

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 2/13/94  
John 15:23-27 "Living in Enemy Territory"

**Intro:**

We are living in enemy territory. The world hates Christians. It's been that way since the world rejected Christ Himself.

Fox's book of Martyrs documents the tragic accounts of the world's brutal treatment of the followers of Christ in centuries gone by.

And in more recent days, the hostility of the former communist societies towards Christians is well attested. Georgi Vins spent 8 years in Soviet prisons and labor camps for preaching the gospel. He was stripped of his Soviet citizenship and exiled to the USA in 1979. Andrei Yudinsev was just 18 when police arrested him at a Christian youth meeting in 1982. He spent the next 3 1/2 years in Soviet prisons and labor camps. Valentina Saveleva was arrested in 1982 while transporting Christian literature. For her "crime" she was sentenced to 5 years in prison. Vladimir Rytikov was just 20 when he, together with his father (Pavel) and another Christian, were arrested. Their crime? Teaching children's Bible classes. Vladimir Okhotin, at 42 years of age, was given a 2 1/2 year prison term in 1984. The reason? Because he served as the music director of his church. (from Let the Waters Roar, G. Vins)

The world is hostile towards Christianity.

You say, "Well in Communistic countries, yes, but what about here?"

Yes, what about here? Nearly all of us are aware of the increasing antagonism towards Bible-believing, evangelical, fundamental Christians in our land.

Quote: article by Rex Rogers, Baptist Bulletin, "Teens..."

We are living in enemy territory. But that's nothing new, is it? Peter said...

I Pt 1:1 "Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the sojourners scattered throughout."

The Bible calls Christians sojourners. To the world, we are strange. We don't fit in. We're peculiar. We're offensive. We are hated.

Paul put it this way.

I Cor 4:10 "We are fools for Christ's sake."

I Cor 4:12-13 "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure it; being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."

A typical scene is what happened to Paul in Acts 22. A Jewish mob turned on him for his commitment to preach Christ to all people. He tried to defend himself. Do you remember how they responded? Acts 22:22 "And they listened to him until this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live."

We are living in enemy territory.

Q: Is it possible to be fruitful as a Christian while living in a hostile environment? What is our responsibility while we occupy foreign turf?

Jesus answers these questions for us in Jn 15.

**Proposition: In John 15:23-27, Jesus teaches us 3 important truths we need to know as we live in enemy territory.**

I. We have Reasons (23-25).

Why does the world hate us?

A. From last week...

1. We are opposed because of Our Involvement with one another (17).
2. We are opposed because of Our Identification with Christ (18-20).
3. We are opposed because of Our Intimacy with God (21).
4. We are opposed because of Our Integrity (22).

B. This week...

1. The world's opposition is based on Ignorance (23-24).
2. The world's opposition is Irrational (25).

II. We have a Resource (26).

III. We have a Responsibility (27).

Reminder. When Jesus spoke the words recorded in Jn 14-16, He had one chief aim in mind. With His death being imminent, and His departure from the world only a short time away, He wanted to prepare His followers for His absence. How should they live when He was gone? He gave them an illustration to answer that question--the Vine. He also spoke candidly, and told them the world would hate them.

**I. We have Reasons for the world's opposition (23-25).**

Last week, we asked the question: Why? Why does the world oppose Christians? Why do they hate us? Jesus gave us 4 reasons in vv 18-22.

A. From last week...

1. *We are opposed because of Our Involvement with one another (17).*
2. *We are opposed because of Our Identification with Christ (18-20).*
3. *We are opposed because of Our Intimacy with God (21).*
4. *We are opposed because of Our Integrity (22).*

It boils down to this. The reason the world hates Christians is because the world hated Christ.

But why did the world hate Christ? Jesus reveals the reasons in vv 23-25. There are two which we'll consider this week.

B. This week...

Why did the world hate Christ? And why does the world hate us?

1. *The world's opposition is based on Ignorance (23-24).*

V 23 "He that hateth Me hateth my Father also."

Notice that. There's a connection between the world's hatred of Christians, of Christ, and of the Father. Jesus said clearly the reason the world hated Him was because it hated God the Father.

I must remind you who Jesus had in mind by the "world." The world refers to society, a society which is apart from God and in opposition to God, a society which is

in the stranglehold of the Evil one. In reality, there are two groups of people on planet earth: There's the Church, and there's the world. The Church is comprised of individuals who have confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord. The world is made up of people who refuse to bow to Christ. The world rejects Christ. The world hates Christ.

