

The Witness of the Holy Spirit

John 15:18 – 16:4

BBC, July 27, 2014

PROPOSITION: *The Holy Spirit keeps us in Christ even when the world hates us.*

- **Trouble is here (18-25)**
 - The World hates Jesus (18)
 - The World hates Jesus' followers (19)
 - The World persecutes Jesus' followers (20-21)
 - The World has no excuse (22-25)
- **The Helper has been sent (26-27)**
 - He will bear witness (26)
 - You will also bear witness (27)
- **The Helper will keep you (16:1-4)**
 - Know that persecution is coming (1-3)
 - Remember to abide in me (4)

John 15:18-16:4:

In the first part of this chapter, Jesus teaches that He is the vine, and we are the branches. Union with Him results in much fruit, joy, and effective prayer. However, our union with Christ also changes our relationship with the world. Listen as I begin reading in verse 18:

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father also. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'

²⁶ "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

16 "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. ² They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³ And they will do these

things because they have not known the Father, nor me. ⁴ But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

This is the Word of the Lord. You may be seated. Let's pray that God's Spirit would show us Christ as we consider His Word together.

It's my joy this morning to introduce you to one of our Christian brothers from Nigeria.



His name is Habila Adamu. On November 28, 2012, at 11pm Habila was shot in the face in front of his wife Vivian and his 6-year old son David. It was all because he refused to deny Jesus Christ.

Here's his story. ⁴ Boko Haram gunman broke into his house with AK-47s. They said they were there to do the work of Alla. The leader asked Habila why he refused to accept Islam as a religion. Habila said, "Because I am a Christian." One of the gunman told his wife Vivian to beg him to save his life by converting to Islam. But he interrupted them saying, "I cannot change my mind. I am a Christian. I would rather die as a Christian." One of them then asked him, "Are you ready to die as a Christian?" And when Habila said, "Yes, I am ready to die as a Christian," they shot him in the face, and left him for dead.

As he was lying on the floor, he remembers hearing his wife weep over him and ask God why He took her husband and the children's father so soon. He didn't want her to sin, so he mustered the strength to talk to his wife before slipping out of consciousness. "She was crying so many tears," he said. "Neither of us thought I would survive so I told her that to live in this world was to live for Christ. I told her to look after our son and herself."

Vivian ran to get help from the Christian neighbors, only to find that all the others had been killed as well. Twelve of Habila's neighbors died that night from the murderous raiders – all because they were Christians, and refused to renounce their faith in Jesus Christ.

Habila didn't get medical attention until 7am the next morning. The police promised to come, but never did. He laid on the ground and bled for 9 hours without any kind of medical help. Miraculously when he finally reached the hospital, his blood levels were normal, and he survived. Though his rehabilitation

and recovery over the last year and a half has been very difficult, Habila gives all credit to God and His Holy Spirit who strengthened him.

Habila strongly believes something that God wants to teach us this morning.

The Holy Spirit keeps us in Christ even when the world hates us.

This morning from our Lord's teaching in John 15, we learn that **the witness of the Holy Spirit is done in the context of persecution.** As one commentator says, "The Spirit is not a guide and a helper for those on a straight way perfectly able to manage on their own. He comes to assist men caught up in the thick of battle, and tried beyond their strength."¹

So strap yourselves in this morning. The Lord wants to strengthen our faith. He wants to keep us from stumbling as we seek to live in Him in the midst of our crooked and twisted generation.

In the previous chapter, Jesus had taught His disciples He was sending the Holy Spirit to **join, change, teach, and comfort** them. And in vs. 31 they had all got up from the table, and begun walking to the Garden of Gethsemane where He would be betrayed. As they walked through some of the vineyards on the way, Jesus continues his final discourse saying, "*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.*"

In the first 17 verses of John 15, Jesus is teaching the disciples about the importance of abiding in Him. They can be of good cheer. Their faith unites them into Christ. His emphasis here on union with Christ is just as important for us today. Only in our union with Christ can we produce *spiritual fruit*. Only in our union with Christ can we have *joy*. And Only in our union with Christ can we participate in *effective prayer*.

