

JOHN 15:18-27
THE WORLD'S RESPONSE!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 15 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

Keep in mind that we are hours away from Jesus being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and eventually crucified.

And after Jesus and His men celebrated Passover, except for Judas who left before the meal was over to betray Jesus, they head out the east gate or the beautiful gate. And on this door was this vine with its branches, and as they passed this door Jesus spoke to them about the vine and the branches, or that He is the vine and we are the branches and we need to be attached to Him if we are going to produce fruit in our lives.

And in John chapter 13 through John chapter 17 Jesus is giving His farewell address to His men. He is instilling in them the things that they need to carry on the work of the ministry after He is gone.

As we saw last time, Jesus focused on love. We read in John 15:12-14, “**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. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.**”

Jesus is not just speaking of a brotherly type of love or a *PHILEO* type of love. A *PHILEO* love is a brotherly love, it is a human love, and that love can change, depending on what the other person has done to you.

Jesus is not speaking of human love, but a supernatural love, an *AGAPE* love. Obviously we can't manufacture this type of love. This is not something we just need to work harder to achieve.

This love comes from God, and it will only be seen in our lives as we surrender ourselves to the Holy Spirit. Again, it is a supernatural love.

If you doubt it then just listen to what Paul wrote in Galatians chapter 5 about the fruit of the Spirit and understand that the fruit of the Spirit is *LOVE*, it is *AGAPE* love and the other things that are mentioned are what is seen in our lives as the *LOVE* of God has filled us and flows from our lives!

Paul put it like this, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”** Galatians 5:22-25.

I can have joy because of this love that God has given me.

I can have peace in the midst of all kinds of disasters because of the love that God has given to me.

I can be longsuffering until someone pushes my button and then look out!

No, that is a worldly type of love, a conditional type of love. If the love of God has filled your life, if you have surrendered to the Holy Spirit, then even when someone pushes my button, I will be longsuffering to them!

Do you see how love is the key to what is manifested in our lives and that love can only come from God, it is supernatural!

Why am I going over this again since we covered it last week?

Keep in mind that Jesus commanded us to love in John 15:12.

And the reason we need to understand that, the reason we need to be reminded of this, is because of what Jesus is going to talk about next.

He is going to tell His men that as much as they love the people of this world, the world is going to *HATE* them!

And this is where human love will not suffice. You see, when someone comes against us. When someone hates us. When someone gets in our face. What is the human response?

We want to get in their face and let them have a piece of our mind. I will be honest with you; I can't afford to give any more of my mind away! I truly need the love of God in situations like that and if I don't surrender to the Holy Spirit in these matters, then the flesh will be manifested in my life and in your life!

Let me share this with you so you can see that what we believe as Christians is being attacked. We are told,

Religious liberty is enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, yet the meaning of this core American value has been debated throughout the nation's history.

Today, conflicts most often arise from Christian nationalism, the anti-democratic notion that America is a nation by and for Christians alone. At its core, this idea threatens the principle of the separation of church and state and undermines the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

It also leads to discrimination, and at times violence, against religious minorities and the nonreligious. Christian nationalism is also a contributing ideology in the religious right's misuse of religious liberty as a rationale for circumventing laws and regulations aimed at protecting a pluralistic democracy, such as nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQI+ people, women, and religious minorities.

These issues will only draw more attention in the years ahead, since the 6-3 conservative majority on the U.S. Supreme Court appears eager to hear more religious liberty cases advancing Christian nationalist arguments than in previous years.

- <https://ampr.gs/3V0aqAs>

Now I don't know about you, but for me, I don't think Christians are the problem! Well, maybe we are because we stand up for morality, for what is right, and they don't like that. And yes, there are some Christians who do things that are wrong. But for the majority, this is not an issue.

Look at what Black Lives Matter and Antifa did a few years back and the millions upon millions of dollars of damage they caused, lost businesses and even lives, but they are not terrorists!

Doesn't that make you mad?

And it gets worse when you see the Federal government call Bible Believing Christians –
TERRORISTS!

Listen to this report. We are told,

So, who are these alleged domestic terrorists which pose such an existential threat to our democracy? The U.S. Government's report identifies two categories of "bad" guys.

