

## Jesus Prepared His Disciples for Persecution

John 15:18-16:4

**Introduction:** (Read John 15:18-16:4) John 13-16 takes place on the last night Jesus spends with His disciples before He surrenders to authorities to be offered up for the sins of the world and be crucified. Jesus spends this last night with His disciples, before His “departure” to the Father via the crucifixion, preparing them for life and ministry without Him physically present.

Up to this point in the discourse Jesus has been building their hope by highlighting the incredible, even incomprehensible and supernatural union that the disciples will have with Jesus and His Father by the Holy Spirit – the mutual indwelling which will bring all who believe in Jesus into the life and love of the Triune God... This deep and supernatural union with the Father and the Son by the Spirit is utterly transforming at the level of relationship (adoption as sons) and identity. This promises a profound presence that is even more intimate than experienced while He walked with them (14:15-23). The basis of His promises is a shared and relational love which brings with it hope that is substantial and sustaining (cf. 15:1-17).

In his commentary on John D.A. Carson sees 15:17 as transitional when he writes, “If the union of believers with Jesus constitutes a community of love, that community stands over against the world.” (“The Gospel According to John,” pg. 254) In these verses extending through the chapter 16 Jesus prepares His disciples for what will inevitably be the world’s reaction to His them as they grow into and carry on His ministry in His likeness. Jesus describes the hatred the world will have toward them in theological terms/categories, which makes what He says relevant in every time and place where the church exists in human history (cf. Carson).

We will see that Jesus’ desire is to make clear to His followers/disciples that they will experience the world’s hatred, as well as the source/reason for such hatred for two reasons – so that they will not be caught off guard when it happens and stumble over it AND so that in understanding its source they might be strengthened and sustained in that day.

***\*Jesus Told the Disciples “The World Hates You” – 15:18-20***

***\*\*The “world” hates Jesus because it hates His Father and it hates those who follow Jesus because it hates Jesus*** – It seems clear that in John’s Gospel the “world” is not referring to the physical universe or the globe on which we live, rather it is a general term to refer to the world in rebellion against God which is expressed through those who belong to the world. Carson defines John’s use of “world” as “the created moral order in active rebellion against God” (cf. 1:9-13; 3:16; **8:23-26**). In Ephesians 2:1-3 – though it is Paul writing – we see that the “world” expresses the heart of the enemy toward God through human passions/desires and within social structures and cultural value systems, morals and norms (cf. 8:34-47; cf. also 7:7; 14:17, 22, 27, 30; 16:8, 20, 33; 17:6, 9, 14).

**Note:** We can't isolate this passage from what Jesus said as recorded in 14:30-31. Jesus was going to meet Satan at the cross – whom He calls “the prince of this world” (ὁ τοῦ κόσμου ἄρχων – connotation of “ruler”). He was going to defeat him by taking on the sin of all humanity – “the world” – and destroying death and the curse (cf. John 3:16; 1 John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14-15; Galatians 3:10-13; Revelation 21:3-4; 22:3). If you and I had witnessed the events as they unfolded we would've seen all of the hatred of the enemy directed at Jesus through the hatred of human beings and human societal structures (Sanhedrin, Rome etc.). Though Christians of every age and in every place experience the hatred of the “world” make no mistake – Jesus is the epicenter of that hatred. **Ferguson** makes that point in “Lessons from the Upper Room” when He writes, “Because they are Christ's, they will be hated. But because they are his they will also be helped.” Jesus makes that point – when first He leads His disciples understand the coming persecution.

*\*\*Jesus ties the world's hatred for His disciples to its hatred of Him – 15:18-19 – Jesus uses two forms of what is called a “conditional clause” (“if...then” statements) which teach corollary elements of this truth.*

Conditional sentence #1 – Structurally this is a 1<sup>st</sup> class condition which assumes the protasis to be true for the sake of argument and can read “If the world hates you – and it does – you know that it hated me before (it hated you)” - (Εἰ ὁ κόσμος ὑμᾶς μισεῖ, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐμὲ πρῶτον ὑμῶν μεμίσηκεν). ***Christians are hated by the world because of our relationship with Jesus and we can know that greater our love for Him, the more intimate our relationship with Him, the more purely He is formed in us and the more our lives bear fruit to His glory the more intense the world's “hatred” and the more focused the enemy's opposition.***

