

## Christ's Rejection and Our Responsibility (John 15:22-27)

As we come to God's Word in Jn 15 I have a growing burden on my heart:

- for those outside the church with no love for it, or who hate the church
- for people inside the church with little love for the Lord or His church (tonight I'll talk more about that and how to grow love for the church)
- for people who come to church but don't want to be at church right now
- for people who reject the Word preached or refuse to apply it, as James 1 says 'hearers only but not doers,' or some resist even hearing the Word
- I fear for young people who can be inoculated to the gospel, thinking if they're homeschooled, or know the answers in Sunday School, they are Christians, but statistically speaking there are some in this room who are already gone and will leave the faith after you leave home, some sooner
- I worry for older people who have heard the gospel so many times but it has never changed your heart, the glory of Christ is presented week in and week out before your eyes, the Lord's miracles and saving mercy have been set before you, but your heart isn't humbled, it's hardening

When Jesus spoke the words of our text in John 15 there were many in His day that heard Him teach but didn't continue when it went against what they believed or wanted. Many grew up in conservative Bible-believing homes, but they rejected Christ's call to repentance and discipleship. Many saw His miracles and mercies in His earthly ministry but their hearts were hardened. Their rejection only increased their responsibility and their guilt of great sin

John 15:22: *If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.* <sup>23</sup> *Whoever hates me hates my Father also.* <sup>24</sup> *If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.* <sup>25</sup> *But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'* <sup>26</sup> *"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.* <sup>27</sup> *And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. [\*PRAY\*]*

v. 27 ends in witnessing but He knew the disciples would fail to that night. Peter would deny Him, the others would desert Him, Thomas would doubt Him. These guys would need some help, so He would send them a Helper to help them have courage and power to be faithful witnesses to evil hateful hostile people. He shares a burden on His heart for sinners to hear the truth

The hated Savior has a Holy Spirit who helps us share God's love to haters. His heart was not only heavy this night about rejection He'd face by the world and would even face from His father on the cross, Jesus had a burden on His heart for His followers to have a burden on their hearts for the lost, so that despite the world's hate we'll witness to it of Jesus' love

In this text we see 2 key points: Christ's Rejection and Our Responsibility.

### 1. Christ's Rejection (v. 22-25)

*If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin*

...

Who's the 'them/they' in context? The verse says it's those that Jesus came to and spoke to, so clearly He's talking about the people of Israel that Jesus came to and spoke to in His speaking ministry for about 3 years before this. That much is clear but what isn't as clear is what He means by saying they would not have been guilty of sin if Jesus hadn't come and spoken to them. Is He saying the 1<sup>st</sup> century Israelites had no sin or weren't guilty of it until Jesus came and spoke to them? Were those living before Jn 15 not sinners?

We know from other Scriptures *including the OT* that all are sinners and all are accountable, the whole world is guilty (Romans 3 proves it quoting OT). Even people who never heard the Word of Christ have no excuse, it says in Romans 1-2 because all men know God by creation and by conscience that shows they know God's law written on their hearts (Rom 1:20-21, 2:14-15). That's Paul's Exhibit A and B as to why all are '*without excuse*' (1:20, 2:1)

So what does Jesus mean in the end of v. 22 here that only after He came and spoke did these Jews have no guilt of sin and no excuse? Paul teaches all since Adam are condemned sinners before and without the Word of God (5:12, 18-19), but Jesus seems to speak of guilt for a specific sin in context. Rejecting His coming and speaking to them is a specific sin in the text. It isn't the sin of rejecting creation or conscience, it's rejecting Christ Himself, and the end of v. 22 says there's no excuse for those guilty of rejecting Him.

That doesn't mean people before He came or who didn't hear His teachings had a *valid* excuse, v. 22 in the KJV says now '*they have no cloke for their sin.*' In Young's Literal Translation there's now no '*pretext...for their sin.*' The same Greek word in Acts 27:30 is translated *pretending* (NIV). Strong's Dictionary defines its basic meaning as 'pretended cause, alleged reason.'

