

Harm and hatred for His Name

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Preacher: Adam McNinch

[0 : 0 0] Great, well if you have your copy of God's Word, please turn to John chapter 15 again, the passage that Craig read for us earlier. Let me tell you about David and Gerald. David was the head chef at a hotel, the picture on the left hand side there, Auchin Castle in the Scottish countryside.

And Gerald was a student who used to come with other students from a nearby college to work at the hotel from time to time. They would come as waiters and get a bit of extra money while they were at college during their studies.

And the thing you need to know about David is that as a head chef, he was a bit like a lot of head chefs. I hope we don't have any head chefs here today, but he's not an easy man to work with.

Think Gordon Ramsay mixed with a bit of Roy Keane and you're kind of in the right ballpark. Gerald and other students used to see David's angry side quite a lot.

And yes, not an easy man to work with. And one night David invited all the students and other staff from the hotel back to his house for some socialising basically. And people were having a great evening and then the atmosphere changed.

[1 : 1 6] One of the students happened to mention that Gerald was a Christian. And it was at that moment that the atmosphere changed in the room. It was a bit of a red rag to a bull for David when the idea of Christianity was mentioned.

And to say that David exploded was a bit of an understatement. He said, you're not really one of those Christians, are you, Gerald? David was an angry man at the best of times, but this revelation about Gerald sent him over the edge.

And so began an evening of kind of arrogant, angry, dismissive, seething interrogation. He just plied Gerald with questions. And Gerald did his best to answer these questions that David was firing off at him.

But the truth is David wasn't really looking for answers. He was looking for a fight. And over the months that followed, there would be a number of difficult interactions between the two men.

Gerald managed to stay calm in the face of this hatred from David. But that usually made David worse. It's now over 40 years since that challenging period in Gerald's life, but he remembers it like yesterday.

[2 : 2 8] What did he do to deserve such hatred? Let me tell you about another situation. This picture on the far side is a little Methodist chapel in the village of Turnditch in Derbyshire.

And the Methodists have been meeting in this building since 1831, up until a few years ago. Because in July 2021, the members of this little Methodist congregation had to leave the National Methodist denomination.

They left because the National Methodist denomination adopted this report called God in Love Unites Us. They did that at their national conference.

And this God in Love Unites Us report, it marked the next step in the Methodist denomination's departure from the Bible's teaching on sexuality, gender and marriage.

This little church in Turnditch, Derbyshire, wanted to remain faithful to God's word when it comes to these matters. And so they could not in good conscience remain within the wider denomination.

[3 : 32] And so they left. And as they left, they tried to buy the building that they'd been meeting in for nearly two centuries. And yet the denomination refused them outright.

The denomination would rather score points and suppress this church's ministry than let them buy this little building that they'd been meeting in. And to be clear, the congregation were not looking for a freebie.

They were willing to pay the going rate for the building so that they could continue their gospel witness in this part of rural Derbyshire. However, the question is, why would a so-called Christian denomination that on the one hand goes on about love and inclusion and unity, behave on the other hand so hatefully and so divisively and so uncooperatively towards Christians?

Why would the denomination want to do this little congregation such harm? Well, Jesus is going to tell us why in John chapter 15.

So if you're not there, go back to John chapter 15, verse 18, and we will just get our bearings a little bit about what's going on here. In the first half of John 15, Jesus has likened himself, if you have a look, to a vine, the true vine.

[4 : 44] And he's likened his followers to branches. Verse 5 of chapter 15, Jesus has said very plainly to his followers up until this point, The way that you follow me, the way that you are going to be fruitful is if you remain in me.

And so the call of Jesus to remain in him is a call to a life of sacrificial, fruitful obedience that produces complete joy, friendship with Jesus, and everlasting fruit.

And in the passage that we're going to look at today, Jesus is going to tell us about the opposition that we can expect to face if we seek to remain in him. And I think this passage demands our attention today because I think for many Christians, if not all Christians, the idea of remaining in Jesus is not necessarily something that we struggle with.

But the idea of opposition for following Jesus most certainly is. We have a tendency, I think, a lot of us, to avoid opposition and to avoid the world's hatred if we can avoid it.

And maybe that's just me, but I don't know that I'm alone in this. But I am confident that we can overcome any fear and avoidance of persecution and opposition if we take seriously what Jesus is saying in this passage.

