

HATRED WITHOUT CAUSE

NO. 89

A SERMON
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“They hated me without a cause.”
John 15:25

IT is usually understood that the quotation our Savior here refers to is to be found in the thirty-fifth Psalm, at the nineteenth verse, where David says, speaking of himself immediately and of the Savior prophetically, “Let not them who are mine enemies rejoice over me, neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.”

Our Savior refers to that as being applicable to Himself and thus He really tells us, in effect, that many of the Psalms are Messianic or refer to the Messiah. And therefore Dr. Hawker did not err when he said he believed the Psalms referred to the Savior, though he may have carried the truth too far. But it will be a good plan, in reading the Psalms, if we continually look at them as alluding not so much to David, as to the man of whom David was the type, Jesus Christ, David’s Lord.

No being was ever more lovely than the Savior. It would seem almost impossible not to have affection for Him. Certainly at first sight it would seem far more difficult to hate Him than to love Him. And yet, loveable as He was, yea, “altogether lovely” no being so early met with hatred and no creature ever endured such a continual persecution as He had to suffer.

He is no sooner ushered into the world than the sword of Herod is ready to cut Him off, and the innocents of Bethlehem, by their dreadful massacre, gave a sad foretaste of the sufferings which Christ would endure and of the hatred that men would pour upon His devoted head.

From His first moment to the cross, save the temporary lull while He was a child, it seemed as if all the world were in league against Him and all men sought to destroy Him. In different ways that hatred displayed itself. Sometimes in overt deeds, as when they took Him to the brow of the hill and would have cast Him down headlong. Or when they took up stones again to stone Him, because He said that Abraham desired to see His day, and saw it, and was glad.

At other times that hatred showed itself in words of slander, such as these, “He is a drunken man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.” Or in looks of contempt, as when they looked suspiciously at Him because He did eat with publicans and sinners, and sat down to table with unwashed hands. At other times that hatred dwelt entirely in their thoughts and they thought within themselves, “This man blasphemeth,” because He said, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.”

But at almost every time there was a hatred towards Christ, and when they took Him and would have made Him king, and a shallow fleeting flood of popular applause would have wafted him on to an unsteady throne, even then there was a latent hatred towards Him, only kept hidden under by loaves and fishes, which only wanted an equal quantity of loaves and fishes offered by the priests to develop itself into the cry of, “Crucify him, crucify him,” instead of the shout of, “Hosanna! blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD.”

All grades of men hated Him. Most men have to meet with some opposition, but then it is frequently a class opposition, and there are other classes who look at them with respect. The demagogue, who is admired by the poor, must expect to be despised by the rich. And he who labors for the aristocracy, of course meets with the contempt of the many.

But here was a man who walked among the people, who loved them, who spoke to rich and poor as though they were (as indeed they are) on one level in His blessed sight, and yet all classes conspired to hate Him.

The priests cried Him down because He spoiled their dogmas. The nobles would put Him to death because He spoke of being a king. While the poor, for some reasons best known to themselves, though they admired His eloquence and frequently would have fallen prostrate in worship before Him on account of the wondrous deeds He did, even these, led by men who ought to have guided them better, conspired to put Him to death and to consummate their guilt by nailing Him to the tree. And then wagging their heads, bade Him, if He could build a temple in three days, to save Himself and come down from the cross.

Christ was the hated one, the slandered and scorned. He was “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

Now, we shall try this morning, first, to *justify the Savior’s remarks, that He was hated without a cause*. And secondly, to dwell upon the *sin of men—that men hated Him without a cause*. In the third place, to *give a lesson or two to Christ’s own people*, which they may well learn from the fact that their Savior was hated without a cause.

I. First then beloved, let us JUSTIFY WHAT THE SAVIOR SAID, “They hated me without a cause.”

And we remark, that apart from the consideration of man’s sinfulness and Christ’s purity, there certainly is no cause whatever to be discovered why the world should have hated Him.

First, let us regard Christ *in His person*. Was there anything in Christ’s person as a man, when He lived in this world, which had a natural tendency to make any person hate Him? Let us remark that there was an absence of almost everything which excites hatred between man and man.