First, there are "the racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists and networks whose racial, ethnic, or religious hatred leads them toward violence. . . . [who] focus their violence towards . . . persons of color, immigrants, Jews, Muslims, other religious minorities, women and girls, LGBTQI+ individuals, or others."

Second, there are the "anti-government or anti-authority violent extremists . . . who take steps to violently resist government authority or facilitate the overthrow of the U.S. Government based on perceived overreach. . . . [and] may be motivated to violence by single-issue ideologies related to abortion. . . ."

To put it simply, according to the Biden Administration, all Bible-believing Christians who have religiously informed perspectives on human sexuality (marriage, LGBTQI+, etc.) and/or who are passionately opposed to the killing of innocent babies in utero (abortion) are potential domestic terrorists.

This verbal trickery became possible because some very clever liberal elite snowflakes have quite intentionally and maliciously redefined faith-informed and reasoned disagreement with their sexually permissive worldview as "hate." And strong "hate" almost invariably leads to violence. Ergo, Christians are "domestic terrorists."

By self-servingly labeling truth hate, they have effectively silenced a large swath of timid believers whom, though commanded to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), really do not like being called names.

Again, doesn't that make you mad?

Here is where we need to be careful. There is nothing wrong with being mad about something, but it is how you respond to it.

How should we respond?

Jesus said, "**This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**" John 15:12.

Are you kidding me?

No, I am not. That is what Jesus said and it was not a suggestion, but He is commanding us to love as He loves us!

I can't do that!

True, humanly speaking we can't. But as I have said, the love that Jesus wants us to have manifested in our lives is not a human love but a supernatural love, an *AGAPE* love or unconditional love!

And what we will be looking at this morning is what the world thinks about our love or – ***THE WORLD'S RESPONSE!***

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into three main points, and they are,

THE WORLD'S HATRED – JOHN 15:18-20

NO EXCUSE – JOHN 15:21-25

HOW CAN WE GO ON – JOHN 15:26-27

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 15, beginning in verse 18 and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we study His Word and look at this topic – ***THE WORLD'S RESPONSE!***

JOHN 15**VERSES 18-20**

I want you to see what the bridge is from John 15:17, where we are told, “**These things I command you, that you love one another.**”

And from there Jesus speaks of the world hating them. Do you see how important the love of God is in our lives! We are commanded to love one another, and we need that love because we are going to need each other and depend on each other for help and for support as we experience the hatred of this world towards us.

The tragic thing that I saw with this whole COVID issue is that it divided the body of Christ. There were those who thought it was nothing and they were mad at those who thought it was something. There were those who were not vaccinated, and they were mad at those who were vaccinated, and it also plays the other way around. There were those who were mad that the church was opened up and others mad that it was not opened up soon enough. In reality, the Devil did a great job in dividing the church!

Whatever your feelings on those issues – ***LET THEM GO!***

I am not telling you to ignore what you believe, that is up to you. But ***LET IT GO!*** Do you think that this is going to be the first and last issue that the world will use to divide the body of Christ? Of course it is not and we failed at this one and hopefully we are going to learn from it.

And let me ask you this. When you die and go to heaven are you going to be asking Jesus who was right about this COVID issue?

Of course you are not, it would be foolish! It is not an issue of right and wrong here, it is an issue of – **LOVE!**

And we do need to take a good look and we need to think about this for a minute. Do you really think the world is going to love us and have what is best for our lives?

Of course it is not going to love us and what they are putting forth is evil, unrighteousness.

Then what can we do?

We are to – **LOVE ONE ANOTHER!**

I can't imagine not being able to fellowship with you! I can't imagine not being able to worship with you! I can't imagine not being able to study God's Word with you!

And yet, as the statistics show, many Christians are opting out of church and staying at home. They have isolated themselves from the body of Christ and they have all kinds of reasons for that.

The enemy knows, **DIVIDE AND CONQUER!**

I have called these verses – **THE WORLD'S HATRED!**

And as we look at this opening verse, John 15:18, we need to understand what Jesus means when He says, "**the world.**"

He is not speaking of the created world, or humanity in general.

Then what is He speaking of?

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.

