

“Worshipping God in Truth”
Acts 24:1-27
(Preached at Trinity, June 11, 2008)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Paul has had quite a rollercoaster journey since he entered into Jerusalem. First, he learned from James and the other elders of the extreme animosity the Jewish Christians had towards him. In an effort to gain their trust Paul agreed to go through the rite of purification, a gracious act of accommodation. No sooner than he entered into the Temple the unbelieving Jews mobbed him and sought to kill him. He was quickly taken into custody by the Roman authorities who were anxious to put the issue to rest and restore peace in the city. The day after Paul’s arrest the Romans brought him before the Sanhedrin in an effort to discover the reason for the uproar.
2. Immediately there was trouble as Paul stood before the Sanhedrin. Paul had no sooner begun to speak that the high priest ordered a bystander to smite him on the mouth. Paul then railed upon the high priest for his complete ignoring of the law. Paul admitted the respect due to the high priest and continued make his observation of the body of rulers.
3. After Paul created a great division in the Sanhedrin over the issue of the resurrection and the pandemonium that ensued the Romans were forced to return Paul to the Roman barracks.
That night Paul received a revelation from God.
Acts 23:11 – “And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.”
4. Paul received great comfort from God. This was all ordained from God’s hand. He had purposed that Paul would not only speak before the Jews, he would also speak before the Romans. And indeed it would come to pass. Paul would speak before the Roman Governor Felix, Governor Festus, and King Agrippa.
5. The following chapters will cover Paul before these Roman officials. Tonight we will look at Paul before Felix.
6. After Paul was removed from before the Sanhedrin a plot was devised by more than 40 assassins to murder Paul. After the plot was exposed the Roman captain commanded 470 Roman soldiers to give him safe passage to Caesarea to see Governor Felix.
 - A. Felix was a former slave who gained influence through his brother Pallas. The Roman historian described him a most unflattering way, “He had the power of a king with the mind of a slave.”
 - B. He maintained order often through the use of brutality. His ineptitude led to his removal from office by Emperor Nero some two years after the events recorded in this chapter. .
7. Five days after Paul arrived at Caesarea the high priest Ananias came down with some of the elders of the Sanhedrin – they were continuing to seek his life. They brought with them a skilled orator by the name of Tertullus who brought the charges against Paul.

8. He began with flattering words designed to win the favor of Felix. Then he gave his accusation of Paul:
Acts 24:5-6 – “For we have found this man a pestilent *fellow*, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: ⁶ Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.”
- A. He accused Paul of sedition against Rome, of violation of Jewish law, and of sacrilege. All of the charges were false. Their main motivation is exposed at the beginning of **Verse 5**
- B. The considered Paul to be a plague
Acts 24:5 – “For we have found this man a pestilent *fellow*”
9. Then Paul gave his defense claiming his innocence.
Acts 24:12-13 – “And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: ¹³ Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.”
10. Paul then makes a profound statement in **Verse 14**
Acts 24:14 – “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:”
11. This is an amazing statement. Paul is telling us the very essence of Christian worship. True worship cannot exist in the absence of sound doctrine.
- I. First Paul states that he was of a different opinion than his accusers.
- A. They called his doctrine heresy – they called him a leader of an apostate sect
1. The word here is **αἵρεσις** – most translations translate it “sect” which is perfectly permissible. In fact, it is most often translated “sect” or “party.” This is the same word used in **Verse 5**
Acts 24:5 – “For we have found this man a pestilent *fellow*, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:”
 2. Paul is answering their charge that he was the leader of the sect of the Nazarenes.
 3. But it is also the word from which we get our English word, heresy. The KJV translates it heresy which transmits the force of Paul’s statement. They are accusing Paul of heretical doctrine.
We can find it translated this way in **2 Peter 2:1**
2 Peter 2:1 – “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”
 4. They are accusing him of being the leader of a strange sect. One that teaches strange doctrine.
 5. Paul answers here, “There is one thing they accuse me of that is true. This thing they call heresy is how I worship God.”
- B. What heresy were they accusing Paul of? What was the nature of this sect?
1. Paul was preaching Christ
 - a. The word “Way” refers to Christianity.

