

Why People Hate Jesus

John 3:19-21

As we continue our worship through the proclamation of the word of God, I would invite you to open your Bible with me to John 3 for this message entitled, “Why People Hate Jesus.” Our text for today is John 3:19-21 and in this conclusion of Jesus’ revelation of divine truth to Nicodemus, Jesus reveals the underlying reasons that people reject him. There might be many different factors and influential dynamics in a person’s life that contribute to their rejection of Christ, but when you peel back the layers, in every case, Jesus teaches us here what will always be found at the heart of rejection—they love the darkness and hate the light. For the sake of context, follow along as I read John 3:16-21...

Why do people hate Jesus? Jesus is the greatest man that ever lived. He is the only human being who never sinned. He’s never done anything wrong. He had no character flaws. He had no annoying quirks. He had no awkward idiosyncrasies. He treated everyone with kindness and love. He always spoke the truth. He revealed divine truth. He offered living water to thirsty souls, he satisfies hungry spirits.

He healed the sick, restored broken bodies, cast out demons, raised the dead. He miraculously fed thousands of people for nothing more than the cost of one meal. He spoke against abusive religion and oppression of the vulnerable. He was the ultimate manifestation of the grace and love and patience and mercy and kindness of God.

Why in the world would anyone hate someone like that? How could anyone possibly hate Jesus? Why do people hate Jesus? Matthew Henry says it best: “Christ is hated because sin is loved.”

What is sin? Sin can be defined as anything contrary to the nature and purposes of God. In other words, sin is everything God is not, and nothing that God is. God is love, sin is hate. God is gracious, sin is vindictive. God is merciful, sin is merciless. God is patient, sin is quick to anger. God is just, sin is unjust. God is measured and controlled, sin is explosive. God is generous, sin is stingy. God seeks the good of others, sin is self-seeking. God is self-sacrificial, sin is self-preserving. God’s ways

produce joy, freedom, and peace, sin's ways produce guilt, shame, and anxiety. God is a healer, sin is a cancer. God aims to kill sin in us, and sin in us aims to kill God.

And yet, Christ is hated because sin is loved. That's what we'll see in our text. Specifically, we learn from this revelation by Jesus three reasons people reject the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ: First, they reject Jesus because of what they love. We'll see that in vs. 19—they reject Christ because of what they love. Second, they reject Christ because of what they fear. We'll see that in vs. 20—they reject Christ because of what they fear. And third, they reject Christ because of who they serve. We'll see that in vs. 21—they reject Christ because of who they serve.

1. Because of what they love (vs. 19)

LOOK at vs. 19. . . .

Why do people reject the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ? Because they love the darkness—they love their sin. They do evil and they love it. And that enslavement to the darkness creates a hatred for the light of Christ. This is what Jesus teaches here.

Jesus begins with the declaration, “This is the judgment.” In vs. 16-18 Jesus has just proclaimed the glorious good news that God loved the world by sending his Son so that anyone who believes on him will not perish, but have eternal life.

The eternal, glorious God who made all things, who is sovereign over all, and to whom all things owe their thanks and praise and submission, gave up his throne and left the splendor of his majestic heavenly home to take upon himself a human body and nature. He walked among us, experienced all that we experience, and then he gave himself over to death to serve as a substitute for sinners. He received upon himself the wrath of God, thereby satisfying God's justice. And now he offers forgiveness and eternal life to all who would believe in him and come under his gracious rule.

Salvation from condemnation is made available and proclaimed to all. But most don't accept it. Many reject it. The majority have no interest in the extraordinary gift that God gives. Why? In saying, “This is the judgment,” Jesus is saying, here is why people are still condemned despite the offer of forgiveness. This is why people are judged.

Notice how he says, “The light has come into the world.” This, of course, refers to the coming of Jesus the Messiah into the world. This calls us back to the introduction to John’s Gospel where he says in 1:4-9. . . . As we saw when we studied that passage, the apostle John takes a cue from Jesus in John 8 where he declares himself to be the light of the world. But Jesus didn’t invent this title for himself; he drew from the Old Testament’s use of light and darkness to refer to spiritual realities.

