

## Joined to Jesus to Persevere

John 15:18–16:4

Studies in John #37

I WANT to begin by praising the Lord! Last week he spoke to us about loving one another. And we're seeing tangible results of his work in our lives to do that! During this season of Thanksgiving you and I can give to the North County Food Bank and assist a family in our community we've adopted during Christmas. Most especially the Lord stirred you up love to our brother Sidney, whose wife Brenda and daughter Abigail arrived from Uganda this morning. The elders and I text back and forth all week and one of the things I said was we need to pray this little spark is fanned into a flame to burn through our church family! Amen? Praise the Lord for what he's doing among us.

But we can't stay in our holy huddle singing kumbaya. Jesus juxtaposes our **love** for one another because he and the Father love us with the world's **hatred** of us. Note also Jesus' pattern in chapters 14–16 of teaching then the reason for this teaching. He taught about being the way, the truth, and the life, then said why in 14:25: "These things I have spoken to you..." then in verse 29, "so that...you may *believe*." He taught about being the vine and we the branches then said why in 15:11: "These things I have spoken to you, that my *joy* may be in you, and that your *joy* may be full." He taught about his new commandment then said why in 15:17: "These things I commanded you, so

that you will *love* one another.” Now here he teaches and concludes in 16:1: **“I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away”** then again in 16:4, **“But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.”**

Brothers and sisters, you and I are JOINED TO JESUS TO PERSEVERE.

### THE HATRED OF THE WORLD (15:18–25; 16:2–3)

Jesus transitions from our love for one another to THE HATRED OF THE WORLD for us. Jesus explains the reason for the world’s hatred as *parallel hatred for the Master and therefore the servant* in verses 18–20: **“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you”** (v. 18). Remember, **world** or κόσμος, can be used in different senses but here’s it’s being used in the sense of the realm of rebellion against God. Jesus is the light of the world because it exists in spiritual darkness. The Gospel story has been one account after another of the Word who became flesh coming into this world among his own people, the Jews, yet his own, as a whole, didn’t receive him but rejected him. **“If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you”** (v. 19). You and I once were *in* that world of spiritual darkness, evil, wickedness, and rebellion against God; but because Jesus chose

us *out of* that world so that we're no longer *of* it. Praise God! Because of this the world hates us now as it hated Jesus. **“Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master’”** (v. 20). Do you deserve better treatment than Jesus? Are you more innocent than Jesus? Jesus makes a contrast: **“If they persecuted me (and many did), they will also persecute you. If they kept my word (and some did), they will also keep yours”** (v. 20). Just as the world was divided over Jesus they'll be divided over you.<sup>1</sup>

*Being hated by the world is a principle of Christian discipleship.* We know it was true of the apostles in the New Testament. Just read the book of Acts. We know it was true at times in the ancient church under various Roman Emperors. We know it was true of various believers under tyrannical Roman Popes and later of Protestants under the Spanish Inquisition. But do you realize it's still true? I mentioned a while back an article that said the fastest growing evangelical church movement in the world is in a place you and I never would expect: Iran.<sup>2</sup> But do you realize it's still true for you? This principle of discipleship falls on our deaf ears in our comfortable lives. Listen to these verses and see if you can finish them: “...through many [*tribulations*] we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). God doesn't promise you a life of health and happiness! “...all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be [*persecuted*]” (2 Tim. 3:12). If you're not being hated by the world

could it be you're too friendly with the world? "...if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided [*we suffer with him*] in order that we may also be glorified with him" (Rom. 8:17). Ryle said, "Mere churchmanship and outward profession are a cheap religion...and cost a man nothing. But real vital Christianity will always bring with it a cross."<sup>3</sup>

