

# Opportunity Missed!

(Acts 24:22-23) *“Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. “When Lysias the commander comes,” he said, “I will decide your case.” He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.”*

The apostle Paul was a Roman citizen and no eyewitnesses came forward to verify the charges, so Governor Felix is faced with a difficult decision. He had been governor for six years and knew about the peaceful life-style of Christians. They did not instigate riots, and were not political protestors nor militant activists, so all the charges against the apostle were baseless.

Even the Jewish high court had not found the apostle guilty of anything specific, so the only fair verdict the governor could render under Roman law would be *not-guilty*. Such a verdict would infuriate the Jewish leaders, however—something Felix wanted to avoid, so he adjourns the meeting under the pretense of wanting to obtain more information about the Way.

Lysias had already stated in writing that he believed the apostle Paul was not guilty of any crime and that the charges only concerned Jewish religious law (23:29). Lysias probably had no further information to give (and there is no record that the governor ever contacted him). Felix keeps Paul in prison to placate the Jews since he could not rule in their favor. Being a

Roman citizen who was not convicted of any crime, the apostle is allowed some freedom and visits from friends.

(Acts 24:24-25) *“Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, “That’s enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you.”*

Drusilla, (still in her teens and known for her beauty), was the youngest daughter of King Agrippa I and was Felix’s third wife. She may have been the one who told Felix more about the Christian *Way*. The apostle Paul takes advantage of this opportunity to explain (to the governor and Drusilla) about Christian beliefs, the need of forgiveness, and the judgment to come. (Jude 1:3), *“I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”*

In sharing the gospel with Felix and Drusilla, the apostle focused on what is every sinner’s dilemma—how to be righteous and self-controlled in a world that is unrighteous and out of control. Jesus said (Matthew 5:48) *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”* (1 Peter 1:15) *“Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*

Self-control is something every believer in Christ can have through the power of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Peter said that a Christian must be *“self-controlled and alert”* at all times because of Satan’s constant prowling to catch us off guard (1 Peter 5:8). *Self-control* is an important issue to deal with today—because *lack of control* is so common. The Bible says that we should see an increase of self-control through the power of the Holy Spirit.

(2 Peter 1:3-4), *“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”*

Divine judgment is inevitable and will be faced by everyone on earth unless we have truly confessed our sins before God, genuinely repented from the sincerity of our heart, and have placed our faith in the atonement sacrifice of Christ. The only way to escape the flames is to stand firm in our faith in Christ to the end (Matthew 10:22).

Satan wants everyone to be judged guilty, so he constantly tempts people to fall away from the faith, or to fall back into sin (by not persevering in the faith). We can be tempted by the pleasures of sin, the lust for power, or the desire for money—three specific things Felix would have to deal with if he wanted to escape divine judgment.

Since the governor was living in adultery (as he had married another man’s wife), it is no surprise that he became upset at what the apostle told him, so he abruptly ends the discussion. Felix lacked the first two virtues (righteousness and self-control), so he would, like everyone else who does not accept Christ as their Savior, face divine judgment. The only way for Felix to escape the lake of fire would be to genuinely repent, to terminate his unscriptural marriage, and to turn back to God in faith (as the prodigal son returned to his father in Luke 15).

(Acts 24:26-27) *“At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him. When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted*

to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.”

There is no mention of the governor repenting of anything nor correcting the unscriptural issues in his life, so he would naturally become alarmed when the apostle spoke about faith in Christ and the wrath of God. Felix was given the opportunity to turn his life around, but he failed to act on God’s Word and he failed to heed the advice of Jesus—(Matthew 4:17), “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.*”

It was the opportunity of a lifetime, but the governor missed it because he failed to see the value of it. He failed to take action against obvious sins in his life and would pay a dear price. (2 Corinthians 6:2), “*Now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.*” The governor did not heed that advice, did not heed the warnings, and did not repent, so he was with the religious leaders (John 8:24) who rejected Jesus. “*I told you that you would die in your sins; [if you do not believe that I am the ONE I CLAIM TO BE], you will indeed die in your sins.*”

The opportunity to correct the serious faults and to repent of the serious sins, passed and no action was taken. The governor did have more talks with the apostle, but instead of discussing the unscriptural aspects of his marriage or other life issues that would have to be dealt with in a scriptural way, the governor shows no willingness to repent but only a desire for more money.

Roman law did not allow bribes, but it was a common practice anyway. The governor had hoped that the apostle would want to purchase his freedom (or that someone would pay a ransom for his release), but no money was offered, so the apostle remained in custody. (Galatians 5:22-23) “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control,*” so the apos-

tle is willing to wait on God to bring about his release.

Two years pass and another governor succeeds Felix. History says that Felix’s brutal suppression of a riot in Caesarea so infuriated the Jews that they managed to have him removed from office. Emperor Nero recalled him to Rome, where he would have faced severe punishment (had not his brother Pallas interceded for him). Felix is not mentioned again in Scripture.

Although Governor Felix knew that the apostle Paul was innocent, he never took the necessary steps to see that he was released. Felix knew the right thing he ought to do, but did not do it. (James 4:17) “*Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.*” It was the sin of omitting to do what God wanted him to do.

The governor was trying to curry favor with the Sanhedrin rather than do what was right by the apostle, so it resulted in the governor losing his position, power and influence—(the very things he tried desperately to hold on to). Anything we try to hold on to outside of God’s will and Word will be lost eventually.

Felix is just another tragic example of missed opportunities to repent and to turn his life around for the saving of his soul. When we are convicted of a wrong course of action or unscriptural attitude, we must repent, call on God for help, make corrections, and get back into God’s will.

It was a sin not to act on what Felix knew was the right thing to do. That is an example for every believer today. When the apostle Paul spoke to him about *faith in Christ Jesus, righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come*, the governor had the opportunity to repent of his sin and turn to God. He missed the

opportunity, and did not act on scriptural advice.

By his own free-will choice, the governor remained in sin and never came to his spiritual senses (as the Prodigal in Luke 15), so he never returned to God and never repented of his sins for the salvation he so desperately needed.

(Hebrews 10:26-27) “*If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.*”

How unfortunate that is, but how often it has been repeated—century after century. Anyone who is convicted of sin, wrongdoing, or unscriptural attitude in their heart (like resentment and bitterness), but they deliberately postpone making a decision or correcting the mistake when they are given the opportunity to do so, places themselves in the same precarious position and attitude as Governor Felix (who did not heed the warning): “*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts,*” (Hebrews 3:15).

The true gospel can bring about true righteousness—but the decision to place our faith in Christ who alone can cleanse our heart is ours! Do not miss this opportunity!



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