

Reading: John 15v17-27

Theme: Warnings and encouragements.

This morning we are going to look at the 2nd part of this chapter (v17-27) – although v17 could be in either section – as it could round off the first part or be a reminder and contrast as we start 2nd part. As believers we have many privileges - loved by God the Father and God the Son. We are to be aware to love and care for other believers, as the union of believers with the Lord Jesus forms a community of love, care and concern. It is a family and our Lord expects us to love as He loves. Yet this community of believers is in a hostile world and love and care are to be shown from within the caring community of the Church, because we will not receive it from the world around us.

We are not to expect the world around us to like us as a believer! Jesus gives us reasons why the world will hate us - our beliefs will affect, must affect our lifestyle, and the world will react in hatred against such for it resents God and the things of God. Realise at the outset that living the Christian life demands something from us, as it costs us to follow Jesus and it could even cost us our livelihoods or lives if the world's hatred is allowed to go unchecked.

If anyone is considering Christian things, considering becoming a Christian, then be warned, that society, even close friends and family will mock and oppose you. Thankfully Jesus doesn't leave us unprepared, but, as He warned and encouraged His first disciples, He also does for us. I want us to note 3 main things in v18-27 concerning all disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ:

1. What we do not want to hear.

Jesus warns His first disciples and all who follow Him, they will be hated by the world. This statement in v18 is a certainty, not an uncertainty - "*should the world somehow, in some way come to hate you*". It is a statement of fact and has the force of "*Since...*" The term "*world*" here refers to mankind in its rebellion, hatred and

resentment against God. Ever since Adam and Eve fell into sin, mankind has a bias against God, an inclination to, a magnetic attraction to evil. Mankind's moral qualities, his mind, every faculty has been marred, affected and polluted by sin. Mankind is not neutral, but is against God - whether they openly show it or not. Since mankind's fall, there has been a hatred by the ungodly against the godly e.g. Cain and Abel.

Here Jesus forewarns and forearm His disciples - that we are not to have a rose-tinted view of society, of the world around us. Even with all its wonders, glories and joys, there is this underlying animosity against Jesus and His followers by the world system. The reasons given in this section are important for us to keep in mind, for they are still true in our age. Fundamental to it is a hatred against God and all that are His people.

We are not to be misled into thinking that all the world needs is to be made aware of God's love, of God's existence. The world doesn't want to be reminded of God's existence; nor is it a matter of education. The world is blinded by the devil and all are his slaves naturally. Their understandings and minds are darkened, they are dead in trespasses and sins. The world is against God and nothing we can do on our own can change that.

The world will mock, despise and hate the Christian and the Christian message. Many here have known that from their own experience. If you are not a Christian this morning that is how you, deep down, are. It may shock you, annoy you; you may protest that is not the case, for you are sympathetic, seeking and questioning about God. Yet if you're not a Christian, then in your heart of hearts, you are still against God and the Saviour He has provided. You need to ask God to have mercy on you and bring you to trust in the Saviour Jesus, to give you a new heart, eyes to see, a mind to understand.

Deep down the whole world hates God, but it will take its hatred out on God's children. Jesus says we are not of the world (v19). We are aliens - not from outer space, but are children of God in a world where the devil has control. We have been chosen out from the world, we too were once rebels, enemies of God and that is why the world hates us - we are different, we are called by God to be His people. We have what the world's ruler (the devil) despises - favour with God, a relationship with God. We also have to say that the world hates each other deep down - despises, curses, seeks to get an advantage over each other, but it has a significant hatred against God's children.

We have to beware, as John Calvin noted, that we do not regard our being hated or persecuted as a hallmark of our being true believers. Some people are angular characters or unwisely stir up resentment. What Christ is speaking of here is the hatred against us for being a Christian and living godly, peaceable lives in all sincerity for His namesake (v21). Matthew Henry speaks of our need for wisdom so as not to provoke **unnecessary** hatred and he basically says we are not to do anything to make ourselves hated or despised, for if we do, we deserve all we get!

