

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Why the World Hates Christians John 15:17-19

This morning's message I have entitled, "Why the world hates Christians." But is this really true? Does the world in fact hate us? And the answer I believe based upon the words of Jesus would have to be absolutely!

And this brings us to the text that we will be examining this morning. Let me read for you **John 15:17-25**, "**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 or 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.'**"

When this text is read I do not believe that there can be any doubt as to the fact that the world does in fact hate Christians. Jesus could not have said it any plainer.

But has the world's hatred for Christians in fact been demonstrated? And the answer that we would have to give would be, "Absolutely!"

Certainly the eleven disciples became very familiar with the world's hatred during the first general persecution under Nero when each of them, with the exception of the Apostle John, were martyred for their faith.

But even with the passing of Nero the persecution of Christians did not end. The persecution of Christians continued on under the following Roman emperors: Domitian, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Severus, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, Diocletian and then even after the formal persecution of Christians ended throughout the Roman Empire during the reign of Constantine the informal persecution of Christians continued throughout the world and throughout the centuries as chronicled for us in Foxes' Book of Martyrs.

Even in recent times Christians continue to suffer. In fact it has been reported that in the past 100 years 26,000,000 Christians have been killed for their faith. This is estimated to be more than the combined total of all previous centuries. And this does not count the untold numbers of Christians who have been imprisoned, tortured, or who have suffered financial loss.

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Even this morning as we are meeting here in the comfortable confines of this building there are Christians around the world who are gathering together secretly for fear of reprisal. Has the world's hatred of Christians throughout the centuries, even to this present day, been demonstrated? Absolutely!

So does the world hate Christians? Based on the words of Christ and the actions of the world throughout the centuries the answer I believe that we would have to give to this question would be, "Yes!" The world hates Christians.

This knowledge should hopefully put us on alert. In other words if we in fact publicly identify ourselves as the disciples of Christ and would seek by His grace to live in a manner worthy of the Gospel we will be hated by the world and we will suffer at the hands of the world. These things are certain.

The only thing that is uncertain is the matter of degree. And this will vary from Christian to Christian depending upon their individual circumstances. For most of us living in 21st century America the level of suffering will be minimal compared to other Christians living in other parts of the world, but the truth is that all Christians who are publicly identifying themselves as the followers of Christ and who are seeking to live in a manner worthy of the Gospel will be hated by the world and will suffer to some degree at the hands of the world.

So why does the world hate Christians? In this morning's message I will try to answer that question based on the words of Christ in **John 15:17-25**.

My hope for this message is that we would not simply acknowledge the world's hatred of Christians but that we, in spite of that hatred might be willing to do what Christ has called us to do no matter the personal risk to ourselves. So what is the first reason why the world hates us? The first reason is this:

Christians are not of this world (15:17-19). Isn't this exactly what Christ told His disciples in **John 15:19**. Let me read it for you, the very first words of the verse, "**If you were of the world (and the assumption is that they are not) the world would love its own...**"

The verse could not be any clearer. Christ is telling His disciples that they were not a part of this world for if they were a part of the world the world would in effect be a lot more friendly toward them than they actually were. So what did Christ mean by this expression "the world?"

When Jesus referred to "this world" in John 15:17-19, He was speaking of that part of God's created order that was and continues to be in active rebellion against God. This not only includes all the people who are in active rebellion against Him, but all of the things that those individuals control and can influence whether that would be governments, courthouses, corporations or whatever. This is what Jesus meant when He referred to "this world" in **John 15:17-19**.

We as an inhabitant of planet earth are presently in the midst of a rebellion against God. And Christ is describing that part of His creation that is caught up in this rebellion in this particular verse as "the world."

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But even though most of the inhabitants of this earth have been caught up in this rebellion and therefore are a part of this "world," there are some who are not caught up in this rebellion and they who are not caught up in this rebellion are therefore not of this world.

So who exactly are these individuals? So let us once again go back to **John 15:19** and consider what Jesus said to His disciples. What did He say? This is what He said, **"If you were of the world (and the assumption is that they are not), the world would love its own (or in other words would be more friendly toward you); but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world..."** Why were the disciples no longer a part of the world? They were no longer a part of this world because Christ had chosen them out of this world.

Nothing has changed for us today. If we are not a part of the world and because we are not a part of the world the world is now less friendly toward us, this has all come about because Christ Himself has chosen us out of this world. This is true of all of Christ's disciples.

Christ's disciples are set free from this world and are able to end their active rebellion against God because Christ has chosen them out of this world (John 15:19).

We as inhabitants of this earth are in the midst of a rebellion against God and the inhabitants that will be able to ultimately cease being the enemies of God are those who God in fact chooses. It really has nothing to do with them.

This thought is not new. Christ had introduced this thought just three verses earlier in **John 15:16**. Let me once again read this verse for you, **"You did not choose Me, but I chose you, ..."** So let me ask you this question.