*God using the world's hatred as a mark of our belonging to Christ is another principle of Christian discipleship.* Notice how the parallel of our suffering like Jesus suffered is in the context of belonging to Jesus like a branch to its vine. If the world tries to rip out the vine that means I'm a branch. That's why Jesus says to his disciples **know** (v. 18) and **but I chose you out of the world** (v. 19). God uses the world's hatred to refine his people's faith and prepare them for heaven. Speaking of the church in Iran again, this week I read an academic journal article tracing Christianity's history there. It's spread and success was so great that the pre-Islamic Sassanid Empire tried to wipe it out. But even after martyring 200,000 Christians the entire Western portion of what is today Iran was exclusively Christian. These Christians were known as the Assyrian Church of the East, and it was they, not the Greek-speaking Orthodox or Latin-speaking Roman Church, that sent missionaries as far as China and Tibet by the 600s and India and Sri Lanka by the 800s.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus explains the reason for the world's hatred a little more deeply as *parallel rebellion against Jesus therefore the Father* in verses 21–25: **“But all these things they will do to you on account of** (meaning, here's the reason:) *my name,*” or simply *me*. Notice he doesn't stop there. He makes the parallel between Son and Father: **“because they do not know him who sent me”** (v. 21). The world hates the church because it hates Jesus, and it hates Jesus ultimately because it hates the Father. **“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin”** (v. 22). He's not saying the world would be sinless or guiltless if he didn't come to earth from heaven—in which case it would've been better if he didn't come at all—but that now that he has come they are guilty of rejecting the Lord face to face. Note the parallelism again: **“Whoever hates me hates my Father also”** (v. 23). Notice the greater guilt again now that the Son has come into the world: **“If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father”** (v. 24). He speaks generally of the world and whoever but then particularly of the first century unbelieving Pharisees: **“But the word that is written in *their Law* must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause’”** (v. 25). This comes from Psalm 69, in which David speaks

prophetically as the Messiah: “Save me, O God! For the waters [his troubles] have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire [of troubles], where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters [of trouble], and the flood [of trouble] sweeps over me...More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause” (vv. 1–2, 4a). Note how in 16:2–3 the world’s hatred for the church because it hates Jesus because it hates the Father comes full circle: **“They will put you out of the synagogues.”** Why? **“The hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God”** (16:2). Why? **“Because they have not known the Father, nor me”** (16:3).

Teenagers and children, you need to hear this too! You’ve been baptized and some of you have professed faith publicly. You’re JOINED TO JESUS TO PERSEVERE amid and through *the world’s hatred of God, Jesus, and the Church*. I want you to imagine right now a beautiful, finished piece of jewelry. How did the ring, necklace, or earrings start? Gold is underground in rocks. It has to be blasted or dug out. Then all that rock with gold in it has to be crushed up into smaller pieces. Then it has to be heated so hot that the metal melts and separates from the rock. Then liquid gold is poured into a mold that is cooled into bars. Then a jeweler has to melt it again, shape it, hammer it, bend it, and finally polish it. So it is with you. The world’s going to bring the heat and beat on you; but God is going to use it all for your good!

## THE HELP OF THE SPIRIT (15:26–27)

**“I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away”**

(16:1). Brothers and sisters, you and I are JOINED TO JESUS TO PERSEVERE. He calls us to persevere amid and through THE HATRED OF THE WORLD for us. But don't forget, Jesus hasn't left us to do this alone as orphans. As we saw in chapter 14 he promises us THE HELP OF THE SPIRIT so that we will persevere.

**“But when the Helper comes”**—ὁ παράκλητος, remember that word we transliterate as “Paraclete?” It was used in the first century for an advocate who would come alongside you and plead your case, testify on your behalf and therefore comfort or help you. Jesus says from where he comes: **“whom I will send to you from the Father...who proceeds from the Father.”** Then Jesus, who is the truth (14:6) calls the Paraclete **“the Spirit of truth.”** Then he tells us his purpose in proceeding forth and being sent from the Father and Son: **“he will bear witness about me”** (v. 26). The Spirit's entire ministry is to be the Advocate of Jesus in the world. And amazingly Jesus says of his first disciples, **“And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning”** (v. 27). The Spirit will bear witness and that's paralleled with the disciples' witness; in other words, their witness was empowered by and because of the Spirit's. So is ours. We are joined to JOINED TO JESUS TO PERSEVERE through hatred and with the Spirit's help.

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<sup>1</sup> See the discussion in Carson, 525–526.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-story-of-the-irans-church-in-two-sentences/>

<sup>3</sup> Ryle, *John 13:1–21:25*, 4:116–117.

<sup>4</sup> See Philip O. Hopkins, “Iran’s Ethnic Christians: The Assyrians and the Armenians.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 61:1 (March 2018): 137–152.