

Acts 24

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[0 : 00] Turn to the book of Acts, chapter 24. Our text for today is Acts 24. And you read that right on the bulletin and you're hearing me correctly now.

! It's the entire chapter 24. The narrative has picked up pace at this point. And we're actually kind of hastening to the end of our study of Acts in about a month.

I think probably the first, maybe second Sunday of September will conclude our study. As we've been looking at these events leading up to Paul's arrest and now his subsequent trial as he's headed to Rome.

So the action has picked up pace. I will admit that this type of preaching is some of the hardest preaching to prepare for.

Large sections of historical narrative. Sometimes for me, upon the first reading, I just go, well, and that happened. And want to skip on to the next thing.

[1 : 03] And it takes a great deal of time to kind of wring it out. And really consider what is it, right, under the inspiration of the Spirit that Luke intended for us to pick up from such a text.

And so I will tell you that I have spent the mass majority of this week doing so. And just maybe even early this morning, totally settled on what God would have us learn from this text today.

Acts 24 is Luke's telling of Paul's trial before Felix, who is the Roman governor of Judea. So he's the highest ruling power of the region of Judea.

Recall that in Acts 21, Paul has visited the temple in Jerusalem, where some Jews from Asia wrongly assume and then wrongly accuse Paul of defiling the temple by taking Gentiles with him into the inner part of the temple.

In order to quell the commotion, Paul is arrested by a Roman tribune named Lysias, who wrongly assumes that he's an Egyptian that had previously led a rebellion of Jews that was brutally crushed by this Felix.

[2 : 16] And the Egyptian, we don't know who this man was, but the Egyptian, as he's referred to, disappears. So Lysias assumes that's who he is. And in order to hush the crowd, arrest him.

Paul denies that he is this assumed Egyptian and then addresses the Jewish crowd in chapter 22, which is so rich, but angers them even further.

And they call out for his death. Lysias determined to discover what it is that's causing all of this commotion. And why it is that the Jews are so furious by taking Paul into the barracks to have him tortured and questioned by torture.

But Paul makes him aware through a centurion that he is a Roman citizen, which makes this kind of questioning unlawful. So in chapter 23, Lysias takes Paul to meet with the Jewish high council.

So he goes, takes him back to the Sanhedrin with Roman protection, where Paul addresses them and causes another commotion, a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees by saying, it is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.

[3 : 35] Now, if you don't know, I want to catch up real quick, the difference between Sadducees and Pharisees, just in brief, because I think it'll help you understand that a bit more. The Sadducees were were a division of Judaism that were much, much more liberal.

Take took very little of the Old Testament. Literally, it was largely Judaism was largely about their cultural heritage, political power. Quite a few Sadducees sat on the Sanhedrin, but they were not the dominant group there.

The Pharisees, which we read so much about in the gospel accounts, Jesus's life, were the more conservative. They were the more scripturally faithful.

They believed in the Messiah, a coming Messiah that would deliver them, although they misunderstood what that meant. They believed in the resurrection from the dead. So we read in

Acts chapter 23 that Paul sees the two of them sitting there, and he knows he can cause a ruckus by calling this out.

And that's exactly what happens. They get furious at each other because they believe different things about the resurrection. When this dissension becomes violent, Lysias had Paul return to the barracks, and upon the discovery of a plot to kill Paul, he determines to take Paul to Caesarea, which is the Roman capital of Judea, to stand trial before Felix.

[5 : 01] So he says, man, this is causing some serious issue here in Jerusalem. His charge is to keep the peace there. So he takes Paul to Caesarea to train trial before Felix.

So that's where we are in the text. Now, because this morning's text is such a long one, I'm going to read it in three sections. We're going to read it, make some comments at the end of each of these sections to be sure that we all understand what's happening.

And then I will loop back to draw out some doctrines and applications from the text. So that's the plan. And the three sections will be organized as follows. Number one, the prosecutors.

Number two, the defendant. And number three, the judge. Before we start reading in verse one, beloved, let me remind you that this is God's word to us.

It was written for his glory and our good. And we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Chapter 24, verse one.