Faith unites the Christian with Christ Himself so intimately that everything changes. But on this fateful night in which Christ will be betrayed, Jesus wants His disciples to know that union with Christ also brings trouble. A new relationship with Christ means a new relationship with the world too. And so in our passage this morning, Jesus first teaches us that,

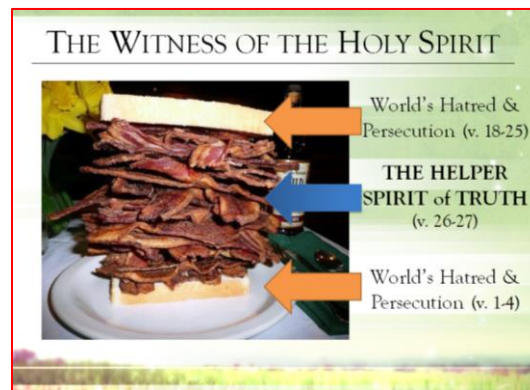
Trouble is here (18-25)

What was true for the disciples crossing the Kidron Valley that fateful night is still true for us today. When you connect yourself by faith to Jesus Christ, you must expect to be hated and persecuted.

This week as I was studying this passage, I began to affectionately talk about this passage as a "hatred sandwich." Because Christ's teaching on the Holy Spirit is sandwiched right in the middle of strong teaching on the world's hostility, hatred, and persecution of Christ's followers.

¹ Leon Morris

But then I got thinking about this. You don't name a sandwich by the bread, but by the meat, right? If you make yourself a bacon sandwich – you call it a bacon sandwich, not a bread sandwich, right?



So ... as we work our way through this passage this morning, it's helpful to see that it's a "Helper Sandwich." The Helper keeps our witness for Christ even we are hated and persecuted for His Name's sake!

First then, Jesus reminds us that trouble is here because in verse 18, The World hates Jesus (18) Jesus says, "If the world hates you..." and certainly "the world does and will continue to hate you"... know that this is not new or surprising. For the world hated Jesus before it hated you.

Who hates Jesus? The world. In other words...all of human society that seeks to live apart from God. Like our memory verse this week, "*all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh, and the desires of the eyes, and pride of life – it is not of the Father but of the world*" (1 Jn 2:16)

Even before Christ was born He was hated. Remember King Herod killing all the babies in Bethlehem? Men apart from God, hate God for being God. "*People loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil*" (Jn 3:19). Trouble is here today because the world hates Jesus. So Jesus doesn't want us to be surprised at the fact that, The World hates Jesus' followers (19)

Let's pull the car over for a moment. Christian, do you believe John 15:19? Do you live like you believe this verse?

If you were of the world, [which you are not] the world would love you as its own [but it does not]; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

When you personally encounter the hostility and hatred of the world towards you – not just hatred towards Christ, but hatred towards you personally, are you surprised? Offended? Caused to stumble in your faith?

Jesus' teaching is clear. Since the world hates God, it hates His Son Jesus. And since the world hates Jesus, it hates His followers too.

Christian, vs 19 gives two reasons the world hates you. First, *"because you are not of the world."* When we are born from above, the Holy Spirit transfers our citizenship from this world to heaven. We no longer value money, property, social status, and position like we used to. It's harder and harder to enjoy the language, the spirit, and the priorities of our former friends. The believer who is growing deeper and deeper into Christ will quickly find himself "out of step" and "out of place" with the unbelieving world.

Have you noticed that the world operates on the basis of conformity? Everyone clamors to conform to the latest fads, fashions, and flash ... all so that they can be accepted. But Romans 12:2 teaches believers not to be "conformed to this world." And because believers are nonconformist to the world, the world is provoked to hatred.

Now look at the end of verse 19 for the 2nd reason the world hates Jesus' followers. Because Jesus chose them. It's sad, but it's true. The world hates grace. JC Ryle says it well, "It's not the weaknesses and inconsistencies of Christians that the world hates, but their grace."

