

Theme: Opposition to the gospel message and its adherents is nothing new. Using the means God provides, both secular and sacred, we face that opposition with courage and grace because we already know the end that Christ has secured for us.

Introduction/Background:

1. Dealing with false accusations -
2. The clear “injustice” of Paul’s imprisonment
 - Festus, new arrival, inherits Paul’s case
 - Careful to follow the law. (15, 16)
 - Festus has big problem. Charge is political, but evidence was theological.

I. The Inevitable Conflict

- A. Why does it come?
 1. The message of the gospel is offensive to many. *Repent and Believe*
 2. It intrudes upon the kingdoms of men. Luke 1:52,53; 2:34
 3. It is easier to attack the messenger than to refute the message!
- B. Where does it come from?
 1. Every corner of the unbelieving world! From Daniel to Nigeria
 2. Sometimes from the “believing community”
 - Jeremiah – wasn’t exactly loved.
 - Paul’s adversary? The Jewish leaders.
- C. Why does God allow it?
 1. To purify us. Hebrews 5:8; 1 Peter 4:12-19
 2. To help up clarify the truth.
 3. Makes us look to Him for strength, faith, wisdom. Psalm 109:1-4; Ps.73

II. An Envious Conscience!

- A. Start with the Ending.
 - We have already died in Christ. There is nothing to fear in this life. (Romans 6:8; 2 Timothy 2:11; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:3)
 - Paul can *Trust God!*
 - Suffering comes to the follower of Christ. 1 Peter 4:12
- B. Follow the example set before you in Christ.
 - Hebrews 12:1,2; Matthew 20:27
 - The gospel of salvation is more important, and much bigger than me!

III. An Appeal to Caesar?

A. A Lack of faith?

- No! Using the means the God has given him to protect life.
- The duties of the 5th Commandment

B. Not trusting God?

- Use all the means that God has given you in this world.
- Appealing to Caesar – to protect his life and to promote the gospel.
- Romans 13

C. Why hasn't he done this before?

- Actually, he has. Acts 16:37-40
- Although ready to suffer imprisonment, even death – he sought out neither.
- He still seeks the honor of Christ.

IV. The ongoing challenge

A. Christ's servants do not bring suffering upon themselves through illegal or antisocial behavior.

- a. If we face opposition/suffering – let it be for the sake of righteousness.
1 Peter 2:20
- b. Remember, it is the message that offends.

B. We must see “persecution/opposition” as part of our life, our pilgrimage with Christ.

- Not because we “try” to alienate those around us
- But because the Word of God, the Kingdom of God always confronts man's sin.

C. Don't be caught off guard!

- We are being told that we have outgrown the “immaturity” of religious intolerance.

D. Use the means that God has given us to overcome the opposition to the proclamation of the truth. Romans 13 – We live in submission to the sovereign God.

Exercise your rights and privileges in the worldly kingdom – so that there may be peace – and the good news can go forth with power and much fruit.