

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth One Verse at a Time***

Hated Without a Cause, Part 2

### **INTRODUCTION**

In Acts 1:8, as Jesus Christ was preparing to ascend into heaven, He told His disciples, "Ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The Greek word for "witnesses" is *martures*, from which the English word "martyr" is derived. A martyr came to refer to someone who died for a cause because witnesses for Jesus Christ often lost their lives as a result of their unwavering Christian testimony.

Knowing that persecution would come, Jesus warns His disciples in John 15 to balance out the wonderful promises He gave them. He said they would have unlimited power to do even greater things than He had done when He was present (John 14:12). He said they would have peace (John 14:27) and joy (John 15:11) and that they would lack nothing (John 15:7). Such blessings would give them the ability to confront the world with truth. In John 15:26-27, Jesus promised the disciples, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me; and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." He told them that their witnessing would be energized by the Holy Spirit. But to keep them from thinking that because of the promises and power available to them they wouldn't encounter negative reactions, Jesus informs them that the world is going to hate and persecute them for their testimony. In fact, He said the world, which is steeped in false religion, would think it was serving God by killing them (John 16:1-2).

### **Review**

On the last night before His crucifixion, Jesus not only gives His disciples promises that will become reality in His absence, but He also gives them a warning to be aware of the world's hatred. Those who are Christ's--those who are willing to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him daily--will be hated for three reasons.

## **I. CHRISTIANS ARE NOT OF THE WORLD**

### **A. The Rejection of the World**

The world hates Christians because they are not of this world's evil system, which is controlled by Satan and his evil angels. The world is a society of wicked men who have set themselves against

God and His Kingdom. Because the heart of the system is false religion, whether atheistic humanism, idolatry, cults, or liberalism, the world hates those who belong to the true religion. Don't be surprised that the world hates you because it hated Christ. The world loves only "its own" (v. 19). It is not that the people of the world actually love one another; it is that each individual in the world loves himself and his possessions. He loves others only insofar as loving others will bring advantage to himself. The love of the world is selfish and superficial. Naturally the world would not love Christians because they confront and condemn it by their pure lives and the Word of God.

## **B. The Ruler of the World**

First John 5:19 implies that the whole world lies in Satan's lap. The people of the world are not unhappy under his rule; they're naively content with it. The world is self-satisfied and complacent, indifferent to God and unaware of its lostness. It has been lulled by Satan into doubting God's judgment. Consequently, when you and I come along and try to wake it up with disturbing messages of sin and judgment, the world responds with hatred toward the message and the messengers. Verse 18 says, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." In the Greek text, verse 18 is a first-class condition, which emphasizes the reality of the statement: We can be sure that the world hates those who are visibly committed to Christ.

Every man is born into this world as a part of Satan's system. Whether he likes it or not, he is under the headship of Satan, who is "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4; KJV). Ephesians 2:1-2 says that when we were "dead in trespasses and sins," we walked "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air." The unsaved individual has a Satan-centered existence. However when a person acknowledges Christ as Lord by faith, that's a sign that he's been chosen "out of the world" (John 15:19). In Colossians 1:13, Paul says that God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

## **C. The Responsibility to the World**

The world hates us because of the liberty that is ours in Christ, which brings with it newfound joy, confidence, and sense of belonging to an eternal Kingdom. The fact that we know the truth and confront the world's sin brings about jealous antagonism.

## **D. The Reaction of the World**

If we walk worthy of our calling, the world will hate us. Timothy perhaps needed to share that with the people he was ministering to, so Paul told him in 2 Timothy 3:11-12, "Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." If there isn't any antagonism in the world toward you, then perhaps you don't have a visible, Christlike

testimony.

## **Lesson**

### **II. THE WORLD HATED JESUS (v. 20)**

#### **A. The Principle of Identification (v. 20a)**

"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord."

##### 1. Explained

The world hates us because they hated Jesus Christ, whom we represent. Hate isn't something that can be stored up for very long; it has to be vented. The world has always hated Christ and now that He is gone, they unleash their hatred on those who represent Him. We get the brunt of the hatred that is ultimately directed toward Christ. Let me assure you that the hatred of the world is just as real today as it was two thousand years ago. There are people all over the world dying for their faith in Jesus Christ.

