

# What Happens When My Kindness Creates Controversy?

## The Dangers of Hospitality

### Acts 17:1-9

This study explores Acts 17:1-9, where Paul and Silas arrive in Thessalonica and face opposition despite their faithful ministry. A key figure in this passage, Jason, experiences persecution simply for showing hospitality to these missionaries. Through this story, we will examine how acts of kindness, particularly within Christian hospitality, can sometimes lead to unexpected challenges, controversy, or even danger.

## I. Why This Study?

### A. Objective:

1. To explore how Acts 17:1-9 highlights the risks and rewards of Christian hospitality.
2. To examine how kindness can sometimes lead to opposition and misunderstanding.
3. To gain biblical wisdom on responding to hostility when serving others.

### B. Relevance:

1. Many believers experience backlash for standing with the marginalized, opening their homes, or supporting others in faith.
2. The story of Jason reminds us that being faithful to Christ can invite opposition.
3. This passage encourages us to remain steadfast in hospitality and kindness, even when it is costly.

## II. Context of Acts 17:1-9

### A. The Background of Paul and Silas in Thessalonica:

1. Paul and Silas travel to Thessalonica, a major city in Macedonia, and visit the synagogue to \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 1).
2. Paul preaches about Jesus as \_\_\_\_\_, leading some Jews, Greeks, and prominent women to believe (vv. 2-4).
3. However, some Jews become \_\_\_\_\_, inciting a mob to riot against them (v. 5).
4. Unable to find Paul and Silas, the mob seizes \_\_\_\_\_, their host, and drags him before city officials (v. 6).

5. Jason is accused of harboring “ \_\_\_\_\_ ” and forced to post bail (vv. 7-9).

**B. Historical Insight:**

1. Thessalonica’s Strategic Importance: As a major trade city, Thessalonica was influential, and any disruption to the \_\_\_\_\_ was taken seriously.
2. Hospitality in the Ancient World: In Greco-Roman culture, hospitality was a significant social expectation, yet it could also make hosts \_\_\_\_\_ to the reputations of their guests.
3. Roman Political Sensitivities: The accusation that Paul and Silas preached “another king—Jesus” (v. 7) was seen as a \_\_\_\_\_ to Roman rule, fueling opposition.

**C. Key Takeaway:**

1. Christian kindness is \_\_\_\_\_, but it can also invite opposition.
2. Biblical hospitality is about more than serving others—it’s about \_\_\_\_\_ in faith, even when it costs us.

**III. What Happens When My Kindness Creates Controversy?**

**A. The Power of Gospel Hospitality (vv. 1-4)**

1. Key Verses:

“Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead.” (vv. 2-3)

“Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.” (v. 4)

2. Key Lessons:

- a) *Gospel hospitality extends beyond welcoming people—it invites \_\_\_\_\_ .*
- b) *Sharing the gospel often disrupts the status quo, bringing both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ .*
- c) *Many who responded positively were \_\_\_\_\_ —Greeks and prominent women—showing the broad reach of God’s message.*

**B. When Hospitality Brings Opposition (vv. 5-7)**

1. Key Verses:

“But the Jews who refused to believe became jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob, and started a riot in the city.” (v. 5)

“Jason has welcomed them into his home. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.” (v. 7)

2. Key Lessons:

- d) *Hospitality can make us a \_\_\_\_\_ —Jason faced persecution simply for opening his home.*
- e) *Jealousy and fear often drive opposition to God’s work.*
- f) *The gospel challenges \_\_\_\_\_ power, making it a perceived threat to those in control.*

**C. Standing Firm Despite the Cost (vv. 8-9)**

1. Key Verses:

“When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.” (vv. 8-9)

2. Key Lessons:

- g) *Faithfulness to Christ sometimes comes with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ costs—Jason had to pay for his association with Paul and Silas.*
- h) *The gospel's message will unsettle those who are invested in \_\_\_\_\_ power.*
- i) *Despite the risks, Jason's courage shows that standing with God's people is worth the cost.*

#### **IV. Scholars' Insights on the Dangers of Hospitality**

##### **A. John Chrysostom (4th century, Early Church Father & Preacher)**

"If we cannot endure hardship for another, how will we claim to follow the One who endured all hardship for us?" (Homilies on Acts)

- Chrysostom saw Christian hospitality as an act of sacrificial love. He reminds us that welcoming others in Christ's name is a privilege, even when it brings suffering.

##### **B. Rabia al-Adawiyya (8th century, Sufi Mystic & Poet)**

"True love is not measured by ease but by endurance." (Sayings of Rabia)

- Rabia, though from a different faith tradition, reflected the idea that true hospitality requires risk. Her insights parallel the Christian idea that love for God and others will sometimes bring personal hardship.

##### **C. Ada María Isasi-Díaz (20th century, Cuban-American Mujerista Theologian)**

"Hospitality is an act of resistance in a world that values exclusion." (Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the 21st Century)

- Isasi-Díaz emphasizes that true Christian hospitality is radical. Her work challenges the church to recognize that opening one's home and life to others—especially the marginalized—often goes against societal expectations.

##### **D. Martin de Porres (16th century, Peruvian Dominican Friar & Advocate for the Poor)**

"Charity is not about comfort but about standing with those who have nothing." (Collected Sayings)

- Martin de Porres, who served the sick and impoverished in Lima, understood that Christian kindness often leads to hardship. His life reflects the call to serve even when it is costly.

#### **E. Cheng Jingyi (20th century, Chinese Church Leader & Advocate for Unity)**

“Hospitality in the name of Christ is not merely about welcome—it is about breaking barriers.” (Essays on Christian Mission in China)

- Cheng saw hospitality as a way to dismantle divisions within the church and society. His writings challenge believers to embrace kindness even when it leads to opposition or misunderstanding.

#### **F. Elizabeth Evelyn Wright (19th century, African American Educator & Founder of Voorhees College)**

“To extend hospitality is to take risks, but those risks build the kingdom.” (Letters and Writings on Faith and Education)

- Wright faced extreme opposition while founding schools for Black students in the American South. Her faith-driven hospitality—offering education and refuge to the underserved—reminds us that kindness often invites conflict, but it is always worth it.

#### **G. Allan Boesak (Contemporary, South African Theologian & Anti-Apartheid Activist)**

“To welcome the outsider is to welcome God’s disruption into our lives.” (Dare We Speak of Hope?)

- Boesak reminds us that biblical hospitality often leads to unexpected change—both for the guest and the host.

### **V. Prayer Focus**

1. Pray for courage to practice Christ-centered hospitality, even when it comes with risks.
2. Ask God for wisdom to discern when to stand firm in the face of opposition.
3. Pray for those who face persecution because of their association with Christ and His people.

### **VI. Discussion and Reflection Questions**

1. Why did some people in Thessalonica respond positively to Paul's message while others reacted with hostility?
2. How does Jason's story challenge our understanding of hospitality today?
3. Have you ever faced backlash for supporting someone in need? How did you respond?
4. What can we learn from Jason's response to persecution?