

44a ACTS

We're here on Friday the 20th of August 2004 to continue our study in the Book of Acts. We begin a new chapter tonight in Chapter 24. If all goes according to plan, we will also finish Chapter 24 tonight.

I make so bold as to predict that we will get all the way through the chapter. It's an action-packed chapter. There's a lot of information in here, and it would be a good idea for us to be sure that as we look at it, the time is well spent.

Anybody can read the chapter. Anyone can look at historical facts. But we as Christians have the opportunity to have our souls strengthened, to have the power of God active within us.

A lot of people in the modern day think that the power of God is defined by the Holy Spirit and getting the ghost and having the Holy Spirit do a lot of things into and through you. The less commonly known fact of the matter is that the power is in God's Word because it is God's Word that gives us something to think with. And it is not emotion, and it's not feeling, and it's not getting the ghost.

It gives us power to live this life and be happy and be productive and have a bright future with God in eternity. It is knowing what's going on. You can't get very far on feelings.

You have to be able to think your way out of a wet paper bag. You have to be able to look at choices and pick the best one. You have to be able to look at issues and weigh them and figure out what is best, what is right, what is good.

And the only way we can do that is to have good information. We need to know some things about reality, about the present, about the past, and about the future. And our study in Acts is giving us that information.

It's an important thing because what we look at in these studies helps us think, and thinking makes us what we are. The old guy sitting there, the marble statue with his chin on his knuckles, and he says, I think, therefore I am, is really true, and very much so for us as believers. So this is an important time.

The only way we can understand God's word, the only way it's going to stick with us and do us any good, is if we do acknowledge that God the Holy Spirit does play a part. What is his actual ministry to us? It isn't making us wave our hands and roll around. It is giving us the ability to understand and process God's word.

He is our tutor. He's our teacher. He's the one that takes this information that could just be dry, dusty information on a page, and makes it real to us, brings it back to our mind when we need it, helps us to understand its applicability.

So it's important that he be here and help us understand it as we learn it, and then he will also be there to help us turn around and put it into practice in the days ahead. So our short time of prayer at the beginning is important because the only way God's Spirit can do his work is when we have cleared the decks. We have acknowledged whatever sin is in our heart and in our mind.

If we have had attitude sins, if we've had sins of the tongue, if we have done things that we know are wrong, we need to bring those to God and ask him to cleanse us and remove the garbage out of the way. If you're going to sit down and eat a meal, you want to eat off of clean plates, right? We don't grab something that's been sitting in the dishwasher for two or three days unwashed and try to put our food on it. The same thing, God's word is food for our souls.

We don't want to use dirty plates. We ask God to cleanse us, to forgive us, and based on his promise that if we ask, he will do it. There's no payment.

Don't have to light a candle. Don't have to consult a priest. All we have to do is go to God and say, Lord, I recognize that I have sinned.

When we do that, it's a free gift. He cleanses us. Then our soul is free and clear.

God the Holy Spirit can teach us from the word, and we have resources. We have strength. We have something to think with, something to decide with.

That's what life is all about. This life has no point if we are not ready for the future with God. It just doesn't have a point.

It blows away with the wind. This is a very important time. Let's take a moment and go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we are grateful, as always, for another opportunity to spend time in fellowship with believers who recognize the importance of your word, who desire to live in a way that is pleasing in your sight. We thank you for the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross for us and who made it possible for us to be rescued from a lost and hopeless condition, who died to give our lives meaning and purpose and direction. We thank you that your word reveals what that meaning and purpose is.

We thank you that your Holy Spirit can guide us in the right direction through your word, and we ask that you will bless our study tonight, cause these things to live in our minds, to be an active and powerful force, to motivate us to live in a way that pleases you, that justifies the work that the Lord Jesus did on our behalf and prepares us for the future. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, we pick up in chapter 24 of Acts tonight. What is going on? We are just about three quarters of the way through this book. It started out with the departure of the Lord Jesus.

