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If the World Hates You

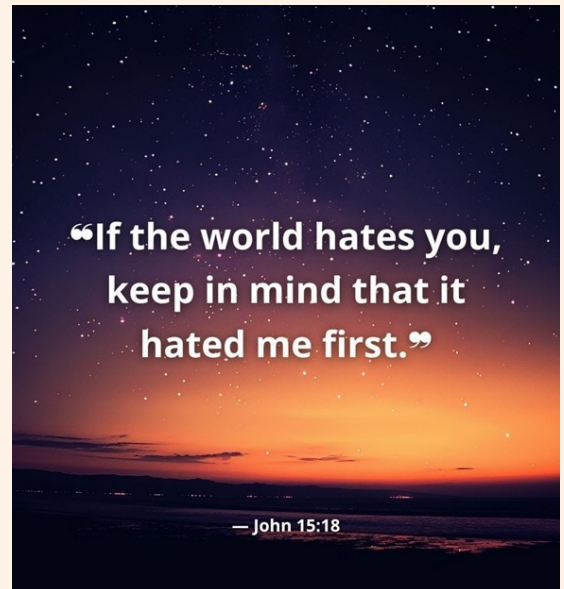
“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, be-

cause they do not know Him who sent Me.” John 15:18-21

The High Priest and other religious leaders in Jerusalem were filled with indignation against the apostles for preaching Jesus. They imprisoned them once and let them go charging them not to teach or preach anymore in the name of Jesus. The apostles continued to preach Jesus, and they were imprisoned again. After taking the advice of Gamaliel, they beat the apostles and let them go again charging them not to speak in the name of Jesus. The response of the apostles is recorded in Acts 5:40-42, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”

While here on earth, Jesus told his disciples not to be surprised if the world hated them. In fact, Jesus told them to rejoice when this happened, and that is exactly what the apostles did. Jesus said, “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matt. 5:11-12)

Why did the world hate Jesus? They hated him because he told them the truth about themselves. He didn’t gloss over their sin; Jesus called them to repent of their sin. “There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.’” (Lk. 13:1-5)



Why does the world hate disciples of Christ? They hate Christians when they do not embrace and value things in this world the same way the world values them. If Christians will just hold their tongues and not call for repentance, then the world will tolerate Christians, even if they don't love Christians. If a Christian is willing to compromise God's word in order to "get along", then the world is happy. The world is fond of creating false Christs, who are not anything like the real Christ of the Scripture. The false Christ is a friend of the world. He is more like a genie that grants wishes than he is a Lord who demands obedience. This genie is at the beck and call of the world. He is summoned to perform some cure or to grant a desire, then he is told to return to his bottle until he is needed again.

Jesus tells us that if we truly follow him and his word, then the world will hate us because it hated him. Jesus tells us that as his faithful disciples the world will hate us because we are not of the world. We do not look or think like the world, so the world will reject us. They will persecute us because they persecuted Jesus before us. Ultimately the world rejects Jesus and his true disciples because they do not know God who sent Jesus.

We read a passage in which Jesus testified regarding the ministry of John the Baptist: "As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet.'" (Matt. 11:7-9) Jesus said that John was not like a politician. He wasn't shaping his message based on which way the wind was blowing. He wasn't trying to please his audience. Like a true prophet of God, John was God's messenger calling men to repentance.

Jesus then commented on the response of people to John's ministry and his own ministry: "But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, saying:

'We played the flute for you,

And you did not dance;

We mourned to you,

And you did not lament.'

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children." (Matt. 11:16-19) The world rejects the message of repentance, and it rejects the messengers at its own whim. The world demands that we change the message if we want to be approved.

John reports a typical encounter between Jesus and the worldly leaders of his day:

Jesus told them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. I am not here on my own, but he sent me. Why can't you understand what I am saying? It's because you can't even hear me! For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies. So when I tell the truth, you just naturally don't believe me! Which of you can truthfully accuse me of sin? And since I am telling you the truth, why don't you believe me? Anyone who belongs to God listens gladly to the words of God. But you don't listen because you don't belong to God."

The people retorted, “You Samaritan devil! Didn’t we say all along that you were possessed by a demon?”

“No,” Jesus said, “I have no demon in me. For I honor my Father—and you dishonor me. And though I have no wish to glorify myself, God is going to glorify me. He is the true judge. I tell you the truth, anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!” (Jn. 8:42-51 NLT)

If they accuse Jesus of being a demon, should we be surprised at the names they call true disciples today. Those who contend earnestly for the truth are labeled as hatemongers, homophobes, and other labels.

