

# If the World Hates You...

## John 15:18 – 16:4

The following sermon outline can be used at a Suffering Church Sunday service or meeting. We suggest that you follow the basic structure, and brief notes are included to aid your study and preparation. Various stories of persecution may be found on pages 16-20, and some helpful commentaries are recommended on the next page.

### INTRODUCTION

In today's world hatred of Christ's disciples is widespread and severe. Discrimination, harassment and persecution blight the lives of our brothers and sisters in many parts of the world. Even in some Western countries, such as the UK, Christians face increasing hostility to their faith and find themselves under pressure.

The hatred that Christians experience raises many issues, both for those who suffer it directly and for those who support and pray for them. Why does it happen? How should we respond to it? And does it call our faith into question?

But anti-Christian hatred is nothing new. These same issues have confronted believers since New Testament times, and some sections of the Bible are specifically addressed to Christians facing persecution.

This passage from John's Gospel is part of Jesus' farewell address to His first disciples, which is intended to prepare them for the challenges they will face after His departure. The purpose of these verses is to explain why the world hates them, to show them how to respond, and to protect them against falling away when persecution comes.

### THE REASONS FOR HATRED (15:18-25)

**1. The world hates Jesus (15:18-21).**  
In the New Testament the word "world"

sometimes refers to the whole created order, or to the human world in a neutral sense. Here, however, it means humanity in its fallenness and darkness, which are expressed in an ideology and practice that



**Anti-Christian hatred is a painful reality for many of our brothers and sisters today**

exclude the true God. This world hates Jesus' disciples because it has first hated Him, and because they do not belong to it but to Him. The world will respond to them as it responded to Him, because they bear His Name, and because it does not know His Father.

**2. The world hates the Father (15:22-25).**  
Whoever hates Jesus also hates His Father. If Jesus had not spoken His word to the world or performed mighty works among them, their rejection of God would not put them in the wrong. But now their hostility to Jesus and the Father are inexcusable; they have hated Them without reason, so fulfilling an Old Testament scripture. (Psalm 69:4)

### THE RESPONSE TO HATRED (15:26-27)

When Jesus sends the Spirit of truth to His disciples from the Father, His role will be to bear witness to Jesus. And the disciples are to respond to the world's hatred in the same way, by bearing witness to what they know about Jesus.

### THE READINESS FOR HATRED (16:1-4)

Jesus is giving this teaching to the disciples so that they will not abandon their faith. The severe persecution that they suffer, at the hands of a world that knows neither Jesus nor the Father, may tempt them to do so. But when it happens, they can now remember that Jesus warned them in advance, and their faith in Him will be strengthened and not weakened.

### CONCLUSION

This passage assumes that Christians should not expect the world always to regard them kindly – indeed, that they are to expect the world to be their enemy. But for those Christians who do face hatred, this passage makes sense of their sufferings, in terms of the hostility of the world towards Jesus and His Father. It outlines the response required of them, to bear witness to Jesus with the help of the Spirit. And it provides a necessary preparation for them, by giving notice of what Jesus' disciples can expect to undergo because of His Name. In all these ways it helps them not only to prepare for persecution, but also to endure it.

Turn to page 13 to read the story of a young Christian woman from India, Swaroopa, and her family, whose faith in the Lord was strengthened and not weakened by her experience of anti-Christian hatred.