

Reaffirmation of Religious Intolerance and Inability of Justice in the Case of Apostle Paul Politics, Nepotism, Corruption and Neutrality

Adolfina Elisabeth Koamesakh and Iwan Setiawan Tarigan

ABSTRACT

Human Rights Enforcement that has begun since the 17th century is increasing being fought in various parts of the world in this century. However, there are more and more injustices and human rights violations on the grounds of differences in beliefs. Conflicts between religious people often occur in religious societies including in democratic countries such as Indonesia in different scales of conflict and various forms of persecution, while the law often does not favor truth and justice. This research aims to raise the persecution experienced by the apostle Paul in the Book of Acts 24-26. The two angles highlighted in Paul's persecution are intolerance of belief and incompetence of legal justice. Intolerance of faith was committed by Jewish leaders. They demanded that Paul be put to death on charges of violating Jewish beliefs, the desecration of the Temple, the preaching of the remission of sins by Christ. Authorities and law enforcement failed to deliver justice and truth. Political interests, voice of majority, and mentality corrupt negate the personal human rights as free creatures. Apostle Paul shown his heroism in defending his faithful in Christ in front of the lawless persecutors. Indifferently from the king's Agripa neutrality who knows the truth but he did not clear Paul's case to free him from being accused.

Keywords: Reaffirmation, Intolerance, Justice, Nepotism, Corruption, Neutrality

Published Online: December 2021

ISSN: 2828-5492

Adolfina Elisabeth Koamesakh*¹
Iwan Setiawan Tarigan ²

¹Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Paulus Medan

²Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Tarutung

Email:
finaelisabeth@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1981 the United Nations issued a declaration “*Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination on the basis of Religion or Belief*”^[1] However, in various parts of the world there are still many acts of violence against those of different faiths and religions. Tensions in the Middle East, especially Iraq, between groups of different faiths still continue and crystallize in the form of a fundamentalist movement that is synonymous with terrorism. ISIS emerged with atrocities against Syrian Christians and moderate Islamic

groups creating fear and vain victims. The treatment of Muslims in Rohingya, Myanmar in 2017 still caused hundreds of thousands of people to become *refugees* in foreign countries, including Indonesia.

In their own country, various forms of persecution in the name of belief are still often shown. Even though the intolerant groups are in the minority, the movements they display are still worrying. Social media has become a painful target for venting outrage against Christianity. Call it a man named Abdul Somad openly mentions that the cross is a

hanging genie. A convert who became a cleric named Yahya Waloni fiercely called the *Messiah a failed prophet* whom recently arrested. Basuki Tjahaja Purnama who called AHOK was imprisoned for two years for blasphemy against Islam. Likewise, Meliana a woman who was found guilty and convicted of questioning Toa's voice was overdue. There are several churches and places of worship for Christians forcibly closed by taking refuge in regulations and laws that are still discriminatory.

Incidents of violence against humanity in the name of religion often give injustice to minorities. Legal authorities often choose less risk when faced with the demands of the stronger masses and often sacrifice justice for the minorities. Then does justice only belong to them the majority and the strong? Is this kind of action new in the modern world where human rights are upheld? Church history records many instances of physical and verbal persecution of those who were minorities and differed from the majority and legalists.

Pope Francis on a visit during the pandemic COVID-19 he called for some interesting things to be studied even though his words were related to the Iraqi context. First, that there is foreign fascist interference in the religious conflict in Iraq. Second, fundamentalists and extremists have become instruments of persecution against Christians. Third, that extremists are people who are unable to coexist with parties of different ethnicities and religions.^[2] This

conclusion raises some serious questions, among others: Are differences in religious beliefs the most effective tool in realizing the colonization of human freedom? Are radicals and extremists *by design* nurtured for political purposes or because of the inability to coexist in (intolerant) differences? Who is the main actor doing the persecution? What makes law enforcers unable to protect individual human rights?

