

## Who Is An Enemy of God?

John 15:18-23 NAS:

<sup>18</sup> *"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.*

<sup>19</sup> *"If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.*

<sup>20</sup> *"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave 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.*

<sup>21</sup> *"But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.*

<sup>22</sup> *"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.*

<sup>23</sup> *"He who hates Me hates My Father also.*

In the previous section (John 15:12-17) Christ told us who His friends are. In this section He tells us who His enemies are. We are friends of Christ and show our love for Him by obeying Him (John 15:14-16). But Christ has many enemies and when we love and serve Him those enemies become our enemies too.

“If you become an evangelical Christian in Laos, the Communist neighbor of Vietnam and Cambodia, you likely will be ‘asked’ to sign a fill-in-the-blank form. And it's not a membership card at your neighborhood church. The form reads, in part:

*“I, (name), who live in (location), believe in a foreign religion (a religion that is against government policy),<sup>1</sup> which the imperialists have used for their own benefit to divide the united front and to build power for themselves against the local authorities. Now I and my family clearly see the intentions of the enemy and regret the deeds which we have committed. We have clearly seen the goodness of the Party and the Government. Therefore, I and my family voluntarily and unequivocally resign from believing in this foreign religion.*

“If you sign, you promise not to participate in this ‘foreign religion’ under punishment of law. If you don't sign, you can expect humiliation, harassment, and persecution, including

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<sup>1</sup> Parentheses mine.

probable imprisonment and torture. The document's widespread use by Laotian officials has been authenticated by the World Evangelical Fellowship's Religious Liberty Commission and other sources. Hundreds of rural Christians reportedly have been forced to sign the form in public, then compelled to participate in animistic sacrifices (demon worship and sacrifices to demons)."<sup>2</sup>

Look again at Jesus' words in John 15:18, 19 NAS:

*"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.*

<sup>19</sup> *"If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you."*

We are not to be surprised when the world treats us like the followers of Christ are being treated in Laos and for that matter all over the world. Now you may or may not understand why the world hated Jesus from the moment He came. Just in case you do not know, they hated Him because He was not the Messiah they were looking for. The Jewish leaders wanted a military hero who would free them from the control of the hated Roman Empire thus allowing them to exercise power once again throughout the world. In addition they also wanted the Messiah to tell them what wonderfully righteous people they were. Instead Christ brought a message of love rather than revolution, and He condemned them for practicing hypocrisy in their relationship with God. Also, they did not want someone who came criticizing their behavior and turning their beliefs and values upside down. They wanted to be told how good and special they were and they wanted to enjoy the power and wealth that came with being part of the ruling class. Instead they found this Man who taught that they should give all they have to the poor and then follow Him. People did not want to live like that then and they do not want to live like that now. People generally want life to be all about them.

So if you are a friend of Christ you are going to be hated by most people. The other side of that is that if you are friends with the world, the world will accept you warmly, but you will be an enemy of God. In James 4:4 James writes: *You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God (NLT)."*

A fundamental reason for the world's hatred of Christians is born out of their different values. For example, if we look at 1 Peter 4:1-4 we see some of these differences highlighted:

1 Peter 4:1-4 NLT:

<sup>1</sup> *So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have **suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin.***

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<sup>2</sup> *More Perfect Illustrations: For Every Topic and Occasion*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "PERSECUTION".

<sup>2</sup> You won't spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God.

<sup>3</sup> You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.

<sup>4</sup> Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you.

If we lean on Christ during our suffering, if we turn to Him and trust in Him to get us through it, we can have victory over sin. But the central idea here seems to be the same truth taught in Romans 6 (The Message):

<sup>1</sup> *So what do we do? Keep on sinning so God can keep on forgiving?*

<sup>2</sup> *I should hope not! If we've left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there?*

<sup>3</sup> *Or didn't you realize we packed up and left there for good? That is what happened in baptism. When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, we entered into the new country of grace—a new life in a new land! That's what baptism into the life of Jesus means.*

<sup>4</sup> *When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus; when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus.*

<sup>5</sup> *Each of us is raised into a light-filled world by our Father so that we can see where we're going in our new grace-sovereign country.*

<sup>6</sup> *Could it be any clearer? Our old way of life was nailed to the Cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life—no longer at sin's every beck and call! What we believe is this:*

<sup>7</sup><sup>8</sup> *If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection.*

<sup>9</sup> *We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word.*

<sup>10</sup> *When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us.*

<sup>11</sup> *From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did.*

<sup>12</sup> *That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day.*

<sup>13</sup> *Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time—remember, you've been raised from the dead!—into God's way of doing things.*

<sup>14</sup> *Sin can't tell you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God.*

<sup>17</sup> *But thank God you've started listening to a new master,*  
<sup>18</sup> *one whose commands set you free to live openly in his freedom!*

<sup>19</sup> *I'm using this freedom language because it's easy to picture. You can readily recall, can't you, how at one time the more you did just what you felt like doing—not caring about others, not caring about God—the worse your life became and the less freedom you had? And how much different is it now as you live in God's freedom, your lives healed and expansive in holiness?*

