

## DEALING WITH THE ILLEGALITY OF THE DEVIL



An act is described to be illegal if it is prohibited by law or by official or accepted rules. Therefore illegality is unlawfulness by virtue of violating some legal statute. There are many acts that are not consistent with the Bible which we endure or live with. What should we do if we find out that we have been unjustly treated? In this article I will be showing to us how Paul dealt with an illegality melted to him.

***Act 16:35-40 KJV 35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. 36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. 37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. 38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. 39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. 40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and***

***when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.***

Paul and Silas were on their way to the place of prayer when accosted by a possessed damsel who had been following them for sometime now. That day Paul was grieved and cast out the devil from the young lady. Rather than the people rejoicing, the Bible says that the owner of the girl arrested Paul and Silas and brought them before the magistrates.



They were accused of being Jews who had brought strange doctrines and beliefs which were alien to the Romans.

This was not the main reason why Paul and Silas were arrested, it was because their source of their income through the girl had been destroyed. The hope of their gains was gone. The girl no longer had the ability to prophecy or soothsaying anything again. Because of these,

they arrested Paul and Silas and dragged them to the magistrates. The people of the town also joined in the mob action.

The magistrates did not give the benefit of hearing or defense to Paul rather they asked the lictors - the rod carriers to strip them of their clothes, flogged them and threw them into the prison.



While in the prison, they were singing and praising God and suddenly there was an earthquake that resulted in the prison door being opened and all the bonds of the prisoners loosened.

The Jailer who had been rude to them wanted to kill himself thinking that all the prisoners had run but Paul called out. The man was terrified and asked how he could be saved. He was led to the Lord.

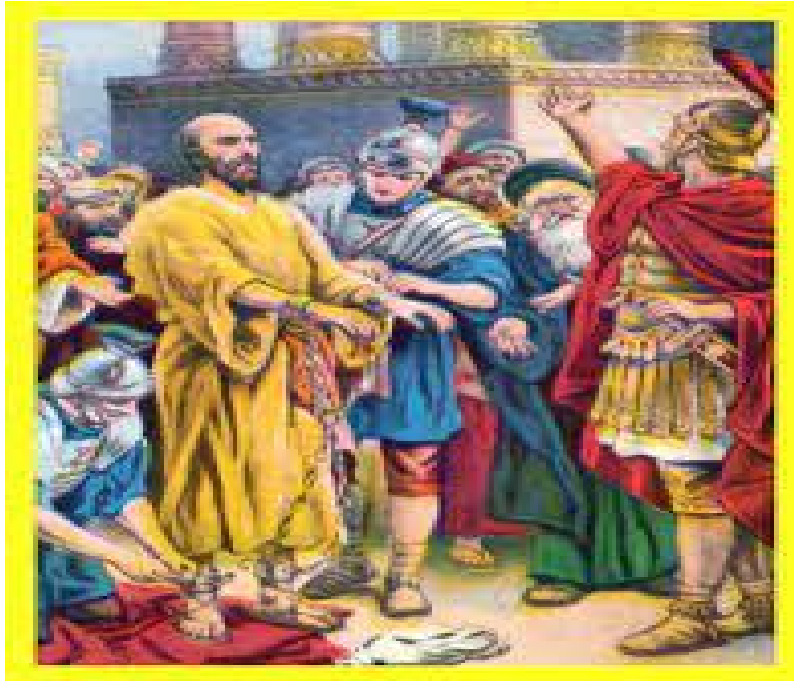


In the morning time, the magistrates probably due to conscience of the earthquake incidents sent the sergeants or police to the jailer to allow the prisoners Paula and Silas to go but Paul told them that they were not going anywhere. He accused the magistrates of maltreating them, condemned them without trial even though they were romans.

***Act 16:37 KJV But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.***

Paul was saying they threw them into prison after disgracing them publicly as common criminals and now they wanted to push them out in secret. He was not going to take anything like that.

***Act 16:38 KJV And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.***



The bible says that when the magistrates heard that they were Romans, they became afraid. Why were they afraid? What is so special about being a Roman citizen that made them afraid?

If you remember that in Act 22 when the Roman Centurion and the chief captain knew that Paul was a Roman citizen, they were afraid and even the people who wanted to scourge Paul left him immediately.