In chapter 13, Jesus used the principle of a servant not being greater than his lord in talking about service. He was telling His disciples, "I'm concerned that you humbly wash each other's feet as I have done to you, and serve one another." But in chapter 15, He's using the same principle to apply to persecution, saying, "You don't think that if your Master is persecuted that you're going to get away without persecution, do you?"

##### 2. Exemplified

###### a. Philippians 3:10

Paul talked about "the fellowship of [Christ's] sufferings." He knew firsthand what sharing and identifying with the sufferings of Christ meant.

###### b. Galatians 6:17

You may have collected some trophies for past accomplishments. The apostle Paul had a very interesting trophy case: his body. He said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." I can imagine when someone had a chance to see his back he might wonder where Paul received all his scars. Paul might have said, "Do you see those stripes across the back? I got those for the sake of Jesus." I believe he loved every one of them, because he could say, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). He counted the things he had previously valued before becoming a

Christian as refuse in his striving to become more like Christ (Phil. 3:8). Paul was a committed disciple who identified with Jesus Christ. He experienced the same kind of abuse that the world gave to Jesus until finally, his head was cut off. Paul shared in the sufferings of Christ. Most Christians don't have the joy of knowing what it is to suffer the rebuke and hatred of the world for Christ's sake because they fail to identify completely with Him.

### 3. Exhorted

In 1 Peter 2:21, Peter said, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." The word "example" (Gk. *hupogrammon* = "a copy") established a pattern of suffering for Christians to follow in confronting the world. Verse 23-24 explain how He suffered: Jesus, "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Jesus never retaliated for the suffering He received; He took it willingly. He not only suffered on the cross to take away our sin, but He suffered to give us a pattern of how to confront the world. If the world abuses us, we ought to take it in silence and count ourselves worthy to have suffered like Jesus. Don't be surprised if you suffer; our Lord did, and His servants are not exempt from the same kind of treatment.

### B. The Promise of Persecution (v. 20b)

"If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

#### 1. Explained

Jesus was saying to His disciples, "You're going to have the same situation that I had: Some people are going to persecute you and some people are going to accept your words. There's going to be a vast majority that will be antagonistic toward you. However, there will be some who accept what you say." Most Christians don't experience the persecution that Jesus said would be common because their lives revolve around only church activities. If they tried going door to door announcing that people are sinners in line for the judgment of God in an eternal hell, the reactions would be different than what they are accustomed to. We aren't all doing our job of confronting the world if we confine our Christianity to ourselves.

If we follow Christ's example, the unbelieving world is going to persecute us. Although some will accept Christ's teaching, and therefore, that of His servants, their number will be fewer than the antagonists. In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus said, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in that way; because narrow is the gate, and hard is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." I heard a minister say there's going to be more

people in heaven than there will be in hell. But I don't believe that for a minute. Only a believing remnant will be there. In spite of that, our responsibility is to confront the world and suffer whatever abuse may come, joyfully knowing that some will hear the gospel and believe.

## 2. Exemplified

In Acts 7, a man named Stephen became one of the first martyrs of the church. After preaching a great gospel message, he indicted the religious leaders for their hard-heartedness, saying, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them who showed before the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" (vv. 52-53). The religious leaders were furious: "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the Apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him" (Acts 7:54-8:2). That's an example of the world's hatred of those who confront their sin.

When you confront men with their sin, expect a reaction. Sometimes they'll receive Christ, but more times than not, they will react violently. If you're not getting a reaction from the world, you're probably not confronting it.

## **III. THE WORLD DOESN'T KNOW GOD (vv. 21-25)**

The hardest fact for the world to swallow is that it doesn't really know God. You can imagine how that fact was received by the religious leaders Jesus presented it to, for they prided themselves on their knowledge of God. But when Jesus repeatedly told them that they really didn't know God, they became greatly infuriated. The inner cause of all hate is the absence of a knowledge of God.

### **A. Explaining the Reason (v. 21)**

"But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me."

