

## Difficulty, Duty, and Delight (Matthew 2:14-23)

### Introduction: *Hated Without a Cause*

God declared that the Messiah would be “hated ... without a cause” (Ps 69:4). When Herod heard that the Christ had been born, he was greatly troubled. The Messiah is threatening my little kingdom! Many react the same way even today. Chapter 2 traces the experiences that Jesus and his family had to deal with right from the very beginning. They’re the same kind of experiences that you, as the family of Jesus, have to face today.

### 1. Difficulty

Here is the sinless Son of God, still an infant, and the king is already so troubled even to hear of him that he wanted him destroyed. Jesus was not immune to dangers, to sufferings, to trials, to difficulties, and therefore neither was his family. Maybe you feel that it ought to be easier somehow now that you’re with Jesus? “Dear friends, do not be surprised ...but rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed” (1 Pet 4:12-13, see 2:20-21). If God did not spare his own Son from the difficulties of this life, if even he “learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb 5:8), then we’re wrong to expect God to deliver us from trials and difficulties (see John 15:18-20, Matt 10:25, Acts 14:22).

### 2. Duty

Since we aren’t saved by our obedience, you might not expect obedience to play much part in the life of God’s people—or at least expect that God would make our duties to be easy. But once again, we find the very reverse is true in the family of God. That night, Joseph must have been tempted to think, “O God, you know all things. You know that Herod’s going to seek the child’s life. Do you think you could have told me earlier so that we had time to pack? Why wake me up in the middle of the night and tell me?” It’s as though God wanted to make obedience, not easier, but more difficult for him. Much has been required of the family of Jesus; and duty has been difficult for the family of Jesus so far (compare Luke 1:38). This is what the family of Jesus is to expect. “Tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Rom 5:3-4).

### 3. Delight

The difficulties and duties we’ve seen shouldn’t overshadow the most important thing that’s been happening. “That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matt 1:20-21). This is their joy: As hard as it all is in some ways, there’s no doubt that God is in it. This was all God’s sovereign will. Every last bit of it has been planned by God, and they were being allowed play a role. So it says repeatedly, “All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet” (Matt 1:22). Jesus is sharing our experience, and we’re sharing in his. And everything that went before, the Exodus from Egypt, the deliverance of Israel under Ahaz, the return of the captives from Babylon to the promised land—all this was woven into their history to teach them about who Jesus is.

### Conclusion: *Which king represents you?*

Such is our whole world, and Herod is its great king and representative. Most people are willing to say that what Herod did was very wrong; but they’re not willing to face that they’re very often wrong in the same ways he was: selfish, thoughtless, cruel, angry, uncaring of God, and wanting quietly to be rid of Jesus. The “good news” is: “There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

## Another Gospel?! (Galatians 1:1-10)

### Introduction: *Review—gospel beauty in a setting of passionate controversy*

There is a life and death struggle for churches of Galatia and the souls of their members. This is pure gospel, being administered in the form of an antidote to the deadly poison of legalism in the church. “Born in controversy, [Galatians] seems inevitably to be born for controversy” (S. Findlay, *Expositor’s Bible*, ad loc).

### 1. The Address: *Four Things to Gain the Attention of a Wayward Church (v. 1-5)*

#### (a) *Apostolic authority (v. 1)*

Apostoloi were authorized representatives in the ancient world. “He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me” (Luke 10:16).

#### (b) *Christ’s deity (v. 1)*

Paul says he became an apostle, “*not through man, but through Jesus Christ.*” What does that tell you about Jesus Christ?

#### (c) *Substitutionary atonement (v. 4)*

Jesus Christ gave himself *for* our sins—not *because* of our sins, but *in behalf of* or *in place of* (*huper* with the genitive).

#### (d) *A gospel of both forgiveness of sins and holiness of life (v. 4)*

The gospel is the antidote both to legalism and antinomianism. Salvation is a package deal. We don’t get forgiveness of sins by the blood of Christ without the deliverance from the evil age by the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. We’re not justified by our deliverance from evil; but justified people are also delivered from this evil age.

### 2. The Purpose: *Warning Against the Accursed Preaches of a False Gospel (v. 6-10)*

How could they be so easily misled by a message that undercut the gospel? It had happened, and it would not be the last time. “By the grace of God we here in Wittenberg have acquired the form of a Christian church. In our midst the Word is taught purely, the sacraments are used properly, there are exhortations and prayers for all social classes; in short, everything is moving along well. But some fanatic could stop this blessed progress of the Gospel in a hurry, and in one moment he could overturn everything that we have built up with the hard work of many years. This is what happened to Paul, the chosen instrument of Christ” (Luther, *Commentary*, ad loc.).

“Here Paul is breathing fire” (Luther, *Commentary*, ad loc.). Paul’s whole approach—the whole Bible’s approach is radically against the spirit of our age. If we follow Paul and Scripture, we will certainly be branded zealots or worse. You may take your choice, but choose you will. You cannot both embrace the uncompromising stand of the Scripture and adopt the passive, conciliatory platitudes of modern syncretistic religion.

### Conclusion: *How are differences dealt with today?*

ECT: “Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ. It is time for evangelicals and Catholics to be Christians together. ... It is neither theologically legitimate, nor a prudent use of resources, for one Christian community to proselytize among the active adherents of another Christian community.” In an article called “Why I Signed It,” J. I. Packer wrote, “Good evangelical Protestants and good Roman Catholics ... are Christians together.” Contrast his introduction to Buchanan’s *Justification*.