

FROM RAGS TO RICHES TO RUIN
Acts 24:22-27

Intro: Every once in a while I like to bring a biographical message. Biographical studies in the Word of God give us instruction which is very, very profitable.

My mind turned to Felix because in thinking over the past year one of the things we as Christians cannot but be concerned about is the fact that many still need to be reached with the Gospel of Christ. I am sure that the one factor which amazes us more than anything else is the fact that many hear the Gospel, know it as well as we do, and yet do not receive the Lord Jesus as Saviour.

No one ever had more of an opportunity to be saved than
did Felix--unless it might have been Judas Iscariot!

Let us notice the story.

I. HIS INFAMOUS PAST.

- A. He had been born a slave. There, of course, was no disgrace ~~in this~~.
- B. He seems to have had the heart of a slave. To historians this means that he was crafty, cruel, and lustful. Born without any real opportunity he was determined to make his own way.

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- C. "His wife, Drusilla" (Acts 24:24). She was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I. His terrible death at the hands of God is recorded in Acts 12:20-23. Drusilla's aunt was Herodias, the woman whose daughter had requested the head of John the Baptist (at her mother's suggestion).

Drusilla had previously been married, and Felix had gotten her to leave her first husband and to marry him.

II. HIS AMAZING ACHIEVEMENT.

He had risen from this lowly place socially to the place of being governor of Judea. This meant that he was directly responsible to the Emperor. Tacitus, the historian, tells us, "He wielded his kingly authority with the spirit of a slave, in all cruelty and lust." Cf. MACLAUGHLIN, Vol. 8, p. 287.

This shows that Emperors and slaves were not too far

apart, many times, in character.

III. THE GRACE OF GOD IN HIS LIFE.

Often when we read this story we are inclined to think of Paul before Felix, but Alexander Maclaren has referred to this account as Felix before Paul.

To be sure, Paul was the prisoner, and Paul's future was uncertain, but it is Paul who is really free. It is Paul who speaks with the one message which Felix needed to hear.

Think what it must have been like to hear the Apostle Paul presenting the Gospel to those who did not know the Lord. Cf. Rom. 1:16--to power-made Rome!

How good God was to Felix in spite of everything!

And he heard Paul, not once, but many times. Cf. Acts 24:25.

Notice what his subjects were in talking to Felix:

- (1) "Righteousness."
- (2) "Self-control."
- (3) "Judgment to come." Cf. Acts 24:25.

(Explain how Paul would have developed these, and why "self-control" would enter into this--pointing out that Felix had made many conquests, but he had not conquered himself.)

IV. THE TRAGIC SEQUEL.

Was he ever saved? V. 27 would seem to indicate not. Why not? It was certainly not due to ignorance! No, it was due to the lust which had completely dominated his life and to which he was a slave.

Concl.: Why do you suppose the Spirit of God led Luke to include this in the book of Acts?

Was it just because it formed a part of the history? That is part, but surely not all!

It must be here to show us:

- (1) What amazing ways God can use to get the Gospel to those who otherwise might never hear. Cf. Phil. 1.
- (2) What better illustration could we have of the grace of God--sending one of the mightiest of men in the Word to one of the greatest of sinners and allowing that sinner to hear the Word of God again and again and again!
- (3) As a warning to all who have not trusted Christ.