

## **The Gospel of John (96) The Hatred of the World toward God**

The section of John's Gospel that we have been considering for some time contains a lengthy farewell discourse of Jesus to His disciples (John 13:31-16:33). Here is a description of this discourse:

Surrounded by a prologue (3:31-38) and an epilogue (16:25-33), the farewell discourse can be divided into six significant and developing thematic statements by Jesus, with each offering comfort and consolation for the disciples (and the reader), befitting the nature of a farewell discourse. These six statements within the farewell discourse offer one long exhortation to stay the course and encouragement that their efforts will be matched by the Trinitarian God Himself.<sup>1</sup>

We might identify these sections at this time:

1. Prologue: glory, departure, and love (13:31-38)
2. "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life" (14:1-14)
3. "I will give you the Paraclete" (14:15-31)
4. "I am the True Vine" (15:1-17)
5. "I have also experienced the hate of the world" (15:18-27)
6. "I will empower you by the Paraclete" (16:1-15)
7. "I will turn your grief into joy" (16:16-24)
8. Epilogue: Speaking plainly, departure, and peace (16:25-33)

Before us today is the fifth of these eight sections of this discourse in which Jesus declared that He had experienced the hate of the world (15:18-27). Here we read of the great enmity that exists between the world and the Son the God and therefore also between the world and His disciples. We also read of the danger of persecution that His disciples would encounter as they bear witness of Him. But they may be assured that they are not helpless, for He will send them the Helper, even the Holy Spirit, who will give them power and success in their witness. These words of Jesus may serve to exhort us to be confident and faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ in today's world which continues to be hostile to the Son of God when He and His kingdom is presented clearly and proclaimed rightly. May we not be characterized by fear that it might mute or modify our witness. But let us in the power of the Holy Spirit be bold in our proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in our fallen world. Let us take to heart our Lord's warning, "Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels (Luke 9:26).

Here is John 15:18-27.

<sup>18</sup>"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup>If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup>Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant 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. <sup>21</sup>But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. <sup>22</sup>If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. <sup>23</sup>He who hates Me hates My Father also. <sup>24</sup>If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me

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<sup>1</sup> Edward W. Klink, III, **John**. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2016), p. 661.

and My Father. <sup>25</sup>But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’

<sup>26</sup>“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. <sup>27</sup>And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

These verses press upon the disciples of Jesus Christ to see and acknowledge their decisive break from the world from which they have been separated by their Savior. As one wrote,

From an evangelistic perspective, these verses demand decision, because the issues are of ultimate importance. Following Jesus costs something (cf. Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-33), and may cost life itself. Yet not following Jesus means one is siding with a lost and hateful world. To warn prospective disciples of these unyielding realities serves to discourage spurious conversions and to foster true ones, just as Jesus told these things to the first disciples in order to ensure stability until the time of faith truly dawned (16:1).<sup>2</sup>

We may assess this portion of Scripture by employing the following outline.

1. The cause of the world’s hatred of disciples of Jesus (15:18-21)
2. The culpability of the world for its hatred (15:22-25)
3. The Holy Spirit will sustain the disciples in their conflict with the world (15:26-27)

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And so, let us first...

## **I. Consider the teaching of our passage**

### **A. The cause of the world’s hatred of disciples of Jesus (15:18-21)**

The Lord Jesus had been encouraging His disciples in the face of His impending arrest, trials, crucifixion, and burial. He had given great attention and emphasis on the love relationship that He and His Father had for His disciples. But here He transitions in addressing the hate relationship between the world and Himself, and His people.

What the Lord was about to experience was the greatest act of injustice that was ever perpetrated in the history of mankind. It was born out of hatred toward Him, which would also fall out toward His followers, His disciples. Here the Lord described the fact of this hatred of the world toward Him and toward them. We read in **verse 18**, “*If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.*” Let us consider these words of our Lord.

