

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

A Warning and a Promise

John 15:18-27

Intro: Ch15 has been filled with a wonderful amount of good news for the disciples. Jesus has spoken to them of their coming fruitfulness and of the benefits of abiding in Him. He's spoken of the divine love that exists between Himself and the Father and that this same love is expressed to the disciples and should also exist between them. He's spoken of obedience and the blessing of experiencing His joy and how all this will bring glory to the Father. He's also just talked about friendship and how He's chosen them as His friends and has commissioned each one of them specifically to go into the world as His emissaries to bear the kind of fruit that will last for all of eternity.

All these topics are true, good and wonderful. They're an encouragement of service for every believer, every follower of Jesus Christ. But, lest we think that being about our Father's business is all roses and clover; Jesus now gently brings them back to reality by giving a warning of how the world will receive their witness of Him. We are moving into a section of the Lord's final discourse that focuses on 2 important themes: the opposition of the world against the church and the ministry of God's Holy Spirit both to and through the church to bring salvation to this rebellious world.

18-20- Up to this point, Jesus has stressed the blessings that rightly come to those who left all to follow Him. He has done this to comfort the disciples who are understandably upset at hearing that their Master was laving them. Now, the emphasis has changed. Instead of privileges, Jesus speaks of persecution and the hostility of the world towards Himself and His followers. The word hate or hatred is repeated 7 times. Earlier, He spoke of "His own," now it's "the world." Before, He talked about friends; now He speaks of enemies. Previously, He declared His love to them and commanded that they love each other, now He warns them of the world's hatred that will soon be coming their way.

This passage may seem fairly mundane but it is of great importance, if for no other reason than so we can learn of the great gap in difference between those who are truly Christ's own and the world. If we will understand this

difference in its proper context, we'll focus a lot less on whether there is harm in this thing or that activity. We'll no longer try to determine how worldly we can be. Rather, we'll seek God's will in everything and work for God's glory.

Jesus begins by warning them of the world's hatred for them. It was not meant to imply that there was any doubt that the world would hate them; in fact, it's the exact opposite – the world will certainly hate them. But when that happens, and it will, the disciples will not be caught off guard. They'll know it's no new or unexpected thing that's happening to them. The world will hate them because it hated Jesus first. Because it hated Jesus, it's not the least bit strange that it would also hate His followers. Interestingly: the disciples are to be known by their love and the world by its hatred. The thrust of this passage is not just that the disciples will be hated; it also shows us why they will be hated.

1) They're not of the world (19). When John uses the term "world", he's not referring to the earth itself or even of the human race that populates it. He's referring to the world system. It's the world of men in rebellion against God and it includes all the people, plans, organizations, activities, philosophies, values, etc. that belong to society as a whole without God. These things originate in the hearts and minds of sinful man and promote what sinful man wants to enjoy and accomplish. Bible says the world, in this sense, doesn't know God (1 John 3:1) and rejected Jesus (John 1:10). The world hates Christians because they're not of it. The world hates them for being different.

This hatred of non-conformity isn't exclusive to Christians. The 1st man to sport an umbrella in London was routinely pelted with rocks and dirt. He was persecuted for being different. Aristides of Athens lived in that city's golden era and considered to be an outstanding person. He was even known as Aristides the Just. Yet he was banished from Athens. Why? People got tired of hearing him always called the Just. Socrates was known as a busybody because he was always challenging others to examine themselves and think deeply and for this they hated and killed him.

The world always suspects nonconformity. It likes a pattern; it likes to be able to label a person and to classify him and to put him in a pigeon-hole. Anyone who doesn't conform to the world's pattern will definitely run into trouble.

If this is true of any human difference, how much more true is it of the radical difference caused by the transformation of a person by the Spirit and power of Jesus Christ? Here's a difference that makes the unusual qualities of Hanway, Aristides, or Socrates pale by comparison. Christians have been with Jesus and are becoming like Him. They're not like the world, at least shouldn't be. They now have other experiences, loyalties, and goals. So the world hates them.

