

45a ACTS

This is August the 27th, 2004, Friday night. We continue our study in the Book of Acts, Volume 2 of Luke's Great History of the Lord Jesus and the subsequent incursion of Christianity into world history. We resume our study tonight right at the end of Chapter 24 and cruising into Chapter 25.

We say goodbye to Felix, we say hello to Festus and Agrippa, but we want to take a moment at the outset to be sure that our study will do us some good. We acknowledge the role that the Holy Spirit plays as we pray in the two-way communication between us and the Lord God in the same way that we... It's a mystery to me when you think about radio. For thousands of years, nobody knew anything about radio, but now you can use a cell phone, which is just a glorified form of radio.

Someone around the world can speak into a microphone connected to a shortwave transmitter, and if you have a shortwave radio, you can receive... television and every radio station that you can pick up, both shortwave, mediumwave, longwave, AM, FM, police band, weather, fire, all of these different channels are passing right by us, and we are insensitive to it at the moment because we do not have a tuner tuned in to that information. But it is right here available, and if we needed it or wanted it, we would turn on the appropriate kind of receiver, and there it would be. The information from God's Word is available.

It is here in God's Word, but we are unable to tune it in. We are unable to receive it, hear it, benefit from it, without that intermediary ministry of God's Holy Spirit. Even though we're saved, and even though the Holy Spirit dwells in us, unless we cultivate that ministry, unless we ask for it and are aware of it and ensure that we are qualified for it by acknowledging our sins before God, God told His people in the Old Testament, your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins, notice it says your iniquities have separated between you and your God, not the God, it's your God.

He belongs to you, you belong to Him. Your iniquities have erected a barrier between you and your God. Your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear.

And we have this interference. Again, if you've ever tried listening to AM radio in a big thunderstorm, a lot of times there's so much interference you just can't even hear what's being said anymore. Well, our sins generate interference.

We can't receive the active ministry of the Spirit in any sense other than conviction when there is sin in our heart. And God does not hear us. The psalmist says, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

What does it mean to regard it? It means to give it a place, to give it some sort of honor, to allow it. When you regard someone and they come over to your house, what do you

do? Put them in a nice chair, give them a cup of coffee, take care of them, give them place, do them a courtesy. Well, if we do that for sin in our heart, if we don't give it the bum's rush and send it out, God can't hear us and obviously we cannot hear Him.

So at this time, I have said it many times and I will always try to remind all of us of how important it is to get off on the right foot in a time of Bible study because we're wasting our time. Might as well just close the books and go turn on the TV. If we do not have God's Spirit ministering this truth to our soul, planting it in the soil so that it can grow, otherwise it will not do us any good.

But when He does do that and when it is there, it is a power unlike anything on this earth. It's better than the power of positive thinking. It's better than the power of your peer support and your peer group and accountability.

It's better than step programs. It's better than anything you can think of whereby man tries to get something done. Rah-rah motivation, a lot of that in the Olympics.

Psych up, psych out. Whatever you think is a means of accomplishment in this life pales in significance beside the power of the God who made the universe. So that's what we're looking at.

That's what we think about when we stop at the beginning. That power is essential or our time is of no effect. So let's pause and go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, you are our strength. You are our redemption. You have established a plan and purpose that encompasses our life.

We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ who made a way, who bridged the gap between our hopeless and impossible situation into your eternal plan and purpose. And not only that but also into eternal relationship with you. We thank you that our standing depends on him, on his righteousness, on his acceptability and not on our own.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to claim it. We thank you for the presence of the Holy Spirit who seals us and guarantees that that status and that standing will never change. We thank you for the opportunities that it gives us.

And we pray that we can take hold of what you have made available to us tonight as we study your word so that we can learn and grow and be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, as I said at the outset, we are rapidly coming to the end of chapter 24 of Acts. Paul the apostle has done his first missionary journey and come back. He didn't write any epistles yet in the first missionary journey.

He's out there learning his way around as a missionary. On the second missionary

journey, he starts writing some of the letters that have come down to us in the New Testament. Galatians gets written.

1 Timothy gets written. Thessalonians, the Thessalonian letters get written and so on. Titus gets written.

He comes back from the second missionary journey, goes out on the third missionary journey and while he's out there accomplishing his apostolic purpose, he gets the idea that he needs to go to Jerusalem. He hears about the poor saints. He says, what a great idea.

I'll collect this big trunk of money and I'll take it to Jerusalem. Originally, he was just going to send it. But then he decided he would accompany it and he would go to Jerusalem.