First, Jesus said, “If the **world** hates you.” A single word may have the capability of a variety of meanings, which can only be more narrowly defined by the context in which the word is used. How do we define the word, “world” in this context? In the Gospel of John this word has special significance in that it may have any one of seven different meanings:

- (1) the classical sense, i.e., the orderly universe, the cosmos
- (2) the earth itself,
- (3) the human inhabitants of earth, by metonymy<sup>3</sup>,

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<sup>2</sup> Donald Carson, **The Gospel According to John** (William B. Eerdmans. 1991), p. 524.

<sup>3</sup> Metonymy is a figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated. For example, one might refer to “Washington” when speaking of the United States government. This meaning of the word “world” is another way of referring to all humanity.

- (4) mankind under the Creator's judgment, alienated from His life, in the ethical sense,
- (5) the public gatherings who were about Christ, Jews in particular,
- (6) the kingdom of evil forces, angelic as well as human, as related to the earth, and
- (7) men out of every tribe and nation, but not all tribes and nations as a whole.

In other words the term "world" may refer to all that God has created, or to the earthen sphere upon which mankind dwells, or to mankind as a whole, or to the Palestinian contemporaries of our Lord, the Jews in particular, or to all evil forces related to the earth and in rebellion against God, or to persons selected out of every tribe and nation upon the face of the earth. In this verse Jesus is referring to all who are unbelievers in Him. Here the "world" are all non-Christians, those who do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. "The *world*, as commonly in John, refers to the created moral order in active rebellion against God."<sup>4</sup>

Our Lord stated this clause in the form of a conditional sentence. He said, "*If the world hates you.*" He was not expressing doubt as to whether or not the world would hate them, He is assuming that it does so and would do so.<sup>5</sup> It is as though He were saying, "*If the world hates you (and it does),* know that it first hated Me."

The Word of God teaches us that all mankind, until they are reconciled to God through the salvation that Jesus Christ provides, are born haters of God. Paul wrote of mankind in general in Romans 1:28ff

<sup>28</sup>And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; <sup>29</sup>being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, <sup>30</sup>backbiters, **haters of God**, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup>undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful...

Mankind hates God because, as **Jeremiah Burroughs** (1599-1646) once wrote, "The workings of sin are always against God." He expressed how sin shows itself against God:

As the nature of sin is opposite of God, so in the workings of sin there is a continual working against God. A sinful heart that is always stirring and working is always working against God. Therefore, you shall observe these several expressions the Holy Ghost has concerning sin.

1. The Holy Ghost calls it *enmity to God*, Romans 8:7. The wisdom of the flesh (the best part flesh has) is enmity against God.

2. Yes, the Holy Ghost says it (sin) is *walking contrary to God*, Leviticus 26. You have it in several places, verse 21 and verse 28, and several others.

3. It is *fighting against God*, Acts 5:39 and Acts 23:9. In these two places, rejecting the gospel is called fighting against God.

4. In Acts 7:51, *You do always resist the Holy Ghost*. There is a company of men who naturally walk contrary, resisting and fighting against God. We see that we must take heed of opposing the ministry of the gospel for, while you do that, you fight against God. You think you only oppose such and such men, but opposing the gospel is not fighting against us men, but against God...

5. Sin, in Scripture, is called *striving against God*, Isaiah 45:9. *Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker: Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth.* As far as sin prevails in your heart or life, so far you are guilty of striving with your Maker.

6. It is also called *rising against God*. By sin, the soul rises against God. And for that you have an expression in Micah 2:8, *Even My people of late are risen up as an enemy.* These are strange

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 525.

<sup>5</sup> In Greek it is a 3<sup>rd</sup> class conditional sentence, which assumes the protasis (the "if" portion) is true.

expressions: enmity, walking contrary, striving, fighting, resisting, rising against God, and yet these are all in sin.<sup>6</sup>

And yet fallen man is so ignorant of his own sin that he would protest against this assertion that he is a hater of God. **Arthur Pink** (1886-1952) wrote of this:

Enmity is a principle which expresses itself by opposition against its object. It contends with what it loathes. As in the regenerate the flesh lusts against the spirit, so in the unregenerate it fights against God. Enmity is the energy behind every sinful act...