Conditional sentence #2 – Structurally this is a 2<sup>nd</sup> class condition in which the protasis is assumed to be untrue for the sake of the argument and can read “If you were from the world – and you are not – the world would love its own” (εἰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἦτε, ὁ κόσμος ἂν τὸ ἴδιον ἐφίλει). ***The world loves its own and we are not “its own.” It is an issue of identity and belonging. However, Jesus makes it clear that – as Paul said – though we once were “its own” Jesus chose us and made us His – (cf. 15:19b; 8:23). Peter said it simply when He referred to us as “aliens and strangers” – (cf. 1 Peter 1:1, 17; 2:11; also Hebrews 11:13). We testify to Jesus and whence He came and His glory – the glory to which He returned and in which we share.***

Jesus finishes or sums it up by declaring “Because of this/this is the reason ***the world hates you!!***” It is your/our union with Jesus – the mutual indwelling of the Father and Son with the Christian by the Spirit – the very source of such an incredible hope (“Christ in you the hope of glory”...) – which attracts the world's hatred to the believer and the church.

*\*\*Jesus referred to John 13:16 to make the point that as we seek to be like Him – and we must – we cannot expect to be treated differently than He was – nor should we – 15:20*

**Note:** Jesus now uses two conditional sentences structured exactly the same way to make a very critical point. If we are to faithfully represent Jesus – as we abide in Him, in His love – we have no control over how “the world” to whom He has sent us, will respond to us and our ministry!!

**Notice how Jesus moves from a reference to “the world”- “it” – to the people who comprise “the world” – “they.”**

Conditional sentence #1 - εἰ ἐμὲ ἐδίωξαν, καὶ ὑμᾶς διώξουσιν – “If they persecuted me – and many of them have – they will persecute you.”

Conditional sentence #2 - εἰ τὸν λόγον μου ἐτήρησαν, καὶ τὸν ὑμέτερον τηρήσουσιν – “If they kept my word – and some of them have – they will keep yours.”

**Note:** Putting it in terms they will soon come to understand. Jesus is effectively saying, “You follow me – a crucified Savior. I came to be rejected, beaten, and crucified by some so that I can save some who will receive my offer of love and life by faith. Those in the world who rejected me will reject you. But there are those to whom I sent you who will receive me through your ministry.” (cf. Ferguson, 128)

In the next verses Jesus will take this point of identity and solidarity to the next and deepest level as He reminds His disciples how He understands/explains the world’s response to Him. He reaches to the very bedrock of the “world system” and its hatred for you and me.

***\*Jesus Took Them Step By Step to the Conclusion That When People Oppose or Hate the Disciples or the Church it is Because They Do Not Know the Father – 15:21-25 – Note:*** Jesus will show them that when people oppose or hate Him it is because they do not know the Father, indeed they hate the Father. Likewise if people oppose or hate the disciples it is because they do not know - they oppose or hate Jesus. Therefore if people hate or oppose the disciples it is because they do not know - they hate or oppose the Father.

***\*\*Jesus tells the disciples that “they” will do “all these things” to them because of His name – based in their new identity in Jesus – because they have not known the one who sent Him – the Father – 15:21*** This will accomplish two things – First, the disciples understand that their message and ministry is based in the unchanging truth of God – God is their message! We cannot, under any circumstances, compromise the message that is God Himself in an attempt to gain acceptance or favor with the world – which is fundamentally opposed to Him. In reconciliation the Father sent His Son to provide the atonement for the sin of the world but the world must come to Him – as He is – in repentance. Second, the disciples can now see the hatred and opposition of the world in contrast to the eternal power and glory of the Sovereign Creator. We must not stumble or shrink back in fear but move forward with boldness and faith carrying the message of love and grace and judgement.

