



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 24:1-27

“Great Lion of God – Paul Before Felix”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for this privilege. And, again, we thank Thee for the great apostle, the apostle of the gentiles, and for all that Thou didst give to him and for the great use that Thy dost make of him not only for his day, but for the days down through the years. And we thank Thee for the influence that his writings and his life have been to us. And as we look again to his confinement in the city of Jerusalem and then Caesarea, we pray that Thou wilt be with us as we study. And enable us to profit from the things that are illustrated in his life. We give Thee thanks for all that Thou hast done for us through the Lord Jesus Christ and for our spiritual souls. And we rejoice in the salvation that has come through him who loved us and gave himself for us. Accept our thanks and be with us in this hour. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Returning to Acts chapter 24. And the subject for tonight is Paul Before Felix. Or we could turn it around with similar justification and say it is really Felix Before Paul because in the light of the fact that the apostle is the representative of the Lord God, it's really Felix who ultimately is on the judgment seat, speaking figuratively, before the great apostle.

Perhaps the thing that stands out in this chapter, Acts 24, more than anything else to me is that little statement near the end of the chapter in verse 25 where we read, “Felix trembled.” Felix was a man who trembled. But also the Scriptures say nothing about his repentance. And so he is an individual who trembled, but he did not repent. He is, as someone has said, a victim of tomorrow. “If today has slain its thousands, tomorrow has slain its tens of thousands.” It has been said.

It’s also been said that procrastination is the thief of time. It is also the burglar of eternity. And in spiritual things there hardly is a sin that is more destructive of a man’s spiritual life than the sin of procrastination in spiritual things. The Bible delights in striking contrasts. I think this is true of life, but the Bible pictures it so beautifully. For example, we have Abel and then Cain. And that has stood out for any reader of the Bible. We have Elijah, the great prophet seeking to turn Israel again back to the Lord after she has apostatized. And then there is Jezebel. Elijah and Jezebel. Jacob and Esau. “Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated.” One wonders how it could be said that God hated Esau. But it’s even more of a thing of wonder to imagine how it could be said that “Jacob have I loved” looking at things naturally. There is Jesus and there is Pilate who stands over against him. And just like Felix who stood before Paul was really the one who was being judged. So when Jesus stood before Pilate it was not our Lord who was at the judgment seat, except physically. For Pilate did sit on the bema or the judgment seat. It was really Pilate who was being judged by our Lord.

Now here we have one of those instances and Paul and Felix. And later on we’ll have Paul and Festus. But Paul and Felix is certainly a beautiful illustration of these striking contrasts. Felix was a man who began life as a slave. And then as a result of some experiences in life he became a military commander. And one of the reasons for that was that he was befriended by someone who was of royal blood. And then ultimately he became the procurator of the land of Judea. He was instrumental with the help of a magician in the use of incantations to seduce Drusilla who was the daughter of

Herod, or Herod Agrippa. And so we can look back at the life of this man, Felix, and see a remarkable change. He was a man who was characterized by ruthless greed. And this is the man who is going to stand before the Apostle Paul. Tacitus, the Roman historian, has said with reference to him, “He exercised the powers of a king with the disposition of a slave.”

The responsibility of every preacher of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is great. That is something for us to remember. In fact, one of the most gratifying things of the few letters that I just read a moment ago is the uniform testimony it seems of at least what you are trying to do is to say what the Bible says and you are not afraid to say it. That’s an interesting commendation. I didn’t say whether it was said well or not. But at least they could sense that from Believers Chapel there was an attempt to set out what the Scriptures have said to some extent fearlessly. I wouldn’t want to claim that I am fearless because I am not. But I appreciate the fact that a preacher of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is one who is required of God to stand for the truth of God. It is solemn truth. He may never preach it again. I may never preach again. My hearers may never hear it again. And so it is important that men be fearless in the preaching of the word of God if they have been called to do that. And Paul was a man who recognized his responsibility and was fearless in it.

Now, as a matter of fact, when he went to Jerusalem he was not doing anything unusual when he was taken captive. But the reason that he was taken captive was that some of those people in whose presence out away from Jerusalem he had been fearless. They recognized him. It was the feast time in the city of Jerusalem. And they saw him in the temple area. And they said, “This is the fellow who out where we were (whether in Asia Minor or Greece, it is not said), this is the fellow who has caused so much trouble among the Jewish people.” So they recognized him as a fearless Nazarene. And it is for this reason that the apostle was set upon by the Jews. Well now you know that the apostle sought to defend himself. And he defended himself until finally he made the

statement back in chapter 22 that the Lord had sent him to the gentiles. And with that the audience couldn't stand it any longer. And again, “They cried out, cast off their clothes, threw dust in the air.” And it was necessary for the Romans to save Paul from the Jews.

