

## Mark 13:9-13

### HATED FOR THE GOSPEL'S SAKE

**Intro:** Listen to a few facts that ought to cause us to stop and think.

- A Chinese Pastor is arrested and thrown into prison. His sons are beaten by the police.
- 70,000 Indian Christians were driven from their homes and forced to march through a jungle to safety to avoid people intent on their murder.
- A Christian Mexican family is attacked and killed by their neighbor because he blamed them and their faith for his daughter's stomach ailment.
- In Saudi Arabia a man cut out his own daughter's tongue and burned her to death because she converted to Christianity.
- Taliban gunmen in Afghanistan shot and killed a Christian aid worker as she walked down the street just because she was "*spreading her religion*".

These stories, and many more could be mentioned, sound like they come from the distant past. All of these events occurred during the past week. You don't hear much about it in the media, but over 200 million Christians in some 60 countries are suffering intense persecution for their faith. They are literally being "*Hated For The Gospel's Sake*".

As Jesus continues to deliver the Olivet Discourse, He warns His men of the persecution that lies ahead for them. He wants them to know that following Him carries a high cost, Matt. 16:24. He wants them to know that they are going to be called upon to face persecution for their faith.

I want to preach from these verses on the thought, "*Hated For The Gospel's Sake*". I want to talk about the matter of persecution as it relates to our faith in Jesus. There is a word in these verses for us today.

We have it made in America, but our brothers and sisters around the world are paying for their faith with their lives. Of course, it is my belief that some hard times are on the horizon for the church in America. We need to know what Jesus says about persecution. We need to know what to expect and we need to know how He would have us respond to the persecution we might have to face.

I want you to see in these verses *A Promise Of Hardship*; *A Promise of Help*; and *A Promise of Hatred*. Let's look at these *thoughts* together and we think about being *Hated For The Gospel's Sake*.

#### I. A PROMISE OF HARDSHIP v. 9-10

A. The Powers Behind This Hardship – The disciples are warned that they will be delivered up to the "*councils*". This is a reference to the Jewish Sanhedrin, which was their version of the Supreme Court. They would also stand before "*rulers and kings*", who would interrogate them concerning their preaching and doctrine. They would be hunted, hounded, beaten, and some would even die, for the faith they preached.

This prophecy was literally fulfilled in the book of Acts.

- Acts 4 – Peter and John face the Sanhedrin and give an account of the healing of the lame man at the Temple.
- Acts 7 – Stephen is tried by the Sanhedrin and is condemned to die.

- **Acts 9:22-25** – The Jews want to kill Paul for His preaching.
- **Acts 12** – James and Peter are arrested by King Herod. They are imprisoned and scheduled to be executed. James is beheaded, but Peter is delivered by a divine miracle.
- **Acts 14:19** – Paul is stoned and left for dead at Lystra.
- **Acts 16:19-24** – Paul and Silas are imprisoned in Philippi.
- **Acts 18:12-17** – Paul is persecuted in Macedonia.
- **Acts 19** – Paul is arrested and tried in Ephesus.
- **Acts 21** – Paul is arrested and held for trial in Jerusalem.
- **Acts 24** – Paul is tried before Felix.
- **Acts 26** – Paul is tried before Festus and King Agrippa.
- **Acts 27-28** – Paul is kept under arrest and sent by ship to stand trial before Caesar. Paul remains a prisoner in Rome until he is executed by the Romans.

That is but a brief sampling of the kind of persecution that rocked the early church. Here is Paul's own testimony concerning the things he suffered for Jesus, **2 Cor. 11:21-29**.

Why did the disciples receive such treatment from the religious Jews and from secular government? They received this treatment because the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is a direct threat to organized religion and to corrupt human government.

The Gospel, with its twin calls to repentance and exclusive faith in Jesus Christ, challenges everybody who hears it. The Gospel exposes the sin and ungodliness of this corrupt world system. When the system is confronted by the Gospel, the system reacts by seeking to silence the Gospel.

It has been this way since the beginning of the church and it will continue this way until Jesus comes to get His church. As the end of the church age draws closer, there will be an intensification in persecution of the Gospel with its call to holiness, repentance and faith in Christ alone.

B. **The Places Involved In This Hardship** – The disciples will face their persecution in religious houses and in the seats of human government. These are both places where people should expect fair treatment and justice. Those who preach the Gospel can expect neither! The very places that should have provided refuge and safety, will instead become judgment halls where evil will condemn righteousness to death.

C. **The Purpose Of This Hardship** – The purpose for this persecution is two-fold.

First, the persecution will serve to seal the destiny of those who reject the Gospel and its message. They prove their sinfulness by rejecting the Word of God and the Way of salvation. It may be hard for us to understand, but God receives as much glory from the damnation of sinners and He does from the salvation of His saints. How is this possible?

When God saves a soul, He demonstrates His grace, love and mercy. When God condemns a soul to Hell, He demonstrates His righteousness and His holiness.

