



**Riot in the Temple
Religious Gaslighting 101
Acts 21:27-22:29**

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There are times when we study scripture, where, because of the topic, we engage on a more emotional level.

Part of that is because of the simple fact we have been created in the image of God and when we read of and see His servants being treated poorly in the text of the word, we take it personal, and we should.



The enemy has tactics which are on full display in the Bible and those tactics continue on today. We should learn from what we read. Deception, lies, misdirection, slander, false accusations, they are all things we should expect as followers of Jesus since they were used on Jesus and have been used on His followers for centuries.

Lying about and gaslighting others in the name of God is not a new invention that has only recently shown up. Forget the message, attack the messenger has been the tactic used for thousands of years. It pops up in the Bible in the Old and New Testaments. Paul dealt with it, David did as well, so did Moses. Every single prophet in the Old Testament also dealt with it. Why should we expect otherwise?

Today it goes by the term spiritual abuse, church hurt, gaslighting, slander and defamation. The intent has been and never has changed, it is from the pit of hell, and it is an attempt to find cover in the guise of being religious and stopping what it is God is actually doing.

The goal of the enemy is to misdirect from the message to the messenger. There is obviously something wrong with the person who is delivering such a racist and non-tolerant message as many of us are being blamed of doing.

Forget what the Bible says, accuse the messenger of anything and everything you can and tie them up responding to that; this is so everyone forgets the truth which was just delivered. That is a tactic being seen in the news media today and as followers of Jesus, we not only see nonbelievers do this, but this is also a popular tactic within the world of religion. The intent is to hurt, damage and stop the work of God; and this is done by wolves in sheep clothing.

Spiritual abuse can occur when a leader uses his or her spiritual position to control or dominate another person. It often involves overriding the feelings and opinions of another, without regard to what will result in the other person's state of living, emotions or spiritual well-being. In this application, power is used to bolster the position or needs of a leader, over and above one who comes to them in need. (Johnson and VanVonderen 1991, 20-21)

What we will see here in Acts is religiously oriented gaslighting, lying and defaming, all in the supposed name of God. Except it is not in the name of the Lord at all. What we will witness are some of the common things folks who engage in this do and have done for thousands of years. It is not new. Paul was a past master. We will also see relational manipulation demonstrated in the Temple as well as the enemy attacking Paul through those who are willing pawns with a religious axe to grind.

Per the law, there is loyalty to the high priest, however, what happens when the religious leadership is corrupt as it is in the Temple in Jerusalem. Michael Kruger identifies the behavior this way.

Relational manipulation has a significant payoff for the abusive leader. For one, it generates the kind of loyalty he might need at a later point if ever accusations are made against him. In addition, abusive pastors often use this sort of influence to get other leaders in the church (usually elders) to engage in bullying behavior on their behalf. In numerous cases I studied—ranging from the West coast to the Southeast—the bully pastor was known to send other elders or pastors to confront anyone he saw as a threat, to accuse them and keep them in line (usually under the auspices of “shepherding”). At this point, the abuse had become systemic, now involving more than the senior pastor alone. (Kruger 2022, 33)

Yes, Kruger has identified this as an issue in the church, and it is, but it has centuries old roots and comes from the enemy and his attempts to stop ministry from taking place.

Those who practice this, do so from the place of being in the church, but not really believers, they are hypocrites, wolves really and are in it only for themselves. Just like the Sanhedrin.



What we have learned over the centuries is that Satan doesn't have to raise an army to stand against the work of the church. All he needs is a few willing pawns in the church who look and sound like they are followers of Jesus but really aren't.

Then attack from the inside and have others ask questions designed to destroy the character of those who are trying to teach the word.

That is what has been developing in Jerusalem in the Temple. The political machinations we saw involving the crucifixion of Jesus are nothing compared to where they have gone to by now. Plausible deniability is indeed a thing as they teach error and get others to do the work for them.

We have already begun seeing the infiltration of this problem when we were last in Acts as some in the church have begun to lean into legalism. The expectation of Paul to follow a specific course of action, which he was willing to do in order to see others come to Christ, advises us on how we should act many times as we confront similar attempts to bully, misdirect and stop ministry. And yes, there is also a time where confrontation is required. Paul will be forced into that corner.

