

Protected and Prosecuted by Rome (Acts 22:23-30)¹

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1. Context

- Paul has recently returned from his third missionary journey.
- Back in Jerusalem, in the temple.
- Recognized by Jews of the diaspora who are visiting Jerusalem.
- Accused of bringing a Gentile into the temple, a riot ensues.
- Rescued from the mob by the authority of Rome.
- Recounts his radical conversion from persecutor to preacher of Christ.
- Crowd listens until Paul mentions Jesus is sending him away from Jerusalem, to the Gentiles.

2. Passage (Acts 22:21-30)²

²¹ "Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'" ²² And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" ²³ Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air, ²⁴ the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him. ²⁵ And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" ²⁶ When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman." ²⁷ Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes." ²⁸ The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born a citizen." ²⁹ Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. ³⁰ The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them. (Acts 22:21-30)

3. The Trigger Word: "Gentiles"

²¹ "Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'" ²² And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" (Acts 22:21-22)

- As we saw last time, the crowd boiled over when Paul reported that Jesus had instructed him to depart from Jerusalem and minister to the Gentiles instead.
- They were already offended by Paul's pro-Gentile bias, supposed him to have brought a Gentile into the Jewish temple (Acts 21:28-29).

- Now Paul indicates that Jesus indicates his audience won't receive him, but—by implication—the Gentile's will.
- The prevailing Jewish view of Gentiles is seen in Jesus' interaction with the Canaanite woman early in his ministry: *But He [Jesus] answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's [Jews'] bread and throw it to the little dogs [Gentiles]."* (Matthew 15:26)
- Even Jewish believers in Christ struggled to understand that God was saving "unclean" Gentiles, just like Jews:
 - Peter to the household of Cornelius. ²⁸ *Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean* (Acts 10:28).
 - Peter subsequently defends his actions, ² *And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, ³ saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!" . . . ²⁸ Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean* (Acts 11:2-3,28).

4. Roles of Government

Actions of the Government - upholding justice

- Represents Paul: Rome intervenes to save Paul from action of mob.
 - ³⁴ *And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks* (Acts 21:34).
 - Protecting the *minority* from the *majority*.
- Represents crowd: begins to investigate/interrogate Paul — perhaps, for some yet-unknown reason, Paul is a legitimate threat to the crowd?
 - ²⁴ *. . . examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him* (Acts 22:24)
 - Protecting the *majority* from the *minority*.
- Citizenship: additional rights guaranteed by the government (law).
 - ²⁹ *Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.* (Acts 22:29)
 - "The exact rights of Roman citizens are not fully known. It seems that at least they (1) field preferential positions in the army, (2) may have been taxed at lower rates than were non-citizens, (3) could not, if arrested, be beaten or otherwise tortured, (4) had the right to appeal legal cases to the imperial court, and (5) could not be executed by crucifixion, except in the case of desertion from the army. See A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), and *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 144-85."³

5. The Basis of Government

God's instructions to Noah after disembarking the Ark: ³ *Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.* ⁴ *But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.* ⁵ *Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of*

man. ⁶ *Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man* (Genesis 9:3-6).

- Capital punishment for taking another human life.
- Why? "For in the image of God He made man."
- Man is unique, being the only creature with the *imago dei*.

5.1 *Imago Dei*

- *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* (Genesis 1:26-27)
- ⚠ The theory of Evolution denies the *imago dei* and asserts that man is essentially no different than any other animal, although more intelligent.
- Undercuts the innate value of human life: man is "just an animal"; it is acceptable to kill animals for any number of reasons.

5.2 Upholding Justice

Although God could instantly enact judgment—taking the life each murderer—He purposefully placed this weighty responsibility in the hands of mankind! Why?

- Mankind will understand the seriousness of murder and appreciate the need of justice.
- Mankind must exercise justice, forcing us to learn about justice and wrestle with the weighty issues surrounding its enforcement.
 - ² *Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?* ³ *Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?* ⁴ *If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?* ⁵ *I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?* (1 Corinthians 6:2-5)
- One purpose of mankind's *imago dei* is to allow mankind to emulate God. In this case, to provide *just rule* in His stead—an extension of the dominion mandate.