The common meaning isn't a legitimate excuse, Greek dictionaries define as 'An outward show or appearance, a pretense or pretext put forth in order to cover [old English *cloke*] one's real intent, that which is put forth as a cause or...apparent reason' (Complete Word Study Dictionary). Another defines as 'what is said in defense of a particular action, but without real justification' (Louw-Nida Lexicon). Jesus is saying even the false defenses are now gone.

Christ's coming and teaching stripped away pretending, pretexts, pretenses as He spoke to sin of the heart that couldn't be cloaked or covered. He laid bare sin for what it is and left no excuse for sinners and no leg to stand on. Mouths that tried to make excuses or make sin not such a big deal are shut by Christ's coming and teaching as He shut them up and down in Mt 21-23. So the NT later says every mouth is stopped and accountable to judgment.

I think this text goes beyond sin in general to specific sin: rejecting Christ's message and miracles that proved He was the God the Son. Look at v. 24:  
*If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.*  
 This specific sin they're guilty of, Jesus said, had to do with specific works Jesus did among them, greater works than any man had ever done, and still they didn't believe. They could see what Jesus did was miracles no man can do, but for them seeing wasn't believing, seeing was hating Jesus. His work was clearly God's so they not only hated Jesus they hated the Father's work

Go back to John 9 for a clear example that I think will help us see this idea. There's a man blind from birth and some asked whose sin caused his state. That's bad theology that thinks disability is caused by personal sin of people who are disabled or that they would be healed if only they had enough faith.

Jesus says in Jn 9:3 "*It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.*" Notice as He's about to work a miracle on this blind man, Jesus calls it 'the works of God.' The Father is at work in His miracles, that's why in Jn 15 He says rejecting His works is also a rejection of the Father. In v. 6-7 it says nothing about the blind man's faith, in fact he's healed before the man knows, much less believes, in Jesus.

Then in v. 13 as the Pharisees clearly see this man who was blind but now sees, we see the sin Jesus will talk about in chapter 15. They reject Jesus in v. 16 as not from God, for healing on a Sabbath some called Jesus a sinner! Then in v. 32 the formerly blind man enlightens spiritually blind Pharisees:

Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. Remember what Jesus said in Jn 15:24, their guilt of sin was because Jesus did works among them no one else had ever done but they still reject Him? Here in v. 34 the Jewish leaders conclude the blind man is in utter sin, and they cast him out, then in v. 35 Jesus seeks him out and asks if he believes in the Son of Man, that God's Son and Messiah of OT prophecy has arrived. In v. 36 the healed man asks who or where the Son is so he can believe Him

<sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, *“You have **seen** him, and it is he who is **speaking to you.**”* <sup>38</sup> He said, *“Lord, I **believe,**”* [same key words as 15:22, 24] and he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, *“For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.”*

<sup>40</sup> Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, *“Are we also blind?”* <sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, *“**If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.**”*

That's the same sort of wording in 15:22-24 and you can go back there now. If these religious leaders really had a physical inability to see or hear they might try to claim some pretext or excuse, but because they rejected God's Son so clearly before their eyes, there's not even a pretend cloak to wear as their guilt of rejecting Christ is exposed and is great. <sup>22</sup> *If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.* <sup>23</sup> *Whoever hates me hates my Father also.* <sup>24</sup> *If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.*

'Jesus was not saying that if he had not come and spoken to these people [in Israel that] they would be sinless; rather he was saying that if he *had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of the sin* of rejecting him and the Father he came to reveal. Rejecting Jesus...[as they did despite the miracles in final hard-hearted hatred allows] no forgiveness, because the one who has committed this sin has at the same time rejected the only cure'<sup>1</sup>

He said in Lk 12:47 *‘that servant who **knew** his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a **severe** beating.* <sup>48</sup> *But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a **light** beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.’*

