



John 15:18-25
Who Does the World Hate the Most?

18 " If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.

19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet 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 servant 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 Him who sent Me.

22 "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no 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 have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.

25 "But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'

[I will read the whole section, but this today, I will be focusing in on the fact of Christian persecution in the verses 18-21 and will take up verses 22-25 and discuss the reasons for its vehemence the next time I preach.]

Who does the world, and there I mean the world in contradistinction to the kingdom of God, hate the most? Who does the World hate the most? There are lot of candidates we could put up for that title.

Everybody has a genocidal dictator they can probably think of whom the world despises. But generally even those men aren't universally despised. For instance, polls tell us that Hitler is very popular in the Middle East. Also with the passing of time, they hate that people once felt for them generally begins to fade. At one time Napoleon was called "the monster" and "the most hated man in Europe" and yet today who still hates Napoleon? For some he's simply the little guy who stuck his hand in his tunic or a great general. Many years after his death his remains were conveyed back to Paris and he was buried in a grand tomb, once again the beloved of the French people. The same could be said for countless other men who were once greatly hated, Julius Caesar, Attila the Hun, and Genghis Khan for instance.

Even George W. Bush, a man who can still inspire a teeth gnashing frenzy in millions of the world's inhabitants will someday be just another president in American history and hating him will be as quaint and unheard of as hating Calvin Coolidge or Chester Arthur.

But who has the world hated and persecuted for two millennia, who does it still hate with a passion?

In 2006 Valedictorian Brittany McComb found out the answer to that question. She was giving her graduation speech at Foothill High, now Brittany could have waxed eloquent about how she had learned much from the generalship of Genghis Khan, she could have talked about how Mao's Redbook had inspired her to do great things, she could even have attributed her success to Allah and the Prophet Muhammad, and raised hardly an eyebrow. In fact, if anybody had complained, a horde of lawyers would have descended upon that little High School to immediately demand they stop infringing that poor little girl's right to free speech. But the unthinkable and unforgivable thing that Brittany did was to mention the dreaded "J" word – and the moment she began speaking about her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they pulled the plug on her microphone and unceremoniously marched her from the podium.

Almost two millennia after His Crucifixion, Jesus and His followers are despised as much as ever by a world that has been in active rebellion to His rule since the fall. The world crucified Christ and has been crucifying His followers ever since, in every time and place. The only thing that has varied has been the extent and the vehemence of the persecution. Sometimes it is the soft persecution that Brittany McComb encountered, and often it is the hard persecution that the Christians killed in Pakistan this month encountered. *This very day*, many will pay for their witness to Christ's Lordship over them, with their lives. It's interesting that the very word "martyr" means witness in the Greek. The word itself indicates that those who are witnesses for Christ are often made to die for their faith.

Now in these verses Jesus the Messiah was preparing His disciples to undergo a lifelong persecution for His name. Persecution that would end with the execution of almost all the disciples. Ironically only John, the Author of this Gospel Account, would avoid being put to death for Christ. But even He would not avoid terrible and lasting persecution.

This persecution was going to be surprising to them, not because it was something new to the Lord's people, after all faithful Jews had been persecuted for their faith in Christ, often by their own countrymen for millennia, it was going to be surprising, because it ran counter to their expectations.

You see, most Jews were expecting that with the coming of the Messiah a Messianic kingdom would be established on earth. They expected: **the Messiah comes, we have the judgment of the wicked, and then the righteous, who had been persecuted are vindicated and immediately gain the kingdom rewards of God's chosen people.** You can see that in the preaching of John the Baptist, He not only preached that Jesus was the Messiah, he preached that the advent of the Messiah would be followed almost immediately by the final judgment. What did John say, "His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:12) That is true, Jesus will do all those things, but John was thinking now in the first coming, when the reality is that what he spoke there prophetically will happen in the second coming. If we understand that, we can also understand why He sent messengers to Jesus asking ***"Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"*** It was hard to fathom, if the Messiah had come why are God's chosen ones still being persecuted? Isn't it time to restore the kingdom NOW? Even the disciples got hung up on this one, as Jesus was about to ascend in Acts 1 they are asking ***"Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"***

To this day, brothers and sisters, this desire for the persecution of the righteous to end forever runs deep in our veins. You ask the majority of American evangelicals "are we living in the last days?" and

they'll say yes of course we are! But you could have picked any period in Christian history and gotten the same answer from true Christians. Persecution just seems so wrong to us, that we assume it has to end NOW. That's natural because it is wrong! Even the martyrs in heaven cry out for the judgment, we read in Revelation 6:9-10 *When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*

And the answer they and we are given is not one that we are entirely happy with – they were told to *“rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.”* When, at a time we are not give to know, the last martyr is slain for his faith in Christ, then and only then, will the final judgment come. And I hope you see, that that answers means, that far from being something odd that we should expect to end before Christ comes back, the persecution of the saints is intimately tied to the return of Christ, and that this persecution will continue until His return.

Jesus even says that this persecution shouldn't surprise them. If the world hated me, know that it will hate you as well. It's unavoidable. He even tells them its not about *you*, its about *ME*. The world has been in rebellion against God since the fall and utterly consumed with hatred for Him. They hate the Master and as a result they despise His servants. The world sees the servants of Christ as enemies and traitors. They were born into the World, and originally they too served the Devil (John 8:44, Eph. 2:2), but then Christ came and called His chosen ones to His banner and worse they heard and they answered! They left the world and joined Kingdom of God. They “betrayed” the City of Destruction, the city of their birth. Had they ignored the call of Christ to **“Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.”** as it says in Rev. 18:4, the world would have loved them, but because they are no longer citizens of the world, but now have their citizenship in heaven. The world hates them and persecutes them.