Light, by its very nature, gives life. Scientifically we know that light is one of the essential requirements for the existence of life. This is as true spiritually as it is physically. In a cry of desperation David pleads with the Lord in Psalm 13:3, “Light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.” His pain and sorrow are so intense that they have blocked out the light of God in his life, so he pleads with God to grant life-giving light to his eyes—so he can see God rightly and not die in despair.

Paul describes the life-generating work of the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 4:6 saying, “For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Notice that the light is the knowledge of the glory of God as manifested through Jesus Christ. And because that knowledge is only found in Scripture, Psalm 19:9 says, “The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”

So light gives life. The converse is true: darkness describes death. Psalm 143:3 says, “For the enemy has pursued my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground; he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead.” Though the psalmist is not physically dead, he describes his condition as hopeless as death.

Light not only gives life, it also gives understanding. Psalm 119:130 says, “The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.” When you shed light on a matter, you bring clarity and understanding to others. Darkness, on the other hand, obscures the truth. 1 John 1:6 says, “If we walk in darkness, we lie!” Ephesians 4:18 says unbelievers are “darkened in their understanding,” which is to say that they do not understand truth.

What else does light do? Light reveals the path we should take. Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Psalm 18:28 says, “For it is you who light my lamp; the Lord my God lightens my darkness. For by you I can run

against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall.” On the other hand, Jesus says in John 12:35, “The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going.”

Light represents good and darkness represents evil. Isaiah 5:20 says, “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!” Scripture says that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. So when we are in his presence, we need no other light. Revelation 22:5 says, “And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”

On the other hand, hell and the lake of fire are enveloped in darkness. 2 Peter 2:4 says, “God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.” Jesus repeatedly refers to the lake of fire as “the outer darkness” where there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

But the lake of fire is not the first time souls experience darkness. All who are born into this world are born into darkness. We are born dead in sin and blind to the glory of God. This is why Paul describes salvation this way in Colossians 1:13-14, “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Those who find redemption in Christ are set free from the darkness, but those who don’t go from darkness of soul to complete and utter darkness.

If you are resisting coming to Christ, don’t think that hell is a place where you can party with your friends. Hell is not the devil’s domain where he’s in charge. The devil, his angels, and every person who dies apart from Christ will experience personal, individual torment. And since you won’t be able to see anything in the darkness, the only way you will know you’re not alone is because you will hear the weeping cries and angry screams of others.

To deliver people from that darkness, to free people from the wrath of God, the light came into world. Jesus came as the giver of life and understanding and wisdom and guidance. He came as the only good and righteous man. He came to give the light of life; he came to teach the light of truth; he came to give the light of

knowledge; and he came to grant the light of righteousness to all who believe on him.

And what happened? LOOK at vs. 19. . . .

This is shocking. What the ESV translates as “people” other versions have “men.” The Greek is a bit stronger than either of those—it could be translated as “mankind” or “humanity” or “human beings.”

The point is that light of God came into the world, and the human species loved the darkness. The God who created them came to rescue mankind from the grip of judgment, and mankind sees the light and runs after the darkness.

When it says “people loved the darkness,” people do not love the darkness the *phileo* love—as though darkness is a friend. Neither do they love the darkness with an *eros* love—a romantic, heat-of-the-moment kind of love. No, mankind has an *agape* love for the darkness. This is a loyal, committed, self-sacrificial love.

People love the darkness even though the darkness doesn’t deserve it. Mankind loves the darkness even though the darkness doesn’t love them back. Humanity loves the darkness even though the darkness doesn’t keep its promises, only brings sorrow and pain, is never satisfied, and only makes demands of them. The world of sinful people are like a pitiful fool who in his irrational and blind affections keeps pining after a merciless and sinister queen who only keeps the fool around to serve her own purposes.

The Light came into the world to bring joy and hope and peace and forgiveness and reconciliation, but people were willfully and passionately committed to the darkness. Why? What drives such irrational passion for the darkness? What is behind such love? LOOK at the end of vs. 19. . . . You do what you love and you love what you do.

It’s been well said that orthodoxy leads to orthopraxis, which essentially means right thinking leads to right living. If the truth rules your thinking, it will manifest in your lifestyle. But do you know that the reverse is true? Just as your thinking can and does affect your living, so your living can and does affect your thinking. When you make a habit of living for Christ, that confirms and cements the right thinking that leads to living for Christ.

