



What do Paul's Roman citizenship, Governor Felix, and bribery have to do with the Bible's authenticity? M. Antonius Felix was the 4th Roman governor of Judea, from 52-60 CE, and well known for taking bribes and other corruption. The apostle Paul, who was in custody, came before him in **"trial"**, and after hearing both sides of the issue, **"Felix . . . postponed the trial"** (**Acts 24:21,22 NAB**). Why?

"Felix . . . hoped that a bribe would be offered him by Paul, and so sent for him very often and conversed with him. Two years passed" (**Acts 24:25,26 NAB**). Felix' hope for a bribe from Paul seems highly unusual, not because of any honesty on Felix's part, but because of Paul's poverty. To support himself, Paul, at times, did manual labor as a part-time **'tentmaker'** (**Acts 18:3**). Due to his intense focus on spreading the gospel and his itinerant travel, at times he didn't even have the basic necessities of life (**2 Corinthians 11:27**).

"His personal presence is unimpressive, and as for eloquence, he has none" (**2 Corinthians 10:10 Weymouth**). In addition to his poverty, Paul was very unimpressive in his appearance and speech, so he must have looked like a commoner to others, not like anyone who could afford to pay a bribe.

Why did Felix think such a seemingly poverty-stricken person as Paul would have the means to pay a bribe? On the surface, this might seem like something that the writer of Acts, Luke, invented to embellish the story, were it not for some details buried in the scriptural record.

For one thing, Felix must have known that Paul had used his rights as **“a Roman citizen”** to avoid being beaten, and had the right to a public trial (**Acts 22:22-30; 23:23-33**). He also knew that acquiring Roman citizenship could be very costly. By coincidence, the commanding officer on duty in Jerusalem when Paul was taken into custody admitted, **“I paid a lot of money to become a Roman citizen” (Acts 22:28 GWT)**. Not only was Roman citizenship legally purchased with money, but Felix knew that bribes also were often paid to those in charge of this process. Might Paul be willing to pay a bribe to be released from custody?

Another thing that Felix knew was that during the first hearing when Paul appeared before him at Caesarea, Paul had testified, **“After several years I came to bring relief-money to my nation and to make offerings” (Acts 24:17 NJB)**. Felix knew that somehow Paul had the means to travel long distances to a large sum of relief money to Jerusalem. Might Paul still have access to some of this money? Even if Paul personally didn't have the money to pay a bribe, might Paul have benefactors who could pay a bribe for him?

Felix, who was known as an unkindly, unmerciful man, did something that might otherwise seem to be out of character with his personality, without knowing the above facts. What was that?

“Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs” (Acts 24:23 ESV). Felix allowed any of Paul's friends who wished to visit him, and he very likely hoped that someone, or several, of them could give Paul money to pay a bribe.

We can see from all of this how Paul's Roman citizenship, Governor Felix and bribery all fit

together in Luke's account historical in the Bible book of Acts in verification of the Bible's authenticity. Such undesigned internal harmony in the account of Acts, combined with the concurrence with known historical facts, gives us very strong evidence that the Bible is no fictitious or forged account, but contains true and accurate details of actual historical occurrences.