You had the disciples kind of milling around in Jerusalem. Then came the day of Pentecost and everything changed. Judaism and the Jewish way of life and sacrifice under the Mosaic Law and all of that got a jolt, because on a day called the Day of Pentecost, which was actually a Jewish feast that had been observed every year for about 1480 years.

On that day, God the Holy Spirit came down and said we are going to do things a different way. Now you don't have to concentrate on being a good Jew under the law. Now you concentrate on being a good person under the Spirit.

A whole new way of life was ushered in. The next 20 chapters of the book of Acts tell us how this information began to spread, because it is a big change. You can imagine, we understand Christianity today.

We have our Bible and if somebody suddenly showed up in New York City and said, Hi there, I am here from God and guess what, I have the Third Testament. You have the Old Testament and the New Testament. Well, I have the Third Testament right here.

And there is a whole new thing coming in, a whole new brand of Christianity. Well, we would be somewhat speculative. We would be a little bit hesitant to just immediately, at least I hope we would, we would want some proof, we would want some guarantee that this is really from God and that it is not just Joseph Smith with his golden glasses making up a bunch of King James English or that it is not the Bhagavad Gita or it is not the Koran or some other piece of writing that does not come from God.

It needs to be the real deal or we are deceived, right? Well, this is what the people in Jerusalem and Judea went through. They needed some, what they used to call bona fides, some proofs. Show me that you are really from God.

So you have John and Peter walking around and dead people come to life. People with withered hands and crippled limbs and all kinds of leprosy are instantaneously and totally healed before your very eyes. It isn't a TV healer that somebody staggers up and says, I have got a pain in my back and smack, being healed and then suddenly, oh, my pain is gone and there is no proof.

You can't see that. That is not a proof. What is a proof? You show me somebody that has got a withered, twisted, backward facing leg and the apostle comes by and says, In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, be healed.

And the man stands up and he has got legs like an Olympic runner. That is healing. That is God's power.

And anything less than that is not God. God heals totally. He heals instantly.

He heals visibly. And He heals permanently. None of that can be said about modern day,

quote, unquote, faith healing.

It is not verifiable. It is not demonstrable. It is not instantaneous.

And the emotional burst and the adrenaline and the hormones that hit people when they are up in front of the TV cameras that maybe give them victory over their arthritis for a couple of minutes does not last. Countless studies have been done where people follow up on these that you see on TV that stand up out of their wheelchair. They are back in their wheelchair.

They are back down at the hospital. They are back on their pain medication. They are not healed.

That is not of God. That is a lie. It is satanic.

It is deceptive. And it distracts people from getting busy and understanding the truth. The Apostles, in the early chapters of Acts, we saw that God gave people the proof they needed to recognize that this was the real deal.

Our New Testament and the information that is in it is the real deal. Eyewitnesses verified where it came from and saw it. Well, then we move from Peter and John and Philip and Stephen on into the Apostle Paul.

And the last part of Acts has been all about the Apostle Paul. He is a venomous, Christian-hating Pharisee bent on destroying this new incursion into Judaism. He does not think it is from God.

He does not believe it is from there. Smack! The Lord Jesus Christ meets him on the road to Damascus, blinds him with the light of His presence. He says, I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting.

And Saul says, I believe you. What do I need to do? He says, go on to Damascus and someone will tell you what you must do. When he gets there, he sees Ananias.

Ananias says, Peter, I mean Paul. Peter, Paul, all men joy. He says, Saul, the Lord Jesus Christ has called you to be the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Even though you are a Pharisee, even though you are ramped up with all this knowledge, you need to go to the people that are outside Israel, that have not been laboring under the yoke of the law of Moses all these years. Go to the Greeks, the Greek speaking world. Go to the places in the Roman Empire and share this good news.

God's salvation is not within the borders of Israel anymore. Anybody that wants it, regardless of where they come from, regardless of what they have done in the past, all they have to do is recognize that they have a problem, that they are separated from the God who created them. They are separated from the God who created the world.