When a soul is saved, God proves that Jesus Christ is "*the Way, the Truth and the Life*" and that "*no man cometh unto the Father but by*" Him. When God condemns a soul, proves that Jesus Christ is "*the Way, the Truth and the Life*" and that "*no man cometh unto the Father but by*" Him. (Ill. **Rom. 9:18-24**)

Second, persecution causes the Gospel to spread. When persecution comes to the church, the faith and

message of the church are validated. When believers seal their testimony with their blood a lost world takes notice.

Consider this: Approximately 60 percent of the world's Christians live in prosperity and peace. We have most of the money, most of the Bibles, the various outreach opportunities such as radio, television, printed media and the Internet. 40 percent of the world's Christians live in poverty and persecution. Many of these people suffer daily for their testimony, and many others are tortured and killed for believing in Jesus Christ.

The greatest number of conversions and the greatest moves of God are being reported among our poverty stricken, persecuted brethren. They are suffering and dying for their faith, and millions are being influenced. We, on the other hand, enjoy our peace and prosperity and influence no one for Jesus. We neither draw men to Him nor do we confirm them in their unbelief. The persecuted, on the other hand, give daily testimony to the depth of their faith and commitment to the Gospel.

*(Illustration: There is a word here for the modern church. As we draw nearer to the end of time, we can expect persecutions against believers to increase. The fact is, we are living in an environment that is growing increasingly hostile to the Gospel we proclaim.*

*We tell the world that there is only one way to be saved. They want to embrace every path as a way to get to God.*

- *We tell the world that God demands righteousness and holiness. They want to live life on their terms and do as they please.*
- *We tell the world that abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide are all wrong. They want to treat life as if it has not value, at the beginning, at the end or in the middle.*
- *We tell the world that there is a place called Heaven that can only be reached through faith in the Gospel. They want to believe that everyone goes to Heaven, or that life ends with nothing more than a body in a grave.*
- *We tell the world, false religion and human government that God's Word is the final authority and that they will face Him in judgment one day. They want to live as though God were dead and as if they will never give an account of their actions.*

*It is clear to see that our message and the way of the world are diametrically opposed. Our message and their way of life stand in stark contrast, and the end result will be that those who possess power in this world will abuse those they consider weak. Yes, there are dark days ahead for the faithful people of God. There are hard times ahead for those who preach the true Gospel of grace. There are hard times ahead for those who take a stand for righteousness against the rottenness of this world. Ill. **2 Tim. 3:12***

*We are moving into an era where social liberals are in control our government. They favor many things that are against the clear teachings of the Word of God. We are living in a time when everyone is expected to accept homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle. We are expected to accept that a woman has the right to murder her unborn child. We are expected to tolerate sin and vice of every kind. We are expected to tone down our message and soften our speech so that we do not offend the people who engage in sinful activity. When we fail to go along with the demands of this increasingly secular society, we can expect to be persecuted for our stand.*

*My brothers and sisters, some things are worth fighting for! A baby's right to be born is worth fighting for. The right to preach the Word of God without restrictions is worth fighting for. The right to tell a lost world that Jesus saves is worth fighting for. The right of a teenager to stand at his or her graduation and mention the name of Jesus is worth fighting for.*

*One day soon, we will see who is willing to fight for these things. We might even get to find out who is willing to go to prison or die for these things.)*

### I. A Promise Of Hardship

## II. A PROMISE OF HELP v. 11

- When the disciples find themselves under this kind of persecution, they can expect help from God. The Lord will give them exactly what they need when they stand at the seat of power and give an account for their preaching. God's promise is that the Spirit Himself will fill the disciples and give them the very words they need to defend the faith they have preached. God promises direct, divine help to aid those persecuted for their faith.
- This is seen in Peter and John's response to the Sanhedrin, Acts 4:6-22. This same promise was fulfilled when Paul stood before Felix, Acts 24:10-21, and before King Agrippa and Festus, Acts 26:1-29.

*(Illustration: We need not fear the day when persecution comes to the church! If we are saved by God's grace, and if we take our stand with Him by faith, we can be certain that He will help us in that hour, Heb. 13:5. This can be seen in many instances of persecution that have come down to us through the centuries.*

*On April 17, 1521, the great reformer Martin Luther stood before a Roman Catholic council to answer charges of heresy. As Luther stood there that day, he spoke as a man directed by God Himself. Luther said, "Unless I am convinced by proofs from Scriptures or by plain and clear reasons and arguments, I can and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen."*

*Those words, among others spoken that day, led the council to condemn Luther as a heretic. He was persecuted, but the protestant reformation was launched by those same words.)*

Many other examples could be listed here. The fact is, God is faithful to stand with His people, Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20. He will not desert you when you face persecution or His glory.

### I. A Promise Of Hardness

### II. A Promise Of Help

## III. A PROMISE OF HATRED v. 12-13

A. The Reality Of This Hatred – As the persecution continues, it will intensify until even the strong bonds of family erode and give way to family members turning on one another. We should not be surprised by this revelation. Jesus said that it would be this way, Matt. 10:34-39. The disciples experienced this kind of hatred, and so will the church of the end times.