5.3 The Need of a Justice System

- What does the institution of capital punishment presume?
 - An objective standard for evaluating behavior: *law*.
 - Detaining suspects while the potential crime is investigated.
 - Authorized individuals to detain the suspects: *policemen*.
 - A place to detain suspects until justice is served: *jails*.
 - Investigation of witnesses to establish the truth: *a judicial system with judge, jury, court*.
 - A means of capital punishment.

5.4 What if the Criminal is a Nation?

- God used Israel to judge the godless behavior of nations in the land of Canaan:

- ¹³ *Then [God] said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."* (Genesis 15:13-16)
- A "scaled-up" justice system applies between nation-states, now involving armies.
- The doctrine of "just war" (Num. 25:17; 31:1-7; 2S. 22:35; 1Chr. 5:20-22; Ps. 44:3; Ecc. 3:8; Jer. 48:10)⁷

6. Application

- Obey the government
 - Romans 13
 - ^{13:1} *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴ For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; **for he does not bear the sword in vain**; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. ⁷ Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor* (Romans 13:1-7).
 - ⚠ Problems with dynamic equivalence translations which obscure or omit important details in God's Word.
 - "But some dynamic equivalence translations omit the word "sword." The New Living Translation says: 'The authorities are sent by God to help you. But if you are doing something wrong, of course you should be afraid, **for you will be punished**. The authorities are established by God for that very purpose, to punish those who do wrong.' . . . The New Century Version does something similar: 'The ruler is God's servant to help you. But if you do wrong, then be afraid. **He has the power to punish**; he is God's servant to punish those who do wrong.' . . . The Contemporary English Version similarly omits the sword: 'If you do something wrong, you ought to be afraid because these rulers **have the right to punish you**.' The Message strays even further from the sense of the text: 'But if you're breaking the rules right and left, watch out. The police **aren't there just to be admired in their uniforms**.'"⁸
 - The importance of godly rule
 - ¹² *It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, For a throne is established by righteousness. ¹³ Righteous lips are the delight of kings, And they love him who speaks what is right. ¹⁴ As messengers of death is the king's wrath, But a wise man will appease it.* (Pr. 16:12-14)
 - ² *I say, Keep the king's commandment for the sake of your oath to God. ³ Do not be hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand for an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him. ⁴ Where the word of a king is, there is power; And who may say to him,*

"What are you doing?" He who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful . . .
(Ecc. 8:2-5)

- What about ungodly rule?
 - ² *When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan.* (Pr. 29:2).
 - ¹⁵ *Like a roaring lion and a charging bear Is a wicked ruler over poor people.* ¹⁶ *A ruler who lacks understanding is a great oppressor, . . .* (Pr. 28:15-16).
 - Our examples:
 - Paul wrote Romans 13 while Nero was ruling over Rome—and by extension, Israel.
 - Jesus under Roman rule, ²¹ . . . *Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's* (Mat. 22:21). Also Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25.
 - We must have a very high view of God's sovereignty and our position within it!
 - Sole exception: **higher law^b**.
 - "When a lower authority enacts a law which would *force* the Christian to violate God's law, then the higher law takes precedence and the believer must disobey the lower, civil law. Where these laws conflict, it is because the state has taken upon itself things that are God's alone."⁹
 - Not sufficient for the government *itself* to be ungodly, but for the government to attempt to *force the believer* to violate God's command.
 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refuse to worship the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3). ¹⁷ . . . *our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.* ¹⁸ *But if not . . .* (Daniel 3:17-18)
 - Daniel refuses to pray to King Darius, continues praying to God (Daniel 6).
 - In both cases, they trusted *completely* in God's sovereignty and were well aware they could lose their lives.
- Denial of the human condition
 - Flawed anthropology: the nature of man
 - Bible:
 - ²³ *for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God* (Rom. 3:23).
 - ²⁰ *And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man.* ²¹ *For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,* ²² *thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.* ²³ *All these evil things come from within and defile a man"* (Mark 7:20-23).
 - Culture: mankind is inherently good, or at least neutral—until shaped positively or negatively by his environment.
 - Capital punishment limited or abolished.
 - Justice undermined.
 - No fear, ¹⁰ *And you shall stone him with stones until he dies, . . .* ¹¹ *So all Israel shall hear and fear, and not again do such wickedness as this among you* (Deu. 13:10-11).
 - Repeat offenders.
 - Misplaced mercy: perpetrator considered a victim, additional perpetrators lead to additional victims!
 - Huge expenses housing/feeding criminals for life.

