

# Rogue “Righteousness”

Message Magazine’s Online Devotional for Sunday February 22, 2015

Based Upon Acts 24

**Affairs of conscience have always been at risk in the hands of civil authorities and the overzealous religious. When will we recognize God can vindicate Himself?**

I’m not naïve. I do realize that not all matters purported to be of faith should be excused by civil society as some spiritual “diplomatic immunity.” There are times when fringe groups do things that endanger the lives of others or in some way impact the larger society in ways that are a detriment, which even God would condemn. Yet, world history and prophetic prediction both attest to the danger of allowing civil authorities to meddle in the affairs of conscience. Concerning the first four commandments, we must be free to exercise our right to worship, or not, according to conscience. Concerning the last six commandments, just and sensible, laws should be drafted and enforced to benefit the larger society.

Interestingly, Paul is being shuttled from place-to-place, judge-to-judge, under heavy guard because religious zealots who think they know everything want to execute him due to his beliefs. Notice I used the word, “beliefs.” That of which Paul spoke concerning his beliefs, had zero potential as a public safety risk or upset of just government. He simply shared that Jesus was Messiah, and that he looked forward to the resurrection. Why in the world were the religious so-called authorities so bent out of shape?

If we don’t learn much else from this fiasco, we must recognize that, whether for good or for ill, history has a history of repeating itself. I could cite countless examples where civil governments have attempted to compel conscience and the negative consequences of such. Here are a few: Did not Nebuchadnezzar attempt to compel (false) worship, and when three Hebrew boys refused, did he not cast them alive into a fiery furnace? Did not king Darius allow his advisors to swindle him into enacting a law to compel everyone to worship him as a god? Was not Daniel caught in the dragnet when he was discovered praying to the God of heaven, and then thrown in to a den of hungry lions? Were not so-called religious people allowed to employ the rack, stake, and many other unmentionable atrocities to compel assent to certain dogma during a savage 1,260 year massacre including time in the Dark Ages (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:5-7). Does not prophecy predict that civil authority will be (mis)used to govern matters of conscience right before Jesus returns (Revelation 13:15-18)?

Yet, history also records that the Almighty is able to vindicate His name and honor in these situations. The three Hebrew boys received a blessed visit from the Son of God who nullified the flames. Daniel came forth from the den of lions completely unscathed. Those faithful ones whose early lives were taken because of their faith in God, will soon receive a crown of life. And, those who refuse to receive the Mark of the Beast in the closing moments of earth’s history, will be sealed and, by God’s grace, soon receive the reward for which Jesus paid with His life on Calvary. It’s cool to examine the details of Paul’s journey, but it is imperative that we not simply gather facts. We must dig deeply, in the power and mind of the Spirit, in order to make application for our day. I believe we have done just that today.