The Lord Jesus reminds believers of the fact that the world hated and persecuted Him and we, His servants, are not to expect to fare any better (v20). Society did not receive His teaching or message in His day and society, the world throughout history or now will not receive our teaching - as we still teach His word. The world has not changed in its animosity to God and His ways. In the apostles' time this was demonstrated and came primarily through the Jews and their leaders - this was a specific outworking of the general principle of mankind in opposition to God - even from those who are very religious. The gospel came 1st to the Jews and theirs was the first public reaction against the gospel and our Saviour. Yet such opposition and public reaction against our Saviour goes on in all societies, all races and cultures.

Such reactions show that they do not know God. There are those who accept there is a God and yet will reject the Lord Jesus - showing that they do not accept the true and the living God and the Saviour He has provided. If they have no time for Jesus, or hate Him, then they reject the Father - the true God (as v21 & 23 tell us). Many say there is a God, but dismiss Christ and Christianity. They mock, slander and reject God. The Lord Jesus enlarges upon this in His teaching in v20b, 22 & 24.

Jesus exposed the world, especially the Jewish nation, but all ever since. He taught God's word perfectly as He opened up and applied God's word. He did miracles among them which demonstrated, revealed, underlined that He was God in human flesh, in a real body and no one else could do as He did - He could just speak and have power over creation, death, disease and demons. They saw the miracles of the Son of God in a real human body, but many did not believe. Amazingly, there are still those who say that all people need to do is to see miracles and the spectacular and they will believe in Jesus. Yet Jesus says "Not so" - unless these ones claim to know better than Jesus!

What Jesus did in His miracles was to leave them no excuse or pretence for their sin of unbelief. Unbelief is the grossest of sins. If you know the way of salvation and do not believe, then you have no excuse, nothing to shelter behind. You can only expect judgement, an even worse judgement than those who are in their sin and yet have never heard of the Saviour.

The miracles Jesus did before the Jewish people left them without excuse, but as their lives, failures and sins were exposed, they hated both Him and His Father who sent Him – fulfilling what was written in OT (Psalm 35:19 & 69:4 - Psalm 35 speaks of those who forgot past favours; and Psalm 69 of those who cannot bear to see the burning zeal someone has for the cause of the Lord). Christ was

rejected by those He had done good to and for, as He had a love and zeal for the cause of the Lord.

If we are a Christian this morning, then be ready, prepared for opposition and resentment. We are not to be surprised by such, even to be ready for it to come from family and friends. The apostles were warned of this and given reasons for it - these reasons still stand in our day from a world that is still in the control of the devil and he will hate us too. Knowing the world will still hate us, why then will we court its favour as if it will not; or mimic it as if it is good. Yet the Lord Jesus does not only warn them and us, but thankfully gives encouragement to the disciples and this also includes us as we see:

2. What we need to hear. (v26)

The Lord Jesus is so gentle and wise - He has just told them and us of the opposition, persecution and hatred we would face, but here He goes on to give comfort and encouragement – we would not face this hostile world alone. They would not be abandoned - neither are we in our days. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Counsellor would come and testify to us all.

Our Lord has given to all His people the Holy Spirit. He, the Comforter, has been sent by the Son from the Father. The Holy Spirit comes out from, proceeds from the Father and the Holy Spirit has a permanent, divine and eternal relationship with the Father - He proceeds from, comes out from the Father - in other words the Holy Spirit is fully God. Jesus is speaking here of the “economic” offices of the triune Godhead - all 3 are fully and totally God and yet in the plan of salvation each have their own roles and offices to fulfil; the Son sends the Spirit, as does the Father, but the Son is the Mediator to ask the Father to send the Spirit. We are to remember that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit **are for us now at this moment** and the work of the Spirit is to comfort, encourage, get alongside us, guide us and testify to us.

