

## How Do We Respond to Injustice?

We need to understand what was happening in Paul's encounter here:

*But on the next day, desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews, he unbound [Paul] and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them. And looking intently at the council, Paul said, "Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day."*

*And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?"*

*Those who stood by said, "Would you revile God's high priest?"*

*And Paul said, "I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'" (Acts 22:30 - 23:5)*

When Paul called him a "white-washed wall," what do you think that meant?

*[They looked good on the outside, but were unclean inside.]* Exactly. It meant having a clean appearance, but being rotten on the inside. Now, was Paul's reaction *improper*?

*For to this you were called, because Messiah also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously..." (1 Peter 2:21-23)*

Alright then, what can we gather from what Peter wrote? Let's judge Paul, here.

So how did our Master react? Did He have a right to defend His legal rights? Did Paul?

Do we? Do we have a right to defend our legal rights?

**Shoer** — You gave an example in the freepaper meeting the other day, how if you get pulled over for speeding, and you *know* in your conscience that you were not speeding, then you should not pay the fine; you would take it to the highest jurisprudence [*court of law*] rather than admit guilt for something you didn't do.

**Zimrah shel Sameach** — We have the right to home-school; it's in the law.

**Shoer** — But we would home-school our children even if we weren't granted that right by the state, because it's not merely a legal right, but it's ordained by our Father.

Yes, as in France, for example, they will go to prison if they have to, rather than send their children "by law" to public school.

Another high priest, in Jn 18:20-23, asked our Master about His teaching:

*Yahshua answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said." When He had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Yahshua with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" Yahshua answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?" (Jn 18:20-23)*

So that is how our Master answered. He didn't just remain silent; He answered with the truth.

**Shoer** — It seems as if in Paul's case the priests might have "got his goat" a little bit. I don't know for sure, but it seems as if Paul spoke with a little more force behind what he said, compared with how our Master responded. Our Master spoke the truth, but He didn't react.

So when a person "gets your goat," do you also react, as Paul did, and say something like, "*You white-washed wall*"? Paul also said, "*I did not know he was the high priest.*" Did Paul really not know, or was he using irony<sup>1</sup> to some degree? You see, Paul didn't expect to receive justice from the Jewish court. That's why he took it all the way to the highest court, the highest jurisprudence — the "Supreme Court" of Caesar.

Paul's situation in Acts 23:1-5 is what you might call a "bitter irony" in its denial of his rights. But when do we have the right for someone to "get our goat"? Do we have a right, if someone "gets our goat," to lash out at him? Do we have that right? Do we lash out, or do we respond to injustice by pouting, or by sulking?

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<sup>1</sup> *Irony* — the expression of meaning through the use of language signifying the opposite, typically for humorous effect; a state of affairs that appears perversely contrary to what one expects.

*Sulking* comes from a lack of something in us to hear rightly. A person who sulks judges someone by what he *thinks* he meant to say. The person really didn't mean to say it the way you heard it; he might have "said it," but you took it the wrong way. Why did you take it that way? What *spirit* were you listening to? Not listening to the right spirit is actually what causes divisions. Someone "gets your goat," but he didn't even mean it the way you took it, but you pout and sulk.

Have you ever read the teaching about sulking? In our First Day Festivals, the shepherds will know who has a problem with sulking, so they'll send them to the *Sulkiness* teaching,<sup>2</sup> and others will have a problem with reacting, so the shepherds will send them to the *Reactions* teaching.<sup>3</sup> Then, when we're gathered together after the teachings, the sulker will say, "I learned what *sulking* means and I admit, I'm a sulker. I allow things to bother me and I don't bring it out; I just *sulk* all night. I don't really ever go to the person and say, 'Hey, I might have taken this wrong. How did you really mean it?' Instead, I just sulk." It's like a cancer. It causes division; it causes separation from your brothers and sisters. It just festers inside, and takes over, until you confess it.

Anyway, Paul responded, "*You white-washed wall.*" Now, if you were in Paul's situation, would you have answered that way? What did we learn, after reading 1 Peter 2:21-23?

**Nun** — It brings grace in a situation like this if we "*suffer unjustly, and don't revile in return.*" It brings an atmosphere where people can judge themselves. If one person judges himself, not reviling back, even if he feels he suffered wrongly, and he entrusts himself to our Father and doesn't defend himself, it helps the situation to work out.

Don't "retaliate" against someone who attacks you. Do you know what it means to *retaliate*? If someone slaps you on the face, you don't retaliate by slapping him back.

**Shoer** — It reminds me of Pr 15:1, "*A gentle answer turns away wrath.*"

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<sup>2</sup> *Sulkiness* (1993.09.23-T01)

<sup>3</sup> *Reactions* (1977.00.00-T03)

So, we're never to threaten those who cause us suffering. How do we do that? How do we never threaten one who causes us suffering? I don't know whether I retaliated when I was down at Trio Foods.<sup>4</sup> Dave, the store manager, let us put our freepaper box outside the store. Someone takes out our papers and tears them up and puts them back in the box. So I wrote Proverbs 17:4 on the box. Is that retaliation? Or is it just helping the person to see that he is listening to lies, which makes *him* a liar, and all liars will have their part in the Lake of Fire. If you receive a liar, then you receive a liar's reward.

