

Honesty

Acts 24:16

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“And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16).

The enemies of Paul had banded together and sworn with an oath that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed him. But the plot became known to Paul's nephew who told Paul, who in turn had the chief captain informed about it.

When he knew Paul was a Roman citizen he banded together two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen and escorted Paul safely to Caesarea to appear before Felix the governor.

Now Felix was a rascal. He hired killers to eliminate his enemies. His cruelty and excessive, grasping covetousness knew no bounds. When Paul was trying to explain, in his defense, why he had gone to Jerusalem, not to profane the temple as his accusers had charged, but to bring large sums of money to the poor, Felix took note of that.

He assumed Paul was a rich man and kept him in prison hoping that Paul would pay him a bribe for his release. But isn't it interesting to note what Paul talked about to him all those months? “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25).

Paul did not discuss his release. He would rather save souls than his own life. Paul was not about to pay a bribe. The hopes of Felix were dashed in the character of Paul. Our verse for today gives us insight into this. Paul kept a pure conscience, not deceiving or flattering him. Therefore the thought of bribery or self-gain was not in his mind.

What kept the man? What was it that prompted that lifestyle? He tells us in the context of today's verse. Verse 14 says, “But this I confess unto thee that, after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14).

His rule of faith and practice was the Word of God, all of it, every word. It was not tradition or human reason, but the Bible.

The second thing was his belief in life after death, and that one day we will all give an account of ourselves to God. “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15).

And herein Paul says, in light of these two great facts, he took special pain to maintain a clear conscience. Only as we are honest in all our dealings with both God and men can we have that. A Christian who disregards his conscience is headed for trouble.

All of us face pressure to conform to standards that are contrary to the Bible. The devil will never let up. But remember, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."

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