In the first place, there was *no great rank* in Christ to excite envy. It is a well-known fact that let a man be ever so good, if he be at all lifted above his fellow creatures by riches or by title, though many will respect him, yet the many will often speak against him, not so much for what he is, as for his rank and his title. It seems to be natural to men in the mass to despise nobles. Each man, individually, thinks it a wonderful thing to know a lord, but put men together and they will despise lords and bishops, and speak very lightly of principalities and powers.

Now Christ had none of the outward circumstances of rank. He had no chariot, no long sleeves, no elevation above His fellows. When He walked abroad, there were no heralds to attend Him, there was no pomp to do Him honor. In fact, one would think that Christ’s appearance would naturally have engendered pity.

Instead of being lifted above men, He did, in some sense, seem to be below them, for foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay His head. Many a democrat has railed against the archbishop when he has gone by Lambeth Palace, but would he curse or despise him if he were told the archbishop had not where to lay his head, but simply toiled for the truth’s sake and had no reward?

The envy, naturally excited by rank, station, and such-like, could not have operated in Christ’s case. There was nothing in His garb to attract attention. It was the garb of the peasant of Galilee, “of one piece, woven from the top throughout.” Nor was there anything in His rank. He might have been the son of an ancient royal family, but its royalty was apparently extinct, and He was only known as the Son of the carpenter. They hated Him, then, in that sense, “without a cause.”

Many persons seem to have envy excited in them against those who *exercise rule* or government over them. The very fact of a man having authority over me stirs up my evil passions, and I begin to look at him with suspicion, because he is invested with that authority. Some men naturally fall into the groove and obey simply because the rule is made. Principalities and powers are established, and they submit themselves for the Lord’s sake.

But the many, especially in these republican times, seem to have a natural tendency to kick against authority, simply because it is authority. But if authorities and governments were changed every month, I believe that in some countries, in France for instance, there would be revolutions as much under one government as under another.

In fact, they hate all government there and wish to be without law, that each man may do what is right in his own eyes. But this did not operate in Christ's case, He was not a king. He did not assume sway over the multitude. It is true He was Lord over tempests and seas. It is true He could command demons, and if He pleased, men must have been His obedient servants. But He did not assume power over them.

He marshaled no armies, He promulgated no laws, He made Himself no great one in the land. The people did just as they liked, for all the authority He exercised over them. In fact, instead of binding laws upon them which were severe, He seemed to have loosened the rigidity of their system. For when the adulterous woman, who, otherwise, would have been put to death, was brought before Him, He said, "Neither do I condemn thee." And He relaxed, to a certain extent, the rigidity of the Sabbatical ordinance, which was in some respects too burdensome, saying, "The Sabbath was made for man." Surely then they hated Him "without a cause."

Some men make others dislike them because they are *proud*. I know some men that I should have liked very well if the starch had been left out of them. I should really sympathize with them and admire them if they had the least degree of condescension, but they seem to walk about the world with such a style of pride! They may not be proud—very likely they are not, but as an old divine said, "When we see a fox's tail sticking out of a hole, we naturally expect the fox is there." And somehow or other, the human mind cannot bear pride. We always kick against it.

But there was nothing of that in our Savior. How humble He was! Why He stooped to anything. He would wash His disciples feet, and when He walked about among men, there was no parade about Him, as if He would say to them, "See My talent, see My power, see My rank, see My dignity, stand by, I am greater than you." No, He takes His seat there.

There is Matthew, the publican, sitting beside Him and He does not think He is hurt by the publican, although He is the worst of sinners. And there is a harlot, He speaks to her. There is another with seven devils and He casts the devils out of her. And another, who has the leprosy and He even touches the leper to show how humble He was and that there was nothing of pride about Him.

Oh! could you have seen the Savior, He was the very paragon of humility! There were none of your forms of etiquette and politeness about Him. He had that true politeness which makes itself affable to all men, because it is kind and loving to all. There was no pride in the Savior, and consequently there was nothing to excite men's anger on that account. Therefore, they hated Him "without a cause."

