

Why the World Hates Christians

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 15:17-25
Preached on: Sunday, May 10, 2015

The battle with the world has been especially fierce in my life this last week and so I want to express to our musicians that your ministry has been most appreciated in my soul as I'm sure we can all exclaim.

In the Providence of God, we come now to John 15:17-25 where we will examine the issue of why the world hates Christians. I have experienced this in a severe way over the last several weeks and so it is fitting that the Spirit of God would bring us to this text this morning and what a joy it is to be able to come together and fellowship and worship and humble ourselves before the word of the living God.

Our text begins in verse 17 where Jesus says,

17 "This I command you, that you love one another. 18 If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 He who hates Me hates My Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. 25 But they have done this in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'"

It is the night of Jesus' betrayal and he is warning his disciples about something that they are about to experience that they have not experienced before and that is the intense hatred of the Gentile world as well as their own kinsman. They have seen this hatred toward their Master but they are about to experience it themselves. Eventually all of them except for John who was exiled onto the Isle of Patmos would be martyred, including the Apostle Paul that would come along and join their ranks a little later. Even when Jesus was a little child, he was so hated that Herod slaughtered all the little boys from 2 years old and younger in and around Bethlehem in an effort to eliminate the Anointed One. And although the Lord Jesus was altogether lovely, although he was the sinless Son of God, he was hated without a cause.

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Throughout his life, he was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was so hated that eventually he was crucified. From the very beginning of the church at Pentecost, those who belong to Christ have been despised, especially by religious people. In Acts 5, we read of the intense jealousy of the hearts of the high priest and his associates when they witnessed the phenomenal growth of the church. Jesus warned his disciples in John 16:2, "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God." Certainly this was the attitude of that great persecutor, Saul of Tarsus, prior to his conversion at which point he became the Apostle Paul and boldly proclaimed the Gospel, resulting in enormous persecution on his behalf. In 2 Corinthians 11, he speaks of numerous imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. He says, "Five times I received from the Jews 39 lashes." Can you imagine that. "Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned." He described how he experienced dangers from the Gentiles and dangers among false brethren, counterfeit believers in the church. Eventually Nero had him executed.

The Romans became threatened early on by Christianity because they witnessed large numbers of their own joining the church and they despised Christians because they gave their allegiance to Christ rather than to Caesar. Many of them refused to join the Roman military and Christians refused to worship the Roman idols, insisting that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who is the only way to salvation and we know how well that goes over even in our culture. Though they were kind and gentle, the message of the Gospel that they proclaimed, the message that they lived, exposed sin. It exposed religious superstition which only inflamed the sensitivities of both the Jews and the Gentiles. You will recall that devastating fire in Rome in July A.D. 64 was blamed on Christians. Nero needed a scapegoat to cover up his own wickedness and this, of course, ignited government sponsored persecution. Christians like us were arrested. They were tortured. They were fed to wild beasts in great arenas. They were crucified. They were even soaked in wax alive and used as a torch to light Nero's gardens. This is demonic, satanic hatred. The world's hatred of Christians continued into the second and third centuries, especially in the Roman empire and it really reached its zenith in the fourth century A.D. under the savage rule of Diocletian who endeavored to literally exterminate all Christians from the world until Constantine came along. He claimed to be a convert to Christianity and he put a temporary end to that persecution in the proclamation of the Edict of Milan that essentially decreed that there would need to be tolerance for Christians in the Empire.

But then came the persecution from the Roman Catholic Church. One historian states, "Under the Roman Catholic Church which replaced Imperial Rome as the dominant power during the Middle Ages, persecution broke out anew. Ironically, this time the

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persecution against true believers came from those who called themselves Christians. The horrors of the Inquisition. The St. Bartholomew's Day massacre and the martyrdoms of many believers epitomized the Roman church's effort to suppress the true Gospel of Jesus Christ." The writer goes on to say, "More recently, believers have been brutally repressed by communist and Islamic regimes. In fact, it has been estimated by none other than a Roman Catholic source that in all of church history, roughly 70 million Christians have been killed for their profession of faith with two thirds of those martyrdoms occurring after the start of the 20th century. The actual number is likely much greater. The Catholic journal that is cited in this news article estimates that an average of 100,000 Christians have been killed every year since 1990."