It was a mistake. God the Holy Spirit warned him in every city, if you go to Jerusalem, they're going to bind you. They're going to turn you over and you're going to have a detour.

You're going to go the long way around of where God wants you to go. Well, he went anyway. Sure enough, it did no good.

Nobody in Jerusalem was happy about him being there. It did nothing but cause grief. He didn't get the chance to make his mark.

In a way, it alienated the Jewish population so much that when he gets around to wanting to talk to them, he has to talk to them in an anonymous letter. The book of Hebrews, I believe, was written by Paul. And people say, well, Paul signs all of his letters.

Well, he didn't sign that one because his name was anathema to the whole Jewish world. As soon as they saw Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ, they're out of the building. They're not going to sit and listen to him.

But coming without his personal stamp, they're willing to consider. At least that's his hope. So now, his third missionary journey.

Always before, he would return to Antioch, which was sort of his home base. He doesn't get to go back to Antioch this time because he has been arrested and he's now in the hands of the Gentiles. They have delivered his soul from death at the hands of the Jews.

So, he is first heard by Lysias, the commander of the Roman forces there in Jerusalem. He says, this is over my head. I'm sending you over to Caesarea.

Sends him down to Felix. Felix hears him. Hears the charges against him.

And says, well, I can't turn you loose. Can't convict you. I'm just going to hold on to you

and listen to you at my leisure.

And we saw at the end of chapter 24, in verse 24, after the trial, and Paul is sort of under house arrest. He has some freedom to move about. People can visit him.

But he's not free to leave. It's kind of like the sheriff saying, well, we've got an investigation going. Don't leave town.

And he keeps a guard on him. But Felix came with his wife, Drusilla, who was a Jewess. More about Drusilla momentarily.

Sent for Paul. Listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.

Remember this from last time? This is what we looked at. This is the essence of the message of the gospel. When people talk about the gospel, they say, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

I say, why? What do you say? Why do you have to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? What am I being saved from? What's my problem? I have a hopeless sin condition. I have an incurable cancer that I was born with. And that I can't get rid of.

And it is going to kill me. And I can think all the happy thoughts I want. I can go into all of the denial I want.

I can try all of the spooky cures and strange fantastic sorts of non-remedies. And it doesn't change the fact that I have a terminal case of cancer and I'm going to die from it. That's what sin is for us.

Why is it a terminal case? Because the God that is in charge of the universe, whether you like it or not, whether you agree with it or not, whether you think it's fair or not, the fact of the matter is, it's like living in Bosnia. It's like living in Czechoslovakia under cruel dictatorship. It's like living in Afghanistan or living in a Muslim country.

American women have married men who are from Arabic countries who are deep and steeped in Islam. And they get on a veil and they move back to an Islamic fundamentalist country. And then they say, Boy, nobody told me it was going to be like this.

This is terrible. I have to wear this gunny sack everywhere I go. And I don't have any freedoms.

And I can't go to school. And I can't go to the market. And I can't wear lipstick.

And I can't do anything. And they say, Well, I don't like this. Well, the fact that you don't like it doesn't change it.

They could sit in their living room and say, You know, I just don't believe this country. I just can't believe that if I go outside, they're really going to hit me over the head with sticks and beat me into submission or cut my head off or whatever. Well, you walk out there and see.

And there are women who have had their heads cut off. There are women who regularly get beat with sticks by the fundamentalist Muslims who think women's place is inside a gunny sack or inside the house, one or the other. I mean, it's just the way it is.

Denial is not a good coping mechanism for reality. Most of the world today is in denial about the righteous God who runs this universe, who built this universe, and is going to judge everything in this universe. And people just say, You know, I just think that's just not right.

The ant crawling in my lawn seeing the poison coming from my poison spreader says, You know, I just don't think that's right. Well, you can think all the little ant thoughts you want. The poison is still coming and you and your whole colony are still going to die.

Right? The ant thinking his thoughts does not warp the fabric of my lawn and change reality to where there's no longer poison and he's no longer going to die. Right? But we are the ants in the universe. God is the creator.

And what God says goes. I mean, this seems obvious to the casual observer, but you look around in the world today and there are people who in their hubris, in their arrogance, in their egocentric universe believe that their thoughts are the only thoughts that count and their thoughts define reality. And the way they think is the way it is or should be.

And have no concept of the lawn and the owner of the lawn and the existence of strong poison. They think, I am the super ant and my thoughts will change everything. It seems silly and you smile, but it's the absolute gospel truth.