And they don't have to work. They don't have to slave. They don't have to sacrifice.

They don't have to give up anything. All they have to do is say, I recognize that I lack relationship with God. My sin separates me from God.

My corrupt nature that I was born into makes it impossible for me to connect with God. God has bridged the gap in Jesus Christ. All you have to do is look to the Lord Jesus Christ and say, You are the one I need.

You are the Savior. I put my faith in you. When I die and I stand before God and He says, Why should I not throw you into the lake of fire for all eternity? I will say, because I claimed Jesus Christ as my Savior.

And He will say, Come on in. That's as simple as it is. No candles.

No work. No giving up. No changing your life or anything else.

Salvation is a simple matter of claiming the work of Christ. You have to believe that you have the problem. It's like somebody drowning.

You knock a drunk off a yacht. He may or may not recognize that he's so drunk he's in danger of dying or drowning. A lot of people get high on some substance or too far gone to think clearly on a substance and don't recognize their danger.

Don't recognize the risk and the seriousness of what is happening to them. We all know people that this has happened to. Well, people who are lost have to wake up to the danger.

Have to wake up to the seriousness. Your heart may not beat the next time it's supposed to beat and you'll be gone. And you'll be standing before God and He'll be asking that question.

And if you did not accept Christ in this life, He's going to say, I don't see that you have the mark of my Son on you. When I presented you with the gospel of Christ, you spit in His face and said, I don't need Him. I'm good enough on my own.

I think there will be a big party down in hell and I'd rather be with the fun people than the safe people. And I rejected it. God's going to say, in you go.

And eternity, there is no second chance. There's no do-over. It's a one-time thing.

So it's very important. So Paul is given the task of telling the rest of the world outside of Israel this important news. I mean, it doesn't get any more important than that.

Every single human being has to face that choice and hopefully make the right choice and say, I know I'm lost. I know I'm corrupt. I know I don't have the ability to fix myself.

And I know that I deserve eternity in the lake of fire. But I also see that God has made a way. He loved me, John 3.16. God so loved the world, He gave His Son.

And I have accepted Him. I claim Him. He is my salvation.

Once we accept that, now we have a relationship with God. As many as received Him, they have the right to be called children of God. God doesn't throw His children into the lake of fire, does He? He doesn't disown them and say, well, you were my child for a while, but then you did some really bad things, so I'm going to put you in the lake of fire anyway.

Once saved, always saved. Once you're a child of God, He's your Heavenly Father, you don't get out of that relationship. Now.

Now we have a Heavenly Father. Now we have a relationship with God. Does a father normally have some expectations of his children? That they live in a right way? I want to read you something that was written by Chuck Colson.

His article for today, he has a program called Breakpoint. I would like to read you this article because it summarizes exactly what's happening in Acts 24. This is Chuck Colson.

It's called American Moralism. Why should we be moral? Why is it important to even be moral? This election year, Christians can expect to be criticized for injecting moral values into American public life. Accused of being moralists.

This derisive term often puts Christians on the defensive and causes us to be apologetic for our convictions. Chuck Colson says, I have a better idea. Instead of being defensive, we ought to say, You're doggone right I'm a moralist, and our fellow citizens ought to be glad that we are.

That moralistic streak is why people all over the world look to America for leadership. It's why America is different. The impact of our moralistic streak and the morally based public life that it produces can be seen in events all around the world.

This attempt right now to bring democracy and freedom to the Middle East isn't only about national security. It stems from the moral conviction that tyranny and despotism are bad and democracy is good. That's a moral view.

The only reason we care about the freedom of people thousands of miles away is our moralism and our commitment to universal moral principles. Our concern for human rights is a product of America's Christian heritage. We refuse to sit idly by while human rights of others are trampled.

Our moralism is why America, spurred on by Christian citizens, works to combat the AIDS epidemic in Africa. It's why we are trying to eliminate the scourges such as the

international sex trade. Neither of these directly affect most Americans, but our moralism will not let us ignore the problems.

