

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Why The World Hates Christians

John 15:20

Part 2

We as believers are to pursue peace. The Scriptures are clear, "Live at peace with all men as far as it depends upon you." So if we, as the followers of Christ, do this and we in fact pursue peace with all men as best as we can in light of who God has called us to be and in light of what God has called us to do, how likely will it be that we will achieve peace? The odds are about zero.

Why? The reason why it will be very difficult for us to achieve peace even though that is exactly what we are pursuing is because there will be many people who will not want to be at peace with us in light of what we, as the disciples of Christ, are to be and do.

And if there is any doubt about this all we have to do is to go back to the passage we began to examine two weeks ago in the Gospel of John.

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 there can be any doubt, based on the words of Christ, that the world does in fact hate Christians. And the reality of this I believe is confirmed by the extensive and well-documented persecution of the church throughout the centuries.

Fortunately for most of us living in twenty-first century America the level of suffering we experience will be minimal compared to Christians living in other parts of the world, but even so we should not be so naïve as to think that we will not be persecuted in some form or fashion if we would publicly identify ourselves as disciples of Christ and choose to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel. We will be persecuted! We will suffer!

So why does the world hate Christians? Two weeks ago, based on the text we just read, I gave you the very first reason. And it was this: we will be hated because Christians are not a part of this world (John 15:17-19). Let me read for you **John 15:17-19**.

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"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." Are we "in" the world? Yes. But are we "of" the world? No. And what is the practical implication of this for us as Christians? The practical implication for us as Christians is this: Because we are not a part of this world the world will in fact hate us.

And why is it that we are not a part of this world? We are not of this world because we, unlike the world, have made peace with God. But in making peace with God through faith in Christ we are now hated by the world. It may not be apparent to us at this particular time but it is the truth based on the words of Christ.

So why does the world hate Christians based on **John 15:17-25**? First of all, the world hates Christians because they are not a part of the world. But this is not the only reason based on the words of Christ in this text. There are still more reasons. And this morning we will consider a second reason in **John 15:20**.

My hope in exploring this second reason this morning is not just simply to convince us that the world does in fact hate us but that we might better understand how the world's hatred of us, rather than intimidating us, can actually be used by God to energize us in proclaiming the gospel of Christ and speaking the words of Christ with an even greater boldness and frequency than we were before. So what is the second reason for the world's hatred? The second reason for the world's hatred of Christians is this: The world hated Jesus (John 15:20).

Let me now read for you **John 15:20**. **"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."** Did the world hate Christ? Yes! And if they hadn't hated him they would not have persecuted Him. But they did persecute Him and therefore we know that the world hated Him. And if the world hated Him the world will also hate His disciples; or in other words, the world will also persecute His disciples. Christ is presenting this truth to His disciples as a given.

But now let us look more closely at this verse. How does it begin? **"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.'"** This is a quotation from **John 13:16**. In this verse this principle that **"a slave is not greater than his master"** was applied to humility and the importance of mutual service. In other words, in the context of **John 13** and the foot washing, Jesus was using this principle to help His disciples understand that if He, as their master, was willing to lower Himself in this way to serve them then they certainly should be willing to lower themselves in similar ways to serve one another. This was Christ's point when He brought this particular principle forward in **John 13:16**.

So here again in **John 15:20** Jesus is using the same principle that a slave is not greater than his master but this time He applies it to the subject of persecution.

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So let us once again go back to **John 15:20** but this time we will read a little bit further.

"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' [Now here comes the new application of the same principle] If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."

So in light of this teaching what should we as Christians expect in terms of how the world might treat us? We should expect to be treated in the same manner as Christ was treated.

Rather than expecting the world to understand us, to appreciate us, to commemorate us or to love us, we should expect the world to treat us in quite a different way. In fact, our expectation should be that if the world were given the opportunity to persecute us, they would. And why should this be our expectation? This should be our expectation because this is the way the world treated Christ. And if this is the way the world treated Christ then this is the way the world will treat us.

So what is the second reason why the world hates Christian? The world hates Christians because the world hated Christ. And this should be our expectation.

And all of this makes perfect sense when we understand that though Christ may not be present with us in a physical sense, He is with us in a spiritual sense. In fact, if we are truly His disciples, He is presently indwelling us in the person of the Holy Spirit. Let me read for you **1 Corinthians 12:12-13**. **"But even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. (13) For by one Spirit [the Holy Spirit] we were all baptized [in other words, immersed] into one body."** Whose body? Christ's body!