Though in all sins there may not be an express hatred of God, nevertheless in every sin there is an implicit and virtual hatred of Him. So deeply rooted is man's enmity that neither the most tender pleading nor the direct threatening will abate it. God may entreat, but men will not heed; He may chastise, but as soon as He lifts the rod they, like Pharaoh, are as defiant as ever...

But so far from owning that they hate God, the vast majority will not only vehemently deny it, but affirm that they respect and love Him. Yet if their imagined love be analyzed, it will be found to have respect only to their own interests. While one concludes that God is favorable and lenient with him, he entertains no hard thoughts against Him. So long as he deems God to be prospering him, he bears Him no ill will. He hates not God as One who confers benefits, but as a Sovereign, Lawgiver, Judge. He will not yield to His government or take His Law as the rule of his life, and therefore does he dread His tribunal. The only God against whom the natural man is not at enmity is one of his own imagination. The deity whom he professes to worship is not the living God, for He is truth and faithfulness, holiness and justice, as well as being gracious and merciful. The soul of man is a complete stranger to holiness, even when his head be bowed in the house of prayer. But God is not deceived by any verbal acknowledgments or external homage: "This people draws near unto Me with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me" (Matt. 15:8). It is a God of their own devising and not the God of Holy Writ they believe in. It is an awful delusion to fancy they admire God's character while refusing His Son to reign over them.<sup>7</sup>

But because people are haters of God, they are also haters of God's Son. Again, Jesus declared, "If the world hates you, *you know that it hated Me before it hated you.*" The Jesus that the world claims to love is a different Jesus than He who is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Paul warned of some who come and proclaim "another Jesus" (cf 2 Cor. 11:4). This past week we were treated to the reading of Scripture by politicians who claimed that they were speaking on behalf of "Jesus", who, we were told to believe, would have endorsed their beliefs and practices. But if we were to proclaim our Jesus of the Holy Scriptures before them, they would reject Him straightway and us who proclaim Him, for they hate Him who is true.

The Lord Jesus told His disciples that the world hates them because they were no longer of the world. We read in **verse 19a**, "*If you were of the world, the world would love its own.*" Throughout human history there have been two peoples that have existed in this world, which are opposed to one another. These are the people of God and the people of the devil. There has been hatred and persecution of one people against the other throughout history. And this persecution has been one-sided. True Christians do not hate the people of the world, for they desire their well-being, their salvation. But the people of the world only love their own, those of the world. Those who think like they think, value the things they value, strive for the things that they long for, are regarded as their friends, for "the world loves its own." We are no longer part of the "world", for if we were of the world, the world would love us.

But the primary reason that the world hates Christians is because it hates Christ, their Master.

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<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah Burroughs, **The Evil of Evils, or, the Exceeding Sinfulness of Sin** (Soli Deo Publishers, 1995, orig. 1654), pp. 32f.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Pink, **Gleanings in the Scriptures** (The Moody Bible Institute, 1969), pp. 113f.

Christ's followers will be hated by the same world, partly because they are associated with the one who is supremely hated, and partly because, as they increase in the intimacy, love, and obedience and fruitfulness depicted in the preceding verses, they will have the same effect on the world as their Master. They, too, will appear alien. The world loves its own; this is not a sociological remark about inborn suspicion of strangers, but a moral condemnation. The world is a society of rebels, and therefore finds it hard to tolerate those who are in joyful allegiance to the king to whom all loyalty is due. Christians *do not belong to the world*, not because they have never belonged, but because, Jesus avers, *I have chosen you out of the world*. Former rebels who have by the grace of the king been won back to loving allegiance to their rightful monarch are not likely to prove popular with those who persist in rebellion. Christians cannot think of themselves as intrinsically superior. They are ever conscious that by nature they are, with all others, 'objects of wrath' (Eph. 2:3). But having been chosen out of the world, having been drawn by the Master's love into the group referred to as the Messiah's 'own' who are still in the world, the world of rebels.<sup>8</sup>

We then read in **verse 19b**, "*Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*"

