

Text: Ac 24.25, Jn 16.8-11

Today I want to come back to a phrase in the biography of Felix so we can talk about powerful preaching. Our title today:

Preaching with Power

We saw last week how, under Paul's preaching, Felix was very frightened. We talked about the conviction he experienced and how he resisted it.

The text that describes this has an interesting parallel in the Gospel of John. We will look at both texts this morning.

Read Ac 24.24-25, Jn 16.8-11

The parallels in the two passages are close, but not exact:

Ac 24.25: righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come

Jn 16.8: sin and righteousness and judgment

The effect Felix experienced seems to fulfill exactly what the Lord promised in the Upper Room discourse: *He, when He comes, will convict the world*

Felix certainly experienced conviction when Paul was preaching.

Now, what I want to talk about today is what makes for this kind of powerful preaching? What is its effect on hearers? How should we employ it? How should we respond to it?

Proposition: Powerful preaching brings conviction that demands a response.

I. The nature of conviction**A. The senses of the word**

1. To convict (be convicted) [prove wrong]
2. To sternly admonish (be sternly admonished) [expose, show, rebuke, reprove]
3. To be in a state of conviction/exposure

B. How conviction comes about

1. "give evidence"¹

¹ J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 202.

2. “bring to light the true character of a man and his conduct”²

C. In the OT, the word for *convict* translates Hebrew words with these senses

1. “to rebuke” or “to shame” Isa 50.2, 37.3 [two different Heb words]
2. “to punish” 2 Chr 26.20
3. “to condemn or convict” Job 15.6
4. “to examine” or “to test” Pr 18.17

D. The Jewish background sets the stage for NT usage

1. It is like words which imply parental instruction and discipline
2. But it is particularly the act of God through the agency of men

Nathan the prophet to David the king: “Thou art the man.”

3. However, conviction in the NT isn’t simply rebuke and shame with no hope:

“It means ‘to show someone his sin and to summon him to repentance.’”³

Constable: “In each case it involves showing someone his or her sin with a view to securing repentance.”⁴

“The word does not mean only ‘to blame’ or ‘to reprove,’ nor ‘to convince’ in the sense of proof, nor ‘to reveal’ or ‘expose,’ but ‘to set right,’ namely, ‘to point away from sin to repentance.’ It implies educative discipline.”⁵

Mt 18.15 ¶ “If your brother sins, go and **show** him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

² Moulton and Milligan, 202.

³ Friedrich Büchsel, “Ἐλέγχω, Ἐλεγκεις, Ἐλεγχος, Ἐλεγγμός,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed., vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 474.

⁴ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Jn 16.8.

⁵ Büchsel, “Ἐλέγχω, Ἐλεγκεις, Ἐλεγχος, Ἐλεγγμός,” 474.

- a. Show him
 - b. Expose him
 - c. Convict him
 - d. That he might listen
- E. The special agency of the Holy Spirit
1. It isn't just the work of men to bring conviction
 2. The Holy Spirit's ministry is specifically conviction

Jn 16.8 "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

II. The special subjects of conviction

A. Conviction of sin

1. "because they do not believe in Me" (Jn 16.9)
2. Usually, we would think: prove I am wrong
 - a. A man commits a murder
 - b. In court, the prosecutors give evidence of the murder
 - c. The man is convicted: proven wrong

Telling comment: "A court can convict a man of murder, but only the Spirit can convict him of unbelief."⁶

3. The problem with sin is not just that it is wrong, but it is a declaration of independence from God: unbelief

B. Conviction of righteousness

1. Righteousness = conformity to a standard
 - a. Men are well-pleased with standards of their own making
 - 1) They may follow a religion which is satisfied with their works: a works standard

⁶ Tenney, "John," p. 157.

- 2) They may follow a philosophy which declares the only standard is there are no standards: postmodernism
 - a) They judge you for holding a standard (you just want power over me)
 - b) They are satisfied with themselves, because they are so tolerant
- b. The only standard by which men should judge themselves? the standard of Jesus Christ || perfection

2. How the Spirit is involved in conviction on this standard

- a. “because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer” (Jn 16.10)
- b. When Jesus preached on the earth, he brought men to conviction face-to-face

Nicodemus, Samaritan woman, rich young ruler

- c. Now that Jesus ascended, the Spirit brings conviction for righteousness

C. Conviction of judgement

1. When Paul speaks to Felix, he refers to “judgement to come”
 - a. For each man convicted of sin/righteousness, judgement is future
 - b. The power of conviction for sin is coming judgement: you are accountable
2. The proof of coming judgement: “the ruler of this world has been judged” (Jn 16.11)
 - a. Satan saw the cross as his triumph
 - b. The resurrection and ascension openly demonstrate that the cross is Satan’s defeat

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Colossians 2:14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; 15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

c. Judgement is coming

D. The conviction of Felix (Ac 24.25)

righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come

1. Self-control: The many sins of Felix laid bare: did Paul speak to Felix and Drusilla directly about known misdeeds? He may have.
2. Righteousness: The standard of holiness raised, the only way you can come to God is by righteousness
3. Judgement to come: Judgement is coming

III. The danger of conviction

A. The danger that the convicted will not repent

1. They hear the message
2. They fear judgement
3. They know they are guilty
4. They know there is a way out (Jesus Christ)
5. And they say...

“Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you.”

B. How often the preacher hears words like these!

1. “I’ll be back...”
2. “That was interesting...”
3. “I’ll hear you again of this matter...”

I can remember selling cars on the car lot (for a short time). We learned never to give any credit to the term “I’ll be back” — we called them “Bebacks” — they weren’t coming back.

Far more serious when a preacher hears these words

They are the most crushing words a preacher ever hears.

C. Preaching with power comes when you preach on sin, righteousness, and judgement

1. But you run the risk of turning your audience against you
2. You may find that the audience will harden their hearts and actively work against you, certainly never hear you again

No doubt this fear compromises many sermons and preachers. Who doesn't want an audience?

- Felix turned away
 - The rich young ruler turned away
3. But here is the thing when people turn away: they tend to blame the preacher

To whom are they actually saying, "No!"?

They are saying, "No!" to the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion:

Proposition: Powerful preaching brings conviction that demands a response.

Remember what Jesus said to his disciples when many were turning away from him:

"Will ye also go away?" (Jn 6.67, KJV)

What you need is to say, "Yes!" to the Holy Spirit, come in humility and repentance and find real healing for your soul.