

# “Vital Vintage Union” (Part 4)

John 15.18–27

“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. <sup>24</sup>If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. <sup>25</sup>But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, ‘THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.’ <sup>26</sup>When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, <sup>27</sup>and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” [NASB]

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## I. Introduction

One evidence that the Scriptures are written by divine inspiration from God rather than being fables cunningly devised by humans,<sup>2Pe1.16</sup> is that they do not attempt to downplay the weakness or wickedness of humans. Nor do they cover up the painful struggle you will encounter if you receive the Word as your life. Other pamphlets proclaiming the path to paradise will not place much emphasis on what in you keeps you from paradise, or what battles will be pitched against you along the path to paradise.

The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments do both. The path to paradise is not a pretty picture. It is a path of persecution and pain. It is the path of One who was betrayed by His close follower, denied by His closer friend, crucified by His own people. It is the path of One whose flesh was stripped from His bones by the scourge; whose hands and feet were bound to wood by nails; whose side was pierced by spear. It is the path of a stranger in a strange and relentless land. It is a path upon which you will persevere only if you are united to Him as a branch to a vine.

If you are so united to Him, passages such as this will strengthen rather than diminish your faith in Him. He calls you His *friend*. He does not hide from you what you need to know along this path. You will catch brighter and brighter glimpses of the marvelous truth that He Himself *is* the path upon which you walk. And since He has risen from the dead and ascended into heaven... you can be sure of the end of this path for yourself.

Jesus here reveals the reason for spite you experience on this path. He reveals the reality of sin in this world. And He reveals the reaction of saints on the path. Reason of spite, reality of sin, reaction of saints.

## II. Reason of Spite

First the Reason of Spite. Have you found out yet that the world doesn't like you anymore? Oh, there are plenty of people (I'd like to think) who are civil and maybe even friendly toward you. Some may even admire you. Many may welcome you into their club, into their circle, into their confidence. You may have a lot in common and share pleasant experiences. This camaraderie may endure for a long time. As long, that is, as you suppress your expression of communion with the Lord Jesus Christ.

As soon as you begin hinting at your communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, you begin hinting that you just may not share so many values with this circle of acquaintances as you had been letting on. And you begin hinting that you just may not be quite so pliable in their hands as they would like you to be. You begin hinting that you have an identity that does not correlate to their identity... even if you share the same last name.

And that's where you begin to run into trouble. It's your identity. <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.” Because of what? Because you are of Christ, not of the world. If the world hates Christ, and you are of Christ, then the world hates you.

Now, maybe you're already squirming as you hear this. But don't make the mistake of thinking the “if” at the beginning of v18 gives you any wiggle-room. That “if” is NOT an uncertain or questionable condition. Read it this way: “If the world hates you—AND IT DOES—you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.” Or if you prefer: “If you feel like the world hates you—AND DON'T BE SURPRISED BECAUSE IT DOES—you know that it has hated Me before it

hated you.” As John says in his epistle, <sup>1Jo3:13</sup>“Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.”

We will soon hear Jesus praying to His Father, <sup>Jn17:14</sup>“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Here then is the reason of spite: The world hates Jesus. You who believe in Him are *in* Him and He in you. Thus the world hates you. Don’t be surprised by that.

I’m going to get a wee metaphysical here. I’ve shown you how the fall of Adam and Eve heralded a complete inversion of the created order of nature. God created man to submit to God and take dominion over the creatures. But Adam chose to submit to the creature (namely the serpent) and attempt to take dominion over God. Ever since, fallen mankind has bowed to creatures (even images made of wood and stone!) while trying to subdue God (trying to get God to do what man wants Him to do).

Check out this evidence! In the natural order, opposites attract and likes repel. The north end of a magnet will push away the north end of another magnet, whereas the north end of one will clamp tightly to the south end of another. In the natural order male will attract female and vice versa while, according to Scripture, a disproportionate attraction of a male to male is cause for sober investigation. Well, here in this passage Jesus says opposites repel and likes attract. Those who are of the world love those who are of the world, and hate those who are of the Lord. How *unnatural*—that is, how miraculously spiritual it is when a soul who is of the world becomes attracted to those who are of the Lord! It goes against all the nature of a fallen world.

It is impossible for man, but not with God, for nothing is too difficult for God. Only when Christ saves by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, are we restored <sup>Titus3.5</sup>—and those who are of the Lord are able to love those who are of the world. It is impossible for man. That is why Jesus does NOT say, “You are not of the world because you turned over a new leaf” or “because you have been dry for two years” or “because you’ve joined a synagogue or a church.” No, Jesus says, “you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world.”