Simply stated, the Christian is no longer "from the world" (ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου), a prepositional phrase that describes to whom the disciples belong and the nature of their identity. They used to be "*from the world*," and they will continue to be "*in the world*" (17:11), but Christ Himself—note the emphatic first-person pronoun—"chose" them *out of the world*... Christ's disciples are now a foreign entity in the world, and the world's antibodies will naturally respond to them in force with intent to destroy.<sup>9</sup>

The world hates God the Father. The world hates God the Son. And the world hates the disciples of the Son of God. This is how it has been throughout all of (biblical) history. God had declared after the fall that He put enmity between two peoples, His people and the people of the devil. We read in Genesis 3:15 that God declared to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed." This is an ultimate reference to Christ as the Seed of the woman. The Lord Himself put this enmity between the fallen world and His Son Jesus Christ. But this verse also speaks to the hatred of the fallen world of the people of God through history. There is enmity between these two peoples, for one is identified as the people of God and the other is the people of the devil. And there can be no peace between them when their distinctions and differences are manifest. And it has always been the seed of the serpent that has hated and persecuted the seed of the woman, the people of God. As **Matthew Henry** (1662-1714) wrote,

Note, whom Christ blesseth the world curseth. The favorites and heirs of heaven have never been the darlings of this world, since the old enmity was put between the seed of the woman and of the serpent. Why did Cain hate Abel, but *because his works were righteous*? Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing; Joseph's brethren hated him because his father loved him; Saul hated David because *the Lord was with him*; Ahab hated Micaiah because of his prophecies; such are the causeless causes of the world's hatred.

Now the Lord had declared a few verses before that He had chosen them. Verse 16 reads, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." He favored them, He chose them, therefore the world hated them. **J. C. Philpot** (1802-1869) once illustrated this dynamic by citing the hatred toward Joseph by his brothers. It was due to their knowledge of their father's favor of Joseph over them that caused them to have such enmity toward him. Here are Philpot's words in which he describes the hatred that the world has for the true Christian:

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<sup>8</sup> Carson, p. 525.

<sup>9</sup> Klink, pp. 664f.

However various sects differ among themselves, they all unite in condemning him. All other religion is right, and his alone wrong; everyone else's faith is genuine, and his only is spurious. Of him alone the charitable augur uncharitably; universal salvationists cut off him alone from salvation; those that pity the heathen have no pity for him; and those who compass sea and land to make one proselyte, pronounce his case alone as past recovery. And what is his trespass and what is his sin, that they so hotly pursue after him? (Gen. 31:36). Does he live in sin? No. Is he buried in the world, head over ears in politics, heaping together dishonest gains, or eaten up with covetousness? None dare say so. Does he neglect prayer, reading the Word, hearing the truth, contributing to the necessities of saints, and living peaceably with all men? No. Why then this universal baying at him from every dog of the pack? For the same reason that Joseph's brethren hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him—the Father loves him, and has clothed him in a garment of many colors, and given him revelations which He has denied to them.<sup>10</sup>

You and I are Christians ultimately because the Lord chose us to be the recipients of His salvation. We were of the world, as ones opposed toward God, hating Him and refusing to believe on Him and submit to Him. What set us apart from the world? Why was it that we came to love the true God and His Son in the way that He is revealed to us in the Scriptures? Was not the antipathy toward Him resident in our own hearts? It is because the Lord chose us and called us unto Himself. We must ascribe the change in us due to the grace of God so richly poured out upon us through the Holy Spirit who caused us to become born anew. This is what we read today in Acts 26 if you are following our reading chart. Before King Agrippa Paul described who he had been and what he had been like.

“Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup>This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup>And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

But then Paul recounted his conversion. He had formerly been a hater of Jesus Christ and a hater of His people. But suddenly, due to an act of God's grace in Christ, He became a Christ promoter and a lover of Christ's people.

“While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, <sup>13</sup>at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. <sup>14</sup>And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ <sup>15</sup>So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. <sup>16</sup>But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. <sup>17</sup>I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, <sup>18</sup>to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’

The Lord had at once delivered Paul from the power of satan by His own power. He then declared that Paul would bear His message so that the gentiles of the world would also be turned from the power of satan to God.