You talk to these people and it is like talking to a rock. You just can't get any thought to penetrate other than the thoughts that they have already decided in their own mind are the only thoughts that count. Well, these are the people who are hell bound.

Now, even in the realm of the body of Christ, even in the realm of the saved and the believers, a lot of people want to define the Lord Jesus according to an image in their mind. And they have the same type of thinking. This is what Paul talks about in Romans chapter 1 and Romans chapter 2. He says, you see these unbelievers who are hard-headed and hard-hearted and suppress the truth in their unrighteousness? Then in chapter 2 he says, you, O believing man, do the same thing when you suppress, as a believer, the truth of God's word.

And do you not think you're going to come into judgment? Read Romans chapter 2.

Romans chapter 2 is addressed to believers. And it says, don't think that the problem of defining one's own reality is limited to unbelievers. It happens in the body of Christ as well.

We do not want to be people who cannot be told anything, who cannot be taught, who cannot be objective and say, well, if this is what God says, then this is the way it is and I need to adjust my thinking to come into line with God's, instead of trying to adjust God to fit my way of thinking. Well, this is what Paul talks to Felix and Drusilla about. He says, righteousness is an absolute.

It's not relative. It's not open for debate. We're not going to have a town meeting and figure out what righteousness is.

You don't get a vote in what righteousness is. Do you ever think about that? Nobody gets to say, well, Lord, let me tell you what I think righteousness is. I think righteousness is that I have a lot of slack and I can do some things and you just forget about it.

That's righteousness. It doesn't work that way. God is absolute.

God is black and white. Did you know the Bible says God is white and in him is no darkness at all? If you have light with no darkness, you know what that means? No shades of gray. It's either all white or it's all black.

It's either righteous or it's unrighteous. There's no semi-righteousness. There's no sort of, well, it was kind of righteous.

I did kind of a righteous thing. No, it's either all right or it's not. Righteousness, self-control.

Why self-control of all of the possible things? Why not grace? Why not mercy? Why not compassion? Why does Paul talk to Felix and Drusilla about self-control? Because when God the Holy Spirit comes and talks to us about righteousness and judgment, we have to steer the ship. Each of us is like a ship on the water. There's a harbor here.

There's a storm here. You can either turn to starboard, turn to the right, go into the harbor, and find safe haven. Or you can say, I'm not going in that harbor.

I'm captain of my ship. I master my fate. Hoist the mizzen topsails, pull out the spinnaker, put on all the canvas that you'll hold, and let's sail boldly where most men have gone before.

You're going to go right out there into the storm. You're going to be dismasted. You're going to be holed below the waterline.

Your ship is going to be crushed and splintered on the rocks, and you're going to be destroyed. Those are the choices that we have. Most of the ships in the fleet,

unfortunately, are heading out into the storm to be destroyed.

They do not turn into the one safe harbor of God's grace. What does it take to see that opportunity and lay hold of it? Self-control. You have to have humility and say, this is what I need to do.

I need to put aside my arrogance. I need to put aside my preconceptions. I need to put aside my sinfulness and go to the cross and go to Christ and get myself forgiven and cleansed and let God save me.

Let my ship go sailing into that harbor. Righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come. Paul did a good job of preaching this because Felix became afraid.

This is our old friend from Phobos in Greek, which M. Phobos, he became afraid from Ginnomai plus Phobos. He became afraid and he answered, that's enough for now. Don't tell me anymore.

Remember the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai? God started speaking. Make Him stop. That's enough for now.

No more. You go hear the rest of it. We heard the big thunder.

We don't want to hear anymore. When I find it convenient, I will send for you. This is a devastating mistake.

This is the year 58 A.D. In 60 A.D., Felix is going to be replaced because there's going to be an insurrection. There's going to be a big defugality between the Jews who live in Caesarea and the Syrian contingent there. And he's not going to be able to survive the political fallout.

The Jews are going to go to Rome. They're going to petition Caesar and he's going to be recalled and he's going to run the risk of being executed. He has only a few years left to live.

By 62 or so, Felix is dead. This is near the end of his life. He doesn't know it yet, but he is near the end of his life.

He does not have the luxury of saying, when I find it convenient, I'll come back to this subject. None of us does. I've told you this before, but the thing that gets me, the times that I have seen dead bodies, and I have seen some, maybe you have too, the thing that gets me is when you look at a corpse, someone who has died through some happenstance, an accident, a bullet at the wrong place at the wrong time, I always am struck by their shoes.

