

JOHN

Please turn in your Bibles to John chapter 15 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Now keep in mind that Judas has departed to betray Jesus. The Passover meal has been completed.

In John chapter 14 Jesus spoke comfort to His men who were troubled and told them not to focus on the situations but upon Him, “**you believe in God, believe also in Me.**” John 14:1. He then spoke of His departure and that He was the only way to the Father. There is no other way, no other means.

He also tells them that He is not going to leave them as orphans when He leaves. The Father is going to send the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth who will be *with* them and after the death and resurrection of Jesus the Holy Spirit will be *in* them!

As they finish up in the upper room, where they had the Passover meal, they are going to enter out of the city, past the Temple, through the Brook Kidron and up the Mount of Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane.

And I believe it is on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, as they pass by the Temple with its beautiful doors, that we get the teaching here in John chapter 15. Of this J. Vernon McGee wrote,

. . . that night He went by the temple, following the Law as He so meticulously did. The gates would have been open during the Passover nights. Those beautiful gates of the temple were actually a tourist attraction. They had been forged in Greece, floated across the Hellespont, then brought to Jerusalem, and placed in Herod’s temple there.

The gates were made of bronze and wrought into them was a golden vine. That the vine symbolizes the nation Israel is apparent from the following verses: “Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land” (Ps. 80:8–9).

“Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. . . . For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry” (Isa. 5:1, 7).

“Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? (Jer. 2:21).

“Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself . . .” (Hos. 10:1). It is clear that the vine is a picture of the nation Israel.

Now, friend, our Lord is saying one of the most revolutionary things these men have ever heard. It sounds familiar to us today, but it was strange to their ears. Listen to Him.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. IV, pp. 464-465

Also, here in John chapter 15 we come to the seventh and last of the “*I AM*” statements, the EGO EIMI in the Greek, made by Jesus in this Gospel. Look at what we have seen in regard to Jesus being the *Great I AM*, Almighty God.

Those statements that Jesus made are as follows:

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| <i>I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE</i> | (John 6:35) |
| <i>I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD</i> | (John 8:12) |
| <i>I AM THE DOOR FOR THE SHEEP</i> | (John 10:7) |
| <i>I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD</i> | (John 10:11, 14) |
| <i>I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE</i> | (John 11:25) |
| <i>I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE</i> | (John 14:6) |
| <i>I AM THE VINE</i> | (John 15:1) |

You see, Jesus becomes to us what we need. He is the becoming one and thus, He is our spiritual food, He is our light to see by, He is the door to enter in through, He is the good shepherd to lead us, He has power over death, He is the only way to the Father and now we see here that He is the vine and we are the branches, and thus, He has become to us the nourishment we need to grow and produce fruit by.

In fact, that is the purpose for your life, to produce fruit, for a fruit tree that doesn't produce fruit is worthless and cut down! That is what we will be looking at as we get into John chapter 15.

Let me give you a summary of this chapter.

The Lord now speaks of Himself as the Vine, with the heavenly Father as the Vinedresser. As branches, believers are to abide in Him for blessings and fellowship, but also for bearing Christian fruit. Without this spiritual connection, believers cannot bear fruit and thus are "taken away." Jesus also commands his disciples to love one another just as Christ has loved them. He then reminds them that the Helper will come to bear witness of Him to the world.

- Elmer Towns, The Gospel of John, p. 149

With that as our background, let's begin reading in John chapter 15, beginning in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

JOHN 15**VERSES 1-3**

Yes, in the Scriptures Israel is pictured as the vine but here we are told of the “**true vine**” Jesus Christ. We must be rooted and grounded in Him and not in Israel or some church, some denomination if we are going to bear fruit for God.

And the vinedresser is God the Father. They work together. You see, if a grape vine is going to produce abundant grapes, it must be pruned. We are attached to the vine, to Jesus where we get our life from. And the Father comes by and He does the pruning in our lives so that we can produce fruit!

Now I am not sure any of us like the pruning process but we do like the results of that process. But can you imagine if there was no pruning in our lives, we would be in trouble.

