

# The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

*"...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end"(John 13:1.)*

## **The Communing Savior**

### ***The Believer's Relationship to the World (Part 3)***

*John 15:18-25*

*18 If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 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. 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. 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. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 He who hates Me hates My Father also. 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. 25 But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.'*

In just a few days there will be a religious holiday of sorts that very few of us stop to consider. That religious holiday is known as "Reformation Day". On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted a series of statements that challenged the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. These statements have come to be known as the 95 theses, which Luther nailed to the doors of a church in Wittenberg, Germany. Contrary to what many think, Luther's action was not one of defiance or provocation. The doors of the Wittenberg chapel faced the city's main thoroughfare and the church door functioned as a public bulletin board where men like Luther would post things for discussion and debate. Of course, because Luther's 95 theses challenged the Roman Catholic Church's false doctrines, superstition, ignorance, and corruption, he was eventually excommunicated from the Catholic Church and the Protestant reformation began. At the time of the Reformation, most who attended church were illiterate and had little knowledge of the Bible, and so they relied on the clergy for religious instruction and guidance. Tragically however, monks, priests, bishops, and even the popes in Rome taught unbiblical doctrines like purgatory and salvation through good works. Luther's communication of the truth of Scripture was what caused him much persecution.

Just a few years later, as the teachings of Luther began to spread, a man by the name of William Tyndale came on the scene. Tyndale was educated at Oxford and Cambridge in England around 1523 began his work of translating the Bible into English so that the common people could read and understand the Word of God. As an ardent believer, Tyndale delighted in defending his beliefs while having discussions at the home where he resided. The local clergy who visited to dine quickly grew weary of Tyndale's constant criticism of the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. They became so weary with him, that they began to bear a grudge and desired harm to him.

But Tyndale knew that in order for lay people to know the truth of God's Word, they needed to be able to read it for themselves. The clergy kept the Scriptures hidden and unavailable to their congregations. God gave William Tyndale the will and wisdom to begin translating and printing the New Testament.

The printing began in Cologne, Germany in 1525, but was interrupted by a legal injunction. The printing of his work was completed in Worms, Germany in 1526, just about 10 years after

# The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

*"...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end"(John 13:1.)*

Luther first nailed his 95 theses to the door at the Wittenberg Chapel. Later Tyndale translated the Old Testament as well. It was of great spiritual benefit to the godly lay people of that day.

As Tyndale worked on his translation and spoke of the true teachings of the Word of God, he experienced a lot of harassment, ridicule, and threats from the clergy and their aids. Finally, in Antwerp, Belgium, Henry Philips tricked him into coming out of the house, where officers were waiting to arrest him. He was condemned by decree of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, at Augsburg, in 1530. On October 6, 1530, in the town of Vivorde, Netherlands, William Tyndale was tied to a stake, strangled by the hangman to the point of death and then burned in fire for doing God's Work. It is said that as he met the Lord, Tyndale cried with a loud voice, "Lord! Open the King of England's eyes!"

Difficulties, trials, hardships, broken relationships, hard feelings, confusion, heartache, discouragement, alienation and isolation are just a few of the words that might be used to describe the experience of any believer who has sought to live out what they believe about Jesus Christ before others. I would suspect that most of you, at some level or another, have experienced to some degree or another such things in your lives as you have lived for Jesus.

To be sure, there are numerous accounts, even as we have looked at, of those who have suffered such things to such an extent that it causes us to wonder if we would stand firm under such pressures. But as we have been considering over the past couple of weeks, such hardships are not to be considered abnormal for the believer, but rather normal – simply part and parcel of the Christian life. And so, the question for the believer in Jesus Christ is not should or if such hardship comes, but when it comes, how should he face it – how should he react to it – how might he face such times with the grace and poise of Jesus Christ Himself? Over the past couple of weeks, we have encapsulated such questions into two main questions which we have sought to answer from our text:

## **1. Do you rightly practice the commands of Jesus? (John 15:18, 20)**

From verses 18 and 20 we noted that believers are to "know" and "remember" that the hatred of the world against believers, those who truly seek to follow Jesus, is a hatred first directed at Jesus Himself and that also, any persecution believer's experience in life is to be expected, for if the persecuted Jesus for the things He said and the way that He lived before an unbelieving world, then how could His followers expect anything different.