On the other hand, when you make a habit of living in sin, the current runs the other way and whatever right thinking you had erodes, giving way to thoughts that validate and encourage your sinful behavior.

Whereas one might sin the first time only after a strong battle with the conscience, after repeated failures you begin to console yourself that God will forgive you. And as you go down the path of sin you begin to wonder if God even cares or pays attention. Eventually you've sinned enough that you couldn't care less what God thinks. And then comes the final phase. You hate God because he has the audacity to have a standard that goes against your desires. We'll see that in vs. 20.

Our thinking and our living cannot be separated—they are intricately connected and affect one another. But we tend to disconnect them—we think we can go down the path of sin and it won't affect us. We think we can hit the eject button anytime we want. But in truth, the further down the path of sin we go, the less we desire to eject, and eventually we hate to see that red ejection button so we cut the wire to make the light go out.

This is why many unbelievers hear the gospel message and say, "Be saved from my sin? What? I love my sin! I don't need to be saved from it!"

[[When Eve was tempted by the serpent, initially she fought back. She reminded herself and the serpent of the truth. But the more she pondered and looked at the fruit, the more her thoughts shifted and finally overcome all resistance and she indulged in her sin. But she didn't stop there.

But she didn't want to sin alone—so she invited her husband into her sin. And unlike Eve who was deceived, Adam immediately and directly rebelled against God and joined in her sin. As the heads and representatives of the human race, they chose sin for us, and their sin was imputed to us, such that we are born out of the womb with a sinful nature that loves the darkness and practices evil.

This natural and passionate commitment to sin is why God designed the family the way he did. Parents exist not merely to ensure a child survives until they can fend for themselves—that's what animals do. Parents really exist to curb the sinful nature and help children learn how to choose something other than what they naturally want to do. Once a child grows beyond parental oversight, the Lord instituted

human government to curb the sin we all want to do. They exist to punish the evil and reward the good, it says in Romans 13.

But to whatever degree parents and the government are successful in curbing outward sinful behavior, they cannot change the heart of a person who loves the darkness.]]

There is a sharp contrast that we see in the words of Jesus. Here in vs. 19 Jesus says that mankind loves the darkness. But vs. 16 Jesus says that God loves the world. God loves the world that loves the darkness. His love is not an irrational love; his love is not pining for the affection of the world; his love is not based on false promises or anything good he sees in the world. God's agape love for the world is based on his mercy and compassion for the world of men and women who are destined to spend eternity under his wrath.

Whereas the world's love of the darkness enslaves them to it, God's love for the world offers freedom and forgiveness and life. People will sacrifice anything and everything to squeeze a thimble self-pleasure from the darkness. God gave his Son to unleash a flood of joy and blessing and life.

This is why the light came into the world—to take upon himself the divine justice due to those who love the darkness, and to grant them new life in him so that they would no longer love the darkness. So people reject Jesus the Messiah because of what they love. Second, they reject Jesus because of what they fear.

2. Because of what they fear (vs. 20)

LOOK at vs. 20. . . .

Why do people reject the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ? Because they fear exposure. They don't want their true self brought into the light for all to see. They don't want God or anyone else to shed light on their desires and preferences and lifestyle. They loathe someone telling them that what they think and do is wicked.

In vs. 19 Jesus says the world loves the darkness. And in case someone is tempted to say that the love of darkness can coexist with some degree of openness to the things of God, Jesus says here in vs. 20 that love for darkness requires hatred of the

light. The darkness demands it. It cannot coexist with light and it will not tolerate its slaves to have anything less than animosity to the light.

Notice how he begins here, “For everyone who does wicked things.” Though the English can sound like the focus is on a person’s behavior who could otherwise have good qualities, in the original, the phrase “who does wicked things” reflects the quality of a person. In other words, a person does wicked things because they are a wicked person. That’s the idea here.

There is no category for a good person who occasionally does bad things. Human nature being what it is, there are only evil people who occasionally do relatively good things. Scripture is consistent in its anthropology—it’s teaching about the nature of man. The Lord says in Genesis 8:21, “the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” He says again in Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.” Psalm 14:2-3 says, “The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.” And that’s quoted again in Romans 3.