Think about that for a minute. David said in Psalm 119:67, “**Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.**” And in Psalm 119:71 David said, “**It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.**”

And that cleansing agent that God uses in our lives is the Word of God! Pruning is needed in our lives. One writer summed it up like this. He wrote,

A character in C. S. Lewis’s Chronicles of Narnia series is named Eustace Scrub, a selfish, immature boy who thinks only of himself. In The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, he not only finds himself in the dragon’s cave but discovers he has turned into a dragon! He attempts to remove the scales but cannot do so by himself. Finally, the Lion, the Christ-figure, comes.

Eustace describes what happens next:

This is what the Lion said, but I don't know if he spoke. "You will have to let me undress you." I was afraid of his claws I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate, so I just lay flat on my back and let him do it. The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right to my heart and when he began pulling the skin off it hurt worse than anything I had ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off.

That is how it is with pruning. We would rather do it ourselves, but we cannot, and even if we could, we would not remove what really has to go. The truth is, what is noble and attractive to us has come from the cutting we would have avoided.

- R. Kent Hughes, John "That You May Believe", p. 355

Now some look at verse 2 and as they read this they believe it is saying that you can lose your salvation or it is a picture of a backslidden Christian because if you don't bear fruit you will be **"taken away."**

First of all, Jesus says in verse 3, **"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."** So, if His men are clean, is Jesus saying that they can be unclean? I don't think that is what Jesus is saying.

Let me explain what I mean and I think you will see that Jesus is not speaking of someone losing their salvation. The Greek verb **"takes away"** or AIRO can also be translated "lifts up" which I think that is the intent here in verse 2.

Also, the Greek word for **"prunes"** or **"purge"** is KATHARIZO which can be translated "cleanse."

Now the picture that Jesus is painting they would understand, we might miss it because we don't grow grapes.

But the idea here is that at times branches can become heavy and lay on the ground, not getting the sunshine that it needs to produce fruit. So, the vinedresser would come and lift it up and brace it.

Other times the fruit became so heavy it would lie on the ground and become dirty so once again he would come by and lift it up and wash it or cleanse it.

That is what verse 2 is all about and when you look at verse 3, it makes sense. You see, we are cleansed by the Word of God. For those that are in Christ, God will lift you up and support you and He will cleanse you with His Word, with the whole idea of producing fruit in our lives!

Tenney puts it like this, "The means by which pruning or cleaning is done is by the Word of God. It condemns sin; it inspires holiness; it promotes growth. As Jesus applied the words God gave him to the lives of the disciples, they underwent a pruning process that removed evil from them and conditioned them for further service."

So, this is not saying that you can lose your salvation but it just shows how actively involved the Father is in our lives, lifting us up, pruning us so that we can produce abundant fruit in our lives and that fruit would honor Him!

VERSES 4-5

Imagine taking an apple branch and cutting it from the tree. This branch has blossoms on it so it will produce fruit, it will produce apples, right? And you bring it in your house and you wait for the apples to come. What is going to happen? Nothing because the branch was removed from the rest of the tree and it could not receive any nourishment, any nutrients to help it to grow and produce fruit.

That is what Jesus is speaking of here when He says that we need to “**abide**” in Him. The Greek word for “**abide**” means to “remain” or to “stay where you are.”

Sin can break our fellowship with God. Rebellion can break our fellowship with God. We can just not listen to God and thus, we are not abiding in Him.

Boice put it like this, “When our Lord says: *Abide in me* he is talking about the will, about the choices, the decisions we make. We must decide to do things which expose ourselves to him and keep ourselves in contact with him. This is what it means to abide in him.”

And think about this for a minute. When we are attached to the vine the sap runs from the vine to the branches, the nutrients, and helps the branch to bear fruit. I see that sap or those nutrients as the Holy Spirit as the Godhead is actively involved in our lives as we abide in Christ!

Also understand that as you watch an apple tree it does not strive or struggle to produce fruit. There is no complaining or groaning as it is producing fruit.

But how often do we, as Christians, strive and struggle to produce fruit. And in the end, we are groaning and complaining about it. That is not how true fruit is produced.

What are we to do? Abide in Christ, stay close to Him and you will naturally produce fruit in your life!

Now I know that it says you can't do anything apart from Christ, and that is very true. But there are those who will argue, "What do you mean I can't do anything meaningful, fruitful outside of Christ? I can do whatever I want and I have done good things no matter what you say!"

