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## **They Hated Him Without a Cause**

**By David Wilkerson**

June 15, 2009 “This cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, *They hated me without a cause*” (John 15:25, my italics).

Jesus said he came to seek out and save the lost. This was the same man who had power to subdue the very winds and waves. At any time Christ could have sent fire down from heaven to destroy the wicked. Yet instead Jesus came as a humble servant.

The Gospels tell us he listened patiently to people’s heartbreaking cries. Multitudes pleaded with Christ to deliver them from their afflictions. And he met their needs: He healed the sick, opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, loosed tied tongues, and made cripples to walk. Jesus set captives free from every form of bondage. He even raised their dead.

Even some nonbelievers agree: No one ever loved humankind more than Jesus did. He grieved over the multitudes before him, seeing them as lost sheep in need of a shepherd.

The truth is, nobody in history should be more revered, respected and loved than Jesus Christ. He should be honored and highly esteemed by all the world. He performed works of compassion for the people he met, he wept over the world’s spiritual blindness and he poured out his life for all.

In spite of the goodness Jesus performed, the world hated him without cause. There were ten thousand or more reasons for people to love Jesus and not one reason to hate him. The four Gospels portray him as kind, patient, long-suffering, full of tenderness, forgiving, willing that no person should perish. He is called a shepherd, a teacher, a brother, a light in darkness, a physician, an advocate, a reconciler. Jesus gave no cause whatsoever that he should be hated by anyone.

So, what did Christ do that he should be so despised, both in his own day and today? Simply put, the world hated him because *he came as a light to deliver them from darkness*.

Jesus declared himself to be the light of the world: “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). Yet Christ also tells us, “Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (3:20).

Christ’s gospel includes the call to “cast off the works of darkness, and...put on the armor of light” (Romans 13:12). Here is the reason the world has for hating Christ, both then and now. Jesus promised to deliver people from their chains of darkness. He pledged to set men everywhere free from all satanic power.

However, what we Christians see as a holy gift of deliverance and liberty, the world sees as a form of bondage. They love their sins and have no desire to be free from them.

“You call that freedom?” the nonbeliever asks. “No, here is freedom. We can do as we please with our bodies and minds. We declare ourselves free from all restrictions. We are already free — free from the bondage of the Bible, free from all sexual taboos, free to worship a god of our own choosing, including no god at all.”

Simply put, the world loves the things of this world. The ungodly relish the pleasures of sin. Jesus said

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these prefer the darkness to the light.

“This is the condemnation [their reason for hating him], that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).

Jesus warned his disciples clearly: “Because I have chosen you out of this world, the world will hate you, just as they hated me.” Christ tells his followers, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:19).

Jesus adds in the same passage, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you” (15:18).

In short, if you are of Christ — if God chose you out of a worldly life to follow his Son, Jesus — you will never be loved or accepted by this world. Why?

Just as Christ said he is the light of the world, he declares us also to be the light of the world: “Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14).

Think back for a moment to the time when you were born again in Christ. When you first saw the Light — that is, Jesus — you fell in love with him. The things of the world you once loved now seemed despicable to you. And the holy things you had hated you now loved. You believed the Light.

If Jesus brings such light, why is there so much rejection of him? Why so much mockery of his Word and ridicule of his church? Why does society go to such lengths to stamp out everything pertaining to Christ? For years courts have tried to outlaw the very mention of his name. Why such abhorrence of Jesus and of those who hold to his Word as their moral compass?

Think of how strange such hatred is. People don't usually hate those who love them. And true Christians exhibit love to the world. Those who walk wholeheartedly with Jesus are meek, friendly, forgiving, kind and even self-sacrificing. They respond to the human need all around them.

Indeed, Christian groups are often the first responders in times of disaster. We bless the world both with our helping hands and with our prayers of comfort. Yet still we are hated. We who call ourselves by the name of Christ are sons of peace, yet we are hated by the very world to which we offer help.

This hatred toward followers of Jesus has to do with our mission as light bearers. As Christ's witnesses, we are called to a seemingly impossible task. Think about it: We are asking worldly people to give up those things that are absolutely dear to them. And we call them to a life that looks to their eyes like some form of slavery. What is heaven to us seems to them a kind of hell.

Consider what we are called to do in witnessing to the world:

We are asking people to forsake and turn away from the very sins they love.

We are calling people to repent for having rejected the love and mercy of God, who demonstrated his love by giving up his Son on a cross. These people have struggled for years to silence the very conscience we appeal to. They don't want to hear some message about guilt. They've spent their lives trying to put to death any thought of a day of reckoning.

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We are called to tell sinful men and women that their own personal goodness — their moral uprightness and good works — cannot merit any right standing with God.

We are called to persuade self-made people that they must die to their own desires in order to give their lives for others.

We are called to tell the worldly person that his integrity is as dirty rags in God's sight. In telling him this, we are taking from him his pearl of great price, the thing he worked so hard to obtain. And when we tell him no amount of self-earned righteousness can amount to salvation, he will despise us.

Some say the preaching of the cross is too intolerant, as so-called "new evangelicals" seek accommodation for people's flesh. Many voices in the church today say Christians must accept and show a new kind of love. They're talking about a love in which biblical truth must bend with the times.

According to this gospel, no personal changes are necessary when one accepts Christ. Indeed, no repentance is needed. Rather, the goal in presenting this gospel is simple: to break down any barrier that could be considered a stumbling block to a person's acceptance of Christ.