Human rights isn't the only area where morality plays an important part. The importance of moralism is seen clearly in the economic sphere. The success of the U.S. economy displays the effect of our moralism.

Did you ever think about that? The reason we have a good economy is because we're moral. Do you know why that is? He says it here. We insist on openness in business transactions.

We demand that contracts spell out the parties' rights and obligations. We insist that the books be opened to auditors and that fraud be prosecuted. We have laws that are based in morality that says, you have to do a square deal.

You have to play fair. You have to obey the law when you enter into a contract or when you make a promise. That's morality.

He goes on to say, since the Bible teaches us that no man can serve two masters, we have laws requiring parties to reveal conflicts of interest. There's the rule of law. Our moralism insists that people be held accountable for their agreements, and we prosecute people who break the rules.

In contrast, Russia, which has a lot of resources, has a lot of riches, has few of these moral safeguards. The lack of openness and accountability has hampered Russia's attempts to build a thriving free economy. Corruption and a lack of accountability have allowed former communist officials and the Russian mafia to steal billions behind closed doors.

This has left millions of ordinary Russians without any real stake in their country's financial well-being. Russia and other countries have made bad policy choices, and it's hard to avoid the conclusion that the lack of morality has undermined their economic development, just as crony capitalism has in the third world. So he goes on to conclude, the next time you hear Christians accused of moralism, smile and reply like I do, you're right, and it's a good thing, too.

Point out to your neighbors the real root of the world economic crisis. They need to know that doing the right thing isn't only good for our souls, it also makes the world a better place to live. And it isn't pointed out often enough, in my view, that the reason our country is prosperous and the reason we enjoy so many freedoms, freedoms that we carry to the point of abuse, is because we have a moral fabric that keeps our society together.

The same people who will freely abuse their freedom, if they get hurt or if they slip and fall or if something bad happens, they're the first ones to go to the court and say, I

demand justice, I demand my rights. Well, where does the concept of justice and rights come from? It's our Christian heritage, it's our morality, it's our sense of fairness, and that comes from the word of God. Well, as I said, now that we are children of God, we have a responsibility to play by the rules, to please our Heavenly Father, who loved us enough to send His Son to die for us when we were hopeless, helpless, and useless.

We had no redeeming qualities, there's nothing good about us. What are we going to give to God that He hasn't already got? Are we bringing anything to the table? It is all of grace. But if somebody does you a great favor, like saving your life, like giving your life a meaning, giving a direction, giving you the wisdom to live a happy and productive life, you would want to try to live in a way that pleases Him, right? And that's what we want to do for God.

So Paul the Apostle is given this message to take to the world, and the next many chapters of Acts that we have studied have shown Paul making these three great looping trips through the Roman provinces there, spreading this good news in Galatia, and in Corinth, and in Ephesus, and in Miletus, and Troas, and Lystra, and Derbe, and Iconium, and all of these other towns and cities that are generally north and west of Israel. So now, many, many of these Gentile people are coming to the faith, but you've still got the Jews. Now, have you ever seen it happen where there's like an established thing going on, and then something new takes place, and the established thing starts to suffer? It's sort of like you can have a clique of friends in school.

I think everybody remembers back in school, you have a group of friends, and everybody is kind of happy with that group of friends. Then maybe a new kid or two comes into school, and they're popular, and they're interesting, and so pretty soon some of the friends start drifting over to the new person, and then the old group of friends start kind of looking around saying, well, he's not so hot. What's the big deal about him? Why is everybody going over to him? And there becomes a little bit of a jealousy and a tension because you're losing something that you took for granted that you had.

Well, this is exactly the feeling that the Jews have with Paul going out and talking to all these Gentiles and saying, you can have a relationship with God. You can have salvation through Christ. And don't worry about sacrificing bulls and wearing your beard a certain way and doing all of these Jewish customs and Jewish laws that built up in Israel.