God's divine election and choosing is emphasized all throughout the Gospel of John. In verse 16, Jesus told the disciples that they didn't choose him, but He chose them and appointed them to go and bear fruit. By grace and grace alone, God sets His love upon His children, and gives them divine purpose.

There's so much we could say about this. But Jesus' point is clear enough now. The world only loves its own children. Its love is selfish, loving only what affirms it in its materialistic hatred of God.

So does the world hate you? If not, why not? Is your witness of Christ's commands and His love clear? Examine your life, and see if you are compromised with the world.

Since the world hates Jesus' followers, The World persecutes Jesus' followers (20-21)

Hatred expresses itself in persecution. In verse 20 Jesus reminds His disciples what He had already told them in chapter 13:16. The servant must expect to follow in his Master's steps, and to be treated the same way Jesus was treated.

"Persecute" means to chase like a wild beast. The reason those men came to Habil Adamu's home on November 2012 was that they were "hunting" for Jesus' followers.

Such mistreatment and injustice must be expected by God's followers. Christ is the head, and we are His body. We must share His fate, because the world does not know God who sent Jesus. That's what he says at the end of verse 21.

But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

The root cause for the persecution of Jesus' followers today is the world's ignorance of God. They have rejected Jesus, and truly knowing the One who sent Him. Because the world refuses to believe and submit to Jesus Christ as Lord, Satan has blinded their minds (2 Cor 4:3-4) and sin has blinded their hearts (Eph 4:17-19). Though they may know a lot of facts about God, they do not personally know His heart, His nature, and His mission.

What about you? Do you personally and experientially know God –and seek to live out allegiance to His Name in this world?

If so, then you have come to expect persecution and hatred from this world.

Jesus drives this point home for His disciples in verses 22-25, clearly teaching that, The World has no excuse (22-25)

Here Jesus is relating the responsibility of the world to believe, to the greatness of the revelation that they had been given through Him.

To clarify, Jesus is not teaching in vs. 22 and 24 that if He would not have come the world would have been sinless...but that it would have not be guilty *of the sin of rejecting Him.*

But Jesus *had* come and revealed His deity in fullness. They had heard His supernatural teaching (vs 22) and they had seen his supernatural works (vs 24), but after seeing all of this they rejected Him and the Father who sent Him (v23) in wicked hatred of unbelief.

In our culture of victimized blame-shifters we can understand this, right? When brought face to face with the ugliness of our sin, instead of repenting and trusting in our Savior, we seek to kill the messenger.

It's like getting pulled over for speeding. You're driving home delighted by the good weather and wide open roads that give you the freedom get the dust bunnies out of your engine. But when you get pulled over by that officer with a radar gun, you become angry – not at yourself for speeding, but at the officer for writing you a ticket! That's how the world responds to God's Gospel!

But note, the Gospel of Christ doesn't make us sinners—it reveals that we are sinners. And on judgment day, those who are not abiding in Christ will have no excuse, for they had access to His all-sufficient Word that clearly testifies to His Words and His works.

If you are yet outside of Christ this morning, please understand that you have no excuse. There is no way for you to cover up your sinful rejection of Jesus Christ. Please stop and consider this morning. God has flooded you with the light of Christ in the Scriptures. Humble yourself and repent of your sins. Believe on Jesus Christ whom God has sent to be your Savior, your forgiveness, and your peace.

For though trouble is here...

The Helper has been sent (26-27)

Now we get into the meat of our message this morning. Jesus wants to make sure His disciples understand that whenever the Holy Spirit comes, He will help them stay faithful through the hatred and persecution of this world. If you're walking in the Spirit, you need not fear when trouble comes.

First, the Holy Spirit Himself
...will bear witness (26)

Look at verse 26 again.

But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

Let's briefly remind ourselves what we learned last week about the Holy Spirit.

He is a person who is called the Helper, or the Comforter, or an Advocate. Here all three persons of the Trinity are revealed in intimate operation together. The Son of God is sending the Spirit of God from the Father of God. One God in being, but three persons in function. What marvelous wonder of our God!

