

The Gospel According to Christ's Enemies

Psalm 76:10

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise You"

Jehovah glorifies Himself in the wrath of the wicked against Him. When they bellow their wrath against Him, He puts His trumpet to their lips, causing them to sound forth His praise instead. He may cause prophets hired to curse His people to bless them instead – as He did with Balaam in Moab. He may magnify His name in destroying those who try to destroy His people – as He did with Pharaoh of Egypt in the Red Sea.

The truth stated in our text – "Surely the wrath of man shall praise You" – was gloriously illustrated when the enemies of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ vented their wrath against Him. They unwittingly spoke the truth about Him when they castigated Him. Their words of condemnation against Him unwittingly justified Him. He wore their terms of derision as badges of honor.

We read of this in the four gospels written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (the first four books in the New Testament).

We here will consider the wrathful sayings of men against Jesus Christ in what we may call a fifth gospel, *The Gospel According to Christ's Enemies*. In wrathfully castigating Him they expressed the following truths regarding Him: 1. His *divine sonship*; 2. His *indisputable humanity*; 3. His *divine power*; 4. His *unbridled sovereignty*; 5. His *vicarious death*; 6. His *kingly lordship*; 7. His *godward faith*; 8. His *unselfish salvation*; 9. His *legal vindication*; 10. His *receiving grace*.

1. Jesus Christ's *divine sonship* (John 5:18, in the context of vv.1-18). When Jesus healed an invalid at the pool called Bethesda in Jerusalem on a Sabbath, He answered those who criticized Him for doing so by saying "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." His enemies attempted to kill Him because, according to them, he committed blasphemy when "**He ... said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.**"

Jesus Christ spoke truth when He identified God the Father as "My Father". For He is "God's only begotten Son" (John 3:16, 18; also 1:18 & 1 John 4:9), begotten by God from eternity by an eternal generation (Psalm 2:7). And God twice from heaven publicly declared of Jesus Christ, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" – both at Jesus' baptism and His transfiguration (Matthew 3:17 & 17:5).

And God's Son is indeed equal with His Father. For a son is equal in nature with the father who begot him. Accordingly, Christ Jesus from eternity is "in the form of God" and "equal with God" (Philippians 2:5f).

Therefore, Jesus' foes unwittingly spoke the truth and declared His divine Sonship when they said "**He ... said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.**"

2. Jesus Christ's *indisputable humanity* (Luke 4:22, in the context of 4:16-30). When Jesus ministered to his fellow

townsmen in Nazareth, He read to them from the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-3: "The Spirit of Jehovah is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of Jehovah." Then He said to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." But they denied Him as Jehovah's anointed Servant and Savior when they said "**Is this not Joseph's son?**" They in essence said "**Is He not one of us?**"

Yes, Jesus Christ is one of us, a man in our humanity. For the Son of *God* in His incarnation became also the Son of *Man*. He did so in order to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy (Hebrews 2:14-17): "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren"

Therefore, Jesus' foes unwittingly spoke the truth and declared His indisputable humanity when they said "**Is He not one of us?**"

3. Jesus Christ's *divine power* (Luke 5:21, in the context of vv.17-26). When Jesus healed a certain paralytic, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." His foes then began reasoning in their hearts and thoughts, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? **Who can forgive sins but God alone?**"

Jesus' foes rightly understood that only God can forgive sins. None can forgive sins except the One against whom the sins are committed, whose law is broken by the sins. Sins are against God only – for honest sinners confess that "Against You, You only, have I sinned" (Psalm 51:4). Since Jesus Christ is God, sins against God are against Jesus Christ, and He therefore can forgive them.

Therefore, Jesus' foes unwittingly spoke the truth and declared His divine power when they said "**Who can forgive sins but God alone?**"

4. Jesus Christ's *unbridled sovereignty* (Mark 3:22): When Jesus cast demons out of people, His foes said "**He has Beelzebub**". This name means "lord of the flies", which are pests feeding on excrement. The Jews gave this name to "the ruler of the demons", who is Satan the devil.

Jesus' wrathful foes unwittingly spoke the truth – but not in the sense they intended.