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<sup>10</sup> J. C. Philpott, **Winter Afore the Harvest or the Soul's Growth in Grace.**

It was the Lord who put love for Himself within us because He first loved us. His love for us is not His response to us because we loved Him. Rather, our love for Him is the result and the response of His love for us. “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, <sup>3</sup>among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

<sup>4</sup>But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup>and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:17)

But when we became aligned with our Lord and Savior, no longer ones belonging to this world, then the world began to hate us as it has hated Him.

Returning to John 15, we read that Jesus then declared that we would experience similar things to what He experienced because of our association with Him as His servants and He as our Lord. We read in **verse 20**, “*Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.*” The people of the world persecuted Jesus; they will also persecute you because you are His servant. We see this played out in the Book of Acts in the manner that the world treated the apostles of the Lord Jesus. In a similar way the unbelieving Jews regarded and treated both Stephen and the Apostle Paul.

But thankfully there will be those that respond favorably to the message of the gospel that the disciples of Jesus will bear before the world. Jesus said, “*If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.*” (v. 20b). We see that our lord’s words to His disciples are within the context of their mission to declare Him and His Word to the world. Two reactions could be expected, and they are far different from one another. There are those who will persecute us for doing so. But thankfully, the grace of God will be operative and there will be some who “keep” His word just as we have kept His word.

The Lord then gave the reason that the people of the world respond to His people in the manner that they do. In **verse 21** we read, “*But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.*” Here the Lord Jesus indicated that the world will maltreat His disciples due to their ignorance of the true God. Because the people of the world do not know the Father whom is revealed through His Son, they will reject the disciples of Jesus who represent Him and declare Him to them. He declared that they would be maltreated by the world “*for My name’s sake*”, in other words, “because of Me.” And so we see, that the cause of the world’s hatred of disciples of Jesus is because of their sin they are ignorant of who the true God is, and because of their sin they hate Him who is true when He is proclaimed to them.

## **B. The culpability of the world for its hatred (15:22-25)**

The Lord Jesus then addressed the spiritual condition of the people of the world declaring that they warranted God’s judgment. They were without excuse. Jesus said,

<sup>22</sup>If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. <sup>23</sup>He who hates Me hates My Father also. <sup>24</sup>If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. <sup>25</sup>But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’

Our Lord declared that the people of the world who failed to believe on Him deserved to be condemned for their sin. Jesus said, ***“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.”*** (v. 22). He was not saying that they would have not been responsible for any and all sin if He had not come among them. He was declaring that the sin for having rejected God that was born out of their ignorance would not have happened had the Lord Jesus not come among them revealing the Father to them. But because He had revealed His Father to them, they had no excuse for their sin of unbelief. “By coming and speaking to them Jesus incited the most central and controlling of sins: rejection of God’s gracious revelation, rebellion against God, decisive preference for darkness rather than light.”<sup>11</sup> **Matthew Henry** wrote,

The aggravated guilt which those lie under to whom Christ has *come and spoken in vain*, whom He has called and invited in vain, with whom He has reasoned and pleaded in vain; *they have no cloak for their sin*; they are altogether inexcusable, and in the judgment day will be speechless, and will not have a word to say for themselves. Note, the clearer and fuller the discoveries are which are made to us of the grace and truth of Jesus Christ, the more is said to us that is convincing and endearing, the greater is our sin if we do not love Him and believe in Him. The word of Christ strips sin of its cloak, that it may appear sin.

Our Lord then stated in **verse 23**, ***“He who hates Me hates My Father also.”*** It is clear that the Lord Jesus was asserting that love of God can only be known and expressed if one has love for Him as the Son of God. All claims of all religious people everywhere that they truly love God are false claims. According to the Lord Jesus, they hate His Father. They hate God the Father as shown in that they hate His beloved Son. One cannot truly love God if he does not love God’s Son. He who hates Jesus Christ hates God.