[6 : 09] He's going to pull back the curtain on the world's hatred and let us see what's really going on when we face opposition. I want us to consider two main questions today.

And the first one is this. Why is the world's hatred to be expected? And the first part of the answer is this. The world's hatred is to be expected because it hates Jesus.

We see that in verses 18 to 20. That's really Jesus' opening words in this passage. Look with me again at verse 18. If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

We can expect the world to hate us because the world hates Jesus. When I was growing up, we weren't allowed to use the word hate in our house, particularly towards my siblings.

And I would come down swiftly on that in my own house as well. It's not a particularly nice word, is it? It's not one that we band about. It's quite a strong word. And the original word here is no less strong. It has the idea of someone fixing you in their sights and hating you on an ongoing basis.

[7 : 20] Hatred that is relentless and ongoing. This is the hatred that followers of Jesus can expect in this world. And it's all because Jesus was hated first.

Now, why does the world hate Jesus and his followers so much? Well, if we look at verse 19 and 20, it gives us the answer. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own.

As it is, you do not belong to this world. But I have chosen you out of this world. That is why the world hates you. Here's what Jesus is saying. We do not belong to this world.

We've been chosen out of it. We're different. We have different priorities. We have a different worldview, a different way of making decisions. And so, therefore, God's priorities influence how we go about our lives.

Because God is the center of our world. And like Gerald in my opening illustration, we're going to stand out as being different if we take heed of these words.

[8 : 23] This world is not our home, Jesus tells us. We've been chosen out of it. And if you've put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ because of his saving work on the cross, in dying for your sins, then you have been chosen by Jesus.

And heaven is your home. This world is not your home. You are simply passing through. You're a sojourner. You're a pilgrim. For the Christian, this world is like, I don't know, if you're heading north and you stop at Kinross service station.

That's what this world is like. We're passing through. We don't stay in service stations for long. We're not staying in this world for long. Jesus' point is this. You do not belong to this world.

And so that's why you're not loved by this world. More than that, you belong to me. So you will be hated by this world. And it is our belonging to Jesus that is the foundation of the world's hatred towards us.

And this is underlined by Jesus' words in verse 20. Remember what I told you. A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.

[9 : 27] You see, our master is our model. Jesus, our master, the holiest man that ever lived on this earth, is our model for life on this earth.

And here's the truth. If the world could not get on with Jesus, we cannot expect the world to get on with us. If the world hated Jesus, then what right have we got to expect any different?

The world persecuted Jesus because of his teaching. And Jesus' followers can expect the same for following that teaching. The teaching that Jesus brought.

Why? Because verse 20 tells us, a servant is not greater than his master. Now I want you to look with me again though. It's not all bad.

That sounds like quite a bad situation I'm describing here. But there is a silver lining to all this. And it's there in verse 20. Verse 20 at the end of it, it says, If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

[10 : 31] You see, some people in the world obeyed Jesus' teaching. And Jesus' promise here is that some people will obey the disciples' teaching too. It's not that everyone will reject Jesus.

It's not that everyone will reject Jesus' words forever. Some people will obey. Some people will listen. Now sometimes I think when we face people's hatred, we might think that we're doing something wrong.

Or we might try something different to try to blend in. So we might say, you know, I'm having a hard time being a Christian in my workplace, in my street, my block of flats, my sports team or my friendship group and my family and so on.

So I'm just going to, I'm not going to deny Jesus, but I'm just going to withdraw from standing out. I'm going to kind of go into myself and withdraw. I think the encouragement here is not to withdraw.

Some people will listen. Some people will obey. It says in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 2 to 3, For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[11 : 47] Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. But we're to consider what our master did and do likewise, to press on, to endure the same suffering, to not throw in the towel when we face people's hatred for following Jesus.

We're not to lose heart. We're not to hide from the world because of the hatred of the world. We're to keep speaking, keep shining, as the Apostle Paul says in this warped and crooked generation.

The world's hatred is to be expected because it hates Jesus. But it's also to be expected for a second reason, and that is because it hates the Father.

Look at verse 21 with me. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. The first part of this verse summarizes what we've just seen, and the second part brings out the point that the world's hatred towards Jesus reveals something about their relationship towards God the Father.

Ultimately, that they hate Him. The same idea is picked up in verse 23. Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. You see the connection?