He says, you don't have to do that. You just have a relationship with God. Love God.

Try to please God in the way you live. God will bless you. Be honoring God and be kind to one another, and you're good to go.

Well, the Jews are saying, wait a minute. We sort of had the lock. We had the monopoly on relationship with God, and if you wanted to come to God, you kind of had to come through us.

You had to become a Jew. You had to go through the mikveh and proselyte, turn into a Gentile Jew. You remember, some of you are probably too young, but you remember Sammy Davis Jr.? Black man? Tremendously talented guy.

He could sing. He could dance. He could act.

In the entertainment field, the guy had talent just oozing out of every pore. He was so talented. Well, he was a black man, but he was a Jew.

Do you think he was descended from Levi or Judah or Simeon or any of those other guys? He's not even a Shemite. He's somewhere in the Hamitic line, right? But he converted. He proselyted to Judaism.

You can choose. Anybody can choose to become a Jew if you want to. Just go through the rituals and wear the little cap and do the thing, and you can be in.

Get circumcised if you're a male and that kind of thing. So he did. And so Sammy Davis Jr., black as he could be, but he was a Jew.

Lots of people have done that. Well, Paul says you don't have to do that. You don't have to become a Jew.

God says that's the past. It was good while it lasted, but the Lord Jesus has come and fulfilled the law and accomplished his purpose, and now we've got a new economy. Well, the Jews are just incensed.

And they follow Paul from city to city saying, Hey, you're messing up our deal here. And even the Jews in these towns are beginning to realize that they don't have to train their children up under the law and travel to Jerusalem and sacrifice animals and do all the rest of this stuff that was the Old Testament religion because a new thing has come. Well, it just tremendously upset them because their little house of cards is blowing down and falling apart.

So they chase Paul all through the Roman Empire. Every new town that Paul goes to, these people are right behind him trying to bring him down and stop him and get him arrested. Well, Paul finally decides to go to Jerusalem.

In these last couple of chapters, we saw Paul come to Jerusalem and the Asian Jews, the Jews from all the way up there, the farthest reaches of where he had been, they travel to Jerusalem and try to get him in trouble right there at the temple. Paul goes into the temple, does all the normal temple things that a Jewish guy would do, which he really should not have been doing because it goes against what he's been saying all of these years out in the Roman Empire, right? He said you don't have to do this, and he comes right down there and does it. He kind of cripples his case a little bit.

He thinks this will make the Jews happy. It just inflames them. So the Romans have to come in because the Jewish mob comes up and tries to tear him limb from limb.

The Romans rescue him. So then he stands before the Jewish council and they get all mad at him. The Romans have to come get him again.

So now the Romans are sending him to the Roman governor to see if he is guilty of a crime or not. That's where he is now. Felix is the governor of the Roman province of Syria.

And that is headquartered in Caesarea. And so the local procurator, Lysias, has said, well, this is beyond my jurisdiction here. I can't sort this out.

I'm going to send him up to the head shed. This would be like if something happened here in Dallas and the mayor and the legal system here in Dallas couldn't figure it out, they'd say, we're sending you down to Austin. We'll let the governor deal with you.

So remember they had the cavalry and the infantry to protect him because 40 guys had taken a vow. We will not eat or drink until we kill Paul. And so there's this huge contingent of Roman soldiers all around this little raggedy apostle.

And they're going to take him, what we would say, to Austin, Texas, to the state capital. They're taking him to the coast, to Caesarea. Now what do we know about Caesarea? Have we seen it recently? You remember Agabus who got the belt, wrapped it around, and when Paul was on his way going to Jerusalem, Paul says, I've got to go to Jerusalem.

I want to tell them all about the great stuff. And everybody in every city said, Paul, the Holy Spirit says, don't go to Jerusalem. He said, but I've got to go.

My strategy calls for it. And so he wants to go anyway. And Agabus, the last stop is Caesarea.