The Spirit here is again called "the Spirit of truth" (just like in 14:17) to emphasize that His function is to communicate truth, just as Jesus is the truth (14:6), and those who worship God must worship Him in truth (4:23).

And in truth, the Holy Spirit is sent to bear witness about Christ. "*He will bear witness about me*" Jesus teaches. The Spirit is the supreme witness for Christ, and His ministry is always Christ-centered. JI Packer describes the Spirit's ministry as a "floodlight ministry" with Jesus always being the One highlighted by His beam. In other words, the chief purpose of the Holy Spirit is not to bring about independent revelation, but draw out the significance of historical revelation. The Holy Spirit's ministry is to show us Christ! To teach us more about Christ! To grant us greater understanding and faith in Christ!

Now think about the wonder of this truth in light of its context. The world hates Jesus and His followers. Persecution and trouble is all around us trying to move us away from Christ. But the Helper has been sent! He is ever with us to give testimony to us about Christ, and to testify to the world of Christ's glorious Gospel. Because of His witness, **the Holy Spirit keeps us in Christ even when the world hates us.**

But the Spirit is more than just a defense attorney on our behalf ... He energizes us for the work that we are called to do!

Because the Helper has been sent, Jesus tells His disciples that,
You also will bear witness, (27) because you have been with me from the beginning.

The 11 disciples who were walking with Jesus on this evening were well qualified to give testimony to Christ. And Jesus here reinforces a truth that is important for us to understand as well.

The Spirit bears testimony of Christ to our own hearts, so that we too can give testimony of Christ to the world. Just like what Jesus taught in Mark 13:11,

And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit does much of His work through human agency. Through human means. So one of the chief ways, though not the only way, the Holy Spirit bears witness of Christ to the world is through Christ's disciples!

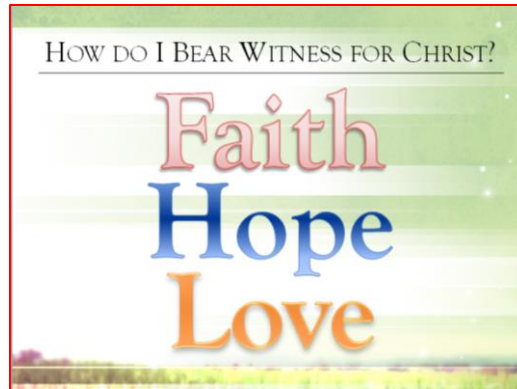
After His resurrection Jesus taught the same thing,

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” ... even in Peoria IL.

And indeed this is what we observe as we read the book of Acts. “*And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all* (Acts 4:33).

So we today cannot evade this reality of true Spiritual life. All Christians today bear a responsibility to bear witness of Christ and His saving grace. So the question is, how does the Spirit empower us to bear witness of Christ?

I believe the answer could be summed up by Faith, Hope, and Love.



First, *Faith*. The Spirit of truth helps us to proclaim the truths of God and His Gospel to the world, so that “whosoever will” might believe on Him and be saved. Such witness is communicated through our words and our worship. Like we talked about last week, our obedience is the real proof of our faith. Second, *Hope*. The Helper comes and gives us joy in the midst of trouble. We call this peace. Because of the Spirit’s witness of Christ and His finished work on our behalf, our souls are at rest and satisfied. And third, *Love*. While the world is known by its hatred of God and His followers, the church is known by its love. So a Spiritual witness for Christ looks like a believer whose life and lips are continually proclaiming faith, hope, and love through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Such testimony for Christ can only be maintained in the midst of hostility when the Spirit Himself is bearing witness of Christ to us. So when you are tested by the world, cry out for the Spirit to show you more of Christ! Go deeper into His Word that you might see Christ! It is the Spirit who shows Him to you in all His glory. And in seeing Christ in all of His glory, you will be kept from stumbling.