Not only will family hatred increase, but so will secular hatred for the people of God. We wonder why the world would hate a people devoted to godliness and peace, but as I mentioned earlier, they hate us because we stand for everything they are against and we are against everything they stand for. We will see the persecution of the church grow stronger and more public as the end approaches.

B. **The Reason For This Hatred** – Jesus tells them that “*they will be hated...for my name’s sake*”. The reason the world hates the believer is because the world hates Jesus. This world is energized and controlled by Satan. After all, he is the “*god of this world*”, **2 Cor. 4:4**. This world is filled with unregenerate sinners that exist to fulfill the will of the devil, **John 8:44; Eph. 2:1-3**. Since the devil hates Jesus, he causes all those under his power to hate the Lord too.

Jesus warned His men that just as the world hated Him, they would hate those who follow Him, **John 15:18-21**. This proved true for all of the disciples of the Lord Jesus.

- **James** – Beheaded by King Herod
- **Peter** – Crucified upside down in Rome
- **Andrew** – Crucified on an olive tree
- **Thomas** - Thrust through with pine spears, tormented with red-hot plates, and burned alive.
- **Philip** – Tortured and crucified
- **Matthew** – Beheaded
- **Nathanael** – Skinned alive and then crucified
- **James the Less** – Thrown down from the temple mount and then beaten to death with a club.
- **Simon the Zealot** - Crucified
- **Thaddeus** – Beaten to death with sticks
- **Matthias** – Stoned while hanging on a cross
- **John the Beloved** – Thrown into boiling oil, but did not die. Later exiled to the prison island of Patmos.
- **Paul** – Beheaded in Rome

It also proved true for millions down through the centuries. It still proves true millions in our own day. They hated our Savior, and they will hate us until He delivers us from this world.

C. **The Resolve Of This Hatred** – When Jesus says “*but he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved,*” He is not telling us that some people will lose their salvation by failing to stand in time of persecution. It is not possible to lose your salvation under any circumstances! Jesus is telling His men that genuine believers prove the reality of their salvation experience by standing true to their profession of faith. The Apostle John puts it this way, “*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us,*” **1 John 2:19**. He says this in reference to some who abandoned the early church because of the intense persecution they were enduring in those days.

The lesson for us is simple. When persecution comes, those who know the Lord Jesus will be empowered to stand for Him, even if they are called on to go to their deaths for His glory. Thank God for all the noble, faithful saints of God who have taken their stand for Him and not backed down even in the face of torture and death. I pray that if I am called on to give my all for Jesus, that I will do so without hesitation.

*(Illustration. We really can’t look at a rise in persecution and say that the end is near. Like the signs Jesus gave in **vv. 6-8**, this is another non-sign. The church has been persecuted since she was planted in this world, and that persecution will intensify as we near the end.*

*It is not likely that we will ever face the kind of persecutions in America that some have faced*

*throughout history. In the first century, the Roman Emperor Nero took Christians, coated them in wax and set them on fire to light his garden parties. Believers were sewn inside the skins of animals and thrown to wild animals. Many thousands went to their deaths in the Roman Coliseum to entertain the crowds and to satisfy their bloodlust. Countless believers have been burned alive at the stake, tortured to death, drowned, and mutilated because of their faith.*

*Could it happen here? Yes it could! More likely, believers in our society will face prison and the loss of personal rights and property for the Gospel. We need to ask ourselves if we are prepared to face such a time of persecution.*

*Persecution, while painful, would do more for the church than all of our programs, our buildings and our meetings. Persecution would purify the church, Ill. **1Pet. 1:7**. Sin and sinners would be driven from the membership rolls. The power of God would once again rest on the church house. The church would lose her taste for worldliness and liberalism. She would see her doctrine purified. She would see the glory of God return. A lost world would see our devotion to the Lord and some would be drawn to Him. The Gospel would have more influence in this world if the church that preached it were holy, pure and separated.)*

**Conclusion:** What are we to do with a message like this? First, I would encourage anyone here who has never received Jesus as Savior to come to Him and be saved today. I understand that a message on the persecution of the of the saints does not make many people want to become one. However, believing the Gospel and even dying for Jesus is far better than living in peace and dying without Him. All those who die for Him will go to Heaven, while all those who die without Him will go to Hell.

Second, I would call all true believers to examine their hearts. Are you committed to Jesus, even to the point of death? Or do you shy away from even a simple confrontation at school or work? Are you willing to go to prison if need be? Are you will be suffer for the Lord's sake? Are you will to go to your death for Jesus if that is His will for your life?

If the Lord has touched you heart on any level, please come to Him today and let Him do in your life what He desires to do. I also invite all believers to come to this altar. I invite you to come to and pray for the Christians who are being persecuted around the world today.

Pray for that young girl in Africa who has been sold as a sex slave to a Muslim man. Pray for that Pastor who has been thrown into prison in China. Pray for that family in Mexico whose house has been burned and their children taken away. Pray for those who are paying for their faith with their blood. Pray for them and then pray for us that we will have the same resolve should we be called on to walk the path of persecution.