[6 : 02] And after five days, the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul.

And when he, being Paul, had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation in every way and everywhere, we accept this with all gratitude.

But to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. By examining him yourself, you'll be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him.

The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so. So we see, right, that the transport has happened, and after five days, the high priest Ananias, who's one of the most corrupt high priests in Israel's history, comes down from Jerusalem.

[7 : 18] And any time you're reading New Testament narrative, Jerusalem was on a hill, so everything's coming down. We're not thinking north to south. We're thinking in elevation. So they come down from Jerusalem to Caesarea with these elders.

So these elders would have been members of the Sanhedrin, this council that Paul has already stood trial before and caused such a commotion amongst.

Perhaps some of these men were part of those 40 who plotted to kill Paul and took an oath not to eat or drink until he was dead. We kind of wonder what happened to those guys.

They devised this plot, second part of chapter 23, took this oath. Clay did a great job of mocking them a bit for not being able to kill Paul.

What happened to him? Did they all starve to death? Likely not. But some of them may have come on this journey, right, seeking to fulfill that oath and find Paul martyred. And they bring with them a spokesman.

[8 : 20] Some of your translations may actually say a lawyer, one Tertullus. Now, I think most likely he was a Roman lawyer. Tertullus is a Roman name.

We see at the end of the passage I just read, verse 9, the Jews also joined in the charge. So I think Luke is pointing out the non-Jewish person made the argument and the Jews joined in.

But we don't know for sure because he could have been a Hellenistic Jew with a Roman name who was familiar with Roman law. So they see this need to bring along someone with them that can more accurately state their case and navigate the challenges of Felix's court.

Now, this cohort of men are wicked men. They come to see Paul falsely condemned for the sake of the preservation of their own status.

To be part of the Sanhedrin, to be part of Judaism in this day was extremely profitable for them.

They were revered in their society. And they want to see Paul put to death because he's messing that up.

[9 : 33] And as corrupt men will employ any means for gain, they began their accusation with false flattery of Felix. And you don't get this on the surface when you're reading it.

You may even assume some great things about Felix as a governor. But Felix was not a good governor. In fact, he'll be removed, as we'll see in our text, from his post because he is such a poor governor.

Perhaps the only thing he has done to maintain peace and promote any prosperity in the region was the crushing of the uprising that I mentioned earlier by the Egyptian. But he did so with such brutality.

I mean, he killed everyone that came for that revolt. That rebellion and the quelling of it seems to have led to more unrest and not peace in the region.

So he was a poor governor being falsely flattered for their gain. And they make three charges against Paul. The first charge is the charge of sedition, violation of Roman law.

[10 : 44] They say, verse five, the first part of it, for we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world. This was, as I've mentioned now twice, not tolerated by the Roman government.

Somebody stirred up a revolt. They brought the full force of their army against them. They crushed any type of groundswell of dissension against the Roman Empire.

So this is a major charge they were bringing against him. He is leading riots all over, right? All over throughout the world. The second charge they bring is the charge of sectarianism, which was a violation of Jewish law.

And this would be significant to Felix because the Roman government allowed Jews to govern by their own rules. It was part of the way they kept peace. They didn't come in as long as they paid tribute to, as long as they respected the rules of Rome, they could still function underneath and within their reign.

So if it was going to cause dissension amongst the Jews, this could have been a very serious charge. And they say in verse five, he's a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

[11 : 59] Now, this appears to be a term of derision. It also appears to be well known. We don't see any account in the scripture of a Christian calling himself a Nazarene and here saying they're followers of Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth.

And it must have been widespread and accepted because there's no explanation of what they mean by that, right? He's of the sect of the Nazarenes. And this would have been a violation of Jewish law.

And thirdly, they charge him with sacrilege, which would have been a violation of God's law, not in Felix's eyes, but in theirs would have been a violation of God's law.

Verse six, he even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. Now, we find in this passage an opportunity to inject a brief aside about textual criticism.

Don't let me lose you at this point. Some of you may have noticed in the reading, you may even have a translation that included more text than I read that jumped over verse seven.

