

Our passage today reminds us that the USA has enjoyed a rather unique experience. Up until the 1960s, if you believed the Bible was the inspired word of God, that Jesus was born of a virgin, the only begotten Son of God, that He died to atone for our sins, and that He is coming again, you were in the majority. You faced little or no hatred for taking those stands. It was not uncomfortable to make those confessions in public. If you lived according to Biblical principles, you were respected and admired. Sure, there were individual issues that may have set you apart and caused you to be the target of some of the hatred in our passage for today, abolition being the most predominant in our history, but over all, American culture was a Christian culture. Bob Dylan's timing was pretty accurate when he sang, *The Times They Are A Changin'*. We were a Christian nation with freedom of religion.

Today, in an American University, a student is being denied a Master's degree in psychology because she refuses to undergo re-education to accept the "fact" that homosexuality is normal. She doesn't hate those she doesn't agree with, but she is hated because of her Biblical conviction. She and the runner up to Miss USA are falsely accused of hating, by those who hate them for their beliefs. It sounds like the definition of irony to me.

You've seen politicians harassed because of their Christian principles. I am not endorsing a candidate or a party. This isn't about politics. It's about being hated for godly principles. This person dared to not abort their Down's Syndrome baby and stood against aborting babies because she believes they are made in the image of God. She has faced so many frivolous lawsuits that she now has half-a million dollars in outstanding legal fees with cases still pending. There have been no convictions but plenty of hatred. It's legal. I don't care what you think about her, it's not right!

We could go on and on with stories about students, employees, employers, and politicians taking a stand for Biblical principles here in the land of religious freedom and yet suffering for it. But what we face is nothing compared to what some endure in restricted nations. I think every believer should read the Voice of the Martyrs monthly newsletter. Your brothers and sisters around the world are suffering for their stand for Jesus. A Chinese attorney who helps Chinese Christians when the government places charges against them was arrested. He hasn't been heard from for months. His family doesn't know if he is alive or dead. Word has leaked out that he has been tortured and may be dead.

In Nigeria and India numerous churches and homes have been burned simply because the people are Christians. Thousands have fled their villages to find refuge. The atrocious acts against them are too horrific to describe. In Muslim nations, Christians are routinely hauled in for interrogation and torture. If Muslims convert, they risk being beheaded, yet the number coming to Jesus has never been higher.

This is the norm. This prejudice against Christians has been going on since Jesus founded the church. Jesus knew it was coming and warned His disciples. <sup>18</sup> *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.* Why does the world hate us? It's

because it hates Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus exhorted the people that if they were insulted, persecuted, and slandered they should be happy because that is how the world treated the prophets. (Matthew 5:11-12) If they treat the prophets that way, shouldn't we be treated the same? If we live a righteous life, it will be the same for us. Jesus encouraged them to remember that our reward in heaven will be great when we suffer for righteousness. (Philippians 1:29)

They hated Jesus first. It's hard to find someone today that will admit to hating Jesus. The hatred is seen in the way they re-create Jesus and change what He said so that their newly defined Jesus fits with their preferences. They don't accept the words of the disciples that Jesus chose, but ascribe to them various nefarious motives. When you try to share a quote from Jesus, they either interpret it in some bizarre way, or get angry and tell you that it was mostly made up by those "evil" disciples. They hate the real Jesus, the Jesus of the Bible, because His teaching doesn't match with what they want to hear. (2Timothy 4:3) I'd rather see them get angry, because that often means they are wrestling with it in their heart. Being hated isn't such a bad thing. At least they are not apathetic. That is even worse. (Revelation 3:15)

There is also the persecution that comes in the form of calling us ignorant simpletons. That is probably the most common form of anti-Christian bias in our culture. As I was preparing this message, a member of Sedona's clergy invited me and "any one that was truly a student" to come hear a speaker from the Jesus' Seminar. In case you don't know what that is, it is a gathering of liberal scholars and some media types that decided they'd edit the Gospels down to what they all could agree was really from Jesus. The implication was that if you are really educated you would be interested. Stupid people like me believe that eyewitnesses who died for their faith are more capable to tell us what Jesus said than a Hollywood director that lives 2000 years later. Man am I slow! I guess I am just not open to other ideas.

