

The Hatred of the World

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[0 : 0 0] onwards, and I want us to focus on today. Last week we were looking at the friendship of Jesus and the love that we have to have one for another. We read at verse 18, If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. As we saw last week and as we have been seeing over the weeks, Lord Jesus is putting great emphasis upon the importance of love. The Christian faith is a faith of relationship. We were seeing last week of how the Christian faith is so different from the other religions and faiths of this world in the way that God comes close to us. God wants to become one with us. God dwells with us, which is really almost separates from all the other faiths and religions. It's one of a close, intimate relationship.

So love is at the very center of the Christian faith, abiding in the Lord and loving one another. And that really was the great emphasis that we were looking at last week. And if we were to compare and to contrast last week's section with this week's section, indeed if we were to put them together, I think we could put it as a title, Love and Hate. Because last week was all about love, the love that God has for his people, the love that his people have for him, and the love that we have one for another. This week we see that the whole emphasis has changed. Because unfortunately for the Christian, it is not simply a world of love. Because there is also, sadly, a world of hate. Because that's what Jesus tells us. Now, the emphasis that Jesus puts upon us loving one another is one that he emphasizes over and over and over again. And I think the reason why we find Jesus really emphasizing, and not only the Lord Jesus, but for instance, when you go down into John's letters, the huge emphasis upon loving one another is because there is always a potential within us not to do that. I think when something is emphasized over and over and over and over again in Scripture, it is because we have the real potential not to do. And as we know, that is probably the great area where the devil has caused most havoc in the Christian church, is trying to separate and to divide and to break up. And he knows when there is division and break up, that very often what is base, our own human antagonism, our own human nature rises up. And so often resentments and bitternesses and these sort of things rise up. And then there's squabbles and all these. The devil is rubbing his hands because he is achieving the very thing. This is dishonoring to the Lord. It is taking the glory away from the name of the Lord. And he sees that his people are not enjoying the fullness of the blessing that God has for them.

And so I believe that's part of the reason why the history of the church right down throughout the generations. There's been so much division, so much breakup. And unfortunately, following on from that, there are often, as we say, squabbles and things like that. That's why the Bible is saying, look, you've got to love one another. You have to. In fact, John is really adamant. When you, if we were reading, if we were studying John's letter, the great John who has written, given the gospel, when he reaches the letter that he writes, to hate a brother is really equal, not a Christian. It's as extreme as that. That's what John is saying. For a brother, for, in other words, for a Christian to say, I hate my brother. He says, sorry, you cannot be a Christian. If you say that you love God whom you have not seen, you cannot then hate your brother. That is a total inconsistency. So it's a very, very strong statement that John makes. And that's why we need grace. And if we find within our own heart resentments and bitterness and any of these things arising, which it's all too easy to have these things, we need to pray. We really need God's grace and God's help. We've all got to remember the Lord says, my grace is sufficient for you. And so it is when we face these things. And it's all very well saying when everything is rosy in the garden and you feel this great sense of love for everybody and say, ah,

I find it so easy as a Christian to love. But when the garden isn't rosy and when there's difficulties and division, that's when it's often hardest to love. That's when the reality of Christian love comes into the fore. When we love, when it's hard to love. Because this is a reflection of God's love to us in Jesus Christ. God didn't love us. Jesus didn't love us when we were all lovely.

[6 : 01] He loved us when we were enemies, when we hated him, when we were defiant against him, when we were living in sin against him, when we didn't want to know him, when we were like Adam running away.

That's when he loved us. And he loved us in order to bring us to himself. And so this is what, this is, this is Christian love. It's where we're to love when it's ugly, when it's sore, when it's difficult to love. And that's why we need the grace. And so the Lord is really emphasizing the importance of this. And so Jesus then tells us that while it is so important that we love one another, we find that on the other hand, in the world, it's going to be difficult. Because he says the world is going to hate you. Now, there are different times within the history of the church when the world and the church have often had a different form or different kinds of relationships. For instance, maybe some of you have been in revival situation. If there is a powerful revival within a district or within a community, even those who aren't being converted, the influence of God's Spirit touches, it affects, it has a restraining influence upon the whole community. So that even those who do not come to faith, that their attitude is different during the period of revival. That, of course, changes when that powerful movement passes on. But there are, as we know in this world today, there are areas of this world where the world's hatred towards the Christian is at its very height. And there are fearful atrocities being carried out right now throughout this world in different places against the Christian. Because there is an absolute and utter hatred towards the cause of Christ. But that's nothing new, although it is awful. Because Jesus tells us that very thing at the beginning of chapter 16. He says, you know, there's going to come, there's going to come, there's going to come, there's going to come, there's going to come when whoever kills you will think he is offering a service to God. And when Jesus made that prophecy, very shortly after, that's exactly what was to happen. Stephen was executed. James, who was in the company of Jesus when he said that, was executed. And the Jews who executed thought they were doing God a favor.