The case of the apostle Paul recorded in the Acts of the Apostles is a study that is still relevant in the era of human rights being fought around the world. The aim is to find a similar pattern of treatment from religious radicals and the attitude of law enforcement in dealing with the issue of intolerance.

II. METHODS

The method used in this research is the interpretation of the passages in the Acts of the Apostles that are directly related to the events of the apostle Paul's persecution. Study specifically on chapters 21-26. Internal verification of the data is obtained from thorough observations on various writings of the apostle Paul which provide information related to the events, perceptions and attitudes of Paul and law enforcers. Conclusions are drawn from each subtopic analysis to answer these research questions.

III. DISCUSSION

The Apostle Paul embarked on a unique and long martyrdom journey. Weak legal arguments

against the demand for the death penalty but power holders are powerless to deliver justice to Paul. It is the same with Pilate in the case of Jesus. His own wife had warned Pilate not to punish the innocent, but he resorted to *washing his hands* for fear of the crowd of loud-mouthed accusers. But the aspect of injustice was not the only reason for the persecution of Paul.

Starting from Paul's arrival to Jerusalem after his return from the 3rd missionary trip in Asia Minor and Greece, he gave his report to the apostle James who was the archbishop of Jerusalem at that time. James and the other leaders were happy at God's deeds through Paul's ministry. Although the objections of the Jewish conscience among Jewish Christians are getting sharper, for not only outside of Christianity but also among the evangelists themselves.

These chapters reveal the struggle of the apostle Paul in defending the truth that he believed in, including the consequences. But it also shows that the issue of religious belief has always been an effective issue in the persecution of others. Even Paul himself was once in a position as a persecutor for reasons of different beliefs.

There are several topics revealed in this research text, namely:

A. Religious Persecutors are Religious Figures

Paul, formerly known as Saul, had acted as a persecutor of Christians. Saul was a Jew of Benjamin's lineage, was born and grew up in Tarsus. Tarsus is the largest Greek city outside Athens. That is why Paul naturally grew up in

Greek intellectual and pious Judaism. Saul's family belongs to the Jewish diaspora group. Saul was lucky because even though his family did not live in Israel, they still lived the strict religious ethos of Judaism. He himself emphasized that compared to his peers and countrymen he was a person who was 'more advanced' than them in living up to the demands of the Jewish religion and even the culture of his ancestors. (Gal. 1:14)

Intellectually religious, Saul was educated by Gamaliel and at a relatively young age he became a member of the clerical council of Israel, in the Pharisees.^[3] The horrendous events of Christ's death and resurrection were talked about throughout the world and of course Saul knew exactly what it was. Preaching the disciples of Christ got the attention of all circles, including the Jewish leaders. They carry out repressive actions against the followers of Christ. As the number of believers grew, the Jewish leaders took tougher steps.

Israel's clerical assembly consists of priests, scribes and Pharisees systematically persecuted everyone who preached that Jesus was the Messiah. Jerusalem became so chaotic that Jesus' disciples were forced out of their territory to nearby cities and islands after Stephen was stoned to death.

Saul was present to assist the priests and Jewish leaders when Stephen was executed by the Jewish priests. Saul was not only present but also helped hold the religious leaders' robes to rain stones on Stephen. This is the first incident after they successfully killed Jesus. The *religious*

robed, religious special people carry out a sadistic murder of a young servant of Christ.

After the incident of Stephen, Saul became more and more active in pursuing and persecuting believers until at the climax he received a special mandate from the Israelite council to hunt Christians as far as Damascus, Syria. A supernatural event occurred. Jesus himself met Saul with a challenging question: "...Saul, Saul! Why do you persecute me?" This question also confirms that during this time Saul persecuted Christ's followers more than can be described in the New Testament.

Saul's encounter with Jesus was a very serious turning point for the rest of his life. He who was previously a persecutor became a victim of persecution. From the background of Saul and the Jewish priests, it gives a complete picture that the persecution of different faiths is sadistically carried out by robed people, educators and educated in religious laws.

