

The World's Hatred (John 15.18-16.4)

I. CONTEXT

- A. Throughout John 15 Jesus had spoken of the disciple's intimate union with him. Those who follow him are called to "abide" in him like branches in a vine and will therefore bear fruit in this world.
- B. The life of union with Christ is a glorious teaching that is meant to provide security and confidence for those who have faith in Christ in this world.
- C. To abide in Christ is to remain in a posture of trusting obedience to him. This type of life, sustained through faith in Christ, will result in the fruits of righteousness that bring glory to God and joy to those who follow him.
- D. However, Jesus seeks to demonstrate to his disciples that although there are glorious realities to abiding in him, there will also be profound difficulties. The truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ is both a confrontation to the world and an invitation to find life. Jesus desires that his followers be aware of the diametric opposition of sinful humanity to his truth.
- E. This section is intended to rightly orient and interpret a life of fidelity to Christ and his mission. These words are given by Christ in order to strengthen the hearts of his followers to correctly interpret the places where their fidelity to his truth will result in apparent failure in the form of opposition.
- F. Jesus does not leave his disciples grasping to make sense of such opposition in the world. Rather, he speaks tenderly to them of the coming ways they will experience difficulty in order to help their hearts not become overwhelmed with trouble.

II. THE HATRED OF THE WORLD

¹⁸If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰Remember 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 also keep yours. ²¹But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. ²²If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³Whoever hates me hates my Father also. ²⁴If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.' (John 15.18-25)

- A. Jesus is seeking to rightly orient the expectation and experience of the disciples as he prepares them for the coming days that include his immanent crucifixion and his ascension to the Father. He is attempting to reorient their expectations for 'success' as they walk in his ministry of reconciliation throughout the world.
- B. Jesus had taught his disciples throughout his life that his followers would experience persecution and opposition. He even demonstrated that opposition would be one of the defining 'marks' of the new covenant community.

¹⁰"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matt 5.10-12)

- C. **The World:** Throughout the Gospel of John, the "world" stands for the moral order that describes and encompasses sinful humanity. This is not merely speaking about the created area in which we live, but rather speaks of the realm of sinful humanity that is set against God in rebellion. This includes the values, practices, and structures that define life in rebellion against God.

D. Jesus orients the opposition the disciples are to face through a series of “if... then” statements that generally fall into four categories.

1. If the disciples experience the hatred of the world, they are to know that the ***world hated Jesus first*** (15.18). Jesus had come into the world that he had made, but the world did not know him and stood opposed to him. Jesus will go on to show that the hatred of the world for him is ultimately the expression of the hatred of sinful hearts toward God.

⁹The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. (John 1.9-11)

¹⁹And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed (John 3.19-20)

2. If the disciples experience the hatred of the world, it is only because ***they do not belong to the world*** (15.19). The world loves its own. Experiencing opposition and hatred by the world *demonstrates* to the disciples that they belong to another master. This truth is not to make those who follow Christ boast, because they are those who have been *chosen out of* the world by Christ. This teaching is designed to give comfort to the heart, not ammunition to our pride. It is also meant to be a litmus test for our own hearts to understand where we have compromised with the world.

⁴²Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁴³Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.” (John 8.42-27)

¹⁴I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. (John 17.14-18)

3. If the disciples experience the hatred of the world, it is because ***servants are not greater than their masters*** (15.20). The disciples are here reminded of Jesus’ saying. Elsewhere this saying had been used to call disciples to love (John 13.16) and to tell them that they will be slandered on account of his name (Matt 10.24).

¹²When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. ¹⁶Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 13.12-17)

²⁴“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household. (Matt 10.24-25)

4. If the disciples experience the hatred of the world, it ultimately demonstrates that ***the world does not know God*** (15.21-25). This is the most expansive of Jesus’ arguments. Jesus is simply saying that his words and his works were intended to “show” the Father (cf. John 14.9). However, the fact that he was rejected demonstrated their sin, showing that they hated God himself.