The goal of the enemy never changes, create an environment where the man or woman of God is eliminated, for good. Time for another riot.

If the enemy can foment enough anger and so-called rage against a follower of Jesus, before the authorities can respond, then even better.

Let's look at our text.

Acts 21:27–36

"When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, 'Men of Israel, help! This is the man who instructs everyone everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides, he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place!'" For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they thought that Paul had brought him into the temple. Then the whole city was provoked and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. **While they were intent on killing him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. He immediately took along some soldiers and centurions and ran down to the crowd; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.** Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered that he be bound with two chains; and he began asking who he was and what he had done. But among the crowd, some were shouting one thing and some another, and when **he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks. When Paul got to the stairs, it came about that he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob; for the multitude of people kept following them, shouting, 'Away with him!'"** (NASB 2020)

We read this and not only wonder why would the elders of the church ever even agree with the decision to force Paul into this position, but also, what else was going on around this time in and around the Temple. There was actually a growing problem with maintaining the peace there around the Temple.

Prior to the incident with Paul, there had already been some violent reactions to gentile incursions in the Temple resulting in riots. The Jewish leadership was learning how to get their way with the Roman government and were learning how to manipulate the people to achieve their goals.



Under Cumanus, the Roman governor immediately preceding Felix (Acts 23:24), a Roman soldier lewdly exposed himself in the temple area; Josephus estimated that ten thousand people were trampled to death in the ensuing riot (Jewish War 2.224–27). When another soldier burned a Jewish Law scroll, Cumanus acceded to the crowds' demands and executed him (Jewish War 2.229–31). Hostility against Gentiles and collaborators with Gentiles had been mounting, and in less than a decade would lead to a war that would produce massacres (reportedly over twenty thousand Jews slaughtered in Caesarea in an hour; Jewish War 2.457–58) and culminate in the temple's destruction. (Keener 2014, 393)

Spiritual abuse is indeed self-destructive.

It is into the middle of this, right after departure of Cumanus, that Paul shows up and some of the same individuals who had earlier caused a fuss with Demetrius in Ephesus in Acts 19:24 and were ignored as Jews when they submitted Alexander to defend them in Acts 19:33 were now in Jerusalem. Now they were in a world they could control. They recognized Paul and saw him with Trophimus, a gentile from Ephesus, in the streets of Jerusalem.

Yes, gentiles were indeed welcome into the Temple per the law, into specific areas only, but it appears that seeing the church begin to bring in gentile believers, was causing a reaction within the Sanhedrin that was all about following the oral traditions as well as the Torah.

War with Rome over this was less than a decade away and even false allegations could lead to huge issues, thus there is now an enhanced presence in the city of Roman military.

This was all planned. It is not spur of the moment. They finally see Paul in the Temple and it is now on. The ring leaders, with leadership approval, remember, they wanted Paul gone as well, manage to create the impression among the crowd that Paul brought Trophimus, a gentile, into the Temple, he didn't, but that doesn't matter to someone who is about achieving a specific end, such as the elimination of a ministry or even Paul's life. This is classic gas lighting.

Acts 21:30

"Then the whole city was provoked and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut." (NASB 2020)

This has some appearances of being preplanned. Paul is in the inner courts where, as a Jew, he is allowed to be, this group drags him out of the inner court and into the outer court of the Gentiles. The gates were then closed to prevent the riot and violence from coming into the Temple proper, as bloodshed and violence would violate the sanctuary. Smells like hypocrisy to me. They may have also closed the outer gates to prevent escape, and if so, that would be seriously alarming to Roman authorities who have allowed some control to the Sanhedrin but are closely supervising.

This is no different than what we see government do today. Local jurisdictions that have decided to play fast and loose with the law try to see how quickly they can drop the hammer on a believer who may only be doing street preaching, but the idea is to rush to judgment and prevent higher authority from stopping it. That usually does not work, and the ensuing legal activity may last years, just like it does for Paul. But it does stop things.