We have to have something in us to judge rightly, to not believe the lie so quickly. If you believe it quickly, you *want* to believe it. You *want* to believe that lie. But if we have the Holy Spirit, and we're in communion with Him, then we won't believe so quickly the things we hear about one another, that turn us against a brother or a sister, alienating us.

Anyway, I thought it would help us out if we could understand what happened in Acts 23:1-5. I've always wondered why Paul would say that so quickly, but we would probably do the same thing, though we'd be afraid they would incarcerate us if we called the Judge a "*white-washed wall*."

**Shoer** — It's amazing how there's so much in the Scriptures about speaking: the culmination of which, is how to speak, what to say, when to say it. Pr 10:32 says, "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, But the mouth of the wicked what is perverse." Our Master knew what was acceptable; He didn't react, but simply asked a question. If there was anyone there who could have been convicted, then he would have been by what He said. His spirit was under control when He said, "*If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?*" (Jn 18:23).

That is what our Master was trying to say when He said,

*But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes*

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<sup>4</sup> Trio Foods is the grocery store right beside our future Yellow Deli in Hiddenite.

*you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. (Lk 6:27-29)*

All He is saying there is to *keep your spirit under control*. Do not to retaliate. Do not hit back. Keep yourself under control. Let him slap you, but don't retaliate. Probably, it will just cause a big fight if you do, and they'll kill you, or you'll kill them. That is what our Master was trying to say in Lk 6:27-29.

**Gad** — So, are we saying that Paul reacted there in Acts 23:3, when he said, *“God is going to strike you, you white-washed wall”*?

Well, what did Shoer say? Did he answer it right? He said, “I'd probably do the same thing.” So, would we? Would it have been good to say that? Should he have said, *“You're outwardly clean, but inwardly rotten”*? He was telling the man the truth, wasn't he? I guess he didn't know he was the high priest, or he wouldn't have said, *“I didn't know you were the high priest,”* and apologize. I wonder why he didn't know he was the high priest. Paul had been a Pharisee himself at one time, so he should have known.

**Shoer** — It is interesting what is written right after that, in Acts 23:11, “The following night the Lord stood by him and said, ‘Be of good cheer, Paul, for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.’”

Our Father was with him. There was certainly a plot against Paul. Some Jews had taken an oath not to eat or drink unless they killed Paul. So what do you think about Acts 21:4-14?

*And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. (Acts 21:10-12)*

They warned Paul, pleading with him before he went, but he would not be persuaded. When they saw that he wouldn't be persuaded, they said, *“The Lord's will be done.”* They told him what was going to happen; so should he not have gone? Did the

Holy Spirit say *NOT* to go, or just what would happen if he did? These are the things that make the Scriptures more exciting than any other book ever written, if you understand it right. But most people don't understand the Scriptures.

**Raphael** — There was an interview done with fighter pilots. Some said, "I'm already dead," before they got in the plane. They were expecting to die, so they weren't afraid to risk their lives, because they already knew they were going to die. The men who actually died were those who were afraid to lose their life. The ones who made it back alive were those who went there to die. Paul realized he was already dead, so he went in fighting. He would have died if he hadn't appealed to a higher court.

At least Paul's experience has taught us something: to take everything to the highest court, the highest jurisprudence. We don't just let people accuse us falsely, admitting guilt when we are innocent. Even if in appealing to Caesar he wasn't heard, at least the world would be judged for not judging it right. That is what we, as a people, ALWAYS try to do when we are innocent: take everything to the highest jurisprudence, even to the Supreme Court, if we have to, to appeal for justice.

**Shoer** — When you said that we take it to the highest jurisprudence so that at least then the world can be judged, it reminded me of what our Master said in Jn 15:20-22, "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin." And also, in Jn 12:48, "The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."

Some situations our Father allows so that people could have an opportunity to judge, rightly or wrongly, as you said about Pr 17:4, to see whether people are going to pay attention to a malicious tongue or not. When the gospel is preached as a witness, the world really will be on trial. Is it going to believe the evidence, or reject the evidence and make a wrong judgment?

Paul's circumstances judged the Pharisees and Israel. Our Father's will was in it.

**Sekel shel Nun** — It's so easy to not "turn the other cheek" when you get in a situation. I remember hearing in a teaching about responding, "*When you*

*treat someone in a way he doesn't deserve to be treated in return — if you don't retaliate, if you're not unkind when someone is unkind to you — then it causes that person to be regenerated, it causes him to change."*

Yes, it's like a wife toward her husband: When a wife suffers injustice under an unbelieving husband, or a slave under a hard taskmaster — someone who doesn't even deserve to be a master — they are still supposed to obey and not retaliate.