I'm sure you've noticed that it is politically correct to demean and mock Christians. We are typically depicted as ignorant hypocrites. As narrow minded bigots in Hollywood and in the media. In a recent speech, presidential hopeful, Hillary Clinton, was speaking about how women are being denied access to reproductive health. You remember the whole Hobby Lobby situation and basically she's promoting abortion. And in that context she said, quote, "Laws have to be backed up with resources and political will and deep seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed." Of course, this is the ultimate goal of the pro-abortion caucus.

In our culture and in our courts we see the erosion of our fundamental freedoms, in the United States, namely the freedom of speech, freedom of religion. Freedom of religion is now trumped by the culture's ferocious appetite for what they would call sexual liberty. According to the Alliance Defending Freedom, quote, "A new concept that sexual liberty trumps religious freedom has begun to impact churches, ministries and individual Christians across the nation." They go on to say, "This concept has led to the passage of sexual orientation and gender identity ordinances. These ordinances elevate special interests over our cherished fundamental freedoms, especially religious freedom." They go on to say, "Their practical effect is to legally compel Christians to accept, endorse and even promote messages, ideas and events that violate their faith. Those promoting these ordinance use public sympathy gained through misleading rhetoric about 'discrimination' to silence dissenting voices and no ministry will remain immune if they remain true to Scripture's teachings about sexuality and gender." And certainly we see this hostility mounting against the church, even our own church. Some of the most violent emails I get are from homosexual activists.

I don't think you need to be convinced of the world's hostility towards Christianity and how it is alive and well all around the globe. I shudder to think what our children are going to experience as they grow up should the Lord tarry but it's important for you to understand this morning, my purpose is not to somehow gin up animosity toward the

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world, not at all, because we were once like them and were it not for God's grace, we would still be like them. In Ephesians 2, Paul says, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." So we must bear in mind that even though the world hates us, this is the satanic, the very same satanic system from which we have been delivered. So as we contemplate Jesus' words, his explanation of why the world hates us, we need to see more clearly why we should have compassion, why we should love our enemies, that they might see Christ in us and be saved.

Now, as we come to this text, remember, this is a section of the Lord's farewell address to his disciples just hours before his betrayal and his mock trial, his torture and ultimate crucifixion and yet, knowing all of this, he ministers to the disciples. An amazing thought. He has reminded them of the astounding riches that they enjoy because of their vital union with Christ and he did that through the use of the allegory of the vine and the branches. But here in verses 17 through 25, he is going to warn them about the opposition that they are about to experience from the world and as we examine his words, we're going to be able to answer this question: why does the world hate Christians? I might say that his answers might surprise you a bit but certainly they will speak directly into each of our lives and give us great insight into how we should conduct ourselves as believers in this fallen world. It will also remind us, dear friends, that there is a high cost to following Jesus. It may even cost us our life although the glory far outweighs the cost. And the potential fact that we might lose our life for Christ's sake should discourage superficial, spurious conversions and promote true ones.

Essentially, Jesus is going to give us 3 primary reasons why the world hates us. 1. Because we're not of the world. We're not of this world. 2. Because we worship the Lord Jesus Christ. And finally, because they do not know God. But I want you to notice first verse 17 because this really sets the stage for what he's going to say. The idea is that because of the world's hostility toward Christ and all who belong to him, Jesus is going to repeat the instruction that he gave them earlier in verses 10 and 12. He says in verse 17, "This I command you, that you love one another." Now, this statement not only serves as a contrast to the world's enmity toward believers but it also reminds us of how desperately we need each other in the midst of this battle. I grow so weary of factions in the body of Christ that often result in broken fellowship. Typically they spring up because some nonessential that people are bickering over: somebody is jealous about this or upset about that; some personal preference isn't being met. Dear friends, what soldier wants to be at odds with his fellow soldiers when surrounded by the enemy? How can we possibly fight the enemy if we're fighting amongst each other?