Of course, death in the name of religion is not an authentic form of religious belief.^[4] The normal question of this religious attitude is *why do those who teach God's way do cruelty to others?* Paul to the Galatians gives the statement that: *...he who was their persecutor, now proclaims the FAITH which he is trying to destroy.* It is interesting that the Greek word *eporthei* (1:23) is translated in the KJV *try to destroy*. This word in its figurative form refers to the activity that Saul did to destroy the believer's belief in Christ.

In the presence of king Agrippa, Paul emphatically recounted also that he came from

the hardline group called the Pharisees in his youth. Saul zealously pursued, persecuted, tortured, and forced others to renounce their faith. He chased the Christians to various cities outside Israel. (Acts 26:4-11) even approved the death penalty for Christians.

In front of many Jews, Paul admitted that he was also active in Jewish teachings *persecuting to death and arresting everyone, whether female or male* who followed *God's way* (Acts 22:4). All of this was done with the same zeal as those who were demanding Paul's death. It is a fact that atrocities against religious people are perpetrated by leaders of other religions.

B. Reason for Persecution

1. Preaching Jesus is the Messiah

Persecution in the name of and against beliefs is an attempt by the persecutor to undermine or destroy the beliefs of others. In Paul's context what is meant is the belief that Jesus is the Messiah awaited by the Jews. The Messiah had died by the hands of the Jews and had ascended to Heaven.^[5] Paul's preaching that "... Jesus is the Son of God... Jesus is the Messiah." (Acts 9:20,22) was considered such a threat to Judaism that Paul was pursued to be killed.

In expressing his belief in God, Paul not only uses the monologue method of preaching but also through dialogue with opposing groups that are balanced with him. He dialogued with Greek-speaking Jewish priests and scribes, but their tendency was not to find the truth but to sharpen their intention to kill Paul (Acts

9:29). Saul was lucky because he was previously a persecutor of Christians then understood God's way and defended his belief in the path of suffering.

Persecution in the name of and against beliefs is an attempt by religious radicals to undermine or destroy the beliefs of others. And in this context the belief in Jesus as the Messiah awaited by the Jews. The Messiah had died by the hands of the Jews and had ascended to Heaven.^[6] Paul's preaching that "... Jesus is the Son of God... Jesus is the Messiah." (Acts 9:20,22) was considered such a threat to Judaism that Paul was pursued to be killed.

The Messianic faith of the Jews in the long history of the world has not led them to the fulfillment of the promise of a Messiah in accordance with the description of their hope. The image of the Jewish Messiah emerges from the psychology, sociology and politics of the Jewish nation.^[7] The psychological element faced by the Jews was the uncomfortable feeling of the presence of various civilizations and nations around them. This affected their religious focus on Yahweh. They longed for deliverance from a Messiah as savior.

The second factor is *social emptiness*.^[8] The influence of the outside world around the Jews created social pressure for the movement of the Israelites. Not only because of the influence of other nations but also the acceptance of the Sadducees to knowledge from the Europeans made them also recognize the truth of the general knowledge of other

nations. The culture of the new world will certainly be a challenge for the Israelites throughout the ages if they still hold on to the coming of the Messiah who can free them from social pressures. Elias Giankopoulos through his personal *blogspot* said that the social emptiness felt by the Israelites had an impact on their economy and politics. As individuals who experience social pressure, the Israelites yearn for someone who gives real liberation. It also affects political expectations through messianic expectations.

The description of the coming of a Messiah is interpreted as a person who has strong economic, political, and religious power. Figure *superman* like they did not find on the personality of Jesus then, the Jews leaders judge Him as a deceiver of the people.

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Before Paul was arrested he met James and other Christian leaders in Jerusalem. He reported on missionary work among the Gentiles. Even thousands of Jews believed in Christ even though the sacred Jewish customs were another matter

and they accused Paul of wrongdoing in his teaching.