Jesus chose you to be His servant. A servant is not above His master. How many “friends” did you lose when you first turned to Christ in faith and then turned away from your sinful life? I lost 97.3% of mine. (I had one who was elated. I still live with her now.) How many “friends” did Jesus lose from the time He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt to the time He suffered death on the cross? He lost 100% of His. His own Father forsook Him on the cross. Jesus gave Himself over to that utter humiliation and agony so that the Father would *never, ever* forsake you who are united to Jesus as branches to the vine. But be assured the world will forsake you.

It is worth it! As James says, “Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” <sup>Jam4:4</sup> The reason for spite: the world hates you because it first hated Jesus and you are in Jesus. If they persecuted Him, they will also persecute you. <sup>v20</sup>

### III. Reality of Sin

Why, though, does the world hate Jesus? We come, second, to the Reality of Sin. <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. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.” Talk to me! What is your first reaction when somebody brings to your attention that you have sinned? That you have offended God? That you have served your own ego by speaking arrogantly or harshly and put someone else down?

That you have lived for yourself rather than for a brother or sister when they needed you? That you have held too tightly to and worshiped your money instead of worshiping the Lord in the collection? That you have not kept the Sabbath in a way honoring to the Lord? That you have paid inordinate attention to a woman not your wife or a man not your husband? That you have drunk too much? That you have not spoken according to what you really thought and knew?

Come on, what is your first reaction? You joyfully and eagerly want to hear more about it, right? NOT! If your first reaction is strong resistance, readiness to defend yourself energetically... “Hello, this is Flesh speaking”!

Now, if you are of Christ—no longer of the world—then sooner or later your born-again spirit is going to say, “Beat it, flesh, Jesus is King here, not you. And because He hates sin so do I. And because He has come in pure flesh, suffered and died for the sin you love and I hate, and because He has taken all the threat of God’s anger upon Himself for *my* sin... I don’t have to defend myself from my brother’s chastening. So listen up, Flesh. You won’t like this, but tough! I’m going to listen with full attention to my brother who is helping me see that you’re up to your evil ways again. And since I despise your evil ways I’m going to submit to the pain of having your ways purged from this heart in which Christ is set apart as Lord.”

People of God, you want to have compassion on those who are not yet branches in the vine? Those lifeless and unable to bear fruit pleasing to the Lord? Then recognize the difference in your life from theirs! The scene I’ve just outlined is what you can do, and will do sooner or later. (So why not sooner?) But look...those who are still of the world *cannot* do this! They are under lock and key—under firm control of the world—just as you once were. They are under the Law—the Covenant of Works as given to Adam—and their sins, let alone Adam’s imputed to them, *must* be accounted for in judgment by The Almighty, Holy, Righteous, and Just God.

So you see, they *have* to defend themselves! Imprisoned by guilty necessity! They *have* to prove that they are right and God is wrong! They’ll try to pretend there is no God; they’ll try to pretend their sins aren’t all that offensive; they’ll try to pretend they can make it up to Him... if He really cares. But all the while, they are terribly frustrated with how unsuccessful all their self-justifying endeavors are! *You* can repent and the Lord will hear from heaven and forgive your sin.<sup>2Ch7.14</sup> But they remain unwilling and cannot know His comforting mercy, until He breathes life into their soul. Does this not move you to intercede for those who need—like you once needed—to be grafted into the Vine?

Now here’s the thing: if Jesus hadn’t come as Great High Prophet and brought their sins to their attention, they “would have no sin.” That means, they would continue in their blind ignorance of the terrible wickedness and depth of their sin and their need for the Messiah to save their souls. They would go on enjoying their self-righteous lives right up to the point when Jesus the Great High King comes to judge. Only then would they see, too late, the reality of their despair.

But now that God Himself has come and spoken, they have no excuse. They can’t even procrastinate until the Day of Judgment. No... they know their predicament NOW. Furthermore, as in v24, if Jesus had not come and given unmistakable evidence that He is God by the wondrous works He did, then they could just go on thinking He was merely a created being like any other human, vested with some special gifts. But the works He did attested to the Word He spoke when He said “I AM”, using the very Name of God Himself. <sup>Jn8.58</sup>“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.” <sup>Jn10:30</sup>“I and the Father are one.” Jesus was not trifling, He was not fooling, He was not deluded. His works attested to this.

No merely human creature could do the works He did. Has another human ever raised people like Lazarus from the dead after four days? Has any mere human ever raised himself up from the dead three days after being crucified and stabbed with a spear in the side so all His blood ran out, along with water, giving clear physiological evidence of His death?

