

Acts 16:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

Analysis

These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city (οὗτοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἐκταράσσουσιν ἡμῶν τὴν πόλιν Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες)—The charge weaponizes ethnic prejudice against Paul and Silas. The Greek ektarassō (thoroughly disturb/throw into confusion) exaggerates the threat, while identifying them as Ioudaioi (Jews) frames the conflict as ethnic rather than economic.

This is historical irony: the slave-owners, who profited from demonic exploitation, accuse the liberators of disturbing civic peace. Their appeal to Roman magistrates invokes antisemitic sentiment (Jews had been expelled from Rome under Claudius just years earlier, Acts 18:2). The gospel always troubles exploitative systems—the same accusation would be made at Thessalonica (Acts 17:6).

Historical Context

Philippi was a Roman colony (Acts 16:12) with strong imperial identity. Claudius had expelled Jews from Rome around AD 49 for disturbances concerning "Chrestus" (likely Christ). This verse reflects the social tension between Jewish Christian missionaries and Roman colonists, where economic interests and ethnic prejudice combined to oppose the gospel.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. When has advocating for justice or freedom made you appear as a "troubler" of the status quo?
2. How do those who profit from exploitation use accusations of "disturbing the peace" to silence prophetic witness today?

Interlinear Text

καὶ προσαγαγόντες αὐτοὺς τοῖς στρατηγοῖς εἶπον,
And **brought** **them** G3588 **to the magistrates** **saying**
G2532 G4317 G846 G4755 G2036

Οὗτοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἐκταράσσουσιν ἡμῶν τὴν πόλιν
These G3588 **men** **do exceedingly trouble** **our** G3588 **city**
G3778 G444 G1613 G2257 G4172

Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες
Jews **being**
G2453 G5225

Additional Cross-References

James 4:4 (Parallel theme): Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Acts 28:22 (Parallel theme): But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

Romans 12:2 (Parallel theme): And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

