

GOD'S END-TIME STRATEGY 2

Acts 14:19–23 ESV

¹⁹ But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. ²⁰ But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹ When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³ And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Paul was dead. In fact, the passage in [2 Corinthians 12](#) where Paul wrote about a man who was caught up to the third heavens, that is referring to this incident here in [Acts 14:19](#). Paul was dead. Listen to TPT of this passage:

Acts 14:19–20 TPT

¹⁹ Some of the Jews who had opposed Paul and Barnabas in Antioch and Iconium arrived and stirred up the crowd against them. They stoned Paul and dragged his body outside the city and left him for dead.

²⁰ When the believers encircled Paul's body, he miraculously stood up! Paul stood and immediately went back into the city. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

The Greek word "rose up" is *anistemi* and is used 27 times to refer to raising the dead. Paul has now given his life for the gospel, but Jesus resurrected him. Things are not going that great. He's been ran out of every town. But they did manage to start some *ekklesias* and were able to strengthen them on the way back through.

After attending the Jerusalem Council to determine whether Gentiles had to follow the Law, Paul and Barnabas wanted to go visit the *ekklesias*, but Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them again. Paul was having none of it. John Mark abandoned them. It says that "there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other" ([Acts 15:39](#)). This was a "severe argument based on intense difference of

opinion.” That might surprise you that they had a knock-down drag-out fight as apostles, but it happens.

Paul and Silas head out where Paul picked up Timothy on the way. Paul was on his way to Asia, but he had a night vision of a man of Macedonia calling them to help them.

Acts 16:11–15 ESV

¹¹ So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.

I hope you see from what we studied so far, the role women played in the early church and how many were prominent and business owners! Lydia was very important in the early church. She hosted the apostles when they traveled through and was personally disciplined by Paul. Things seemed to be changing and going really well until...

Acts 16:16–24 ESV

¹⁶ As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” ¹⁸ And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour.

¹⁹ But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. ²⁰ And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, “These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. ²¹ They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.” ²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the

garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³ And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

Paul and Silas worshipped God in jail and so He sent an earthquake to get them out. The jailer and his household were born again. Things worked for good for sure. But Paul was starting to figure out that he didn't have to put up with this abuse and used his rights as a Roman citizen and then took his time leaving! Lol.

Acts 16:35–40 ESV

³⁵ But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." ³⁶ And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace." ³⁷ But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out." ³⁸ The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. ³⁹ So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. ⁴⁰ So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

Many Christians think that persecution is God's will just because He said that you will be hated and by many tribulations, you enter the kingdom of heaven. Those are statements of fact not preference. There's absolutely nothing wrong with using our rights as citizens to our benefit.

Acts 17:1–3 ESV

¹ Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."

Acts 17:4–9 ESV

⁴ And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. ⁵ But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble,

they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.⁶ And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also,⁷ and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.”⁸ And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things.⁹ And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

Here we have “wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar...” which sounds awfully familiar to our time in America with mobs burning down cities and attacking those who believe in conservative values.

Acts 17:10–15 ESV

¹⁰ The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.¹¹ Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.¹² Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.¹³ But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds.¹⁴ Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there.¹⁵ Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

Now the Jews are following Paul from city to city. He can’t get anything done. While waiting for his team in Athens, Paul delivered the most brilliant sermon ever to the stoics and philosophers (Athens was riddled with them). The results were dismal.

Acts 17:32–34 ESV

³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.”³³ So Paul went out from their midst.³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

To many of them, Paul was a babbler. A babbler was “applied to a person who is an information scavenger one who is not able to say anything worthwhile.” But with the Athenians, specifically, they applied this name to “those who made their living by collecting and selling refuse they found in the market places. Therefore, they were men of no account, low and contemptible persons.”

Paul is at a low place. His work is frustrated at every turn. He has asked God to remove the “thorn in his side, the messenger of Satan sent to buffet him” three times. The Lord assured him that His grace was sufficient for him. But don’t take that response as Paul having to stay in this place in ministry. The grace was needed for his current level of revelation. But he was about to get a strategy that would change things!