[13 : 05] If you hate Jesus, then you'll hate the Father likewise. I want you to look at just the similarities between verse 22 and 24 because I think they're quite striking.

Let me read verse 22 for us. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. If they had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

And then verse 24. If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father.

See what Jesus is saying here? Verse 22 is all about His words. It's His words that expose the world's guilt. And then verse 24, a similar idea is brought out, but it's not His words this time, it's His actions, His miracles.

The works He performed right in front of their very eyes. They expose the world's guilt too. And so Jesus' haters have no excuse for denying who He is.

[14 : 12] No excuse for denying that He's come from the Father. Jesus teaches throughout John's Gospel that He had come to make the Father known through His words and His actions. And these people have seen both words and actions.

Jesus reveals the Father in this way, and so the world is completely without excuse. Excuse. Now, the disciples should not have been surprised that the world hates the Father, despite Jesus giving witness to them.

The Bible speaks about this plainly. That's why Jesus quotes from Psalm 69 in verse 25, where it says, they hated me without reason.

Jesus is quoting there from Psalm 69. Jesus is drawing attention to the fact that if David could be on the receiving end for people's hatred for no apparent reason, then how much more would the sinless Savior be hated?

Brothers and sisters, we are to expect the world's hatred because it hates our Lord Jesus and it hates the Father. Now, it might be that you're sitting here today and you're familiar with the idea of Christians being hated, but it feels something like a kind of distant issue, like an issue that's out there for other people.

[15 : 27] Maybe you hear about nurses getting in trouble for wearing crosses around their neck. Maybe you participate in prayer times where we pray for the persecuted church. Maybe you get the briefings from the Christian Institute or you subscribe to Evangelicals Now and you see something of what the times we're living in are like, but it all feels a little bit secondhand.

You personally haven't experienced the world's hatred. Now, why might that be? Well, notice how the persecution that Jesus is speaking about in this passage, as we saw in verses 22 and 24, is connected with his words and his actions.

There's a clear connection between what Jesus says and what he does and the hatred that he receives as a result. And I think the connection with what we say and do as followers of Jesus will have a similar connection with persecution.

And I think similarly, there's a connection between what we don't say and what we don't do for Jesus and our lack of persecution. Let me ask you just two questions for you to think about this week.

Question number one, could it be that in our relationships in the world around us, we never cross the pain line to speak about Jesus and the need to respond to him? Could it be that we live in the friend zone as we talk to our friends, but never move into the faith zone and talk about Jesus and what he means to us and all things connected to our Christian faith?

[16 : 58] Question number two, could it be that maybe we don't even have any of these relationships in the world with unbelievers? You see, hatred and persecution presupposes human contact with people that might hate you and might persecute you.

And so if you live in a Christian bubble where everyone is broadly on the same page as you, it's only natural that you'll never experience the hatred that Jesus is talking about.

And so maybe that's why this talk of persecution and opposition and hatred feels distant and second-hand. Hatred and persecution was Jesus' normal experience on this earth.

And he's teaching us here in this passage that hatred and persecution for his followers should be a normal lived experience. And so what's changed? Here are some questions to think about, some questions to reflect on.

Okay, so having seen the world's hatred is to be expected, let's consider secondly, why is the world's hatred to be endured? Here's why it is to be endured.

[18 : 06] The first part of the answer is this, because people still need to hear about Jesus. And we see that in verses 26 and 27. Let me remind you, when the advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

And so you must also testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. At this point in John's Gospel, Jesus is just hours from the cross. He's just hours from the point where he will die for the sins of this world.

But he is fully focused on his mission, continuing long after he's died. Long after he's been buried. Long after he has been raised and returned to the Father's side.

And there's two aspects to Jesus' plan to help people hear about him. The first aspect is there in verse 26. Jesus is going to send the Holy Spirit to testify about him. John 14 tells us that the Spirit's job was to point people to, it says in verse 14, verse 26, the advocate of the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I've said to you.

That's the Holy Spirit's job. That's why the Holy Spirit would be sent. The second part is in verse 27. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. So what we've got here is Jesus commanding his followers and disciples, who would be filled with the Holy Spirit, to testify about him, even after he has gone, to tell people about him.

[19 : 40] Now that makes being a follower of Jesus hugely significant. Sometimes when we think about following, it can seem a bit of a passive thing. So I follow this band, or I follow this person on X, or whatever it might be.