## **2. Do you rightly perceive your condition in Jesus? (John 15:21)**

Then, last week, we saw how Jesus informed His disciples that by following Him, by being no longer of – or living according to the world – the world would disown them. Believers are to know their condition or position in Jesus, that they are strangers, aliens, whom the world does not understand as well as saints, those called out from the world to live no longer according to the lusts of men, but according to the will of God.

All of this brings us to the final verses of this section, verses that speak to us not so much of what to expect or concerning our position now that we are followers of Jesus Christ, but rather we find Jesus taking the time to answer the question, "why does the world hate Jesus and those who follow after Him?" I'm sure that a number of answers might come to mind as to why the world hates Jesus and His followers, but let us examine what Jesus laid forth.

Before we do this however, let me share with you why I believe it is important to understand why the world hates Jesus and His followers. First, in understanding some of the

# The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

*"...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end"(John 13:1.)*

reasons why the world hates our Lord and therefore believers as they do, we can find peace and comfort. How can we find peace and comfort? When we understand the reasons, while we may not like the results, we are better prepared to show compassion and love rather than hatred. When I understand why a person thinks (or doesn't think) about Jesus as he does, I can come to see just how lost he is in the darkness of sin and then prayerfully see that my life becomes a light that points him to Jesus.

Another reason why I think it is important to see why the world hates Jesus and His followers is because it stands as a test for each one of us this morning. We need to make sure that none of the reasons for the world's hatred as presented here by Jesus is found to any measure in us. Yes, in those of us here today. Let us remember that much (not all) of the persecution of believers has come from within the walls of the church. Luther was persecuted by the Church, Tyndale by the Church and oftentimes today, it is those in the church who persecute in some form or another the true believers of God.

I know this has been a long introduction, but bear with me. Before we look at that final question that will guide our look at these verses, let me remind you of a few important definitions we must keep in mind.

**First**, remember that by the word "**world**" as seen throughout our text, we do not mean "individuals" but rather a way of thinking and living that is opposed to and rebellion against God's revealed way of thinking and living.

**Second**, the word "**hatred**" as seen in our text refers to detesting or despising something. It is the counting of something or someone as being unworthy and therefore worthy of destruction. [The other day I was talking with Bill Thomas behind the building and as we were in conversation, I saw this glob of weeds growing up through the crack in the pavement. As we talked, I began kicking at it with my shoe until I uprooted it and left it on the pavement in the sun to shrivel and die – yes, that is a demonstrable hatred of the weed that counted it worthy only to be destroyed].

**Third**, the word "**persecution**" in our text speaks of hatred being taken to its most vivid and often violent end. Persecution is hatred that pursues its object with ill-intent; sometimes harassment, sometimes death.

Keeping this in mind, let me ask you this final question that guides the message today and by which we will also answer the question as to why the world hates Jesus and those who follow Him.

### **3. Do you rightly ponder the confusion of the world's thinking? (John 15:21-25)**

#### **III. Do you rightly ponder the confusion of the world's thinking (15:21-25)**

Our Lord Jesus lays out two simple reasons why the world is confused in its thinking about Jesus and His followers. And I present these two reasons to you as a warning – calling you to make sure that no form of these reasons is found in you. For failure in any one of these areas results in the detriment to your soul and the body of Christ at best and to the betrayal of your profession as a child of God at worst. Let us consider these warnings.

##### **A. We must not be ignorant of God (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.*

# The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

*"...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end"(John 13:1.)*

Here in verse 21 we clearly see that the cause of the world's hostility toward Jesus and His followers is caused by their ignorance of God. Jesus begins by saying, "But all these things..." What things? As we saw beginning back in verse 18 and following, any kind of hatred, whether passive or active; this disassociation because you don't belong to the world and this persecution.

