

Despise not the Lord's Salvation: God's Son in Human Flesh

John 8:42-59

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me." ⁴³ Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. ⁴⁴ You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *does not* stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it. ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. ⁴⁶ Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? ⁴⁷ He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." ⁴⁸ Then the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" ⁴⁹ Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. ⁵⁰ And I do not seek My *own* glory; there is One who seeks and judges. ⁵¹ Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death." ⁵² Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.' ⁵³ Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?" ⁵⁴ Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. ⁵⁵ Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad." ⁵⁷ Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." ⁵⁹ Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Redeemed in Jesus Christ,

By nature, all men are in bondage to the devil. That is how we are born. God has to rescue us, or we would remain that way until we die, and thus be lost forever. To be born in bondage is to be a slave. Your will is not your own. You can only do what you are told. If you are in bondage to the devil, then your works can only be evil. Yet there is a difference between being a slave, and being a child of the devil who delights to do the devil's work. It is the difference we see between the Israelites in our Old Testament lesson, and those in the Gospel. The Israelites in the wilderness murmured against God, but repented when they were chastened by fiery serpents, and looked to the brazen serpent which God had setup to save them, and lived. Their descendents, the Jews in our lesson, would by no means look to the Salvation whom God had sent, but despised Him, and sought to kill Him, even in the face of the clear testimony of the Prophets, and the Father in heaven. Therefore Jesus Himself calls them the devil's children. The thought of Satan having children is dreadful. It is the stuff of horror movies. Yet, no horror movie has ever shown what a child of the devil really is. Their eyes do not glow, and they have no horns sprouting from their head. They look exactly like you or me, right down to their outward religious devotion.

How does one cross the line from being the devil's slave to being his child? One only has to hate and viciously oppose God's saving love by which He has redeemed sinners from eternal death, particularly at that time when the Holy Spirit is calling to you to trust in and rely upon the salvation of God. In a nutshell, it is to despise the Gift of salvation in Jesus Christ, and to hate the Giver of that Gift, *because* He sought to save you. Because it is only in Jesus that God's salvation comes to men, those who hate God's salvation hate Christ Himself. Because it is by becoming man that the Son of God saved men, their hatred is always directed at the incarnation of Jesus. They despise nothing more than that God was manifest in the flesh of Jesus Christ, so that he could destroy the power of sin and death. What a dreadful thought, that the very highest and freest love of God could become the target of such scorn and hatred! May God graciously preserve us from this sin!

Who would imagine that anyone could so despise the very God who loves them and wants to save them? No, not as they naturally do, and not in ignorance, but *at the very time* when God's Holy Spirit is calling to men to believe on Jesus Christ and be saved, and by the very people who have had a clear and undeniable testimony of the truth. Yet, that is exactly what we see, of all people, in the Jews who sought to kill Jesus. This portion of the Gospel is not often preached today because modern Christians do not want to hear Jesus speak the harsh truth, especially about the Jews. In Oberammergau Germany, where the world-famous passion play is held, the vile hatred which the Jews manifested toward Jesus has been almost entirely removed. Why is this? There are many reasons, but chief among them is this: that the Jews are no different than other men. The words which Jesus speaks here apply equally to anyone who would despise the Salvation of God, and blaspheme against the Holy Spirit by calling the saving grace of God the work of a demon. It is uncomfortable to realize that such people are far more common than we would like, and that but for the grace of God, it might be our own voice calling Jesus a devil, and hating the grace of God.

When it comes to the Jews that we see opposing Jesus, we should not be smug, but rather be grieved. Think of who they were, Jesus' own people, the ones whom God had loved and preserved, the apple of His eye through whom the greatest blessings of heaven came to men. These very people turned against the God of their Salvation. They boasted in being the children of Abraham, but hated the very Redeemer which God had promised to Abraham. Therefore Jesus tells them as plainly as it could be said, "God is not your father, and Abraham is not your father. The devil is your father. I know this because if you were Abraham's children, you would love me, and rejoice that I am here, even as Abraham did. If you were God's children, you would believe His testimony concerning me, and believe the works which He sent me to do. But in-