Saul of Tarsus was involved in the execution of Stephen. They laid the clothes, those who were carrying out the execution, they took off their outer garments in order to throw the stones better. And it was Saul who was the one who was looking after. And they all thought that they were doing God a favor. They thought the execution of Stephen was something that God would really be pleased of, that God would be proud of them for what they were doing. That's how distorted, that's how evil, how corrupt sin is. But Jesus tells us, that's the world. That is, that the world really, really hates me.

[9 : 26] Now, of course, I suppose we have to ask the question, what is the world? Well, again, scripture will show the world in different ways. Sometimes when we read the world, it speaks very simply of planet earth, this world that God made. Other times when scripture speaks of the world, it speaks of the world with regard to the people of the world. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. There are other times when the Bible speaks of the world, and it speaks of the world with regard to everything really that is opposed to God. The way that society lives in a godless way, where all the aims and the objectives and the standards and the philosophies are without God. Where there is no focus upon God or looking to God, it is selfish, it is not in any way seeking the glory of God, but the glory of the human race, and it is influenced by the powers of darkness.

That is another way that we look in the world. And I believe that that is what has been spoken of here, that this is the world. Now, you and I live in this world.

We're told in scripture, we're not to be hermits, we're not to shut ourselves away, we're to live in the world, but we're not to be off the world. In other words, as we live out our days in this world, it is important that we retain the Christian objectives and the Christian faith as we live out each day. And that's where it's going to become difficult.

Because as we seek to live as salt and light, and give hope to people, it is often in these situations that we come into conflict one with another. Now, I suppose we have to ask ourselves, how is it that the world will hate us? Well, one thing I'll say before we come to look at that, I believe that Jesus, and everything Jesus says, there's an order to it. Jesus has spent quite a while focusing, first of all, on abiding in God, and secondly, in loving one another. And then, after dealing with the abiding in

God and loving one another, he then focuses upon the hostility of the world. Because what Jesus is doing here is saying, you haven't a hope of dealing with the hostility of the world, if first of all, you're not abiding in me, and secondly, you're not loving one another. We need all that we can get from God and from one another as we deal with the hostility of this world. So that's why it's very important to follow the order that Jesus has given to us here.

So why does the world hate you? Well, Jesus tells us, because you are not part of the world. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. I think it's true that we're drawn to those who we can identify with. That's the way that natural groupings work in this world. When there are similarities, when there are common causes, when there are things that we identify with in other people, then we're drawn together in that particular way. Every so often, there's a crisscross to these things, but by and large, that's the way it operates. And that's why straight away, the Christian doesn't fit in comfortably into the world. Because the world cannot identify with the Christian.

[13 : 38] And that, because the Christian makes the world feel uncomfortable. Jesus tells us this very thing. That's what Jesus said. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin. But now they have no excuse for sin. So that, that's what, if I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. It's Jesus's presence in all his purity and his light that has been a rebuke into people's hearts. People feel uncomfortable sometimes in the light. The light exposes. It's just as we were saying to the young folk, it's where you're, where you're brought right in face to face and you see sin for, sin for what it is. And so a lot of people, they don't want that. And that is why sometimes the Christian is a rebuke to, to, to the world.

Because Jesus said, men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. And so there is this, the, the, the, the Christian often impacts and affects people in a way that they, that they, they just don't like it. And so it's a strange thing in many ways.

Because here is the world and here's the Christian. They live side by side, they work side by side, but there's a big difference because they have different objectives. They have different goals.

They have different aims. They're walking together, down, walking along together, walking towards different destinies. Of course, we pray that the Lord will intervene and will work within people so that they will be taken off the broad road onto the narrow road so that they'll all be walking in the same direction.

But as things stand with the world and with the Christian, it is as at this particular moment in time, walking towards different destinies, different directions, so that everything really is different.

[15 : 53] And that's what, that's part of what, what brings this conflict that Jesus is talking about.

Because the, the, the world's outlook, Paul, in his own usual brutal way, tells us in Philippians, those, it tells us that those who are without God, their end is destruction, their God is their belly, and they glory in their shame with mindset and earthly things. Whereas, he says, the Christian, he says, our citizenship is in heaven. From it, we await our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body. That is so different. See, the Christian, yes, we're in the world.

We enjoy much of what this world has, because we must, we're not looking here and saying, well, Christian's got to be against life. We're not to enjoy anything. It doesn't say that.