There are others that you cannot help disliking, because they are so snappish and waspish and *angry*. They look as if they were born on some terribly dark stormy day, and as if, in the mixture of their body, no small quantity of vinegar was employed. You could not sit long with them without feeling that you have to keep your tongue on a pretty tight chain. You must not talk freely, or there would be a quarrel, for they would make you an offender for a word. You may say, "Such a one is, no doubt, a good man, but really, that temper of his, I cannot bear it." And when a man stands prominently before the public, with a nasty sour disposition, one feels inclined to dislike him.

But there was nothing of this about our Savior. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again." If men spat in His face, He said nothing to them. And when they smote Him, He did not curse them. He sat still and bore their scorn. He walked through the world with contempt and infamy constantly poured upon Him, but "He answered not a word."

He was never angry. You cannot find, in reading the Savior's life, that He spake one angry word, save those words of holy wrath which He poured, like scalding oil, upon the head of Pharisaic pride. Then, indeed, His wrath did boil, but it was holy wrath. With such a loving, kind, gentle spirit, one would have thought that He would have gone through the world as easily as possible. His kind spirit

seemed to make a straight road for His feet. But notwithstanding all that, they hated Him. Truly, we can say, "They hated him without a cause."

There is another set of people you can scarcely help disliking. They are *selfish* people. Now we know some persons who are very excellent in temper, who are extremely honest and upright, but they are so selfish! When you are with them, you feel that they are just friends to you for what they can get out of you, and when you have served their turn, they will just lay you aside and endeavor to find another.

In trying to do good, their good deed has an ulterior object, but somehow or other, they are always found out. And no man in the world gets a greater share of public odium than the man who lives a selfish life. Among the most miserable men in the universe, kicked about the world like a football, is the selfish miser.

But in Christ there was nothing selfish. Whatever He did, He did for others. He had a marvelous power of working miracles, but He would not even change a stone into bread for Himself. He reserved His miraculous power for others. He did not seem to have a particle of self in His whole nature. In fact, the description of His life might be written very briefly, "He saved others, Himself He did not save."

He walked about. He touched the poorest, the meanest, and those who were the most sick. He cared not what men might say of Him. He seemed to have no regard for fame, or dignity, or ease, or honor. Neither His bodily nor His mental comforts were in the least regarded by Him. Self-sacrifice was the life of Christ. But He did it with such an ease that it seemed no sacrifice. Ah! beloved, in that sense, certainly they hated Christ without a cause, for there was nothing in Christ to excite their hatred—in fact, there was everything, on the other hand, to bind the whole world to love and reverence a character so eminently unselfish.

Another sort of people there are that I do not like, which is the *hypocritical*. Nay, I think I could even live with the selfish man if I knew him to be selfish, but the hypocrite, do not let him come anywhere near where I am. Let a public man be a hypocrite once, and the world will scarcely trust him again. They will hate him.

But Christ was, in this particular, free from any blame. And if they hated Him, they hated Him not for that, for there never was a more unvarnished man than Christ. He was called, you know, the child Jesus, because as a child speaks itself out, and has no reserve and no craftiness, even so was it with Jesus. He had no affectation, no deceit. There was no change about Him. He was "without variableness or shadow of turning."

Whatever the world may say of Christ, they never said they believed He was a hypocrite. And among all the slanders they brought against Him, they never disputed His sincerity. Had they been able to show that He really had been imposing upon them, they might have had some grounds for hating Him, but He lived in the sunlight of sincerity and walked on the very mountaintop of continual observation. He could not be a hypocrite and men knew He could not. And yet men hated Him.

Verily, my friends, if you survey the character of Christ, in all its loveliness, in all its benevolence, in all its sincerity, in all its selfless devotion, in all intense eagerness to benefit man, you must say, indeed, "They hated him without a cause." There was nothing in Christ's person to lead men to hate Him.