For Jesus has bound Satan (v.27; cp. Revelation 20:1-3). Satan is the ruler of the demons, and Jesus is the ruler of Satan. In this sense, "**Jesus has Beelzebub**" because "**He owns Beelzebub.**"

5. Jesus Christ's *vicarious death* (John 11:50, in the context of vv.45-52). The Jewish Sanhedrin gathered to consider what to do about Jesus' popularity. They feared He would

become a political Messiah and therefore move the Romans to end Jewish national existence. Caiaphas the high priest suggested that Jesus be killed so that the nation would be spared: **“It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.”**

The divinely-inspired explanation of this declaration is found in the next two verses (vv.51f): “Now this he [Caiaphas, the high priest] did not say on his own authority [rather, He spoke as directed by the Holy Spirit]; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation [not the *political* Jewish nation, but rather national Jews in the *spiritual* Israel], and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad [elect Gentiles of many nations across the earth].”

Therefore, Caiaphas unwittingly spoke the truth and foretold the vicarious death of Jesus Christ as the substitute for God’s elect.

6. Jesus Christ’s kingly lordship (Mark 15:18, in the context of vv.16-20): Roman soldiers mocked Jesus by calling Him **“King of the Jews!”**

They unwittingly told the truth! They did so for two reasons:

First: Jesus is King of *physical* Jews (and also Gentiles) by virtue of being “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Revelation 19:16) – regardless of whether or not they admit it.

Second: Jesus is acknowledged as “King of the saints” (Revelation 15:3) by *spiritual* Jews – who are defined and described as *true* Jews in Romans 2:28-29: “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly [i.e., one whose circumcision is in the flesh], ... but he is a Jew who is one inwardly [i.e., one whose circumcision is of the heart]; ... whose praise is not from men but from God.”

7. Jesus Christ’s godward faith (Matthew 27:43): Jesus’ enemies at His crucifixion mocked Him by saying **“He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”**

They unwittingly told the truth! And they did so in fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 22:8: “All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, ‘He trusted in Jehovah, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!’”

The remainder of this prophecy declares that Christ trusted in God even from His mother’s womb (vv.9f): “But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother’s breasts. I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother’s womb You have been My God.”

Furthermore, Jehovah delivered this One who trusted in Him.

8. Jesus Christ’s unselfish salvation (Mark 15:31): Jesus’ enemies also said of Him when He was crucified, “He saved others; **Himself He cannot save.**”

They unwittingly told the truth! They did so for two reasons:

First: Jesus *could* not save Himself because He *would* not save Himself – for more than twelve legions of the angelic hosts would have come to save Him had He summoned them to do so (Matthew 26:53).

Second: Jesus could not save Himself because He had unselfishly purposed to die as the substitute of His people for their salvation. He is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for His sheep (John 10:11).

Therefore, if Jesus saved Himself, He could not save God’s people. He therefore unselfishly did not save Himself in order to save them.

9. Jesus Christ’s legal vindication (Matthew 27:25): “And all the people answered and said, **‘His blood be on us and on our children.’**”

These words from the Jewish nation to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate have this meaning: “If Jesus is innocent, and we put Him to death as a guilty person, may the punishment due to such a crime be inflicted upon us and all our children after us.”

They told the truth! Their prophecy has been fulfilled in two ways:

First: the troubles of the Jewish nation since that time evidence their blood-guilt in crucifying Jesus Christ. His blood is on them.

Second: their blood-guilt has legally vindicated Jesus Christ.

10. Jesus Christ’s receiving grace (Luke 15:2): Jesus’ enemies derided Him by saying **“This Man receives sinners”**.

They unwittingly told the truth!

And Jesus wears their term of derision as a badge of honor.

For Jesus graciously receives sinners.

Jesus says “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Matthew 9:13). The sinners whom He calls come to Him, and He graciously receives them. No sinner who came to Jesus was refused by Him. For He came into the world to save sinners – even the *chief* of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

Yes, He graciously receives and saves even sinners who have the guilt of His blood on their hands – if they come to him.

If you are convicted of being a sinner, you will come to Jesus, and He will receive you and save you.

But if you are self-righteous, you will turn from Him to your self-condemnation.

– Daniel E. Parks