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And Jesus knew that the disciples had a little animosity toward each other. They were jockeying for who was going to be first in the kingdom and all of this type of thing but the Apostle Paul reminds us in Ephesians 4, beginning in verse 1, that we need "to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." You see, friends, if we're fighting amongst ourselves, we cannot effectively do battle with the enemy and I fear that the reason why there is such a scarcity of brotherly love in the church is because there is so little genuine love for God. To be sure, pride is the great enemy of love. Jesus understands this obviously and so he warns them and he commands them to love one another.

Then he launches into the first reason why the world will hate us, 1. Because we are not of this world. Notice the very first phrase of verse 18, "If," or in other words, "since the world hates you," then drop down to verse 19, "If you were of the world," the idea being and you are not, "the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you." Now, this should be obvious. Had the disciples been part of the world, they would have had nothing to worry about because the world is perfectly comfortable with those who are just like them. And unfortunately, there are many naïve believers who think that the reason the world hates Christians is because we're just too dogmatic. We're just not kind enough. We need to be more gentle. You know, "If only the church were more tolerant of others. If we were more sensitive to opposing views, less dogmatic and so forth. Then the world would like us." Others erroneously think that, "Well, if we're just more like Jesus. If we just will love more and be more humble, then surely that kind of character would dampen the fires of animosity." But both positions are equally wrong.

Notice closely: he uses the word "world." The term in the original language is kosmos and it refers to the moral order comprised of unregenerate people who serve Satan in active rebellion against God. In fact, the term kosmos is related to a verb which means "to set in order." The idea here being that Satan works in the context of orderly systems. What he does is not whimsical. It is not indiscriminate. It is calculating. It is well planned. It is efficient. He works in the context of orderly systems. If you want to see how the world works under Satan's rule, look at governments, look at churches, look at colleges and universities, seminaries, school systems, political parties, the media, the entertainment industry, Hollywood, the internet and so forth. Any discerning believer can see the evil influences of Satan in that little list that I just gave you.

But bear in mind even the name "Satan" which in Hebrew means "adversary," tells us that he is against us. Satan is the personal name of the head of the demons. The demons are

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nothing more than evil angels who sinned against God and who now continually work in the world to do evil, to thwart the purposes of God. Satan is called "the god of this world," small "g." He is called the ruler of this world. In 1 John 5:19, we read, "that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." And as we look at Scripture, we see that the primary tactics of Satan and his demonic horde are to use lies, deception, murder, every imaginable kind of evil to prevent people from seeing who God really is and worshiping the one true God. He is the one that blinds the minds of unbelievers so that they might not see the Gospel, the light of God and his glory through Christ. He keeps people in bondage to prevent them from coming to Christ. Even with Christians, his tactics are so ingenious and powerful, formidable. He uses things like temptation and doubt, guilt, fear, confusion, false teaching, the misinterpretation of Scripture, the misapplication of Scripture, sickness, envy, pride, slander, anything to rob us of our joy. Anything to hinder our effectiveness in service. Anything to ruin our testimony. He wants to destroy our marriage. He wants to destroy our family. Our life. Our church and so forth. So on a most basic level, we have to understand that Satan hates God. He loathes the Lord Jesus Christ and all who belong to him. He preys upon us as Peter says, "he prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour." Moreover, we must understand that the world gives hearty approval to those who practice evil, Romans 1:32. So the world hates us but it loves its own.

Now, notice the beginning of verse 19, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own." Sadly, this is what many Christians seek to do, to become more like the world so that the world will love them. I mean, after all, who wants to have enemies, so to speak, and how sad to see Christians go to such great lengths to look like the world, to talk like the world, to think like the world, to develop appetites and ambitions and conduct themselves like the world and to function according to earthly values just so that they can be popular. Yet in 1 John 2:16 we read that, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever." Despite such a clear statement, it's amazing to me to realize how many churches in our modern era have adopted the premise that basically says, "We must become like the world in order to win it." In these churches, the danger of worldliness is seldom ever mentioned because ultimately theology takes a backseat to methodology. "We don't want to offend our potential consumers." This kind of thinking demonstrates an attitude that is ashamed of the Gospel, ashamed of Christ.