We're, in fact, we're told that every good and perfect gift is from above. All the good things that we have in life, all the things that we are able to enjoy, all these blessings, and that's what they are, have been given to us by God. All our ability to work, our homes, our families, many of the great pleasures that are given to us in life, God has given them to us. He has given us the senses, our taste, our sense of feeling, our hearing, our vision, our smell, all these things, to enjoy these things. And so we're not to become anti-life, and there were different groups of people throughout life that they've operated like that. They've tried to withdraw and tried to make sure they didn't enjoy anything. That's a denial of God's goodness to us. We're not to be like that.

And we're to engage in the world that we live in. And we are to engage with those who aren't Christians. Because that's really what this whole section is about. It is about witnessing.

And in fact, Peter draws this very clearly to us. He said, look, every Christian who suffers from the world doesn't necessarily suffer because they're a Christian. Often the Christian will suffer because of the defects in their own personality. That's basically what Peter's saying.

[18 : 40] That there are many people who get a hard time from the world, and it's got nothing to do with the fact that they're a Christian. It's just maybe that they're disagreeable or awkward, which they shouldn't be if they're Christians. So Peter's very strong on this, and he says, let nobody suffer

because they're a busybody or a nosy parker and involving themselves and other things. If you suffer for that, well, that's your own fault. So we've got to draw a very clear line. Not all persecution or difficulty that a Christian experiences in this world is brought about simply because they love the Lord Jesus. As we say, it could be because the person is just a very awkward character, which again shouldn't be in a Christian. Because these are areas that a Christian. But Peter says, if you suffer, if you suffer as a Christian, then simply because you're a Christian and because the world hates you, then you are entering into something of the fellowship of Jesus. Remember the Apostle Paul? I used to often, in my early time as a

Christian, I would say, I don't understand. Paul prayed. And I would always like the first part of his prayer, but the second part, I said, I don't know if I can pray this. And he would say, Lord, that I might know you, and the power of your resurrection. And I would say, yeah, I'll go with that, Paul. And then he says, and the fellowship of your sufferings, that I might know the fellowship of your sufferings.

I just say to myself, oh, I don't know if I can pray that. What does that mean? But you see, when we do that, it is very obvious that we enter in to an area and a dimension of the love of Christ, where simply because of our love and our adherence to him and for him, if we have to suffer in this world, the Lord draws particularly close to us. Now, of course, the suffering, when we think of persecution, I think we often think of maybe being put in prison or tortured, and that happens all over the world. But it's not the only form of persecution.

There are lots of very subtle forms of persecution. There are lots of different degrees to persecution. Simply because a person is a Christian, there is something niggling, something happening in their life.

Even that is persecution. But through that, there is an identification with Jesus. And there's also a greater understanding of Jesus. Because if you are called to suffer as a Christian, then you are drawn in, to a certain extent, into something of what he had, not ever to the same extent. But he came as somebody who had to suffer in this world. And you are brought into something of the fellowship of his sufferings. So you understand even a little more of what it was that he had to do for us. So Jesus tells us, look, don't be surprised if the world hates you, because it hated me. The world hates me. And that's where, you know, this is where we just see how absurd it all is. Because if there was one person that the world should love, it's Jesus. He never did anything but good. He healed, he loved, he tended to people in all their illness and all their sickness.

[22 : 36] And what did the world do to Jesus? Well, if you didn't know anything about the history of Jesus, and the only thing that you were brought in to see was his execution, and you were, you're, all of a sudden, your mind was focused upon this person hanging from a cross, who had been so beaten up beforehand, who had been flogged, who was so abused that he was, his features were unrecognizable.

You would say to yourself, that must have been an awful man. It's a sort of death, you would think, that people would unleash upon the likes of Pol Pot, or somebody who had, had, had ordered the deaths of, or so many, or the likes of Stalin, or Hitler, or somebody who had been a fearful tyrant. But no, this is Jesus, the Son of God, the one who came with love, and by love, and brought love. This is what the world does. So Jesus is really saying to us, look, see what they do to me? Do not be surprised if they're going to do the same to you. And that's why it's so difficult for us to understand. But it comes down to what we were saying, is the difference, the difference in attitude, the difference in direction, the difference in motives between the Christian and the non-Christian. But although there is all this, as we say, all this hatred, that is here, Jesus, it's not all, although this may seem quite a difficult passage in some ways, Jesus shows us that we are not on our own.

[24 : 31] Because he shows us that the Holy Spirit, the helper, is coming. And because we have the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is going to enable us to witness in the face of suffering. And that's the amazing thing.

And the Holy Spirit will give us the words to say. Now, if you're like me, that is often the great problem I have is, what do I say to people? And I'm sure we've often been in situations where we've entered into discussion or a dialogue or something happens and people, an opportunity is given. And sometimes, so often, I go away and I say, oh, I missed a golden opportunity there. The Lord opened that door for me and I missed it. And that's why we need to be saying, Lord, give me the words to say, because that's exactly what Jesus has promised us. Back in Matthew, Jesus said, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to

you in that hour. Jesus was here talking about the times of persecution. And if we go to the Acts of the Apostles, when the early church were being persecuted, we find that the religious leaders were kind of, they were spelled, but they were, they couldn't get over how the apostles would defend themselves. And they were saying, remember, in one occasion it says, these are unlearned men. How come? They're speaking in the way they are.