Jesus says here that these things will be done "for My name's sake.." – an interesting reminder to all who suffer for Jesus, for all who have strained family relationships because they have followed Christ, for all who have been dismissed by friends because they would no longer participate in "deeds" of darkness, for all those who have lost jobs, go hungry, are subject to harsh verbal or physical treatment or even imprisonment (not much of which we experience now), that such suffering was first experienced and directed toward Jesus, just as we saw in verse 18, *"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.* Beloved, there is to be a comfort gained when we suffer for Jesus. As 1 Peter 4:14 reminds us, ***"If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."***

When a believer suffers in light of following Jesus, the blessing comes in the form of the honor it is share in His sufferings. When people hear from you the words of Christ and see in your life the workings of Christ and choose to revile you, you know that Christ is indeed in you and you are on the path to glory with Christ. As 2 Timothy 2:12 declares, ***"if we endure with Him [in suffering], we will also reign with Him [in glory]."***

But why this reviling, why this hatred, why this potential for persecution? We read on in our text, ***"because they do not know the One who sent Me."*** They are ignorant of who God really is and this ignorance is revealed in their passive and active hatred against God and His people. Matthew Henry noted so well,

*We do not rightly know God if we do not know Him in Christ, and those who persecute those whom He sends make it to appear that they know not that He was sent of God.*

When people are willing to exchange the truth of God for lie and to worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25), when people are willing to make a profession of godliness and yet deny its power to conform a person more and more into the likeness of Jesus (2 Timothy 3:5; Romans 8:29), when people are willing eat up the Lord's people as they would eat bread and not call upon the Lord (Psalm 14:4), by such things it is evident that they do not know God and they do not know Jesus whom He has sent. What application does this have to us – most of us here I assume would not regard ourselves as hating or persecuting others. But let us heed the warning of Hebrews 3:12, ***"Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God."*** Let us examine ourselves that there be no form of hatred in us. Sometimes we simply veil and disguise our hatred toward Gods people even as Korah and many of the children of Israel did against Moses in Numbers 16. Korah disguised his hatred for Moses by calling the people and Himself holy, which was supposed to be true, but what was at stake was simply following Moses as the one whom God had appointed over Israel. Likewise, children, because what you think and say to your parents. They have been given to you by the Lord and think, say or behave hatefully, is to act in ignorance of God. Be careful dear congregation, of speaking ill or hatefully of those whom the Lord has given over you in the Lord, a brother or sister in Christ, an elder or pastor, for such reveals an ignorance of God and His purposes for you. Be careful, believers of hateful talk

# The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

*"...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end"(John 13:1.)*

against government or individual politicians, for all government has been appointed by God according to Romans 13.

We must not be ignorant of God, but know who He is and whom He has sent to us for our good and His glory, the greatest Person being of course Jesus Christ, His Son as our substitute and sacrifice for sin.

## **B. We must not reject the words and works of Jesus (15:22-24)**

*22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 He who hates Me hates My Father also. 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.*

As we come to verses 22-24, we find the second reason as to why the world hates and persecutes Jesus and His followers – it is because they reject both the words (that is the message, the truth) of Jesus; and they reject the works (that is the actions and accomplishments) of Jesus. In Hebrews 1:1-2 we read these profound words:

***God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken [finally and sufficiently] to us in His Son...***

Beloved, this is the purpose and testimony of the entire Gospel of John. In John 1:18, Jesus is presented as the one who has come into the world to perfectly reveal, to make God known. In John 14:9 Jesus declared that ***"He who has seen Me has seen the Father"***. In John 5:19-24 we find that the words of Jesus are the words of the Father, these are the words that Jesus is referring to in part when He said that He had spoke to them in 15:22. In John 4:34 the works of Jesus are said to be the works of God, again the very works which Jesus speaks of in 15:24. From these things we must conclude that Jesus is truly the Savior of the world, that He is indeed God in the flesh. Jesus is truth (14:6), committed no evil (7:18), did all that He did in love (13:34) and even suffered and died for the sins of His people (10:11).

This is quite the resume and it is only partial. And yet, with all this, one of the first comments of the gospel writer is this, as found in John 1:10, ***"[Jesus] was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him."*** Jesus came and has spoken words of life to humanity and proved the validity of those words by His works, the greatest of which was rising from the dead on the third day. And for those who have heard and seen such things, and for those who have been given such a revelation of the truth and yet reject what Jesus said and did, these are under a greater judgment. Jesus says, "If I had not come and spoken to them [if I had not exposed the greatness of their sin and the extent of their rebellion against god], they would not have sin [meaning, they would not have so great a sin], but now they have no excuse for their sin [with the preaching and giving of the gospel, there is no where to hide; no means of escape in light of what Jesus has said and done]."