- b. Peter and John were strictly forbidden by the council to speak or teach the name of Christ.
Acts 4:17-18 – “let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. ¹⁸ And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.”
 - c. When Peter and John continued preaching Christ they were brought back before the council
Acts 5:27-28 – “And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them, ²⁸ Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name?”
 - d. Christ was considered heresy
 - 2. Paul was also preaching the resurrection
Acts 24:15 – “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”
Acts 24:21 – “Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.”
 - C. Paul makes his doctrine more definite
Acts 24:14 – “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.”
 - 1. There is one Greek word which changes the translation of the modern text
 - a. The NAS reads:
“believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets”
 - b. Although it doesn’t change the meaning of the passage I think the KJV gives it greater clarity.
The “Law and the Prophets” always refers to the OT Scriptures.
 - 2. Paul is saying he worships God according to his faith in all things written in the Scriptures. He is making a direct connection between worship and doctrine.
 - 3. In other words, you cannot worship God apart from the teachings of His Word. You cannot separate doctrine from Scripture.
- II. This is not to say that sound doctrine automatically makes worship
- A. Doctrine can be embraced on a purely intellectual level
 - 1. A lost man can attain to a high degree of theological understanding
 - 2. Satan and his angels have great theological understanding
 - 3. There are many people who are more enamored with doctrine than with Christ.
 - B. True worship demands spiritual life
 - 1. Worship is an activity of the redeemed
 - a. This is why “seeker friendly” worship is irrational – a lost man doesn’t have the capacity to worship
 - b. Only a love for Christ will result in worship
 - 2. True worship demands a transformed heart

3. Worship takes place when a person spiritually meets God. This is made possible through our spirit which has been transformed from death to life.
 4. James Montgomery Boice: “True worship occurs only when that part of man, his spirit, which is akin to the divine nature (for God is spirit), actually meets with God and finds itself praising him for his love, wisdom, beauty, truth, holiness, compassion, mercy, grace, power, and all his other attributes.”¹
 5. This is what Jesus meant in **John 4**
John 4:24 – “God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.”
 6. This isn’t the same thing as merely an emotional feeling. We can be stirred emotionally by the music or by a stirring sermon. We may be moved to tears or great joy and still not be worshipping.
Worship demand meeting Christ, coming to an awareness of His presence and praising Him for who He is. This cannot be done apart from doctrine.
- C. True worship demands having both our heart drawn towards God in adoration and love as well as having our mind filled with the fullness of who He is.
1. Notice again what Jesus says in **John 4:24**
John 4:24 – “God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.”
 2. Listen to Paul in **1 Cor. 14**
1 Corinthians 14:15 – “What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”
 3. God’s people are to be thinking people
1 Peter 1:13 – “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;”
- III. God can only be worshipped according to true doctrine
- A. God will not allow us to worship Him according to our own imagination. He will not allow us to consider Him as someone other than He is.
1. This was the sin of the scribes and Pharisees
Jesus condemned them
Matthew 15:9 – “But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.”
 2. God must be worshipped in truth. What is our source for truth?
Acts 24:14 – “. . . so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:”
- B. This was the great emphasis regained by the Protestant Reformation
1. The medieval church had become drowned in ritual. The Word of God buried by tradition.
 2. Luther and Calvin regained the preeminence of Scripture. The pulpit was placed in the center of the building where the Word of God could be thundered before God’s people and they would be drawn to worship Him in the fullness of His attributes.
 3. One of the great cries of the Reformation was Sola Scriptura

¹Boice, J. M. (2005). *The Gospel of John : An expository commentary* (297). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.

- C. True doctrine demands that God be approached through Christ
1. Paul is saying that what they call heresy is how he worshipped God. He had been preaching Christ! He was following the Way.
 2. All true worship is Christocentric.
John 14:6 – “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
 3. This was the great stumbling block for the Jews
1 Peter 2:6-8 – “Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. ⁷ Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, ⁸ And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”

Conclusion:

1. True worship demands that we come before God in the union of Christ. It demands knowing Him. It demands having our minds filled with His attributes. We come meditation Him and praising Him in His fullness.
2. True worship is separate and distinct. True worship will often be rejected by some. It will even be called boring by those who have no relationship with Christ. But for those who know Him . . .
“. . . after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers”