

Connecting Minds

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)

The Gospel of John

Chapter 17:14,15

"I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one."

Jesus now begins to pray about the hatred that His followers will face. This is an unwelcome, unpleasant thought for most of us. We might ask, "Why does the world hate us? Why hate Christians?" Jesus gives us three reasons why the disciples of Christ will face hatred. First, we are told that the world will hate the Christian because "they are not of the world..." Jesus had said earlier "These are in the world..." (verse 11). So what does this mean... we are in the world but we are not of the world? It means that we are not a part of the world's rebellion towards God. We have been taken out of the world's mindset and out of the spirit of opposition to God. We live in this physical world, but our citizenship, if you will, is in heaven.

Second, Jesus says "They are not of the world *just as* I am not of the world..." Our conformity to Christ is a cause of hatred. We are different. Peter says the same thing. The world thinks we're strange and speaks evil of us because we do not join in their godlessness – "They think it strange that you do not run with them to the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you..." (1 Peter 4:4).

Third, Jesus says "I have given them Your word..." The word of God is what has caused the transformation in the life of the believer. We were once of the world, but because we have been given the word, we are now not of the world. What had happened? We have received the word and believed it (verse 8). We have believed the truths taught by Christ, including that He has come from the Father and been sent with a mission.

Here is the trouble then - we are in the world, but not of the world. And because of this we face this tremendous opposition. This should be something that every genuine believer has a measure of experience in. If we have no experience of these things it simply shows our lack of conformity to our Lord and our measure of conformity to the world.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes "Does the world hate us? If it does not, it is simply because we are very poor Christians... [The world] does not hate him [Jesus] because he made himself odd and difficult, it was his sheer purity and holiness, and his teaching that caused the hatred."¹

We have been living at a time in history where Christians have, at least on a nominal level, been the majority. Our culture even today still has a basically neutral (if not positive) view of true Christianity. This has not been the case for most Christians throughout history, starting with persecution at the birth of the church, through the medieval era, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and the early and late Puritan era. It is also not the case for many Christians in other places of the world today. Let us be aware that as our culture moves further away in generations and morals from the Bible, we will find ourselves being spoken of as evil more and more (1 Peter 4:4).

But it is not only the world that is against us, that hates us. We have another adversary to contend with – the evil one. Jesus prays that the Father would keep us from the evil one. It is not just the world that we are facing, but also the god of this world. And so, here we are facing hatred from the world and the evil one and Jesus prays that we *not* be taken out of the world. Do we not wish sometimes that God would take us out of the world, take us out of the hatred, the opposition? Jesus has not done so – "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world..." But He has prayed for something even greater. He has prayed that our Almighty Father would keep us and protect us.

TableTalk

Read Matthew 13:5,6,20,21. When persecution for the sake of Jesus' Name comes what will happen to you? Is your faith planted in stony soil with no depth, with no roots? Does your faith rest deeply in the sovereign grace of God?

¹The Assurance of our Salvation, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, pg. 326