The Jewish religious leaders couldn't get their head round. The brilliance of the arguments, the authority with which they spoke, the convincing arguments that they had. They said, how come? Because the Holy Spirit was giving them the words at the very time. And he'll do the same for you. And you ask the Holy Spirit, ask the Lord, Lord, please. And if you're going through, I don't know, a difficult situation, whether, I don't know what it might be, but you know what it might be.

Ask the Lord to help you. That's a prayer he will not turn away from. Lord, give me the words. Give me the wisdom. It's the easiest thing in the world, if you're having a hard time, is to ask the Lord, Lord, please stop this hard time in my life. Please take away this.

[27 : 04] That's the easy way. And that's what we would expect. But the Lord's saying, no, he said, actually, I'm going to make you a better Christian through this. And I'm also going to enable you to witness for me.

Because my great aim is not just to take that person away, but to deal with that person. And I would probably deal with that person through you. And it's amazing how often, over time, the influence of the Christian has won through. And I'm sure there's many a person in this church today, and you look back and you'll say, you know, there was that day I was quite antagonistic towards the faith. I'm sure there are Christians in here today who, it's part of the cross you have to bear, you'll remember giving Christians a hard time because you're a Christian. But you've changed. The Lord has changed your heart. And you're vexed because of that. But you understand where it is.

So that's why the Lord is saying, you know, we've got to be witnesses. And that early church, they suffered persecution, but the gospel flourished because God's people went out testifying, witnessing, wherever they went. But they never went on their own. Always with the help, with the aid, with the wisdom, with the guidance, with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit. And he is there for you today so that you will know his help, his blessing. And if today you have to say to yourself, you know, I'm hearing all this, but it's kind of passing me by. I would say to your Lord, Lord, that you say to the Lord, Lord, I need to get my eyes opened here. Because let me tell you, I know who you are because there was many a day I sat in church and things passed me by and I was just, because my eyes weren't open to see. We need to have our eyes opened in order to see, our ears opened to hear. Lord, speak it. Lord, help me to hear you. Help me to see, to understand.

Help me, Lord, to believe. You pray that, the Lord will answer your prayer. Let us pray. Oh, Lord, our God, we give thanks that although sometimes we come to your word and we realize that being a Christian can be demanding and challenging, and that we will face obstacles and sometimes persecution, help us, Lord, also to remember that through the witness you are drawing many people in to yourself. When we look at Corinth, it would be very easy for the Apostle Paul just to have turned round and said, impossible. But the Lord said, I have many souls yet in this city. And so it came to pass.

[29 : 55] And we believe it's the same today. Believe the Lord is saying that of Stornow, many souls in this place. And so we pray that we might seek to be effective witnesses, not bullying witnesses, but gentle, warm, winning. We pray to bless us and we pray for all those who are unwell, those who are ill, those who are in hospital, those who are undergoing treatment.

Lord, we pray that you as a great physician will work in their lives, doing them good. Bless us and we pray, guide us in everything. We pray to bless a cup of tea in the hall after, and that your hand will be upon us for good in everything. Wash away from us all our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it.

Amen. Our concluding psalm is Psalm 138 from the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 138 from the Scottish Psalter, which is on page 431. And the tune is St. Columba. Psalm 138, page 431.

I'm going to sing from verse 5. Yea, in the righteous ways of God, with gladness they shall sing. For great's the glory of the Lord, who doth forever reign. Though God be high, yet he respects all those that lowly be, whereas the proud and lofty ones afar off knoweth he. Though I in midst of trouble walk, I life from thee shall have. Against my foe's wrath thou stretch thine hand, thy right hand shall me save. Surely that which concerneth me the Lord will perfect make.

Lord, still thy mercy lasts. Do not thine own hands what's forsake. These verses 5 to the end. Yea, in the righteous ways of God. In the righteous ways of God, with gladness they shall sing. For

great's the glory of the Lord, who doth forever reign.

O God be high, yet he respects all those that lowly be.

[32 : 38] For great's the glory of the Lord, who doth forever reign.

Gives my foe's wrath, thou stretch thine hand, thy right hand shall me save.

Surely that which concerneth me, the Lord will perfect make.

Lord, still thy mercy lasts. Do not thy own hands work for sale.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen. Thank you.

[34 : 09] Amen. In the name of I? God. Let's take care. You get good to see. I will try. Yet, my strength is on God. Come down.

I will cry. The Father, may the Lord, may the Lord be with me again. This is my love. I will try.