I ask you: Is it possible we have allowed the fullness of Christ's light to become partly darkened?

Jesus warned about the danger that comes when our light becomes darkness. "Take heed therefore that the light which is in you be not darkness" (John 12:35). He's saying, in other words, "Let no part become dark."

Tell me, has our light darkened when polls show that 20 percent of evangelical youth accept same-sex marriage? Has our light become darkness when more and more Christians want to be loved and accepted by the world? According to Jesus, any desire for worldly acceptance causes our light to darken.

I want to pose a question to all Christians reading this. Tell me, are you tired of the shame of the cross? Are you fed up with being mocked, dismissed, seen as the off-scouring of the earth? Are you weary of being rejected and ridiculed?

You can easily find acceptance. You can have the world call you friend, associate with you, admire you, even love the kind of gospel you preach. How? It happens when you allow the ways of the world to seep into your soul. You cast off the reproach of Christ, convincing yourself you can mix with darkness and still be a light to the world.

*No, it does not work!* If you succumb to such friendship with the world, your light will become darkness. Jesus describes the process:

"If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23). Such is the condition of your soul when something of the world has taken hold.

At the Last Supper, Christ warned his disciples, "Some of you will be killed, some will be imprisoned, and all will be persecuted." At this point, Jesus gave the disciples a word of direction. It was meant to teach them how to reach their generation after he was gone. He told them, "A new commandment I

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give unto you” (John 13:34).

This new commandment was not about methods of evangelism. Jesus had already told them they were to go into all the world preaching his gospel. He had also instructed them they would need the Holy Ghost to fulfill that command. Now he was giving them a totally different commandment, one they hadn't heard before.

Jesus told these men plainly:

“If you will obey this new commandment, all men will know who you are. It will cause them to know exactly where you stand. They may hate you, call you a fanatic, accuse you of bigotry. They may kick you out of their synagogues. But they will see and know that you are mine.”

What was this new commandment? Jesus told them, “A new commandment I give unto you, *That ye love one another*; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (13:34, my italics).

This commandment is not an option but is directed to every follower of Christ. This one commandment is where all evangelistic efforts begin. Yes, we are to feed the poor, do many good works and preach Christ boldly. But if we are to penetrate the “gross darkness” that increasingly covers the world, we need to lay hold of this new commandment. Through it, we will be totally identified as being “of the light.”

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

Our love for one another in the church must be not merely in word but demonstrated in deed. Only love in action will get the attention of a lost generation. It will cause the world to recognize this is the same love that Jesus has toward his people.

This love is the only way to penetrate the darkness. And it is our only response to the world's hatred. “Love one another; as I have loved you” (13:34).

We don't need a book or a list to show us how to love as Christ loved us. I can sum it all up in one sentence: *It means laying down your life for those of like faith*. In fact, I can name it in a single word: *martyrdom*.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (15:13).

The author of Hebrews tells us, “Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance” (Hebrews 11:35, my italics). When this testimony was recorded, the church of Jesus Christ was still mostly an underground movement. The persecutors who tormented these Christians demanded to know, “Who are your pastors? Where do you meet? Tell us the names of the people you worship with.”

But these believers loved their brethren even as Christ had loved them. So they suffered for the sake of their fellow saints, to the point they laid down their very lives for them. “They were stoned, they were sawn asunder...were slain with the sword” (Hebrews 11:37).

Let me tell you what I know about modern-day martyrs. I know some of their names. These people are destitute, afflicted, tormented. Many endure torment of mind, soul and body on a daily basis. Some suffer such pain and anguish they would welcome death.

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These precious believers are laying down their lives every day by keeping faith in their time of great anguish and testing. Surviving, they go on, holding onto faith one day at a time.

We who live in free nations also “lay down our lives” in a sense. It happens each time we trust God through another day, praising him in our adversities. All the while, many eyes are watching us. Nonbelievers who have heard us testify of God’s keeping power examine our actions closely. And baby believers monitor our faith as they struggle through their own doubts.

The fact is, no other kind of love gets the attention of “all men” as does sacrificial love for our brethren.

Why is this “new commandment” from Jesus so important today? It is urgently important because the Holy Spirit has brought to our generation a great sense of need. Consider: Why are drinking and alcoholism on the rise? Why are increasing numbers of people turning to drugs? Why are there so many suicides?

The answer is simple: People everywhere are hurting. There is “sin sickness” all over the world, with multitudes facing empty days and anguished nights. They find so little to trust in. To whom can they turn? Where will they find someone who can show them hope? Where is there a source of real compassion, someone who himself has endured pain and suffering?

The hurting and bewildered of the world aren’t going to turn to people who question their own faith. They won’t seek out a people who think God has placed more on them than they can bear.

Of course, it’s true that all believers have their “crying times.” Even the godliest Christian can be overwhelmed by sorrows and trials. For many saints, personal pain has grown so powerful they have succumbed to weariness, feeling utterly helpless.

Yet amid their sorrows, they continue to cry out to the Lord. In their grief, they lay hold of the Father’s comforting promises. And daily they rise up again and fight on with renewed faith.

These believers simply do not quit. They trust the Holy Spirit to keep their light of faith burning, for Christ’s sake and for the sake of his church.

Dear saint, this is where true love begins: with laying down our dreams, hopes and plans, to share in the sufferings of Christ and yield willingly to our cross. That is the love all men can see. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples” (John 13:35).