

Corner For Religious News

Sunday School Lesson

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Lesson for November 22

PAUL BEFORE FELIX

GLDSEN TEXT—Acts 24:1-27.
GLDSEN TEXT—"Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men."—Acts 24:16.
PRIMARY TOPIC—Why Paul Was Not Afraid.
JUNIOR TOPIC—Paul Before Felix.
INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—Paul Before Felix: A Contrast.
YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—How to Have a Good Conscience.

I. Paul Accused (vv. 1-9).
Paul was now in the hands of Felix who determined to hear his case after his accusers had come from Jerusalem. Ananias, the high priest, and elders came with Tertullus, perhaps a Roman barrister, who formally made the accusation according to Roman law. He began with flattery. He gave Felix the fullest praise when he and all the people knew that he lied, for Felix was one of the worst governors, destitute of morals and justice. He brought a four-fold charge against Paul:

1. "A Pestilent Fellow" (v. 5).
2. That he was a Jew who uttered base and corrupt—plague.
3. An Inciter of Rebellion, a Mover of Sedition (v. 5).
4. That he hoped would bring him into conflict with the Roman power.

8. That He Was the Ringleader of a Sect—a Schismatical Party—a Heretic (v. 6).

This was designed to throw contempt and suspicion upon the Christians, by this means to bring Paul into deeper trouble.

9. That He Had Profaned the Temple (v. 6).

10. This charge we see the wickedness against him, they willfully suppressed facts.

11. Paul's Defense (vv. 10-21).

12. This is a splendid example of the strength and dignity of a man whose life is controlled by a noble purpose, who has nothing to conceal, and who does not distort or suppress facts.

13. Paul's Frankness and Courtesy (v. 10).

14. Flattery is entirely wanting. He gave recognition of the fact that Felix had been ruler of this people long enough to be able to judge justly, as the habits and ways of the Jews were familiar to him; he then in a dignified manner assumes that Felix will render a just decision based on the facts of the case.

15. The Charge of Sedition Denied (v. 11-12).

16. He flatly and scornfully denied this charge, showing its utter falsity since the time was too short, it being but five days since he went to Jerusalem, and half of that time had been spent as a prisoner of the Romans.

17. The Charge of Heresy (vv. 14-16).

18. This he met by a concession and a denial. He admitted that he was of the "way" which they called heresy, but denied that Christians were schismatics. He showed clearly that his actions were in keeping with the Hebrew religion.

19. He worshiped the same God (v. 14).

20. He fully believed in the same Scriptures (v. 14).

21. He had the same hope of a coming resurrection of the dead (v. 15).

22. He declared that he had as the principle of life a conscience void of offense before God and man.

23. The Charge of Sacrilege or Profanation of the Temple (vv. 17-21).

24. His charge he refuted by showing:

(1) That he had come all the way from Greece (v. 17), to worship at the feast.

(2) That he did not come up empty-handed but had brought alms for his nation (v. 17).

(3) That there were not competent witnesses present to testify of his behavior in the temple (v. 19).

(4) By challenging his enemies to testify as to his conduct in the council (v. 20).

25. Felix Trembles Before Paul (v. 22-27).

26. This is a sort of a sequel to the trial. Wicked as Felix was, Paul's manner somehow won his favor, though he did not release him. His sentence was indulgent imprisonment, which kept him free from his enemies while under Roman protection. Felix sent for Paul that he might hear of Christ from him. Paul behaved himself right before these sinners in high life. He reasoned of righteousness, self-control and of judgment to come, before Felix and his sinful wife with such power that Felix was terrified, and declared that he would hear Paul further at a convenient time. This was a most flimsy excuse for not changing his life and granting justice to Paul.

Increasing Burdens

27. The man who increases the burdens of his brother will find his own load giving heavier.—Western Christian Advocate.

Revenge

28. Revenge is sweet to the taste but bitter in the heart.—Western Christian Advocate.

WHY GO TO CHURCH?

Rev. F. B. Meyer, the world-famed and aged minister of London, said recently, "It becomes increasingly clear to me that nothing can save our Christian civilization except a wide-spread religious revival. Our times in many respects resemble those at the close of the eighteenth century, and need a re-acceptation of the great principles of our Saviour's ministry and death, the gifts of the spirit and the approach to the masses."

"That the Church is the medium through which His saving grace can co-operate; that she must cease to accentuate her differences, and act under the baptism of one Spirit; that all which hinders his operation through her must be eliminated, and as the end of the age approaches, we must light our lamps and gird our loins—these seem to be the urgent demands of the hour."