1) *Desecration of the Law (Acts, 21:21)*

On various occasions the issue of Abrahamic circumcision has been discussed by Paul. The circumcision that God commanded Abraham was a sign that distinguished believers from those who did not believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Consequently, every circumcised must do God's will as a believer in Yahweh. Otherwise, external circumcision is only an ancestral tradition passed down to each generation with a loss of meaning. Therefore, a new concept of circumcision, namely inner circumcision, was popularized by Paul. For Paul "*...circumcision or uncircumcision has no meaning, only faith working by love.*" (Gal. 4:6)

The apostle James' followers were known as Jewish Christians who adhere to Jewish customs. They did not feel comfortable in the midst of the uncircumcised. While Christianity was formed not only among Jews but also other nations. Paul himself believed that he was a special apostle for the 'uncircumcised' while Peter was for the 'circumcised'. (Gal. 2:7). The issue of circumcision was resolved in the apostolic assembly (Acts 15) with the conclusion presented by the apostle James so that non-Jewish believers were not burdened with Jewish rules such as circumcision. But in practice there was still pressure from the evangelists on the obligation of circumcision for Gentile Christians, and Paul was the target of sharp criticism. Paul

was accused of violating of Jews customs and profaning their teachings.

Paul through his various writings mentions that there are certain groups who call themselves 'evangelists' requiring circumcision for non-Jews. To the Church in Rome Paul firmly said: "*...what is called circumcision, is not circumcision...outwardly...and circumcision is circumcision in the heart, spiritually, not literally.*" (Rom. 2:28-29).

The meeting with James' group before Paul's arrest confirmed that it was true that the Jewish group of Christians adhered to Israel's legal tradition and saw the need for Paul and the other brothers who came with him to perform purification. They do the phases of finishing as James says.

2) *Desecration of the Temple (Acts 21:28)*

The interesting thing is that after the 7th day the Jewish leaders instigated their people to arrest Paul on charges of desecrating the temple. They considered the presence of the Greeks worshiping in the temple was defilement. According to the Jews the temple is a holy place where God is present in it. However, there are many paradoxical attitudes displayed by these pious people.

The temple of God turned into a market place for economic activities. Jesus himself came and saw everything and he overturned the tables of the merchants. The temple is also not only a place to hear God's word but to incite hatred against groups of people who follow God's teachings. The temple is no longer a place for

offerings for the remission of sins but also a place for arresting people who are considered sects. The temple is no longer a place of prayer but a den of thieves. (Matt. 12. John 2). Then where is the sanctity of the temple of God which is upheld by the Jewish priests?

Paul was arrested and accused of having defied the temple, while he and his companions had performed the cleansing process for the conscience of the Jews. They do not realize that the real living temple is themselves, and not the building. A proof that the accusation of defiling the temple is an act of arrogance against those of different faiths in the name of religion.

On both charges: transgression of the law of Moses and defilement of the temple, Paul emphatically told the judge that he was innocent (Acts 24:8).

3) *Preaching of Forgiveness and Christian Morals*

The two previous accusations are self-defeating, because Paul as a true Jew, he did what the Jewish law commanded. Although with a few exceptions to the requirements that prevent believers from living the right way, such as mandatory circumcision, and practicing Jewish customs.

A particular interest is the Paul case reported by Festus to the king Agrippa. According to Festus, this case is merely an enmity between religious people, -between Jews and followers of Christ, between Jewish leaders and the apostle Paul- which was brought to the Roman positive law which did not

recognize both Jewish and Christian religious law.

Festus emphatically said that he found no wrongdoing as the Jews accused Paul. They couldn't even include the evidence they had but Paul was required to be put to death. Another thing more interesting is Festus concludes that this is an issue of religion or belief in one name, namely *Jesus*. Festus knew that Paul was preaching about Jesus who died and came back to life. This Roman ruler emphasized that it was a matter of belief and not a crime or other criminal act that could be tried and decided based on the articles of Roman royal law. Consequently, there is no reason for Paul to be sentenced to death.

