

YOU ALSO MUST TESTIFY

John 15:18-27

Key Verses: 15:26-27

“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 you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”

Last week, Jesus said to us, *“You are my friends if you do what I command”* (14). We learned that true joy comes from God. We can have complete joy when we love Jesus and serve him as his friends. By obeying his words, we can bear fruit that will last forever.

In today’s passage, Jesus tells us that the world will hate us when we follow him as his friends. We must be prepared to endure persecutions. But Jesus will not leave us alone to face the trials on our own. He will send the Holy Spirit to be with us. Let us listen to Jesus at this hour!

I. “IF THE WORLD HATES YOU” (18-25)

Look at verse 18. *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.”* Jesus tells us two things. The world will hate us, and we should remember that the world hated him first. Who is “the world” that Jesus is referring to? It is the unbelieving world. Why did the world hate Jesus? What did Jesus do to the world that it hated him? Jesus is the Son of God. But he gave up his heavenly glory to come down to this world in order to serve and save sinners. God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. During his earthly ministry, all Jesus did was to teach the word of God, heal the sick and love the sinners. Finally, he gave his own life on the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He loved the world. He didn’t do anything to deserve hatred from the world.

The world hated Jesus for no reason. In verse 25, Jesus said, *“They hated me without reason.”* In our society today, hate crime is considered a very serious offense. But Jesus was the target of a hate crime. And they hated him without reason. They hated him so much that they killed him by nailing him to the cross between two common criminals.

In John Chapter 9, Jesus saw a man blind from birth who was begging on the road side. His heart went out to this man. Jesus opened the man’s eyes, giving him a second chance in life. But the Pharisees were mad at Jesus over the miracle. They hated Jesus. So they pressured the man to call Jesus a sinner for violating the Sabbath law. When the man refused, they turned to his parents to bring a charge against Jesus. When they were not willing, the religious leaders summoned the man a second time, pressuring him to accuse Jesus. But the man said clearly, “Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!” (9:25) At this, the

Pharisees hurled insults at him and threw him out of their community. They hated Jesus so much that they turned a blind eye to the fact that Jesus opened the man's eyes. A man's life was changed. It was a beautiful work of God. It was time to celebrate it by praising God. But they didn't care about the man's life. They didn't care about the work of God. Their hatred made them blind to see it. We can see why Jesus said, "They hated me without reason."

Look at verse 18 again. *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first."* Jesus says that the world hated him and that it will hate us also. Why does the world hate us? Jesus gives us the answer in verse 19: *"If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."* Jesus says that the world hates us because we don't belong to it. If we belonged to the world, it would love us as its own. What does it mean to belong to the world? It means to follow the ways of the world, not the ways of God. It means to conform to the world, to accept the value system of this world as ours. It means to follow the trend of this world to live a materialistic and hedonistic lifestyle. As long as we belong to the world, it would love us. It is when we go against the world, it will hate us.

For example, one of your unbelieving friends may say to you, "Hey, let's go to a party on Richard Avenue Thursday night to have some beer." And you answer, "Sorry man, I am going to a Bible fellowship." He might hate you for being a religious nut.

As disciples of Jesus, we do not want to follow this world. We know that we are in the world, but not of the world. Jesus says in verse 19: *As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.* Jesus has chosen us out of the world. We are not of this world any longer. We don't follow the value system of this world. We don't follow the trend of this world. At least, we try not to. In his grace and mercy, Jesus has chosen each of us to be with him and follow him, not this world. Jesus said earlier, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last" (15:16).

Look at verse 20. *Remember what I told you: "A servant is not greater than his master." If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.* In John 13, Jesus said, "No servant is greater than his master" (13:16). Jesus had washed the smelly feet of his disciples. Then he told them to follow his example. He told them to love each other by washing one another's feet. This time Jesus says we should expect persecutions from the world. We are Jesus' disciples. We have committed our lives to him. We are his servants. If Jesus our Master endured persecutions, we should be prepared to endure persecutions as his servants.