***Act 22:25-29 KJV 25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? 26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. 27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. 28 And the***

***chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born. 29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.***

Paul was from Tarsus yet a roman citizen. How? Being a citizen of Tarsus (Act 21:39) did not make Paul a Roman citizen. Tarsus was an urbs libera, not a colonia like Philippi. Some one of his ancestors (father, grandfather) obtained it perhaps as a reward for distinguished service.

What is it about being a roman citizen?

## **ROMAN CITIZENSHIP**

The Rome empire had very good laws that protect the citizens of the empire in Rome and wherever they may be found and Rome did not take lightly if the fundamental rights of her citizens were violated.

### **We learnt from history**

A passage from Cicero, Orat. pro Verr. Act. ii. lib. v. 64, throws the fullest light on this place: Ille, quisquis erat, quem tu in crucem rapiebas, qui tibi esset ignotus, cum civem se Romanum esse diceret, apud te Praetorem, si non effugium, ne moram quidem mortis mentione atque usurpatione civitatis assequi potuit? "Whosoever he might be whom thou wert hurrying to the rack, were he even unknown to thee, if he said that he was a Roman citizen, he would necessarily obtain from thee, the Praetor, by the simple mention of Rome, if not an escape, yet at least a delay of his punishment." The whole of the sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth sections of this oration, which speak so pointedly on this subject, are worthy of consideration. Of this privilege he further says,

lb. in cap. lvii., Illa vox et exclamatio, Civis Romanus sum, quae saepe multis in ultimis terris opem inter barbaros et salutem tulit, c. That exclamation, I am a Roman citizen, which often times has brought assistance and safety, even among barbarians, in the remotest parts of the earth, c

From history, there are cases where the rights of Roman citizens were violated or even the person killed that attracted grievous consequences.

It was the heaviest of all the charges brought by Cicero against Verres, the Governor of Sicily, that he had broken this law: "Facinus est vinciri civem Romanum, scelus verberari" (Cic. in Verr. v. 57). The words civis Romanus sum acted almost like a charm in stopping the violence of provincial magistrates.

### **THE FEAR OF THE MAGISTRATES**

A Roman citizen unjustly treated can report to Rome and have his case retried and If convicted, the magistrates would have been degraded, and incapable in future of holding office; cf. Cicero, In Verrem, v., 66; Rep., ii., 31; Grotius, in loco, and O. Holtzmann, Neutest. Zeitgeschichte, p. 99.

In A.D. 44 the Rhodians had been deprived by Claudius of their privileges for putting some Roman citizens to death (Speaker's Commentary, in loco).

Claudius had "deprived the city of Rhodes of its freedom for having crucified some citizens of Rome" (Rackham).

### **PAUL KNEW HIS RIGHTS HAD BEEN VIOLATED**

Paul well knew the Roman laws; and on their violation by the magistrates he pleaded. The Lex Valeria B.C. 509 and the Lex Poecia B.C. 248 made it a crime to inflict blows on a Roman citizen. Cicero says, "To fetter a Roman citizen was a crime, to scourge him a scandal, to slay him--parricide."

The Valerian law forbade any Roman citizen to be bound. The Porcian law forbade any to be beaten with rods. "Poecia lex virgas ab omnium civium Romanorum corpore amovit." And by the same law the liberty of a Roman citizen was never put in the power of the lictor. "Poecia lex libertatem civium lictori eripuit." See CICERO, Orat. pro Rabirio. Hence, as the same author observes, In Verrem, Orat. 5: "Facinus est vinciri civem Romanum, scelus verberari." It is a transgression of the law to bind a Roman citizen: it is wickedness to scourge him. And the illegality of the proceedings of these magistrates was further evident in their condemning and punishing them unheard. This was a gross violation of a common maxim in Roman law. Causa cognita, possunt multi absolvi; incognita, nemo condemnari potest.

The magistrates, in their treatment of Paul and Silas, had violated no less than three laws: First, in punishing them without a trial, which was not only an infringement of Roman law, but of the law of nations. They had likewise violated the Valerian law, which forbade that a Roman citizen should be bound: and, thirdly, the Sempronian, or Porcian law, which forbade any man to punish a Roman citizen with rods.





This was the reason why Paul said let them come themselves and fetch us out. The apostles were determined that the magistrates should be humbled for their illegal proceedings; and that the people at large might see that they had been unjustly condemned, and that the majesty of the Roman people was insulted by the treatment they had received.