To simplify that religious people are easier to punish and want to kill each other just because they have different beliefs. Festus represents people who are not religious but see humans as human beings who want justice and truth to be upheld. Festus arrived at a kind of humanistic conclusion that "it is not proper for a prisoner to be brought without including the charges brought against him." (Acts 25:27) Agrippa reemphasizes Festus' opinion that Paul should have been free if he had not appealed. (Acts 26:32)

Paul's bold proclamation of his newfound faith caused much uproar among the Jews. What is the content of Paul's preaching? In the presence of king Agrippa and Festus Paul told why he was arrested by the Jewish leaders. In Acts 26:16-19 Paul mentions that his preaching is *about repentance: turning from darkness to*

light, from the devil to God. The purpose of this repentance is so that humans may obtain *forgiveness of sins and do worthy deeds* (20)

A paradox of the religious attitude shown by the Jews. Paul's preaching of forgiveness and salvation was considered a violation of the law. Their attitude weakens human logic. The urge to leave evil and receive forgiveness accompanied by good deeds is considered unrighteous.

Paul proved that the accusations against him were unfounded. He did not commit any crimes that were against both Jewish law and imperial law. On the Contrary, he invites Jews and Gentiles alike to realize their mistakes and act like a man who knows God. But the response of the Jews was different and they arrested Paul in the temple. Who committed the crime? Who is telling the truth?

The argument built by Paul that his belief in Christ is shown through 'actions' that have human values. In other words, religious beliefs are not highlighted from their "sources or roots" but from their "results or fruits".^[9] The Jewish roots of the Jewish Christians serve as the basic argument for their piety. The law became a source of truth so that it closed itself off from grace in Christ.

Geisler introduces a methodology of argument against the defense of religion or belief in terms of results rather than origins. This is also what Paul emphasized in several of his writings. Torah law as a source of religious rules that have no impact on the

attitude of human life. Even killing other people is justified because of the holy verses. The paradox of course is compared to the attitude of Festus and Felix in arguing in Paul's case that 'this man should be free' because there is no evidence of lawlessness.

C. Weak Law Enforcement

The Apostle Paul himself revealed a fact that the law was weak against him. Although repeatedly and by several Roman law enforcers found Paul innocent in the case he was accused of, Paul had to endure various processes of detention until he appealed to Caesar in Rome. The Apostle Luke records in Acts. 28:17-19 "...I did nothing wrong against the our people or against the customs of our forefathers, but I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. After being investigated they intended to release me, because there was nothing wrong with me that was commensurate with the death penalty. But the Jews were against it... I had to appeal to Caesar."

In the process of investigating the case, Paul was faced several law enforcement officers, including a troop chief, Felix and Festus as governors of Caesarea. First, the attitude of Lysias, the head of the squad. The Greek text mentions his name and gives a description of his position as head of an army of a thousand or *khiliarchos* meaning a commander in charge of thousands of soldiers.^[10] The commander of this army knew very well that the Jews wanted to kill Paul not because of a crime but because of the law and customs. The attitude of the head of

the Troops was written on Acts 23:23-35 even though there is not a single charge that deserves Paul to be put to death or even jailed (29) but the head of this army of a thousand cannot protect a citizen like Paul. The Troop chose to move Paul out of Jerusalem to Caesarea.

Commander Lysias must have had a reason because there was a Jewish gang that was preparing to kill Paul without due process. The act of handling Paul over to the major as an attempt to avoid the demands of the masses that went beyond common sense and legal logic. But the consequences of these actions prolong Paul's imprisonment and suffering, even Paul was not given the right of freedom.

