

The first 16 verses of Chapter 15 speak of the blessings that a follower of Christ is promised. The next fifteen verses address the world's response toward those who follow Him. Jesus' theme is Christians should expect hatred and hostility from the world. This is set forth in six important truths (taken from D.A. Carson in *The Farewell Discourse*, 115-132).

### **1. The hatred of the world is contrasted to the love of Christians for each other**

***15:17 "This I command you, that you love one another.***

***15:18 If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you."***

In verses 17 and 18 the hatred of the world is contrasted to the love of Christians for each other. The conditional sentence ("if...then") in Greek means "if the world hates you – and it does- . . ."

Jesus assumes that Christians will love each other. In fact, John even sees love as a test of true faith (Jn. 13:34-35; 15:12; I Jn. 3:10b-24; 4:7-21). Love is to be as natural for Christians as it is for the world to hate. Christians should therefore be aware of any bitterness, resentment, or hatred that begins to creep in and get rid of it as soon as it is recognized.

The world can express degrees of love, but because it has no room for God or Christ, its people become absorbed in themselves and their self-created gods. Therefore, it is impossible for them to love as they were intended to do until they lay these things aside.

### **2. The world hates Christians because the world and the church are mutually exclusive**

***15:19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you."***

The world resents any lack of conformity to itself. When Jesus spoke, the world could not receive it for it has nothing in common with God.

In John 8:43 Jesus asked the Jews, "Why do you not understand what I am saying?" He then answers His own question; He says, "It is because you *cannot* hear My word." They cannot understand Him because they are incapable of hearing Him. Why? Because, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He . . . does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But *because* I speak the truth, you do not believe Me." They cannot hear Jesus because they only know the voice of their father, the devil. They do not believe Jesus, because they believe the lies of their father. It is because Jesus speaks the truth that they do not believe. Paul said to those who opposed him, "So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? (Gal. 4:16)"

Verse 15 makes it clear that Christ has chosen to take us out of the world. Nevertheless, many Christians think that they can be in the world and in Christ at the same time; they believe that they can be a friend

of God *and* a friend of the world. However, the Bible is clear that this isn't possible. Matthew 6:24 says, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other." James 4:4 says that "friendship with the world is hostility toward God. Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." Friendship is a companionship, a closeness, an affinity that develops between two people. To develop a friendship with the world is to hold their values and desires. But siding with those who hate the Savior can only be interpreted as hostility toward God. One cannot embrace God and the world; they are mutually exclusive (Ro. 8:5-8). By becoming the world's friend, the individual takes his stand against God and sides with the enemy (cf. Eze. 16:35-42). 1 John 2:15 tells us not to love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Thus, because believers have no connection to the world they stand out, and because they stand out they are hated.

2 Timothy 3:12: Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Luke 6:22-23: Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

### **3. The world hates Christians because it hates Jesus**

***15:20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave 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. 15:21 But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me."***

Secondly, the world hates Christians because it hated Jesus. If the Master suffered by the hands of the world, His disciples will too. Matthew 10:24-25: "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!"

There is an affinity between God's word and God's people; His sheep hear His voice (Jn. 10:4, 5, 8, 16, 26, 27). Everyone who is of the truth listens to the witness of the truth (Jn. 18:37), and the one who is of God hears the words of God (Jn. 8:47; Stott, 158). Jesus says, "if they kept My word, they will keep yours also" (Jn. 15:20b).

The opposite is also true. 1 John 4:4b-6 says, "They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." The world recognizes its own people and listens to the message that originates in its own kind.

To be a follower of Christ is to invite hatred that is directed toward Him. In one sense that is reassuring; people don't hate us personally, they hate Him whom we follow.

The next verses explain why people hate Christ.

**4. The world hates Jesus because He exposes their sin and**  
**5) because it does not know the Father who He revealed**

***15:22 "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.***

***15:23 He who hates Me hates My Father also.***

***15:24 If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well."***

Verses 22 to 24 give two reasons why the world hates Jesus:

1) The world hates Jesus because through Him its sin is exposed. The world hates us for the same reason.

John 3:20: For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

In speaking to His unbelieving family members Jesus said, "The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil" (John 7:7).

2) The world hates Jesus because it does not know the Father

In verses 22 and 24 Jesus says that if He had not come they would "have no sin." Of course, He is not saying that the world was innocent before He came and now they are guilty. Rather, He is saying that His coming robbed them of any excuse to sin. The sin in the context is specific. Jesus had said in verse 21 "they do not know the One who sent Me;" He then immediately says, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin" (v. 22). The point is that prior to Jesus' coming, God had not revealed Himself so clearly. God was hidden, which gave men a more reasonable excuse not to believe in Him. However, in Christ the veil was removed making men fully culpable for their sin.