I look at their feet and I see that that morning when they got up, they put on their socks, they put on their shoes, they tied their shoes. You look at their shoes and realize that

they didn't have any inkling that morning when they tied their shoes that that was the last time. How many times have you tied your shoes in your life? It's just thousands.

Did you think this morning this could be the last time that I ever do this? Nobody expects that. People who die unexpectedly do not, I mean that's the definition of unexpected, you don't expect it, you don't think it's going to happen, and yet it does. Nobody wakes up in the morning saying, well, pretty good chance I won't be around this evening.

I mean, you know, you would take steps, you would do something. None of us knows what our last day on this earth is, that's the point. None of us knows how long.

I was looking at a picture of one of my family members, sort of a great-uncle, one of my grandfather's half-brothers, there was a picture taken of him that was printed in the newspaper, and he was on the Indian board up in Oklahoma, he was the president of this thing, and he's sitting around with a bunch of other committee members at a big table. He looks healthy, he looks vital, he was a well-known individual up in northeast Oklahoma, had a prosperous business, had a long history, had a big family, and you look at this picture of him, and you think, boy, this guy, I mean, he's got to be good for another 10 or 15 years, I mean, he looks great. Then I looked at the date on the picture, and less than two years after that picture was taken, he was dead and gone.

And you look at the picture, and you just think, how could this guy possibly be gone when he looks so much a part of everything? You just don't know when it's going to happen. Felix has no idea how close to the end of his life he is. He cannot say, when I find it convenient, I will send for you.

He is very soon going to exit stage left, never to see Paul again, never to get this opportunity. If you're going to be evangelized, get evangelized by the guy that knows the answers to all your questions. Don't wait for some second or third generation Christian that just came to faith a couple of weeks ago.

Here you've got the Apostle Paul. Have you ever had a question you'd like to ask the Apostle Paul? I've got a book full of questions I'd like to ask him. And if I ever get 10 minutes with him, there's a couple right at the top of the list, I want to ask him right away.

Maybe year 998 of the millennium, I'll finally work my way up in the line, and I can ask him a question. Anyway, Paul is discoursing on righteousness and self-control. The point here, here's the point.

We have an opportunity just like Felix. Because the Apostle Paul is speaking to us. We've got the whole New Testament full of the letters of Paul.

It tells us what we need to know. It tells us about righteousness. It tells us about self-control.

It tells us about the judgment to come. Who is it that said, we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ? Who said, be careful how you build on the foundation that no man can lay. Because if it's wood, hay and stubble, it's going to burn and you'll be saved, yet so as by fire.

But if you build with gold and silver and precious stones, it will withstand the fire and it will reflect the glory of God for eternity. Who taught us those things? This man, the Apostle Paul. He's talking to you and he's talking to me.

And he says, look, this life is all about righteousness. This life is not about tasks. It's not about money.

It's not even about relationships. This life is about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come. That's what defines this life.

That's how you view and value and prioritize and organize what you do in this life. Get up in the morning. Somebody we were watching was talking about here's how to be organized.

Here's how to be successful and get stuff done. The night before, just when you're going to bed, get a three-by-five card and think about everything you have to do the next day and write it out in order of priority. Put the most important thing first.

Then when you get up the next day, get your card, find number one, and whatever else you do, make sure you get that thing done. Try to get them done in that order. If you don't get them finished, write you a new card the next night.

Get up the next day. These are priorities. Well, that's all great, but what if my priority is trying to find the five lost Bugs Bunny episodes or something, and I spend all the next day on the Internet trying to find somebody who will sell me a copy? This does not define a successful life.

What's the point? You have to know what's important. What do you write on the card? Oh, I really want to complete my Looney Tunes collection. That's my priority.

Well, at the judgment, how's that going to stand up? Well, Lord, if you'll just look in my closet, I've got all these Looney Tunes. It took me years. It's meaningless.

It's smoke. It's effervescent. Righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.

If you find yourself kind of confused, you've got a lot of stuff on your plate, what needs to take place, how should I prioritize, what's the most important thing, here's a good place to start. What hooks into righteousness? What reflects self-control? What can be done that will stand at the judgment to come? That's the most important thing. And the way to apply it is to look at our thoughts.

How do we spend our thought life? Computer guys, especially mainframe guys, pay close attention to the big mainframe computer. Where does it spend its time? How many processing instructions, they actually bill it out. Many people will share, sometimes companies will share a mainframe, and they say, well, how much of the mainframe's time got spent on this task? We're going to charge you for that.