Second, Felix's attitude. He was the governor of Caesarea who according to Paul was a leader who was generous, wise, and provided welfare for his people. (24:2-3). Felix also knew the *ways of God* (22). The Indonesian Bible Society calls it *God's Way*, which does not exist in either English or Greek. What it means is "when Felix heard everything (from Paul) he got a more precise understanding/information/knowledge of the matter or the way." It has nothing to do with *God's way*.

Felix's attitude is:

1. Asking for time until the arrival of the new Lysias Felix decides the case.
2. Have the commander of the army of the hundred hold Paul lightly
3. Did not forbid Paul's friends to come to serve him.

4. Felix pretends to want to hear Paul's teaching but is afraid when they talk about justice, self-control and judgment to come.
5. Felix expected a gift from Paul to get him out of the case.
6. He kept Paul in prison for two years because what he expected he did not get from Paul.

Felix shows an unpretentious attitude with ideal leadership qualities, but in dealing with Paul's case he does not show partiality to truth and justice. Felix knew exactly that Paul was innocent because Paul was on the right path. He also spent two years for Paul's detention in Caesarea dialogue and hearing Paul's preaching but it had no effect on releasing innocent people. Rhetorically Felix gave hope of law enforcement but until the end of his assignment he could not free Paul. The money he expected was not given by Paul even though Paul was visited by many friends and relatives. Laws for Felix can be bought. Justice can be paid for, freedom can be redeemed for money.

Third, Festus' stance. Festus is the major who succeeded Felix. Like the commanders Lysias and Felix, Festus knew Paul's truth, but confession was not compatible with acting in the name of truth and justice. Festus committed several acts that imprisoned Paul's freedom:

1. Leaving Paul imprisoned to please the Jews (24:27)
2. Festus makes trial against Paul
3. In trial Festus sided with the Jews and offered Paul to be tried in Jerusalem (25:9)

4. Paul considers Festus's act as *a gift* from the ruler to the Jews (25:11)
5. Festus is inconsistent in law enforcement. On the one hand he refused to allow Paul to be punished by the Jews without a single proof of guilt. He knows that it is not right to *hand over an accused as a gift* (25:16) to his accusers without a defense first. Festus did the trial not to give justice to Paul but to release Paul back to Jerusalem even though he knew very well that the plan of the Jews was not to seek justice but to kill Paul. He had no idea that Paul was asking to appeal to Caesar, which meant Festus had to send Paul to Rome.

The attitude that Festus showed was a political stance in a trial. The Jewish group was a minority group in the Roman empire, but because of the special religious factors of the Jewish nation they had special attention from royal control. This Jewish minority group always uses violence and religious precepts to massacre and kill anyone who is considered to have violated the Torah law. And most of the victims are Christians.

The political element is often the main consideration to please one of the parties who seek the truth. Their voice more vocal demands a consideration for the court's alignment. Festus considered defending the Jews as a way to maintain his popularity in the eyes of the Jews, and Paul's truth was only enough to be discussed, not applied.

Fourth, Agrippa's position. Agrippa was a local king who happened to be visiting

Caesarea. Festus, who was still confused about the administration of Paul's appeal to Caesar did not have sufficient reason in the form of an accusation (25:26) to be written in the indictment to Caesar. He told king Agrippa about Paul the same thing and asked to see Paul so the king could hear directly from Paul. This opportunity was used by Paul to tell in detail about himself, his preaching and his struggle in proclaiming the truth. The Agrippa's demeanor as follows:

1. He patiently listened to all of Paul's responsibilities in his case. According to Paul Agrippa knew well the Jewish customs (26:2). Even hearing Paul's thoroughness in speaking about the Christian faith, Festus thought Paul was crazy because of the high level of religious knowledge that Paul knew. Festus' accusations were refuted by Paul and asserted that all that was said was true and out of "sound mind." (25)
2. Agrippa admits to almost becoming a Christian (28). Paul had knowledge of the person he was dealing with. Agrippa was a believer in the prophets and knew exactly the problem Paul was facing.
3. Agrippa also admitted that Paul was innocent. He did not deserve to be put to death, nor did he deserve to be shackled.
4. Agrippa thought Paul should have been released. (26:32) But because of the consistency of the previous trial Paul asked for an appeal so he too had to be sent to Caesar in Rome.