Hodge (Hodge, Systematic Theology, vol. 1, 504) explains how Jesus' "works" (His miracles; Jn. 15:24) revealed who He was:

The laws of nature are ordained by God. They can be changed or suspended by Him alone. A miracle, therefore, or any event which involves such change or suspension, is an evidence of the

immediate operation of divine power. The efficient agent, therefore, in working a miracle, must possess divine power. When Moses, the prophets, or the Apostles wrought miracles, they expressly disclaimed the idea that it was by their own efficiency. Why do you gaze at us, says the Apostle Peter, as though by our own power we had made this man whole? (Acts 3:12) When Moses divided the Red Sea, the efficiency by which that effect was produced was no more in him than in the rod with which he smote the waters. Christ, however, wrought miracles by his own inherent power; and it was to his efficiency the Apostles attributed the miracles wrought through them. It was His name, or faith in Him, as Peter taught the people, which effected the instantaneous healing of the lame man (Acts 3:16). Christ never referred this miraculous power to any source out of Himself; He claimed it as His own prerogative, and He conferred the power upon others. He said of Himself that He had power to lay down his life and power to take it again, that He had life in Himself and could give life to as many as He pleased. I will give you, He said to his disciples, power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the adversary. Every miracle of Christ, therefore, was a visible manifestation of his divinity. When He healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, restored the lame, raised the dead, fed thousands with a few loaves of bread, and calmed the raging of the sea, it was by a word, by the effortless exercise of his will. He thus manifested forth his glory, giving ocular demonstration to those who had eyes to see, that He was God in fashion as a man. He, therefore, appealed directly to his works, "Though you believe not me, believe the works; that you may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him" (Jn. 10:25). "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." (Jn. 10:37, 38.) "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." (Jn. 15:24.)

In John 10:38 Jesus said, "even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." In John 14:10-11 He said, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves." In other words, Jesus had revealed the Father through His words and deeds. Even if people found it difficult to believe in what He said, they should have been able to see the display of God's glory in His works. Their inability to see was a heart problem. Jesus challenged the blindness of the people by saying, "the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish-- the very works that I do-- testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. . . but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves . . . I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?" (Jn. 5:36-44) Thus, the sin that Jesus is referring to in John 15:22 and 24 is the sin of rejecting the revelation of God in Christ.

Why does the world hate Christ and His followers? Because it hates the God whom they reveal (Jn. 15:21).

You could say that Christ had “the aroma of God” upon Him. This same aroma permeates the followers of Jesus, as well. 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 says, “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.” In other words, God diffuses or spreads abroad the knowledge of Himself (i.e. the knowledge of Christ), which is compared to the aroma of a sacrifice (Gen. 8:21; Eph. 5:2; Phil. 4:18) or incense. The believer emits a fragrance which penetrates here and there like the smoke of incense carried by the wind (Tasker, 57).

In I Corinthians 2:14 and 15 a slight change takes place. In 2:14 the sweet aroma is the knowledge of Christ (the gospel); in verse 15 the messenger is the sweet aroma. However, the thought is essentially the same, for it is not just the person that is an aroma, but the person as a messenger communicating the knowledge of Christ (the gospel). When a man’s garments are full of the fragrance of incense, every place he enters he fills with its fragrance. So Paul, wherever he went, diffused the knowledge of Christ (Hodge, 45).

The gospel and its preaching are pleasing to God whether it is accepted or rejected. The light is precious whether the eye rejoices in it or not (Hodge, 46). Christ is the precious cornerstone to some and a rock of offense to others.

1 Peter 2:7-8: This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER *stone*," and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed (also see Jn. 3:19; 15:22).

The sweet fragrance that is perceived by some as an aroma of new life, is perceived by others as the stench of rotting corpses (Carson, The Farewell Discourse, 122).

1 Corinthians 1:18: For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

## **6. The world 's hatred is part of the sovereignty of God**

***15:25 "But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.'"***

Jesus speaks of the world’s hatred in terms of fulfilling the word of God. He quotes from either Psalm 35:19 or 69:4, the latter being regarded as messianic. The Jews, who so vehemently opposed Jesus, did so without reason. One may understand why hatred is directed toward Hitler, a serial killer, rapist, or the like, but hatred against one who came to reconcile men to God, reveal the truth and bring light into the world is completely senseless. Nevertheless, even this falls under God’s sovereign purposes.