In the next place, *was there anything in Christ's errand* which could make people hate Him? If they had asked Him, "For what reason have You come from heaven?" Would there have been anything in His answer likely to excite their indignation and hatred? I think not. For what purpose did He come? He came, first of all, to explain mysteries—to tell them what was meant by the sacrificial lamb, what was the significance of the scapegoat, what was intended by the ark, the brazen serpent, and the pot of manna.

He came to rend the vail of the holy of holies and to show men secrets they had never seen before. Should they have hated one who lifted the veil of mystery, and made dark things light, and expounded riddles? Should they have hated Him who taught them what Abraham desired to see, and what prophets

and kings had longed to know, but died without a knowledge of? Was there anything in that to make them hate Him?

What else did He come for? He came on earth to reclaim the wanderer. And is there anything in that that should make men hate Christ? If He came to reform the drunkard, to reclaim the harlot, gather in the publicans and sinners, and bring prodigals to their father's houses again, sure that is an object with which every philanthropist should agree. It is that for which our governments are formed and fashioned, to bring men to a better state. And if Christ came for that purpose, was there anything in that to make men hate Him?

For what else did He come? He came to heal the diseases of the body—is that a legitimate object of hatred? Shall I hate the physician who goes about gratuitously healing all manner of diseases? Are deaf ears unstopped, are mouths opened, are the dead raised, are the blind made to see, and widows blest with their sons? Are these causes why a man should be obnoxious? Surely, He might well say, "For which of these works do ye stone me? If I have done good works wherefore speak ye against me?"

But none of these works were the cause of men's hatred, they hated Him without a cause. And He came on earth to die, that sinners might not die. Was that a cause of hatred? Ought I to hate the Savior, because He came to quench the flames of hell for me? Should I despise Him who allowed His Father's flaming sword to be quenched in His own vital blood? Shall I look with indignation upon the substitute who takes my sins and griefs upon Him and carries my sorrows?

Shall I hate and despise the man who loved me better than He loved Himself—who loved me so much that He visited the gloomy grave for my salvation? Are these the causes of hatred? Surely His errand was one that ought to have made us sing His praise forever and join the harps of angels in their rapturous songs. "They hated me without a cause."

But once more—*was there anything in Christ's doctrine* that should have made us hate Him? No, we answer. There was nothing in His doctrine that should have excited men's hatred. Take His perceptive doctrines. Did He not tell us to do to others as we would they should do to us? Was He not also the exponent of everything lovely and honorable, and of good repute? And was not His teaching the very essence of virtue, so that if virtue's self had written it, it could not have written such a perfect code of lovely morals and excellent virtues?

Was it the ethical part of His doctrines that men hated? He taught that rich and poor must stand on one level. He taught that His Gospel was not to be confined to one particular nation, but was to be gloriously expansive, so as to cover the world. This perhaps, was one principal reason of their hating Him, but surely there was no justifiable cause for their indignation in this. There was nothing in Christ to lead men to hate Him. "They hated him without a cause."

II. And now, in the second place, I come to dwell on MAN'S SIN, that he should have hated the Savior without a cause.

Ah! beloved, I will not tell you of man's adulteries, and fornications, and murders, and poisonings, and sodomies. I will not tell you of man's wars, and bloodsheds, and cruelties, and rebellions. If I want to tell you of man's sin, I must tell you that man is a deicide—that he put to death his God and slew his Savior. And when I have told you that, I have given you the essence of all sin, the masterpiece of crime, the very pinnacle and climax of the terrific pyramid of mortal guilt.

Man outdid himself when he put his Savior to death, and sin did out-Herod Herod when it slew the Lord of the universe, the lover of the race of man, who came on earth to die. Never does sin appear so exceedingly sinful as when we see it pointed at the person of Christ, whom it hated without a cause. In every other case, when man has hated goodness, there have always been some extenuating circumstances. We never see goodness in this world without alloy, however great may be any man's goodness, there is always some peg whereon we may hang a censure. However excellent a man may be, there is always some fault which may diminish our admiration or our love.

But in the Savior, there was nothing of this. There was nothing that could blot the picture—holiness stood out to the very life. There was holiness—only holiness. Let a man hate Whitefield, one of the

holiest men that ever lived. He would tell you he did not hate his goodness, but he hated his ranting preaching, and the extraordinary anecdotes he told. Or he would pull out something that dropped from his lips and hold it up to derision.