Jesus not only spoke of degrees of reward, like we saw last week, He spoke of degrees of punishment in proportion to their knowledge and light given to them. Scripture speaks of the strictest harshest judgment on false teachers and Jesus spoke of severe guilt on the generation of Israel's religious leaders that rejected Him just days before, using the same word as Jn 15:24: '*who ...for a pretense make long prayers...will receive the greater condemnation*' (Lk 20:47). Earlier in the gospel He said because of the mighty works Jesus did before that generation '*it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you*' (Lk 10:14). That wasn't just true of those who didn't respond to Christ's miracles, He said 2 verses earlier to those not repenting at Christ's message through His messengers '*it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than that town*' (v. 12). Judgment on Sodom is more bearable on judgment day than those who knew but rejected the full gospel presented

The sin of sodomy is not the worst of all according to Jesus the judge, those who clearly hear of Christ's Word and works from His messengers, but they reject the gospel in the fullest light of revelation have greatest guilt. Heb 10:<sup>26</sup> *if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,* <sup>27</sup> *but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.* <sup>28</sup> *Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.* <sup>29</sup> *How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God ...* <sup>31</sup> *It is a fearful [terrifying] thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

This is why I started this message saying my heart carries a burden today. There's worse punishment than there was in OT times where God's wrath is on display for those rejecting the law, there's worse punishment for people rejecting the Lord Jesus, those who trample underfoot His message of grace. The knowledge of the truth of the gospel is more available now than ever to you, and if you don't repent, if you keep sinning deliberately hard-heartedly, the Word of God says your sin and guilt is inexcusable and an unimaginable fury of fire awaits. You are a sinner in the hands of an angry living God and it's a fearful terrifying reality to fall into His hand if your sins aren't covered

Your only hope my friend, is to renounce your own efforts to cloak or cover your own sin, reject all pretenses or excuses, repent of sin, realize there's nothing in your hand you can bring to please God, recognize you need the hands of another with nail prints through them, look to the cross to cling in faith to what Jesus' hands did to rescue sinners from hands of an angry God

This takes us from Christ's Rejection, to Our Responsibility (in application)

Unbelievers are responsible because Jesus has come and has spoken and has done as v. 24 says things no man has done. Your duty is to respond to Jesus and you're without excuse if you don't. If you refuse the good news and you don't repent of your sins and follow Him as Lord in a changed life, the end of v. 24 makes clear you're not just holding back, you're hating God the Son and God the Father. In the words of v. 25 you're hating Him without a cause but it's not too late today to turn, to trust Him, commit your life to His cause

J.C. Ryle wrote 'misuse of religious privileges...intensifies man's guilt, and will increase his condemnation ... [v. 24] means, "they had not been so sinful and so guilty as they are now. But now they were utterly without excuse." They had seen Christ's works, and heard Christ's teaching, and yet remained unbelieving. What more could be done for them? Nothing. absolutely nothing! They wilfully sinned against the clearest possible light, and were of all men most guilty ... religious privileges are in a certain sense very dangerous things. If they do not help us toward heaven, they will only sink us deeper into hell. They add to our responsibility ... He that dwells in a land of open Bibles and preached Gospel ... will find to his own cost, except he repents, that his judgment will be according to his light. The mere fact that he had knowledge and did not improve it, will of itself prove one of his greatest sins ... the devil has more knowledge than any of us, and yet is no better for it. Let the burning words of our Lord in the passage now before us, sink down into our hearts, and never be forgotten ... to say "I know," and yet not to say "I believe," will place us at the lowest place ... of judgment.'<sup>2</sup>

Friends, don't reject the Lord, repent, cry out to Him to have mercy on you! The application for unbelievers is repenting, the application for believers is representing Christ. Christ holds us responsible to represent Him, to witness in v. 27, but first in v. 25 He wants us not to be rattled that people hate Him. When many people reject His word of grace and resent us who speak it, and it seems irrational how much they resent, it doesn't mean something's wrong with the message, it actually proves God's Word is right: <sup>25</sup>*But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'*