The opposition that believers shall face is not unforeseen either. Human beings look at suffering as an abnormal condition of life. When things become unpleasant we long for things "to get back to 'normal.'" But why do we think this way? People universally suffer and die. Why should we think suffering is abnormal when it is a normal experience of life? Jobes says it's because within us there is a "lingering echo of life in Eden as God created it before the fall" (286). Suffering was not a part of God's original design and we still feel that internally.

Suffering is not an eternal arrangement either. Someday God will restore creation to Edenic conditions. There will be no more curse (Rev. 22:3). "He will wipe away every tear . . . there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain." (Rev. 21:4) Believers, along with the rest of creation, have an inward sense of this as well (Ro. 8:18ff).

Though suffering is not normal to God's original design, it is not something that should surprise us either. Peter tells us in I Peter 4:12-14:

4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

4:13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

4:14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

In these verses, Peter may have seen the persecution of Nero on the horizon when both he and Paul were killed. The "fiery ordeal" in verse 12 isn't simply the normal suffering that all people experience; it is called "sharing Christ's sufferings" in verse 13, and being "reviled for the name of Christ" in verse 14. Then in verse 16, it is called "suffering as a Christian." The suffering has at its root the fact that believers are living the way that Christ did and as a result, are identifying with Him in His experiences.

Elsewhere in the Bible we learn that trials produce endurance and that endurance will have its perfect result, so that we will become complete, lacking in nothing (Ja. 1:3-4). But the reason given by Peter for rejoicing in the midst of suffering is not because we will grow in our faith; it is because our suffering is the proof that we are on the right road in attaining joy "at the revelation of His glory" (4:13b).

"So that" in I Peter 4:13 expresses the result of our present suffering; suffering results in our ability to experience the fullness of joy at His coming. In other words, by suffering as a Christian we know that we are walking as Jesus walked. The more we suffer for our faith, the greater our assurance and joy should be. Therefore, we have no reason to respond with bitterness, because our sufferings are not merely our own. They are also Christ's sufferings.

Furthermore, we are blessed because in the midst of trials, "the Spirit of glory and of God rests on us" (I Pet 4:14). The words recall Isaiah 11:2 which says of the Messiah that "The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him." The "Spirit of glory" conjures up the imagery of the temple filled with the glory of God. God

will not abandon us in the midst of suffering. Rather, in a unique way, He will make His presence known through the power of the indwelling Spirit. Suffering will thus become a means of blessing us with the presence of God that cannot be known in any other way.

***Verses 26 and 27 make it clear that Christians are expected to serve Christ in this Christ-hating world, joining the Holy Spirit in His work.***

***15:26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, 15:27 and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning."***

Jesus didn't just leave the disciples in the world by themselves to be persecuted, but to be a testimony for Christ by joining the work of the Holy Spirit who bears witness to Jesus.

The work of the Holy Spirit will be discussed in more detail in the notes on chapter 16, but for now we must note that the Holy Spirit works through the believer.

The disciples, as they testified of Christ were conscious that they were working in accordance to the work of the Spirit. Acts 5:32: "And we are witnesses of these things; *and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.*" Others who opposed the disciples were unable to cope with their wisdom. Acts 6:10 tells us why: "But they were unable to cope with the wisdom *and the Spirit with which he was speaking.*" In times of persecution they remembered Jesus' earlier instruction: "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you" (Matt. 10:19-20). One can only appreciate these passages when we consider that the same people who were in hiding just prior to the resurrection were now speaking boldly in the power of the Spirit, even to the point of being willing to die for their faith – which eventually all of them but John, did.

***16:1 "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. 16:2 They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. 16:3 These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. 16:4 But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you."***

Not only will Christians face the hatred of the world; they will, at times, face violence. In John 12:42-43 Jesus had said, "for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." Jesus tells His followers these things so that they do not stumble when they, who love and follow God, are not immune to the world's animosity.

Three points are made.

1) Terrible persecution is inevitable.

“There are well documented stories of believers burned at the stake, of Christians whose knee caps were smashed, whose children were drowned, whose joints were systematically and excruciatingly dislocated . . . not because they were evil people, but solely because they belonged to Christ” (Carson, The Farewell Discourse, 129).

2) Most persecutions will be done in the name of God.

“An hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that *he is offering service to God.*” They do this because they do not know God or Christ (16:3).

3) Believers will be able to withstand the persecution. “These things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them.”

It is hard for some people to believe that a cause is truly of God unless it is on the ascendency. When a church remains the same, or even dwindles in numbers, people often assume that God isn't in it. But God is working out His plan in His way. The blessings of the kingdom are only ours in part now. We look forward to another day, a day when God's Kingdom comes and His will is done on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus' words provide Christians with the will to endure. They build us for eternity.