Some people expect to live an easier life when they become Christians. They expect God to pour many blessings upon their lives. It is true that God blesses us, protects us and guides us when we become his children. In Jesus, we can have true joy that is complete (11). We can have true hope in the kingdom of God. But we should know that Jesus never promised that our life would become easier. On the contrary, he said this to his followers: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take

up their cross and follow me” (Mk 8:34). Jesus our Master took up his cross in order to save us from our sin and death. We his disciples must follow him, taking up our own cross.

Look at verse 21. *“They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.”* Jesus explains further why the world will hate us and persecute us. He says it’s because of his name. Jesus Christ—this is a sweet name for us. It’s the name of our Savior and Lord. We pray in this name. We confess our love in this name. But to many other people this name invokes hostility. They use the name as a swearing word. Our entertainment industry exports many movies and songs that contain the name of Jesus in this manner, and many young people of the world hear his name in this way. The Son of God loved the sinful world so much that he willingly gave his life as a ransom sacrifice to save sinners. But the world persecutes his disciples because of his name. Jesus says it is because they do not know the one who sent him, that is, they do not know God. They do not know the love of God for them. It is a tragedy.

Persecuting Christians because of Jesus’ name is not new. Many believers in the first century were persecuted, simply because they believed in Jesus and followed him. Beginning with Nero, Roman Emperors demanded Christians to denounce the name of Jesus and to worship them instead. But the believers refused to bow down before man because they knew who Jesus was and what he did for them. For example, Polycarp of Smyrna in Asia Minor (today’s Turkey) was arrested and taken to the amphitheater for public execution. The Roman governor, knowing Polycarp was very old, told him that he would be released if he denied Jesus only once. But Polycarp replied, “Eighty and six years have I served him, and he has never done me wrong. How can I blaspheme him, my King, who has saved me?” The crowd who gathered there to see the execution shouted: “Unless you deny Christ, you will be burned to death.” Polycarp answered them, “You threaten me with fire that burns only for an hour. You should know about the eternal fire and the eternal punishment reserved for the wicked.” With this, Polycarp was burned at the stake. It was in 156 AD.

Since then, many more believers were killed simply because they held on to the name of Jesus. Even today, Christians are killed for their faith in Jesus in countries like Syria, Somalia, North Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan. The Reuters news service reports that the number of Christian martyrs was doubled between 2012 and 2013 from 1,201 to 2,123¹. This number does not include secret killings in countries like North Korea.

In the U.S., we have freedom to believe in Jesus, and we thank God for that. But it does not mean we don’t face any persecutions, especially if we follow Jesus as fully-committed disciples. It is increasingly more difficult to live as a true Christian and serve him as his servants. This is what I mean. Up until the 1950s, we had freedom to pray in Jesus’ name in schools and other public places. Once I found at a garage sale an old college reading book that included several chapters of Genesis. Now things are very different. Public school teachers get in trouble if they share their personal faith in Jesus

¹ January 8, 2014: “Reported Christian "martyr" deaths doubled in 2013”

with their students. They are not allowed to teach Genesis chapter 1 as the truth. Many people still celebrate Christmas, but only as a holiday, not for the birth of the Savior Jesus. We are conditioned to say, “Happy Holidays” instead of “Merry Christmas.” Cities and municipalities are not allowed to display a nativity scene. Court houses are removing Ten Commandments. More and more people are just happy to be religious than to be truly committed disciples of Jesus. A couple of days ago, I read a news article about a cross in the 9/11 museum in New York City. Workers discovered a cross-shaped steel beam in the rubbles of the ruined buildings and included it as part of the memorial. Now, however, a group called American Atheists is suing to have it removed.