In other words, some would protest to these words of Jesus.

As true as that may be outside of Christ, that you can do whatever you want, even good things, they will not be accepted by Him no matter how good they are outside of Him. Thus, we are to abide in Christ or Christ should be at home in our lives. You see, a branch that is cut off from the vine will die, it won't produce fruit!

What is this fruit that Jesus is speaking of? There are several examples of fruit spoken of in the Scriptures.

In Romans 1:13 Paul tells us that fruit is seeing people saved.

In Romans 6:22 Paul tells us that fruit is holiness.

In Romans 15:28 Paul speaks of our giving being fruit.

In Colossians 1:6-8 Paul speaks of fruit being the help we bring to others.

In Hebrews 13:15 we see that the praise of our lips is fruit.

And lastly, in Galatians 5:22 the fruit of the spirit is love!

What about joy, peace, longsuffering and-so-on? Notice that it is the fruit of the spirit not fruits. These others are descriptions of love, what it produces in our lives, how that love is seen in our lives. Thus, outside of Christ we can do nothing that He will accept as fruit unto Him!

But what about those that are not abiding in Christ, that are not saved? Jesus deals with that in John 15:6.

VERSE 6

Now this is speaking of the unsaved who are not, of course, abiding in Christ. That word “**cast out**” in the Greek is BALLO and it means “to throw.” And notice the progression here. Not abiding – cast out – withered – gathered – thrown into the fire – burned! I think that is pretty clear, it speaks of judgment for those who reject Christ.

Yes, they may look like Christians but they are not. John tells us in I John 2:19, “**They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.**”

And please understand that this is not speaking of leaving a church. They had cut off their relationship with Christ, the One they said they loved but now they do not. They were never saved in the first place.

And keep in mind in those days there were not many churches, maybe just one in an area and thus, they at first were part of it. Maybe even served in it. But then, after a while, for whatever reason they left. And the key here is “**that none of them were of us.**” They left the church and that was the evidence that they were not part of the body of Christ.

These people we might call *the Judas branch*. A professor of Jesus but not a possessor of Jesus! How can I say that? Because there is no abiding in Christ, they never knew Him, they had a form of righteousness but denied its power. They were religious but there was no relationship with Jesus!

Let me also say this because there are those who are not in agreement with what I have just said regarding this branch here in John 15:6 being a Judas branch or the unsaved. Let me show you what I mean.

The first view believes *cast out* branches are ones who, though once true believers, end up in hell for lack of abiding and fruit. They were once disciples, but are now *cast out*. I don't believe you can lose your salvation. I don't think this is what Jesus was saying here. Remember that Paul said in Philippians 1:6 that the work that God has begun in us, our salvation, He will complete. I don't think the Lord is going to mess up on any of us. He will complete the work that He has started!

The second view is that the *cast out* branches are ones who only appeared to be disciples, and who never really abided in Jesus, and therefore go to hell (like Judas). I do believe this is what Jesus was speaking of.

The third view sees the *cast out* branches as fruitless disciples who live wasted lives that are in effect burnt up, and this passage doesn't refer to their eternal destiny (like Lot, Abraham's nephew). Again, when you are cast into the fire and burned up it is speaking of judgment, eternal judgment. So, this can't be right either.

The emphasis seems plain: there are no true disciples who do not abide. The branch must remain connected to the vine or it has no life and is of no lasting good.

VERSES 7-8

I realize that some who read this think that this is an open-ended statement by Jesus. We just need to ask what we want and we will get it. In fact, we have to because Jesus said so!

First of all, if you are abiding in Christ His will becomes your will. The more time we spend with the Lord the more we will think as He thinks. The more we dig into His Word the more we will understand His will for our lives. And the more our will is in line with His will the more we can be sure of having our prayers answered.

James makes this point of not getting what we ask for because we are asking amiss. In James 4:2-3 we are told, “**. . . Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.**”

I have a feeling that not too many health, wealth and prosperity teachers use those verses much!

And the key for me is found in I John 5:14-15 where John tells us, “**Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.**”

You see, according to His will and not mine. That is why I must abide in Him so I know what His will is for my life, what He wants me to do, what He wants me to pray for! It is an awesome statement by Jesus that if we ask what we desire it will be given to us.

