

Acts 22:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

Analysis

Paul's Testimony of Persecution: The phrase "this way" (*tēn hodon tautēn*) was an early designation for Christianity, emphasizing it as a comprehensive way of life, a path to follow and live by, not merely a belief system or religious philosophy. Paul strategically uses it to identify with his Jerusalem audience—he once shared their zealous hostility toward believers in Jesus.

Extent of Persecution: "Unto the death" (*achri thanatou*) indicates Paul pursued believers with lethal intent and deadly purpose, not mere harassment, imprisonment, or social ostracism. The participles "binding and delivering" (*desmeuōn kai paradidous*) describe systematic arrests and formal legal proceedings leading to imprisonment. The inclusion of "both men and women" emphasizes the comprehensive, indiscriminate nature of Saul's persecution—gender, age, or social status provided no exemption, showing the thoroughness and severity of his former misguided zeal. This self-description serves Paul's apologetic purpose: demonstrating the radical transformation Christ caused in his life and validating his testimony. The one who once methodically destroyed the church became its greatest missionary and theologian, proving the reality and power of his Damascus road encounter with the risen Christ. Paul's transparency about his violent past validates his testimony while magnifying God's transforming grace.

Historical Context

Paul recounts this testimony circa 57 AD in Jerusalem, defending himself after being seized in the temple (Acts 21:27-36). He's speaking to a hostile Jewish crowd who accused him of teaching against Jewish law and defiling the temple. His persecution of Christians occurred circa 33-35 AD, shortly after Pentecost and Stephen's martyrdom. Acts 8:3 and 26:10-11 provide additional details: Saul entered houses, dragged believers to prison, voted for death penalties, and pursued them to foreign cities. His authorization from the high priest (Acts 9:1-2) made this official, not merely mob violence. The early church's memory of Saul the persecutor was so strong that even after his conversion, disciples initially feared him (Acts 9:26). His transformation from Christianity's chief persecutor to its primary apostle became a powerful evangelistic tool and encouragement to the persecuted church.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Why does Paul emphasize his persecution of both men and women when defending himself before this crowd?
2. What does the phrase "this way" reveal about early Christian self-understanding and identity?
3. How does Paul's testimony of his past persecution serve his current apologetic purpose?
4. What does Paul's transformation from persecutor to apostle demonstrate about God's grace and power?

5. How might the early church's knowledge of Paul's violent past have affected their reception of his ministry?

Interlinear Text

ὅς	ταύτην	τὴν	όδὸν	ἐδίωξα	ἄχρι	θανάτου	δεσμεύων
And I	G3778	G3588	way	persecuted	unto	the death	binding
G3739			G3598	G1377	G891	G2288	G1195

καὶ	παραδιδοὺς	εἰς	φυλακὰς	ἄνδρας	τε	καὶ	γυναῖκας
and	delivering	into	prisons	men	both	and	women
G2532	G3860	G1519	G5438	G435	G5037	G2532	G1135

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