### **LESSON FOR US TODAY**

If the government of Rome that was even hostile to Christianity in the first century could have laws that promote and protect the rights of its citizens, how much more is heaven. Paul had dual citizenship. It will amaze you that 5 times he suffered scourging from his fellow Jews 2Cor 11:24 but he never made appeal to being a roman citizen because it will avail him nothing. However, when he was maltreated in a Roman colony, even though he was both Jew and Roman; he made appeal to his being a roman citizen and he was well treated. In chapter 21 of the

book of Act, when he said he was from Tarsus, nobody paid attention but in Chapter 22 when he said he was a roman citizen, everybody paid attention.

**We are citizens of heaven.**

***Phi 3:20 KJV For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:***

The word for "conversation" there is also citizenship.

***Eph 2:19 KJV Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;***

If we are citizens of heaven, then we have dual citizenship and fundamental rights of being a citizen. And if being a citizen of Rome would avail Paul so many advantages; how much more being a citizen of heaven where God Almighty rules? To make the case stronger, we are also called an Ambassador for Christ.

***2Cor 5:20 KJV Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.***

You know that ambassadors for nations enjoy diplomatic immunity in the host nations, they can't be harassed, arrested or intimidated because any infraction melted to them is deemed to be melted to the countries they represent. it could and has led to wars between nations. That is how important we are. However, it is unfortunate that many Christian don't know this. We live far below our rights and we allow the "magistrates" of this life to disgrace us and maltreat us and they do get away with it.

Paul insisted that the magistrates that maltreated him uncondemned came personally to discharge him. We should know how to enforce our fundamental rights as believers in Christ, as a citizen of heaven and as an ambassador of the Most high. Failure to do that will make us suffer unnecessarily. When Paul did not declare who he was on time in Act 16, he was beaten. The reasons could be because of the mob actions or impatience of the magistrates to hear him out. But I learnt from the law of Rome that even if a person can shout "I am a citizen of Rome" he will be delivered. Paul declared who he was in chapter twenty two and he was let go of scourging.

## **UNDER THE REDEMPTION**

Today many Christians suffer untold hardship from the hands of the devil even though those things had been paid for nearly 2000 years back by the death, burial, resurrection, ascension and the sitting of the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God. How do you explain a Christian suffering from sickness and diseases when the book of the law had stated facts of what Jesus had done about health and healing.

***Isa 53:4-5 KJV 4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.***

Peter quoted assuringly as a done deal fact.

***1Pet 2:24 KJV Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.***

The stripes of Jesus paid for our healing and all the medical research categorized all diseases into about 39. Each stripe paid for each one.

When we are faced with poverty and financial problems we should remember what has been done.

***2Cor 8:9 KJV For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.***

You see the list go on and on. The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy John 10:10 and it is our responsibility to arrest him, detain and recover all he has stolen. WE should put our feet on the ground to declare and stay on what the laws state. Satan is infringing on our rights when he brings upon us what Christ has taken away on the cross. There is no more condemnation for us who are in Christ Jesus Rom 8: 1. How come he makes you feel condemned when Christ was condemned for us? Our guilt and punishment over sin had been placed on Jesus, praising God.

When next the devil violates your right, hold him on to it till he lets go and off.

In verse 39, when Paul stood his ground that unless the magistrates came to bring them out of the prison, those magistrates knew the consequence and so they came. They besought them. The word rendered "besought", is in the very next verse, as well as in many other places, rendered comforted; and so it should have been rendered here, as it gives us the idea of a more respectful treatment. they comforted them, namely, by acknowledging their innocence, and commending the patience and fortitude with which they had borne the punishment so rashly inflicted upon them, as well as by other kind and conciliating

speeches. And brought them out With the most respectful treatment; and desired them to depart out of the city With all convenient speed, to prevent any of those popular tumults which might be the consequence of their longer abode in it.

Some manuscripts have an addition here, importing that the magistrates, in a respectful manner, conducted them out of the prison, and humbly begged them to leave the city.

This is very interesting. The magistrates that were proud yesterday were humbled today because somebody refused to receive an injustice. They had to come and plead. In others, The Greek verb for the word "desired" was imperfect. In other words they kept pleading with them while holding their hands to forgive them and leave the city. They didn't want to be reported to the higher authority or experience further turmoil in town.

When we stand our ground power that has disrespected us will bow before us. Don't allow the illegality of the devil to stand. Whenever you are experiencing or hearing what is contrary to the Bible, it means that the devil is transgressing and violating your fundamental human rights. It is up to you to suffer unjustly or resist the devil and he will flee away from you Jam 4: 7