

Introduction

We all have negative people in our lives. All of us, good or bad, have had adversaries (David, the prophets, Jesus, etc.). The question is, “What should we do about them? What weapons do we have to deal with them¹? ”

Many of the Psalms deal with the subject. They speak of the whispers, the conspiracies, and the slanders of our adversaries². The requests range from asking God to strike them down to special strengthening from Him to protect us and carry us through.

Deal with them – if you can

The first level of response is to find ways to deal with them, if we can³. I think of how Christ dealt with a vast range of people and their opinion of Him⁴. He was open to all those who opposed Him and tried to establish a relationship of love with them. Many followers were “hot” and then “cold” towards Him. He just moved along trying to teach those who would listen about the real nature of God’s Kingdom. Even with Judas, whom He knew would betray Him, He left the door open for the opportunity of reconciliation.

Peter Scazzero makes this statement: “Jesus shows us that healthy Christians do not avoid conflict. His life was filled with it! He was in regular conflict with the religious leaders, the crowds, the disciples — even his own family⁵. Out of a desire to bring true peace, Jesus disrupted the false peace all around him. He refused to spiritualize conflict avoidance.⁶ ” We all have our adversaries for a variety of reasons. We must do what we can to promote peace⁷, but it does not always only depend on us. If we follow Jesus, we must expect and be prepared for rejection⁸ (as He was).

We must not submit to these adversaries and let them move us out of our “lane” as we follow Christ. As Henry Cloud and John Townsend write: “Your best defense against the harm of toxic people is to be like David and have a clear set of values that you live out with all people⁹. ”

When Paul was in prison and was aware of those who preached to stir up trouble for him¹⁰, he was able to let go because of the much more important value of the fact that the gospel was being preached¹¹. But we must protect ourselves, and even stand up for the weak and helpless, when attacked by negative and bullying people. The Psalmist wrote “Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild beasts; do not forget the lives of your afflicted people forever.” This is very similar to the idea from Jesus about not casting our pearls before swine¹².

If Not, Break Contact and Walk Away

Jesus told us that we must turn the other cheek when we are insulted or offended¹³, but I do not think that means that we have to stay to receive any type of physical abuse. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out [a way of escape] so that you can endure it.”

Remember how Jesus told the disciples that He sent on missions to surrounding towns to shake the dust off of their feet from the towns that did not welcome them¹⁴. This was to be done as a “testimony” against those who would not listen to the disciples as they preached the gospel. This was essentially a directive to break contact with troublesome people.

Paul effected this when leaving the city of Pisidian Antioch¹⁵. Consider how many times Paul had to leave a place to avoid negative people (those who tried to destroy him or his work¹⁶). Paul also separated himself, and encouraged others to do so, from adversaries in some of his letters¹⁷. John felt the opposite side of this attempt at exclusion from Diotrephes¹⁸.

Warren Wiersbe writes¹⁹, “The festive crowd in the temple did not impress Jesus, nor did the angry religious leaders who wanted to kill Him disturb Him. He simply moved away from the crowd and went to help an individual who was desperately in need. He left people who were spiritually blind to go heal a man who was physically blind²⁰. Our Lord turned away from the religious leaders who rejected Him and ministered to a poor man who obeyed Him and ended up worshipping Him!

He said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life²¹. ” I think of this as “Walking the Worthy Way”! This light attracted some, but repelled others²². We may have to separate from someone, but we must still try to reflect the light of Christ²³ for their good.

Should We Hide Our Faces?

Separation is often achieved to some extent by hiding our faces from our adversaries. The Bible notes that God hides His face from those who turn against Him²⁴. In Deuteronomy 31:18, we read: “And I will certainly hide my

face in that day because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods.” The expression indicates that God turns His face away and refuses to look at us.