Why do they hate the real Jesus? It is for the same reason that the Pharisees hated Jesus. He infringes on their goals of power and wealth. They have their heart set on the things of this life and Jesus tells them having their heart set on those things is not only wrong, but will end in judgment. (Matthew 5:29) Jesus has the audacity to tell us we need to repent, to turn around our thinking. (Matthew 23:33; Mark 1:15) Pride hates to hear that.

Jesus went on to warn the disciples, <sup>19</sup> *If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.* Jesus uses the word "world" here to represent the present condition of mankind set in opposition to God and His kingdom. He called Satan the prince of this world. (John 12:31) Verse 19 is telling us that when we become Christians, we no longer belong to this world order. We become citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20), and so we no longer think like the world. We take on the mind of our King. We become aliens like the patriarchs. We don't belong here. (Hebrews 11:16) God reached down into this system and pulled us out and set us in His kingdom. (Colossians 1:13)

It is a well-documented historical fact that much of the hatred and bloodshed of history has been against those who are different, those who don't fit in. The

**Commented [notes1]:** 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matt 5:11-12 (NIV)

**Commented [notes2]:** 29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, Phil 1:29 (NIV)

**Commented [notes3]:** 3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 2 Tim 4:3 (NIV)

**Commented [notes4]:** 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! Rev 3:15 (NIV)

**Commented [notes5]:** 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. Matt 5:29 (NIV)

**Commented [notes6]:** 33 "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Matt 23:33 (NIV)

**Commented [notes7]:** 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Mark 1:15 (NIV)

**Commented [notes8]:** 31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. John 12:31 (NIV)

**Commented [notes9]:** 20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, Phil 3:20 (NIV)

**Commented [notes10]:** 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. Heb 11:16 (NIV)

**Commented [notes11]:** 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, Col 1:13 (NIV)

differences are misinterpreted and judged with suspicion. That has accounted for much of the persecution of the Jews, Christians, and many others. We tend to be suspicious of that which we don't understand. So when God transforms a life and the person starts to act differently and associate with others that act differently, it is no wonder that suspicion and even hatred follow. It is easy to use them as scapegoats. If something unexplained happens in the community, it must have been those weird people. We even see it in the latest danger assessment warning from our own Department of Homeland Security. Those weird people who are against abortion, volunteer to serve in the armed forces, actually believe the Bible and are opposed to redefining marriage are a likely threat to the nation's security. What is so strange about this assessment is that the people that hold those biblical views are the same ones that know government is in the hands of sovereign God and that they are not to oppose it. (Romans 13:1) In fact, we are commanded to be good citizens. (Titus 3:1-2) They can't understand us, so we must be dangerous.

One talk show host even said that Christians are as much a threat to the nation as Muslim terrorists. Let's see, our religion says to turn the other cheek. (Matthew 5:39) Islam says the world must be conquered for Allah. Somehow I have a hard time seeing that as an equal threat. But it is an example of unexplainable hatred. We are called haters when our religion commands us to love one another. (John 13:34-35) Our nation is making every effort to understand Islam and not offend them while at the same time ignoring the religion that made it great and distorting what that religion stands for. If there is not a sovereign act of God that brings revival, especially to our educational system's bias, it is only going to get worse. What Jesus is saying in this passage is that we should expect it. (1Thessalonians 3:3-4)

*<sup>20</sup> Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. If the world treated Jesus as it did, then why should we expect it to treat us differently? (Ezekiel 3:7) If the life of Jesus is flowing through us, don't you think you will be as much of a threat as Jesus? It's not a physical threat. It's a spiritual threat. It is light shining in the darkness exposing sin and injustice. It is calling evil, evil. It is making godly judgments with God's standards and not backing down. Our world is more afraid of words and ideas than they are of weapons.*

Curt Warner did an interview just before the Super Bowl, and as is his habit, he shared what Jesus means to him. That entire testimony was deleted from the interview. Words are powerful, and the world knows it. They will complain about editing cursing while having no qualms about deleting a person's declaration of faith.