[13 : 04] Anybody notice that? There's no verse seven in the text. Some early manuscripts have a second part of verse six and a first part of verse eight and in between verse seven.

And here's and here's what that says. And we would have judged him according to our law. But the chief captain Lysias came and with great violence took him out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come before you.

So some of these early manuscripts contain this falsehood as well. Right. This addition to the things they've already said. They've lied already. We know in verse six, right, halfway through, if we're considering this second part of verse six.

But we seized him. Right. Was that true? In my summary. Right. It wasn't true. They were seeking by mob violence to kill him at the temple. And who came and seized him instead?

It was Lysias for the sake of his own life. He came and seized him and took him to the safety of the barracks. And ever since he's been trying to sort out what's going on, like, why are the Jews so upset with him?

[14 : 11] So they take the credit for arresting him, going through the proper channels rather than killing him on the street. And then if we include this part of the text, verse seven, that the captain Lysias came in with violence, right, violence against the Jews, took him out of our hands.

It just wasn't the case. They surrounded him. They picked him up and carried him into the barracks against the violence of the Jews. So it doesn't really change the meaning of the text, if you're with me.

So the work of textual criticism is the science of determining the original words of the Bible.

And we are indebted to faithful men who spend hours and hours pouring over all of the original manuscripts that exist in order for us to have copies of the word like we have today.

Wonderful labors they've put into this across the centuries. John Piper said this of the way in which textual critics work. It's a really nice, quick summary.

[15:19] There are 5,800 Greek manuscripts, either whole New Testament books or fragments. This is incredible if you know your manuscript history. Even if you don't, it's incredible. In other words, when the text critics sit down to do their work, they're not comparing three or four or 50 manuscripts, which might leave us wondering what the original wording was.

They have thousands of texts from different places in different types that function as confirmations of what the original wording was. There's a great deal of work and a great evidence for that work to be done.

So then what of inconsistencies? Right. So there's these places like this that for some people is really unsettling. And you may feel that way this morning. Oh, wait a minute. Right. Some manuscripts include it.

Some manuscripts don't include it. Can any of it be trusted at all? And I want to show you that it can and that by the process of textual criticism, my faith is increased in the Bible as God's word.

Paul Wegner, author of *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible*, which if you are interested in this, I commend to you, said this. It is important to keep in perspective the fact that only very small parts of the text is in question.

[16:32] Approximately 10% of the Old Testament, 7% of the New Testament. And that's not saying 7% of the verses that could get excluded or included. He's just saying there's only 7% of the New Testament that anyone even has to do any hard work to determine if it's the original text or not.

Yes, you're with me? They're going, wait a second. Right. We've got to really look at the evidences here in these places. He says, and of these, most variance makes little to no difference to the meaning of any passage.

Don Carson says essentially the same thing. He says, what is at stake is a purity of text of such a substantial nature that nothing we believe to be doctrinally true and nothing we are commanded to do is in any way jeopardized by the variance.

And this is an evidence of that where I showed you it doesn't really change the meaning whether it's included or not. But the fact that the textual critics take such care in passages like ours to exclude the text, right?

That's not in the majority of the transcripts, so they exclude it. But to also carefully footnote that some of the early manuscripts do have this addition at this point is bolstering to faith.

[17:46] Look at what care they took in doing this work, right? Had they just excluded it, would we have known any different? Had I not pointed out to you that there was no verse 7, you may not have even noticed it this morning, right?

But they did this very careful work to be sure that we can have a confidence in the work that they've done and in the original manuscripting. So it's a wonderful thing, and that's an aside to what we're saying.

Someone loves my argument right now. William, I love you, buddy. All right, so there's this charge being made by Tertullus. The Jews join in this charge, and those are the prosecutors.

Okay, verse 10. The defendant. And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied, Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. You can verify that it is not more than 12 days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem. And they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city.

[18:52] Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. But this I confess to you, that according to the way which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the law and written in the prophets.

Having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward God, both God

and man.

Now, after several years, I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple without any crowd or tumult.