We must cry for mercy so that God will turn back to us, and we see examples of this in the Psalms²⁵. A great example of this is Psalm 13:1: “How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” Then David asks that God hide His face from his sins, instead²⁶. Through Ezekiel God proclaims that He will no longer hide His face from us, but will pour out His Spirit²⁷ to bring about His mercy.

It is very interesting that Isaiah’s prediction of the suffering Messiah speaks of Him as not hiding His face from the suffering (mocking and spitting)²⁸ that He had to endure. But He was also despised and rejected by those He came to save; they in turn hid their faces from Him because they did not understand the value of His sacrifice²⁹.

Let Them Go – Don’t Pursue

We should not pursue forever those who are your adversaries, unless they are supremely important to you. As an example from the Old Testament, Craig Groeschel writes this: “Notice Joseph didn’t stick around to share his faith with the seductive wife. He didn’t stop and hold hands with her to share a prayer. Instead, he got out of Dodge. He severed, cut off, and ended whatever type of relationship they had. She was gangrene, so he cut off the relationship immediately³⁰.” He chose the right path, and even though it caused great hardship for him, it eventually enabled the salvation of multitudes of starving people.

With adversaries that are supremely important to us, like members of our family, we have more difficulty in letting go. But for others, if we let them go we should not pursue them. Lysa TerKeurst wrote: “When people didn’t like what Jesus had to say and they walked away from Him, He didn’t drop His boundary, chase them down, and beg them to take Him back³¹. ” We must not let the negative pressure from our adversaries bring stifle our relationship with others, especially with our Lord. We must separate ourselves from them³².

Regardless, Pursue the Mission

No matter how we choose to deal with difficult people, we must “Keep Calm and Carry On³³”. We must proceed with our mission to follow Christ and pursue His Kingdom on earth and heaven. The Hebrew writer wrote:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. *Hebrews 12:1-2*

This must apply to the involvement with our adversaries as well.

Pray for God’s Help

When David wrote Psalm 31, greatly affected by those who would entrap him, he prayed for God to help him:

Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction and my bones grow weak. Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbors... But I trust in you, LORD... My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love.

Psalm 31:9-16

In my own life, I daily pray for God to help me know how deal with my adversaries and ultimately to protect me from them.

Conclusion

I have found that it is all right for me if people don’t like me, but it is very hard for me to respect them (or their judgment). That sounds a bit egotistic, but I value myself as a creation of God who tries his best to be a child of God, and should at least be considered one of His servants.