- Devaluation of human life — multiple murders, perpetrator jailed for 5-10 years, then paroled.
- Defund the Police, opposition to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).
 - Opposition to law-enforcement, which is mischaracterized as fascism or worse.
 - Resulting celebration of lawlessness, justification of violence as a means to political ends.
 - Root problem: evolution instead of biblical history: a denial of the problem of sin.
- Globalism in relation to justice.
 - Inability to police among nations.
 - Ultimate example on the horizon: the Antichrist—no independent nations to oppose/judge his ungodly behavior.
- God provided divine institutions to combat sin¹⁰
 1. Sanctity of Life (Gen. 1:27)
 2. Labor (Gen. 2:15)
 3. Marriage (Gen. 2:18-25)
 4. Family (Gen. 1:26-28)
 5. Conscience (Gen. 3:22)
 6. Human Government (Gen. 9:6)
 7. Nationalism (Gen. 11:6)

7. Closing Prayer

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Endnotes:

1. https://spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts_by_Tony_Garland/77_Acts_22_23-30/index.htm
2. Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
3. Ref-1200, p. 90n21
4. Ref-1505, 585
5. Ref-1509, 677
6. Ref-1509, 691-692
7. “During the war [Einstein] wrote to a conscientious objector saying that he had given up pacifism since he could maintain it only at the risk of allowing the whole world to fall into the hands of the most terrible enemies of mankind. “Organized power can be opposed only by organized power,” he went on. “Much as I regret this, there is no other way.””⁴ ““Our desire to lead the world towards disarmament by our example of unilateral disarmament has not succeeded,” admitted the Defence White Paper.”⁵ “Hitler crystallized and gave direction to all that was sick in German society. Wishful thinking and fear—not admiration for or sympathy with Nazism, which hardly existed in England—then caused “appeasement” to continue until Hitler’s repeated aggression made it irrelevant and finally contemptible. . . . Well-meaning determination to avoid war only delayed it and increased its ultimate cost.”⁶
8. Ref-0786, 19:56, p. 32

9. [Ref-1620](#), 3.3.18.1.1

10. See [Divine Institutions^e](#) by Andy Woods.

Sources:

Ref-0786 Wayne Grudem et. al., *Translating Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005).

Ref-1200 J. Julius Scott Jr., *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1995, 2007). ISBN:[978-0-8010-2240-1^f](#).

Ref-1505 Ronald W. Clark, *Einstein: The Life and Times* (New York, NY: World Publishing, 1971).

Ref-1509 Robert Tombs, *The English and Their History* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014). ISBN:[9781101874776^g](#).

Ref-1620 Anthony C. Garland, *Daniel Discovered*, Rev. 0.27, (Camano Island, WA: SpiritAndTruth.org, 2008-2021) [https://spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book_of_Daniel/commentary/htm/index.htm].

Links Mentioned Above

a - See <https://spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.

b - See https://spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book_of_Daniel/commentary/htm/chapters/03.html#3.3.18.1.1.

c - See <https://spiritandtruth.org>.

d - See <mailto:contact@spiritandtruth.org>.

e - See

https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/topics_by_andy_woods_15/156_Divine_Institutions/.st/20250706_divine_institutions.mp4.

f - See <https://spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?978-0-8010-2240-1>.

g - See <https://spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?9781101874776>.