What we see at this point is Paul has been taken to the court of the Gentiles with the intent to beat him to death. Finally, the Sanhedrin can be done with the traitor and their hands are "clean." Others are taking on their offense for them and doing the work.



Acts 21:31–32

“While they were intent on killing him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. He immediately took along some soldiers and centurions and ran down to the crowd; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.” (NASB 2020)

On the northern end of the Temple Mount sits the Antonia fortress. This fortress was a garrison to anywhere from 480 to 600 Roman soldiers and the guards would be looking, from the towers of it, for any disturbances taking place in the Temple area just below. Josephus tells us a bit more.

The entire structure resembled that of a tower, it contained also four other distinct towers at its four corners; whereof the others were but fifty cubits high; whereas that which lay upon the southeast corner was seventy cubits high, that from thence the whole temple might be viewed; but on the corner where it joined to the two cloisters of the temple, it had passages down to them both, through which the guard (for there always lay in this tower a Roman legion) went several ways among the cloisters, with their arms, on the Jewish festivals, in order to watch the people... (Josephus and Whiston 1987, 708-709)

The text says the report went up to the commander and that would indeed be a correct statement as the fortress is further up the hill. “To rush into the outer court of the temple, they had only to rush down the stairs from the fortress.” (Keener 2014, 394)

Obviously, the ringleaders were not locals and did not have an appreciation of the reaction time of the Romans to anything going on. The Romans have been there more than once already, and this is just another time for them.

That is not an unusual thing for law enforcement to do either. You tend to know where the problem places are and how to get the maximum number of people there as quickly as possible. Even to the point of having folks prepositioned.

When I was working in insurance, there was a rather infamous traffic circle in the city that had so many bad traffic accidents take place there, that there was usually a unit nearby and those who responded already had the intersection pre-drawn for them on a rubber stamp. It saved time for paperwork. No one was sorry to see the intersection demolished.

Notice this, the Roman commander took centurions, plural, with him. A centurion usually commanded 80 troops. The idea, which has not changed, is to show up with enough force to overwhelm those who are there causing the problem and take the source of the problem away as quickly as possible, that would be Paul, or so they would think as they arrived and witnessed who was being beaten.

Of course, the intent of the ringleaders was to beat Paul to death as quickly as possible and now Rome has stopped that from happening. We will discover that the Roman commander is also highly experienced at his job and thanks to the Temple issues, knows how to respond ahead of time.

Acts 21:33–34

“Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered that he be bound with two chains; and he began asking who he was and what he had done. But among the crowd, some were shouting one thing and some another, and when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks.” (NASB 2020)

At this point, the commander has no idea who Paul is or what was going on. There are some bad guys, particularly an Egyptian Messiah wannabe, they are on the lookout for, but he does not know if that is why



there is a riot starting. He sees who is being beaten and takes him away removing the cause of the instability as quickly as possible.

The goal of military law enforcement, even then, is deconflict the situation as quickly as possible. When we were running convoys in Kuwait and someone would decide to test the convoy, and there was always at least one who would, we immediately isolated them and removed them. It was a test we refused to ever lose to, and our intent was immediate defusing of the situation with about as rapid as a bag and tag operation going on as with the Romans and Paul. Pull, remove the issue, and then identify who it is. But pull them out immediately if not sooner. It is incredibly difficult to test run to be a suicide bomber if you never get closer than a quarter mile away before you become one with the pavement. Every time.

Here is the thing, the Lord is using Roman authorities to protect Paul, literally saving his life from the crowd.

What has taken place so far though is pretty much the norm for religious gaslighting. First, determine who the target is and then come up with a plausibly believable scenario to blame them with. All done ahead of time. Welcome to the gaslighting phase. However you do it, since you are “doing it on behalf of the Lord” or at least that is the impression you want to create, you must have a carefully crafted narrative that is believable to the masses who really have never bothered to examine the facts, the Bible, or anything else other than to simply follow the leader.

