

The truth that Jesus is the Christ will certainly hurt you regardless of what you believe because it is offensive and upsetting in a fallen world, but despite the pain that accompanies faith in Christ, Christians may thrive by loving God’s written Truth and hoping in God’s incarnate Truth.

Introduction – True/False test about Bible doctrine. Is your first instinct to answer true or false based on what you choose to believe, or to answer based on what the Bible actually teaches? How did you feel when you got the answer right? Wrong? How did you feel about questions you find distasteful? How did you feel about that other person rejoicing in the right answers to those distasteful questions?

I. Who the Truth Hurts

A. Truth haters (vv. 5-7, 13)

A developing pattern: jealousy expressed in anger aroused men to stop the gospel from advancing (cf. Acts 16:19; 19:23-28). The Jews were losing influence among those who worshiped at the synagogue. They perceived Paul “stealing” their members. There is no mention of unbelievers refuting Paul’s proclamation. Instead, they were jealous of the missionaries’ popularity and growing influence. Their motives were jealousy, not doctrinal purity. Truth always hurts truth haters.

B. Truth tellers (vv. 5-10a)

The unbelieving Jews gather a mob and bring highly inflammatory charges against Paul, accusing him and other Christians of causing riots and of political sedition (“Jesus is Lord”). But upon fair examination, the charges against Christianity were deemed false, and the city officials released the Christians after collecting bail money. Perhaps this is Satan’s hindrance that prevented him from legally returning to visit the Thessalonian church he planted, which Paul later lamented (cf. 1 Thess 2:17-18)? The truth of the gospel hurt the truth tellers when they were slandered by truth haters, when their followers were persecuted, and when they had to leave the Thessalonian church behind.

C. Truth lovers (vv. 5-10a, 14)

The truth haters searched in vain for Paul and Silas. Perhaps the Christians hid them from the mob. But the mob still attacked Jason’s house (likely the church meeting place). Everything that the truth haters threw at the apostles also hit the new believers. But rather than shrinking from persecution, their love for God’s truth caused them to endure the hurt for truth’s sake. Jesus promised it would be this way for his followers (Mt 5:10-12; Lk 21:12-13; Jn 15:20-27; 8:31-32).

II. Why the Truth Hurts

A. Because the gospel is offensive to the unregenerate (vv. 2-5a, 13)

1. Paul’s mission was to proclaim, explain, prove, and defend the gospel. He reasoned from the Scriptures using the same method of interpretation that Jesus used and taught his disciples (cf. Lk 4:16-21; 24:27, 32, 44-47). Paul and Jesus interpret all of Scripture as centrally about Christ.

2. What specifically did Paul proclaim and explain about Jesus? (1) That the Christ must die according to the Scriptures, (2) the reasons why the Christ must suffer and rise again (the fall of humankind, sin and its punishment, the judgment of God, the eternal curse of sin that falls upon every sinner), (3) the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ as an atonement for sinners, (4) that Jesus the son of Mary is the Christ. Surely Paul also explained the evidence for Jesus’ resurrection.

3. Some of the Jews were not persuaded by Paul's arguments that Jesus is the prophesied Christ of the Scriptures. Many Jews stumbled over the fact that Jesus was crucified. Criminals hung on trees were cursed of God, not blessed (cf. Dt 21:23; Gal 3:13). Proclaiming that the Christ *must* suffer and rise again highlights suffering and resurrection as part of the divine plan for the Christ (cf. Ps 22; Isa 53; Zech 12:10; 13:7).

B. Because it turns an upside-down world right-side up (vv. 6-7)

Indeed, the gospel was advancing and turning the world upside down, but not in the way its enemies meant. The gospel turns the world around by rooting out love for the world and contradicting the way of the world. God is in the business of transforming the world through changing hearts. The world is slowly being turned right-side up through the saving work of Jesus Christ. Note the irony and hypocrisy the unbelieving Jews displayed in charging the Christians with proclaiming another king who overthrows Caesar. These truth haters falsely accused Jesus of being the kind of messiah they actually expected for themselves!

III. How to Thrive When the Truth Hurts

A. Eagerly seek solace in God's Word of Truth (vv. 11-12)

Those in Thessalonica believed the gospel upon hearing it, but they lacked the Scriptural foundation of the Bereans. The Berean believers verified the gospel message with the Bible, were eager to learn, and had thoughtfully considered the gospel message. Thus their faith rested on a stronger foundation and they were commended for their noble attitude and effort. The name "Berean" today stands for serious Bible study by those who sincerely seek to learn what God requires us to believe and do. For "Bereans" in every era, the Bible is basic, relevant, and precious. With God's help, test everything and everyone by the Scriptures! Searching the Scriptures for verification is an act of faith, not doubt!

B. Confidently move ahead knowing that Truth will prevail (vv. 10, 14-15)

Being a Christian may bring persecution, especially if you are vocal about Jesus. Paul escaped persecution many times, but he never gave up serving Christ because he knew that in serving Jesus he would prevail. Paul's Christian friends escorted him out of Berea and on to Athens to quell resistance from the Thessalonian truth haters. But he did not surrender to the opposition. He wrote to them two letters answering their questions about matters of faith, and offered them comfort, encouragement and instruction. Like Paul, we can be confident that Jesus (who is the Truth) will prevail.

C. Patiently hope in Jesus who embodies Truth that hurts (v. 3)

But that does not mean the Truth will stop hurting! Jesus was a "man of sorrows" acquainted with grief, despised and rejected by people (Isa 53:3). He was oppressed, falsely judged, and carried away to be crucified (Isa 53:7-8). He was counted among criminals at his death, although he always spoke truth and obeyed the truth (Isa 53:9). Even God attacked him (Isa 53:4)! Yet Jesus who embodied Truth (cf. Jn 14:6) willingly and joyfully endured all this hurt (Heb 12:2). Why? So the full weight of all the hurt he endured would not fall on you! He did it all for his children by putting himself in their place. His truthful, guiltless soul was a sacrifice for your guilt (Isa 53:10) so that the full weight of God's wrath we deserve as truth haters would not fall on us.

Conclusion – When you see Jesus in all his glory and beauty and love, and by his grace you become a truth lover and truth teller instead of a truth hater, then the hurt becomes like a shadow. It's won't be heavy, it won't crush you. You can endure it with joy like Jesus did because by faith you can see your glorious end—resurrection glory and life in his presence forever. Your life will be blessed like the thriving tree planted by streams of water if you love God's Word (Ps 1:3), and you'll find refuge if your hope is in God's Son (Ps 2:12).