But being a follower of Jesus is not a passive thing. We have been called to this glorious task of testifying about Jesus. Somebody once said that the gospel gets to people through gospel people.

I think that's what we see here. It's not enough to stay in the friend zone with the world, or even worse, to stay in a Christian ghetto or bubble. Jesus' followers cannot go back and hide in the upper room at this point in John's gospel and kind of stay in a holy huddle.

They've got work to do. Jesus has commissioned them here because people still need to hear about him, even after he's gone. Romans chapter 10 verse 14 says, How then can they call on the one they have not believed in?

And how can they believe in the one whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? After Jesus' departure, these spirit-filled disciples would indeed testify on Jesus' behalf.

[20 : 56] They would continue to reveal the Father to the world. They'd continue to expose the world's hatred and sin. And as they did that, if you know the book of Acts, they got the same response that Jesus got when he walked this earth.

Some people believed, some people hated. This is what happens as Jesus is taken up into heaven in the opening chapters of the book of Acts.

Jesus' followers preach and then they're persecuted. Preach, then persecuted. Preach, then persecuted. That is exactly the picture in Acts. But the world's hatred is to be endured because people need to hear about Jesus.

The people of Winsborough need to hear about Jesus. I don't know how many people will be in church today in Winsborough, a bit like in Queensbury. There's lots of stuff they'll be doing, no doubt, when church is going on.

I don't know how many Christians you'll meet at the school gate or as you go about your life here in Winsborough. I suspect not many. I suspect it probably reflects what we experience in Queensbury and in different parts of Scotland.

[22 : 03] But this is not the time for Christians in our country to get tongue-tied because people still need to hear about him. You don't need to know all the answers. That's not your job.

Your job is to introduce them to Jesus. He has the words of eternal life. And so the world's hatred is to be endured, firstly because people still need to hear about Jesus, but secondly because what is the alternative?

The alternative is to fall away. John 16 verse 1 says, All this I have told you so that you will not fall away.

Jesus' followers, or he tells his followers about the harm and the hatred and all that's coming their way to prepare them, to prepare them for what's ahead so that they don't fall away, so that they're not caught off guard, so that they don't think they're doing something wrong.

It had happened before. If you come back to John chapter 6, you see this really striking phrase in John chapter 6 verse 66. There had been this group of, let's call them so-called disciples, who had been happy to follow Jesus so far, but then they find Jesus teaching too hard.

[23 : 24] They find the life that he was calling them too hard. And so we read in John chapter 6 verse 66, From this time, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

What we need to understand is that Jesus' concern for his followers is not that they would have it really easy, but that they would remain in him. That's why he tells them in John chapter 16 verse 1 that they are to endure this hatred so that they don't fall away.

He's telling them that hatred from the world is to be both expected and endured. Notice in verse 2 of John chapter 16 that Jesus even gives an example of the type of hatred that they are going to have to endure.

They will put you out of the synagogue. Notice that this hatred and this persecution is not just going to come from the world outside the church.

It's going to come from inside the church, so to speak. Not unlike the experience of that little church in Derbyshire that I mentioned earlier. Jesus says in verse 2 that they're going to be kicked out of the synagogue, that the religious elite are going to kick them out, their place of worship.

[24 : 42] These haters think they're on a mission from God. That's what he says. There's a time coming when anyone who kills you will think they're offering a service to God. They might not think they're persecuting you.

They might actually think they're doing a really good job on behalf of God. But the truth is they don't know God. And that is the sort of nonsense that Jesus' followers would have to endure. And Jesus wants them to endure.

He doesn't want them to fall away. He doesn't want them to be like the rocky ground in the parable of the sower. Remember the problem with the ground there?

Matthew chapter 13, 20 to 21. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time.

When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Jesus does not want that for people who follow him. To fall away because you're persecuted for Jesus does not end well.

[25 : 42] So Jesus says so clearly in Mark 8 verse 38, If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with all the holy angels.

What we need is to have our spiritual spines stiffened by the words of Jesus as he sends out the twelve disciples in Matthew 10 where he says, Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

Rather be afraid of the one who can be destroyed both soul and body in hell. Brothers and sisters, the world's hatred is to be endured because people still need to hear about Jesus.

They need to hear about him in Winchborough, they need to hear about him in Queenstreet, they need to hear about him all across Scotland. But people also need to hear about Jesus because what is the alternative?