2) They're chosen out of the world. (19) When we trusted Christ, we moved into a new spiritual position: we are now in Christ and out of the world. Col 1:13 says, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." That is a glorious depiction of the change in citizenship that occurs when you trust Jesus as your Savior. Paul gives a more detailed description in 1 Cor 6:9-11. Paul is describing people who are both dominated and characterized by their sin – it's not just what they do, it's who they actually are. They are living under the merciless bondage of sin within the kingdom of darkness. But the key point Paul makes here is that the saint in the Corinthian church were saved out of the very same darkness – and such were some of you... What made the difference? They were washed, sanctified and justified in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Spirit. They were washed clean from sin by the blood of Christ and the mercy of God; set apart, away from the world and unto God and declared "just" before God's righteous court. God takes the kind of people described in vs9-10 and makes them into the people described in vs11! That's how great the work of God is in our lives!

That's marvelous but why does the world then hate us? 1 Peter 4:3-4 says we've spent enough time living like the world. Now we're called to live like Christians. When the world sees our godly living, they think it's crazy that we don't waste our lives like they do. Life lived after the flesh is a wasted life. We've been called out of our natural wasteful living into greater purpose. The fact that we refuse to participate in all the sin that goes on around us is a real source of conviction to those who do practice sin. They don't appreciate the conviction that comes from our righteous living so they speak evil of us. No matter how good or moral your life is, if you are like God, you'll be received with contempt and ingratitude. We no longer walk in darkness because Jesus has chosen and called us out of it.

3) The world hates Jesus (20). The world hates Christians because of their identification with Christ. This is the crux of the matter. The world hates Christians because it hates their Master. Hatred doesn't exist simply because of what Christians are in themselves; they're nothing. It doesn't exist because of what they've done; they're harmless (should be). Hatred exists because the world hates Jesus and because Christians are identified with Him because of His call.

Jesus is greater than we are so He must receive the praise and glory. But the world won't give Him praise or glory! The world has rejected Jesus because it hates Him and thus, it must hate us as well. If, for all His greatness and perfection, Jesus was unable to escape the hatred and persecution of the world, what possible hope is there for us with all our multiplied faults, limitations and imperfections?

Of course, this only pushes the question back 1 step. If we say that the world hates Christians because it hated Christ; we must then ask the valid question: "Why does the world hate Jesus?" Jesus goes on to explain this too.

21-25- The primary cause of the world's hatred for believers is it's ignorance of the Father. Having said that, we must also understand that this was a willful ignorance; it wasn't for lack of information or example as Jesus goes on to say.

The 1st reason the world hates Jesus is because of His words (22-23). Why'd they hate Jesus for His words? Before Jesus came and spoke the truth to them, the world could get by with relative goodness. They could have a little arrogance, but not too much; a little selfishness, but not too much; a little meanness, a little hypocrisy. Plus, they could be considered good because of their limitations. But, after Jesus came this was shown for what it really is: sin. People hated the exposure. Still today, Jesus and Gods Word reveal our true selves and we don't like the revelation. Their sin of rejecting God as He really is wouldn't have been imputed to them if they hadn't had the revelation of God that was clearly presented by Jesus. But they did, so now they have no excuse. There's no way to cover up their sin.

The 2nd reason: because of His works (24). It's not that people were with out sin before Jesus came. It's just that His works, like His words, brought their

sin to light. The works that Jesus did, not just the miracles but His whole life and ministry, were the works of God and thus, the accurate and clear revelation of God. The works and the revelation of God are brought to their proper climax and completion in the ministry of Jesus. The world hated Him because He did the works of God; and they, like the words of God, reveal our spiritual bankruptcy. Before we had Christ's works for comparison, our works looked pretty good. But next to His deeds, even the best of ours looks shabby. In the final analysis, the world's hatred for believers can be reduced to this. The world hates Christ's followers because it hates Christ, and the world hates Christ because it hates God the Father.

All this might seem to put a damper on becoming a disciple of Jesus. Discipleship is fine if it leads to sharing glory with Jesus Christ but hatred, persecution, a cross – who would want that? Wouldn't it be better and easier to simply walk a little closer to the world and its ways and escape the world's judgment? Not according to vs25 for there, God Himself expresses a judgment on the world's pointless hatred of Jesus and His followers, saying it's entirely without cause, groundless, unfair and without any justification. As such, it deserves to be blamed and judged.

Will God ignore this injustice against His Beloved Son and His people? Can He ignore it? Not forever. Eventually, He will move against those who've ignored or hated His Son. He'll judge them and He'll receive and honor those who've taken their place beside Jesus and faced the world's ridicule with Him in quiet faith and determination. The favor of the world isn't worthy to be compared to the favor Jesus gives to His own. The world's fellowship, for all its frivolity, can never compare to the fellowship opportunity we have with Jesus. We must always be careful not to sell ourselves too cheaply to the world, seeing we've been bought at such a high price with the precious blood of Jesus.