Dear friends, it is not our similarity with the world that attracts sinners to Christ, it's our difference from it. Early in my ministry, I remember grappling with these issues. I had to make a choice: was I going to seek to be popular or faithful because you can't be both. Luke 6:26, Jesus says, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way

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their fathers used to treat the false prophets." Christians who claim to love Christ yet seek to be popular with the world have forgotten that stunning rebuke made by the pastor of the Jerusalem church, the Apostle James. In James 4:4, he begins by saying, "You adulteresses," in other words, "Those of you who seek and enjoy the illicit love of the world. Those of you who crave what the world has to offer. Those of you who love to have fellowship with the ungodly. You are guilty of spiritual adultery." "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." That great British preacher, Martin Lloyd Jones, once said, "Our Lord attracted sinners because he was different. They drew near to him because they felt that there was something different about him." He went on to say, "And the world always expects us to be different. This idea that you are going to win people to the Christian faith by showing them that after all you are remarkably like them is theologically and psychologically a profound blunder."

Now, notice again what Jesus says at the end of verse 19, "but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you." You see, the world hates true believers because like the disciples, they have been chosen out of this Satanic system. We read this all through Scripture. Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:4 that God "chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him." In other words, through the uninfluenced sovereign choice of a holy God, he elected us to be the special objects of his love. We've been set apart. We've been therefore drawn by the Messiah to be his own even though we are still in the world but we are not of the world. Therefore when he caused us to be born again, we became new creatures in Christ. The old nature that was enslaved to sin and that clamored after all of the things of the world was miraculously replaced by a new nature that no longer finds those things attractive, at least not as attractive as they once were. The more we walk with Christ, the less those things appeal to us.

But what Jesus is saying here is that all this is because of God's unconditional sovereign election which is a doctrine that the world hates. People have by nature a rabid commitment to self-determination. In Luke 4, you will recall when Jesus announced his ministry as the Son of Man to his Jewish kinsman, he also explained to the synagogue worshipers that God "has compassion on whom he chooses." Well, they went ballistic. In verse 28 we read, "And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff." That has never happened to me but I've had people who have wanted to do that to me when I preach on the doctrines of grace. In John 6, Jesus said to the large group of disciples that were following him, "No one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him from the Father." This was on the heels of many other similar statements. Well, the people went

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nuts when they heard this, this idea of God choosing so in verse 66 we read, "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore."

My friends, while the doctrine of election abolishes all pride in salvation, it has a way of absolutely igniting a firestorm of animosity amongst the people of the world. In fact, it even infuriates many Christians. Let a preacher exposit the numerous texts on the doctrines of grace and salvation and his audience will soon disappear. But let's look beyond the doctrine here and look at the consequence of a person's life when they have been chosen out. Let that believer who has been chosen out of the world act like that, let him manifest a character of a transformed life and he will quickly fan the flames of enmity from the people of the world. So Jesus says, "Because of this, the world hates you."

Now, let's be clear here: the world will not hate mere professors who have chosen to be conformed to the world nor will they hate genuine believers who have rejected the command, for example in Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, to the spirit of this age, to the belief system and values of this world dominated by Satan." In other words, "Don't allow yourself," that text is saying, "Don't allow yourself to be so influenced by the world that that you outwardly conform to its evils, so that you begin to manifest a play acting type of a role. It's as if you're wearing some masquerade that does not really reflect who you are on the inside as a new creature in Christ. Don't let the world cause that to happen to you but rather," he says, "be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Transformed, from the word metamorphoo. We get our word metamorphosis from that. "Let there be a metamorphosis where who you really are on the inside bursts into all of its glory on the outside so that people can see Christ and that will happen by the renewing of your mind." Present tense. In other words, by a continual process of renewal that comes through the word of God and the power of the Spirit in your life. But make no mistake: if you live this way and you walk in separation from the world as very few Christians do, you will be rejected because you are imitating Christ who was rejected and as a result you will understand what Paul meant when he spoke of the fellowship of his sufferings in Philippians 3:10.