What Dr. Meyer meant in a word is that the world is needing today the positive and sustaining force of the church of Jesus Christ. Since it takes individuals to make a church if such a force is to be produced, the need of the world for this force is sufficient appeal for every one to act. WHY NOT GO TO CHURCH NEXT SUNDAY?

THE QUESTION BOX

(Send problems in question form to Church Editor; answers will appear in later issue.)

1. Suggest some ways by which the Sunday school may have trained teachers and officers.

2. The Methodist Church South has been encouraging each pastor to study one of the recognized teacher training text books receiving special recognition for the work done in order that he may in turn train his teachers and officers. Arrangements can be made with your denominational Sunday School Board for pursuing one of the courses by means of correspondence.

3. One of the common methods is to organize a young people's leadership training class which meets during the Sunday school hour. To make a success of such a class faithful and uninterrupted attendance with at least 45 minutes for the lesson period. A week-night class may be conducted for teachers now giving service with any others that might enroll. Often such a class is one among others conducted in the mid-week church night program now quite popular.

4. In rural districts under the direction of the pastor or some other capable leader a plan can be worked out for weekly lessons in the home, meeting once a month for review making much of the fellowship privileges. The leader needs to work out some plan of keeping in touch weekly with each member of the class. This can be done by mimeographed assignments and reports.

5. In the city it is well to effect a ten week's interdenominational training school—or a week's Standard Training school. Leaflets can be secured from denominational boards explaining the different plans.

Sermonograms

Be thankful for many things you haven't got.

To be thankful is to be especially Christlike.—Russell H. Conwell.

Nothing takes the heart out of a person like ingratitude.

You can only make others grateful by being grateful yourself.

Gratitude is one of the trifles that help to make a little man a big man.—George H. Knox.

Gratitude is the echo of the pleasant words we speak to others.

A thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue, but the parent of all other virtues.

We are blest beyond all other nations of the world, and we should be correspondingly thankful.

String the pearls of God's favor. Hide the dark parts, except so far as they are breaking out in light. Give Thanksgiving Day to thanks, to joy, to gratitude.—The Methodist Recorder.

Henry Ward Beecher expressed himself as beautifully on Thanksgiving

as any man ever has: He said, "Thanksgiving Day is the one national festival which turns on home life. It is not a day of ecclesiastical saint; not a national anniversary; not a day celebrating a religious event. It is a day of thanksgiving for the year's history. And it must pivot on the household—the one great festival of our American life that does pivot there."

The unthankful heart, like a finger in the sand, discovers no mercies, but let the thankful heart sweep through the day, and as the magnet fluids the iron, so it will find in every hour some heavenly blessings.

It is a pleasant sight to see anybody thanking God, for the air is heavy with the hum of murmuring and the roads are dusty with complaints and lamentations.—C. H. Spurgeon.

THANKSGIVING

"For unkind words repressed,
For all intent not done,
For evil thoughts suppressed,
Unworthy goals unwon."

For faults of yesteryear
Repaid by aid of thine;
For penalties we fear
Withheld by love divine.

For mercy patient still
With us so slow to mend;
For heaven's kindly will
That daily good doth send.

For one more day to live
And one more chance to love;
For will to work and give,
And thus our manhood prove."

RELIGIOUS NEWS GATHERED ALL AROUND THE WORLD

It is announced that King George of England reads a chapter of the Bible every day.

Biblical instruction is given in 350 colleges of the United States with an enrollment of 100,000 students.

The First Congregational church of Kalamazoo, Michigan, ninety years old this year, has sent fourteen men into the Christian ministry.

There are over 3,000,000 Jews in New York City alone. More Jews eat dinner every day than ever attended the Passover Feast in Jerusalem.

The average age at which people join the church has dropped during the past forty years from 16.4 years to 11.9 years, according to Dean Athearn of Boston University School of Religious Education.

In spite of the earthquake and American immigration legislation, missionary work in Japan has never seemed more worthwhile. All of the burned churches in Tokyo have been rebuilt and are flourishing as never before.

At the National meeting of the Episcopal church in New Orleans, Rt. Rev. John Gardner Murray of Baltimore, Bishop of Maryland, was elected presiding bishop of the church. This is the highest honor of the church, now made elective for the first time.

The International Student Conference will be held in Evanston, Ill., December 29 to January 1, 1926. The central theme for discussion will be, "To what extent can the idealism of youth function effectively through the church?"