But in Christ's case, men could not do that. For though they sought for false witnesses, yet their witnesses agreed not together. There was nothing in Him but holiness and any person with half an eye can see that the thing men hated was simply that Christ was perfect. They could not have hated Him for anything else.

And thus you see the abominable, detestable evil of the human heart—that man hates goodness simply because it is such. It is not true that we Christian people are hated because of our infirmities. Men make our infirmities a nail whereon to hang their laughter, but if we were not Christians, they would not hate our infirmities.

They hold our inconsistencies up to ridicule, but I do not believe our inconsistencies are really what they care about. We might be as inconsistent as all the rest of the world if we did not profess religion or if they did not think we had any. But because the Savior had no inconsistencies or infirmities, men were stripped of all their excuses for hating Him, but it came out that man naturally hates goodness, because he is so evil that he cannot but detest it.

And now let me appeal to every sinner present and ask him whether he ever had any cause for hating Christ. But someone says, "I do not hate Him. If He were to come to my house, I would love Him very much." But it is very remarkable that Christ lives next door to you, in the person of poor Betty there. She goes to such and such a chapel, and you say she is nothing but a poor canting Methodist. Why don't you like Betty? She is one of Christ's members and, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

You say you do not hate Christ. Now, look across the chapel. Don't you know a man, a member of this place, a very holy man, but somehow or other you cannot bear him, because he once told you of your faults? Ah! sir, if you loved Christ you would love His members. What! Tell me you love my head, but you do not love my hands? My dear fellow, you cannot cut my head off and let me be the same person. If you love Christ, the Head, you must love His members.

But you say, "I do love His people." Very well, then you have passed from death unto life, if you love the brethren. But you say, "I am not sure that I am a changed character, still, I am not aware that there is any opposition in my heart to Christ and His Gospel." You may not be aware of it, but it is your not being aware of it that makes your case all the more sad. Perhaps if you knew it and wept over it, you would come to Christ, but since you do not know it and do not feel it, that is a proof of your hostility.

Now, come! I must suppose you to be hostile to Christ unless you love Him. For I know there are only two opinions of Him. You must either hate Him or love Him. As for indifference with regard to Christ, it is just a clear impossibility. A man might as well say, "I am indifferent towards honesty." Why, then he is dishonest, is he not? You are indifferent to Christ? Then you hate Him. And why is it that you hate Him? Many a time you have been wooed by the Gospel. You have resisted appeals, many of them. Come, now, for which of Christ's works do you hate Him?

Have I a persecutor here? Sinner! For what do you hate Christ? Do you curse Him? Tell me what He has done that you should be angry with Him. Point to a single fault of His in His carriage towards you. Has Christ ever hurt you? "Oh!" says one, "He has taken my wife and made her one of His children, and she has been baptized and comes to chapel, and I cannot bear that."

Ah! sinner, is that why you hate Christ? Would you have hated Christ if He had snatched your wife from the flames, if He had saved her from going down to death? No, you would love Him. And He has saved your wife's soul. Ah! if He never saves you, if you love your wife, you will have enough cause to love Him, to think He has been so good to you. I tell you, if you hate Christ, you not only hate Him without a cause, but you hate Him when you have ample cause to love Him.

Come, poor sinner, what have you got by hating Christ? You have stings of conscience. Many a sinner, by hating Christ, has been locked up in jail, has a ragged coat, a diseased body, a nasty filthy

house, with broken windows, a poor wife, nearly beaten to death, and children that scamper out of the way as soon as father comes home. What have you got by hating Christ? Oh! if you were to estimate your gains, you would find that getting Christ would be a gain, but that hating Him is a dead loss to you.

Now, if you hate Christ and Christ's religion, I tell you that you hate Christ without a cause, and let me give you one solemn warning, which is this, if you keep on hating Christ till you die, you will not hurt Christ by it, but you will hurt yourself most awfully. Oh! may God deliver you from being haters of Christ! There is nothing to get by it, but everything to lose by it.

