

Christianity in Exile: Sustaining Faith in a Hostile World

Remember that the World Hated Jesus First

John 15:18-25

Intro: An overused word in our language is *hate*. We use it so loosely and frequently; it has lost its depth of meaning. We hate traffic, we hate specific types of music, we hate junk mail, spam and every rational person I know hates cats. But, the word hate carries a more significant meaning.

Hate: intense hostility & aversion usually deriving from fear, anger, or a sense of injury. Extreme dislike or antipathy (Webster's). Hate is a relational word; it is the polar opposite of love.

Hard Truth: The World Hates You! By the world, I mean the Cosmos: the worldly system that is in rebellion against God. That system cannot stand Christ and His followers. That world and those who are a part of it have always and will always hate us. That's why John said...

"Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you." **1 John 3:13**

After Stephen's Message to the Sanhedrin: *"When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth...then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him."* **Acts 7:54, 57-58a**

After Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath: *"But they (Pharisees & Scribes) were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus."* **Luke 6:11**

After the 3 Hebrews refused to worship a pagan deity: *"Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego."* **Daniel 3:19**

The World Hates Us: Not like a bad band, a rival sports team or cats kind of hate. The world wants us gone! It doesn't want to tolerate us, it isn't indifferent to us...it hates us. This worldly system wants to shake its fist in the face of God and rebel against His authority at every turn. Specifically:

- God says that wealth is a snare that can bring destruction. The world says that accumulating money is life's end goal (golden rule).
- God says that He *"gives grace to the humble."* The world says, only a fool steps down. Claw and fight to get ahead, regardless of the cost!
- God says that marriage is a sacred, lifetime commitment between a man and a woman. The world says that there is absolutely no reason, other than hateful bigotry, that marriage should be restricted to people of the opposite sex or is permanent, for that matter.

"So the world hates us. As relational creatures, that truth can gnaw at us. We crave acceptance. We long to be loved. We desire to be esteemed, valued, and respected. We can yearn for those things from the world. But Jesus says that acceptance will never happen. The world doesn't love us. The world doesn't even like us. The world hates us!" **Paul Nyquist**

Text & Prop: Four Facts about the World that Hates Us from John 15:18-25

I. The World Hates us because We are Strange – 19

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." **Romans 12:2**

The world has a mold & Christ has a mold. Paul's admonition is that we not allow the world to force us into its mold, but rather submit to Christ's mold! This means that we will be strange to the world!

Bad Idea: There has been a movement, mainly in the United States to make Christianity normal, mainstream, everyday. We did this by taking whatever the world did and tacking Jesus on the end of it while doing it poorly (see fashion, music, movies and clichés). However, Christianity was never supposed to be normal, mainstream or a cheap knock-off of a lost world!

"As Christianity seems increasingly strange, and even subversive, to our culture, we have the opportunity to reclaim the freakishness of the gospel, which is what gives it its power in the first place." **Russell Moore**

III: A country farmer & his wife lived out in the most remote part of WVA when they welcomed a baby boy into their home and named him Junior. They never traveled more than a mile or so from their farm and were quite content to live without a TV, Internet access, telephones, magazines or any other contact with the outside world. As their son grew, it became apparent that he would have to go to the city one day and get a job. So, they saved for several years and finally had enough money to take Junior to the city. They loaded up their truck and the three of them headed down the mountain. Once they got to their city hotel, they couldn't believe their eyes. The most amazing thing they saw were these stainless steel doors with a button on the wall next to them. As they watched, an older lady with a walker shuffled up to these doors, pushed the button and when the doors opened, she shuffled through them as they closed behind her. Just about 45 seconds later, those same doors opened and a blonde bombshell in her 20's stepped out. The farmer was stunned and said, *"Junior, got git yer momma!"*

That's not the kind of weird I'm talking about. Paul wasn't weird because he was doing crazy antics to get attention, he wasn't weird because he was selling prayer cloths, he wasn't strange because he was standing on a street corner with a megaphone telling people they were going to hell...NO, Paul kept the scandal, the strangeness and the weirdness where it belonged: the Gospel of Jesus Christ! It is completely foolish to think that God would become a man, live among us, DIE (the weirdest part of all), rise again, ascend to heaven with a promise to return one day to judge the living & dead.