What else are we here for? If we don't speak of Jesus, if we fall away from him, if we turn our back on him, it does not end well. And so, we need to see that it is worth it to endure the world's hatred and persecution for the sake of Christ.

[26 : 54] Gerald would say it's worth it. I know Gerald would say it's worth it because he's my dad. Let me explain how that story ended. My mum and dad moved away from Dumfries where this interaction with the head chef happened.

But then, we moved back to Dumfries a few years later. My dad was in a car park in Dumfries. I think he was just putting shopping in the boot.

And a voice came from behind him. And it said, Gerald, is that you? And my dad recognised the voice straight away because it was that angry guy.

But the next question my dad wasn't prepared for. David said, are you still a Christian, Gerald? And my dad was kind of thinking, oh, I remember how this went the last time.

But amazingly, David shared news of his radical transformation, how he'd become a Christian, how not only he'd become a Christian, but his family had also become a Christian.

[28 : 01] Because near his house in the country, there was a holiday home. And a man from Ayrshire used to come and take holidays there and he would pass David's gate regularly on his walks. And over the years, this man who happened to be a Christian would talk to David about his faith.

First of all, David's wife became a Christian and soon after, David became a Christian. And the thing that struck David about this man from Ayrshire was that he reminded him of this student, Gerald, that he'd mocked and hated.

The one who had calmly and patiently spoken of his faith and lived it out in the workplace. Fast forward a few years on, David and Gerald went on to serve as deacons in the life of Dumfries Baptist Church.

David would go on to lead Scripture Union camps. He took me on my first ever mission trip to Ukraine. He then trained for ministry and pastored a couple of churches and he's now retired.

Do you believe that God can take a Christian hating chef, cause him to meet a Christian student, then cause him to meet a Christian holiday maker, put him in the same car park and in the same church as that Christian student that he hated all those years ago and end up pastoring two churches?

[29 : 22] I hope you believe it. Gerald, my dad, would tell you that it is worth enduring people's hatred for the name of Jesus if only for that man. And so would the people of Cross the Hands Chapel in Derbyshire.

Like I said at the start, the national denomination, the Methodist denomination, refused to sell them the building when they left. No hope of getting the place back and it was all looking a bit bleak.

But then a local farmer heard about their problem. Now the thing you need to know about this farmer is that he was not part of this church. He is not, even to this day as far as I know, even a Christian. But he heard how badly this little church had been treated by their denomination that he decided to buy the church building with his own money and then not sell the building to the congregation but gift it to the congregation.

This is an amazing token of God's grace. The building reopened as Cross the Hands Independent Chapel in January 2022 for weekly worship as an independent evangelical church and it's recently joined the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches that we're part of as well.

Do you believe that God can control the heart and the purse strings of an unbelieving father? Do you believe that God is sovereign over liberal apostate denominations who think they're offering a service to God when in fact they are simply acting in hateful and harmful ways towards a small but faithful Jesus loving gospel preaching church family?

[30 : 54] Well you better believe it because it's true. Brothers and sisters don't fear the world's hatred. Don't fear the harm and hatred that you will experience for Jesus' name.

Expect it endure it for he is worthy. Let's pray. I love what happens in Acts 5 when the apostles are thrown in jail for what they were saying and doing in Jesus' name.

They face a trial then they're flogged and then they're released on condition that they don't speak in the name of Jesus Christ. And Acts 5 says the apostles left the Sanhedrin rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name.

Day after day in the temple courts and from house to house they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah. Oh Lord, we pray that this would be our experience too.

We pray that we would never stop teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah. We pray that we would see as something that is to rejoice in that we are worthy of suffering disgrace for your name.

[32 : 09] Oh Lord, we pray that you'd forgive us for our unbelieving hearts. You'd forgive us for closing our mouths and not speaking of you. Forgive us for not taking every possible step to speak out for you.

Forgive us for fearing the world's hatred. And thank you for Jesus. Thank you for Jesus who told us that the world would hate us. Thank you for Jesus who models to us what it is to suffer well.

Thank you for Jesus who demonstrates how to deal with the world and how to deal with the religious establishment. Lord, we pray that you would help us to endure well.

That you would help us to suffer well in the face of hatred and persecution. And we pray that you would use us in this community here in the community of South Queensry to testify about Jesus.

Please help us to go and bear fruit fruit that will last for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.