So when Jesus says “everyone who does wicked things” he’s speaking about every human being in their natural state untouched by the grace of God. The words “evil” in vs. 19 and “wicked” here which describe the actions and character of unbelievers may be a punch in the gut, but Jesus is not exaggerating or speaking in hyperbole. Those enveloped in darkness are so opposed to all that good and right and true, and the contrast between light and darkness is so great, and the chasm between God’s nature and character and everything not like him cannot be overstated.

And don’t think God’s the only one who thinks this way. Those who love the darkness feel the same. How do I know? Because of what Jesus says next. He says, “everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light.” The darkness is as opposed to the light as the light to the darkness. Neither side wants compromise. Each hold strong in their position that there can be no coexistence. One of the two must fall. That’s why I said earlier that God desires to kill the sin in you, and the sin in you desires to kill God.

Paul put it this way in Galatians 5:17, “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.” He says again in Romans 8:7, “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.”

This is why you must be born again. Because being born into this world means that you have an pervasive hatred of God and all that God represents. The only way to change that is to be born again whereby God gives you a new heart that can see the glory of Christ and which desires to know and follow him.

Well, to get to the point here, look at the second half of vs. 20. . . .

Darkness fears exposure by the light. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:11-14, “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light...”

The problem with the works of darkness being exposed is that they are then seen for what they are—detestable. And because all people are made in the image of God and endowed by him with a conscience, the moment our sin is exposed we feel the pangs of conviction and guilt and shame. And that, my friends, is the last thing the world wants.

One of the primary lies of temptation is, “No one will know, no one will find out.” But when sin is exposed, suddenly other people know, others will find out. The distress that causes sends some people to the grave—sometimes by their own doing.

But there’s more to this than other people knowing. The word “expose” can also mean “convict.” The conscience holds court against the soul and the gavel comes down declaring them guilty. In the same vein, the word also has the idea of “reprove” or “rebuke” where the sin is not merely known, but that knowledge invokes a rebuke against the sinner—whether by the conscience or by others. We see this illustrated in Luke 3:20 illustrates this: “But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reprovved by [John the Baptist] for Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.”

Herod took for himself his brother's wife, and though many knew about it, only John the Baptist had the courage to rebuke him publicly. Now if Herod didn't care what anybody thought, he wouldn't have done anything. But he couldn't stand that someone would rebuke him, so he put John in prison.

This is why the Jewish leaders hated Jesus—he rebuked them. After one particularly strong rebuke against them, Luke 11 records, “As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.” They knew that if they could catch him in something he said, they could accuse him of blasphemy and kill him. Since he always spoke truth, the time came when Jesus declared himself to be the Messiah, and on that basis they charged him with blasphemy and killed him.

So do people reject Jesus? They reject Jesus because they love the darkness and because they fear exposure and rebuke. Finally, consider the third reason people hate and reject Jesus—because of who they serve.

3. Because of who they serve (vs. 21)

LOOK at vs. 21. . . .

Why do people reject the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ? Because they serve a false god and therefore the true God who would lead them into the truth and empower them to live by the truth is their enemy.

Jesus teaches this by showing the contrast between those who hate the light and those who come to the light. In contrast to those whose works were evil and in contrast to those who do wicked things, notice that he says here, “whoever does what is true.” This is a unique phrase that requires our consideration.

The verb “does” is different than in vs. 20. As I said, the language there refers to the wicked character of the unbeliever. Here, it speaks more to how one characteristically behaves. “Whoever does what is true” is not someone who does what is true from time to time—no, they habitually, regularly, characteristically do what is true.

Perhaps you're wondering, "Why does Jesus say 'whoever does what is true' instead of saying "whoever does what is good?" It would seem natural to contrast the evil and wicked life of the hostile world to goodness or even righteousness. It seems odd to use "true" as the contrast, doesn't it?

Well, there's no doubt that Jesus could have used "good" or "right" here, but by using "true," we're led to consider what is it that makes something good or right. You could say that something is good or right simply because God says so. But then we can ask, "on what basis does God identify something as good?" Someone might say, "On the basis that it is consistent with his character." Ok, but what is it about God's character that defines goodness and righteousness?

One could say that everything God does is good simply because he does it. But that doesn't get to the essence of God's character—that makes goodness grounded in God's acts, not in his nature. What makes God good is that he is utterly committed to truth.