***\*\*Jesus’ words – the things He taught – were the very words of His Father and the things He did were the very works of the Father – 15:22-24***

– The things He taught and the words He spoke were not His own words. They were the words of His Father. Jesus has taught this very thing throughout His ministry as seen in John’s gospel and nowhere more clearly than in **John 8:18-19, 28-29, 37-38, 42-47**; cf. also John 5 & 14:9-11 – etc. - Jesus’ works – including the miraculous displays of love and compassion – were the works of the Father – 15:24 – This is clear in any number of the sign miracles of Jesus which John recorded in the first half of this gospel – especially in **John 10:25-31, 37-39; also 14:10-11; 11:53; 12:9-11.**

Ferguson draws 3 principles from the things Jesus says here;

**The first principle** is the Fatherhood of God - Notice that Jesus is very personal – not “the Father” but “my Father.” This is what happens to you and me when we come to faith in Jesus – His Father becomes “my Father.” Think of the strength that comes from knowing that “my Father,” who has commissioned/sent me, is the Sovereign One – Creator and Sustainer of all that is. I am doing His work and speaking His words.

**The second principle** is the judgement of God – If Jesus hadn’t taught what He taught or hadn’t done the things He did “they would not be guilty of sin” (ἀμαρτίαν οὐκ εἶχουσιν – 15:22, 24). Jesus left them without excuse for their rejection or unbelief (πρόφασις – pretext, reason, valid excuse). We must understand that this stands true for us too. We must understand that the gospel we proclaim, the very lives we live – the proclamations of truth and the invitations to forgiveness of sin and eternal life - even the very acts of kindness and love which put on display the distinctive life of the Christian – they indict a world in unbelief and the enemy must silence them!! Hence;

**The third principle** is the expectation of persecution – Peter would write to the scattered and persecuted church – “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup> If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.” (1Peter 4:12-14 NIV) That is the reason for Jesus’ words in 15:25.

*\*\*The world’s persecution and crucifixion of Jesus - and by application its persecution of all who follow Him – did not and does not thwart the Sovereign plan of God – 15:25; Psalm 35:19; 69:4*

**\*Jesus Promises That He Will Send the Holy Spirit Who Will Empower Them for the Ministry to Which He has Appointed Them** – 15:26-27 – This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 4 (παράκλητος) *paraclete* passages in John 14-16 – 14:16-17, 26; 16:7. There are two things I would like to emphasize from these verses.

*\*\*It is clear from these παράκλητος passages that the Spirit passes the baton of ministry from Jesus to the Church – Believers – 15:26b-27; cf. 14:26; 16:7-11.*

*\*\*It seems that Jesus is profoundly uniting His disciples to His Father and Himself, in both relationship/identity/being and to His eternal mission, by the Spirit – 15:26b and 26c-27 – This hints at the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father (and perhaps the Son) now sent to the believer to unite them to the Triune God and to empower them for an “eternal” mission – the mission of the Trinity – Father, Son and Spirit – from before the foundations of the world (cf. Ephesians 1:3-14).*

**\*In Conclusion** – 16:1-4 – Perhaps we should consider the look on the disciples’ faces when Jesus finished “saying these things.” It must’ve fractured their Kingdom hopes...So Jesus does a couple of things in summary.

1. - 16:1 - He gives His reason for teaching them what He’s taught them. He doesn’t want them or you and me to stumble when the world responds to us as it did to Him. Knowing what is coming really helps to fortify us against its difficulties – the suffering it brings.

2. – 16:2-3 - He wants them to understand that this rejection is inevitable and may be incredibly severe, because those who persecute them/us do not know your Father as their Father and as a result they cannot know Jesus, whom you and I love – who is our very life. They do not see His glory – He who is the incarnation of the glory of God – they do not long for His glory as you and I do.

3. – 16:4 - He did not tell them before because He was with them and now He was going to leave them. They needed to understand that the cross was a gospel necessity and that they served a crucified (and risen victorious) Savior and they would bear His cross just as they would bear His life and glory (cf. Romans 8:16-17; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 1 Peter 3:13-18).

Applications: 1. This connects our mission – our proclamations of truth and the character of our witness to the Ancient of Days – the very heart/mind and character of the Triune God. 2. We have no control over whether people will receive our offerings of Christ-like love, kindness and grace or embrace the gospel truths of the glory of God in the face of Jesus – the wonderful life and hope of the gospel. It is entirely dependent upon where they stand with the Father and His Son which is a sovereign work of God.

Two Notes of Caution: 1. We must not confuse the offense that we needlessly cause by ungraciousness or poorly placed passions etc. – beware lest you attach a worldly offense to the message of Christ. 2. We must not court favor with the world/culture. To seek favor with the culture on the terms of the culture is to compromise the very person of the Living God.