You know, I have many unsaved friends that like me superficially. "Yeah, Dave's a nice guy. Yeah, I really like that guy. You know, we're friends. We shoot together. We do things together." But I know deep down in their heart they have a secret hatred for Christ and that hatred will one day manifest itself even in my relationship with them. It's a matter of time. This is true for all of you. You must understand that the more discernible the character of Christ is in your life, the more they are going to hate you, especially when an opportunity arises where for some reason you line up on some moral issue or

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some religious issue or some issue that is sacred to their heart, when you line up on the opposite side of them and then you will see that they hate you.

Well, this leads us to the second reason that Jesus gives for why the world hates us. Not only because we're not of the world but because we worship the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice verse 18, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you." My friends, there is perhaps no greater evidence of man's depraved nature than his utter contempt for that which is holy, that which is altogether lovely, good and pure, all of which are the attributes of the sinless Son of God. Think how often we hear the ungodly use Jesus' name in vain. This betrays not only a limited vocabulary but it also betrays their contempt for the Lord Jesus, their disregard. The Jews attacked him for violating their man-made laws pertaining to the Sabbath, for calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God. The religious leaders loathed him because he exposed their sin and hypocrisy. They hated him because they could never catch him in some of their clever traps. They could never best him in a debate. But at the most fundamental level, the reason they hated him and the reason the world hates him today is because by nature they are in rebellion to a holy God and they serve their father, the devil.

This is still true today so it should be no surprise that the world also hates those who worship the Lord Jesus. Verse 20, "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.'" This, by the way, is a reference to the statement that he made earlier in chapter 13, verse 13, one made in the context of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. He goes on to say in verse 20, "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." As D. A. Carson put it, "Those who preach Jesus' Gospel and live in progressive conformity to his own life and teaching will attract the same antagonism that he did."

I often think of the terrible toll, the Down-Grade Controversy had on the life of Charles Spurgeon, that great English preacher. He virtually stood alone in his defense of the doctrines of grace, what is sometimes called Calvinism. He stood against the errors of liberalism and Arminianism and especially worldliness that was taking over the church in 20th century England and the strain of the battle, frankly, shortened his life. I was reading how he received an encouraging letter from a fellow minister and Spurgeon wrote back to him and here is what he said in part, quote, "You may well pray that I may be kept near to God for with knocks up and kicks down, if I did not lean on his arms I were of all men most miserable. It is no easy matter to be labored both by high and low and stand still firm." He went on to add, "Your note is like a flower in winter. It has the bloom of the summer on it. Oh, to have Christ in the heart, the Holy Ghost in the soul and glory and prospect. For this we might well barter worlds and for this let us strive not only in words in the pulpit but in verity and truth in our closets alone with our Father."

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Indeed, the world hates us and there is a great and high cost for following Jesus, oh, but it's worth it all. We would all do well to remember the words of the Apostle Paul who suffered so greatly for Christ when he says in 2 Timothy 3:12, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." The contrary is also true, if you don't desire to live godly in Christ Jesus, you won't be persecuted because the world loves its own. But know this, my friends, as Peter says, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

So again, Jesus says in verse 20, "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." Then he adds this word of encouragement. I'm so thankful for this word of encouragement. He says, "if they kept My word, they will keep yours also." In other words, some people out of the world who heard the Gospel message believed and he's saying, "This is going to happen with you as well, you disciples. Most are going to reject it but some will believe." And Jesus warned about this in other passages, "There is always going to be the few versus the many. Most people are going to reject the Gospel message. They prefer darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." Paul says, "They suppress the truth in unrighteousness and every time you give them the Gospel, you're kind of prying open the lid of that which they are trying to suppress and they hate you for it." But ah, what a blessing to see a person come to Christ, right? Ah, what a blessing. It makes it worth it all and I've seen so many times when my heart is breaking how the Lord brings some something to help me see the glory of his grace in someone's life and suddenly you remember again, ah, but it's worth it all.