In Sweden, a Pentecostal preacher was found guilty of hate speech when he spoke against homosexuality in 2003. He referred to homosexuality as “abnormal, a horrible cancerous tumor in the body of society.” What makes this particularly noteworthy is the comment of the prosecutor: “One may have whatever religion one wishes, but this is an attack on all fronts against homosexuals. Collecting Bible citations on this topic, as he does, makes this hate speech.” You can believe what you want, but you can’t express it publicly if it is against homosexuality, nor can you offer evidence that the Bible is against homosexuality. (<https://www.lavistachurchofchrist.org/cms/hate-speech/>)

It is not hate-speech to call sinners to repent, whether they are homosexuals, confused about gender, abortion advocates, or prideful Christians. The Bible teaches that we are all sinners in need of a savior. The Bible also teaches that we must warn people about compromising with the world. John wrote, “Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. And this world

is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.” (1 Jn. 2:15-17 NLT)

If there is no difference between the way the world lives and the way disciples live, this should be a sign of concern. We are to be in the world but not of the world. “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.” (Rom. 12:2)

Jesus said not to be surprised if the world hates faithful disciples because they first hated him. If the world does not hate us, maybe this should be a concern for us. We should examine ourselves: “Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.” (2 Cor. 13:5 NLT)

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Reflections On the Psalms: Psalm 7

Most of us have been taught to be responsible for our actions. All of us will make mistakes, and if we are confronted with our errors, we usually admit that what we did was wrong. If we try to live our lives as Christians, we accept whatever rebuke is given, and determine that we will do better in the future.

However, what happens when we are unjustly accused of major wrongdoing? What if a fellow worker resents us when we claim that we are Christians, and spreads lies about what we are doing? What do we do? How do we react to an attack on our integrity?

Usually when such a thing happens, our response is, at the very least, a strong denial. Often, our reaction is accompanied by anger, and a desire to “get even”. Yes, slander is something that is hard to deal with as a Christian.

In Psalm 7, David also had to deal with slander when he was accused of being a traitor! We don't know the circumstances behind the accusations, but apparently a Benjamite named Cush made them.

Like us, David's reaction was anger. But unlike the methods of the world, David turned to the Lord in prayer. “O Lord my God, I take refuge in you; save and deliver me from all who pursue me.” The Lord was constantly before the mind of David. Was he upset at what was said? Of course he was upset! But the difference is that he knew that the Lord would deliver him, and resolve the situation.

In verses three and four, David considered the charges. If he was guilty, if he had done what Cush had said he had done, then David's prayer was that the Lord should punish him. When we think that we are being unjustly accused, we would do well to try to objectively consider what is lev-

eled against us. There may be some truth to the charges. Maybe we do have a blind spot to certain things that we say or do. What we think is slander may very well be the truth.

If, like David, we consider the charges, and decide that they are false, we still have to decide what to do. The first thing we can do is to place our trust in the Lord. “My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart.” Trust alone is hard at a time like this. We want to “do something”! However, the best way is to always work with the Lord before us. Sometimes, the Lord's justice seems to be long in coming. David wrote, “Awake, my God; decree justice.” Of course, the Lord does not sleep, but sometimes we may echo David's words in our hearts.

Verses fourteen through sixteen paint a vivid picture of what will eventually happen. Sooner or later, trouble will recoil upon the person that causes it. As a Christian, we know that with our God justice will come for all.

One thought that we need to remember, there is a good chance that we will suffer slander as a Christian. Our Lord was falsely accused throughout His ministry. As we labor for the Lord, should we be shaken if we suffer the same thing? Jesus said, “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matt. 5:11-12). Peter is even more specific in 1 Peter 2:19-21, “For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable be-

fore God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”

Yes, like David, we will face injustice, even persecution in our Christian lives. But we need to remember who we are, and to whom our loyalty and conduct belongs. Often the reactions of the world are not to be the reactions of God's people. It is not

easy to change and grow, but with the help of our Father, and the words of comfort and guidance in the Word of God, we can become more Christ-like.

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The Gospel According to YouTube

A man stands on a street corner making an impassioned speech to a few hundred people. He holds their attention for a good while, and their nodding and cheering indicates that his message is connecting. Suddenly, a commotion is heard down the street. The circus has come to town! The connection between speaker and audience is broken, and only a few remain to hear him conclude his talk.

The largest circus of all began rolling into all our towns just over ten years ago. On April 23, 2005 an 18-second video was uploaded to the Internet in a trial of the new service, “YouTube”. Has this circus proven to be a distraction?

To mark YouTube’s 10th anniversary, Cnet.com last week posted some numbers that are nothing short of breathtaking. They begin with that 18-second pilot video: “By the time you finish watching [it], other YouTube viewers around the globe will have collectively watched more than seven years-worth of video. In the time it takes to watch that test video two more times, about 12 days of footage will have been uploaded to Google's video site.” Read through that paragraph again; let those numbers sink in.

