

Subject: *Friends and Foes*

Scripture: *John 15:12-27*

Most things in the Bible are black and white. There is no uncertainty, no middle ground political correctness here. The Scripture draws sharp contrasts between those who are saved and those who are lost, those who are with Jesus and those who are against Him, those who are in children of God and those who are children of the devil.

In the upper room Jesus separated His disciples physically from the world, and He reminded them that they are separated spiritually and eternally from the world. His followers are in the world but not of the world. Here in John 15 He draws the contrast between those who are His friends and those who are His foes, and He reminds them that not only are they loved by Him friends, but they are also hated by the world as foes. As the world hated Christ, the same world also hates those who bear His name as Christians.

THE LORD'S FRIENDS

The Bible calls believers by many names: disciples, brethren, children of God, children of light, heirs of God, the righteous, the saints, members of Christ's body, salt of the earth, slaves of Christ, vessels of mercy, vessels of honor, and friends. The word "friends" suggests a close relationship and bond with the Lord. We sing, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," but exactly what does that mean? Verses 12-17 describe what it means to be the friends of Jesus.

- The friends of Jesus love one another (vs. 12-13, 17)

Jesus commands us to love one another. **John 13:34-35** ³⁴ *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* ³⁵ *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* It sounds simple and easy, but it's not easy and it's not automatic. It is possible to love one another only as we abide in Him. **1 John 3:14** *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* The fruit of the Spirit is first of all love.

We are to love one another as He loves us. He loves us voluntarily (because He chooses to love us). **1 John 4:19** *We love him, because he first loved us.* He loves us sacrificially (He gave Himself for us). **Ephesians 5:2** *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.* He loves us unconditionally. **Romans 5:8** *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

That's the way we are to love one another. This is a command, not a suggestion. Think of all the broken marriages because Christian husbands and wives don't obey this command. Think of all the churches that have split because Christians don't obey this command.

- The friends of Jesus obey Him (vs. 14)

"If" is one of the biggest little words in the English language. **John 14:15** *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* Obedience and faith go together. Obedience is the evidence of faith. In Hebrews 11, the faith of Old Testament saints was proven by their obedience to God. **John 10:27** *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

- The friends of Jesus know spiritual truth (vs. 15)

We have inside information. He confides in us because we are friends. William Barclay describes what it means to be a friend of Jesus: In the courts of Roman emperors and kings of the Middle East “there was a very select group called *the friends of the king*, or *the friends of the emperor*. At all times, they had access to the king; they even had the right to come to his bedchamber at the beginning of the day. He talked to them before he talked to his generals, his rulers and his statesmen. The friends of the king were those who had the closest and most intimate connection with him” (*Gospel of John*, 2:207-208).

- The friends of Jesus are chosen by Him (vs. 16)

We are chosen to bring forth fruit that remains. Jesus did not choose us to be spectators while the world goes to hell.

- The friends of Jesus can pray in His name (vs. 16)

We have access to the Father through our relationship with Him.

THE LORD’S FOES

There is a great contrast from verse 17 to verse 18. Jesus was speaking about the love of believers, and here He is talking about the hatred of the world. What did Jesus mean when He spoke of “the world”? He didn’t mean the physical world (the planet). He didn’t mean the people of the world. He meant the world system with all of its values, beliefs, standards, and ways of doing things. The Bible says that Satan is the ruler of this world system. Unbelievers walk in the ways of the world. Believers are not to be conformed to this world. We are not to love the world neither the things that are in the world. Believers should keep ourselves unspotted from the world. The world is not our friend, but our enemy. John 15 tells us some facts about the world’s hate for Christians.

- The world hated Jesus before it hated us (vs. 18)

We shouldn’t be surprised that the world hates us.

- The world hates us because we are not a part of it (vs. 19)

This is the very thing that Jesus taught over and over. Believers are in the world, but we’re not of it. When Jesus separated His disciples from the world in the upper room, He reminded them that He had separated them from the world spiritually, and one day He will separate believers eternally. Believers are the saints (separated ones), the church (called-out ones).

- The world hates us because it hated Jesus (vs. 20)

Why should we think that we would be treated any better than our Lord? **Matthew 12:30** *He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.* Vance Havner said instead of two groups being Christians and non-Christians, in reality there are only Christians and anti-Christians.

- The world hates us because it doesn’t know God (vs. 21)

The world knows about God, but it doesn't know Him in a personal way. See John 16:1-3. The world's attitude toward us is just like Pharaoh's attitude toward Moses in **Exodus 5:2** *Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.* God's judgment will fall on all who don't know God and don't obey the Gospel, **2 Thessalonians 1:7-8**⁷ *And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,*⁸ *In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

- The world hates us because of the truth we represent (vs. 22-27)

Jesus quoted Psalm 35:19, "They hated me without a cause." There was no valid reason for hating Him, but the world hated Him because His words and works revealed their sin. He lived and spoke the truth without compromise. His presence brought conviction to their hearts. The Holy Spirit now continues the ministry that Jesus had while He was here. Jesus was and is the way, the truth, and the life. Now the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of truth speaks (testifies) of Christ and believers also testify (bear witness). This is the Gospel message the world needs to hear, but doesn't like to hear.

APPLYING THIS MESSAGE TO YOUR LIFE

- 1) Christians should expect the world's hatred, 2 Timothy 3:12 *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* If you don't suffer persecution to some degree, it's probably because you're not living like a Christian. I heard about a man who was anxious about starting a new job. He thought the other workers might give him a hard time if they found out he was a Christian. When he came home after his first day at work his wife asked him how he got along. He said, "We got along just fine. They never found out I'm a Christian."
- 2) Christians should appreciate the world's hatred, Matthew 5:11-12¹¹ *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*¹² *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.* If the world hates you, you're in good company.
- 3) Christians should trust the Lord and ask Him to help us, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2¹ *Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you.*² *And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.* God has given us a mission that is impossible without His help. We are to witness to a world that hates us, hates our message, and hates the Lord we represent. Remember the words of Jesus: "He that is not with me is against me."