

Christian Response to the Rage & Wrath of Man: Examples from the Book of Acts – Part 4

Scripture Reading: Acts 21:10-32

Throughout the book of Acts, as well as the rest of church history, people who hate the gospel try to use government and laws as a weapon to punish and squelch Christian activity. Whether it is church government, or secular government (in many cases they have been combined), man has a need to justify himself when making war with ideologies and practices that he doesn't like. In Daniel 7:19-25, the future Antichrist is predicted to speak blasphemies and to create laws and other changes that will make war against the saints, attempting to wear them out. Jesus spoke of future persecution, in which those who will kill His followers will think that they are offering service to God (John 16:1-3).

We will follow Paul's life a little further and see how the rage and wrath of man will take Paul from Jerusalem to Rome. We will not only see the desperate hatred of the gospel some men have, but also the grace that Paul received from God to endure and persevere in his quest to serve Christ and preach the gospel. As Christ taught us to be wise as a serpent, but harmless as a dove – so, Paul was an example. See Matthew 10:16-22.

From Jerusalem to Rome: The persecution of Paul helped the gospel to spread farther.

Acts 21:10-14 – Resolve: Living for Christ means readiness to suffer and die for Christ. See II Corinthians 4:1-18; 6:1-10; Philippians 1:20-21; II Timothy 2:3-13; 3:10-14.

Acts 21:15-26 – Reasonable Precautions: Paul attempted to avoid unnecessary offense or disruption. See I Corinthians 9:19-23; 10:31-33.

Acts 21:27-38 – Retaliation: People responded with violence. Their emotions and actions were based on rumors, assumptions, and false accusations.

Acts 21:39 – 22:21 – Responding calmly: Paul asked for an opportunity to give his personal testimony.

Acts 22:22-23 – Reaction to the one word – “Gentiles.” All the pent-up anger towards the non-Jewish world, all the rumors that had been spread about Paul exploded on him at that moment. There was no more opportunity for intelligent communication with the Jews. See II Thessalonians 3:1-5.

Acts 22:24 – 26:32 – In the hands of Roman Justice, yet always in the hands of God.

- **Acts 22:24-29** – Paul would have been beaten by the Roman soldiers, except that he declared his rights as a Roman citizen.
- **Acts 22:30 – 23:5,10** – Paul was given a hearing. The Jews were allowed to hit him in the mouth when they did not like what he said. The Jews were about to pull Paul in pieces. So, the Romans removed him.
- **Acts 23:6-10** – Paul saw ways to divide his accusers by dividing them on the topic of the resurrection. Opposites often unite to oppose Christians and the gospel.
- **Acts 23:11** – God directly encouraged Paul. See Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 13:5 b,6.
- **Acts 23:12-35** – The Jews vowed to kill Paul. God provided warning and intervention. Paul received a military escort to Caesarea, to appear before the governor Felix.
- **Acts 24:1-27** – For two years Paul was detained for questioning (*note vs. 27*).
- **Acts 24:10** – Paul answered cheerfully, showing gladness to talk about the Lord. See Acts 26:1-2; Philippians 1:12-18; 2:17; 4:4; I Thessalonians 5:18.
- **Acts 24:24-25** – Paul spoke with conviction. The spiritual issues between God and man were the all-important issues.
- **Acts 24:26-27** – Felix wanted bribe money, but it was not given. Felix also wanted to please the Jews for political advantage. There was no real interest in Paul.
- **Acts 25:1-9** – The Jews appeal to another Roman officer, Festus. They hope to set a trap in Jerusalem, to kill Paul (*they are still determined to do so after two years!*). Festus tries to please the Jews and bring Paul to Jerusalem.
- **Acts 25:10-12** – As a Roman citizen, Paul appeals to Caesar.
- **Acts 25:13 – 26:23** – One more hearing. One more opportunity to preach Christ. This time with King Agrippa, Felix, Festus, along with other military and civil leaders. Paul is clearly not the prisoner of Rome. He is the prisoner of Jesus Christ. See Ephesians 3:1-9.
- **Acts 26:13-23** – Paul's confession and mission.
- **Acts 26:24-32** – Paul appears to them to be a crazy fanatic, but Paul is not seeking man's approval. Paul only seeks God's will, God's glory, and the salvation of men. See Acts 21:13-14; II Timothy 1:12; 2:10 cp. I Corinthians 4:1-5,10-16.