And remember what John said in I John 5:19 about the pull of the Devil upon their lives. He wrote, “**We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.**”

That is the battle. We are of God and the **WHOLE WORLD** is under the sway of the Devil. Thus, the world hates us because we love God. The World hates us because we stand up for righteousness and hate evil. And for some, they just hate us! In other words – **THEY ARE UNDER THE SWAY OF THE DEVIL!**

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?

We kind of covered that but the reason is simple. 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?

Think about this.

Where did we come out of?

We came out of the world!

And as Christians we became part of the church and the Greek word that is translated “**church**” is **EKKLESIA** and it literally means “**An assembly of called out ones.**”

We were called out of the world and to Christ just as the children of Israel were called out of Egypt, which is a type of the world!

It took God one night to get them out of Egypt, but it took forty years to get Egypt out of them!

How true that is in our own lives as Christians. It took one moment to get us out of the world because salvation is the miracle of the moment!

But it is a lifetime to get the world out of us and that truly is what the sanctification process is all about!

The world is in opposition to God and thus, as John said 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.”**

Where is your love focused, the world or the Lord? You can't love both because whoever you love most will be what is manifested in your life. And if it truly is the world, then you are missing out because this world is quickly passing away!

And I realize that some feel that things are so bad right now, that people hate us Christians, they say bad things about us, and it truly is about us, and they are ready to just give up and throw in the towel! Come Lord Jesus! And I am excited about the Lord's return but He also told us to occupy until He comes, continue doing the work that He sent us to do, not give up!

How do you think they felt about Christians early on?

As you will see, they hated them back then just as they hate us today!

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)

You see, nothing has really changed in almost two-thousand years in regard to how people think of us.

They still say we are people that are filled with hate! Nothing has really changed!

If we don't agree with their sin, their wicked lifestyle, then we are hateful, intolerant.

No, I don't hate them, I just don't agree with what they believe in regard to transgenderism, homosexuality, children taking drugs to change their gender, which does not change their gender, they still are who God created them to be, their DNA proves that! And the list can go on with drugs, alcohol, pornography, adultery, sex outside of marriage.

I don't hate these people, but I do feel sorry that they are trying to fill a void in their heart with things that will never satisfy! Only God will fill that void!

Now I do 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.

Maybe you have heard people say this, I have, and I have seen it posted on Facebook several times as well.

I have heard people say that *“Love the sinner hate the sin is not biblical.”*

Let's play that one out because Jesus is always our example.

Did Jesus hate us?

No, He loved us so much that He was willing to die for us.

Did Jesus love our sin?

No, Jesus hated our sin but was willing to become sin for us so that we can become the righteousness of God in Him!

The woman that was caught in the act of adultery, did the religious leaders love her?

Absolutely not, they just used her as a pawn in their plan to catch Jesus!

Did Jesus love her?

He absolutely did. And He confronted the sin of the religious leaders, something they accused her of, and she was guilty, and so were they. And they all left and the only person who was left with Jesus was this woman.

And Jesus forgave her sins and told her to go and sin no more! He loved the sinner but hated the sin!

So we are to love the sinner, not the sin that they are involved in but to love them so that they may come to saving faith just as God loved us and died for us while we were yet sinners!

We have talked about this before in other studies but something that the church is doing today is they want the world to love them.

But here is the problem. If you follow Jesus, if you obey what the Word of God is saying, then you can't agree with the direction the world is going in, you can't accept their sin as being okay!

So the only way that the church can get the world to love them is to compromise what they believe, accept the sin that the world is involved in.

The world hated Jesus who was perfect, and now we, as the church think that by compromising our faith, we will get more people into the church because the world will love us.

The world will never love you, but it will keep forcing you to compromise more and more of your faith until Jesus is outside the church knocking to get in! You kicked Him out and let the world in!

And if you are disagreeing with me on this one, then just listen to what James tells us what will happen if we allow the world to come into our church, into our lives and we accept their sin.

In James 4:4 we are told, “**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.**”

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 at the same time!

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!

Let's face it, we don't like persecution, we don't like conflict, we don't like trouble, but if we are going to grow in the Lord, it is these times, these times of stress and persecution where we will grow.

Let me show you what I mean.

Scientists were growing trees in a sealed biosphere. And they were puzzled by the fact that as these trees grew, they kept falling over. They did not understand why this was happening.