Truth is that which is real. That which is true is that which is consistent with reality. What is, is true, and since God is self-existent, he defines reality. All reality flows out of the mind and heart of God, therefore he is true and all that he does is true. This is why Jesus, who is God, can say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." This is why John could say of Jesus in 1:14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Doing what is true is a helpful contrast to doing what is wicked because the nature of evil and wickedness is that it is false. It's at best a distortion of the truth, but even a distortion is entirely false. A half-truth is a full lie. Therefore, to do what is true is to do that which is consistent with God's character and his revealed will—and his character and revealed will are good and right because they are true.

LOOK again at vs. 21, "But whoever does what is true comes to the light." If anyone is living in reality, they will come to the light because they are not afraid of being exposed. There is no guilt or shame that comes upon those who do what is true. So they come to the light. They welcome the light. They embrace the light.

The rest of the verse is a purpose cause—it tells us why whoever does what is true comes to the light. “So that,” he says, “it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

Whereas those who do wicked things are afraid of exposure, those who do what is true put on a show. What do they display? They show that their life is the overflow of their relationship with God. Rather than being hostile to God, they are aligned with him, they are guided by him; they are empowered by him.

To live according to truth one must know the truth; and to know the truth one must have been given the capacity to know the truth; and to have the capacity to know the truth means that one has received new life; and to have received new life one must have been born again by God.

As Jesus said in vs. 3, “unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And then in vs. 5, “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” And as John said in 1:12, those who are born “were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” So God’s work in a person’s life is the explanation for how anyone who hates the darkness could come to the light and live according to the truth.

In contrast, those who reject God and do not come to the light have not been born of God. They love the darkness and they serve the darkness. Turn over to chapter 8 with me. What Jesus teaches positively here in vs. 21 he explains to Pharisees in more detail negatively in 8:39-47. Follow along as I read. . . .

What Jesus says to the Pharisees standing before him, the apostle Paul expands to all people apart from Christ when he writes in Ephesians 2:1-3, “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”

This is why people reject Jesus—they have no interest in serving God because they serve their father, the devil, the prince of the power of the air. Now I can already hear the objections running around in some minds. “No I don’t, I’m not a Satan worshipper; there are no pentagrams in my home; I don’t practice rituals and

sacrifice animals and engage in anything that satanists do.” To which I say, “I’m very grateful for that.” But Satan is not just the god of Satanism, he is the god of every false religion. He goes by different names—Buddha, Allah, Shiva, and many others. Sometimes he even goes by the name of Jesus in those religions that make Jesus something other than what the Bible reveals him to be. Satan is behind Atheism as he has deceived people into denying that any god exists.

As Jesus said, Satan is a liar and the father of lies. Everything that is not of the truth—which is to say, not of God—is of the evil one. So if those who do what is true manifest that they are guided and motivated and empowered by God, then those who do what is false manifest that they are guided and motivated and empowered by the devil whether they realize it or not.

Conclusion

Why do people hate and reject Jesus? It’s because of what they love—they love the darkness; it’s because of what they fear—they fear exposure and rebuke; and it’s because of who they serve—they serve the evil one, not God.

Do you see why you must be born again? Apart from God we are incapable of turning from our love for the darkness, our fear of exposure and our loyalty to the kingdom of darkness.

Someone once said to me that they believed people have a free will to believe. This is a very common view, of course. And the illustration he used to explain how someone can choose of their own free will and yet not boast their own salvation was this: when someone is drowning and someone else throws them a life preserver and they grab hold of it—they don’t boast in the fact that they grabbed the life preserver and were saved. They thank and praise the person who threw them the life preserver.

That makes sense. We know that someone who is thrashing about in the water and grabs hold of buoy ring doesn’t take pride in themselves. But the problem with that illustration is in the setup.

It pictures someone thrashing in the water desperately wanting to be rescued. But that’s not how the Bible describes us in our natural condition. To stick with the same concept, the Bible pictures us as having drowned, sinking lifelessly to the

bottom of the ocean. And no matter what saving method is thrown our way we don't have the ability to grab hold of it.