Does Christ's choice of us eliminate our responsibility to exercise faith in Christ if we want to be saved, or in other words to be set free from the world's active rebellion against God? No! It does not set us free from our responsibility to exercise faith in Christ. What does **Ephesians 2:8** tell us? **"For by grace are you saved through faith."**

So yes, it is true that faith in Christ must be exercised in order for us to be set free from our sins, or in other words to end our active rebellion against God, but God is the one who gives us that faith (John 6:29). Let me read for you **John 6:29** **"Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."** Yes we have to exercise faith in Christ in order to become a friend of Christ and be delivered from this world's active rebellion against God, but it is God that gives us that faith.

Therefore, over 40 years ago God working within me provided me the faith to believe, and in providing me the faith to believe he delivered me not only from my sins but also from my participation in this world's active rebellion against God thus delivering me out of this world and allowing me to become a friend of Christ.

And guess what? Not only did this change my relationship with the world but it changed the world's relationship with me. And the same thing would be true of you as well. What do I mean?

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If we had continued to be a part of the world the world would have continued to be friendly to us, but this ended when we made peace with God by exercising faith in Christ (John 15:19). This is what is implied when Christ begins verse 19 with these words, **"If you were of the world, the world would love its own."**

So how bad did the disciple's relationship with the world get when they were no longer a part of it? It got so bad that Christ tells his disciples that the world now hated them because of it. Let us go back and once again read **John 15:19 "If you were of the world (and the assumption is that they are not), the world would love its own (or in other words would be more friendly toward you); but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world therefore (what) the world hates you"** And why is it that the world hates us once we are no longer a part of it?

The world hates Christians because God did not simply choose them out of the world but He also appointed them to go into the world and bear fruit (John 15:16).

Let me once again read for you **John 15:16** and consider the stated purpose of Christ's choice of us. It was not simply to get us saved but to use us to get others saved. Let me read the verse, **"You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain.**

And where did Christ appoint us to go? He appointed us to go into the world. He appointed us to go into the camp of His enemies with the gospel of Christ as an ambassador of Christ and a minister of reconciliation in order that God might through us and the message of the gospel might choose out more people from this world thus ending their rebellion and becoming the friends of Christ. This is our high calling. This is our work. This is our mission. May God give us the grace to see our high calling! And if we do see it and by the grace of God take this work seriously what can we expect?

We should expect resistance! Why? Because those to whom we have been sent are being held captive by Satan the prince of the power of the air. And when we go into his kingdom, he will attack us on the beaches, in the fields, in the air, on the oceans. He will seek to bring us down to spiritual defeat. And one of the ways He will do this is by rallying His troops to attack us in a myriad of different ways.

So in light of this battle how did Christ prepare His disciples in **John 15:17**? What did He tell them? This is what he told them, **"This I command you, that you love one another."** So why would Christ begin His comments about the world's hatred of them in this way? Really the answer is very simple.

When the Disciples of Christ are confronted with the world's hatred the importance of having nurtured a loving relationship with fellow disciples will be essential to their spiritual well being (John 15:17). If we are in fact in this world surrounded by the enemies of God who at their very core hate us, it certainly would seem to be extremely prudent on our part to get as close as we can to God's friends, or in other words to get as close as we can to the members of His church where we might find support in our quest to live in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ and to remain faithful to Him no matter what the world as an expression of their hatred might throw at us.

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But even though the prospect of the world's hatred being unleashed toward us should cause us to draw closer together in love it should not cause us to despair in light of Christ's own example (John 15:18). Let me read for you **John 15:18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you."** And was this in fact true, had the world already manifested their hatred of Him? Yes!

The fact that the world had hated Christ and that this hatred had been present almost from the very beginning of his public ministry and had never subsided, is evident from the following passages: 1:5, 10, 11; 3:11; 5:16, 18, 43; 6:66; 7:1, 30, 32, 47-52, 57, 59, 9:22; 10:31, 33, 39; 11:50, 57; 12:37-43.

So why was Jesus sharing these words with His disciples at this particular time? Why did Jesus want them to know that the world had hated Him before the world had hated them?

Jesus did not share these words with His disciples in order to provide direction for His disciples in light of the world's hatred as He had done in **John 15:17**, but rather He shared these words with His disciples in light of the world's hatred in **John 15:18** in order to comfort them.

Over the centuries the world's hatred of Christ has been manifested. But why does the world hate Christians. Christ in John 15:17-25 gives us several different reasons.

This morning we have covered the first reason. And what was that? The reason why the world hates Christians is because Christians are not of this world. They are not of this world because Christ has chosen them out of this world. And why has Christ chosen them out of this world? They have not been chosen simply to enjoy peace with God but rather they have been taken out of this world so that they as ambassadors of Christ might take the battle for the souls of men into this world And it is our willingness to engage in this battle that will make us the focal point of Satan's wrath and therefore the focal point of the worlds' hatred. Obviously this will not be easy and it of course is risky but it is not as if we haven't been warned.

My God give us the grace as those who have been chosen out of this world to take the battle for the souls of men into the world.