<sup>20</sup> *As long as you did what you felt like doing, ignoring God, you didn't have to bother with right thinking or right living, or right anything for that matter.*

<sup>21</sup> *But do you call that a free life? **What did you get out of it? Nothing you're proud of now. Where did it get you? A dead end.***

<sup>22</sup> *But now that you've found you don't have to listen to sin tell you what to do, and have discovered the delight of listening to God telling you, what a surprise! A whole, healed, put-together life right now, with more and more of life on the way!*

<sup>23</sup> *Work hard for sin your whole life and your pension is death. But God's gift is real life, eternal life, delivered by Jesus, our Master.*

We are identified with Christ in His suffering and death, and therefore can have victory over sin. As we yield ourselves to God, and have the same attitude toward sin that Jesus had, we can overcome the old life and manifest the new life.<sup>3</sup>

Paul tells of further benefits that come when we separate ourselves from the world in Romans 12:1-2 NLT:

<sup>1</sup> *And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.*

<sup>2</sup> *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but **let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.** Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

Once a person places their faith and trust completely in the work and the teaching of Christ, they find a freedom in which they are given a whole new value system. The

<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W.: The Bible Exposition Commentary. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 1 Pe 4:1

believer is given a more meaningful and satisfying purpose in life. The believer is given a life in which they can experience true joy. The believer is given a true sense of hope, both for the balance of their life here on earth as well as in eternity in Heaven when their life here on earth comes to an end. The believer is given the kind of love that can only come through the presence of the Holy Spirit which now lives within them; and the Spirit gives them the capability of both feeling it and giving it to others. Then the believer can obey John 15:17, “*love one another.*”

As a result of all these things that make the Christian different from the world and its value systems, we find yet another example of the world’s **racism**. The world hates Christians because the Christians are not like them. Now this does not mean that Christians are not living in the real world. They do and they are very much a part of it. But God wants them to live in a manner that attracts the world to the Christian life. I am sure you are familiar with Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount during which He said in **Matthew 5:13-16 NLT**:

<sup>13</sup> *“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.*

<sup>14</sup> *“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.*

<sup>15</sup> *No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house.*

<sup>16</sup> *In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.*

Christians therefore are not isolated from the world; they just look at the world from a perspective that has Christ rather than self as their focus.

If there is anything in the life of a Christian that is getting in the way of their having such a Christ-centered focus so that they may feel God’s love and do God’s will, it is a temptation from the world and needs to be identified. Then a plan of action needs to be developed to remove whatever that block is from their lives.

John 15:20-21 NAS:

<sup>20</sup> *“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave 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.*

<sup>21</sup> *“But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.*

Here Jesus reminds His disciples of something He had told them earlier (John 13:16). **No servant is greater than his master.** Just as they were to follow Jesus’ example of humble service, so too were they to so closely identify themselves with Jesus that if He suffered they too would suffer by copying His behavior and doing the things He had

done. In some cases, however, by the grace of God there was a positive result and people would come to accept the apostles' teaching about Jesus. But for the most part these people who refused to accept the apostles' teaching and hated them did so for the same reason they hated Jesus, and that was because they did not really know God, the One who sent Jesus.

Had they known God they would have accepted His Son. Their ignorance got in the way of their knowing that Jesus was doing the work of His Father.

This was not something new for Jesus to say for He brought up the subject back in John 8:19 NAS: "*So they were saying to Him, 'Where is Your Father?' Jesus answered, 'You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.'*" Also in John 8:54-55 NAS:

<sup>54</sup> *Jesus answered, "**If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God';***  
<sup>55</sup> *and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.*

Jesus had taught the truth that God had sent Him to teach. Further, Jesus demonstrated His supernatural powers by fulfilling prophecy and performing miracles. There could be no doubt that He was truly the Son of God. But the religious leaders refused to recognize the truth even when it hit them like a ton of bricks.

John 1:9-11 NAS:

<sup>9</sup> *There was the **true** Light which, coming into the world, enlightens **every** man.*  
<sup>10</sup> *He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.*  
<sup>11</sup> *He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.*

The Church of God has endured since the time of Christ but it has done so only through the power of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Many of the world's religions today claim to know God, but they do not know the **true** God or His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God and the **only** Savior of the world. Satan has blinded these people to the Truth.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 NLT:

<sup>3</sup> *If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing.*  
<sup>4</sup> *Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.*

When they refuse to believe in Jesus, people open the door to Satan to come in, control their lives, and blind them to the truth. Their sin contributes to their blindness.

Ephesians 4:17–19 NLT:

<sup>17</sup> *With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for **they are hopelessly confused.***

<sup>18</sup> *Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because **they have closed their minds** and hardened their hearts against him.*

<sup>19</sup> *They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.*

They are so convinced that their religious beliefs, which they have changed and added to for the purpose of serving their own self interests, are the only true religious beliefs so they persecute the followers of **Christ** in the name of that religion. **Paul** was one of the chief persecutors of Christians before Christ brought him to his knees on the road to **Damascus**. Jesus will address this subject again in John chapter sixteen.