What glorious titles are used here in v26 - “the Spirit of truth”, “Comforter or Counsellor”. The Holy Spirit will only lead and guide into truth and in truth. He never denies what He formerly led God’s people to know, for He carried along the holy penmen of Scripture, He was there inspiring them and He has generated the word of God as true and reliable. He will not go against what He has already inspired. Any teaching, any supposed new revelation that goes against Scripture is not of God the Holy Spirit, but are lies, error and comes from the father of lies - the devil. We are not to be gullible, but test the spirits to see if they are of God (1 John 4v1).

To the apostles, the Holy Spirit would bring many things to remembrance and to mind, for them to know and understand of Christ and the way of salvation. Many times, we are told of the things they understood afterwards, especially after Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came in a far richer, fuller way and bore great witness to these eyewitnesses of Christ.

In our days, the same Holy Spirit bears witness to the facts we read in God’s word - which is all true and accurate historically and doctrinally. It is still the same Holy Spirit, who when we face hard and difficult times, even persecution, He comes and testifies to us that we are God’s children and He brings promises to mind and reminds us of the word of God to encourage and comfort us. We need to present the gospel in His power and authority, so that even openly hostile enemies of the Lord, can be changed and be made followers of the Lord Jesus.

We are to remember we are not on our own. We still have the Holy Spirit in us and for us. We are not to be despondent, or give up, but to draw our help actively from Him as we seek our God in His Word and prayer. Yes, we are still in a hostile world, but we have the Holy Spirit testifying to us and all this with the purpose that we are to know:

3. What we need to do. (v27)

The apostles were to testify of the Lord Jesus. They had been with Him from the beginning of His public work and ministry and said in Acts “*we were eyewitnesses of*” “*we saw*”, “*we heard*”. Even Paul could say that he saw the Lord, but that he also learned from those who were with Jesus from the beginning. The apostle John opens his 1st letter with amazing words of personal testimony (1 John 1:1-4) - “*That which was from the beginning, which we have **heard**, which we have **seen** with our eyes, which we have **looked at** and our hands have **touched**—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have **seen** it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has **appeared** to us. We proclaim to you what we have **seen and heard**, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.*” Our faith is based on historical facts and reality, not some fairy-tale made up after a few beers or eating magic mushrooms, but based on real, tangible, historical facts and events. If we were there we could have videoed, photographed, touched, even taken DNA swabs from Jesus’ real body. Facts were written down and preserved for us, so we can also testify to the same true events and facts.

We also are to bear witness, testify of these things. We are given our part to play. The Holy Spirit’s working does not make null and void our working and responsibility. We are to be witnesses for our Saviour, for this is our duty, our responsibility - our privilege and honour too.

We are to bear witness to a world that hates the message of our Saviour, but as we do so, the Holy Spirit will be at work and use our foolish message to bring people to know and serve Jesus - He will take our testimony, own it as His and true. We become witnesses with Him of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a great thrill and honour to see someone come to trust the Lord, an even greater thrill if it is a member of our family or a friend, but whoever it is, what a thrill and

privilege to have been the one who points them to Christ, - but the glory must always go to God.

These weak men, these disciples who would soon desert Jesus, were told they would be His witnesses, be empowered by the Holy Spirit and do so even as they faced opposition, persecution from a world that hated them. In fact, the book of Acts records how they were then bold for Christ, wanting power to witness more for Him. (Acts 4:23-31 - v31 'spoke the word of God boldly.')

In our days, when any new idea rules the roost, as many fears come on us, we are to proclaim the message that there is a God, Who has provided the only way of salvation through His Son the Lord Jesus. As we proclaim this message, it is to be done with confidence in God working through us by the power given by the Holy Spirit and not in reliance upon clever slick words or methods, yet we use the best words and means we can.

We are to remember we are on the victory side. Yes, opposition may come, we may be hurt, distressed, but God is in control and He carries on knowing and caring for us and has given us His help. I pray we, as individuals would know the Lord Jesus as our own Saviour, and then know His help and comfort in all that comes our way, so that we as individuals, and as a church, would testify of Him and His glorious salvation which we know and delight in.