1. “Perhaps the authentic moral stature of a man is determined by his choice of weapons which he uses in his fight against the adversary.” Howard Thurman, quoted in *Following the Call: Living the Sermon on the Mount Together*; by Arnold, Eberhard, et.al.; p.134.
2. “For I hear many whispering, “Terror on every side!” They conspire against me and plot to take my life. But I trust in you, Lord; I say, “You are my God.” My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love.” Psalm 31:13-16.
“But when I stumbled, they gathered in glee; assailants gathered against me without my knowledge. They slandered me without ceasing.” Psalm 35:15.
“May this be the Lord’s payment to my accusers, to those who speak evil of me.” Psalm 109:20.
“They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name.” Psalm 139:20.
3. Should we try to look at people’s faces no matter how they treat us? Should we face them or shut them out?
4. See Appendix A.
5. “For even his own brothers did not believe in him.”, John 7:5.
6. Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It’s Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature; Scazzero, Peter; p.32.
7. “They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it.” 1 Peter 3:11.
8. “When we want to become like Jesus, we cannot expect always to be liked and admired. We have to be prepared to be rejected.” *Following the Call: Living the Sermon on the Mount Together*; Arnold, Eberhard, et.al., p.8.
9. God Will Make a Way: What to Do When You Don’t Know What to Do; Cloud, Henry; Townsend, John; p.156.
10. See Appendix B.
11. Philippians 1:15-18.
12. Matthew 7:6.
13. Matthew 5:39 and Luke 6:29.
14. Matthew 10:14, Mark 6:11, and Luke 9:5. See also my story “Transfer of Dust”.
15. Acts 13:49-52.
16. There are many recorded instances; see <https://bprenniece.wordpress.com/2012/05/23/a-list-of-pauls-mistreatment-in-acts/>
17. 1 Corinthians 5, for instance.
18. 3 John 9-10.
19. Jesus in the Present Tense: The I AM Statements of Christ; Wiersbe, Warren W.; p.56.
20. John 9.
21. John 8:12.
22. John 3:19.
23. “You are the light of the world.” Matthew 5:14a.
24. See Deuteronomy 31:17-18, Deuteronomy 32:20, Jeremiah 33:5, and Micah 3:4.
25. See Psalm 13:1, Psalm 27:9, Psalm 69:17, Psalm 88:14, Psalm 102:2, and Psalm 143:7.
26. “Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.” Psalm 51:9.
27. Ezekiel 39:29; I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.”
28. Isaiah 50:6.
29. Isaiah 53:3.
30. Soul Detox: Clean Living in a Contaminated World; Groeschel, Craig; p.208.
See also Psalm 74:19 (NIV); “Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild beasts; do not forget the lives of your afflicted people forever.” Compare this to verse about “not casting your pearls before swine” (Matthew 7:6), particularly as we consider how we are to protect the helpless from negative and bullying people.
31. Good Boundaries and Goodbyes: Loving Others Without Losing the Best of Who You Are; TerKeurst, Lysa;p.157.
32. Hebrews 12:1.
33. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keep_Calm_and_Carry_On

Appendix A

What Did Jesus Do About His Adversaries?

- 1) Pushed back sometimes (those asking them for a sign); e.g., Matthew 12:38ff
- 2) Embarrassed them sometimes (they don't know the scriptures); e.g., Matthew 12:7 and 22:29
- 3) Complimented them sometimes (you have spoken well, the great commandments); e.g., Mark 12:28-34
- 4) Separation sometimes (Peter / Satan) (get thee behind me); e.g., Matthew 4:1ff for Satan; Matthew 16:23 for Peter
- 5) Cast out demons; e.g., the daughter of the Syrophenician woman (not a strong adversary; perhaps a better example is the man who cried out in Luke 4:33ff and 4:41; [Paul and Phillip did this as well])
- 6) Silence (no response before judges, etc.); e.g., Matthew 26:62-63a
- 7) Demonstration of "signs"; e.g., forgiving and healing a paralyzed man, Matthew 9:1-8
- 8) Respond with Logic and Scripture; the temptations, Matthew 4:1ff; also John 18:19-24 – Jesus was struck, but answered calmly and logically
- 9) Steadfastness; e.g., fasting for forty days and forty nights, Matthew 4:2 (also, the entire ministry period)
- 10) Acceptance of mistreatment; e.g., especially at the crucifixion, Matthew 26:67-68 and John 19:1-3
- 11) Did not retaliate; e.g., 1 Peter 2:23
- 12) Responded to a question with a question; e.g., authority of John the Baptist, Matthew 21:23-27

Appendix B

Adversaries example with Paul: Acts 16:16-18

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

Repercussions

- 1) When her owners (adversaries) realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them ... before the magistrates and accused them of causing a riot and advocating rebellion
- 2) The crowd (adversaries) joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates (adversaries) ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods, then thrown into prison, and the jailer (adversary at first) fastened their feet in the stocks.
- 3) About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken, all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose.
- 4) When the jailer (friend) woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul stopped him
- 5) In response, the jailer listened to the gospel and he and his household was saved
- 6) When it was daylight, the magistrates (adversaries) ordered their release
- 7) But Paul made the political leaders (adversaries) come and ask them to leave

Source not known; parentheses items added by the author

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Other Psalms that speak ill of us

Psalm 31:13-16; For I hear many whispering, “Terror on every side!” They conspire against me and plot to take my life. But I trust in you, Lord; I say, “You are my God.” My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love.