And then he was required to stand before the council in the city of Jerusalem. And he sought to defend himself there. And seeing that there were two parties, the Pharisees and the Sadducees there, he said that he was a Pharisee and that he was charged with belief in the doctrine of the resurrection. There was an uproar, you'll remember. And, as a result of this, the Jewish men, forty of them, said that they were going to kill Paul. And so they took a vow that they would not eat or drink until they had put Paul to death. But, by the providence of God, for God had already said, “Paul, you are going to testify in Rome.” A little boy, the nephew of the apostle, heard the comments of the plotters, told Claudius Lysias, the Roman captive. And as a result of that, Lysias has had him sent down to Caesarea where Felix, the procurator of the land of Judea, or the governor, is staying. And so now the apostle is going to appear before the Roman governor and he is required to wait until some representatives come from Jerusalem because Felix has said, “I will hear thee when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.”

Now in verse 1 through verse 9 of chapter 24 we have the charges made against Paul.

Now remember it was the custom in those days to do things quite similar to the way in which we do them in the law court. First of all, an individual was indicted. And so Paul was indicted. And then after that there was the citing of the charge against the individual in the court. And finally, the prosecutors began to expound the kind of charge that was laid against the individual who was held.

Now the indictment and the citing are passed over here, but the charging of the Apostle Paul is in the hands of a professional orator by the name of Tertullus. You'll notice that he begins with a lot of nauseating flattery. He calls Felix, in effect, the

reformed governor of Judea. And anyone who has had any contact whatsoever with politics knows how customary this kind of thing is. And in case you wonder about it, and maybe you've never heard it, wait awhile when the Republican Convention comes to the city of Dallas we'll hear some of the same nonsense. It's just as if someone should have stood up in the days of Roosevelt and patted him on the back for being such a magnificent exponent of proper economics and holding down federal spending so. The idea of Felix being a reformed governor, of course, was just about as far from the facts as one could get. But if you're trying to win the favor of someone it's a nice thing to say. Listen to how Luke puts it. He says in verse 1,

“And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. (This was the charge). And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.”

Now then, notice first of all that he charges him politically. He says, “For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, (The Greek word is a word that really means something like a plague. And so we found him a plague, a pestilent fellow), and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world.”

Now the hired lawyer then is the person who supposedly knows all about Paul and calls him “Paul the pest.” Can you not imagine how that really stands in the light of the word of God? “Paul the pest.” That's almost something two words you cannot really put together. But he doesn't stop with the political; he goes on to the religious. He claims that he is heretical. He is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

Now this sect, of course, was not a recognized sect. And the unrecognized sects were religio illicita. That is, a religion that was illegal. And the sect of the Nazarenes was one. At one time Christianity was religio illicita. That is, an illegal sect in the Roman Empire. And here he calls him a “sect of the Nazarenes.” That is, he’s a member of an illegal religious group. And further he goes on to charge him with being sacrilegious. In verse 6 he says, “Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.”

Now that is just a plain lie, a lie. And they are liars. What they planned, to use our language, was a lynching party. They did not intend to judge him according to their law. They wanted to put him to death without any judgement. It was necessary to judge them according to the Law of Moses. They said they believed in the Law of Moses, but they were not carrying out the Law of Moses at all. It was really a planned lynch party that they wanted to do.

Now that illustrates for us a truth that we sometimes forget. Most Evangelicals don’t forget it. But then occasionally we do because we are among the unsaved and the non-Christian so much that it is very difficult to think as a Christian constantly. Religion does not cause men to do what is right. In fact, it often causes men to do what is wrong. We hear people say, “He’s a religious man,” so much that we’re inclined to think that “he’s a religious man” is really a compliment to him. It’s not necessarily a compliment at all. Every one of the Pharisees was a religious man. The Sadducees were religious men. The scribes were religious men. These were the men who put our Lord to death. And these are the men who would love to do the same to the Apostle Paul. One can go back and find many, many parallels between the ministry of the apostle in the midst of the religious people with the ministry of the Lord Jesus in the midst of the same people. And for one moment do not think that that is not true today. Religious men frequently are some of the greatest persecutors of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

Now let’s finish verse 9 and then turn to the apostle’s defense of himself.

“Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him. And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.”

