

THE SECT SPOKEN AGAINST

When Paul was brought to Rome as a prisoner for preaching the gospel, he sent for the chief men of the Jews and explained that his being a prisoner was not because of crimes he had committed, but because he preached the "hope of Israel. " The Jewish leaders told Paul that they had received no letters from Judea concerning him and that those who had travelled with him had spoken nothing against him. Then they added: "But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning THIS SECT, WE KNOW THAT EVERYWHERE IT IS SPOKEN AGAINST." (Acts 28:22) The sect to which they referred was actually the church. They had heard evil about it, but they wanted to learn for themselves.

When a thing is spoken against, people may respond in different ways. Some, because of prejudice, want to hear no more about it. Others are curious enough to investigate. These are not satisfied to condemn on the basis of hearsay. They want the true facts.

When one studies the early history of Christianity, he discovers that indeed it was everywhere spoken against. The world hated the church. Christians were looked upon as the lowest people and were dealt with as criminals. Those whose decisions and attitudes are determined by public opinion would have been turned against God's people. Only those who care enough to learn for themselves could discover the true meaning and beauty of the gospel of Christ.

Religious prejudice is among the most tragic of Satan's devices. Prejudice means that one makes up his mind before he understands the facts. False teachers often keep their followers from the truth by misrepresenting those who teach the truth. Such a person is found in Acts, chapter 13. He was Elymas the sorcerer who sought to turn Sergius Paulus away from the truth. Elymas was not the last who has tried to poison minds against God's word and His church.

Not long ago, a woman said that she had been led to believe that we preached salvation by works-that is, that a person could do something to earn his salvation. Of course, we hastened to correct this misunderstanding by pointing out that the Bible teaches that a person is saved by the blood of Christ when through faith he obeys the commands of God. But this woman had been given a false impression. We are thankful that she chose to investigate further.

Another such incident occurred in connection with the recent series of lessons we presented on evolution. Someone who had not heard the talks was told that we were preaching against science. This, of course, was not true. There was no attack against true science. We spoke against evolution, which is incompatible with both science and Scripture. But those who advocate evolution would like to prejudice people against a fair investigation of the facts.

My friends, don't be turned against the truth by those who speak against it. Teachers of error know that their doctrine cannot withstand the attack of truth. Hence, they must use prejudice to keep people confused. The Bible admonishes, "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good." We should always search the Scripture to know what is true.