

Sermon – 21/05/2006 am

No Excuse for Their Sin

Study Text: John 15:21-27

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Gentile (Romans 1:16). In this gospel the righteousness of God is revealed. In it the wrath of God against all unrighteousness, against those who reject the truth, is also revealed. The preaching of the gospel calls for decision. There will be those who accept it and those who reject it, those who accept Jesus Christ and those who reject him.

We are in the midst of yet another wave of opposition to the truth of the gospel. The documents we are reading, these pages which declare Jesus to be sent from heaven by the Father and to be equal with God, are under attack in our media. Men and women are being told that these documents are not reliable, despite being eyewitness accounts widely read and accepted as authoritative from the beginning of the second century.

This current attempt to deny the divinity of Jesus is nothing new. Jesus' own contemporaries argued with him and eventually killed him for claiming to be equal with God. Dan Brown stands in the line of those who have hated Jesus, the Son of God, many who have hated him without a cause.

Hating God

In this line of those who hate Jesus and deny his divinity are some who claim to love God and worship him. But according to Jesus anyone who does not believe what he says, and the witness of his works, are fooling themselves if they think they love God. *He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him (5:23).* And here Jesus says *he who hates me hates my Father also (15:23).*

To declare Jesus to be a great teacher or even a prophet is in no way honouring to him who himself declares *I and the Father are one.* The Jews of course openly reject Jesus Christ, but many others claim to honour him, yet deny that he is God the Son. Such a position is untenable according to Jesus.

Jesus declares moreover, that those who reject him as the One sent from heaven by God 'my Father' are also rejecting God. The Jews strenuously maintained they were following God and pleasing him. They were children of Abraham they said (8:33, 39). They were proud possessors of the Law of Moses. But Jesus they hated. *You have a demon* they said to him (8:48). Jesus told them *You do not hear because you are not of God (8:47).*

Here were men full of zeal for the things of God, but who were, in fact, hating God because they hated his Son Jesus. And still today there are millions in exactly the same position – zealous for God but blindly so for they hate Jesus Christ.

No Excuse

Whilst on mission service I often shared in home churches about the work of the Lord in other cultures. Sometimes people would say to me ‘what about the work of the Lord here at home? Why are you going overseas when there is such a great need for preachers here?’ ‘That is a good question’ I would say. ‘When I drive around this city I see churches in every suburb, churches along every main street. Who in this city would not know where followers of Jesus Christ meet to worship God’. ‘In other lands, however, there are thousands of towns without any meeting place for Christians. There are people in those towns that have never heard the name of Jesus Christ’.

If I had not come and spoken to them they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin (15:22). Jesus goes on to say *if I had not done among them the works which no one else did they would have no sin (15:24).* To have no sin does not mean the absence of original sin. Paul tells us that through Adam *death came to men because all sinned.* He went on to say *that sin is not imputed when there is no law (Romans 5:12, 13).* All have sinned because death comes to all, but to reject the word of God, especially the ‘Word become flesh’, is particularly heinous sin.

Having heard the words of Jesus, and seen the mighty works he did, declaring that he only does *what he sees the Father do (5:19)*, and then to reject him as they did, left them without excuse for their sin. They stood condemned before the judge of all men. You cannot call God your Father if you reject his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He who does not honour the Son, but in fact hates him, hates the Father as well.

Among us is a generation that heard the word of God through attending the house of God in their youth. But they rejected that word and went after the treasures and pleasures of the world. They choose to follow the desires of their hearts rather than the Jesus Christ the Son of God. They failed to teach their children about Jesus although the churches were still open and the Scriptures were taught in the schools. They even make efforts to stop their children hearing the truth – efforts are being made to remove Scripture lessons from schools. Such is the hatred of this generation towards Jesus and God himself. Such people, Jesus declares, have no excuse for their sin.

Scripture Fulfilled

God remains sovereign whether people reject him or not. We do not live in a spiritual democracy. The word of the Lord stands forever. It was no surprise to Jesus that the Jews rejected him and his message. He did not change his message because it was unpopular. The Scriptures foretold such a response. What happened to him was in fulfilment of what is written.

Jesus rubs it in as it were when he refers to **their** law. The very custodians of the Scriptures given by God were rejecting the one promised in these Scriptures as their deliverer. Just as their fathers persecuted and killed the prophets, so they were guilty of killing the very Son of God. This was the substance of Stephen’s accusation which led to his martyrdom (Acts 7).

They hated me without a cause said Jesus, taking to himself the words of David. But it was all in the sovereign purpose of God. It was for our redemption. It was essential that the precious blood of Jesus be shed for the forgiveness of sin. His was a sacrifice to end all sacrifices, a death by which the elect live. Wicked men hated him. They hated him without a cause and put

him to death. They nailed him to the Cross. But in doing so God was working to effect the salvation of all who believe in Jesus.

‘You with the help of wicked men put him to death by nailing him to the cross’ Peter told the Jews at Pentecost – but this was all in the sovereign purpose of God. *God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).*

Help for the Hated

In the closing verses of this chapter Jesus once again tells his disciples about the coming of the HS or the Helper (Paraclete). The focus shifts from the causes of hatred and persecution to the way to respond to such hatred. Hatred from the world cannot be avoided by those who bear the name of Jesus and speak his words. Such hatred could prove overwhelming. Jesus therefore reminds them they will not be alone. They will have *another Helper* to take the place of Jesus.

Earlier in this discourse Jesus said *I will pray the Father and he will give you another Helper (14:16)*. Here he speaks of the Helper *whom I shall send to you from the Father*. The Holy Spirit or Spirit of truth *proceeds from the Father (15:26)*. There was considerable debate between the Western and Eastern branches of the church over this phrase. The Council of Nicaea (AD 325) declared that the Holy Spirit ‘proceeds from the Father and the Son’, while this text says only *proceeds from the Father*. But the important truth is that the Holy Spirit is God. He is God the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Moreover he was sent to testify of Jesus (15:26).

Because the disciples, along with all believers, would be given the Holy Spirit they also would testify/bear witness of Jesus. These eleven had been with Jesus since he began his ministry, so were well equipped to witness to the world the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God whom God the Father sent into this world.

In the power of the Holy Spirit they would declare Jesus who was crucified and rose again from the dead to be both Lord and Christ. They would call upon men and women and boys and girls everywhere to repent, to turn from sin and believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the way, the only way, the truth, the only truth, and the life, the only life.

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