Oh but it's even worse than that. The Bible pictures us in our natural condition foolishly swimming away from safety, ignoring the calls to return to land. And when we get tired and breathless and weak and we start to drown, though a buoy is thrown right to us we push it away. And if someone were to dive in and grab hold of us we would fight them off. That is the irrational hatred mankind has for God in our natural condition.

The unredeemed person is enslaved to their passions and desires—they don't turn to Christ because they can't. And the reason they can't is because they love their sin and they hate everything that would move them away from their sin. Again, this is why you must be born again. Because only when our heart is fundamentally changed does the hostility melt away and our heart is warmed by the Son of God as his light shines on us and we come to the light to receive forgiveness and grace.

Well, it's taken us five messages to work through this clear but profound teaching by Jesus to Nicodemus. John doesn't tell us how Nicodemus responded in the moment, but there's evidence that whether now or sometime later he was born again. In John 7 we'll hear Nicodemus subtly defend Jesus against his fellow Jewish leaders who had irrational hatred.

And then in John 19 Nicodemus partners with Joseph of Arimathea to bury Jesus. That's all we know about this leader among the Pharisees. But it seems enough to say that he was not among those calling out for Jesus' death. It seems that the grace of God was at work in him and perhaps he was indeed born again.

Jesus began this theology lesson with Nicodemus saying that in order to see and enter the kingdom of God, you must be born again. Jesus ends his theology lesson with the reminder that no one goes to hell because they are not born again. Those cast into the lake of fire are there because they loved the darkness rather than the light. They loved their sin and hated Jesus the Christ.

My friend let that not be you. Don't think you have time to love your sin now and turn to Christ later. Because the more you love your sin the more you will hate Christ. The longer your eyes are kept in the dark the harsher the light will seem to you. The more wickedness you inhale the more you will crave it. And the more

covered in evil you are the more offended you will be by those who point out your stench.

So turn to Christ today. Be washed of your sin and be freed from your addiction and have your affections changed by Christ who came to redeem sinners with his own life, death, and resurrection. Look to Christ and see the glory of his love and grace and mercy and justice.

See him hanging on that cross shedding his blood to take the wrath that sinners deserve, and see the empty grave where he rose victorious over sin and death. Put your trust in him and believe that he is God and only through him can you be saved. Know that you can be forgiven today if you would but bow the knee and submit to the one who cares for your soul.

And beloved church, you who have been born again, see here the condition from which you were saved. Boast in the Lord who rescued you from death and gave you life even while you were his enemy. Rejoice in the Lord always because no matter how hard life gets, an eternity of joy and blessing and peace awaits you.

And let this truth embolden your evangelism. How does it do that? Because it tells you that it's not your job to make the gospel attractive. It's not your job to argue people into the kingdom.

It's not your responsibility to say everything perfectly so they'll understand it and be convinced by it. It is our joy to proclaim the truth with simplicity and clarity and let the Spirit work as he wills—whether to grant new life or to harden hearts.

Our evangelistic strategy can be boiled down to this: find any and every opportunity to proclaim gospel of Jesus Christ. Whatever we do, whatever services we provide, whatever food is offered, whatever activities we have, it should all serve the purpose of creating a platform for the gospel.

If you look in Life@Hope you'll see there's a meeting in a few minutes after church with Spreading Hope, our outreach ministry. It's a time learn about the ministry and brainstorm more ideas of how we can shine forth the light of Christ from this place. We have the Fall Festival, the Free Market Fair, Hope for the Sojourner, park cleanup days, and more. We can't do everything that could be done, but we can do

more than what we're doing. And we need more people putting their hearts and minds and hands together.

Beyond our outreach ministry, each one of us is called and commissioned ambassador for Christ. We are not of the world, but we are in the world, and the Lord has placed you in your family and in your school and in your community to be a light for Christ. Wherever you engage with unbelievers you represent Christ and his purposes. So don't be shy, and don't be afraid. Answer the call of your King and open your mouth and let the word of God go forth knowing that it will not return void.

Discussion Questions:

1. What makes sin so enticing?
2. What are ways we can draw closer to the light of Christ?
3. If Jesus covers our sin, why do we need to stop sinning?
4. How can you help someone struggling with sin?
5. If people hate God, what does that mean for Christians?
6. What are other passages that show man's hatred towards God?