How much of the mainframe's time got spent on that task? We're going to charge you for that. It's real important to see where the computer spent its time thinking, because it costs money. Well, look at the judgment.

Look at the judgment. Where does our mind spend its time? How would you bill out your instructions per second, your MIPS, millions of instructions per second? Is that how you bill? You bill on MIPS? What do you bill on? CPU hours. So, how do you spend your hours? What does your brain run on? How's that going to stand at the judgment? Does it hook into righteousness? Does it pertain to self-control? Does it have a forward look at the judgment to come? All of us can do this.

If you're young, if you're in school, if you're a student, you can do this. Are you spending your time in worry? Does that reflect self-control? It does not. Does it reflect righteousness? The Bible says, Fear thou not, for I am with thee.

Be not dismayed, I am thy God. I will strengthen thee. I will help thee.

I will uphold thee. With the right hand of what? My righteousness. Perfect love casts out fear.

Right? God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control. They're antithetical. You can evaluate where you are.

You can prejudge. You know how they do when you have to go take the SAT or the ACT test? You take a pre-test and find out where your weak areas are. We can pre-test ourselves on the judgment, can't we? Apply the standard.

Take a look at your thought life today. I take a look at my thought life today. Was I thinking in terms of righteousness? Was I thinking in terms of self-control? Did my thinking reflect self-control? That's what Paul the Apostle presents to Felix and Drusilla.

That's what Paul the Apostle and God the Holy Spirit present to you and me at the end of Acts 24. This is the gospel. This is the message of the Bible to you and to me.

We will stand at the judgment seat of Christ. You know it's going to happen. Are we ready? Let's take the pre-test.

How does our thinking, how do our priorities, all the stuff we're trying to do right now, how does it stack up? We can tell what it's going to be. We can tell how it's going to go.

Verse 27, two years pass.

Felix has this period of time of two years and then it's over for him. It says he was succeeded by Portius Festus. The reason he succeeded is this big uprising takes place and he's not able to handle it and he brutalizes the Jews and they go to Rome and go to Caesar and complain and Caesar calls Felix to Rome.

And of course, Drusilla goes with him. Festus comes in and Felix sort of leaves instructions, well, keep this Paul fellow in prison. Don't turn him loose.

I've got enough trouble with the Jews now. They're already mad at me and if I turn this guy that they dislike loose, they'll be even more unruly. So he leaves instructions to keep Paul in prison.

And so Festus, that's sort of in the turnover file that Festus gets from Felix. He says, I've got this character named Paul. Better keep him locked up or the Jews will go nuts.

And that's the turn of the chapter. Well, chapter 25 now. Three days after arriving in the province, where do you think he would arrive in the province? What's the capital of the province? Caesarea.

Festus comes cruising in, gets off the boat, goes down to the provincial palace there, the head office, gets the turnover file, finds out and he says, boy, I've heard in Rome that this Jewish business is totally out of hand. That's what got Felix recalled. I'm going to do a better job.

The first thing I'm going to do is go straight to Jerusalem, talk to these Jews and settle them down. I'm going to try to address their grievances and calm them down because this is like a boiling mess. And so, he hasn't even been in the capital city three days and he bugs out and goes to Jerusalem.

When he gets there, the chief priests and Jewish leaders appear before him and they presented the charges against Paul. Now, they probably presented a lot of other stuff. They said, here's what Felix has done, here's our problems with Caesarea and so on.

But on the list of grievances is the Apostle Paul. He's sowing discord and disunity. He's overthrowing our traditional faith.

They urgently requested Festus as a favor to them to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem. Paul is still under house arrest in Caesarea. Festus passed him by going through Caesarea to Jerusalem.

The people in Jerusalem say, bring that Paul fellow over here and let's all have another trial for him. But, they were preparing to ambush him along the way. Now, how can you call yourself a righteous, law-abiding Jew when you're planning to murder a guy without

a trial? I mean, does this not seem a little bit over the top? The reason I point this out is, if we do not judge our thinking by the standard of the Word of God, if we fail to heed what Paul said to Felix up above, we're going to end up as blind as these Jews in Jerusalem.

They do not pay attention to righteousness. They do not exercise self-control. They do not think about the judgment to come.