For what cause do you hate Christ, sinner? For what cause do you hate Christ, persecutor? For what cause do you hate Christ, you carnal, ungodly men? What do you hate Christ's Gospel for? His ministers—what hurt have they done you? What hurt can they do you, when they long to do you all the good in the world? Why is it you hate Christ? Ah! it is only because you are so desperately set on mischief—because the poison of asps is under your lips and your throat is an open sepulchre. Otherwise, you would love Christ. They hated Him “without a cause.”

And now, Christian men, I must preach at you for just a moment. Sure you have great reason to love Christ now, for you once hated Him without a cause. Did you ever treat a friend ill and did not know it? It has been the misfortune of most of us to do it sometimes. We had some suspicion that a friend had done us an injury. We quarreled with him for weeks and he had not done it at all. What he had done was only to warn us. Ah! there are never tears like those we shed when we have injured a friend.

And should we not weep when we have injured the Savior? Did He not come to my door one cold damp night and I shut my door against Him? Oh! I have done what I cannot undo. I have slighted my Lord, I have insulted my friend, I have thrown dishonors upon Him whom I admire. Shall I not weep for Him?

Oh! shall I not spend my very life for Him? For my sins, my own treachery spilled His blood. Monuments, ah! monuments I will build, wherever I live, wherever I go. I'll pile up monuments of praise, that His name may be spread. And where'er I wander, I'll tell what He did, with many a tear, that I so long have ill-treated Him and so fearfully misunderstood Him. We hated Him without a cause, therefore, let us love Him.

III. TWO LESSONS TO THE SAINTS.

In the first place, *if your Master was hated without a cause, do not expect to get off very easily in the world.* If your Master was subject to all this contempt and all this pain, do you suppose you will always ride through this world in a chariot? If you do, you will be marvelously mistaken. As your Master was persecuted, you must expect to be the same.

Some of you pity us when we are persecuted and despised. Ah! save your pity, keep it for those of whom the world speaks well. Keep it for those against whom the woe is pronounced, “Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.” Save your pity for earth's favorites. Save your pity for this world's lords, that are applauded by all men.

We ask not for your pity. Nay, sirs, in all these things, we rejoice and “glory in tribulations also, knowing that the things which happen unto us, happen for the furtherance of the gospel.” And we count it all joy when we fall into manifold temptations, for we rejoice that thus the name of Christ is known and His kingdom extended.

The other lesson is, *take care if the world does hate you, that it hate you without a cause.* If the world is to oppose you, it is of no use making the world oppose you. This world is bitter enough without my putting vinegar in it. Some people seem to fancy the world will persecute them, therefore they put themselves into a fighting posture, as if they invited persecutions.

Now, I do not see any good in doing that. Do not try and make other people dislike you. Really, the opposition some people meet with is not for righteousness' sake, but for their own sin's sake, or their own nasty temper's sake. Many a Christian lives in a house—a Christian servant girl perhaps. She says she is persecuted for righteousness' sake. But she is of a bad disposition. She sometimes speaks sharp and then her mistress reproves her. That is not being persecuted for righteousness' sake.

There is another, a merchant in the city, perhaps. He is not looked upon with much esteem. He says he is persecuted for righteousness' sake, whereas it is really because he did not keep a bargain some time ago. Another man says he is persecuted for righteousness' sake, but he goes about assuming authority over everybody, and now and then persons turn round and upbraid him.

Look to it, Christian people, that if you are persecuted, it is for righteousness' sake. For if you get any persecution yourself, you must keep it yourself. The persecutions you bring on yourself for your own sins, Christ has nothing to do with them, they are chastisements on you. They hated Christ without a cause. Then fear not to be hated. They hated Christ without a cause. Then court not to be hated and give the world no cause for it.

And now may you who hate Christ, love Him. Oh! that He would bring Himself to you now! Oh! that He would show Himself to you! And then sure you must love Him at once. He that believes on the Lord Jesus will be sure to love Him and He that loves Him shall be saved. Oh! that God would give you faith and give you love, for Christ Jesus' sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.