D. Discussion

There are three basic points that the law enforcers who deal with the legal issues accused of Paul fail to maintain. The first is the protection of the individual rights as citizen. Second, corrupt law enforcement, and third, political elements that dominate court decisions.

Every individual has the right to life which is protected by the laws of any country in the world although often individual rights are just meaningless rhetoric.^[11] Individual rights are interdependent with community rights which consist of groups of people who share the same feelings, goals, ideologies, beliefs. In many democracies popularize the existence of a majority and a minority as in most countries in Asia such as Indonesia. For example, some groups in Indonesia make the class of Indonesian society according to religion, namely a minority group consisting of over non-Muslims and the majority of Muslims themselves.

It is not easy think to solve intolerant stance in Indonesia which is consist of 34 provinces and 514 districts. Religious communities spread and dominate certain place as majority or minority. Abdul Mu'ti in his work stressed if the regulation of the state give such as priority for the majority where they live. Mu'ti uses the word *favoritism*² to the dominant religion in every part of country. For example, in Aceh the law enforcement in the frame of *Syariah Laws*. Based on this fact, people of other religion are forced to adjustable. This was happened between Jews and Christians minority of the ancient times.

The treatment of individuals who come from the majority is different from individuals who come from the minority. Although the Jews were a minority group within the Roman Empire, within the Jews themselves there was an emerging sub-minority called Christians. Paul shifted from the Jewish minority to the Christian sub-minority of the time. So, for the followers of Christ, Judaism is the majority religious group from the minority. Their voices are louder, and they dare to raise spears and stones against minority groups with different beliefs. They were able to influence the law so that many righteous people were sentenced to death.

Individual rights are a gift from God to each person uniquely and freely. The *imago Dei* element in each individual strengthens basic human rights as a person. United Nations statement "*Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.*"^[13] Although human rights were only strengthened in the 17th century, the struggle for their enforcement has been going on since the 19th century. Paul championed human rights as an individual with a conscience and said "I have always lived with a pure conscience before God and man." (Acts 24:16). His defense before Judge Felix emphasized the struggle for *conscience and religious freedom*.^[14]

Law enforcement is also exacerbated by a culture of corruption and nepotism. Money is the reason the truth is unable to free someone from the law even though it is proven true, as if the protection of the law is always determined by

the value of money as Felix thought in the case of Paul. Justice and truth can be bought. This statement is not a generalization or an expression of distrust of law enforcement but on various news information that can be found in various legal cases related to human rights, especially freedom of belief and religion.

The statement of Paul's conscience was also defeated by the voice of the mouth of many Jews who felt humiliated because of Paul's preaching. This reminds the Indonesian people of various cases that are being widely discussed. Joseph Paul Zhang in a video protested against the relatively express determination of his case compared to similar cases carried out by others who have not received legal representation. Although Joseph's actions cannot be justified by utterances that are insulting to other religions. But with a different attitude, it gives the impression of discrimination in treatment between individuals who commit blasphemy.

In a democratic country like Indonesia, law should be the supreme commander, unless the majority, the power will continue to control the minority and weak people. Neutral position of ruler on law enforcement only put the truth being equal to the false, and the innocent to the guilty.

IV. CONCLUSION

The persecution of Paul is a violation of human rights which is still an issue of intolerance in the third millennium era where the struggle for religious freedom is guaranteed by international

law and the law of democratic countries in this century.