All they think about is, we can restore order and we can get things back to the good old way if we can just get this Paul guy off the map. So, whatever it takes, let's just kill him on the way if we can just get rid of him, the end will justify the means because then we'll have calm and we'll have peace and everybody can follow the law of Moses and we'll quiet down this whole Christian, Gentile business. And they say, it'll be worth it.

It's a little shady. It's not quite right. But you know, extreme times call for extreme measures.

And they're justifying it in their mind. We look at it and we say, it's horrible. It's cold-blooded premeditated murder.

They look at it and say, this is protecting the faith. This is a part of my religion. I am a crusader for the faith of my fathers.

I am preserving the old time way. And to them it makes sense. Is that not scary to you like it's scary to me that you could look at something and be convinced that you're doing the right thing and be this wrong? It's a scary thing to not be able to trust the compass in your own soul.

To have a moral compass that is so warped. I told you before when I first went to Beirut to help the Lebanese army and the artillery batteries there. I went to an artillery battery and they were having trouble because when they would shoot fire missions, suddenly their own people were getting blown up and they couldn't figure out why.

And they said, come help us. We don't understand. We're setting off all the correct data and we're blowing up our own people.

We don't understand it. Well, I went out there and the way you determine direction, one way of determining direction for a firing battery when you bring them in and you point all the guns, you want to know that they're pointed in some known direction, right? So you use a compass. And the aiming circle is a sophisticated compass.

And it's got a floating needle in it, a compass needle. Well, I went over to where their aiming circle was and I was checking the lay of the battery. How did you determine direction so that you know where your guns are pointed? Here's the aiming circle set up beautifully.

All of its bubbles are level and it's all in line with the guns. Everything checks out. But right next to the aiming circle was this giant telephone pole with great thick power cables going up it.

Well, power cables generate a magnetic field and it had pulled the compass needle off of north by like 13 degrees. So every time they checked their aiming circle, they said, we are right on the money. We have checked and rechecked and rechecked.

But they were oblivious to the fact that their compass needle was warped off of north by this giant bundle of power cables on this pole. And so I said, let's just take the aiming circle away. Let me give you directional control from Polaris Colchab, which is a star combination that you sight on at night and you get it from the stars.

And we corrected them 13 degrees and now they can shoot fire missions without blowing up their own people. But they did not know that their direction was incorrect. We can be blind to our moral direction.

This is why the Bible says there is a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death. It can make sense. It can resonate.

Your gut tells you this is what needs to happen. This is the way it is. This is what's right and this is what's wrong.

The people in Jerusalem who are plotting the murder of the Apostle Paul, their gut is telling them it's right. Their mind and their experience and their peers, other people around them, they're getting together. The Sanhedrin are the 70 most prominent leaders in Israel, in Jerusalem, and they all agree on this.

And it's cold-blooded, calculated, premeditated murder that they are attempting and they think it's right. You and I can do this very same thing. We can be so sure that we're right, and we're not.

We're very wrong. How can we find out what's the matter with our compass needle? You need an absolute standard. I took the Lebanese and showed them the absolute standard of the stars.

It doesn't depend on the magnetic north. It doesn't depend on the magnetic constant in your area, because magnetic north is slightly different depending on where you are. If you go to the stars and you know where you are on the planet, you know your latitude, it is always correct.

You can't move the stars. You can't move the planet. It's an absolute standard.

When you are getting your direction from an absolute standard, now you know what is a good direction and what is not. This is why Paul preaches righteousness. This is why Paul

preaches self-control.

This is why Paul preaches the judgment to come. That's what you and I have to do. We have to bring on board in our soul the absolute standard of God's word.

That has to be the measure. And not an abstract measure. Not sort of a pie-in-the-sky by-and-by measure.

We have to look at what we're doing. What are we saying? What are we thinking? How are we spending our time day by day by day? Because that's where self-control gets exercised. It's not in our fantasy life.

You know, fat people fantasize that they're skinny, but their fantasies don't make them skinny. People get skinny when their self-control kicks in and they do what needs to be done. Good diet and exercise will bring you to your normal body shape and size, whatever that may be, right? Self-control is the key.

And that's what it is here. These chief priests and Jewish leaders are in such stark contrast to the Apostle Paul and his group of followers because they are on the way. Capital W. They're looking at what they're doing by the standard of the word of God.

These Jewish leaders are making themselves murderers. Jesus said, if you do it in your heart, you're already guilty. They are guilty already of the murder of the Apostle Paul.

Well, we must pause and take our break. When we come back, we're going to travel through chapter 25 and see what happens when Agrippa comes to town.