More than 1 billion different viewers log in to YouTube each month - that's one out of seven inhabitants on earth! And that number continues to grow. I'll be the first to admit there are some wonderful videos to be found on YouTube. I have of-

ten linked to these and recommended them to others. But I have also stumbled upon videos that are shocking, and many others that teach false concepts.

Long before YouTube and video, the apostle Paul acknowledged that people are often distracted from hearing truth, the thing they most need to hear. “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this world has blinded ...” (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

Even if a person watched no shameful or erroneous videos, has the “good” pulled us away from the “best”? What if only half the time spent watching YouTube was instead devoted to reading the word of God? What a difference the world might see!

This lifestyle trend challenges even good people. Martha wanted Jesus to tell her sister to come help in the kitchen, but Jesus' words rebuked Martha instead: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (Lk. 10:41-42). Spending time with our Savior is always the superior choice. Let the circus music blare away while we sit at His feet, preparing our souls for eternity.

Timothy D Hall, *LightGrams, April 30, 2015 Volume 19, Number 17*

Who Is Rich?

Our answer to that question goes a long way in revealing the condition of our heart. I like the story told so many times of the Wyoming rancher who went to Germany to do some agricultural consulting. One day while meeting with a farmer he asked, "How big is your farm," to which the farmer replied, "about a mile square." Then the German asked the rancher, "How big is your farm?" The rancher proudly sticks out his chest and replies, "I could get in my truck at dawn and ride until sunset and still be on my ranch." Not to be outdone the farmer replied, "I'm sorry, I used to have a truck just like that."

We often tell humorous stories such as that in jest, but there are those in today's society who, like the rancher, have more than sufficient earthly goods, and are in need of nothing, who allow such success to lead them into thinking they don't need God either. Although it is only natural for man to be proud of his accomplishments, we must be sure that God receives the proper thanks for our success.

In Luke chapter 12, Jesus is teaching a great number of people when from the audience someone says to Him, "Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus replies, "Who made me a judge or divider over you?" The answer Jesus gives clearly defines what is most important, and it is not striving for houses or lands!

As he went "about his father's business," one very important part of Christ's mission was to remind man that "life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Jesus uses this opportunity to teach, by way of a parable, a story of a rich man who had more bounty from the land than he would ever use. Hence the man says to himself, "I have much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." We might say, "What a successful man." Jesus

says, "Thou Fool! Should you die tonight, to whom will your things belong?" A very good question over 2000 years ago, and one to which we should all give some serious thought today. If you are a child of God, you are rich beyond belief!

Tom Bennett

Antioch Bulletin 7/22/12

People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. and so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty spring.

James 3:7-12 NLT

Word Clouds

Most of us have at one time or another enjoyed reading the comics. Someone might ask, “Read them? I thought comic strips were cartoons, drawings. How can you read them?” In most comic strips I’m familiar with the words of the cartoon character are written in a “balloon” above their head. That’s how we can “read” the comics.

Real people don’t have words floating above their heads. But the concept of word clouds shows that maybe we do.

Wikipedia refers to these as “tag clouds”, designed to show a “weighted list” of the words we most frequently use in a given message. For example, I used one web site to create a word cloud from my most recent LightGrams article. Not surprisingly, the largest word in that cloud was “light”, which was the theme of that article.

What word(s) did we use most in that report?
How will others see the letter I spent hours composing? A word cloud can give insights into your writing style.

There is a sense in which all the words we speak on a given day (or lifetime) are hovering above us in a cloud. Jesus alluded to that concept in Matthew 12:36: “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.” Do our words matter? We may laughingly dismiss the idea, but Jesus sure didn’t. He warns us to be careful what we say.

Here’s another passage that helps us visualize the word cloud that follows us: “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Col. 4:6). Does my speech suggest to others that I am a dedicated Christian? Or do the words that flow out of my mouth (hover above me in my word cloud) suggest otherwise?

Words are powerful. With them we can inflict great damage on another, or we can administer comfort and peace. We may proclaim to others that we are followers of Jesus, but do the words we regularly use in conversation back up such a claim? Our word clouds follow us.

When Jesus was arrested and led to the house of the high priest, the eyes of many turned to Peter who was standing in the shadows. Out of his fear he denied even knowing Jesus. “And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, ‘Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you’” (Matt. 26:73).

Yes, our speech will often reveal us for who we really are. It takes diligence to keep the word cloud above us pure and loving. Our speech will absolutely betray us.

Timothy D Hall

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