Eventually, as they investigated the problem, they figured out that in this sealed biosphere there was no wind, which provided stress upon the trees and that stress was needed to ensure that the trees grew strong enough to support themselves.

For us, our support is from the Lord, for when we are weak, then we are strong in Him!

And, as you can see as you look at this dark world, it 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!

Now we also hear from the church that we are to love people, not cause conflict, we are to be like Jesus.

It is true, we are to be like Jesus. And I want you to listen carefully to what Jesus said about the conflict that will come when we serve the Lord.

In Matthew 10:34-39 Jesus said, **“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man's enemies will be those of his own household.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”**

What is Jesus speaking about here, that He did not come to bring peace?

He is speaking of the world that is in opposition to Him, a world that is at war with Him!

In fact, the word **“against”** in the Greek comes from a Greek word that means ***“to cut in two.”*** And it speaks of a complete and often permanent separation.

When you come to Christ, when you live your life for Christ what often happens is a wedge is driven between family and friends and sometimes that division lasts a lifetime because they don't want to be around you. They don't want to hear what you have to say. They want you to compromise your faith, even though they would not put it that way and thus, the cost of true discipleship will cost. And that is what Jesus is speaking of here in John!

Warren Wiersbe put it like this. He wrote,

The only way a believer can escape [this] conflict is to deny Christ and compromise his witness, and this would be sin. Then the believer would be at war with God . . . We will be misunderstood and persecuted even by those who are the closest to us; yet we must not allow this to affect our witness.

It is important that we suffer for Jesus' sake, and for righteousness' sake, and not because we ourselves are difficult to live with. There is a difference between the "offense of the cross" (Galatians 5:11) and offensive Christians.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 33

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?

It seems like Christians today are demanding their rights for this and demanding their rights for that and yet, listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 10:38-39. He wrote, **"And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."**

What is the point that Jesus is making here when He speaks of losing our life?

He is telling His men and us that we are to die to self, to our rights, our comforts, our interests, our will and even our goals. We are to lay it all down, give it all up, let it go and we are to focus on what is ahead, our life with the Lord for eternity. His will for our lives and not our own will.

And the amazing thing is this. As you surrender your will to the Lord's it is His will that will become your will for your life!

Now you can focus on this life, all that it has for you, and, in the end, it will perish and if you don't know the Lord, so will you! In fact, many have tried to gain all that the world has for them and in the end, they lost their soul! (Matthew 16:26)

Our rights are laid down and we now serve Jesus. And what the world will try to take away from us, and they may even succeed in taking away many things, many of our so-called rights, but they can't take Jesus from us! **NEVER!**

Now this sentence by Jesus in John 15:20, “**. . . If they kept My Word, they will keep your also.**” is very interesting to me.

And it seems like Jesus is saying that if they follow what I have to say then they will follow what you have to say. But that is not exactly the intent here.

One writer put it like this. He wrote, “*The force of the last clause in this verse is well brought out by Knox ‘they will pay the same attention to your words as to mine; that is, none.’*” (Tasker)

Again, the idea is that the world will not listen to what you have to say because they did not listen to what Jesus had to say!

And we see that played out today. The world is in opposition to Jesus and His Word and thus, they are in opposition to us!

So we have seen – **THE WORLD'S HATRED** and as we read on here in John chapter 15, we will look at – **NO EXCUSE!**

VERSES 21-25

The question may be asked, “***Why are they persecuting us?***”

And we have talked about this already but think about it. If they truly don't know God, they really don't have any idea of who He is, then what happens is they will persecute and attack those who represent God in some way.

Is it rational?

No, it is not but that is the best they can do. You can't attack a God you don't believe exists, but you can attack those who are following this God, following Jesus! And that is what we see happening.

Now, for those Jewish religious leaders who may claim that they didn't know, they are pleading ignorance, they are without excuse.

They knew what the Messiah was to do. They knew the timeframe that the Messiah was to come. It was in their Scriptures, but they ignored the Word of God and were living in open rebellion against God. And because of their opposition against Jesus, they were showing that they hated God the Father as well!

The reason for that is God the Father has testified of who Jesus is. So, with knowledge comes responsibility and, like the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day, all of us are without excuse!