And Agabus says, well, you won't listen to people talking. So he takes some of Paul's clothing and wraps it around his arms and falls down in front of him. And he says, you see this? This is what's going to happen to you if you go to Jerusalem.

Well, sure enough, here comes Paul under Roman escort, in chains, into Caesarea. So now this is the same town. This is where Agabus did the falling down thing.

So how hard is it for all of the Christians there in Caesarea when they come to visit Paul and they say, well, hello, Paul. What you got on your arms there? I mean, I don't know if Agabus is still around or not, but who is the main guy in Caesarea? Do you remember? Remember the guy that had the seven virgin daughters? The guy who evangelized the Ethiopian eunuch? Philip. Four virgin daughters? I thought he had seven.

That must be like an Islamic thing. Yeah, he had four virgin daughters. So that's where

he is now.

He's in Caesarea. Felix is like the governor of the state. His spot is in Caesarea.

Now, Felix is an interesting guy. He is not a particularly savory character. We know a lot about him because Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote about conditions in Palestine during this time.

And he tells us a little bit about Felix. And I'll tell you a little bit about him as we go through. But he had come to power there in a time when Judea was just infested with robbers.

This was like Central Park in New York in the middle of the night. I mean, you couldn't make a trip. Remember Jesus telling the story about the guy just trying to go from Jerusalem to Jericho, a little short trip, and he gets mugged? Why? Well, there were muggers all through the land.

And even 20, 25 years later, there are muggers everywhere. You just have to get a big convoy around you to keep from being attacked and robbed. So there was sort of a mafia type of thing under a man named Eliezer.

Eliezer was sort of the mafia boss in Judea. And he ran this ring of thieves. He had little subgroups of thieves.

And they were all over the land. And they had this big racket thing going. Well, Felix came and got that all out.

He came in and just took Roman soldiers and just wailed all over Eliezer and his band and substantially wiped out this robber band. Then there was this Egyptian that raised 30,000 insurrectionists who thought he was the next Messiah and all of that. Remember there was some talk where the procurator over there in Jerusalem said, Are you the Egyptian? You speak Greek.

Are you that Egyptian that we're trying to catch? Because Felix had rounded up a lot of the 30,000 and had scattered them widely, but they never caught the ringleader. They never caught the Egyptian. So he thought maybe he had the grand prize in Paul and maybe he was this missing Egyptian.

And he says, No, I'm not an Egyptian. I'm a Jew born in Tarsus, etc. But Felix put that thing down.

There was also a disturbance that takes place between the Syrians and the Jews in Caesarea. Now this is going to happen right around the time that Paul is in Caesarea, maybe even a little bit after. But there's going to be a conflict again between the Jews and the Syrians who dwell right there around Caesarea.

We'll have more about that in a moment. Anyway, Felix is pretty much a brutal guy. You know the problem in Iraq is that Saddam was such a brutal dictator that people pretty much didn't dare do much in the way of crime.

And then when we removed him and the brutality went away, well then crime began to flourish. They're looting museums and having all kinds of terrors and that because he had the rule of law by brute force. Well, Felix is this kind of guy.

He imposes order with violence and with great brutality. He is known in history for his brutality and his callousness. In fact, so much so, that the Jews are finally going to get sick of him and they're going to go to Nero.

Now Nero is no peach, if you remember. But the Jews in Judea are going to go to Nero and say, look, you've got to get this guy off our necks. He's a maniac.

And they're going to go to Rome and make accusations against Felix and say, this guy's a nutcase. He's too brutal. They're making this case to Nero.

So you know Felix is nobody to fool with. But actually Felix is going to not be removed by Nero because Felix has a brother named Pallas. P-A-L-L-A-S.

And Pallas is kind of a buddy of Nero's. And Nero's going to say, you're making trouble. The Jews are, the peasants are revolting kind of a thing.

And Pallas is going to say, oh look, he's my brother. He's all right. Give him a break.