This is also how you see folks online try to cancel others today as well. First create the question and then make the allegations, facts are not that important, then see where it takes you. You want enough people to agree with you that you can effectively cancel someone or even cancel a movement of the Lord by appearing to be much more sincere and holy than those you are accusing.

But don’t go too far with your allegations, then people will just think you have gone nuts. And yes, we do indeed see that with several so-called internet “influencers” today who are now reporting in as nut jobs.

Within the church, it is important that the “leader appears to be building God’s kingdom—at least on the outside—but is actually protecting his own power and authority. Spiritual abuse usually happens because a pastor is desperately trying to control his ministry and keep it on track. He wants to control his staff, control the vision, control the direction of the church. Loyalty must be maintained at all costs. Nothing can be allowed to diminish his position or take away his power. And when people fall out of line (which tends to happen with human beings), then he cracks the whip.” (Kruger 2022, 33-34)

The common factor we see historically, as well as in some churches, schools as well as online, is a distinct straying away from the truth of God’s word.

Paul will keep his focus, even though he has acquiesced to a rather dubious process imposed by church leadership, no one could have known the extent that the abusive Temple leadership would take it to. As we observe this, we learn and realize that the enemy will do whatever it takes to destroy ministry and those who are intent on teaching the word. Paul would teach Timothy the importance of this and he is now going to provide an example.

2 Timothy 2:15–18

“Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth. Avoid worthless, foolish talk that only leads to more godless behavior. This kind of talk spreads like cancer, as in the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus. They have left the path of truth, claiming that the resurrection of the dead has already occurred; in this way, they have turned some people away from the faith.” (NLT)



Notice what false teaching does? That has never changed and continues on as a serious problem today.

Did Paul just call out two false teachers? Yes, he did and he had no problem doing so here or elsewhere. This is the second time he has referenced Hymenaeus.

1 Timothy 1:20

"Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme." (NASB 2020)

A false teacher is not someone to honor, not at all. Paul makes that clear, we are to avoid them and warn others actively, just as Paul did, about them. For example:

2 Timothy 4:14–15

"Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Be on guard against him yourself too, for he vigorously opposed our teaching." (NASB 2020)

For Paul, there is a difference between being difficult, and being a false teacher. He is now confronting the bullies in the Temple who are using others to do their dirty work for them. This is similar to what we see today. "For most bully pastors, the "gain" they seek is control and power. Sitting at the top of one's own little empire is intoxicating—so much so that they will not let anyone take it away from them without a nasty fight. This was Jesus's complaint against the abusive leadership of the Pharisees: "They love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces" (Matt. 23:6–7)." (Kruger 2022, 55) And as we are seeing here in Acts, it has not gotten better, but much worse.

As we differentiate between those who are difficult versus those who are false teachers, Paul would also add to this, for us to remember, even as we are in the midst of the fight with the enemy.

2 Timothy 2:24–26

"A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants." (NLT)

And that right there is hard to do. Paul is about to show us how to do this. Remember, he wants to see his own people, the Jews, yes even those trying to kill him, come to a saving knowledge of Jesus because he knows exactly where he was just a few years before, and he knows this.

Yes, there are indeed those who are the leaders of this who are beyond hope. But they have misled many and that is who Paul is aiming at.

We see folks today misled by false teaching and we too must learn to separate the victim from the victimizer just as Paul did.

"Those in spiritual positions of authority can violate our trust. It's possible to become so determined to defend a spiritual place of authority, a doctrine or a way of doing things that you wound and abuse anyone who questions, or disagrees, or doesn't "behave" spiritually the way you want them to." (Johnson and VanVonderen 1991, 23)

We all grow in Christ at different speeds, and we must let Him do the growing.



Getting back to our text, the Roman commander is a seeker of fact, he knows that you do not obtain facts from rioters, not even from the ringleaders and they have most likely progressed beyond the point of even believing anyone connected with the Temple leadership anymore. So, the reliance on bagging and tagging instead.

To get to the details, he has his men bring Paul to a safe location, the barracks, where he can get what he needs, facts. And there is indeed a sense of urgency to his work. So, to protect his men, Paul is in chains and he needs more information as he is thinking he may have just snagged a serious bad guy, he will discover that is not the case.