But some Jews from Asia, they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation should they have anything against me. Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council.

Other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them, it is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day. So, Paul, in his defense, he refutes these charges.

[19 : 57] He refutes the charge of sedition in verses 12 and 13 by denying it and stating the truth that they cannot prove a thing that did not happen.

He simply says they have no proof of anything that they've said because it did not happen. Paul had certainly been involved in many riots across Roman provinces.

We've seen that to be true, haven't we? But he was always the victim of these riots and never their leader. Paul refutes the second charge of sectarianism in verses 14 through 17 by clarifying that to follow Jesus, which was popularly known as the way.

So you see here he doesn't call himself a Nazarene. He says he's a follower of the way. Was to follow the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

He's saying this is not a sect. I'm not guilty of sectarianism because to follow Jesus is to follow the God of our fathers. This is the full expression.

[21 : 03] This is the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament taught us about the Messiah. And Paul refutes the third charge of sacrilege in verse 18 by stating that he was found purified in the temple.

He had done all that was required of him. He had been very careful not to offend the Jewish audience there and that there was no crowd and that there was no tumult.

So this is his defense against these three charges that are made. Okay. Verse 22. The judge. But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the way, put them off, saying, When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case.

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. After some days, Felix came with his wife, Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.

And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity, I will summon you.

[22 : 15] At the same time, he hoped that money would be given to him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him. When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Portius Festus and desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

But Felix, as governor of Judea, was charged with judging matters that disrupted the peace. He seems to understand that the accusation of sectarianism is false.

As Luke records, he has a rather accurate knowledge of the way. He seems to understand that it wasn't a sect. He simply puts off deciding the rest of Paul's case until he can hear directly from Lysias.

What happened in this conflict where Lysias arrests him there in Jerusalem? There's an opposition between Paul and his accusers, right?

They can't get their facts straight, would be Felix's perspective. So he waits until he can speak to Lysias. Felix gives Paul a great deal of latitude to take visitors and to have his needs met as they await for Lysias, which is just a fun note.

[23 : 29] It would appear that governments were no more efficient in Paul's day as two years pass under Felix's custody. You have to imagine, I would think, that the call went out to Lysias to come and to speak to Felix, and it actually never happens.

But they're waiting two years to see it happen. During this time, Felix sins for Paul often. The text suggests he did so both to learn, and we'll talk about this a bit more, to learn more about faith in Christ Jesus, but also in the hopes of extorting Paul.

So let's look a bit at the doctrine of the text. This text gives us a great opportunity to consider what true worship is and to consider what false worship may look like.

What true worship is and what false worship may look like. First, let's just take a little, a brief look at the true worship of the defendant, of Paul.

Largely in verses 14 through 17. And I want to draw out three points of true worship from these verses. First, true worship must have the proper object of that worship.

[24 : 50] True worship must have the proper object of worship. The reality, beloved, is that we are all worshipers, right? We all serve something other than ourselves.

So you are a worshiper by very design. But we must worship the right thing, I hesitate to say. The right person in the case of God.

Paul says in verse 14, I worship the God of our fathers. And the one true God has revealed himself by his Son.

There is no other true worship in this world. There is no other worship of God other than to worship God as he has revealed himself in Christ.

Hebrews chapter 1 verses 1 and 2. The writer of Hebrews says, Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

[26 : 02] He goes on to talk about Jesus being an exact imprint of God's nature. So it's through Christ that we worship God the Father. True worship must have the proper object of worship.

Paul says, Having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

So these men, I think it's safe to presume we're all Pharisees. He's saying that we're in agreeance on this. And I am simply worshiping Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of those promises.

I have a hope in God. I worship God through Christ, who is our hope. Secondly, true worship is defined by God.

If he is the object of our worship, then he has the latitude, he has the authority by which to tell us how we are to worship. Paul says, Believing everything laid down by the law and written in the prophets.

[27 : 08] This is not sectarianism. I am simply believing the truth of the scripture. Now remember that the early church had a Bible.

It's not the same as our Bible, but it is the same as our Old Testament. They had the scripture in their day, the scripture that Jesus used, that Jesus affirmed. So when Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 3, this is what he's referring to, verses 16 and 17.