Spurgeon put it like this, “It becomes safe for God to say to the sanctified soul, ‘Ask what thou wilt, and it shall be done unto thee.’ The heavenly instincts of that man lead him right; the grace that is within his soul thrusts down all covetous lustings and foul desires, and his will is the actual shadow of God’s will. The spiritual life is master in him, and so his aspirations are holy, heavenly, Godlike.”

What God has given to us, what is within our reach and yet, we do not use what God desires to give to us so often. Don’t limit God because of your limits! God is far greater than that and thus, pray for God to do exceedingly abundantly above all you could ask or think!

And here in John 15:8 I believe this flows out of what Jesus said in John 15:7. You see, the purpose of bearing fruit is not to glorify us, but the Father.

Jesus put it this way in Matthew 5:16, “**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**”

Thus, as we abide in Him, as fruit is produced in our lives, as prayer is being answered, we prove to be His disciples. Not by what we have done but by what He has done in us and through us! And others will see that we are true disciples of Jesus because we live for Him and our actions reflect His nature!

VERSES 9-10

Keep in mind that the fruit of the Spirit is **LOVE!** And how do we abide in the love of God? Jesus tells us by keeping His commandments! What does He mean by that? Is He talking about a works salvation here?

Not at all. As we abide in Christ we will know His love for us and that love that He has for us will be manifested in our lives. That is what He is talking about. Abiding in Him!

You see, Jesus deliberately loved His disciples according to the way God the Father **loved** Him. We know that Jesus **loved** His disciples by teaching them, protecting them, guiding them, sacrificially serving them, and using His power and authority to do these things. In some way, the Father also did all those things for Jesus and Jesus did them for the disciples after that pattern. And He loves us like that as well!

Spurgeon puts this into perspective for us as he wrote, “Beloved, you do not, dare not, could not, doubt the love of the Father to his Son. It is one of those unquestionable truths about which you never dreamed of holding an argument. Our Lord would have us place his love to us in the same category with the Father’s love to himself. We are to be as confident of the one as of the other.”

Remember, the fruit of the Spirit is *LOVE!* And John gives us some insight into this love by telling us in I John 4:10-11, **“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”**

For the life of me I can't understand how Christians can have bitterness, anger, hatred towards other Christians. Yes, they might not be your closest friends, but bitterness, anger, hatred is not a fruit of the Spirit but it is a works of the flesh!

Imagine if God responded like we do. We do something wrong, we dishonor God and now He is angry at us, bitter towards us, He hates us? No way, not at all. He loves us and we are to love others.

John once again tells us about this love in I John 3:16-19 when he wrote, **“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.”**

If you are confused about this love that Jesus is speaking of, the cost of this love, John tells us, **“He laid down His life for us.”** We can talk about love but John makes it more personal, he tells us to show how much you love people by what you do and not only by what you say!

Remember the words of Jesus in John 13:34-35, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

The evidence for being a disciple of Jesus Christ is your love for one another! It is not your Bible knowledge, which is important, but the reality is, it is that Bible knowledge that is manifested in your life, the love you show people.

If you are angry, yelling at people, harsh towards them, why? Is God that way towards you? Absolutely not! Then don't be that way towards others. We know love because He laid down His life for us. May we do the same for others!

Now, once again, how do we abide in God's love? By being obedient to His Word, that is how we abide in God's love.

Now what happens as we do? Let's read on and see.

VERSE 11

Now some will use John chapter 15 to speak of a believer losing his salvation, as I have said. I don't believe that is what is spoken of. And think about it. Jesus did not say that His purpose was that your "*doubts may be full*" but that "*your joy may be full.*" In other words, our joy should be overflowing!

Now keep in mind that the *joy* of Jesus isn't the same as what is commonly understood as *happiness* or *excitement*. The joy of Jesus is not the pleasure of a life of ease; it is the exhilaration of being right with God, and consciously walking in His love and care. We can have that *joy* – we can have *His joy* – and have it as an abiding presence.

You see, we have a fullness of joy in our lives! But those who don't abide in God's love by being obedient to His Word lose that fullness of joy that God has for them.