Many times we don’t feel like we live in a Christian nation. Perhaps because we no longer live in a Christian nation. At the same time, we are not severely persecuted, at least physically. Now this is a dangerous situation for us, because we can easily compromise with this world and conform to the ways of this world. If you put a frog in hot water, it will jump out. But if you put a frog in cold water and boil it gradually, it will stay there and die. Likewise, if we compromise with the world just a few baby steps each time, we will be far from God before we realize it. We may not have physical persecutions against us, but we still have a formidable enemy in and around us to bring us down. How can we keep our faith in Jesus in this situation? Jesus gives us the answer in this passage, but first he has a warning for those who persecute his disciples.

Look at verses 22-25. *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. Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. 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. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: “They hated me without reason.”* Jesus says that those who persecute his disciples will be surely found guilty of sin. They will be punished by God for their sin. And they will have no excuse for their sins, because Jesus had come and spoken the truth to them, and also he did the work of God that no one else had done. What Jesus taught and what he did is an open book. We are not a secret society. Anyone can find out what Jesus taught and the work of God he did. So they cannot plead ignorance before the judgment seat of God in the end. Furthermore, when they hate Jesus, they hate God the Father as well. Jesus repeats this in verses 23 and 24. Still, Jesus was comforted when he realized that their hatred fulfilled the Scripture. He said in verse 25: *But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: “They hated me without reason.”* This is a quotation from Psalm 69:4.

II. WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES (26-27)

Look at verses 26-27. *“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 you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”* In Chapter 14, Jesus gave a promise that he would send another advocate to help us and to be with us forever—the Spirit of the Truth (14:16-17). Jesus promised that he would not leave us as orphans to face persecutions alone. He will come to us (14:18). Jesus will send the Advocate (the Counselor, the Holy Spirit) from the Father to help us.

First, the Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus. Look at verse 26 again. *“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.* The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus. We will learn details about the work of the Holy Spirit next week when we study John Chapter 16. But Jesus gives us a preview here. He says that the main work of the Holy Spirit is to testify about him. When the Spirit comes, he will convict the world about sin and righteousness and judgment (16:8-11). The Holy Spirit helps a person to realize that he is a sinner before God and accept Jesus as his or her personal Savior. The Bible says that no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit (1Co 12:3).

In John Chapter 14, Jesus said, “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (14:26). Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would teach us all things about Jesus. When we study the Bible, we should pray to God to help us to know Jesus through the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit moves a person’s heart, even a terrible sinner can come to know Christ and become a disciple of Jesus. How assuring it is to know that the Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus in this unbelieving world!

Second, we also must testify. Look at verse 27. *“And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”* Saving people’s lives from sin and death is the work of God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Yet, Jesus says that he can use his disciples like us in his work of salvation. He says, *“And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”* Of course, the 12 disciples were with Jesus from the beginning. But I believe that when Jesus says, “And you also must testify,” he is telling us as well. We are disciples of Jesus. Physically, we have not been with Jesus. But we have been with him through the word of God. We know what he said. We know that he did. And we believe what he said and what he did for us. We have been with Jesus. And he wants us to testify about him to the unbelieving world. Jesus says in Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

We don’t have to be afraid of persecutions, nor do we have to be afraid of being hated by the world. Jesus promised to send us the Spirit of truth so as to help us to testify about his love. Persecutions should not discourage us from testifying about Jesus. In fact, persecutions are the evidence that God is working in our midst. In addition, persecutions build our Christian character if we endure them by faith in God. When the strong wind blows, a young tree sways back and forth. Because of the strong wind, the tree takes deeper root in the ground. Likewise, persecutions are the evidence that we are taking deep root in Jesus.

In today’s passage, we learned that the world will hate us just as it hated Jesus. The unbelieving world will persecute us when we love and serve Jesus wholeheartedly. But God will not leave us alone. He will send us the Holy Spirit to help us to overcome the world. The Holy Spirit will testify about Jesus to convict the hearts of sinners. And we must also testify about Jesus. May God help us to be faithful witnesses to the love of Jesus until we meet him face to face in his glorious second coming!