All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. It is the source of instruction for us. It is sufficient for that. The Christian church needs to regain the reformer's principle that was called the regulative principle.

And if we don't find something in the scripture, we don't do it. And if it's in the scripture, then we do it. It tells us everything that we are supposed to do in order to please God.

[28 : 15] And beloved, hear me. It is very possible to worship the right God, but to worship him wrongly. And it's not a drive us to the Bible to worship him rightly.

Third, true worship is a lifestyle and it is active. It's a lifestyle and it is active. If you've been here long, you know how much calling music worships grieves me.

Because it's not just that. I heard the other day, I don't remember who it was that was telling me this, got into a loving, heated argument with a member of their church about what worship is.

And this man could not accept that anything besides music was worship. And we were musing about why. And the only thing we could think is because the language has communicated that to him.

Words have meaning. They carry ideas. So we should use words very carefully. Our lives are meant to be given in worship. All that we do is worship.

[29 : 23] Worship, right? This service, every part of what we do together is worship. Which means what you're doing is meaningful. Even now in listening is intended to be, is meant to be worshipful, right?

Aimed at God. Heavenward. In its intention. So it's a lifestyle. And look at Paul. Paul expresses that. Verse 16, he says, so I always take pains, right?

I put effort to have a clear conscience for both God and man. To be obedient vertically and to be obedient horizontally that I may worship rightly.

And then he gives some expression of that. A way in which he did that. This is not an all-inclusive list, but in verse 17, he says, now after several years, this is after his missionary journey, I came to Jerusalem to bring alms to my nation.

Gifts. He's giving gifts. And to present offerings. We see further that Paul's life, lifestyle, active lifestyle of worship is expressed in the proclamation of the gospel.

[30 : 38] Verse 25, when Felix comes to him, he says that Paul reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment.

So he expressed in his preaching the truth of the way in which God is to be worshipped. And this is through Christ, right? We must be found righteous before God and we find our righteousness in Jesus, his perfect life.

We are meant in this world to live self-controlled lives by the power of the spirit. And we are saved from the coming judgment because this reality of who God is to us in Christ.

And so true worship is a lifestyle and it's active. James wrote in James 2.26, for as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

And so, beloved, if we are in Christ because of who we are, because we are accepted in him, we will be obedient. We will labor.

[31 : 43] We'll take great pains to have a clear conscience before God and man. Recognizing fully that there's nothing we could do to be accepted, but having been accepted, we work.

So worship is a lifestyle and it is active. So there's this true worship of Paul, the defender. And there's the false worship of the prosecutors and the judge.

It seems to me, this is the wrestling of this week. What do we do with a text like this? How do we give it application for today? That Luke means to juxtapose Paul's true worship against the false worship of the other characters in the episode.

All of these men have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ preached. My mind is drawn to the parable that Jesus taught concerning the sowing of seed and the various types of soil that seed falls on. Here we see Paul as the good soil. The seed has fallen on it. It has taken root. And he is bearing fruit. Going forth.

[32 : 52] And he is worshiping truly his God. These men have had the seeds sown, but they are not good soil. At least not for this part of their lives.

We can certainly hope that there's some later change, but the Bible gives us no evidence of that. And so let me draw your mind with mine to the parable of the sower. Or I'll use the one from Mark chapter 4.

You can turn there if you'd like. You certainly don't have to. I'm just going to read a portion of it beginning in verse 3. Mark 4 verse 3. Jesus said this.

Listen. Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil.

And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.

[34 : 01] And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold. So the gospel of Jesus Christ is the seed.

And it falls on all these various soils. Fields are prepared for planting. They're plowed up and made soft, and the soil is amended for that.

But then around the edges, there are thistles growing, and there's rocky sections that don't get plowed up and prepared, intended to grow things. And there's the path, which is heavy-trodden and packed down.

And the sower goes out and indiscriminately casts seed. He's just trying to get as much of it as he possibly can into good soil. God, through the work of the Spirit, is preparing soil.