Psalm 35:15; But when I stumbled, they gathered in glee; assailants gathered against me without my knowledge. They slandered me without ceasing.

Psalm 109:20; May this be the Lord’s payment to my accusers, to those who speak evil of me.

Psalm 139:20; They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name.

Deal with them – if you can

Your best defense against the harm of toxic people is to be like David and have a clear set of values that you live out with all people. God Will Make a Way: What to Do When You Don’t Know What to Do; Cloud, Henry; Townsend, John; p.156

Jesus and Judas, etc., He tried to establish the relationship, even though he knew that he was a significant adversary...

Jesus shows us that healthy Christians do not avoid conflict. His life was filled with it! He was in regular conflict with the religious leaders, the crowds, the disciples—even his own family. Out of a desire to bring true peace, Jesus disrupted the false peace all around him. He refused to spiritualize conflict avoidance. Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It’s Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature; Scazzero, Peter; p.32

1 Corinthians 10:13; No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out [way of escape] so that you can endure it.

Walk Away

The festive crowd in the temple did not impress Jesus, nor did the angry religious leaders who wanted to kill Him disturb Him. **He simply moved away from the crowd and went to help an individual who was desperately in need.** He left people who were spiritually blind to go heal a man who was physically blind. Our Lord turned away from the religious leaders who rejected Him and ministered to a poor man who obeyed Him and ended up worshipping Him! “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). [Walking the worthy way]! Jesus in the Present Tense: The I AM Statements of Christ; Wiersbe, Warren W.; p.56

The idea of leaving (getting away from) negative people: Acts 13:49ff; Jesus talking the disciples to shake the dust off of their feet from the towns that did not welcome them; see story Transfer of Dust;

Paul separated from some in his letters; no fellowship

How many times did Paul leave a place to avoid negative people (those who tried to destroy him or his work) don’t let their negative pressure bring you down

Break Contact

Notice Joseph didn’t stick around to share his faith with the seductive wife. He didn’t stop and hold hands with her to share a prayer. Instead, he got out of Dodge. He severed, cut off, and ended whatever type of relationship they had. She was gangrene, so he cut off the relationship immediately. Soul Detox: Clean Living in a Contaminated World; Groeschel, Craig; p.208

Psalm 74:19, NIV; Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild beasts; do not forget the lives of your afflicted people forever. [Compare to the verse about not casting your pearls before swine (Matt 7:6); particularly consider how we are to use this in protecting the helpless from negative and bullying people

Let them Go – Don’t Pursue

don’t pursue forever those who are your adversaries, unless they are supremely important to you.

When people didn't like what Jesus had to say and they walked away from Him, He didn't drop His boundary, chase them down, and beg them to take Him back. Good Boundaries and Goodbyes: Loving Others Without Losing the Best of Who You Are; TerKeurst, Lysa;p.157

Pursue the Mission

Keep calm and carry on; proceed with your mission

Hebrews 12:1; Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Pray for God's Help (Ps 31:13-16)

Conclusion

It's OK for me if people don't like me, but it is very hard for me to respect them (or their judgment).

Should we try to look at people's faces no matter how they treat us? [my experience with people at work who are not trustworthy or show engagement and help]; should we face them or shut them out?

Matthew 10:14; If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet.

Mark 6:11; And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."

Luke 9:5; If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."

Matthew 5:39; But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

Luke 6:29; If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them.

Acts 13:49-52; The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Hide Face

God hides his face

Deuteronomy 31:17-18; And in that day I will become angry with them and forsake them; I will hide my face from them, and they will be destroyed. Many disasters and calamities will come on them, and in that day they will ask, 'Have not these disasters come on us because our God is not with us?' And I will certainly hide my face in that day because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods.

Deuteronomy 32:20; "I will hide my face from them," he said, "and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful.