Don't kill him, please. And so even though Felix will not come back and assume the rule anymore, he doesn't get executed. Because Rome was real anxious to keep the Jews appeased because there's so many of them.

And they don't want them rising up. Anyway, that's a little bit about Felix. This is the guy that Paul is being dragged before to answer for creating a disturbance in Jerusalem.

So the guy with a simple flicker of the eyelash can have Paul executed. He's got the authority. He has to be a little bit careful because Paul is a Roman citizen.

He doesn't want to get in trouble with Rome. He's got to play by the rules. But he's got a lot of power.

He's a brutal guy. And he's no nonsense. He will send the troops and put down whatever needs putting down.

And I think he and Nero are sort of birds of a feather. So what's happening here in chapter 24? Take a look at the chapter here. It says, After five days, the high priest Ananias came down with some elders with an attorney named Tertullus.

Now this guy, this orator named Tertullus, he is a hired gun. Basically, the Jews have hired like, you know, Johnny Cochran, only he's not a defense guy. He's an offense guy.

He's a prosecutor. Who's F. Lee Bailey or one of these famous lawyers to do the prosecuting? The guy knows nothing. I mean, he's coming in from the outside.

He's a hired gun. The Sanhedrin back in Jerusalem has pooled their quite substantial funds and hired the best guy they could find. Tertullus, in fact, there's a little bit of history.

Tertullus may have been, there is a Tertullus that lived at this time that was a companion of Pliny the Younger. If you know anything about Roman history and Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger, Pliny the Younger knew a famous lawyer named Tertullus. I mean, the guy is up there.

And this appears, this could be the guy. He's a very famous lawyer. And of course, the weaker your case, the bigger lawyer you need, right? If you've got a really strong case, any schmuck can come in there and win.

But the Jews have a weak case, so they've got to get a really strong lawyer to get it over. And that's what they do. That's what this Tertullus is.

Now, the way Tertullus speaks, we get the idea that although he's got a Greek name or a Latin name, he is, in fact, maybe a Roman proselyte to Judaism because he uses this plural in the sense of us and our. And he speaks as a Jew, but he's manifestly not Jewish by birth. So he might have proselyted, maybe they paid him to become a proselyte.

Maybe they sprinkled a little water on him and said, okay, you're a Jew. Now go fight for us with Felix. So Ananias, the high priest, comes down, and here's Tertullus.

These gave evidence to the governor against Paul. They're coming and mounting the prosecution. When he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation.

Now listen to this guy. Listen to the oily, slick, flattering sort of case that he makes. Seeing that through you, O Felix, we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to the nation by your foresight.

We accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. You're such a wonderful governor. He's representing the Jews who are going to be taking this case to Nero saying this guy is just awful.

But in this particular court, they don't say you're just awful, do they? Oh, we're enjoying peace, and we talk about it all the time. We'll be sitting down there on the hitching post just saying, boy, isn't that Felix a great governor? We just love him. This is what Tertullus is trying to get across.

We enjoy great peace. Prosperity is being brought to the nation because you're such a good planner. You're such a great governor.

This is like they could make a little campaign ad for him. We accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you, I don't want to impose on your time.

We know you're a busy man. You're such a great governor. We know this is just a flyspeck on your windshield here.

And not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear by your courtesy, by your compassion and your leniency, just a few words from us. If we could just take a moment of your time, oh great one. For we have found this man a plague.

Now in the Old King James it said a pestilent fellow. And there is a great juice to the Old King James. But actually this is a better translation because it doesn't have the word man or fellow or anything like that.

This is the word for a plague or a, what do you call it when they have a disease that runs rampant? Epidemic. Yeah, this man is an epidemic. That's what they're saying.

This is the word used for a medical monstrosity like the Black Plague wiping people out. And so what they've done, look at the contrast. Tertullus, I mean he's, there's a reason why he costs a lot of money.