Acts 21:35–40

“When Paul got to the stairs, it came about that he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob; for the multitude of people kept following them, shouting, ‘Away with him!’ As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, ‘May I say something to you?’ And he said, ‘Do you know Greek? Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?’ But Paul said, ‘I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people.’ When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying,” (NASB 2020)

The commander is assuming Paul is a troublemaker he is looking for yet when Paul speaks to him in Greek, there is no accent. He speaks like an educated individual and does not have an Egyptian accent. This Egyptian character is also referenced by Josephus as having escaped from the Roman Governor Felix with a group of followers and gone into the wilderness.

Paul has now been eliminated as that particular threat.

Paul points out he is from a respected city, Tarsus which was a “free” city in the Roman Empire. He does not throw down the Roman citizenship card yet but is moving in that direction with what he says here. As followers of Jesus Christ, we all know that under the law of the land, we have rights and duties as citizens. Yes, there are indeed those around today who want to bypass those rights and make them ineffective for Christians and cancel us. As followers of Jesus, we should be praying for those in leadership over us. Paul reminded Timothy of that.

1 Timothy 2:1–4

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (ESV)

Because Paul is treating the Roman commander with respect, he is allowed the opportunity to talk to the people. He is also still trying to figure out what is going on. But Paul is talking to the people in the Temple, not to the Romans. His use of Hebrew plays to their xenophobia. He is telling his story.

Acts 22:1–5

“‘Brothers and fathers, hear my defense which I now offer to you.’ And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said, ‘I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the Law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can



testify. From them I also received letters to the brothers, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.” (NASB 2020)

Paul is telling his story. He is giving his personal testimony of how he came to faith in Christ. He is doing so fulfilling what it was Jesus told His disciples in Luke 21:15 that He would provide the words through the Holy Spirit. As he describes his youth, we discover he was educated in the best and most orthodox Jewish school of his age, that of Gamaliel. He was raised kosher and raised predominately in Jerusalem. On top of that, he was a persecutor of the church. He was all about following and serving the high priest and the Council of elders. Then he goes into how he met Jesus.

Acts 22:6–9

“But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus at about noon, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.’ And those who were with me saw the light, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me.” (NASB 2020)

Paul goes into his conversion experience. He is telling his story just like you or I would, if asked to tell someone how we came to Jesus, would tell our story. It is different for each of us and the Holy Spirit can use it.

Paul includes the supernatural aspect of his conversion experience. This is something that his current audience would understand. God reached out to him, this was not something he sought out. He had a real encounter with the risen Jesus Christ there on the road to Damascus and he summarizes that for the crowd.

He had received a revelation from God and as a good Jew, would want to be in obedience to that. This leads to the next portion of his story.

Acts 22:10–16

“And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told about everything that has been appointed for you to do.’ But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I came into Damascus being led by the hand by those who were with me. Now a certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me, and standing nearby he said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I looked up at him. **And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear a message from His mouth. For you will be a witness for Him to all people of what you have seen and heard.** Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins by calling on His name.” (NASB 2020)

Speaking to his audience, Paul has couched as much of his story as possible into Jewish terms. The one who explained things to him initially was Ananias. Paul tells us Ananias is a devout follower of the law. His regaining his sight was confirmation that God was speaking to him through Ananias.

Ananias then gives Paul his commission from the Lord. “God’s new role for Paul is then stated in these terms: ‘you will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard” ’.” (Peterson 2009, 602)

He was to be God’s witness to all peoples, not just the Jews and so far the crowd is okay with his testimony. Even as he discusses baptism which sounds very familiar to those listening.

Paul then continues on with a vision he was given while in the Temple at an earlier point in his life.



Acts 22:17–21

“It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, and I saw Him saying to me, ‘Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.’ And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing nearby and approving, and watching over the cloaks of those who were killing him.’ And He said to me, ‘Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’ ” (NASB 2020)

In light of the increasing violence over the recent past regarding gentiles, this was not going to go over well.