Don't get the idea that there is only one kind of "world" (Carson, 117). There is only one truth, but error comes in all shapes and sizes. As D.A. Carson suggests, "The world wears many ugly faces." Naziism was anti-God. So is Communism. But so is raw-secularism, and greedy materialism. So are the special interest groups that promote alternate, immoral lifestyles. They are all anti-God, anti-Bible, and anti-Christ.

Here's the irony. As individual groups, Nazis and communists and materialists hate each other. But they have one thing in common. Together, they hate biblical Christianity, and try to snuff it out.

Do you know why? What did Jesus say is the real problem of the person who hates Him? It is ignorance. V 21 "But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me." V 23--The person who hates Christ also hates God the Father.

If the people of His day had really known God, they would have loved Jesus. But they didn't know God. That's why they hated Jesus.

Their problem was not a lack of evidence.

V 24 "If I had not done among them the works..."

Jesus' works were unique. He did what no other man had ever done. His works actually upset some people, especially the hypocritical religious leaders.

Take Jn 9 as a case in point. Jesus healed a man born blind. The Pharisees couldn't deny the evidence. But they refused to put their trust in Jesus. Instead, His miracle only fanned the flame of their hatred for Him.

Even more graphic is what Jesus did for Lazarus (Jn 11). Lazarus had been dead 4 days. His body was already anointed, wrapped, and placed in a tomb. And Jesus called him back to life! What a miracle! How did people respond? Some believed in Jesus (11:45). But others determined to eliminate Him (see 11:46-48).

Why? Why did Jesus' works offend people? You would think that everyone would have applauded at His miracles. They didn't. Why not? Jesus' works revealed that Jesus was unique.

You see, a person is who different is threatening to the establishment. He breaks the curve on the grading scale. He exposes. He intimidates.

Jesus made people feel uncomfortable. Of Jesus they said, "Never a man did this!" His holy presence and righteous deeds exposed their sinfulness. When He entered the room, He was like a spotlight that revealed every sin-stained spot in their lives.

True, He offered forgiveness. But some chose to reject Him rather than admit their need for Him. Blinded by their ignorance.

You see, human beings are supposed to know God. After all, we were created in His image (Gen 1:27). He reveals Himself to us through His creation, so that we are without excuse for not knowing Him (Rom 1:20). He gave us the Scriptures. He sent His Son. We ought to know God.

And the average person on the street thinks he knows God. Just ask him/her.

Illust:

Yet Jesus' claim is clear. The only way to have a relationship with the Father is through Him (Jn 14:6). If you don't know Jesus, you don't know God.

Application: The world hates Christians because it is ignorant of Who Jesus is. How true this is in our day! If you asked the guy at work who hassles you for being a Christian, "Who was Jesus?" What answer would you get? "Jesus was a nice guy that did a lot of good for people. He taught about peace and love, but was misunderstood, and unfortunately got killed."

When someone views Jesus merely as a person who never raised His voice, who never spoke a critical word, who was a moral reformer that did a lot of good, that's a person has an inadequate view of Jesus. You see, Jesus offended the religious establishment, intentionally. Jesus exposed sin and hypocrisy, intentionally. Jesus condemned injustice, intentionally. Jesus claimed to be the only way to God, intentionally. That's why He was hated.

## *2. The world's opposition is Irrational (25).*

Let me ask you, "Did the world's hatred of Jesus catch God off guard?" No.

V 25 "But this cometh to pass...hated me without a cause."

Notice the phrase, "their Law." That was a poke. Jesus is saying, "Those who hate Me pride themselves in knowing their Law. But if they really knew THEIR Law, they'd know Me. For THEIR Law speaks of Me."

Jesus quotes from a phrase in Ps 35:19 and Ps 69:4. Ps 69 is a Messianic psalm (read vv 1-4). V 4 "They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty."

It's amazing. The world hated Jesus for WITHOUT A CAUSE. They had no just reason to hate Jesus.

That's the second thing about the world's opposition. It's irrational. It doesn't make sense. To hate Jesus is illogical.

Hatred is irrational, even humanly. Why would 2 people who made a vow before God and have spent 10 married years together, get to the point where they hate each other, where they're willing to call it quits, even though that means they inflict great pain on their kids, their friends, and even themselves? Hatred is often irrational.

But the most irrational hatred of all is to hate Jesus.

You say, "I don't hate Jesus."

Let me ask you something. Who hates Jesus? Does the atheist who shakes his fist at God hate Jesus? No doubt. But so do religious people (it was so in Jesus' day!).

To hate someone means I don't give him his rightful place or treatment in my life. If you are prejudice, and hate a person because he has a different color of skin, then you won't give him his rightful place or treatment.