Our Lord stated that the works that He did before people, works that no other person could have done, condemned men in their sin if they refused to believe on Him after having witnessed them. Again, their refusal to believe on Him also betrays their hatred of God the Father. **Verse 24** reads, ***“If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.”***

Christ’s works were such as *no man ever did*. No common person that had not a commission from heaven, and God with him, could work miracles (ch. 3:2). And no prophet ever wrought such miracles, so many, so illustrious. Moses and Elias (Elijah) wrought miracles as servants, by a derived power; but Christ, as a Son, by His own power. This was it that amazed the people, that with authority He commanded diseases and devils (Mark 1:27); they owned they never saw the like (Mark 2:12). They were all good works, works of mercy; and this seems especially intended here, for He is upbraiding them with this, that they hated Him. One that was so universally useful, more than ever any man was, one would think, should have been universally beloved, and yet even He is hated. (Matthew Henry)

One would have thought that the many miracles that Jesus performed would have resulted in all people everywhere, particularly who had witnessed them first-hand, would love Him because of those works. But rather, they hated Him.

He had come to show them the love of God, but they reacted to His love with hatred, just as, when He came to them as the light of the world, they chose darkness rather than light (John 3:19). They thus passed judgment upon themselves: if they rejected the giver of true life, they shut themselves up to the only alternative—death.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Carson, p. 526.

<sup>12</sup> F. F. Bruce, **The Gospel of John** (William B. Eerdmans, 1983), p. 314.



But then the Lord Jesus declared the reason for all of the unreasonable hatred toward Him. Jesus said, ***“But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause’”*** (v. 25). The world’s hatred for Jesus as He is truly portrayed in the Scriptures, is unreasonable. There is no legitimate reason that anyone anywhere would hate Him. But the fact is that everyone everywhere hates Him, unless and until the grace of God imparts a heart in them to do so.

Our Lord concludes this section of His discourse, declaring that...

### **C. The Holy Spirit will sustain the disciples in their conflict with the world (15:26-27)**

Even though the Lord Jesus was about to be arrested, tried, and crucified, and though He foretold the great hardship that His disciples would encounter from the fallen world because of their association with Him, He desired that they would be encouraged in the work of witnessing in His behalf to the world that lay open before them. He assured them of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, whom He would send to them. Here are **verses 26 and 27**:

***“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. <sup>27</sup>And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.***

This is the third saying regarding the Holy Spirit that we have recorded in John’s Gospel (cf. 14:16f, 26). In spite of the fact that the world hates His Father, hates Him, and will hate them, He said that He would send the Helper who will assure that His disciples would be faithful and fruitful witnesses in the world.

Jesus said that He would send the Helper from the Father. He speaks of the Holy Spirit as a Person, whom He would send to them. The Spirit is “from the Father” but would be sent to them by Jesus. This is clearly in anticipation of the event of Pentecost when The Lord Jesus will baptize His church in the Holy Spirit. It had been said of Jesus by John the Baptist:

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. ***He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.***” (Matt. 3:11)

This event of Jesus pouring out the Spirit upon His church would result in His disciples to be empowered with courage and wisdom to become faithful witnesses of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Here Jesus calls the Holy Spirit ***“the Spirit of truth.”*** He had also referred to the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of truth” earlier in John 14:16-17, which reads as follows:

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--  
<sup>17</sup>***the Spirit of truth***, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

We read that the Spirit of truth that He would give to His disciples was for them uniquely and specially, for “the world cannot receive” Him. The idea of “truth” is to be understood in the Gospel of John in a special way. Here are the words of **Edward Klink**:

“Truth” is an important concept in the Gospel (1:14; 16:12-15) and especially in light of the recent occurrence of Jesus’ sixth formal “I am” statement: “I am the way, *the truth*, and the life” (John 14:6). In light of its connection to Jesus, truth is more than a statement of fact or even a doctrine, for it speaks of the reality of God now accessed *through* Christ and *in* the Spirit. Just as Jesus is the standard for what is real in this world and true about God as the perfect expression of God, the Spirit of truth is the

incorporation of this reality, the substance of what is real in this world and true about God as the perfect provision of God.<sup>13</sup>

What He is saying is that when the Lord spoke of the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of truth”, He was declaring to His disciples that the Holy Spirit would enable their witness of Him to be successfully proclaimed and understood by those who heard their witness, by those to whom the Lord would be gracious.