Jesus told His disciples that people were going to persecute and even kill them because of their hatred for Him and their ignorance about God. Man is born into the world as an enemy of God. He is indifferent, rebellious, and hateful toward God. Men don't know God, let alone love Him. But what about religious people? Know this: Being religious doesn't mean you know God either.

### 1. 1 Corinthians 10:20

People in false religions "sacrifice to demons, and not to God." False religion is demoniacally inspired. Advocates of theological liberalism and modernism claim to be Christian, yet deny the virgin birth and deity of Christ and the verbal inspiration of Scripture. They don't love God; they hate Him. They are under Satan's control, whether they are flagrant atheists or superficial liberals. An individual who doesn't worship the true God through Jesus Christ is essentially an atheist, no matter what else he may worship. Worshiping the wrong God is a form of atheism because you're worshiping a god who doesn't exist.

### 2. Acts 17:22-23

The world worships a god who doesn't exist. When Paul arrived in Athens, he stood on Mars' Hill and said, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are very religious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore, ye ignorantly worship." The religious Athenians were worshiping a god they didn't even know. That is typical of man's approach to religion. He postulates a god who doesn't exist and then worships it. In spite of that, he is, in effect, an atheist.

### 3. 1 Corinthians 2:7-8

Paul said, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the ages unto our glory; which none of the princes of this age knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Paul says, "If men had known God, they never would have crucified Jesus Christ." And if men knew God today, they wouldn't continue to crucify "the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" by rejecting the truth (Heb. 6:6). That's proof positive that they don't know God at all. If an individual has never invited Jesus Christ into his life and received Him as personal Savior--I don't care who that individual is or what he thinks he knows--he has no knowledge of God at all. No man ever knew God who rejected Jesus Christ, who is God in human flesh. The main reason people hate Christ and Christians is that they don't know God and are lulled by satanic counterfeit religions into thinking that they do. That's why false religion is such a curse. I

believe Satan spends most of his time in false religion.

### **Is everyone responsible to know God?**

Someone might say, "It's not my fault I'm ignorant of God. I came into the world not knowing God, so you can't hold me responsible!" Everyone is responsible, however. Let me show you why: Romans 1:18-19 says, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shown it unto them." Every man comes into this world with the basic knowledge that God exists. Not only from his innate knowledge is God revealed, but from creation as well: Verse 20 says, "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead so that they are without excuse."

But if all the information is there, how did man get to the place of not knowing God? Verses 21-23 tell us: "Because, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man." The result of false religion comes in verse 28: "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate [worthless] mind." Men are born as rebels against God, but with an innate knowledge that He exists. In John 1:9, Jesus is said to be "the true Light, which lighteth every man." Men know the truth of God, yet they willingly reject God and Christ--not because of ignorance, but because of their wickedness. Men love darkness rather than light (John 3:19). They are like bugs that hide under a rock and scatter when the rock is moved, exposing them to light. Men don't know God because of their own wickedness and rejection of God's full revelation. That is the most serious sin that can be committed!

### **B. Examining Its Rejection (vv. 22-24)**

#### 1. Of Jesus' Words (v. 22)

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin."

##### a. Explained

That is one of the most important verses in the book of John. Jesus is not talking about sin in general because whether He came or not, men would still be sinners. Rather, He's talking about the sin of willful rejection in the presence of total revelation. The greatest sin that a man can commit is to have the specifics of God's revelation and then reject it. Jesus is saying, "I have told you the truth and yet

you have rejected it. Therefore, the cloak of your hypocrisy is ripped off--you can't hide your sin of willful rejection anymore! It has been made obvious by your spurning Me."

The greatest sin that a man can commit is rejecting God's full revelation. When the world killed Jesus, they did it in the face of full revelation. God had given them the Old Testament and then Christ Himself. They heard what He said and saw what He did, yet they killed Him, reacting to all that God had communicated to man with hatred and unbelief. Jesus is saying, "If I hadn't come and given you full display of revelation, you never could have committed the sin of rejection against full revelation. But now that I have come and have revealed God to you, yet you rejected, you've committed that sin."

