

**CLOSE TO HEAVEN, BUT LOST**  
**THE OPPORTUNIST AND PROCRASTINATOR**  
**ACTS 24:24-26**

**Introduction**

This is the fourth week of messages in this series I call **CLOSE TO HEAVEN, BUT LOST**. In the last three messages we have taken a look at three people in the Scriptures who were so very close to making it to heaven, but yet they were lost. How sad. We've seen...

**The Man Who Walked With Jesus, But Missed Heaven—Judas Iscariot!**

**The Moral, Self-Righteous Man Who Walked Away From The Righteousness Of God—The Rich Young Ruler.**

**The Gambler—The Unrepentant Thief On The Cross.**

This week we find the story of a fourth individual who was ever so close to heaven, but lost. **HE WAS BOTH AN OPPORTUNIST AND A PROCRASTINATOR—FELIX. Read the Scripture!**

**I. FELIX HAD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE WAY, YET HE REJECTED CHRIST! (VS 22)**

**A. Ananias, the high priest, along with some of the elders of the Sanhedrin, brought Paul before Felix.**

With the help of a trained orator by the name of Tertullus, they presented their case against Paul.

**They brought three accusations against Paul:**

**1. They Claimed That Paul Was A Worldwide Troublemaker Who Was Stirring Up Riots Everywhere. (Vs 2-5)**

This first charge had political overtones because Rome desired to maintain order throughout its empire.

**2. They Claimed That Paul Was A Leader Of The Nazarene Sect. (Vs 5)**

This second charge was also concerned with the government because Tertullus made it appear that Christianity was divorced from the Jewish religion.

Rome permitted Judaism as a legal religion, but it would not tolerate any new religions.

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By describing Christianity as a “sect” of the Nazarenes, this prosecuting attorney made Paul’s faith appear to be both **cultic** and **bizarre**.

**3. They Claimed That Paul Attempted To Desecrate The Temple. (Vs 6-9)**

This third charge also had political overtones because the Romans had given the Jews permission to execute any Gentile who went inside the barrier of the temple.

In Chapter 21:28 Paul was accused of bringing a Gentile into the temple courts.

**B. Paul Was Given An Opportunity To Answer These Charges. His defense against the charges were these:**

**1. He Had Been In Jerusalem For Twelve Days, But Had Not Instigated A Riot. (Vs 10-12)**

One of his purposes for being in Jerusalem was to worship. Specifically, he was there to observe the Feast of Pentecost. (Acts 20:16)

**2. Paul’s Accusers Could Not Prove An Instance Where He Had Incited A Riot In Jerusalem. (Vs 12-13)**

**3. Paul Confessed To Worshiping After The Way Which The Jews Called Heresy. (Vs 14-16)**

a. He Worshiped The God Of His Fathers.(Vs 14)

b. He Declared That He Chose To Believe All Things Which Were Written In The Law And The Prophets. (Vs 14)

c. Additionally, He Stated His Sure Expectation And Belief In The Resurrection Of The Dead. (Vs 15)

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- d. He Also Stated That He Sought To Keep His Conscience Clear Of Offense Toward God And Toward Man. (Vs 16)

**4. Paul Clearly Revealed His Purposes And His Innocence. (Vs 17-21)**

**C. Felix Responded To The Charges And The Defense. (Vs 22)**

**His response was based upon his rejection of Christ.**

- 1. Scripture Says That He Heard Both Sides Of The Story So He Had More Perfect Knowledge Of That Way.
- 2. But We See He Adjourned The Proceedings. He didn't want to make a decision that would be unfavorable to the religious authorities.

**His position and favor were more important to him than Christ.**

**D. There Are Many Folks Who, Just Like Felix, Have A "More Perfect Knowledge Of That Way", Yet They Reject Christ.**

They reject Christ because it may cost them their position or favor before men.

*FELIX HAD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE WAY, YET HE REJECTED CHRIST! (VS 22)*

**II. FELIX WAS FRIENDLY TOWARD PAUL, A CHRISTIAN, YET HE REJECTED CHRIST. (VS 23)**

You see, it is possible to be friendly toward Christians and the Christian message without allowing it to change your life.

**III. FELIX WAS OPEN TO HEARING ABOUT CHRIST, YET HE REJECTED CHRIST. (VS 24)**

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You see, it is also possible to be open to coming to Church and/or hearing the message of the Gospel, and still reject Christ.