Jeremiah 33:5; in the fight with the Babylonians: 'They will be filled with the dead bodies of the people I will slay in my anger and wrath. I will hide my face from this city because of all its wickedness.'

Micah 3:4; Then they will cry out to the Lord, but he will not answer them. At that time he will hide his face from them because of the evil they have done.

Man's plea for notice and help

Psalm 13:1; How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

Psalm 27:9; Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Savior.

Psalm 69:17; Do not hide your face from your servant; answer me quickly, for I am in trouble.

Psalm 88:14; Why, Lord, do you reject me and hide your face from me?

Psalm 102:2; Do not hide your face from me when I am in distress. Turn your ear to me; when I call, answer me quickly.

Psalm 143:7; Answer me quickly, Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me or I will be like those who go down to the pit.

Overlook our sin

Psalm 51:9; Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

Ezekiel 39:29; I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.”

Christ not hiding His face

Isaiah 50:6; I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.

Isaiah 53:3; He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

B# would not look at me the last five years of our “marriage”; I decided not to include this – I also find it very difficult to look at my adversaries when I am in a meeting with them.

Add to the story about praying for help dealing with adversaries, and protection from them

The work of growing in Christ (what theologians call sanctification) does not mean we don’t go back to the past as we press ahead to what God has for us. It actually demands we go back in order to break free from unhealthy and destructive patterns that prevent us from loving ourselves and others as God designed. Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It’s Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature; Scazzero, Peter; p.28; emphasis mine

[adversary] Helmut Thielicke; Ralf Luther once expressed it this way: “To love one’s enemy does not mean to love the mire in which the pearl lies, but to love the pearl that lies in the mire.” Following the Call: Living the Sermon on the Mount Together; Arnold, Eberhard; Bonhoeffer, Dietrich; Teresa, Mother; King, Martin Luther Jr.; Lewis, C.S.; Berry, Wendell; Day, Dorothy; Tolstoy, Leo; Wright, N. T.; Rohr, Richard; L’Engle, Madeleine; Merton, Thomas; p.146

[adversary] The adversary is a shalom wrecker; Jesus is a shalom bringer. Feasting on God’s Word: Fresh Encounters with the Greatest Story Ever Told; McLellan, Kristi; p.86; [but consider Jesus’ statement about setting one person against another]

[adversary] God produces the fruit of the Spirit in us by allowing us to encounter situations and people with characteristics that are exactly the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit. God’s Power to Change Your Life: Exchanging Personal Mediocrity for Spiritual Significance (Living with Purpose); Warren, Rick; p.44

Jesus shows us that healthy Christians do not avoid conflict. His life was filled with it! He was in regular conflict with the religious leaders, the crowds, the disciples — even his own family. Out of a desire to bring true peace, Jesus disrupted the false peace all around him. He refused to spiritualize conflict avoidance. Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It’s Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature; Scazzero, Peter; p.32; emphasis mine

“Perhaps the authentic moral stature of a man is determined by his choice of weapons which he uses in his fight against the adversary.” Howard Thurman, quoted in Following the Call: Living the Sermon on the Mount Together; by Arnold, Eberhard; Bonhoeffer, Dietrich; Teresa, Mother; King, Martin Luther Jr.; Lewis, C.S.; Berry, Wendell; Day, Dorothy; Tolstoy, Leo; Wright, N. T.; Rohr, Richard; L’Engle, Madeleine; Merton, Thomas; p.134; emphasis mine; [In these discussions no one ever talks about protecting the weak. do we turn our cheek when they abuse someone who is helpless?]