#### b. Expressed

Hebrews 6:4-6, an important and much misunderstood passage, deals with that very sin: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." When someone has been enlightened with the full revelation of God and has seen what the Spirit of God can do, yet rejects the truth, he can never turn from his rejection. He has made a full rejection in the face of total revelation, and there is therefore no more revelation available for him to receive.

That passage is not talking about a Christian losing his salvation because verse 9 makes a contrasting transition into salvation: "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation." The verses prior refer to the man who has full revelation, but hasn't responded to it with saving faith. Verses 4-6 merely refer to getting insights into the truth. So when a man receives all the information God has given, yet still rejects it, he has committed a sin for which there's no remedy.

#### c. Exemplified

Matthew 12 illustrates how a group of people rejected Christ at the point of total revelation and were left with no other recourse for salvation. The Pharisees had seen Jesus' life and His miracles, and they had heard Him speak. God couldn't have given them clearer revelation. Although they were students of the Old Testament and had just seen the Lord cast a demon out of a person, this was their conclusion: "This fellow doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons" (v. 24). In other words, "He's casting out demons because He's demon possessed." They concluded that Jesus was from hell--the exact opposite they should have concluded based on the the revelation they had seen and heard. In response, Jesus said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven men. And whosoever

speakech a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age, neither in the age to come" (vv. 31-32).

Now what exactly is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Everything Christ did, He accomplished through the Spirit. He was saying, "If you have seen all the works that the Holy Spirit has done through Me, yet have concluded they were of Satan, you have blasphemed the Holy Spirit." Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is attributing the works and words of Christ to Satan. You cannot be forgiven for that. The Jewish religious leaders had total revelation, yet they made a total rejection. Consequently, there was no way they could ever be saved. I don't believe, however, that this "unpardonable sin" can be committed during the church age because Jesus isn't now here on earth making a divine display of His power. But I think it will be committed again in His Kingdom after He comes back.

People who appear to be religious and to worship God, yet who do not receive Jesus Christ as Savior have spurned the most complete revelation of God. Such people don't know God at all--they're hypocrites. John 15:22 rips away the cloak of hypocrisy and uncovers their sin.

## 2. Of Jesus' Father (v. 23)

"He that hateth me hateth my Father also."

That statement is crystal clear: The Pharisees didn't love God. They couldn't love God and hate His son--that is impossible. They were practical atheists who played a religious game; they didn't know God. Men who mock Jesus don't know God. And men who reduce Jesus to just a good moral teacher don't know or love God either. In John 5:23, Jesus said, "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father, who hath sent him." Don't ever be deceived into thinking that someone can love God and not Jesus Christ. Some people who reject Christ don't appear as violent haters of God, but Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12:30). Some men persecute the followers of Jesus because they don't know God. But it is inexcusable not to know God because He has given you full revelation for which you're responsible. Romans 1:20 says that men "are without excuse."

## 3. Of Jesus' Works (v. 24)

"If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father."

Jesus is saying, "I've displayed the Father in My works so that they've seen the Father working through Me, yet they've concluded that I'm from hell." People rejected His works as well as His words. I especially can't figure out how they could have rejected His works. They must have known about how He had raised Lazarus from the dead. Imagine the setting in front of the tomb: "Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh;

for he hath been dead four days" (John 11:39). She probably thought that even though the odor of a decaying corpse would be awful, Jesus wanted to say a last goodbye to Lazarus. Convincing her to let the stone be rolled away, Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth" (v. 43). Resurrection is the acid test of divine power. You can go down to the local cemetery and say, "come out" until you're purple in the face, but no one's going to come out--except maybe the caretaker to chase you away! However, when Jesus commanded Lazarus to come out, Scripture says, "He that was dead came forth" (v. 44). The process of decay were reversed and Lazarus stood up and walked out of the grave.

The Jewish religious leaders knew about that miracle because they saw Lazarus and the word about him spread everywhere. But it didn't matter what Jesus did--their hearts were so willfully hardened against Him. They loved their darkness and sin. They loved their pride and willfully said no to Jesus Christ, blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Men still reject Christ. Their hateful rejection of Christ's words and deeds, which reveal the Father, shows that they hate the Father as well.

