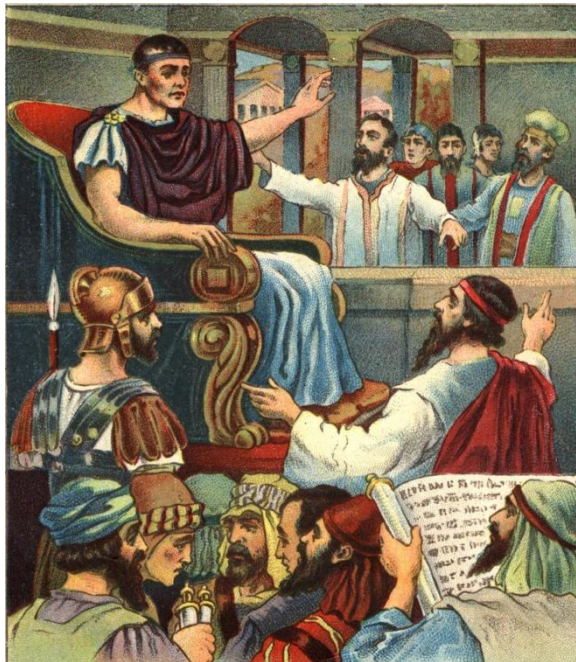


# SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

## LESSON 8



## PAUL BEFORE FELIX

*Scripture Text: Acts 24:1-27*

At the close of the last lesson, we left Paul, a prisoner in Caesarea, waiting for his accusers to arrive and accuse him before Felix the governor.

Everywhere he went after that day on the Damascus Road, Paul gave forth the news of the Gospel of Christ. His testimony in the Caesarean court covered several doctrines: The Truth of the Law and the Prophets. They are the Words of God in the Old Testament. The rightness of worship of Christ (the way the Jews called heresy). The Resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust, or the saved and the unsaved. Righteousness, holy living, the cleansed heart. Temperance, the curbing of fleshly or worldly desires, self-control, living after the Spirit. Judgment to come, the day when all must stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**MEMORY VERSE:** *Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God.*

—*Luke 12:8*

### DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**Job 1:6-22** Satan's power is designated by God.

Tue.—**2 Thessalonians 3:1-15** Appeals for prayer and labor.

Wed.—**Ezekiel 16:44-52** The sins of Sodom, no temperance.

Thu.—**Jude 5-16** Character and doom of false teachers.

Fri.—**Jude 17-25** Holding the true faith is admonished.

**Devotional Reading:** **Matthew 5:13-26** A greater law than Moses'.

### Paul Is Accused Before Felix

**Acts 24:1-9** After five days Paul's accusers arrived. They were **Ananias the high priest**, who had been so unjust to Paul before the Sanhedrin; **the elders** who would have entered into the plan to kill Paul; and Tertullus, an orator brought as spokesman to present their arguments with greater force before Felix. The charges brought against Paul were that he was (1) **pestilent**—disorderly, a disturber of the peace, (2) **a mover of sedition among all the Jews**—leading them to rebel against their laws and rulers. This action grew from Paul's teaching that the Law of Moses cannot save, but that the Jews and all others must receive Christ, (3) **a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes**—a chief follower of Christ Who grew up at Nazareth, and (4) that he tried to **profane the temple**. Tertullus complained that Lysias the chief captain had by violence prevented justice being done to Paul on the spot. (See **Chapter 23** in reference to these complaints.)

### Paul's Defense

**Acts 24:10-21** Paul explained it was but twelve days since he went to Jerusalem. He had been in Caesarea five days, so was in Jerusalem one week. That time was short, recent, and easily checked upon. He pled not guilty to charges one, two, and four. He confessed charge number three to be true. He did believe and teach and

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worship after the Gospel of Christ. The Jews called this heresy, but Paul claimed to believe **all things which are written in the law and in the prophets**. This was not heresy. It was according to Jesus' Words (**Matthew 5:17-19**) that He came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them. Paul looked for the **resurrection of the dead**. He strove to have **a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men**—to live a holy life. A saint is honest and open, not covering up his life before the world. We should strive to have a conscience void of offense.

Paul made one exception in his claim of right doing. In looking back, he had doubts as to the rightness of his cry in the council that **Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question** as we read in **Acts 23:6-10**. That was not the chief charge against him. He said it to divide the council and gain favor from the Pharisees. It started an uproar and fighting. When he recognized the fault, he freely confessed it.

### Felix Defers Decision

**Acts 24:22-27 Felix . . . having more perfect knowledge of that way**—he understood the doctrines of Christ better than these accusers—did not wish to decide from their testimony. He put off deciding until the chief captain should come. In the meantime, Paul was given the greatest liberty a prisoner could have, watched by a centurion but allowed visitors and any comforts they might bring.

The kindness of Felix to Paul was not just because of lack of evidence against him. He seems to have had an interest in the Gospel. He with his Jewish wife sent for Paul **and heard him concerning the faith in Christ**. This was not a court trial but a private talk. He wanted to know more about Jesus. Paul **reasoned of righteousness, temperance** (not about strong drink, but the living of a self-controlled, pure, orderly life in all things), **and judgment to come. Felix trembled**. He felt deep conviction. He was drawn close to yielding to Christ. But he put it off. He did not say no. He left the door open by promising to call for Paul again. And he did—again and again. But the conviction had passed. He had decided for the devil. Now when he talked to Paul, it was with sinful motives. He thought Paul might offer him a bribe to let him go free. But Paul was above bribes. So he was kept in prison two years. Felix was replaced as governor by Porcius Festus. He could have freed Paul before leaving, but having an evil, men-pleasing spirit, he left him in prison to please the Jews. Witnessing the Gospel in the power of the Spirit brings conviction. By putting off salvation, we may lose it altogether.

### Felix's Last Opportunity

In Felix we see a pattern that many follow—to hell. (1) First, he felt interest in the Gospel, (2) he took steps to inquire, (3) he felt conviction, (4) he put off decision, meaning to consider it later, (5) he lost interest and conviction left, (6) sinful desires replaced conviction and filled his heart—greed for money, insincerity, and men-pleasing. What a tragic life! He had the best opportunity—Paul as teacher, God drawing him, Jesus ready to forgive and save him, and a life of great service before him. He turned it all down by putting it off. It is probable that Felix never again felt the convicting power of the Holy Spirit as God drew him to Himself. Poor Felix! Many have followed his example. Do not be one of them.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.  
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