stead you hate me and seek to kill me, even though I have done nothing wrong, and none of you can convict me of sin.” Again, how dreadful it is to see this! Do not callously dismiss this people, the Jews as if these things have nothing to do with you, but put yourself into the place of one of Jesus disciples, who were also Jews, and think of the wonderful heritage of Abraham, who by faith became the father of many nations, the father, even, of the Lord’s Christ. Here you are at the time when all of God’s promises, the very promises that made to Abraham are being fulfilled, but around you, your friends and family, your countrymen whom you assumed all this time were joined together with you in the faith of Abraham, now rise up and viciously hate the the Lord’s Anointed, Abraham’s Seed, David’s Son and Lord. Remember Jesus’ own tears as He wept bitterly over these people as only a dear father can weep over his rebellious children who now hate and despise him. The children of the promise are rejecting their own Birthright before your eyes. The children of Jacob are becoming the children of Esau, or as Paul says in Galatians, the children of the promise have become merely children of the flesh, and persecute their faithful siblings, the body of Christ (Gal. 4:29).

In all this lesson, however, remember this: For all that these people hated Jesus, and even took up stones to stone Him when He identified Himself as God in human flesh, it is for these same people that Jesus continues on to the cross. In all of His passion, He goes forward with the knowledge that so many of those whom He dearly loves, both hate him, and will die because of their hatred. He will redeem these people, and pay for their sins, even as they put Him to death. To the very bitter end, when Jesus suffers the pains of hell upon the cross, He will endure the punishment that they deserved. Jesus went to the cross knowing that these people *did not have to die in their sins*. Their iniquity too would be paid for. Jesus would still be their Redeemer, “for the gifts and he calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29). God never takes back the gift that He has promises in Jesus Christ, not from the Jews, not from the Gentiles, and not from you. All the more sad that the gift is despised and wasted by so many who hate the Son of God, yet all the more glorious that nothing can possibly turn *Christ* away from doing *everything* necessary that you might be saved. Yes, even when a man hardens his heart against God so much that he would willingly crucify the Son of God all over again, Jesus has loved that man, and died for him.

In our day, we are very familiar with opposition to Christ. The Christian faith is ridiculed at all corners. It is the one faith that is allowed no place in the public square, the one voice whose witness must be silenced. When God comes to set men free from sin and reveal His love, it is there that the opposition to God grows the most fierce. It begins with being offended at the thought that a man even *needs* a Savior. But as the witness of Christ grows more and more bold in the face of opposition,

those who oppose Christ grow more fierce. The more boldly Christians declare God’s love in Jesus, the more aggressive and violent the opposition of the world becomes. At some point, the enemies of Christ pass the line from merely being slaves of the devil as all men are by nature, to being the devil’s own children, willfully doing and delighting in the devil’s work. If such people were in ample numbers among the Jews who had all the promises of the fathers and the prophets, we should not be surprised to find that in the Christian Church, which has the testimony of Christ and the Apostles such men will also arise who are hostile toward the Gospel of Christ, and violently oppose the Salvation which He accomplished by coming in human flesh. John, speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, calls this the spirit of antichrist. It was working in the days of Jesus among the Jews, in the days of the Apostles among many false brethren, and has not ceased to work until this day. It has taken it’s fullest form in the papacy of Rome, but it is not limited to there. It can also be found still among the Jews, in Islam, and in many Christian churches who suppress the Gospel of Christ Crucified, and preach nothing but the works of men.

What shall be your defense, both when the devil tempts you to despise the Gospel, and when the children of the devil, and the many antichrists in this world seek to overcome your Christian voice and witness, sometimes through political, sometimes through violent means? Your defense is in the very thing that the devils despise most, in the witness which Jesus makes in our lesson: that God was manifest in the flesh of Jesus, so that in death, He brings life to the world. And now, if you hears and keep the Word of Jesus, you shall not die. Jesus promises you that you shall never see death. Yes, your body will indeed die. The enemies of Christ may even strike you down, yet you will live. You will stand and prevail, because Jesus was crucified for you. The threefold testimony to the glory of Christ, and the surety of our salvation will preserve you and keep you. The testimony of the Prophets, the testimony of the Word and works of Jesus, and the testimony of the Father Himself in heaven, for just as these have testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, so also they have testified that you who believe in Him are the blessed children of Abraham, and of God.

May God graciously preserve us in this Word and promise, until our end, and may He fix our eyes in faith upon the cross of Jesus, as He willingly goes to redeem the world from sin and death. Amen.