

John 15:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake,
because they know not him that sent me.

Analysis

But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake (ἀλλὰ ταῦτα πάντα ποιήσουσιν εἰς ὑμᾶς διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου/alla tauta poiēsousin eis hymas dia to onoma mou)—the phrase **for my name's sake** (διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου/dia to onoma mou) identifies the root cause of persecution: association with Christ's person and authority. Onoma (name) represents not merely a label but the full person, character, and claims of Jesus.

Persecution comes dia (because of, on account of) that name. Being identified with Christ—confessing His lordship, proclaiming His gospel, living according to His ethics—triggers world-hatred. This clarifies motive: believers aren't persecuted for obnoxious behavior but for Christ-identification. Peter later writes: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye" (1 Peter 4:14), "let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (4:16).

Because they know not him that sent me (ὅτι οὐκ οἶδασιν τὸν πέμψαντά με/ hoti ouk oidasin ton pempsanta me)—the ultimate explanation for persecution is ignorance of the Father. Oidasin means experiential knowledge, personal acquaintance, not mere information. Persecutors lack saving knowledge of God despite potential religious sophistication (cf. John 8:19: "Ye neither know me, nor my Father").

This reveals persecution's spiritual blindness. Paul, the zealous persecutor, later testified: "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Timothy

1:13). Knowing the Father transforms hatred into worship, opposition into discipleship.

Historical Context

This warning prepared disciples for the fundamental irony of Christian persecution: religious people claiming to serve God would persecute God's true servants. Within hours, the Jewish Sanhedrin—experts in Torah, guardians of temple worship—condemned Jesus. Within years, Saul of Tarsus, "a Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Philippians 3:5), violently persecuted the church "thinking he did God service" (Acts 26:9-11).

Church history repeatedly fulfilled this pattern: the Inquisition tortured and burned believers in Christ's name; Reformers were martyred by religious authorities claiming orthodoxy; missionaries were martyred by sincere adherents of false religions. Religious sincerity without knowledge of the true God produces zealous persecution.

Jesus' phrase "him that sent me" emphasizes His divine commission and the Father's authority behind His mission. Rejecting Jesus isn't merely rejecting a teacher but rejecting the Father who sent Him. This explains why religious persecution is simultaneously most sincere and most deeply wrong—persecutors genuinely believe they defend God while opposing God's Son.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How can you discern whether opposition comes "for Christ's name sake" versus from your own failings or unnecessarily offensive behavior?

2. What does it mean that sincere religious people can lack true knowledge of God while claiming to serve Him?
3. How should understanding the spiritual blindness of persecutors shape your response when facing opposition?

Interlinear Text

ἀλλὰ	ταῦτα	πάντα	ποιήσουσιν	ὑμῖν	διὰ	τὸ	ὄνομα
But	these things	all	will they do	unto you	for	^{G3588}	name's
G235	G5023	G3956	G4160	G5213	G1223		G3686
μου	ὅτι	οὐκ	οἶδασιν	τὸν	πέμψαντά	με	
my	because	not	they know	^{G3588}	him that sent	me	
G3450	G3754	G3756	G1492		G3992	G3165	

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 10:22 (Parallel theme): And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

John 16:3 (Parallel theme): And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

Matthew 10:18 (Parallel theme): And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

Matthew 24:9 (Parallel theme): Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

John 8:19 (Parallel theme): Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

Acts 5:41 (Parallel theme): And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.