The word 'law' here just means the Jewish Scriptures, in this case probably Psalm 69, a prophecy that Messiah would be irrationally hated. Jesus fulfills attacks with lies (69:4), family members would reject Him (v. 8), zeal for God's house would consume Him (v. 9), they would give sour wine to drink (v. 21), etc. That's all in Ps 69. Jesus had to be hated like that to be Messiah

And if we represent Him rightly, He tells us in v. 18 not to be surprised the world hates us to whatever degree we're like Jesus, hated without a case. If you ever watch interchanges on TV talk shows, some liberals and atheists seem to have such an irrational hatred towards things of Christ. Even some secular observers sometimes wonder what the cause is for such vicious hate toward followers of Christ in our world, around the world, or on the www.

One wrote: "The other day I was on a news webpage. Belief in God came up in the feed below the article and I decided to read the thread of responses because the debate was between what appeared to be a staunch atheist and an agnostic...interesting. The atheist came out with both guns a-blazing. He was just furious and bitter, bashing [esp. Christians] with each tap of the keys. The agnostic kept asking him why he was so angry, trying to explain that he was behaving in the exact same manner he condemned religious people for. The atheist fellow couldn't seem to put his finger on why he was so mad, traveling down a rabbit trail or two with little rationality."<sup>13</sup>

But Jesus in v. 25 helps us make sense of that, it goes beyond disagreement to disdain for Christ and all who represent Him, hatred without good cause. A month after Sept. 11, 2001 a Newsweek cover story ran with the question "Why Do They Hate Us?" It gave a lot of information on Muslim views of the Western world (and Christianity that they wrongly equate as one and the same), but Jesus addressed that question a long time ago in v. 18 and v. 25. The world hates Christians because they hate Christ and hate Christ's Father and better foreign policy or increased education won't stop the world's hate

Hatred for Jesus began early in His life when King Herod's irrational hatred drove him to try to kill the baby of Bethlehem who threatened his kingdom. Israel's leaders tried to kill the man Jesus threatening their kingdom of false religion, and Satan's kingdom of darkness hated Jesus for threatening theirs. The struggle isn't just flesh and blood, it's spiritual warfare rooted in God's promise in Gen 3:15 of the godly seed of woman and the serpent's children. Those with the prince of the power of the air war with the Prince of Peace. As we approach Christmas let's remember even that word offends the haters who can't stand the name Christ in any way, shape, or form, except cursing

The carol says: And in despair I bowed my head: "There is no peace on earth," I said,  
 "For hate is strong and mocks the song, Of peace on earth, goodwill to men."  
 Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God is not dead: nor doth He sleep;  
 The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, With peace on earth, goodwill to men."<sup>4</sup>

Hate is strong, but we have a stronger message of love and peace in Christ. In a hateful hostile world, how can we fearful people be faithful witnesses?

*<sup>26</sup> “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. <sup>27</sup> And you also will bear witness because you have been with me ...*

Matthew Henry said v. 26 has more theology about the Holy Spirit than any other single verse in Scripture. The historic Eastern and Western church had a lot of discussions about what the verbs ‘send’ and ‘proceed’ meant exactly but for our time today I want to focus on the application of bearing witness:

- That’s our responsibility in v. 27 but we lack the ability without v. 26
- v. 26 calls the Spirit the Helper, and in the context He helps us witness
- This word *helper* had legal courtroom connotations in NT times, like a mediator trying to bring 2 parties together, that’s the Spirit’s goal and role in witnessing about Christ to bring a sinner and Christ together
- The term was also used of an advocate who represented the cause of another in court, here the Spirit helps represent the cause of Christ and His helping presence is also a comforter to those represented by Christ
- The term was used for a legal counselor, the idea here would be God’s coming alongside us to help by His Spirit counseling us by His truth, His constant presence to help, and next week we’ll see His convicting
- The end of v. 26 fills out the courtroom metaphor further in explaining the Spirit is also the witness. Jesus isn’t on trial, sinners are on trial, and the Spirit takes the witness stand to testify of the truth about Jesus.
- Years ago a famous celebrity visited a famous museum in France and reportedly told the museum director he wasn’t impressed with what he saw, but the celebrity was told ‘sir, the artwork isn’t on trial, you are.’ That’s the idea here, the beauties and wonders of Christ aren’t on trial, man is on trial, and all rejecting Christ’s work are pronounced guilty.
- The opposition may line up all kinds of false witnesses but in v. 26 the Spirit is called ‘the Spirit of truth’ who bears true witness about Jesus. Not only does He present the truth, He proves the truth by evidences.
- This verse would be fulfilled in the book of Acts as the Spirit testified by signs and wonders and miracles as evidences of the truth of Jesus, and He continues to bear witness in the spirits of believers about Jesus
- Romans says ‘*conscience bears witness in the Holy Spirit*’ (9:1), and ‘*the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God,*’ 8:16  
[application: praise God for all the Spirit is and does!]

*<sup>27</sup> And you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning* [i.e., these 11 men with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry]



This began with the Spirit's help as Acts 1:8 says '*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses...*'  
 Acts 5:32 '*we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit...*'  
 14:3 says as the apostles bore witness of Jesus, God '*bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.*'  
 15:8 says '*God ... bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit...*'

In Acts, Peter filled with the Holy Spirit, bears witness about Christ's power (4:8) and declares the Christ they rejected is risen and there's no other name men can be saved through (v. 10-12). It says '*when they saw the boldness of Peter and John...they recognized that they had been with Jesus*' (v. 13, just like Jesus said in Jn 15:27: you bear witness because you've been with me). How can we be more bold in bearing witness? We need to be with Jesus, to spend time with Jesus in His Word daily, letting His Word dwell richly in us so we'll speak to another from it, as Col 3:16 says. The parallel in Eph 5 says we need to be filled with the Spirit, which will result in us speaking to one another (v. 18), and when Peter was filled with the Spirit he was bold. We need to ask the Spirit's help to convict us and empty us of fear of man, and be filled with the Spirit who gives us power to be witnesses, and His presence with us by our side as our Helper as we go from here as witnesses

The book of Acts also records fulfillment of John 15:20, if they persecuted Christ, they will persecute Christ's followers, and that's still fulfilling today

- In Acts 5 it says they witnessed for Jesus by the Holy Spirit (v. 32) and then when the leaders hated and hurt these men, they rejoiced *that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name*, v. 41. They didn't take personal, it was for their personal Lord and Savior
- These words of Jn 15 helped them witness despite opposition, like in 13:52 *And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*
- These Spirit-inspired words in Jn 15 help us not to be surprised by rejection, but to be strengthened to our responsibility to be witnesses

A Puritan writes '*this is the great encouragement that he holds out to them in view of the world's hatred. Is there not a lesson here for us? Are you hated ... some trial oppress you, some deep sorrow wound you? Are you cast down, harassed because of sin within you and around you? ... by the power of his Spirit and by the word of his testimony ... the blessed [Spirit-inspired] word...left us, and the gracious teaching of the promised Spirit ... these are the two things that would raise us up superior to the world and its hatred. And thus we, too, would become living witnesses for Jesus.*'<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *NET Bible Notes*, 15:22.

<sup>2</sup> J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel*, <http://gracegems.org/Ryle/j15.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.sermonaudio.com/new\\_details.asp?ID=43363](http://www.sermonaudio.com/new_details.asp?ID=43363)

<sup>4</sup> Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day."

<sup>5</sup> Charles Ross, *The Inner Sanctuary*, p. 148-49.