So they're all liars. Every one of them is a liar standing before the Roman procurator.

Now it is Paul's turn to defend himself. And he does in verse 10 through verse 21. “Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself.” One might think that the apostle is doing the same thing that his enemies have done in overly flattering Felix the procurator. But Paul's words are really the words of courtesy without flattery. All he says is, “I'm happy to stand before someone who has had some experience.” And, of course, that was the truth. So it was not foolish flattery; untrue flattery. It was the truth. But it was the common courtesy that one might expect.

That too is a lesson to us. You know as Christians it's good to be courteous. We are, of course, first of all expected to speak the truth. But courtesy is proper for a Christian. False flattery, no, that is not. And if it's lying, like these men, of course not. The apostle's a good illustration of the way in which we too should respond. In verse 11 he says,

“Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people (that is stirring up trouble), neither in the synagogues,

nor in the city, nor was I associated with the peacenicks who were there. (Now you’ll have difficulty finding that in your text. [Laughter] But I was just trying to give the flavor of the passage). Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.”

So the apostle begins by saying, “I am not guilty of sedition. It’s insufficient. There is not sufficient time to raise sedition if you’ve only been here about twelve days. How can you raise a riot?”

Now those of you who were here Sunday remember I made reference to Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov or Lenin. He spent years raising the kind of revolution that he would like to have. And many others were associated with him. And one cannot raise a revolution in just a few days. And so that’s the apostle’s point. “It’s just twelve days since I came up to Jerusalem for to worship. How can you expect me to do something like that in that small time?” So he speaks facts versus their generalities, of course.

Now then, he goes on to talk about whether there was heresy. He says in verse 13, “Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. 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.” So he says, “I worship. I worship the true God. I worship according to the law and the prophets.” And furthermore, in verse 16 he says, “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.” So that he acts a Hebrew should act. He believes the things written in the law and the prophets. And he seeks to have a clear conscious before God and before men. “The only thing that can be said about me,” Paul says is that, “I do believe the doctrine of the resurrection. I do believe that we as believing Jewish men have a hope toward God. That there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.”

And he goes on to talk further about sacrilege. In verse 17 we read,



“Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.”

In other words, “I was there in the temple. I was observing the Jewish custom of purification. And further I was not trying to incite any insurrection of any kind. And here I am just doing that. And they sat upon me. And now, Felix, I’m standing before you and my accusers, that is those who sought to take hold of me, they are not here.”

You know we have a rule in our law courts. I believe that a man has a right to have his accusers before him face to face. And the apostle refers to that here when he says, verse 19, “Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had against me.” So the apostle has brought the whole issue down to this one possible “crime.” And it is faith in the resurrection. That’s the real issue. Is there a resurrection? In other words, is it right for Jewish men to say, “We have hope toward God. We believe there will be a resurrection of the just and the unjust.” Is that a legitimate Jewish or Hebrew doctrine? Is that a doctrine of the law and the prophets? And if it is, and they are objecting to me for holding that, then who is the sectary? Am I? Or are they? And as you can see, it is they who are the sect. Not Paul. He holds the faith of the fathers.

It’s like that today, you know, when people talk about the mainline denomination. Have you ever heard that expression? You’ll hear it constantly in theological seminaries, the mainline denominations. Do you know what they mean by that? Well, they mean by that the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians, the Methodist, perhaps the Christians and one or two others, they are the mainline denominations. And anything else by the use of that term is suspect. But I would just like to say I don’t have anything against mainline denominations if they hold the truth of God. I am grateful. I am thankful that that is true, that they do hold the truth of God. And I’m willing to say you’re a mainline

denomination because you've been in existence for a longtime and you still hold the biblical doctrine. But if you don't hold the biblical doctrine, well then you're a mainline sect, but you're not a mainline Christian denomination. And we should remember that. And we should not be afraid to say those things. It is those who follow the truth of the word of God who stand in apostolic succession, not those who are members of organizations. They could easily have said to Paul, “You're not a member of the mainline denomination.” And that, of course, is Judaism. “You are a member of the sect of the Nazarenes.” But the truth lay with the Nazarenes and that sect, whatever that was. The truth lay with Paul, as we know.