That the Lord declared that He would send them the Helper, who “*proceeds from the Father.*” This expression has had a tremendous impact and influence on Christendom through the centuries. It has to do with what is called the *filioque phrase*. To address it before us all would not necessarily be profitable at this time, but I did include some comments on this matter at the end of the notes.

The Lord then declared of the Holy Spirit, “*He will testify of Me.*” This is a verse that is very helpful in identifying and assessing claims regarding the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in various ministries. There are those, namely those who are our charismatic brothers and sisters in Christ, who make claims that the Holy Spirit performs miracles and reveals extra-biblical revelation of God to them. If you examine their teachings and practice respecting the Holy Spirit, you will often find them concentrating on the person of the Holy Spirit independent of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here before us the Lord Jesus declared the primary ministry of the Holy Spirit is to testify of Him. The Holy Spirit does not draw attention and focus to Himself, but He seeks to reveal Jesus Christ clearly and fully and glorify Him to and through His people. The ministry of the Holy Spirit enables the successful and fruitful witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ in a world that is hostile to Him and His people. A ministry that gives attention and emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit separate from the proclamation and furtherance of Jesus Christ, is flawed.

Our Lord’s words in **verse 27** make this clear. Jesus concluded this portion of His farewell speech telling His disciples, “*And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*” The Holy Spirit will bear witness of Him and they also will bear witness of Him, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **II. A few considerations in the light of our passage**

### **A. First, let us each consider ourselves.**

Examine your heart as best as you can from what our Lord taught His disciples on this occasion. Do you truly love Him and do you show forth that love in how you live and relate to others about you? Here are the words of **Alexander Maclaren** (1826-1910):

Dear friends, I want some of my hearers to-day who have never honestly asked themselves the question of what their relationship with God is, to go down into the deep places of their hearts and test themselves by this simple inquiry: ‘Do I do anything to please Him? Do I try to serve Him? Is it a joy to me to be near Him? Is the thought of Him a delight, like a fountain in the desert or the cool shadow of a great rock in the blazing wilderness? Do I turn to Him as my Home, my Friend, my All? If I do not, am I deceiving myself by fancying that I stand neutral? There is no neutrality in a man’s relationship to God. It is one thing or other. ‘Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.’ ‘The friendship of the world is enmity against God.’<sup>14</sup>

### **B. Let us consider the nature of our Christian witness to a fallen world.**

Our Lord Jesus declared that if His disciples are faithfully witnessing for Him and the Holy Spirit was blessing their efforts, they would experience mixed results. There would be those that hear and respond to them. There would be those who would persecute them. A faithful, vibrant witness for the gospel would

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<sup>13</sup> Klink, p. 635.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Maclaren, **Expositions of Holy Scripture. St. John, Chapters XV to XXI** (Baker Book House, n.d.), pp. 64f.

engender both the hatred and favorable response of their hearers. This should cause us to think carefully about the means by which we attempt to bear witness for Christ in this world and it should cause us to have a proper standard or measure of “success” in our mission.

The words of our Lord to His disciples in this passage calls into question the philosophy of ministry that governs many Christian churches and ministries that claim to be reaching people in our fallen world with “the gospel.” It would seem that they give much attention and effort to shape their ministries to appease the spiritual hostility of the fallen world toward the church, thinking that this is going to better win souls to Jesus Christ. People are brought to believe that they are Christians but they had never been told the true message of the gospel that wages war against the rebel heart bringing it into full submission to Jesus Christ as Lord. And it is often the case that the offensive message of repentance and submission to Christ the Lord is not asserted, for if it were, those Christian leaders know that they would disperse many of their crowd. All too often there is a spirit of worldliness that characterizes churches and ministries, assuming that this will better enable them to reach worldly people. The thought is, “If we can get them to like us, then maybe they will also like Jesus who we are attempting to promote before them.” The result is that doctrines and practices that were once characteristic of Bible-centered evangelical churches are no longer practiced.