Oh, and like Christian and Faithful in Vanity Fair, the world can spot Christ's servants a mile away. They don't talk like they do. Their language is humble, and gentle, they are not filled with vanity and their speech is not laced with profanity and hatred – or at least it shouldn't be! The things they are most interested in are not money and earthly attainments but the things of the Kingdom of Heaven. They are aliens, sojourners, pilgrims in this world, the world is not their home. They are weird. Brothers and Sisters, I hope you are weird amongst worldlings. You should no more fit in with them than a US Soldier amongst a group of Jihadis. You serve a different master, you have a different objective, and a different aim. In fact, here is a quick test: where do you feel most at home, at church amongst the people of God, or when you are out in the world amongst unregenerate people? Where is your heart, in the church or in the world? Because your **home** is where your **heart** is.

Now, the encouraging news is, that Christ is choosing His people out of the world, and while if they hate Him and reject His word, they will reject you and your word, on the other side if they accept His word, they will accept you and your word. In other words if someone from the world hears the gospel and rejects they aren't going to be your friends, because you belong to Jesus and the Kingdom and they reject Jesus and His Kingdom. But if someone hears the Gospel, and that Someone is a person whom Christ has Chosen, then they will be born again, and they will be your friends because you serve the same Master. The critical difference then is keeping or rejecting the Gospel, the Word of Jesus Christ. If they reject the Gospel it shows they don't know Jesus and that they don't know “Him who sent me” that is God, the Father.

Now hang on, says the worldling, just because I reject the gospel doesn't mean I don't know God! How often do we hear that? The claim is often made, that they don't hate Christ, they hate his followers, or they don't hate God, they hate Christ. But you know what Christ says about that, He says it's hogwash. You know people should get this. How many of us would think it perfectly normal to say ***"Oh I love Him and have a wonderful relationship with Him, but I hate and reject His beloved wife and He's ok with it."*** Similarly, you don't get to the Father without the Son. You can't Hate God's Beloved Son and claim to Love Him especially when the Father says things like ***"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."*** (Psalm 2:12):

John 15:23 "He who hates Me hates My Father also.

1 John 2:23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

1 John 5:11 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Now some applications:

1) **Can this persecution be avoided?** Why yes it can! Jesus says so – “If you were of the world, the world would love its own.”

Simply adopt the morals and ways of the sons of the world and they will love you. You don't even need to drop the name Christian. You can keep the name Christian and Church, but you take out everything that smacks of Christ, and the Gospel, and Holiness, and stuff the name Christian full of worldliness. You build a church that look like the world, and loves the same things the world loves, pleasure and money and music and sports and politics and ignoring everything the word says about marriage. Your kids though will be smarter, they'll figure out he we are Christians in name only. And what I go to church to get, I can get better in the world.

But brothers and sisters, persecution cannot be avoided if you are going to remain true followers of Christ. On the eve of his own execution Paul said 2 Tim. 3:12 ***Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.***

"Persecution is the lot of all really godly people at this very day. Ridicule, mockery, slander, misrepresentations still show the feeling of unconverted people against the true Christian. As it was in Paul's day, so it is now. In public and in private, at school and at college, at home and abroad, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3:12.) Mere churchmanship and outward profession are a cheap religion, of course, and cost a man nothing. But real vital Christianity will always bring with it a cross." – JC Ryle

Now I will be very frank with you, in a Paul Washer “*why are you clapping, I'm talking about you*” kind of way, if you refuse to be persecuted because of your faith in Christ, this is not the Church for you, and I pray it never will be, because for the world to not persecute us, would mean that we were worldly and compromised and what a lost and dying world is that real, vital Christianity. Because only that saves.

2) **Here is the second application, you may fear persecution, and choosing the world may seem like a better deal but it is to trade a thimbleful of safety in this life, for an ocean of wrath in the next.**

Luke 9:23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

24 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

25 "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?

26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.

3) **But be encouraged, as Paul says in Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.**

Let me give you some further words of admonition and encouragement from a living example of that principle – James Renwick.

Entered into the Ministry when he was only 19

And served for five years

Like his master he had nowhere to lay his head

A man who was gracious and gentle

Often preached in the rain

On one occasion it was a downpour and they set up a tent for him to preach under but he would not enter it. He was preaching from the Song of Songs on Christ's covenant of redemption:

'My dear friends, be not disturbed because of the rain. For to have a covenant-interest in Christ, the true Solomon, and in the benefits of his blessed purchase, is well worth the enduring of all temporal, elementary storms that can fall on us. And this Solomon, who is here pointed at, endured a far other kind of storm for his people--even a storm of unmingled wrath. And oh, what would poor damned reprobates in hell give for this day's offer of sweet and lovely Christ. And oh, how welcome would our suffering friends in prison and banishment make this day's offer of Christ.' 'And, for my own part,' said he, 'as the Lord will keep me, I shall bear my equal share in this rain, in sympathy with you.' And he returned to his sweet Subject again, and offered us grace and reconciliation with God, through Christ, by his Spirit.

"Words would fail me to express my own frame, and the frame of many others; only this I may say, we would have been glad to have endured any kind of death, to have been home at the uninterrupted enjoyment of that glorious Redeemer who was so livelily and clearly offered to us that day.

Will you choose the same Christ that Renwick chose? Will you embrace the same promises and maintain your vows to the end? "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."