*Wives, in the same way, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. (1 Pet 3:1-2)*

**Raphael** — When Paul said, "You white-washed wall," he was only repeating what our Master had already said about them, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." Paul must have gotten it from our Master.

Yes, he must have. But I sure don't want to be a "white-washed tomb" myself. This teaches us to be careful that we don't become "white-washed tombs" ourselves. You put on a nice outward show, but inwardly, you get offended at every little thing. That means something, doesn't it, when you are easily offended?

**Nun** — Somehow, inwardly, you feel threatened. You're not secure about yourself. Our Master knew who He was; that's why He didn't retaliate.

When I pulled up in my car to Trio and saw all those freepapers ripped apart, it just made me happy. It made me laugh. When we're persecuted, our Master said to rejoice.

*"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice, be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Mt 5:11-12)*

We're supposed to rejoice because it means the enemy doesn't like what we're doing. We learned to just put a few papers in the box, and check it every day. I am hoping that the man who is doing this will be saved. We'd all laugh about it, later on. That would be great, wouldn't it? Imagine if that man were with us, telling his

testimony, *"I used to rip those papers apart."* It is probably a preacher who is doing it, "Kicking against the goad."

In the "Gospel of Thomas" it quotes our Master as saying He can't come back until the outside is like the inside, and the inside is like the outside, and also, *"He who is closest to Me is closest to the fire."* This is good, I think. It doesn't contradict anything in the Scriptures. There is only one way to become purified: Get in the fire...

**Yotsah** — This reminds me of a proverb that Sekel was teaching Ahavti and me in class today: *"As the potter's work is tested in the furnace, so is a person tested by his speech."* (Ecc'cus 27:5)

**Shoer** — I thought also about this proverb: *"He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly."* (Pr 14:29)

In another version, it reads, "He who is short of spirit exalts folly." The phrase "short of spirit" literally means "losing control over oneself." I think that is the main point of what we're talking about here — having our spirit under control. If our spirit is under control, then we will wait for our Father to bring justice, and not be vindictive.

**Nun** — We won't be vindictive if we *"commit ourselves to Him who judges righteously"* (1 Pet 2:23). The circumstances just expose what is in us so that we can see whether there is something wrong in us. Slaves are called to be obedient to their masters, and women to submit to their husbands, even if they are harsh, not "returning evil for evil" (1 Pet 3:9). In the New Covenant, our Master established to not take justice into our own hands.

*"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two."* (Mt 5:38-41)

**Shoer** — It seems that Paul knew and understood the same "Law" as our Master:

*Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* (Rom 12:19-21)



I don't know when he wrote that, whether it was before or after he called the high priest, "*You white-washed wall,*" but he wrote it, so we know what was in his heart.

Yônêq was teaching us this example about not speaking back, but then he gave another example of when a policeman pulls you over for speeding, and you weren't speeding, then you don't just "take it." You don't agree to pay the fine when you're not guilty. There is a different way we need to respond. When that happens, when you're not guilty of the crime, then you keep appealing to a higher court. We don't admit to something we didn't do, even to the point of going to jail over it. "*With all due respect, Sir, I have to say that I was NOT speeding.*"

**Ishah Ruth** — It is interesting that our Father said, "*Vengeance is mine; I will repay.*" As soon as we retaliate, we take it from Him, and then He can't do anything after that. I saw it is a dangerous thing, to take vengeance into our own hands, because we don't know how to use it, and our Father does.

This reminds me of King David, how he really had revelation of that. You can see his respect for our Father, but he also held King Saul in high respect, even when he wasn't worthy of it. David had the right fear of our Father, and he really believed that our Father saw everything. I see how we really need that security, or we will take things into our own hands.

**Hannah** — If we take things into our own hands, He won't be able to act. Then we will react, and sin will be found in our mouth (1 Pet 2:21-23). I don't want sin to be found in my mouth. I want to give the situation to Him and allow Him to deal with what works in me. When you retaliate, you're more worried about what works in the other person instead of your own iniquities. I am thankful He is there to save us, and I want to leave it in His hands, and not try to take things into my own hands.

**Havah bat Zerubbabel** — I'm thankful we heard that "*Vengeance belongs to our Father.*" Through this, I understood how when we try to do it, we take something away from Him that actually belongs to Him. It's not ours, and it's dangerous to have it, because we don't know how to handle it. It is so easy in a situation to be quick and think you know the outcome, so you feel obligated to do something to prevent it. But so often you just want to prove yourself right, so it doesn't end up the way you see it. This makes me want to wait on our Father, and not crowd Him out of situations. I always heard about how we could "tie His hands," but I never understood that. But now I see that if we seek our own vengeance, then of course He can't work in our lives, because we're looking out for our own interests. That ties His hands.