Jesus had come, God in the flesh and spoke to them, revealed to them in great detail their condition in sin. Before His coming, men were still in sin and still deserving of death, but now before them was the way of life; the way of being made right, begin given a restored relationship to their Creator. They heard the message of hope, this message of love and forgiveness that comes as they believe on who Jesus is, the Son of God, come in the flesh, to be the giver of truth, the giver of grace, the giver of righteousness. When one hears the gospel rightly given as

# The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

*"...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end"(John 13:1.)*

we know it was through Jesus Christ, there can be no doubt that men are sinners, at odds with God and that there is nothing they can do to right this relationship; and there can be no doubt that Jesus, in love, mercy and compassion, has come to be the substitute, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world – to make right with God those who having heard this word, receive this word, believe this word and see in Jesus' words life changing truth. For those who reject the words, the message of Jesus, this message from God, there is no excuse, no recourse, no avenue of escape. For the more one hears about the gospel, the sinfulness of man and the provision of God for man's sin through Jesus Christ and yet refuses to respond to such a message, then guilt and condemnation is increased upon them for refusing such a clear light.

Therefore, in verse 23, Jesus said the words, **"He who hates Me** [that is, he who refuses to respond to the truth I have proclaimed; he who despises or dismisses what I say, passively or actively, this one, no matter what else they might say] **hates My Father also."** It is impossible for a person to be in right relationship with the Father who is not in right relationship with the Son. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one [not even one] comes to the Father but through Me." You cannot live in opposition to the words of Christ and say you love God. And yet that is what Jew were doing at the time of Christ, refusing to take to heart and practice the words of Jesus; refusing to believe that God had sent Jesus to condemn their way of life and call them to repentance and by their response to Jesus, their hatred, their persecution, and their ambivalence, they proved they did not know and love God.

Let us be careful not to be in opposition to the words of Christ. As we read through the Scriptures, particularly the New Testament, and see the lists of sins, things like malice, ill-intents, deceit, lying, hypocrisies, envies, jealousies, slander, immoralities, perverse thoughts and the like, we must examine our own hearts as Jesus called us to be perfect, even as our Heavenly Father is perfect. Through His disciples, Jesus called us to sanctification, to putting off the old self with its desires and putting on the new self which is being renewed to a true knowledge of Jesus Christ. To live in opposition to the words of Jesus is to reject those words and to hate Jesus and the Father. The world hates Jesus and those who follow Jesus because the words of Jesus expose these fleshly ways of living, ways that the world thinks they like, ways that the world does not want to see changed, ways that the world thinks causes them no eternal harm and so lashes out at those who reveal the danger of their thinking.

Then, in verse 24, we see a similar thought, but rather than appealing to simply believing His words, Jesus says in effect, "If you are wondering whether or not my words were true; if you needed some kind a validation regarding what I have said, just consider My works." Beloved, the works that Jesus did during His public ministry, while sometimes responded to by us with such a sense of familiarity and therefore often without enthusiasm, are astounding, mind-boggling wonders that ought to cause the heart of any true believer to cry out in praise and awe and ought to cause the unbeliever to repent as they come to see Jesus for who He is, God in the flesh, or to drive them to deeper sin as they reject the proof of the truth that Jesus spoke. Consider with me, be it ever so briefly, the proofs, the attesting miracles, the glorious divine works, that the Gospel of John employs to validate the truth that Jesus spoke.

In John 2, Jesus reveals Himself as the all-powerful Creator, turning ordinary water into wine, instantly creating and combining carbon molecules to that H<sub>2</sub>O. In John 4, Jesus heals the nobleman's son without even traveling to the son, demonstrating the Jesus' power distances. In John 5, Jesus heals the man who had been paralyzed for 38 years, demonstrating His power over time. In John 6, Jesus feeds the 5000 proving His divine ability to supply for man's needs.

