

Why Do People Hate the Gospel so Much?

Acts 16:16-24

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But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. - Acts 16:19, ESV

People hate the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They attack it in various ways, some by direct and open opposition and others by manipulation and distortion. When Paul and Barnabas were going through Asia Minor on their first missionary journey, they saw many converts and much opposition. They planted churches of new believers and were also driven out of towns, beaten, slandered, threatened and even stoned and left for dead. Now Paul has a new companion, Silas, and they're preaching in a new area, Macedonia, and they face the same realities.

Yesterday we rejoiced in the conversion of Lydia and the key strategic advance of the Gospel. Today, we see a slave girl delivered from a demon and then Paul and Silas beaten severely and thrown in jail. Why? Because the very power of the Gospel to bring salvation and deliverance also makes it a real threat. In this case, the Gospel threatened the economic profit of the slave girl's owner, who made money off of her demonic torment, exploiting her as a fortune-teller.

The Gospel is the power of God for salvation, and it is also a threat to everything our fleshly selves hold dear. It is a threat to our self-righteousness, for we cannot come to God unless we confess that we have no righteousness of our own. We confess that we desperately need Jesus to save us from ourselves. It is a threat to our materialism, for Jesus tells us the truth that we cannot serve two masters, God and our wealth. It is a threat to our desire for self-exaltation, for the Gospel exalts Christ above all and draws our hearts to make much of Him. We say with John the Baptist, "*He must increase; I must decrease.*" ([John 3:30](#))

The Gospel gives so much more than it strips away, but it does indeed strip all away before it gives back more than we could imagine. We are given the kingdom of God, but our petty, personal kingdom must die first. We surrender all attempts at establishing our own righteousness, which are vain and pathetic anyway. We receive in exchange the perfect righteousness of Jesus, but we cannot ever claim that we have earned or deserved it. We give up our materialism, and we receive a great treasure beyond human understanding, kept in heaven for us. We humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, and then He exalts us as He sees fit.

In the end, people hate the Gospel because the Gospel proclaims that Jesus is Lord. Those who confess this truth are saved and find eternal life. But those who insist on being the master of their own fate and the captain of their own ship are doomed by the Gospel, and so they hate it fiercely.

Some show their hatred for the Gospel not by open and violent opposition, but by distorting it to make it a message all about me and my righteousness and my prosperity. This is almost worse than those who would just beat missionaries with rods and imprison them. At least the violent opponents of the Gospel are being clear and honest about how they feel about the good news of Jesus' kingdom rule. May the Lord give us the grace to so cherish His Gospel that we willingly and joyfully face all opposition to it for His glory!

Heavenly Father, You have called us to Yourself in Your Son, Jesus Christ. He is Lord of all. You have shown us the futility and bankruptcy of our own personal kingdoms, and You have brought us into Your eternal kingdom. Thank You! Make us faithful ambassadors of Your kingdom. For Your glory and in the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.