Now some people find it difficult to hold up in a situation like that. Their spiritual courage is rather weak. And so when someone says, “You're not a member of a mainline denomination,” they just melt like ice when the weather is one hundred and five. And all of their Christian courage is gone. And, in fact, some of them come complaining, “What can I say?” Why, what a magnificent opportunity it is to say that you stand for the truth that is found in the word of God. And so the apostle is an illustration for us in how a person ought to testify in 1983. We shouldn't be ashamed. We should be bold. We should be very frank. We should have some facts at hand too. And there are many facts at hand. Pick up the *Christian Century* for example and read it for a few weeks and you'll find a lot of ammunition to support the idea that the mainline denominations have often gone a long way from the truth of the word of God. And our loyalty is not to a denomination or a movement, not even in Evangelical circles to a particular church. Our loyalty is first of all to Jesus Christ. And if our loyalty is to him and if that is really the measure of our lives we can be sure that ultimately he will sustain us. He will strengthen us. He will be with us. I think these are very practical lessons.

Now, so Paul in effect has said, “Who is the sectary? Am I the sectary or are they?” Well, now we read the response of the Roman procurator. And in verse 22, “And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them,

and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.”

Now, of course, Felix is a man like so many men who are weak men. He was a vile character and a wicked character and a violent character and misused all of his authority. But in the midst of spiritual matters, he was a temporizer. He was a weak man. He was just like Pontius Pilate, who in the same kind of situation sought to stand on both sides of the issue. So he adjourns the matter. He says, “Claudius Lysias, the captain is in Jerusalem and we need him here.” And then we read in the next verses, well in verse 23 we read of a decision that he has made which is a very interesting decision. “And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintances to minister or come unto him.”

Now the reason that Felix did this is because, of course, first of all there was no case against Paul. And then secondly, as we read on, Felix hoped to get a bribe.

Now we who live in the United States know of the existence of bribes as a way of life. And we have that in our country, a great deal of it. But if you go south of the border you will get a graduate education in the bribe. Almost everything south of the border all the way down to the tip of South America is bribe country. Everything is done by the bribe. And all kinds of tricks of bribing the missionaries have to learn. It's interesting to hear the missionaries come back from Central America and South America and tell you their experiences. If they're ever in, for example, in an accident with an automobile what has to be done in order to extricate yourself from it, or almost anything else. If you're anxious to have your passport or a visa corrected before about two years, then you have to learn what is necessary in order to get that done. It is a way of life. Well, Felix lived in that kind of society too. And he hoped to have a bribe, a bribe. We read in verse 24,

“And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 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. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.”

Court life could be rather dull. And Paul might amuse them and enliven things. And so Felix called for him from time to time and they discussed things.

Now part of his discussion, no doubt, was a kind of interest in this man Paul and the things that he talked about. But also part of it was the hope that he would gain a substantial bribe. Evidently, the word was out that the apostle had his hands on some money somewhere and he thought that he could get it from the apostle. How he knew that I don't know.

It's an interesting thing in the manuscript of the Greek New Testament. There are different families of manuscripts. And when one studies New Testament text or criticism he studies, for example, about the Alexandrian family and the Caesarean family and the Egyptian family of manuscripts and the Western family of manuscripts. And these families, these manuscripts, the many thousands of manuscripts fall into families indicating that there is a relationship between them the scribes copied and certain types of errors persisted in certain types of manuscripts and by the errors you determine the family manuscripts. Well, in the Western family, which is probably the earliest of the families, although weird in some ways, there is a reading at this point that it was Drusilla who was particularly interested in hearing about Paul. And whether it was Drusilla or not, we don't know. But the chances are that since the more reliable manuscripts say that it is Felix, we'll just leave it that way. I just mention that it might have been Drusilla who was remember, a Jewess.

Now Drusilla was an interesting person too. She was one of the three daughters of Herod Agrippa I, Drusilla, Mariamne and Berenice. Her father was the one who murdered the Apostle James. Her great uncle, Herod Antipas, is the one who cut off the head of John the Baptist. And her great grandfather was King Herod who slew the babes. So she comes from quite a nice succession of individuals. She evidently had a great knowledge of things with reference to the relationship between Judaism and the sect of the Nazarenes. And so it may well have been that she was somewhat interested in this. She had been married once and she had left a first husband. And then by the sorcery of a magician – it’s interesting how traditions arise, but some of the traditions are that the magician was Elamas the sorcerer who is the one with whom Paul contended on the Isle of Cyprus. That somehow he got back and threw his incantations. Felix using him managed to seduce Drusilla so that she became his wife and he then was married to a noble woman. And after all coming from a slave to a noble is a pretty good way to go. So there is some evidence or some tradition to that effect.