Carson put it this way when he wrote, “No one is more miserable than the Christian who for a time hedges in his obedience. He does not love sin enough to enjoy its pleasures, and does not love Christ enough to relish holiness. He perceives that his rebellion is iniquitous, but obedience seems distasteful. He does not feel at home any longer in the world, but his memory of his past associations and the tantalizing lyrics of his old music prevent him from singing with the saints. He is a man most to be pitied; and he cannot forever remain ambivalent.”

We don’t have to be miserable Christians, we can be full of joy by abiding in Christ! I like the way Spurgeon sums this up for us. He wrote, “God made human beings, as he made his other creatures, to be happy. They are capable of happiness, they are in their right element when they are happy; and now that Jesus Christ has come to restore the ruins of the Fall, he has to bring back to us the old joy, - only it shall be even sweeter and deeper than it could have been if we had never lost it.”

And that joy you have in your life is a witness to others of what they can have in Christ. I am not saying an absence of problems but a joy that is overflowing because of God’s love! Never forget that. Don’t be a Sally sourpuss but be filled with the Joy of the Lord!

VERSES 12-13

Notice that this is not a suggestion by Jesus, but He is commanding us to love each other just as He loves us.

Now some may say, “I can’t love that person!” No, that is not true! You won’t love that person and notice that Jesus does not give you any wiggle room here. **“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”** John 15:12.

And notice that this is not a feeling, it is an act of your will. It is not “feel this way” but “live this way!”

And the example that Jesus gives to us shows us how much He loves us. He gave His life for us, He laid down His life for us. Clarke put it like this, “No man can carry his love for his friend farther than this: for, when he gives up his life, he gives up all that he has. This proof of my love for you I shall give in a few hours; and the doctrine which I recommend to you I am just going to exemplify myself.”

And Jesus is telling them to love like He loves them and gave His life for them! Over and over on the night before His crucifixion Jesus is instilling in His men the love of God that we are to give to others.

Paul put it this way in Philippians 2:1-4, **“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”**

Because our culture has lost the meaning of what real love is, many in the church have listened to this false love and fallen prey to it. It is a love that gives because of what it gives in return and when you don’t get it in return, you move on!

That is not the kind of love that Jesus is speaking of! This love is unconditional and it only comes from God. We can’t manufacture it on our own, it just does not work! Thus, make the decision to love, live a life that is not just filled with the love of God but that overflows and touches the lives of others!

VERSES 14-15

Jesus calls us friends, not servants because a servant does things not knowing why, while a friend has a close, intimate relationship.

Tenney said, “The friend is a confidant who shares the knowledge of his superior’s purpose and voluntarily adopts it as his own.”

Now, that is what Jesus said, that we are His friends and not slaves. And yet, Paul tells us that he is a bond slave of Christ in many of his letters. How can that be?

Keep in mind that Paul did not say we are slaves of Christ, forced into that role. No, he said we are bond slaves of Christ and a bond slave freely gave up his rights to serve his master. It was not something he was made to do but it was something that he chose to do!

Thus, what Jesus said is completely right, we are friends of Christ. He shows us things we need to know. He guides us.

And Paul is right because we have freely surrendered our lives to Christ, we are bond slaves of Christ and yet friends with Christ!

VERSES 16-17

Jesus just spoke of us no longer being slaves but being His friend, that He would answer our prayers, that we would bear much fruit, that we would know things from the Father. Awesome, right? Of course that is!

But what is the problem with this? It could cause us to be proud, even looking down upon others. They did not receive these things because they earned them, not at all!

In fact, the basis for this is that Jesus chose them! “We are in Christ, not because we hold Him, but because He holds us.” (Meyer)

Now here comes the difficult question. Are we saved by divine election or man's free will?

Not an easy one to answer and it has been debated for many years. My answer is simple, **YES!** I can't explain it but God has called us and yet we can open the door and come or keep it closed. It is 100% divine election and 100% man's free will!

I will give you two pictures to show you what I mean. First of all, railroad tracks lay side by side. Think of one track being divine election and the other one being man's free will. The train is placed on those tracks and those tracks run parallel to each other. And it is those tracks that will lead the train to its destination.

The same is true with our salvation. God knows who will be saved but we have a free will to choose as well. And as we move along those tracks they lead us home, to heaven!

Now some may argue that is not fair! But it is. You see, all you have to do is ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life, repent of your sins, and you will find out that God choose you!