Paul knows that this statement will offend his hearers, given the escalation of Jewish-Gentile tensions in Palestine in recent years, tensions that would soon escalate into war (A.D. 66–73). But he cannot compromise the gospel that makes siblings out of believers from different peoples and backgrounds. (Keener 2014, 396)

To the ringleaders and those in the Temple leadership already totally given over to the relational manipulation of the Sanhedrin, what happens next is predictable.

Acts 22:22–24

“They listened to him up to this statement, and then they raised their voices and said, **“Away with such a man from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!”** And as they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air, the commander ordered that he be brought into the barracks, saying that he was to be interrogated by flogging so that he would find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way.” (NASB 2020)

The reaction of the crowd was one of a reaction to blasphemy

Paul has just announced to the combined audience that he has been specifically called by God, in a vision given to him in the Temple no less, to go and bring the good news to the Gentiles.

Remember, everything that Paul has just said, the Roman troops and the commander did not understand. They did not speak Hebrew, and Paul was speaking in Hebrew. They watch and see everyone listening and then, boom, riot again.

What they do next is normal operating procedure. Do whatever you can to obtain a confession or the “truth” from the one who appears to be the cause of the problem. Roman scourging was usually fatal.

As far as the commander was concerned, Paul is a rabble rouser deliberately causing unrest, he had no idea what had been said by Paul. They were mad at Paul, so here is the real question in his mind, is Paul a rejected revolutionary? Does he have a truly educated bad guy in custody?

So he returns to his original plan which is to “extract” the information out of Paul.

Acts 22:25–29

“But when they stretched him out with straps, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?” When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and told him, saying, “What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman.” The commander came and said to Paul, “Tell me, are you a Roman?” And he said, “Yes.” The commander answered, “I acquired this citizenship for a large sum of money.” And Paul said, “But I was actually born a citizen.” Therefore, those who were about to interrogate him immediately backed away from him; and the



commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains.” (NASB 2020)

Paul waited to the last potential moment though before he pulled out his citizenship card. He had been stripped and stretched out onto a surface in order to be beaten and just as they were doing the final preparations, technically uncondemned, he asks a question of the centurion as he is verifying all the preparations are in place.

Paul does not condemn the centurion; he just asks a question of a man who would indeed know the law. The realization of what they might be preparing to do results in an immediate audience with the commander. Paul has asserted his Roman citizenship.

Under further questioning from the commander, who purchased his citizenship, he discovers that Paul was born a citizen. “There are several theories, including the idea that the Romans may have awarded Paul’s family citizenship because their tent-making trade proved useful to the military. Whatever the case, Paul’s citizenship proves to be significant to what happens next.” (Merida 2017, 349)

Yes, Paul urges us to pray for those who are in authority, but he also expects those in authority to do their job legally.

This suggests there’s a difference between humbly suffering for Christ and being a victim of injustice. We live in a land of laws, and if the laws protect us, then we should appeal to them. If these laws prevent us from following Jesus, then it’s better to obey God than man (Acts 5:29). (Merida 2017, 349)

Paul’s approach, even with the Roman soldiers, is one of respect as he is fully aware of who he is representing. God is more than capable of protecting him, and He is doing so in this process.

What is happening to Paul is not a coincidence. There is a very real enemy, Satan and he wants Paul dead. What we see as well is the long game being played by the enemy to foster the types of manipulation and abuse needed to get previously unwilling individuals to willingly do his bidding. Yes, Satan is the expert in spiritual abuse, deception and manipulation and his followers, who do not know they are his followers, are busy acting on his behalf as they try to cancel Paul. Satan still tries to cancel followers of Jesus Christ today and does so suing those who think they are exercising their free will to further their own spiritual kingdom, except that is so far from the truth is isn’t even funny.

The truth of God’s word is designed to destroy that and it is imperative in these last days that we hear His voice over that of those who are nothing more than false teachers and deceivers. Becoming a follower of Jesus, contrary to what some assert today, is not hard to do, but it does require a decision from each of us.

Paul outlined it this way.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly



declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

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