That is Paul's point in Romans 1:20-24. He wrote, **“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”**

There is no excuse for not believing in God! The evidence is there, but they closed their eyes to the truth and worship creation instead of the creator or they worshiped evolution instead of the God who created all things!

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 what Jesus said in John 15:25, **“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 He has told us beforehand what would happen.

Why did they hate Him? Did you ever think about that?

Let me give you some insight and you will see the foolishness of their actions.

They hated Jesus 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!

It is nothing more than – ***PRIDE!***

And notice that to hate Jesus, to make Him less than God, is to hate the Father, as I have said!

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!

We too are without excuse. Jesus has warned us of what the Last Days would be like, and we are starting to see them unfold before our eyes. These are the pre-labor pains that will lead into the labor of the Tribulation Period, which we will not be here for!

And I am amazed and saddened by the response of some Christians today. How they allow anger, hatred, evil speaking, towards the unsaved come forth and yet, as Jesus was hated without a cause how did He respond?

“Father, forgive them, they do not know what they do!” Luke 23:24.

As Jesus warned His men of the hatred and the rejection that they would face from this world and tells them that they should live in such a way that they will not have any charge to come against them, except for standing up for what is right, He is telling us the same thing!

Peter expounds on that in I Peter 4:12-16, where he wrote, **“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”**

I think the words of Jesus, what He was sharing here in John chapter 15, we see Peter apply to our lives. This is how we are to live. Not a suggestion, but we are to love and as mean, as nasty as people may get, may the love of Christ flow from our lives in spite of what they say and what they do.

Now you may not think this is fair. You may not like it. You may be thinking, ***“What do I get out of all this?”***

Let me explain it like this because in these trials, in these times of suffering, beauty will come forth and it will be a beauty that will last.

There was a French painter by the name of Pierre Renoir. He was afflicted with arthritis and his hands eventually became twisted and deformed so much so that even something as simple as holding a brush was excruciatingly painful.

In time he was confined to a wheelchair, but he would not give up painting.

One day his friend, Henri Matisse visited him and watched as he painfully grasped a brush with only his fingertips. Every movement caused him pain, yet he doggedly kept at this painting.

Matisse asked his friend, “*What do you do this for? How can you paint at the expense of such torture?*”

Renoir replied, “*The pain passes but the beauty remains.*”

Exactly! The beauty that comes forth from these difficult times is a deeper and more loving relationship with our Lord!

This world today, there is – ***NO EXCUSE!***

They have creation itself that testifies that there is a God, as I have said.

And we have the Word of God, the Bible that tells us who this God is and what He has done for us to save us from our sins.

Now, I am sorry to say, I don't think things are going to get any easier for us in the months and years ahead. I think that persecution against Christians is on the rise not only in America but throughout the world.

Which brings us to our last point – ***HOW CAN WE GO ON!***

VERSES 26-27

All this persecution. All this hatred towards us. How can we go on? How can we love as Jesus commands us to love. It seems so impossible, doesn't it?

The only way we can accomplish this is through the Helper or Holy Spirit, who has come, and He will strengthen us for the work!

What is the mission of the Holy Spirit?

The mission of the Holy Spirit is to testify of Jesus!

What is the mission of the believer?

The mission of the believer is 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. We will need His strength to love as Jesus commands us to love!

There is no doubt that in the days of the early church and I believe in the church today, we see the intensity growing against our faith in Jesus.

And what I have noticed is that some Christians are afraid. Some Christians are fretting over all that is going on. Some Christians are troubled by all these things.

But remember what Jesus said to His men who were afraid, who were fretting, who were troubled. He told them, “**Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.**” John 14:1.

May we believe that!

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.

One of the most powerful stories I have ever heard about the love of Christ being manifested in a person's life is the story of a man named Joseph, who had come to Christ out of his Muslim religion.

Let me show you the love of God, not human love, but a supernatural love this man had for people who truly did not deserve it. And the reality is, none of us do but that is what **AGAPE** love is all about.

Listen to this amazing story.

One day Joseph who was walking along one of those hot dirty African roads met someone who shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ with him.