For that’s exactly what the Spirit does for you. According to Jesus’ words in ch. 16:1-4,

The Helper will keep you (16:1-4)

Jesus doesn’t ever want his disciples to be surprised by the world’s hatred and persecution of them. There’s no reason for a believer to be offended or to stumble when they face the blazing furnace of the world’s persecution. The Spirit strengthened Habila when he looked down the barrel of an AK-47 in the middle of the night, and so He will strengthen you.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed. So today, God wants us to,

Know that persecution is coming (1-3)

All who are in Christ, are perfectly united with Him. He is the vine, and we are the branches. Christ’s followers will thus be censured and excommunicated from the fellowship of the world’s legalistic religions and even murdered in the name of God by those who are claiming to do His work.

2 Tim 3:12 *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

It's not a coincidence that the gunman who invaded Habila Adamu's home said they were there to do the work of God. This is a fulfillment of Christ's words in John 16:2. And such was the experience of the 11 disciples who first heard Jesus' clear warning:

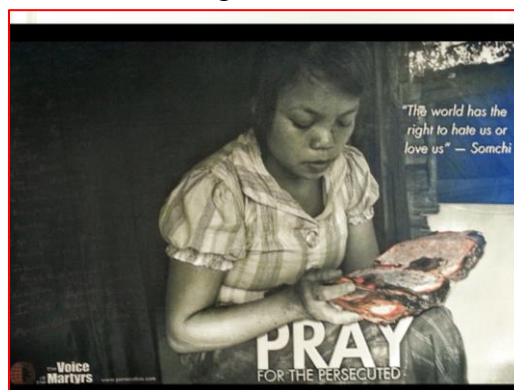
Disciple	Manner of Death acc. to Tradition
John, son of Zebedee	Exiled to Isle of Patmos
James, son of Zebedee	Beheaded by Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:2)
Phillip	Crucified in Phrygia
Matthew	Killed with a 2-sided axe in Ethiopia
James, son of Alphaeus	Stoned & brains bashed out with club
Thomas	Thrust through with a spear in India
Andrew	Crucified at Edessa
Simon Zealotes	Crucified in Britian
Simon Peter	Crucified upside-down at Rome
Thaddaeus	Crucified at Edessa
Bartholomew	Crucified in India
Matthias	Stoned & beheaded in Jerusalem

Every one of the 11 apostles except John died a martyr's death. And this doesn't include Mark who was dragged to pieces in Alexandria, or Stephen who was stoned for the Name of Christ in Acts 7, or the many others that Saul had killed according to Acts 9.

Do you know what's amazing about this to me? Without exception every one of the 11 disciples faced the world's murderous hatred without falling away. Not one of them turned from Christ. God's Spirit kept them from becoming offended at Christ and His cross, and kept them secure in His witness of Christ.

That should give us great courage today church. At a time when immorality and murder are being established as civil rights in our nation, and all those who claim Christ and live humbly obedient to His commands as His chosen children are censored and called hate-mongers...let us take courage.

The world doesn't know God the Father, nor Jesus Christ. Like the Voice of the Martyr poster says that is hanging in our adult wing, "The world has a right to hate us or love us."



Let us not be surprised when the world hates us. We have been forewarned. Jesus has left us a word. Notice verse 4,

4 But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

The Helper will keep us, so we must,
Remember to abide in God (4)

The world's hour is now. While Jesus' followers live "in" in the world, we are not "of" the world (17:15-16). So we Christians must purpose to abide in God – to go deeper and deeper into Christ Himself – so that we might testify of His love and His joy and His grace even in the face of this world's raging anger against us.

All true disciples of Christ will suffer. All those united with Christ by faith will share in His persecution.

But receive this sober warning with the encouragement that such persecution doesn't take your Lord by surprise, and nor should it you. He has sent the Helper to bear witness of Him in the midst of our trouble. And the Holy Spirit keeps us in Christ even when the world hates us.

Persecution towards us – whether in the form of injustice, mistreatment, abuse, censure, or even bodily harm and death – is certain. But there is not the slightest hint in this passage that we should retreat into safe havens and cease witnessing for Jesus. In fact just the opposite is expected. Jesus has left us with the Holy Spirit, and He will bear witness of Christ to us, in us, and through us.

May we rejoice this morning in God's all-sufficient provision of Himself to all those who are united by faith in Jesus Christ.