Well, the world hates us because we're not of the world and because we worship the Lord Jesus Christ and finally, because they do not know God. Verse 21, "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake," in other words on account of me, "because they do not know the One who sent Me." So ultimately the world is going to hate you, hate us because of Jesus, who Jesus is. He is the Sent One from God, the Revelation of God the Father and they don't know God the Father so therefore when you speak about Jesus and basically his name speaks of Christ himself revealed in the Gospel, so when the world here's the Gospel message, they are going to hate it because they don't know God. The disciples later experienced this very thing. In Acts 4:18, you will recall that the religious authorities called in Peter and John and "commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus." "We're not having that. Cut it out." Of course, that didn't stop them. By the way, have you noticed how politically incorrect it is to pray in Jesus' name? Because of some of the things that I'm involved with, I'm asked to pray quite often in large public settings and on a few occasions I have had the people say, "One thing we would ask you not to do is pray in Jesus' name," and I quickly tell them, "Then you need to find someone else to pray." And every time I have an opportunity to pray, I'm not trying to be in your face but I'm going to pray consistently with the truth of the word of

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God, give people some measure of the Gospel and I'm going to pray in Jesus' name and you know what that means.

Well, Satan hates this, doesn't he? You see, Satan knows that God has highly exalted him according to Philippians 2:10. Satan wants to be the one exalted, not Christ. God has "highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." This is the name that God has given to Jesus, Lord. Oh, child of God, though the world might threaten your life, never ever be ashamed of the name of Jesus. Never be ashamed of the Gospel. Jesus said, "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me."

But will you notice, Jesus goes on to explain that the world's animus proves that "they do not know the One who sent Me." You know, had they known the Father, they would have known the Son, the Lord Jesus. Verse 23, "He who hates Me hates My Father also." Now, let me be clear, the world hates us because they do not know the one true God, because by nature they are alienated and hostile in mind to him, the word of God tells us. They are spiritually dead. They are dead in their trespasses and sins. Paul says, "They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart." Again, bear in mind, once we were just like them therefore we need to love them, not hate them.

Take for example the current debate in our culture over homosexuality. Now, we cannot expect unregenerate people to submit to the truths of the word of God because the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to them, Paul tells us. They cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised and unfortunately many think that we as Christians hate homosexuals because we acknowledge God's word as being authoritative when he says that homosexuality is a grievous sin that is an abomination to him and those who practice that sin shall not inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. But just because we do not support the homosexual lifestyle does not mean that we do not love them, in fact, we love them more than others because we are willing to stand up to a world that hates us in order to warn them and call them to repentant faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to give them the Gospel.

A few years ago, a young homosexual who had been involved in the gay escort business in London called me very early on a Sunday morning from Scotland and in his Scottish brogue, he began to tell me how that 2 years ago he was listening to a sermon that I had preached out of the book of Revelation and God used to that to convict his heart and he continued to listen and by God's grace he was radically saved and he wanted to thank me

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Why the World Hates Christians

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 15:17-25
Preached on: Sunday, May 10, 2015

for my ministry in his life and give praise to God for what had happened. He was no longer a part of that and he said, "It's a miracle that I don't have diseases," even though he has other things that he struggles with, typical of those people that come out of that. But he was in Bible school now and walking with Christ and endeavoring to grow in Christ and he was thanking me that we didn't hate him but we loved him enough to tell him what he didn't want to hear.