Also, think of it like this. As you die you come before these doors and one says "Come, enter in!" and so you do. In this room is a large banquet table with all these plates and cups on. And in front of them is a name card and too your surprise, there is yours. It is like they were waiting for you. Now as you turn you see the door close and on the inside of the door you see a sign that says, "Chosen before the foundations of the world." You see, free choice and divine election! It is one of those truths of God that short circuit our brain, but that is what the Scriptures teach!

We also see that Jesus connected fruit bearing with answered prayer. When He departed from them, their experience of asking and receiving would not end but would change, and Jesus prepared His disciples for this.

And notice that this fruit shall remain, and I think the idea here is that of saving faith, the salvation of souls. You see, that is real fruit, lasting fruit.

And Jesus then speaks of love once again and He once again commands us to love one another! Why did He repeat Himself?

Because He knew that self, the flesh would get in the way and that love could quickly deteriorate into hatred, anger, bitterness. Thus, Jesus says, **“These things I command you, that you love one another.”** John 15:17.

VERSES 18-20

First of all, we need to understand what Jesus means when He says, **“the world.”** He is not speaking of the created world, or humanity in general. What He is speaking of here is the society apart from God and opposed to God. The world system you might say that involves all people, all plans, all organizations, all activities, all values, all philosophies and so on. It is a society that is without God.

Now remember that Jesus spoke of us loving one another and thus, I think that same thought is brought out here. We are to love in spite of the world’s hatred toward us!

But why does the world hate us? Because they hate Jesus and thus, they can’t come against Jesus but they can come against those who love Him. You see, as we stand up for the things of God, knowing that men love darkness and they don’t like it when their dark deeds are exposed, they try to put out the light. And if they hated Jesus why do we think they will love us?

Now listen to what they thought of Christians early on. We are told, “It is an odd fact that the world soon justified its hostility to them by imputing to them the initiative in hatred. The earliest extant [existing] reference to Christians in pagan literature charges them with ‘hatred of the human race’.” (Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44.5) (Bruce)

Let me ask you this, has anything changed in almost two-thousand years in regard to how people think of us? I don’t think so. They still say we are people that are filled with hate! Nothing has really changed!

In fact, I remember when AIDS first came out and how they accused Christians for causing this because we rejected the homosexual lifestyle, called it a sin, and thus, they had to hide their sin, which caused AIDS to spread! And even today, if you oppose their views, the worlds views, you are hateful. No, we are not. We just have different believes, different morals, but we don’t hate them.

I realize that there are some who call themselves Christians that behave in a hateful manner, that is not what I am speaking of. I am speaking of us as Christians, we are to love people as Jesus did.

I have heard people say that “Love the sinner hate the sin is not biblical.” I disagree. Jesus reached out to sinners all the time, He loved them and so should we.

Also, something the church is doing is they want the world to love them. Please understand that the only way the world is going to love the church is when the church compromises.

Now how can I be so sure about that? Because James tells us, “**Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**”

James 4:4.

Isn't that interesting. Those churches that are seeker friendly, those churches who water things down so much so that the world is comfortable with them, are at war with God. You can't serve the world and God and the same time!

And John warns us in I John 2:15-17, “**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. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.**”

As Christians, we need to be careful not to love the world system, the world that is opposed to God!

Also, we are not to be conformed to this world as Paul said in Romans 12:1-2, “**I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**”

I think that is pretty clear.

Now, there is a cost to not loving this world system, there is a cost when we follow Jesus
– *PERSECUTION!*

Paul said in II Timothy 3:12, “**Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**” Not *MIGHT* but you *WILL* suffer persecution when you live for Christ.

But just don’t let that persecution cause you to hate. Love them into the kingdom of God!

You see, a dark world does not want the light of God to shine on them. And thus, they want everyone to conform to their image and if you don’t, they will come against you. But we are salt and light in this world and the dark world does not want the light and a decaying world does not want the salt! So, they will come against us with all their might!

Listen to the dying words of William Borden as he gave his life for Jesus on the mission field, “*No reserve; no retreat; no regrets.*” Are you willing to pay the price for loving God? It is a battle out there, who are you going to serve?