He's working the soil to be good soil to receive, and not working other things around the edge where they cannot receive.

[35 : 08] So we see in this text this great work of God, having saved some and not others. The prosecutors were so blinded by ambition and deceitful gain and prominence that they could not and they would not receive the truth and become true worshipers.

Verse 4, and as he sowed, this is of Mark chapter 4, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. Jesus, in his explanation of this parable, says, verse 15, and these are the

ones along the path.

Where the word is sown, when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. I think that these Jewish leaders were much like path soil, unable to receive the truth of the gospel.

And then we see Felix. Felix reminds me of the Athenians. Luke tells us in Acts chapter 17, verse 21, that they were interested in hearing what Paul was teaching because, this is verse 21, all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

They wanted to hear this new gospel message, not because they wanted to know the truth, but they just wanted to muse about some new teaching. Show us some new philosophy.

[36 : 38] Felix has a rather accurate knowledge of the way, Luke records for us, and is interested in knowing more. And we read that he sent for Paul and he heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.

We see that Paul is given the opportunity to reason with him, which means that they were talking, they were discussing. There were questions and answers going between them. But note his response to Paul's preaching about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment. Luke records for us that Felix was alarmed. He was alarmed. And we can wrongly read this and think that Felix was alarmed in a good way.

There's coming judgment. I am alarmed. But I don't think that's the case. I think it means he didn't like the teaching. He didn't like the idea that there was a coming judgment and that there was going to be some standard by which he was judged.

I think we can see that, his intention, right? Because he sends him away. He sends him away at being alarmed. I think the person rightly alarmed would want to hear more.

[37 : 49] Tell me more. How must I be saved as those who heard Peter's preaching in Acts 2 cried out? We can also see part of his ill-directed intention in meeting with Paul because of the want for financial gain.

He had hoped that Paul was going to pay him off at some point and let him go. So what kind of soil was Felix? Felix, I think that he's the soil of Mark 4 verse 7.

Out of their seed fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it and it yielded no grain.

Jesus explains that this soil is thorny and others are the ones sown among thorns.

They are those who hear the word. But the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word and it proves unfruitful.

So maybe Felix's desire to know more, to understand the way, to have a better understanding of it, to have some new philosophy in his belt to entertain people at parties.

[38 : 59] We certainly can see that he desires the deceitfulness of riches in this world. And so as far as we can tell from the text, he's not a true worshiper.

He's a false worshiper instead. So what's the application for us? So great. What's the application for us? I think it's simple.

And it's simply this. Believe. Believe. Be a true worshiper. Of the almighty God. And we do so through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Having accepted by faith his righteousness. Recognizing that if we believe in him, he took our sin in himself.

The wrath of God that was due us was poured out on him. That he is in fact raised from the dead.

God put his seal of approval on Jesus' life and his death by raising him from the dead.

[40 : 02] Notice that will be a continued point of contention in the book of Acts. We believe because he is risen. We are most to be pitied if he was not.

But recognize that there is a coming judgment. God's loving kindness and forbearance will only last so long.

And you need to make your calling and election sure. You can be worshipping the right God but wrongly because you're not found in Christ this morning.

It is very possible that you think that simply attending a church fellowship on a Sunday morning makes you saved. That laboring to live a moral life finds you accepted before God.

None of these things will earn your salvation. You have an infinite debt to pay. Only by faith in Christ is it paid. You have an infinite righteousness that you must have before God.

[41 : 04] Only by faith in Christ is this righteousness given to you. So believe. Believe that Jesus is the Christ. That he is raised and he is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Believe that you have a confidence before God because of him. Spurgeon wrote this and this is on your bulletin. You may have read that on your bulletin and gone, gosh, that seems harsh this morning.

Here's why. And finally. He said we often talk of unbelief as if it were an affliction to be pitied instead of a crime to be condemned.

And it will one day be condemned. If we don't place our faith in Jesus Christ, we are fully responsible for our rejection of the truth. So don't be like these false worshipers.

Be in this sense like Paul. Place your faith in Jesus. Let's pray together. Let's pray together.