The pastor and people of the First Congregational Church of Washington, D. C., of which the president is a member, are talking of the erection of a national Congregational church, in which the entire Congregational fellowship of the country should be asked to share.

At the last International convention of the Gideons held in Columbus, O., the Gideons of the Dominion of Canada and the United States merged as one association, to be known as the Gideons of America. The association has committed itself to the task of a world-wide Bible ministry in hotels in every country where opportunity is presented.

It is rumored that Dr. Harris E. Kirk of Baltimore, has made up his mind to accept the call to the pulpit of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian church, New York City, to succeed Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick who was guest pastor for more than four years. Dr. Kirk has been pastor of the Franklin Street southern Presbyterian church in Baltimore for 24 years. Even the

newspapers in that city have sought to bring pressure to keep him there.

President Coolidge has used the authority given him by Congress to remit the unpaid balance on the indemnity that China agreed to pay us after the Boxer rebellion of 1900. This balance amounts to over six million, one hundred thousand dollars and will be put at the disposal of the Chinese Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture established last year by the order of the president of China. This should strengthen the good feeling that has long existed among intelligent Chinese for the United States.

WEEKLY STORY OF EARLY EDUCATION IN THE HOMES

"One year from this date, I promise to give my son..... one hour of my time every day, with two hours on the Sabbath. And I promise that this time shall be solely his, without interference for business or pleasure of any sort, and that I shall regard it as a prior engagement each day" is a promissory note of a leading business man recently published in the North American.

When asked why he wrote this strange note he said, "Well, the other day a young fellow came to me for a job. I had known his father years ago, and they were a fine family. Now this son is down and out. When I asked him how he came to this end with such a father, he half broke down.

"My father must have been a fine man," he said, "but unfortunately for me, I only knew it through others. He always was too busy to pay any attention to me. As a matter of fact, I never knew him as a companion, a friend, or anything but the man who paid the bills."

"As I sat listening to that poor chap, I suddenly realized that he was painting my picture—me a man of business, but neglecting my most important business, the proper rearing of my son that he may help strengthen humanity and the better carry on the world's work. I gave to him the job he wanted, and he gave to me the job I had neglected. Being a business man, I wrote the promissory note."

D. Carl Yoder.

COMMENTS ON THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

My Conscience and I—Paul Before Felix—Acts 24:10-16, 22-25.

In our last lesson we left Paul standing on the castle stairs, from which he told the story of his life. There is nothing more interesting to an audience than autobiography. The Jewish mob was interested until he spoke of his mission to the Gentiles, then they threw dust into the air. They could not abide the thought that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles.

In the confusion the chief captain was bewildered. He felt the Jews had some terrible charge against Paul as revealed by the readiness to kill him, and his first move was to order Paul scourged. This however, failed. Paul allowed the soldiers to proceed with the preparations to a certain point. When they had stripped and bound him, and were ready to scourge him he quietly said, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned?" Paul shows no bitterness—only asks in a courteous way if it is proper to scourge a Roman.

We can learn from this lesson something of respect for law. The Roman law would brook no lawlessness and no disobedience. We have something to learn in America in regard to reverence for the law of the land. As a Roman citizen Paul took refuge in the security provided for him by the government under which he lived. Law and order have come down to us at great cost, and we should value highly the liberty and law that safeguards

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us in our own hand.

The captain is surprised to learn that Paul was a Roman citizen, and was born into his citizenship; and now he is ready for his second move—to turn him over to the Jewish Council. This also failed for the Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed and came to no conclusion. This third move is to send Paul to Felix in Caesarea in the night. Here is a regular organized court trial with Felix, the governor, acting as judge, was instituted. Ananias, the high priest, and elders came with Tertullus, who made the opening speech for the prosecution. After flattering Felix, when he and all the people knew that he lied, for Felix was destitute of morals and justice in abusive language he charges Paul with being an insurrectionist against the Romans, a ringleader of the Zoroastrians, and a defiler of the temple—summing it all up by branding him as "A pestilent fellow."

Vs. 10-11—Paul defends himself in a masterly address—a splendid example of the strength and dignity of a man whose life is controlled by a noble purpose, who has nothing to conceal, and will not suppress facts. In his introduction he is courteous and complimentary without a single word of flattery. He declares himself glad that his case is being tried before a judge who is familiar with the Jewish affairs, Felix having been governor for five or six years.