Then and there he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior, and the power of the Holy Spirit began transforming his life. He was filled with such excitement and joy that the first thing he wanted to do was go back and return to his own village and share the same good news with the members of his local tribe.

Joseph began going from door to door telling everyone he met about the cross of Jesus and the salvation that it offered, expecting their faces to light up just as his had.

To his amazement the villagers not only didn't care they became violent. The men of the village seized him and held him to the ground while the women beat him with strands of barbed wire. He was dragged from the village and left to die alone in the bush.

Joseph somehow managed to crawl to a water hole and there after days of passing in and out of consciousness found the strength to get up.

He couldn't understand the hostile reception he had received from the people he had known all of his life.

Finally, he decided that he must have left something out or not told the story correctly.

So after rehearsing the message he decided to go back and share his faith again. He limped into the circle of huts and began to proclaim Jesus, "***He died for you so that you might find forgiveness and come to know the living God.***"

Again, he was grabbed by the men of the village and held while the women beat him reopening the wounds that had just begun to heal. Once more they dragged him unconscious from the village and left him to die.

To have survived the first beating was truly remarkable, to live through the second was a miracle.

Again, days later Joseph awoke in the wilderness, bruised, scared and determined in his heart to go back.

He returned to the small village and this time they attacked him before he had a chance to open his mouth.

As they flogged him for the third and probably the last time, he again spoke to them of Jesus Christ the Lord and before he passed out the last thing he saw was that the women who were beating him, had begun to weep.

This time he awoke in his own bed, the ones who had so severely beaten him were now trying to save his life and nurse him back to health, [through Joseph's witness] . . . the entire village came to know Jesus Christ.

I wonder how much pain and suffering are we willing to bear that others might come to know our Lord Jesus Christ? I wonder how much we love with the love of God, people who don't know Christ, who may mock us, make fun of us, do things we don't like?

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.

Again, we can't accomplish this through the power of our own strength. The flesh will not allow it. Yes, we can be nice to people for a time, even when they are not nice to us. But there comes that breaking point and we go after them, get mad at them, distance ourselves from them, and that is just the flesh.

Remember what Paul said *AGAPE* love is all about! In fact, it truly is a definition of *AGAPE* love. Listen carefully as Paul tells us in I Corinthians 13:4-8a what this love is all about.

He wrote, “**Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. . . .**”

Again, that is not a human love but a supernatural love and apart from the Holy Spirit filling us as we surrender to Him, we have no power in the flesh to love like this, to love as Jesus loves us.

If we say that it is getting harder and harder to love people today, maybe it is not the people that have the problem. They are not saved. Maybe it is you and your distance from the Lord. If your heart is cold towards people, something is wrong.

Jesus loved the worst sinners, gave them a chance to repent and turn to Him because He loved them and may we do the same!

HOW CAN WE GO ON?

By the power of the Holy Spirit working in us and through us and that is the only way we are going to love as Jesus loves!

Let me close with this. We are told,

Watchman Nee tells about a Chinese Christian who owned a rice paddy next to one owned by a communist man.

The Christian irrigated his paddy by pumping water out of a canal, using one of those leg-operated pumps that make the user appear to be seated on a bicycle.

Every day, after the Christian had pumped enough water to fill his field, the communist would come out, remove some boards that kept the water in the Christian's field and let all the water flow down into his own field. That way, he didn't have to pump.

This continued day after day.

Finally, the Christian prayed, ***“Lord, if this keeps up, I’m going to lose all my rice, maybe even my field. I’ve got a family to care for. What can I do?”***

In answer to his request, the Lord put a thought in his mind.

So, the next morning he arose much earlier, in the predawn hours of darkness, and started pumping water into the field of his communist neighbor. Then he replaced the boards and pumped water into his own rice paddy.

In a few weeks both fields of rice were doing well - and the communist was converted.

- Perfect Illustrations for Every Topic and Occasion

The power of God's love! I realize that the world is antagonistic towards Christians, and that will only get worse as time goes on. But our God can give us the power we need to live a life that is far different than the world, it is a life that is filled with the love of God and reaches out and ministers to others in spite of how we are treated!

Yes, the world may hate us, the world may persecute us, but Jesus tells us, **“These things I command you, that you love one another.”** John 15:17.