**IV. FELIX TREMBLED AS PAUL REASONED WITH HIM, YET HE REJECTED CHRIST. (VS 25)**

**A. Paul's Reasonings:**

**1. Paul Reasoned With Him About Righteousness. (i.e. Justification By Faith.)**

Felix's regime was marked by injustices that stood in stark contrast with the righteousness of God.

**The Gospel Is About Our Past.**

**2. Paul Reasoned With Him About Temperance. (i.e. Self-Control)**

Felix was on his third marriage and His wife (who was the Daughter of Herod Agrippa I and Brother of Herod Agrippa II) was on her second marriage.

Both he and his wife broke up marriages to become married. He was an immoral man that was grossly lacking in self-control.

His deception and greed is seen in his desire to be bribed by Paul.

**The Gospel Is About Our Present.**

**3. Paul Reasoned With Him About Judgment To Come.** No doubt Paul preached to him about the reality of death and Hell!

*Hebrews 9:27-28—"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."*

**The Gospel Is About Our Future.**

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**B. Felix's Reaction:**

1. **Felix Trembled. (Vs 25) (James 2:19)**  
Trembling is not equated with saving faith.
2. **Felix Procrastinated. (Vs 25)**  
His attitude was, "Some day I may, but not today."
3. **Felix Seized An Opportunity. (Vs 26)**  
He used Paul as a "political pawn" with the hopes of getting money from him.
4. **Felix Heard Repeatedly. (Vs 26)**  
There can come a point where you hear the Gospel so much you become insensitive to the message.  
  
That which once caused you to tremble can cause you to yawn.
5. **Felix Bowed To Pressure From Without. (Vs 27)**  
He was pressed to do the wrong thing.  
  
His pressure was political in nature, but pressure can come from any number of places..

*therefore you are not saved. You will be without excuse when the Lord shall judge the quick and dead. The Holy Spirit has given more or less of blessing upon the word which has been preached in your hearing, and times of refreshing have come from the divine presence, and yet you are without Christ. All these hopeful seasons have come and gone—your summer and your harvest have past—and yet you are not saved. Years have followed one another into eternity, and your last year will soon be here: youth has gone, manhood is going, and yet you are not saved.*

*Let me ask you—will you ever be saved? Is there any likelihood of it? Already the most propitious seasons have left you unsaved; will other occasions alter your condition? Means have failed with you—the best of means, used perseveringly and with the utmost affection—what more can be done for you? Affliction and prosperity have alike failed to impress you; tears and prayers and sermons have been wasted on your barren heart. Are not the probabilities dead against your ever being saved? Is it not more than likely that you will abide as you are till death forever bars the door of hope? Do you recoil from the supposition? Yet it is a most reasonable one: he who is not washed in so many waters will in all probability go filthy to his end. The convenient time never has come, why should it ever come? It is logical to fear that it never will arrive, and that Felix like, you will find no convenient season till you are in hell. O bethink you of what that hell is, and of the dread probability that you will soon be cast into it!*

*Friend, suppose you should die unsaved, your doom no words can picture. Write out your dread estate in tears and blood, talk of it with groans and gnashing of teeth: you will be punished with everlasting destruction from the glory of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. A brother's voice would fain startle you into earnestness. O be wise, be wise in time, and ere another year begins, believe in Jesus, who is able to save to the uttermost. Consecrate these last hours to lonely thought, and if deep repentance be bred in you, it will be well; and if it lead to a humble faith in Jesus, it will be best of all. O see to it that this year pass not away, and you an unforgiven spirit. Let not the new year's midnight peals sound upon a joyless spirit! Now, NOW, NOW believe, and live."*

**CONCLUSION**

The Gospel requires a personal response.

Paul's talk with Felix became so personal that Felix grew fearful, but he failed to trust Christ.

In closing I want to read you a passage from "*Spurgeon's Morning and Evening Devotions For Dec 31 Evening*," by Charles Hadden Spurgeon: "Not saved! Dear friend, is this your mournful plight? Warned of the judgment to come, bidden to escape for your life, and yet at this moment not saved! You know the way of salvation, you read it in the Bible, you hear it from the pulpit, it is explained to you by friends, and yet you neglect it, and