

# Walking in Real Freedom

## Opening Text: Acts 24:22-25

In this passage the Apostle Paul is being accused of sedition in Jerusalem. He makes his defence before the Governor (Felix), twice. The second time is more like a private audience as Felix and his wife enquire about faith in Jesus. Paul shares about faith in Christ but then seems to go a bit ‘off-script’ and starts speaking about 3 specific topics that definitely hit a nerve with Felix:

*25 Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid...*

- a) **Righteousness** (literally *justice* in the Greek). That was a hard one for Felix to digest because that word did not define in any way the way he ruled. Quite the opposite.

Tacitus, a historian of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC wrote the following about Felix: “*He wielded his kingly authority with the spirit of a slave in all cruelty and lust*”

His reign was one of cruelty, not justice. Cruelty and... lust: hence Paul’s words to him about self-control.

- b) **Self-control** – He was a man driven and ultimately controlled by lust. Drusilla was Herod Antipas’ daughter, and she was in fact already married to someone else. However, Felix, disregarded the sacredness of that vow and driven by lust, made her his wife. Other historians also mentioned Felix’s lust.
- c) **Judgement to come** - Paul would have spoken to him about the day when he would stand before God to give an account for how he lived his life and for his actions.

Feeling deeply convicted, Felix realised that he couldn’t get away with most of the things that had defined his life up to that point but then he added, “*go away for now, when I have a convenient time, I will call for you.*”

**Matthew Henry**, the famous Bible commentator, said: “*In the affairs of our souls, delays are dangerous*”

As a very important ruler, as someone in charge of these vast areas of the Empire, he probably thought that he was also in charge of “time” - “*when I have a convenient time, I will call for you*”.

No man controls time. Times and seasons belong to God.

Historians tell us that in no more than two years following this episode, Felix was himself called back to Rome, charged over his cruelty against the Jews and imprisoned. He went from governor to the condition of a convicted criminal. He didn’t have a ‘*more convenient time*’.

When Tacitus wrote that Felix “wielded his kingly authority with the spirit of a slave in all cruelty and lust”, he mentioned ‘the spirit of a slave’.

Indeed, Felix had started out as a slave. He was an educated Greek slave in the Emperor’s palace in Rome but found great favour with Emperor Claudius. Because of his intelligence, he was freed, promoted, and ended up as governor in Judea.

However, in spite of his kingly robes, in spite of his authority, in his heart he was still a slave: he was bound by his cruelty and bound by his lust – his uncontrolled fleshly desires.

Felix was a man on a ‘power trip’, with great intelligence and great authority. However, he is found by Paul to be lacking *control* – not control in a political sense or control over peoples or regions, but of his own self. Paul’s discourse on self-control hit a nerve with Felix.

Controlling his ‘self’ proved to be a lot harder than controlling a territory.

**Psalms 119:133** - *Direct my steps by Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion [or control] over me.*

**Proverbs 25:28** - *Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.*

God doesn’t want any of us to be dressed in kingly robes only to carry about the spirit of a slave (like Felix who was successful on the outside but bound inside).

**Galatians 5:1** – *Standfast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

NIV translation says: *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free*

What things could rob you and I of self-control? What things, if allowed, could exert dominion over us?

I have sat with people who have confessed that

- they have no control over their emotions – they explode easily and respond in anger and wrath.
- Some who have no control over their appetite
- I have set with people addicted to social media or video games, some with pornography – totally bound and helpless by this compulsion.

**Here’s a few things we can do to take back control:**

## **1. Daily surrender to the Lordship of Jesus**

**Romans 13:14** - <sup>14</sup>*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*

## **2. Make no provision for the flesh**

*... make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts (to obey its demands).*

**1 Corinthians 6:12 - 12** *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*

**Galatians 5:13** *13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*

**Romans 6:16 - 16** *Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?*

Remember that God doesn't want us to be like Felix who although he was free still carried about the spirit of a slave.

## **3. Seek to be filled daily with the Holy Spirit**

There is a Spirit who will allow you to take back control of your 'self' and He will give the power to conquer the flesh: The Holy Spirit. Felix had the spirit of a slave; God wants you to be filled with the Spirit of God.

**2 Corinthians 3:17b** – ... “*for where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty*”

**Galatians 5:22-23** - *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law*

**Luke 4:18** - *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.*

The Holy Spirit is always associated with liberty, with freedom. He is the Spirit who breaks the power of the slave spirit.

## **Conclusion**

Jesus said, ‘if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed’ (John 8:36). This is a message about the real freedom we can have in Jesus. Let us walk like Jesus, who said, *satan has nothing in Me* (John 14:30) - there was no bondage, no chain, nothing that could have given satan the upper hand or dominion. Jesus was always in control.