This research reaffirms the existence of intolerant and discriminated treatment in guaranteeing freedom of belief. First, Festus's position is proof that human conscience as an individual in belief has always been an effective tool to strengthen political goals. Festus' choice to please one strong party sacrificed individual freedom of belief. This is a discriminatory choice of a judge who sacrifices individual rights while leaving Paul in danger of being judged by the masses, if he chooses to return to Jerusalem.

Second, the omission of intolerance due to the neutrality of the authorities. King Agrippa chose neutral. Neutral position has a good impact on other conflicts but not in dealing with human rights where the right to believe in individuals is protected. Second, the reason Felix was pleasing the Jews was because his wife was of Jewish descent. This is the reason for nepotism that sacrifices the truth and rights of the other party. Felix also expected a gift from Paul. This clarifies corrupt acts that injure justice. Even though the judges and kings knew Paul's truth, they were unable to free him from prison and punishment.

Third, the perpetrators of persecution and intolerance are religious leaders. The priests, scribes and Pharisees were leaders who liked to kill everyone who was considered different in belief.

Law enforcement and protection of religious freedom are in the hands of law enforcers themselves. Rulers, governments and

judges as well as law enforcement officers with integrity are able to provide justice, otherwise the effort to create religious tolerance is only a longing that is difficult for minorities to achieve as reflected in the case of the apostle Paul.

In the face of all his martyrdom, Paul persisted with a conscience attached to the truth that he believed in Christ. He increased dared to testify before law enforcement without fear even though he had to accept the consequences of his faith. Paul did not get justice even though he deserved to be released. With his decision to appeal to Caesar, Paul faced even greater difficulties. The Orthodox Church around the world remembers the day of the martyrdom of Paul and Peter on June 26 with a hymn:

First-Enthroned of the apostles, (Two apostles with the main position) teachers of the universe: Entreat the Master of all to grant peace to the world, (to grant peace to the world) and to our souls great mercy! (and compassion for our souls)

Citations:

[1]W. Cole Durham, Jr., *Facilitating Freedom of Religion or Believe*. Indo.Trans. Rafael Edi Bosco, M, Rifa'i Abduh: *Freedom of Religion or Belief: How Far?*. (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2010 }, 94

[2]Pope Francis Calls for End to Religious Disputes in Iraq | *Republika Online* acc. Monday, March 15, 2021

[3] A Pharisee was a member of a Jewish social and political movement. They even had schools at the time of Christ on earth. But the metaphorical meaning of

the *Pharisees* is *hypocritical* <http://el.m.wikitionary.org> in Greek. acc. 28 April 2021

[4] Pope Francis in Iraq " "Their deaths are a reminder that violence or bloodshed is incompatible with authentic religious teachings ."

[5] Acts. 2:23,31-40 Peter's sermon at Pentecost. And the biblical argument by Stephen before his martyrdom Acts 7:52 explicitly states that the Messiah was killed by his own people, namely the Jews who learned and were experts in God's law but they carried out acts of persecution and death for the righteous.

[6] Acts. 2:23,31-40 Peter's sermon at Pentecost. And the biblical argument by Stephen before his martyrdom Acts 7:52 explicitly states that the Messiah was killed by his own people, namely the Jews who learned and were experts in God's law but they carried out acts of persecution and death for the righteous.

[7] <https://illiagianakopoulos.blogspot.com>. 28 April 2021

[8] *ibid*

[9] Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* : 108

[10] This is a commander who today can be a lieutenant colonel in a battalion unit. Under the leadership of hundreds calledekatondarkhis).

[11] Marian Gh. Simon. *Human Rights and The Orthodox Church: A Functional Perspective*. Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodox. Civil Society And Orthodox Holy Cross (Boston USA. Nov. 16-17 2012}, 43.

[12] Andar Ishmael. *Happy Indonesian* . (Jakarta: BPK. Gunung Mulia, 2019), 98

[13] Magnis Suseno. *Political Ethics. Basic Moral Principles of Modern State*, (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2016), 170

[14] *Ibid*. 189

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