When we refuse to give Jesus the place He deserves in our lives, when we choose to live as though He had never come, we reveal that we don't love Him, rather that we hate Him. And nothing is more irrational than to hate Jesus.

Illust:

Tran: We're living in enemy territory. We've seen why by considering 6 reasons. Another question--How? How can we stand in this hostile environment?

## **II. We have a Resource (26).**

V 26 "But when the Comforter is come..."

Jesus didn't leave His followers in this hateful world without Help. He gave us a Resource--the Holy Spirit.

Jesus already introduced the coming ministry of the Spirit in ch 14 (vv 16-17, 26), and will again develop the theme in ch 16. But here in ch 15, the context is the hostility of the world.

Notice the Trinity--vv 18-22 speak of the world's attitude towards God the Son, vv 23-25 speak of God the Father, and v 26 speaks of God the Holy Spirit.

As Jesus' followers, we are living on enemy territory. But we are not on our own. What does Jesus tell us about the Holy Spirit in v 26?

1. The Holy Spirit is the Resident Helper ("paraklatos").

You say, "I'm weak. I don't think I can stand against the world." None of us can, on our own. But we don't have to. We have the Spirit of Christ. He's the One Who comforts, counsels, and guides us.

2. The Holy Spirit was sent by the Son.

Everything that Jesus was to the 12 disciples, the Spirit is to us, only more so. Jesus taught. So does the Spirit. Jesus rebuked. So does the Spirit. Jesus encouraged. So does the Spirit.

3. The Holy Spirit has come from the Father.

4. He is the Spirit of Truth. He is truth, and leads us into truth (16:13).

The next point is critical. What did Jesus say would be the primary aim of the Spirit?

5. The Spirit testifies of Jesus.

We have a Resource. Let that sink in. Hostility is inevitable. Opposition is unavoidable. If we're going to live for Christ, we'll feel the hatred of the world. But we can endure, as long as we rely on the right Resource.

Key: Jesus didn't give us His Spirit to help us accomplish OUR agenda. It's HIS agenda that the Spirit wants to energize us to accomplish. What is that?

Tran: See v 27... We have Reasons. We have a Resource. And...

### **III. We have a Responsibility (27).**

V 27 "And ye also bear witness..."

The verb "bear witness" in v 27 is the same greek word used in v 26 translated "testify." That's significant. What Jesus said the Spirit would do is the very thing He told His disciples they would do. See the connection?

How does the Holy Spirit testify of Jesus in this hateful world? Does He write Bible verses in the clouds, like jet streams? Does He make images of Jesus appear for people to see on the wall? How does the Spirit testify of Jesus?

Through people. The Spirit bears witness of Jesus Christ through followers of Christ. That's critical to see.

Listen. Yes, we live in enemy territory. But our aim is not merely to hold on, to endure. Our mission is not merely a defensive one. It's offensive too. What is it? V 27 "And ye also shall bear witness." Our mission is to tell the world about Jesus!

V 27 is another version of the Great Commission. Jesus has given us a task to do. We have a high calling. Why us? Listen to the reason He gave the 11--v 27 "because ye have been with me from the beginning."

Privilege involves responsibility. To whom much is given much is required. The 12 disciples had the privilege of being with Jesus for 3 years, of hearing Him teach, of watching His miracles, of eating the bread He created out of 5 loaves. They were privileged. They knew Jesus.

But they weren't to hoard that privilege. They were to pass it on. So are we.

I must warn you. It may cost you. The greek word "bear witness" is the word "martureo." We get our English word "martyr" from it. See the connection? When we bear witness to Jesus in a hostile world, we'll have to pay a price. Tertullian said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." (Wiersbe, 361)

You say, "But Jesus gave this instruction to the apostles. We're not apostles."

True, but the responsibility to witness belongs to every one of us who know Christ. To be a Christian involves what, according to Rom 10:9? "That if thou shalt CONFESS WITH THY MOUTH the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart..."

Oh friend, please listen. If Jesus left us in this world for no other reason than to endure the scorn and hatred of the world, we would be most miserable. But when He left us, He gave us a high privilege, along with a Helper to aid us.

We are here to tell others about Him! Our #1 responsibility in this life is to testify to Christ, to point people to Christ. When was the last time you shared Christ?

Do you know what the devil's great tactic is? To distract us, to sidetrack us, to get us preoccupied with other things, even good things. Like jobs, and school, and even family time.

### **Conclusion:**

We live in enemy territory. But let us never forget the Reasons, and the Resource, and the Responsibility Jesus has given us.