⁹Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? (John 14.9)

- E. The writings of the New Testament confirm the experience that Jesus' promised his disciples. The early church faced opposition and hardship as they sought to proclaim the gospel throughout the world.

¹²Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Tim 3.12)

¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (1 Pet 4.12-14)

- F. Much of the New Testament presents a 'cruciform' shape to the Christian life. Following Jesus is enabled and animated by the power of his resurrection, but the life of a believer is to take on the shape of Christ's self-giving, sacrificial love as we live in this world. This will include expressing sacrificial love for others and opposition by the world.

²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? (Matt 16.24-26)

²⁴Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church (Col 1.24)

- G. Pursuing faithful mission is the call to go into the world and give witness to the gospel of Christ. This will appear foolish to those who are dead in sin.

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt 28.18-20)

²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord" ... ^{2.2}For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (1 Cor 1.27-2.2)

III. THE MERCY OF JESUS

¹I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. ²They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. ⁴But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. (John 16.1-4a)

- A. At the end of this section, Jesus tells his disciples *why* he is speaking these words to them. The first section of this is the *theological* underpinning of opposition and mistreatment. Jesus is simply telling them how to make sense of their experience. In this section Jesus shows that this is not simply theoretical, but will express itself in real, tangible ways in their lives.
- B. These words are necessary because living through such opposition will be different (more difficult) than simply hearing about it. Jesus tells them that something about the nature of walking through the hardships they are about to face has the potential to drive them to the point of falling away.

- C. **Keep you from falling away:** Here Jesus uses a word (fall away) that is translated elsewhere as “offended” or “stumble”. The potential for offense is high when the reality of discipleship looks different from our expectations. Jesus wants to ensure that his disciples rightly understand what is before them, so that they can rightly interpret the difficulty and opposition.
- D. Jesus told John the Baptist that there was a blessedness to the one who walked through life without offense. This demonstrates that there are places our hearts are tempted to doubt and despair in the midst of difficulty or hardship.

⁶And blessed is the one who is not offended by me. (Matt 11.6)

- E. Jesus desires that those who follow him will not experience a troubled heart in walking through the difficult seasons of discipleship. A troubled heart can be the seedbed for offense; and an offended heart is the seedbed for stumbling/falling away. In his mercy, Jesus tells his disciples beforehand what to expect in order that they will remember his words when they happen.
- F. Jesus demonstrates that the opposition will come from those who believe they are offering a service to God. This is designed to show two things to the disciples.
 1. The opposition will come from those they would not likely expect.
 2. The opposition comes from blindness and lack of knowledge and can be experienced with compassion and sorrow.

³⁴And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23.34)

²⁷“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. (Luke 6.27-28)

IV. THE HELP OF THE SPIRIT

²⁶“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. (John 15.26-27)

- A. Yet, the disciples are to not lose heart because they will not be left alone. Jesus is to send to them the Holy Spirit (*the Helper*).
- B. **Proceeds from the Father:** This demonstrates that the Helper is the Holy Spirit and is himself God. The Holy Spirit comes to enable and empower Christ’s disciples in the midst of their faithful witness in order that they might endure through hardship.
- C. **Spirit of Truth:** The Holy Spirit is identified as possessing and imparting the truth.
- D. The Holy Spirit is said here to come for a specific purpose: to **bear witness** about Jesus Christ. This is in partnership with the witness of the disciples. As they go to bear witness about Christ and his gospel, it is truly the Spirit of Truth who comes in order to empower their witness.
- E. We must set our hearts to remain faithful to Biblical truth and the witness of Christ Jesus no matter what the cost. The world is said to be in opposition to the values, truths, practices, and pursuits that give primary orientation to our faith. We must not be swayed by temptation to succumb to giving up fidelity to God’s word, the truth of the gospel, or the foundation of our faith.