Well, Jesus has more to tell his disciples as we wrap this up this morning. He says in verse 22, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin." This sin is referring to their willful rejection of Christ despite having a clear understanding of the truth. He said, "but now they have no excuse for their sin." Notice also, verse 24, "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well." You see, like the Jews who witnessed the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ but still rejected him, when a man rejects God's gracious revelation of the truth about his sin, about the Savior, and he does this with full knowledge and he therefore makes a decisive commitment to prefer darkness over light, this person has absolutely no excuse for his sin and he has no means of salvation because there is no other means. This is what Jesus, by the way, described as the unforgivable sin, for example, in Matthew 12. My heart aches for some of you who have heard the Gospel many times over and over again and yet you still refuse to embrace Christ. My friend, if that is you, may I tell you in all love but forthrightness: that is a monstrous attack against the Lord Jesus Christ and it is the testimony of Scripture that the greater the light rejected, the greater the eternal punishment so I plead with you to come to Christ, to set aside your pride and embrace him as Savior before it is too late.

One would think that all of this hostility in the world would somehow thwart God's plan of redemption. Don't you know the disciples must have thought this? They are hearing about all of this and there was probably much more said than what is recorded here. They are probably thinking, "My goodness, you know, you're leaving. We don't even understand what's going on. The world is going to hate us like this. We're toast. What are we going to do?" Ah, isn't it amazing how the Lord gives you those words of encouragement. Notice what he says in verse 25, "But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'" In other words, "Men, don't freak out here. This is all part of God's sovereign plan." We see it recorded all the way back in Psalm 35:19, Psalm 69:4. He's also saying that there is simply nothing in my sinless character, nothing in my conduct, that deserves the world's hatred and the only way it can be explained is by the depraved nature of the human heart and only a merciful sovereign God can transform that heart and cause us to believe.

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And why does God tolerate all of this? Well, he says "to fulfill his word." Basically, that reveals his will. You know, in ways that we will never be able to understand, in the inscrutable decrees of our sovereign God, he has ordained to allow these things, the hatred of the world against himself and against his people, he's allowed those things to exist in order to somehow glorify himself. You know, we see a bit of that glory when a person comes to Christ, don't we? We're just amazed when we see that transformed life. And dear friends, a day is going to come when we're going to see that glory in a way that defies our ability to even fathom. We will see his glory when he pours out his wrath and his judgment upon those who have rejected him. Oh dear Christian, be careful.

In closing this morning, I want you to ask yourself: do I seek the applause of men or do I want the applause of God? Is being popular with the world more important than being faithful to the God who has saved me by his grace? You young people, let me ask you: do you easily bend to peer pressure? Is it important to you to be like the rest of the crowd? I wonder who are the heroes you have hanging on your wall. You adults as well, who are the heroes that you post on Facebook? That you can't miss on television? Because there is a real danger of making those things idols and the enemy uses those to appeal to your flesh and gradually pull you away from your love for Christ and your devotion to him and then little by little without you realizing it, the world begins to shape you into its image so that you become conformed to the world, not transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Folks, do you seek and enjoy the illicit love of the world? Ask yourself that. Do you crave those fleeting pleasures of the world? Do you love to be around the ungodly or will you like Moses, recorded in Hebrews 11:25, "choose rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward." Folks, you will never be able to do this unless you know Christ, unless you keep your eyes fixed on him, unless you set your mind on the things above not on the things of earth, unless you have a passionate craving to see the Lord Jesus face-to-face and be forever in the presence of his glory. And when that is the attitude of your heart, you will be able to transcend the world and you will certainly be able to resist the temptations that are in the world to cause you to want to somehow be liked by it and that is my prayer for each of us. I pray that this would be the attitude of your heart.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. They speak so directly to our lives and yet, Lord, sometimes it's hard for us to see specifically those areas in our life that really scream compromise and so, Lord, I pray that by the power of your Spirit, you will help us

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see, you will help us to put off and put on those things that would cause us to be able to bear much fruit for the glory of God, so Lord, we leave it with you. And finally, Lord, for those that do not know Christ, again, I pray that by your grace you will bring such conviction to their heart that they will, in fact, come to you in repentant faith. May today be the day they experience the miracle of the new birth. I ask all of this in the precious name of Jesus our Savior, our Lord, our only hope of salvation. And all God's people said, amen.

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

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