The church is not simply an organization made up of the followers of Christ. The church is also a living organism, the very body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

Has Christ left this world? Yes! In a physical sense He has left this world. But in a spiritual sense He is still here within His church and desiring to live through His church.

And what does He want to do through His church? He wants to save the lost. This is why He has commanded His church or why He has commanded us to go into the world and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teach them to observe all that He commanded. It is all connected to this mission of seeking and saving the lost.

When we in His strength and as an extension of His life actually do this we will in fact make our Lord a very happy camper. Amen! Absolutely!

But let me ask you this question. If Christ is the happy camper, if we in fact go and do what He commanded us to do in the power of His might and as an extension of His life, then who is the unhappy camper? The world is the unhappy camper and more specifically Satan; the ruler of this world is an unhappy camper. And what will be the consequence of this? What will be the consequence for us if we in fact as an extension of His life go into the world to do His work? This is what will happen. The world will hate us in the same way as it hated Christ when we as an extension of His life go into the world to do his work; in other words, we will be persecuted.

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The only difference now in contrast to 2000 years ago is that when we go into this world to do His work in His strength and as an extension of His life we are actually the ones that will take the brunt of the world's hatred. It will not be Christ that is ridiculed, spit upon or crucified per se; it will be us! Pretty scary, huh?

So how should we respond to this prospect? Should we make sure that we do everything that we can to avoid incurring the wrath of the world and its hatred? Perhaps we can get so busy with the things of this world that we have no time and energy left over to do the work of Christ. Or perhaps when the opportunity does in fact presents itself we could just simply bury our heads in the sand pretending that there aren't any opportunities. Or perhaps we could just simply out of fear flee any potential confrontation with the world. These are certainly all possibilities but I would hope that none of these possible responses would be our response. I would hope rather that the prospect of suffering the world's hatred as we go about seeking to do His work in the power of His might and as an extension of His life would in fact energize us. But how could this be? How could the prospect of suffering at the hands of the world actually be used by God to energize us?

When we are hated by the world for Christ's sake we should consider it a privilege (Acts 5:41-42).

Let me read for you the response of Peter and John after they were beaten for speaking the words Christ in **Acts 5:41-42**. **"So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name."** So how did they respond to that particular expression of the world's hatred? They considered it a privilege. They considered it a privilege because they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

So how does this work? How does one come to this place that they feel privileged to suffer for the sake of Christ like Peter and John did here in **Acts 5**? This really is not a very difficult thing to understand.

Who did Peter and John believe Christ to be? They believed that He was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And what did Peter and John believe that Christ did? They believed that He willingly placed Himself on the cross to pay the debt, not only of their sin, but the debt of the entire world. So in light of who they believed Jesus to be and in light of what they believed Jesus had done, they could not really have any other response to the beating that they had just suffered at the hands of the Jewish leaders and the response that they did have.

Isn't this something we see in our everyday lives? When we know that someone has sacrificially served us and has suffered in doing so, how could we not rejoice in the opportunity to serve them even if that would mean that we ourselves would suffer?

So if this is true then certainly how much more true will this dynamic prove to be when we recognize by God's grace that we have been considered worthy to suffer for His name? I would think much more so. And this is exactly what I believe we see with Peter and John in Acts 5.

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So did Peter and John consider it a privilege to be considered worthy to suffer shame for His name? Absolutely!

So let me ask you this question: Will those who consider it a privilege to suffer shame for the name of Christ, as Peter and John did, find themselves avoiding opportunities to Share Christ and the message of Christ or will they find themselves preaching Christ with greater urgency and frequency? I believe that they will find themselves preaching Christ with greater urgency and frequency.

And this is exactly what I believe we see with Peter and John. Let me again read for you **Acts 5:41** but this time we will now add **verse 42**. **"So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name (42) And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."** When we consider suffering for His sake a privilege, the possible negative consequences of sharing the gospel of Christ with others will not discourage us but will in fact energize us just as I believe it energized Peter and John.

We have been called to live at peace with all men. But even though this is true and this is something we should do, if we are striving to be the people that God would have us to be and to do the things that God has called us to do we will suffer.

May God give us the grace when doing the work of Christ to be energized by the hatred of the world rather than be intimidated.