### **C. Exposing Its Responsibility (v. 25)**

"But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause."

That statement is in two of David's psalms. Psalm 35:19 and 69:4 foreshadow the Messiah being hated "without a cause." Jesus spoke enough words and did enough deeds to make them responsible so that when they hated Him, they would be hating Him without a cause. In that way God erased every reason for a man to hate Jesus. If men continue to hate Jesus, they do it for no other reason than their own sin. There's no reason to hate Jesus. God didn't plan that people should hate Him. But He planned that if they did, they would do so without any good reason. God has given us full revelation so that if a man hates Christ, he does it without any cause at all, except his own sinfulness. Jesus manifested such a pure and attractive revelation of God that if a man hated Him, he would do so without reason. There's nothing in Jesus to make a man hate Him. Doing everything to save men and keep them out of hell, God wanted to make sure that He removed every vestige of excuse, leaving a man only with his own sin as the reason for his hatred.

### **Conclusion**

The world hated Jesus because He exposed their sin. He showed them who they were and they didn't like it. When Jesus turned the spotlight of His divine holiness on the sins of the people, they writhed and rebelled under it because He stripped away the darkness and laid bare what was in their hearts. However, instead of turning to Him in loving faith and receiving forgiveness and the salvation He offered, they turned against Him.

The world still hates Jesus as well as those who are His and who live for Him and love Him. Therefore, if you're going to count the cost and be a disciple of Jesus Christ, you're going to find out that true discipleship necessitates a willingness to suffer the hatred of the world. And if you're not willing to suffer the hatred of the world, then you're not really willing to be the disciple that Jesus wants you to be. Persecution is a part of true Christianity.

Many of you, perhaps, feel that you've beaten the problem of the world's hatred by being a friend of the world. If you're a friend of the world, then you're no friend of God. First John 2:15 says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." James 4:4 says, "Friendship with the world is hostility toward God" (NASB). If you're wrapped up in the system, you're violating everything that discipleship stands for.

he subtle temptation of Satan is to get us to the point where we don't want to offend anyone. When we do that, we violate everything that Jesus desires in our lives. He didn't send us into the world to make it comfortable; He sent us into the world to make it miserable. Start offending people with the truth for their own good. Start rebuking and start reproofing their sin. Paul said, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but, rather, reprove them" (Eph. 5:11).

We need to preach the offense of the cross. In 1 Corinthians 1:23, Paul said, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness." In the next chapter, he said, "I determined not to know any thing among you, except Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (v. 2). In Galatians 6:14, he said, "God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Paul could have dropped the cross from his message. He could have neglected to condemn sin to eliminate the stumbling block and be acceptable in the Greco-Roman and Jewish world. But he wouldn't have been acceptable to God.

Are we living holy lives? Are we confronting sin and calling it what it is? Every Christian needs to confront the world by exposing and reproofing sin, whatever the cost. If perhaps you are an unbeliever, you need to recognize that you have no excuse. How you respond to Jesus will seal your eternity.

### **Focusing on the Facts**

1. Why did the word martyr become synonymous with death?
2. What would enable the disciples to confront the world? Support your answer with Scripture.
3. Describe the kind of love that characterizes the world.

4. What system is every man a part of when he is born into the world ?
5. Now that Jesus is not on earth any more, where is the world's hatred directed?
6. Explain the principle of a servant not being greater than his lord (John 15:20).
7. Why do most Christians not experience the joy of suffering the rebuke and hatred of the world for Christ's sake?
8. According to 1 Peter 2:21, what kind of example did Christ leave for believers?
9. Will those who accept Christ's teaching be fewer or greater in number than those who ultimately reject it? Support your answer with Scripture.
10. What kind of reaction did Stephen get in Acts 7 after he confronted the hardheartedness of the religious leaders?
11. What is one of the hardest things for the world to accept? Why?
12. How is it possible for religious people not to know God and even be considered atheists in a sense?
13. If men had truly known God, what never would have happened, according to 1 Corinthians 2:7-8?
14. Why is false religion such a curse?
15. Is everyone responsible to know God? Explain.

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