And not surprisingly there is also tradition to the effect that the magician was Simon Magus, the one who is referred to in Acts chapter 8 and who was in Samaria. Remember when Philip was preaching and remember is the one who came when Philip preached and laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit and evidently were speaking in tongues because it says when he saw that they were filled with the Holy Spirit, he’s the one who went to Peter when Peter came down and said, “Let me have this power that you’ve got, this power of the Holy Ghost.” And Peter said, “Your money parish with you.” In other words, go to hell. And so tradition is to the effect that maybe that magician who was the tool of Felix in seducing Drusilla was that Simon Magus. We don’t know. We just know that there is a lot of tradition to the effect that a certain magician or sorcerer was used by Felix in obtaining Drusilla.

Now the apostle has the two of them, perhaps some others, before him. And they sat for Paul. They heard him concerning the faith which was concerning the Lord Jesus

Christ. And notice the three points in his message. You'd expect three points. After all, he was a preacher. So he reasoned of righteousness.

Now he did not make a philosophical approach. But he reasoned concerning righteousness. I wonder if Felix had expected this. I can just imagine the apostle going on expounding righteousness and probably laying great stress on practical righteousness and the sin of unrighteousness speaking about how the man who persists in unrighteousness is going to wind up in the place of the unrighteous in the Lake of Fire. And finally, I can hear the apostle waxing bolder and bolder and stronger and stronger until finally Drusilla says, “Honey, why don't you stop that fool?” Well, the apostle also reasoned about righteousness and temperance, or self control.

Now that was a very appropriate thing to because here is a woman who has given herself to one man, left him, now has been involved in magic and sorcery and has come to be married to this other man. And so self control. Well, that was designed evidently by the Apostle Paul to bring some form of conviction to her. But then this man Felix, this greedy, vile and seditious character, who was cruel and almost bestial. Why it was very, very appropriate for him too. What he needed to realize is that there is a higher throne than Caesar's throne. He only cared about Caesar because his appointment came from him. And then Paul reasoned about the judgment that was to come. In other words, “Felix you think that you are responsible to report to Caesar and to Rome. And you make your reports every year and you are anxious that your reports will justify your actions and that you'll be able to continue in your job and remain in your favor with Caesar. I'd like to let you know that there is a throne higher than Caesar's and someday you're going to have to report there. And then your life will be at stake.”

No wonder Felix trembled. But you know it is possible to tremble and not repent. He trembled. He was fearful. The apostle's reasoning so evidently had the testimony of the Holy Spirit accompanying it that he felt the power of God and trembled, became fearful, the great text says. But not a thing is said about repenting. And then he did as so

many do. He said, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for you.” Why, Felix this was your season right here, now. But he’s looking for some other season.

Like so many people, “When I get old then I’ll turn to religious things. I’ll turn to spiritual things.” I’ve seen many men come to theological seminary. Well, they were Christians. I’m only illustrating the fact that many people say, “When I get old I’m going to do so and so.” But they never get old. Many men have come to theological seminary and have studied under me. And anybody looking at the class and then looking at me would say, “Dr. Johnson will die first.” And basically you will be right. But there are a number of men that I have taught in theological seminary who are now with the Lord. And we all know many illustrations of that. We do not know what tomorrow holds. And those who say, “I’ll wait until tomorrow to get interested in spiritual things,” may find there is no tomorrow for them.

“Go thy way, Paul, for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for you.” That was his season. He hoped also that money should have been given to him. Ah, what will a man give in exchange for his soul? When his fear left him, his greed began to master him. And so it’s interesting, isn’t it, that we go on and read, “He hoped that money should be given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.”

Now think of what that means, a man communing with the Apostle Paul. Here is a man who is able to sit down and have Paul, as we say, eyeball to eyeball before him and discuss life, discuss the meaning of life, discuss the world, above all, to discuss divine things. And he had more than one opportunity. He communed with him. Ah, you know, it’s so easy to think of what Philip lost.

Now let me say to you who are sitting in this audience tonight, that opportunity is yours. You can sit down with the apostle. Not eyeball to eyeball, but something even better. You can read all of his letters. You can read his sermons in the book as they’re

recorded in the Book of Acts. You can study his life and ministry. You have an advantage that Felix didn't have.

