

### The World's Opposition

#### John 15:18-27

John 15:18-27 - *"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. <sup>22</sup> If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin but now they have no excuse for their sin. <sup>23</sup> He who hates Me hates My Father also. <sup>24</sup> If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. <sup>25</sup> But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'* <sup>26</sup> *"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. <sup>27</sup> And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning."*

#### Background Notes

In verses 18-19 the Lord used the word "world" six times. *"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 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."*

What is meant by the word "world" as it is used six times in these two verses?

Remember the *context* of verses 18-19. As it is used in the John 15 context, the "world" is *not* the "material world" that God created. In these verses the Lord was speaking about the corrupt and evil "world system" that opposes God. The *world system* is the satanic system of values and attitudes that is contrary to the biblical system of values and attitudes.

This *world system* is characterized by the lust or strong sinful desires of the flesh, by the lust or strong sinful desires of the eyes, and by the strong sinful desires of pride and vanity. 1 John 2:15-16 describes the characteristics of this *world system*: *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world."* This, then, is the "world" of which the Lord spoke in John 15, 18, and 19. It is the world system that is opposed to God and His Word.

In verses 22 and 24 the Lord said, *"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin... 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."* The Lord did **not** mean that those unbelievers would have been

completely sinless if He had not come. No! But if the Lord had not come to earth, and had not spoken to them, and had not done the miracles before them, they would not have committed the great sin of rejecting the Messiah who had come specifically to them, and done these miracles before them.

Other sins are as nothing compared with the great sin of rejecting Christ! These people rejected Jesus Christ after hearing His claims and seeing His miracles - greater miracles than any prophet of the Old Testament had ever done (v24)! Greater first-hand exposure to the words and works of Jesus meant greater responsibility and greater sin. They had no excuse (v22).

One more background note. Verse 25 says, *“But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’* This is a specific quote from Psalm 69:4, one of the Messianic psalms: *“Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they are mighty who would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully. Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it.”*

Although those Jews who had rejected Jesus Christ were guilty of great sin and were without excuse, God’s purpose was being accomplished. God’s sovereign plan of redemption was being carried out. Even though the Jews who rejected Christ fulfilled prophetic Scripture, each one of them was fully responsible for the great sin of personally rejecting Christ.

## Doctrinal/Teaching Points

### 1. The world hates Christ, and therefore it hates Christians.

In verse 18 the Lord said, *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.”* 1 John 3:13 says, *“Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.”*

Why does the world hate Christians? Because the satanic world system is opposed to Jesus Christ, the world **hates** Christ. Although the world may speak of Christ as a great human teacher and a great moral leader, when it comes to Jesus Christ’s claims to be God and to be the Judge of all mankind, the world hates Him. The world hates Jesus Christ, and therefore it hates those who follow Him.

Before we became Christians the world didn’t hate us. In fact, before we became Christians, we were part of this world system! *“If you were of the world, the world would love its own”* (v19a). But when we became Christians, we were transformed, and we were transferred out of this world system: *“Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you”* (v19b). The world hates us because we are no longer part of it, and we are now identified with Jesus Christ.

Have you ever experienced the hatred of this world because you’re a Christian? A few years ago I was sitting next to a person on a plane. We both had tennis racquets and we got into a very friendly conversation about the finer points of the game of tennis. It was a great conversation - until I worked the conversation around to the subject of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. The atmosphere immediately changed, and I vividly remember that person saying to me, “You don’t really believe all that stuff in the Bible about Jesus, do you?” I said, “Yes!” And from that point on, I would have to say I experienced the hatred of this world. Even though I tried my hardest to be friendly and show the love of Christ, I received

nothing but negativity. I was a target of "this world's hatred." Why? Because I was identified with Jesus Christ! The world hates Christ, and therefore it hates Christians.

## 2. The world hates Christ, and therefore it hates God.

In verses 23-24 the Lord Jesus said, *"He who hates Me hates My Father also. 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."* It is impossible to love God and reject Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ and God the Father go together. Jesus Christ is God. They are One! Thus the world system that opposes Jesus Christ and hates Him, opposes and hates God.

The "religious world" claims to love God and honor God, but the religious world rejects the Jesus Christ's teaching that He is the only way of salvation. They reject His teaching that there is a Heaven and a hell, and that there is eternal punishment, and that most people are on the broad road that leads to destruction. When the religious world rejects this teaching, they're showing their disdain and contempt for Jesus Christ. They're showing their disdain for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and God's way of salvation. They may say they worship God, but the "God" they worship is not the God of the Bible. It's an empty "god" – a "god" they have made in their own image, to match their own desires and purposes.

The religious world is part of this world system that is opposed to the claims of Christ. The world hates Christ and therefore it hates God.

## Practical Applications

### 1. Be concerned if the world loves you.

In verse 20 the Lord said, *"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."*

The point here is **not** that we should try to get ourselves persecuted, or that we should try to be hated by this world. No! The point here is that if we openly identify with Jesus Christ and share His Word with others, which we should do, then we **will** be hated and persecuted by this world. In 2 Timothy 3:12 we read, *"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."* Notice - it doesn't say that Christians who seek to live godly lives **may** suffer persecution. It says they **will** suffer persecution! So - be concerned if the world loves you, because that means something is amiss.

Notice that verse 20 assumes that we'll be sharing the words of Christ and not hiding our faith: *"If they kept My word, they will keep yours also."* It's great to find an unbeliever who is open to hearing what the Bible has to say! That's evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work in that person's life. It may not be evident to us, but the Holy Spirit is probing the hearts of folks out there in this world! You may find that they're open to the Word of God.

But overall, the world system is opposed to Christ. We shouldn't try to get ourselves hated and persecuted by this world, but it **will** happen if our lives and lifestyles are in line with the Word of God. It may not be physical persecution. It may be mocking. It may be the social "cold shoulder." But persecution will come if we are living godly lives.

So - be concerned if the world loves you.

## **2. Remember - you can't have one without the other!**

What can't we have without the other? We can't have the effective witness mentioned in verses 26-27: "*But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*"

These verses indicate that we can't have an effective witness or testimony apart from the power of the Holy Spirit - and the Holy Spirit can't have an effective witness if we're not effective witnesses! It's a winning team – but we can't have one without the other!

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come, and He promised that the Holy Spirit would help the disciples remember everything that the Lord had said and done throughout His public ministry. The disciples who had been with Jesus Christ during His ministry on earth were eyewitnesses who could testify of what He had taught and done. They were to be effective witnesses for Him (v27).

Notice that the Holy Spirit would witness or testify of Christ (v26), and the disciples themselves would witness or testify of Christ (v27). The same Greek word is used in both verses. How does the Holy Spirit testify of Christ? Not only through the written Word, but also through us.

How do we have an effective testimony for Christ? We should know and memorize Scripture so, through us, the Holy Spirit can clearly point the way to salvation. We should study how to defend the faith, so the Spirit can remind us of what we've studied. We should be clean and open channels so we're ready for the Holy Spirit to use. We should take advantage of our God-provided opportunities to speak. We should build relationships with people. We should make ourselves responsible to witness!

You can't have one without the other. We can't have an effective witness or testimony apart from the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit won't have a completely effective witness apart from us! We must step forward and take on the work and responsibility of being an effective witness, and the Holy Spirit will empower us and testify through us.

Remember - you can't have one without the other!