26-27- Can you imagine what it would be like for the CEO of your company to call you and ask you to be their co-worker? Imagine if the President called you and offered you a seat at his desk in the Oval Office! What an honor! But, how much more special is it to have the Creator of the universe call you His co-worker in the job of carrying His gospel of salvation into the world? The term is used explicitly in I Cor 6:1 but it is implied in our passage with the combined use of the phrases: He will testify (**26b**) and, you also will bear witness (**28a**). It's the combination of these 2 testimonies that God

uses to exalt Christ and draw people to Him. Yet, we must note that Jesus mentions the Spirit's witness first; only after does He mention our own. Our witness is necessary, but it's powerless without the presence and supernatural activity of God's Spirit. Only He can illuminate the lost mind and move the rebellious will of man to embrace Jesus as their Savior.

What is the testimony of the Spirit? There are 2 answers: 1) His work in directing the writing of the books of the Bible. 2) His work in bringing Biblical truths to reality in the experience of the individual Christian. First, the Spirit moved on and inspired the apostles to remember and then record the specific teachings of Jesus, or discern and divulge the necessary doctrines that flow from His teachings, and all of this was placed in one volume of work. Second, the Spirit continues to bear witness of Jesus by speaking through the Bible to carry home the truths of the Bible to the individual human heart and mind. He calls us to salvation by it then progressively sanctifies and transforms us by it.

How does the Holy Spirit speak to the individual heart? What exactly does He do? 1st) He gives comprehension. There's no understanding of spiritual things apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is taught, but people don't comprehend it. The gospel is proclaimed forcefully, but the unsaved think it's nonsense. What's wrong? Is it the Bible or the inability of the preacher? What's wrong is simply that the Holy Spirit hasn't yet granted understanding. Without the internal witness of the Spirit, the lost cannot comprehend anything about the gospel.

2nd) He brings conviction. It's simply not enough to have a comprehension of spiritual things. Comprehension is necessary. But if we have a proper comprehension, this will also involve a clear understanding of our own sin and in order to have that, we must be convicted of our sin. America will never have a great revival until there's a deep and disturbing recognition and confession of both personal and national sin. It's the Spirit's work to bring such conviction.

3rd) He brings commitment to Jesus. Having comprehended the gospel and been convicted of sin to the point of repentance, the one the Spirit bears His witness to must then commit themselves to Christ as Lord and Savior.

Is He at work in your heart? Do you know that Jesus Christ is indeed the

Son of God, as He claimed to be, and do you understand that He died in your place, the just for the unjust, that He might save you from your sin? Are you convicted of sin to the point that you're sorry for it and willing to turn from it? Have you reached the point of committing yourself to Jesus? If you have, you must do so today.

The believer also has a witness to give and it too has 3 parts. 1) There must be an assurance that the gospel is true. There can be no true witness on your part without that, just as there can be no true conversion without it. 2) There must be a personal experience of that truth. It's not enough to just be intellectually convinced of something. It's also necessary to have entered into it personally (27). None of us can reenact the experience of the apostles. But, we can still experience Jesus as they did. We spend time with Him in our personal Bible study and prayer. And we must attempt to put into practice and emulate what we learn of Him during those sessions. 3) There must be a verbalized testimony. You must speak of these things to others. It's not enough to just be convinced of the truth of the Christian faith and have experienced it yourself. You must seek to tell others what you have known and experienced.

At the Lord's return or until we die, we must live in this hostile world and face constant opposition to our faith. How can we do it? What's the secret of victory? It's the presence and power of the Holy Spirit of God in our lives. If we didn't have the Spirit within us, we wouldn't be able to serve the Lord at all in this present evil world. But, because of the special ministries of the Holy Spirit to believers, Christians can not only stand in this world but they can also withstand in the face of the world's hatred and evil intentions towards us. With out Jesus we can do nothing, but with Him, we can do all things – especially those things that He has commanded us to do.

Times of persecution have always been times of proclamation and witness for the church. We must always be ready to give an answer for our faith when the unsaved world attacks us. The Spirit witnesses to us so that we can be a witness to the world. Apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, we cannot give a clear witness for Jesus Christ. 😊