If the world persecuted Jesus, and you live in Jesus, it will persecute you! (1Samuel 8:7) You can avoid that by being a silent Christian, but God wants us to be as bold as a lion! Eternity is at stake. We need to speak up in the Spirit and in love, but we need to speak up. The positive side of that verse is that some will obey. Some will receive what you have to say and become disciples of Jesus. If we stay silent we won't get the persecution, but we won't gain the disciples either. (Romans 10:14)

Jesus explained why this would happen. <sup>21</sup> *They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.* It is because of Jesus' name. The

**Commented [notes12]:** 1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Romans 13:1 (NIV)

**Commented [notes13]:** 1 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, 2 to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men. Titus 3:1-2 (NIV)

**Commented [notes14]:** 39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. Matt 5:39 (NIV)

**Commented [notes15]:** 34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35 (NIV)

**Commented [notes16]:** so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. 4 In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. 1 Thess 3:3-4 (NIV)

**Commented [notes17]:** 7 But the house of Israel is not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for the whole house of Israel is hardened and obstinate. Ezek 3:7 (NIV)

**Commented [notes18]:** 7 And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. 1 Sam 8:7 (NIV)

**Commented [notes19]:** 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? Romans 10:14 (NIV)

name, in Hebrew culture, is all that the person is and stands for. We saw before how the name means the sum of the person's attributes and authority. They don't like Jesus' attributes of justice and righteousness and they certainly don't want to accept the fact that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him. They'll take the love and mercy, but His justice, righteousness, and authority is abhorrent to them. You are just a reminder to them of those attributes of Jesus and so they will treat you like they treated Him. When you share the need to repent, you remind them of the real Jesus and they will hate you for it.

They persecute us because they don't know God. Jesus wasn't speaking of an intellectual attainment, but of an intimate relationship. They have not yielded to God. They do not love God. They love self and yield to none. They will not surrender to the Spirit of God convicting them of unbelief. (Matthew 12:31)

*22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin.* When Jesus speaks, His words bring conviction. If God was never manifest in human form, speaking with absolute clarity what God expects from His creation, we wouldn't be as accountable. But He did come and did declare the truth. We have heard it. We can read it. It is declared by Christians around the world. To reject the words of Jesus makes us guilty of sin. We have no excuse because He came and spoke to mankind. (John 12:48)

*23 He who hates me hates my Father as well.* I've heard people say they believe in God but don't accept the Bible's version of Jesus. Jesus says that's not possible. If you hate the real Jesus, you hate God. Perhaps you are here today and you're not really sure what you believe. These black and white declarations of Jesus are really challenging. They declare that this is the way it is, take it or leave it. We can't read the words of Jesus and think He was just a little overboard. He is clear and intentional. He was crazy or He is God. You can't read the words of Jesus and just go your way. They challenge us to make a decision for or against Him. (Luke 11:23)

*24 If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father.* Jesus said that if we had not heard His words we would not be guilty, but now we have no excuse. He is adding that His unique miracles have also made it clear that He is who He claimed to be. (John 10:38) No one else has ever calmed the wind and waves. No one else calls paralytics to rise and walk. And certainly no one has ever walked out of their tomb after being dead for three days. To reject all that is to declare a hatred for Jesus and God who sent Him. Since Jesus only did what the Father showed Him, to reject Jesus' miracles is to reject God. (John 3:36)