John 16:1-4 NAS:

<sup>1</sup> *"These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling.*

<sup>2</sup> *"They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.*

<sup>3</sup> *"These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me.*

<sup>4</sup> *"But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you."<sup>4</sup>*

Now here is a question for your consideration only that we would ask you to answer honestly. Are you, or can you be, honest about the sin in your own lives? In other words if you were to read through the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17, would you be able to honestly admit that you have broken at least one, if not more than one, either in thought, word, or deed? Well, the Bible tells us that **no one**, other than Jesus Christ, will ever get through this life without sinning in any of those ways. So, if your answer was, **"No, I cannot be honest about my own sin, then you are either unaware of the nature of sin or you are not being honest with yourself.** The sad thing about this is that most of the people in the world today do not want to believe they are sinners and consequently would not want to admit they are sinners, they would very likely answer, "No," to this question. The simple truth is that most of the people of the world will not recognize the specifics of

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<sup>4</sup> "I didn't tell you this earlier because I was with you every day." *The Message.*

their own sin.

Now do you remember what Jesus taught and did over and over again throughout His ministry? Well let us look at some examples in John to refresh your memory:

John 3:1-3 NAS:

<sup>1</sup> Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named **Nicodemus**, a ruler of the Jews;

<sup>2</sup> this man came to **Jesus** by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

John 5:36-38 NLT:

<sup>36</sup> But I have a greater witness than John—my teachings and my miracles. The Father gave me these works to accomplish, and they prove that he sent me.

<sup>37</sup> And the Father who sent me has testified about me himself. You have never heard his voice or seen him face to face,

<sup>38</sup> and you do not have his message in your hearts, because you do not believe me—the one he sent to you.

John 10:24-27 NLT:

<sup>24</sup> The people surrounded him and asked, "How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

<sup>25</sup> Jesus replied, "I have already told you, and you don't believe me. The proof is the work I do in my Father's name.

<sup>26</sup> But you don't believe me because you are not my sheep.

<sup>27</sup> My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

John 14:10-11 NLT:

<sup>10</sup> Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. <sup>11</sup> Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.

So did the people have any excuse to continue to sin? They had seen by Jesus' words and miracles that He must come from God. That in itself should have brought everyone to believe in Him. But they would still not believe, being blinded by their own pride and selfish ambition. In spite of all that He told them and showed them, they still would not admit it or do anything about it.

What did Jesus tell the Pharisees after He healed the blind man?

John 9:39-41 NAS:

<sup>39</sup> *And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind."*

<sup>40</sup> *Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?"*

<sup>41</sup> *Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.*

They had to admit that Jesus had healed a man who had been blind since birth, but they would still not accept the evidence that He was the Messiah and place their trust in Him.

Jesus told them that they were the ones who were blind and that because they admitted that they had actually seen some of the miracles Jesus performed and heard the things that He had been sent to teach, this made their sin even worse. They continued to sin, not because of a lack of knowledge, but because they wanted things their way rather than God's way.

Their attitude was similar to that described in 2 Peter 3:15,16 ESV:

*And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.*

Now we will continue on to John 15:22-23 NAS:

<sup>22</sup> *"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.*

<sup>23</sup> *"He who hates Me hates My Father also.*

Now an alternate translation for the word rendered "sin," in verse 22 is "guilt."<sup>5</sup> Sin causes guilt. If you have done something wrong, you have sinned and you are guilty, even if you do not feel guilty. To feel guilt requires a conscience and it requires knowledge. Guilt requires punishment. If you did something wrong and did not know it is wrong, you are still legally guilty. "Ignorance of the law is no excuse," so the saying goes. If you do not realize you are guilty you do not feel guilt. But that does not change the fact that you are guilty. So Jesus is saying that if He had not taught them, or "spoken to them," they would not have awareness of their sin and guilt. But since He has they do, and they have no excuse for not believing in Jesus and having their sin forgiven.

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<sup>5</sup> NAS margin.

There was **no excuse** for these people not to recognize their sin. Jesus had by His teaching and behavior made it clear that He was the One who God promised to send. The sin of refusing to recognize God's purpose in sending Jesus would certainly have caused them some feelings of guilt because in their hearts they knew they were witnessing the promised arrival of the Messiah. Look at what Paul wrote in Romans 1:18-23 ESV:

<sup>18</sup> *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.*

<sup>19</sup> *For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.* <sup>20</sup> *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. **So they are without excuse.***

<sup>21</sup> *For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

<sup>22</sup> *Claiming to be wise, **they became fools**,*

<sup>23</sup> *and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*

**The world will not be honest about its own sin or guilt.** Jesus came as the Revelation of God. If Jesus **had not come, their sin would not be considered so great.**

You've probably heard someone say, "I believe in God and love Him, but I can't go along with the idea of Jesus. I can't buy this business about Jesus being God or being the only way to heaven." Those are the people talked about in verse 23. If they say they love God but reject Jesus, they don't really love or know God. Hence they are enemies of God.

So this brings us to the all-important question: which side are you on? Are you a friend of God or His enemy? It all depends on what you believe about Jesus, God's one and only Son.