Now I ask you, are you communing with him? Are you discussing with the Apostle Paul as you listen to what he has to say, the Lord God? The world? Life? What it means to be what you are and what your life is to be? What a tremendous privilege we have. Or maybe you're thinking, "Well next week when I'm not going to be so busy at my job I'll do that. Or when my vacation comes I'll take off two weeks." Yes, you may not even have a vacation. It may not come. Next week may not come. You see, now is our convenient season, always. Now is our convenient season. So we shouldn't sit around and envy Felix. What a privilege. No, it is we who have the privilege. We have a privilege he could never have. We can ponder these things day after day; we can learn with the Holy Spirit as our teacher. What a crime it is to neglect our opportunity to study the word of God, commune with him, conversed with him.

In some ways, there's a lot of irony here. What did these two people have in common? It was one of the great opportunities of history, however, discussing life with Paul. Ah, you don't find that, sitting down with Paul and discussing life with him. Ah, listen, there are many, many saints who have that privilege and who do take advantage of it. May God help us to realize our opportunity and to take advantage of it.

Now the decision is made in verse 27. He does have a will. It's not free. But he exercises his will. It's free in the sense that he exercises it in exactly the way that he wishes to exercise it. And so we read in verse 27, "But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound." It's interesting that Felix was recalled over a Jewish complaint about him. So he sought to, in a sense, do that which would please them. But ultimately it is they who are responsible for his recall to Rome. It never pays to compromise. It never pays to dishonestly flatter. And Felix learned that.



Well, let me just very briefly comment on these three individuals. First Paul, we've talked about him enough. The picture of Paul is the picture of a fearless preacher of the way. One who taught the truth of the gospel of Christ as it had been revealed to him. “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the way of death.” Paul taught Jesus Christ as the way of life. And then there's the picture of Felix. And his is the tragedy of procrastination. He was interested at one time it seems. One studies verse 22, verse 24, verse 26. Where his interest came from we don't know. It may have come from Drusilla who knew so much about the development of Christianity. Or who else was it who lived in Caesarea?

Now we've already studied, not too long ago, about an individual who lived in Caesarea. Do you remember who he was? Philip the Evangelist. He lived in Caesarea. Remember he had the four daughters who prophesied. And Paul was there. And Agabus came up. So there was testimony in Caesarea and that's where Felix lived. And so it's possible that he had been exposed, at least secondhand, to what they were saying, this man Philip and others. So he was interested in the way it may have come from Philip. He was convicted of his sin because he trembled. Last man one would expect to do this. He had heard all kinds of orators. He had been in these courts constantly and Tertullus, men like Tertullus had come. And he'd listen to countless of them. I wonder about our judges in our courts of law. They hear all the orators that you possibly can hear and the prosecutors and the defense attorneys and others. And you can just imagine Felix is a man who had heard all kinds of oratory, but when the apostle began to speak he trembled.

Now that was God speaking in divine tenderness to Felix. It was a watershed. It was the crisis of his life. There was another man in the Book of Acts in Paul's life who trembled too. Do you remember who it was? It was the Philippian jailer.

Now he trembled and came to faith. Felix trembled and so far as we know passed into eternity without God. He procrastinated. He said, “We’ll hear you again on another day.”

Some years ago when I was preaching on this it so happened that this sermon came up the week after the National Procrastination Week. [Laughter] Some of you’ll go back into the tape room and get the message on Acts chapter 24 in the Acts series. You’ll find it was 1963. And I preached. And it had been, I think, last week was National Procrastination Week. And the fellow who is president of the National Procrastination Society had made a public announcement saying that they had decided to put it off for a week [Laughter], the celebration. Well, Felix would be a charter member of that society. He was heartened finally. Ultimately, the postponement of his opportunity led to dullness and blindness and hardness of heart. And he became more hopeless than an individual enmeshed in such sexual sins and physical material sins as greed, lust and adultery. He lost his opportunity. The delay was really a rejection. Do you know what his name means? You students of Latin would know. He was Mr. Happy. That was his name, Felix. It’s a felicitous name, isn’t it? [Laughter] Happy, Mr. Happy. But Mr. Happy, so far as we can tell, is a victim of tomorrow.

Now the picture of Drusilla is the picture of a frivolous, wretched vessel of wrath fitted for destruction. She did not even tremble. Yet she was just as much in sin, just as much exposed to grace as was Felix. There is a tradition that she and her son later perished in the fires of Pompeii. The judgment to come concerning which Paul reasoned was a judgment that has come and ultimately will come in the fullest for those who heard it. There is an old statement made by a rabbi in which he preached, “Repent the day before you die.” And someone asked him afterwards, “But we don’t know when we will die.” He said, “Well then, repent today.” Procrastination. Felix certainly illustrates that. Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege that is ours to open the Scriptures and commune with the Apostle Paul in...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**