Our Lord Jesus warned against compromising biblical convictions and paring one’s message in order to appease or win over a world that is inherently hostile to Him and His people. The Lord said, “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26). If we are being faithful to our Lord and if the Holy Spirit is bearing witness using us, we can expect to be regarded and treated as they did the Lord Jesus. Yes, there will be some that the Lord will call to Himself through His grace, and we should pray to that end. But there will be others who will despise us and reject us as the worst kind of offenders of the public welfare. But our Lord Jesus declared,

“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matt. 5:11f)

May the Lord help us to be faithful to our Lord and faithful to people in proclaiming the gospel rightly and clearly to them, even as we pray that the Holy Spirit will bless and use this message for the conversion of many.

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“The LORD bless you and keep you;  
The LORD make His face shine upon you,  
And be gracious to you;  
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,  
And give you peace.” (Numb. 6:24-27)

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## John 15:26 and the *Filioque* phrase

This verse has been the center of a great debate in Christendom that stretches back many centuries. It is actually at the center of the division between the eastern and western branches of Christendom, with Eastern Orthodoxy in the east and Roman Catholicism in the west. I thought that it would be best for us to consider the discussion of this matter in the commentary of **D. A. Carson** (b. 1947). Here are his words on this verse:

From earlier versions which speak of the Spirit *proceeding* from the Father has come the habit of referring to a prolonged doctrinal debate as the debate over the procession of the Spirit. The *procession* of the Spirit was understood in metaphysical terms, i.e. this clause was understood to refer to the Spirit's ontological relationship with the Father, not to the mission on which He was sent. The creed of Nicaea and of Constantinople appeals to this clause. The Western version, however, added the words 'and the Son' (Latin, *filioque*): the Holy Spirit 'proceeds from the Father *and the Son*'. Thus the *filioque* phrase in the doctrine of the procession of the Spirit came to be a divisive point in the debates between Eastern and Western branches of Christendom, the former arguing that the addition of 'and the Son' is not only without textual warrant but was adopted by only one branch of the church, the latter arguing that the addition merely makes explicit the teaching of the surrounding context and is in any case needed to preserve the integrity of the doctrine of the Trinity.

It would be easy to dismiss the debate as so much ado about nothing, since it is almost certain that the words 'who goes out from the Father', set in synonymous parallelism with 'whom I will send to you from the Father', refer not to some ontological 'procession' but to the mission of the Spirit. But if the theological debate is divorced from the meaning of this one clause and allowed to stand on its own, then it becomes clear that tremendous issues are at stake after all, but were mistakenly connected with the interpretation of this clause. To speak of God 'sending' the Son, and of the Son 'going out' from the Father, in a context where the Son is nothing other than the preincarnate Word (1:1ff), who is both with God and who is God (1:1), and who Himself becomes flesh (1:14), and can still be addressed as God (20:28), raises extraordinary complex ontological questions about the being of God. Some of these are addressed by the Evangelist himself. Even if the 'sending' and 'going out' of the Son refer to His mission, this is not the mission of yet another merely human prophet, but of Him who through one with the Father donned our flesh. With this strong Christology coursing through his work, the Evangelist who tells us that the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, comes in certain respects as the *replacement* of the Son, and is sent by the Son, or at His request and by the Father, cannot be thought to be speaking without reflection. It is no accident that in 15:26, when Jesus goes on to say, '*He will testify about Me*', John uses the masculine pronoun *ekeinos*, even though it breaks concord with the (formally) neuter status of the preceding relative pronoun: i.e. 'the Spirit is thought of in personal terms' (Barrett, p. p. 482.) Thus although the clause 'who goes out from the Father' refers to the mission of the Spirit, in analogy with the mission of the Son, this is the mission of the Spirit who in certain respects replaces the Son, is sent by the Father and the Son, and belongs (so far as we can meaningfully use such ambiguous terminology) to the Godhead every bit as much as the Son. In short, the elements of a full-blown doctrine of the Trinity crop up repeatedly in the Fourth Gospel; and the early creedal statement, complete with the *filioque* phrase, is eminently defensible, once we allow that this clause in 15:26 does not specify a certain ontological status, but joins with the matrix of Johannine Christology and pneumatology to presuppose it.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Donald Carson, **The Gospel According to John** (William B. Eerdmans. 1991), pp. 528f.