jewish mob in Jerusalem by the Roman army commander Claudius Lysias, then transferred to Caesarea because of threats on his life. The intent was for Felix the governor to hear Paul’s case and determine whether or not the accusations of the Jewish leaders had any merit. What began as protective custody dragged on into unwarranted incarceration.

According to the will of God, Paul’s circumstances afforded him opportunities to present the truth of the gospel to men who otherwise would never have heard it. Acts 24:25 tells us that, in his audiences with Felix, he discussed “righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come.” It is fascinating to note that this tough, worldly, powerful Roman official was terrified by the things that he heard! What was it about these three spiritual concepts would cause Felix to tremble?

We don’t know exactly what Paul said to Felix, but we do have inspired writings that reveal truth about righteousness, self-control and judgment to come. By devoting a study to each, we should gain some insight into Felix’s unsettled response.

**Righteousness is defined by the creator, not the creature.** It is difficult for many to accept that there is a being who is intelligent enough and powerful enough to have designed and created everything (including us) and that, as a result, He is inherently and ultimately in charge. They chafe at the idea that we are the clay and He is the potter to do with us as He wishes (Romans 9:21). But this relationship is necessarily true regardless of the nature of the creator’s character.

The good news is that the one powerful enough to create us also loves us and knows what is best for us. God doesn’t subject us to a set of arbitrary do’s and don’ts for His own amusement. The demands He makes on us are “for our good always” (Deuteronomy 6:24). To be righteous is to do what is right, and our Creator has defined right and wrong for us.

How do we know what is right? Consider Romans 1:16-17: “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith.’” Paul is not saying that the gospel tells us how righteous God is (although it does); he is saying that the gospel reveals what God’s righteousness should look like in my life!

How was Felix to know what was good and what was evil? Was it determined by the Roman government or the culture of his day? Hebrews 5:13-14 make it clear that the person who practices the use of the “word of righteousness” will have trained their senses to discern good and evil. It must have been sobering for Felix to realize that, in order to be righteous, he would have to conform his will to the will of Jehovah God. But the innate authority of God is not diminished by the refusal of some to acknowledge it. If the skeptics realized their accountability before Him, they would tremble like Felix.

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