He butters him up and everything is peace and tranquility and people sitting around the agora there, the marketplace saying, boy you know that Felix, I just can't get enough of that good governor. But now a plague has come among us. There's an epidemic.

It's leprosy and cancer and festering sores all rolled into one. It's just infecting all the people. He's an infectious monstrous sort of disease next to our beatific and bountiful and beautiful governor.

And so you have Paul way down here and the governor way up here when in fact it is just exactly the opposite. We have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world. And this word translated dissension here means commotion.

We had all of these happy Jews sit around admiring Felix and this man came along like a plague and now there's a commotion. He's just discomfited them. He's destabilized them.

He's taken away their peace and they're confused and cross-eyed and wandering around bumping into things because of this plague man that has come in their midst. He is causing commotion among all the Jews throughout the world. Well most of the Jews are

in Israel, right? He's been sitting in Caesarea for five days and we're going to see that when Paul finally gets to speak he's going to say, you know it was only twelve days ago that I was in the temple.

He says, I've only been in the country twelve days. In five days I've been sitting here in Caesarea waiting for the trial to start. So he only had like a week in Jerusalem.

But they say in this week he has just destabilized the entire Jewish world. All kinds of commotion. Jerusalem's in a complete state of unrest in one week.

And he is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. The word translated ringleader here means in Roman army he's the guy that stands at the right of a platoon. He's the guide.

He's the platoon guide. The right guide. Everybody looks to him and he's the platoon leader.

He's the platoon sergeant. Everybody keys off of him and marches along with him. But look at the name he gives it here.

A ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Who are the Nazarenes? It's been called a lot of things in Acts but this is the only place where Christianity or anything approximating it is called the sect of the Nazarenes. And it's not the Nazarene.

It's the Nazarenes. So when you're going to characterize something you listen to the political campaigns we have right now. The President Bush's campaign is talking about Mr. Kerry.

Mr. Kerry's campaign is talking about President Bush. Well, they don't say the Democrats don't call the Republicans Republicans do they? They call them the far right. Or the extreme right.

Or the radical conservatives. You try to find a name that is accurate but it's the worst way that you could characterize something. Well, calling Christianity the sect of the Nazarenes most of the early disciples... Is Paul from Nazareth? No.

Does he hang around with anybody from Nazareth? Remember in Galatians he says I didn't even meet any of the original disciples for years. And when I did finally meet one or two it was kind of like hi, goodbye and then I went off to Arabia and talked to the Lord for a couple of years. But he's called the leader of the sect.

Why do they call it the sect of the Nazarenes? This harks back. Remember these people are from Jerusalem and they take a dim view. They've had an accommodation but anytime they feel like it they can say well, these are the Galileans.

These are the uncouth, uneducated farmers. These are the southern fried hicks who have come up with some perversity of Judaism. Now the word sect I think actually in

some translations it says the heresy of the Nazarenes.

But this word sect is the same one that's used back in Acts 5.17 called the sect of the Pharisees or when it talks about the sect of the Sadducees it just means a branch or a party. It doesn't mean anything heretical. So they're not saying it's a heresy but it's its own sect.

And so the emphasis here is that it's the Nazarenes. What's the first thing? Who was sitting under the tree? Was it Philip? When his brother came and said we've met the one that John says is the Messiah and he says can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Can any good thing come out of Galilee? So this is a pejorative. This is a criticism and a denigration to call it the sect of the Nazarenes.

It's not called that anywhere else. He even tried to profane the temple. Of course this is a bald faced lie that he didn't profane the temple.

There was no commotion there at all. He never brought a Greek into the temple as he was falsely charged. So here's the thing.

Paul is being falsely accused and trumped up charges. There's flattery. There's deception.

And there is misrepresentation. And it's all coming against Paul. What's he going to do? How's this going to resolve? Well, he's in front of this brutal man, Felix.

We're going to pause and take our break. When we come back we'll see how he makes out in this sort of O.J. Simpson trial in reverse in Caesarea. But let's pause here and take our break.