VERSES 21-25

They may have pleaded ignorance before He came, but now they are without excuse, they are living in open rebellion against God. Thus, with knowledge comes responsibility and all of us are without excuse!

And keep in mind that Jesus is not saying that if He did not come then they would have been sinless. Not at all.

But, by His works and His words they were without excuse!

Tenney wrote, “By both his life and his words he rebukes human sin and condemns it. He uncovers the inner corruption and hypocrisy of men, and they react violently to the disclosure.”

And Maclaren wrote, “So then He puts before us two forms of His manifestation of the divine nature, by His words and His works. Of these two He puts His words foremost, as being a deeper and more precious and brilliant revelation of what God is than are His miracles.”

And notice, **“They hated Me without a cause.”** Jesus quotes out of Psalm 69:4. Make no mistake about it, these men who hated Jesus had a choice. But God knew what they would do. It does not negate their responsibility, because, like I have said, they had a choice to make! But it speaks of God knowing all and told us beforehand what would happen.

Why did they hate Him? For healing the sick, raising the dead, opening the ears of the deaf, opening the eyes of the blind? He did good and they hated Him because He, being a man, made Himself equal with the Father and they could not accept that. And for the Jewish religious leaders, they could not accept the fact that they were sinners and needed a Savior!

And notice that to hate Jesus, to make Him less than God, is to hate the Father! In fact, that is John’s main point throughout this Gospel, to show that Jesus is Almighty God, the Great I Am. And to reject that, for these Jewish religious leaders, just showed that they hated God the Father as well because the Father sent the Son to save sinful man!

VERSES 26-27

All this persecution. All this hatred towards us. How can we go on? The Helper or Holy Spirit will come and He will strengthen us for the work!

And notice the mission of the Holy Spirit – to testify of Jesus.

Notice the mission of the believer – to testify of Jesus.

I believe we need to be empowered by the Spirit to do this. Why?

Because He, the Holy Spirit shows us all truth.

Because the world is going to hate us and persecute us and we will need His strength to carry on.

But don't be afraid, don't fret, don't let your heart be troubled. Remember the words of Jesus as we opened up this study, and let these words encourage you. He said, "**Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.**" John 14:1. May we believe that!

And let me close with this story because Jesus spoke of how we are to love, even those who hate us. We are told,

Persecution is not an excuse for silence, but it does challenge us to witness, to share Christ lovingly to a hostile world, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

A little boy named Stevie, who was quiet and shy, moved to a new neighborhood. One day he came home from school and said, "You know, Mom, Valentine's Day is coming, and I want to make a valentine for everyone in my class. I want them to know that I love them." His mother's heart sank at the prospect of her son's rejection. Every afternoon she watched the children all coming home from school, laughing and hanging on to one another – all except Stevie who always walked behind them.

But at the same time she did not want to discourage her will-intentioned son. So she purchased glue and paper and crayons, and for three weeks Stevie painstakingly made thirty-five valentines. When the big day came, he stacked the valentines under his arm and ran out the door. His mother thought, "This is going to be a tough day for Stevie. I'll bake some cookies and have some milk ready for him when he comes home from school. Maybe that will ease the pain of not getting many valentines."

That afternoon she had the warm cookies and milk out on the table. She went over to the window, scratched a little of the frost off the glass, and looked out. Sure enough, here came all the children, laughing, valentines tucked under their arms. And there was her Stevie. Though walking behind the children, he was walking faster than usual, and she thought, “Bless his heart. He’s ready to break into tears.” His arms were empty. He was not carrying any valentines.

Stevie came into the house, and his mother said, “Sweetheart, Mom has some warm cookies and milk for you, just sit down.” But Stevie’s face was all aglow, and as he marched right by her, all he could say was, “Not a one, not a single one. I didn’t forget one. They all know I love them.”

It isn’t a song until it’s sung,
It isn’t a bell until it’s rung,
It isn’t love until it’s given away.

Figuratively speaking, Christ did not get a valentine, but he did not forget a single person, and we are to be like him! Lovingly we are to “go get ‘em” for Jesus. Openly! Lovingly! Vulnerably! Joyously!

- R. Kent Hughes, John “That You May Believe”, p. 373

As Jesus said, “**This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. . . . These things I command you, that you love one another.**” John 15:12-13, 17.