

**Acts 24:1-21**  
**10/23/16**

## **An Overcoming Gospel**

*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. <sup>2</sup> And when he 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, <sup>3</sup> in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. <sup>4</sup> But, to detain<sup>[a]</sup> you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him <sup>8</sup> By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him.” <sup>9</sup> The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. <sup>14</sup> 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, <sup>15</sup> having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. <sup>16</sup> So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. <sup>17</sup> Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. <sup>18</sup> While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— <sup>19</sup> they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. <sup>20</sup> Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, <sup>21</sup> 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.’”*

*(Pastor prays)*

I spent the last several days in Mumbai, India, a teeming city of 22 million people, most of whom have never heard the name of Jesus. In that one city, there are more than

31,000 millionaires and yet there is a 500-acre slum where 1,000,000 people live and die without hope. And I stood in the midst of that and it just feels overwhelming.

By God's grace, very few of us have that sort of physical haunting, famished, crushing sense of hopelessness, at least not physically. But many of us, like Paul in the text, feel that the events of our lives are so far beyond our control that the weight of sadness or stress or frustration is overwhelming – like the onset of a panic attack. You feel like you can't breathe. I set this up this way because, if I were Paul, that's how I would feel in his situation.

It started back in Chapter 23 while the Lord was encouraging him in v. 11. Forty men made a plot to kill him. Paul's nephew found out and told him. He told a centurion and the tribune decided to send Paul out of the jurisdiction. Several hundred soldiers and heavy cavalry brought Paul to Antipatris where he would stand before a puppet governor named Felix. Felix makes him wait on the accusers. That is where we pick it up in v. 1. I will read with comments. I want you to see that:

## **In an Overwhelmed World, We have an Overcoming Hope**

That is what Paul's testimony is about. What you can trust.

### **You Can Trust in the Power of the Gospel**

The stage is set in Chapter 24:1. Paul is finally officially on trial. Verse 1 tells us Ananias, the high priest, has come to Caesarea with a lawyer named Tertullus. The lawyer begins in v. 2 with *compario benevolentas* – flattery. In v. 5, he presents the charges: 1. Seditious – stirring up riots. 2. Sectarianism – diversity. 3. Sacrilege – profaning of the temple. All of these are false charges. V. 10, <sup>10</sup> *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. -my apologia. V. 11-13, Paul dismisses the charges out of hand and in v. 14 you see the Gospel: *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.* As Paul gives his testimony, he does something unusual.*

He calls following Christ, “The Way”; that could be a nod to when Jesus said in John 14:6: (*Jesus said to him,*) *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* But I think more is at stake here.

When you are interpreting the Bible, it's important to think about the material intent. What did the writer intend? Luke wrote this and I think he is reminding us of the first time we saw the phrase “The Way” in Acts. In Acts 9:2, when Luke tells us Paul was persecuting “The Way” and, now, here he is stripped of power and prestige with everything going wrong except his heart is free and his soul is forgiven because he worships the one and only true God through Jesus, who is the Way, Truth and the Life.

No wonder Paul would say in Romans 1:16, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* Paul believes the Gospel is the Power of God, not gimmicks, hype, entertainment or self-help. The Gospel is the perfect life of Jesus fulfilling the law of God...The atoning death on the cross in the place of sinners, taking the wrath of a just God, victoriously resurrected from death with victory in His hands, a victory He gives to anyone here who believes...not just power.

Notice how Paul speaks to the exclusive nature of the Gospel in v. 14: *But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers...* The overwhelming Grace of God is found only in the cross of Christ. Isn't that what Paul told Timothy to preach in 1 Timothy 2:5? *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

In Christ, we stake our claim, in Christ we have our hope and, I say with Paul, I can preach nothing to you except Christ and Him crucified. And in this world, overflowing with pain and panic, with sin and guilt, you can join Paul and by faith, anchor your life in the cross of Christ. For the hurting brother or crushed sister, come to the wounds of Christ and find healing and hope and strength for tomorrow. You can trust the power of the Gospel.

### **You Can Trust the Authority of the Bible**

You see that as part o: *believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets.* What does it mean to believe the Bible? Rules for our faith and practice. For

Him we live. Paul told Timothy as much when he said in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

Back in Acts, Paul says I believe in the Old Testament law and the Prophets. The Old Testament Law has 3 primary functions. The Old Testament shows us: 1. The requirements of God for holiness. The character of God. 2. As a tutor, the law shows us how far we fall short of the requirement of God. That we need a Savior. It takes us to Christ. 3. When we come to Christ, the law (Old Testament) shows us what we are to become in Christ.

In the Bible, we learn of the goodness of God, the sanctity of life, the fall of man into sin and separation from God. We learn about the nature of a good and gracious God who pursues people who are in sin and how He purchases people at the cross as the judge and redeemer. He puts the penalty on Christ and grants freedom to all who believe.

That's what we celebrate today, freedom from the slavery of sin. Freedom from the hopelessness and the overwhelming despair of a life separated from God. Today, we have a chance to remember the Grace of God at the cross through The Lord's Supper. Let's prepare our hearts and minds in prayer.

*(Pastor explains how The Lord's Supper is taken and by whom it should be taken.  
Pastor prays)*