# The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

*"...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end"(John 13:1.)*

In John 6, Jesus walks on water, demonstrating His power over nature and its elements. In John 9 Jesus heals the man born blind, proving His divine ability to change the course of man's condition, particularly those who believe in Him. And finally, in John 11, we see the work of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, proving Jesus power over death, something that He would again demonstrate at His resurrection.

When we consider these things in light of Jesus statement in verse 24, *If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin...* we again must see that Jesus is not saying there is no sin in those who had not seen and heard of such wonders, but rather that even upon seeing such miracles, those very works that proved Jesus was both from God and was God, things of the like which even Nicodemus testified in John 3:1, ***"for no one can do these signs [these attesting, divine-verifying miracles] that You do unless God is with Him,"*** that those who see and hear of such things are sinning all the more greatly when they refuse to trust Jesus for who He is in light of these miracles. Beloved, such a rejection is an insult – it is not taking Jesus either at His word or according to His actions. I remember once when Luke and Elizabeth were quite young. We were at a hotel and swimming in the pool. Elizabeth, the more risky one, ran up to the side of the pool and commanded, "Daddy, catch me and then proceeded to jump into my arms while in the pool." All the while Luke was swimming around, watching this. Elizabeth did this several times when Luke finally got out of the pool and came to the edge. Looking rather trepid, I said to him, "Luke, jump and I will catch you." He continued to ponder for some time and said, "But what if don't catch me?" (as if jumping into the pool would be some catastrophe). And I said to him, "Have you seen me all these times catch Elizabeth? I will catch you!" Luke continued to hesitate for a time when I asked him, "Don't you trust me? You're hurting my feelings by acting as though you shouldn't trust me?" Luke did eventually jump, but the point is that even after seen me at work, there was a hesitation to trust. To an even greater extent, this is like the world's reaction to Jesus. Even after seeing or hearing of the works that Jesus did that prove Him to be both God and Savior, they hesitate or refuse to trust Him.

And Jesus says, ***but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.*** He states that their rejection of His works results not only in their hating of Him, but also their hating of the Father and again we are reminded that for those of us who do trust Jesus, the world will also hate us then for such a trust, calling us foolish or ignorant when in fact the reverse is true.

We must be careful that we do not reject the words or works of Jesus. Unbelievers reject these to the eternal damnation of their souls. But sometimes believers can subtly reject the words and works of Jesus; the words by not obeying all that Jesus commanded and the works by not living in wonder of all that He has done for you and by not trusting fully in those works to transform all your life into a shining testimony of the power of Christ in you. This only weakens your faith and your testimony of Christ before others.

Ultimately, because Jesus said all the things that people needed to hear, because He communicated the truth of God in love and compassion, because He did before and for them those things necessary to make people right with God, all that the people did at the time of Christ to Jesus and throughout the centuries to the people of Jesus, they have done to the fulfillment of the Word of God as verse 25 reminds us that "They hated Me without a cause." There is truly no good reason why people would rejected the loving provision and call of God given by Jesus Christ to repent of their sins and to live forever in blissful glory by the work and power of Jesus. There is a bad reason however – sin. Sin will keep the heart hardened to that which is needful to

# The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

*"...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end"(John 13:1.)*

the soul. Sin will blind the eyes so that they will not see the love of Christ and sin will deafen the ears so that they will not hear of the love Christ. Rather than seeing in Jesus then freedom, all they see are fetters. Rather than seeing in Jesus true liberty to live most nobly and joyously as created, the world sees in Jesus a law that they believe binds them.

Beloved, as believers in Jesus Christ, let us not manifest such attitudes of the world in our lives. Our lives ought to be lived before God and before men in such a way as they recognized the liberty we have in Christ, the freedom we have in Christ. To be sure many, if not most will hate us for it, but some will believe and we will be blessed.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

---

**Copyright © 2008 Edward K. Godfrey.** This message is the sole property of the copyright holder and may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this message must contain the above copyright notice. This message may not be copied in part (except for small quotations used with citation of source), edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of the copyright holder. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Edward K. Godfrey, Pastor, Hope Community Bible Church, and 2300 South 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Rogers, AR 72758.