Again, the same is true with us. As we represent Jesus in the world, as His healing power flows through us, those who reject what He does through us reject God as well. (Matthew 10:40) It is not just rejection, for the declaration comes with conviction of judgment. Rejection always ends in hatred because it detests being called evil. You'll notice today that the word "evil" is frowned upon. Current polling indicates that a majority of people do not believe in a being named Satan. The world wants to deny that there is such a thing. Much of the mainline church denies that the miracles actually took place. Watch any secular account on TV and you'll see a

**Commented [notes20]:** 31 And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Matt 12:31 (NIV)

**Commented [notes21]:** 48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. John 12:48 (NIV)

**Commented [notes22]:** 23 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters. Luke 11:23 (NIV)

**Commented [notes23]:** 38 But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." John 10:38 (NIV)

**Commented [notes24]:** 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." [John 3:36 (NIV)]

**Commented [notes25]:** 40 "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. Matt 10:40 (NIV)

desperate attempt to make the miraculous explainable as some natural phenomenon. They hate Jesus and God. Acknowledging them would mean they should listen to the message of Jesus and they will not accept that they will have to give an account for their souls. (Romans 14:10)

<sup>25</sup> *But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'* The world rejects the words and miracles of Jesus. It has no acceptable or justifiable reason. Jesus was quoting Psalm 69:4, a messianic psalm. The Jews considered groundless hatred as evil as sins of idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed. (b. Yom 9b)

In the previous passage we are commanded to love one another, to remain in Jesus' love, and that our love for Jesus will result in obedience to His commands. That was immediately followed by these verses of warning about the world hating us. It is quite a contrast! We are to love while the world hates God, Jesus, and us. The world has a different spirit. (John 18:36) It operates under another power, but Jesus has come to change that one heart at a time.

<sup>1</sup> *"All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. <sup>2</sup> They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.* We are going to put the last two verses of John 15 with the next passage as they go together topically. In the first few verses of chapter 16, Jesus continues His warning. He warned them of the world's hatred so that when it happens they wouldn't be discouraged and fall away. He warned of religious persecution. The world will hate them and the world includes the religious system. They will be denied access to the Temple and synagogues. They will even be put to death, and the ones killing them will think they are serving God. How twisted the mind can become when it is not under the influence of the Holy Spirit. (John 3:6)

Religion does not mean a relationship with God. Religion is often completely contrary to a true relationship with God. Not long after Jesus said these things, James would be martyred, then Stephen, then others, hundreds and then thousands. Today Islamic fundamentalists think they are serving Allah when they kill Christians. Hindus in the Indian state of Orissa think they are serving the gods when they kill Christians. Jesus' words are coming to pass now more than ever.

<sup>3</sup> *They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. <sup>4</sup> I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.* They don't know what they are doing. (Luke 23:34) They don't really know God or Jesus or they would love and not hate. We shouldn't be surprised as our country changes, as persecution comes, and as we are slandered. Jesus knew it would come after His ascension. As the end of this age comes it will only increase. (2 Timothy 3:12-13) Jesus' words should prepare our hearts as they prepared the hearts of His disciples to stand firm, even unto death. Rejoice and be glad for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:12) Are you in the vine? You won't take a stand for righteousness unless you are in the vine. Only a real relationship of love with your Savior will enable you to face the hatred, for it is in that relationship that we receive the righteousness of Christ.

**Commented [notes26]:** 10 You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.  
Romans 14:10 (NIV)

**Commented [notes27]:** 4 Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me. I am forced to restore what I did not steal.  
Psalms 69:4 (NIV)

**Commented [notes28]:** 36 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."  
John 18:36 (NIV)

**Commented [notes29]:** 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.  
John 3:6 (NIV)

**Commented [notes30]:** 34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.  
Luke 23:34 (NIV)

**Commented [notes31]:** 12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,  
13 while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.  
2 Tim 3:12-13 (NIV)

**Commented [notes32]:** Matthew 5:12 (NIV)  
12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.