"You are of God, little children...They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us." **1 John 4:4-6a // We are different! We are not of this world, we are strange.**

"Raw secularism, greedy materialisms, immoral special-interest groups seeking privilege or 'alternative lifestyles' which are biblically indefensible, all with one

accord resent the Christian who stands up and lovingly insists 'Thus says the Lord.'" **D.A. Carson**

Transition: The world hates us because we are strange, but secondly...

II. The World Hates us because We Belong to Jesus – 20-21

III: Pastor Kim & his church of 27 believers lived, worshipped and raise their families in hand-dug tunnels beneath the North Korean soil in the 1950's. While the Communists were constructing a road, they discovered this small church. The officials drug the entire group before a large crowd of 30k people for a public trial. They were clearly told, "Deny Christ, or you will die." When they refused, an officer grabbed the 4 youngest of the group, tied ropes around their 4 small necks while commanding the parents to deny Christ. None of them would, only telling their precious children, "We will soon see you in heaven." The kids died quietly. The officer then called for a steamroller and forced Pastor Kim & his flock to lie down in its path. As the engine revved, they were given one last chance to recant their faith. When they refused, the steamroller inched forward slowly, but the Christians began to sing a song they had often sung together. As their bones were crushed under the weight of the massive rollers, their lips uttered these words: "More love to Thee, O Christ, more love to Thee. Thee alone I seek, more love to Thee. Let sorrow do its work, more love to Thee. Then shall my latest breath whisper Thy praise. This be the parting cry my heart shall raise; more love, O Christ, to Thee." The N. Korean press reported this an act of suppressing superstition.

Why? The world hates us because we belong to Jesus. All worldviews, philosophies & religions despise us for this very reason. The World Hates Us:

- Not for who we are – We are nothing, Jesus is everything!
- Not for what we've done – We've accomplished Nothing!
- The World hates us because of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done!

Note: This is why the mainline churches and Christians lining up to re-write the Bible or manipulate the clear teachings of Christ in order to earn wide-spread support from the world for their church are woefully mistaken.

"But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake..." **John 15:21a**

Trans: So go ahead & capitulate on marriage, abortion, the exclusivity of Christ, the inerrancy of the Bible and everything else that you think will make a lost world love you, but until you are ready to deny the very person and work of Christ, the world will hate you because you belong to Jesus!

III. The World Hates us because We Believe in Sin – 22-24

Note: Historically, Christians in America have been accused of being morally superior. We have been labeled judgmental, arrogant and self-righteous. However, lately the label has changed. Now we are accused of being morally deficient by refusing to endorse, among other things, gay marriage. We're being accused of turning a blind eye to our own temptations/sins while focusing our anger on the sins of people we don't like. And, while that may be

the case with some, the fact of the matter is that it is not that we see our own sins as less than the sins of another that is the problem. It is that we are being asked to deny the very reality of sin altogether. But we can't...

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." **Romans 3:23**

Jesus explains to Nicodemus: "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." **John 3:19-20**

We're strange, We belong to Jesus and we believe in sin, therefore...

IV. The World Hates us and That is Okay – 18 & 25

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." **1 Peter 4:12-13**

VIDEO

Note: We have entered a period of time we could call the "new normal" as follower of Jesus in the United States. For reasons known only to the mind of almighty God, we have escaped persecution for the first two centuries of our nation's existence. This freedom has allowed us to flourish, taking the lead in funding and sending missionaries around the world. From our perspective, we might think that it is preferable to be liked, endorsed and tolerated by the world around us. **Jesus said otherwise!** What is normal is persecution. Once we are okay with the world hating us, then we can realize the spiritual benefits of having Christ and Christ alone for our reward!

Concl: The only remaining question we have to ask is this, are we going to live for the praise of people or the approval of Jesus? There may have been a time when you could have lived for both in this country, but that time is quickly fading. So, what is it going to be? It was said about Moses that he chose to "suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin." (**Hebrews 11:25**) We have a similar choice today.

Remember that the World Hated Jesus First **Reading List**

Monday: Psalm 9:13-14

Tuesday: Matthew 6:24

Wednesday: Matthew 24:1-51

Thursday: John 3:1-21

Friday: John 16:25-33

Saturday: Acts 6 & 7

Sunday: Matthew 5:10-12