A true gentleman will be polite whether it pays or not. Felix responded by permitting the prisoner's friends to visit him. What we say is after all not so important sometimes as the way we say it. Tertullus had flattered and flattered Paul. Christianity makes gentlemen.

Vs. 12-13—Paul squarely denied the charges. (The love of Christ will give courage to speak the truth fearlessly even to the one having the power of life and death.) Paul remarked that it was only twelve days since he had gone up to Jerusalem and it was hard to think that he could have hatched out an insurrection in that short time. An innocent person best defends himself by throwing challenge of proof upon his accusers. Noise is not argument, nor declaration nor proof.

Paul went up to worship—and they had not found him stirring up trouble either in the synagogue or in the city; he had come to bring alms to his nation, and he tells them that the real instigators of this trouble should have been there if they had aught to say against him.

V. 13—Paul called for proof. Unjust accusers are never more confounded than when they are asked for evidence of their charges.

Vs. 14-15—Paul had one thing to confess; he was a Christian "When the so-called 'heresy' gives one higher, more worshipful thoughts of God and Christ, makes Bible teaching clearer, and its truth more vital and energizing, and renders life hereafter more sure, let us all be 'heretics' with Paul." Paul avoided controversy, finding common ground. Should we be?

V. 16—"And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men." Best cure in the world for the blues. How many of us "exercise" ourselves to have a good conscience. A good conscience is not gained by chance, but by the steady determined exercise of right thinking and right doing. Paul does not affirm perfect attainment, but perfect aim. "Not failure, but low aim, is crime."

Paul's conscience was no different from ours when regulated by the spirit of God. Our Father would have us "exercise, illumine, use conscience until it is an unerring guide—until it revolts against even the shadow of evil in our lives, until our lives reflect the life and our consciences the conscience of the Lord Jesus Christ."

V. 22—Conscience and diplomacy are not always on speaking terms. It is not enough to think and speak well of Christianity, and admire its adherents and its works; nothing short of personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour will satisfy.

V. 23—Felix grants Paul the liberty of his friends ministering unto him. A pagan may possess a sense of justice and kindness of heart.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What was the difference in the ways in which Tertullus and Paul addressed Felix?
2. Before what judges are we put on trial for our Christian faith? Are there people and causes that are fighting without proof?
3. What are the most telling arguments in favor of Christianity?
4. What means is a Christian justified in using when defending himself against unprincipled enemies.
5. What do you understand by Paul's statement "a conscience void of offence?"
6. How would you characterize

Paul's preaching?

7. How do Paul and Felix illustrate the difference between a good and bad conscience?

8. What is the value of faithfulness in little things?

BOOK REVIEW

YOU CAN LEARN TO TEACH, by Margaret Slattery, The Plummer Press, 14 Beacon St., Boston, U.S.A. is an unfailing source of wisdom and guidance to the leaders of young people and young people alike. Margaret Slattery is famous for her inspirational writings for young people of teen age.

HYMN STORIES, by Elizabeth Colson, The Plummer Press, 14 Beacon St., Boston, U.S.A. is a delightful collection of hymn stories upon which are built worship services for the junior department of the church school. As the book is arranged, there is material for a short period of hymn study each week of the year and on special days, programs are planned for the school as a whole.

LESSON PRAYER

Father, forbid that any one here today may wait for a more convenient season, but may we at all times and under all circumstances give our lives unto thy keeping. Make us strong and courageous, and may we like Paul, use every circumstance of life as a means to glorify thee.

AMEN.



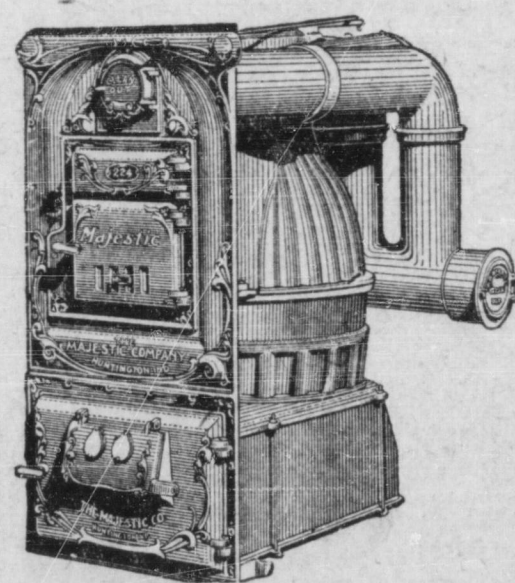
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