[adversary] Henri J. M. Nouwen; When we want to become like Jesus, we cannot expect always to be liked and admired. We have to be prepared to be rejected. Following the Call: Living the Sermon on the Mount Together;

Arnold, Eberhard; Bonhoeffer, Dietrich; Teresa, Mother; King, Martin Luther Jr.; Lewis, C.S.; Berry, Wendell; Day, Dorothy; Tolstoy, Leo; Wright, N. T.; Rohr, Richard; L'Engle, Madeleine; Merton, Thomas; p.8; emphasis mine

Should we try to look at people's faces no matter how they treat us? [my experience with people at work who are not trustworthy or show engagement and help]; should we face them or shut them out?
[adversary] Do you know that it is possible to love someone you do not even like? Remember what I said in chapter 2 — that for God to teach us to love, he puts us around some unlovely people. God's Power to Change Your Life: Exchanging Personal Mediocrity for Spiritual Significance (Living with Purpose); Warren, Rick; p.50

[adversary] Jesus never demanded that we have a warm affection for everyone. He did not have warm emotions for the Pharisees. We don't have to like everyone (isn't that a relief?), but we do have to love them. God's Power to Change Your Life: Exchanging Personal Mediocrity for Spiritual Significance (Living with Purpose); Warren, Rick; p.51

The festive crowd in the temple did not impress Jesus, nor did the angry religious leaders who wanted to kill Him disturb Him. He simply moved away from the crowd and went to help an individual who was desperately in need. He left people who were spiritually blind to go heal a man who was physically blind. Our Lord turned away from the religious leaders who rejected Him and ministered to a poor man who obeyed Him and ended up worshipping Him! "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). [Walking the worthy way] Jesus in the Present Tense: The I AM Statements of Christ; Wiersbe, Warren W.; p.56; emphasis mine

The area between Galilee and Judah (Samaria), was like a test area on how to deal with adversaries

The Parable of the Widow and the Judge; 'Vindicate me from my adversary.'; consider the widow and oil, and the protection from those coming after her children (2 Kings 4:1)

In preparation for this Sunday I went back through Acts taking note of all the recorded times that Paul was opposed, maligned, beaten, stoned, driven out or plotted against. Here's the list with a textual reference, a brief description and the city he was in.

List of Paul's Mistreatment in Acts

"For I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." Jesus in Acts 9:16

9:23-25 – 1st Plot to kill Paul – lowered through a wall in basket in Damascus.
9:29-30 – 2nd Plot to kill Paul – sent to Caesarea from Jerusalem.
13:45 – Paul is contradicted/maligned in Pisidian Antioch. 13:50 – Paul and Barnabas were persecuted and drove out by Jews in Pisidian Antioch
14:2; 5 – The Jews embitter minds of Gentiles against Paul and attempted to stone Paul in Iconium.
14:19 – Paul is stoned and left for dead in Lystra.
16:16-24 – Paul and Silas were beaten with many blows and thrown into the inner prison in Philippi.
17:5-10 – Paul is forced out of Thessalonica.
17:13-14 – Paul is forced out of Berea
18:12 – Paul is brought before the judgment seat by Jews in Corinth but charges dismissed.
19:23-41 – No small disturbance arises concerning the Way in Ephesus when Christianity began to cause job loss for idol makers of Artemis.
21:27-40 – Paul is beat with the intent to murder in Jerusalem. 21:33-36 – Paul is seized by the Romans in Jerusalem. Paul remains under arrest for the remainder of the book of Acts.
23:2 – Paul is struck in the mouth as commanded by the High Priest – Jerusalem.
23:12-22 – A plot is formed by forty Jews to conspire with the Jewish leadership to assassinate Paul – Jerusalem. To avoid this attempt on Paul's life, Paul was moved to Caesarea.
25:1-5 – There's an attempt by the Jews to have Paul brought back to Jerusalem in order to ambush and kill him.
27:42 – The Roman Soldiers plan to kill the prisoners from the ship that was run aground, including Paul, but the centurion prevents it. Paul, with 275 persons is ship-wrecked on Malta on their way to Rome.
<https://bprentice.wordpress.com/2012/05/23/a-list-of-pauls-mistreatment-in-acts/>