No wonder they fretted, fumed, and frothed. <sup>Jn3.20</sup>“For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.” They could not with any reasonable logic deny that they had crucified the Son of God who is fully God and fully man. And yet, according to the Scriptures, Jesus spoke words to their ears and worked miracles before their eyes... in part precisely to *prevent* their believing in Him and repenting before Him. <sup>Isa6.9f</sup>

Jesus is smarter and stronger than you will ever think or imagine. Do not trifle with Him! And Jesus is more compassionate and merciful than you will ever think or imagine. Do not delay with Him! Close with Him now; He may return before fellowship hour! Believe in Him, trust in Him! Will you continue trying to defend yourself and earning your way into heaven when He already took your sins upon Himself as your sacrificial Passover Lamb, and offers to you His account of perfect obedience to the Holy Law?

Recognize the reality of sin! Christ alone, being God, could withstand the infinite wages of our sin against our infinite God! Christ alone, being man, could be a worthy substitute for you and me. Christ alone! Christ alone! Christ alone! Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior! You must have Him or you perish! He has given Himself freely to you at infinite cost to Himself!

This hatred from the world was no surprise to Him. Through the Psalmist His word is, <sup>Ps69.4</sup>“Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; those who would destroy me are powerful, being wrongfully my enemies.” He knew it would happen... it was part of God’s eternal plan of salvation for those He has chosen out of the world. But if you will not have Him, then mark His words: <sup>Jn12.48</sup>“He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.” You must have Christ the Messiah. You must have the One who crushed the head of the serpent, though His own heel was struck. <sup>Gen3.15</sup>

Jesus came because of the reality of sin. He took on the form of man and suffered in order that He might be the reality of mercy which abounds so much more than sin. He rose from the dead and showed that He has in fact defeated the power of sin and death over you. Be embraced by Him that you might embrace Him and live. He is the path; the way, the truth, the life. He is the Servant who suffered to bear the sin of many. <sup>Isa52.13-53.12</sup>

#### IV. Reaction of Saints

What, third, is the Reaction of Saints amidst the Reason for Spite and the Reality of Sin? <sup>26</sup>“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, <sup>27</sup>and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

The first thing you must do is recognize that <sup>2Ti3.12</sup>“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” *Secondly*, take comfort in the fact that God does not leave you. He sends the Helper, the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the triune Godhead. Never will the Spirit fall into the temptation of trying to be liked by the world. He will always bear witness to God, so He will never be liked by the world. *Thirdly*, realize that the world’s hatred toward you may be seen as assurance that you are not of the world, but of the Lord. And *fourthly*, rejoice that the Spirit is dwelling in you who trust in Christ who sends Him. Yes, the Spirit will testify about Christ... but He will do so *in and through you!* He is “the Spirit of truth, whom the world

cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”<sup>Jn14.17</sup>

The Reaction of Saints is that you *will bear witness* of Christ, because you have been with Him from the beginning. The disciples were with Him from the beginning of His ministry. They saw His works, they heard His words, they witnessed His death, they beheld His resurrection, they saw Him ascend into heaven. They understand how He fulfilled all the Word of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Law, the Prophets, the Writings. But there is more. They, like you, were chosen by God in Christ before the foundation of the world, that you should be holy and blameless before Him.<sup>Eph1.4</sup> Chosen—with Him—from the beginning.

Now then, *don't try to get the world to love you!* That would be untrue to your calling as saint, and would be to try to put yourself above the Lord our Master. I'm not saying to try to get the world to hate you! I'm not saying be an isolationist!<sup>Rom12.18</sup> “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”<sup>1Pe2.12</sup> “Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.” Love those who are of the world! But don't try to make the world love you.

Be wise and wary of such things as the Facebook phenomenon. This movement facilitates reconnection with “friends” from your past. Many of these may be “friends” from prior to your conversion, and many of them may have no interest at all in your new life. It is very tempting to seek comfort in recalling relationships that then were. But in most cases, relationships that then were cannot suddenly be transformed into corresponding relationships that now are. Those who once loved you as their own cannot and will not love you now unless they, too, have been chosen by Christ out of the world. You can love them... but can they love you? And you cannot love them by pretending you are what you once were. That is lying, not love. So enjoy your reconnected Facebook friends. But beware of flattering and gratifying a fleshly need for acceptance from virtual but unreal friends. Be real instead. Perhaps your “friends” will hear and know the voice of the Shepherd.

You must understand, finally, that the vine of which you are a branch is NOT planted and rooted in this world! It does NOT derive its vitality or its security from the soil encrusting the world. Every single molecular nutrient comes from heaven above. Not so much as a neutron or a quark come into your cambium through sap drawn upward from the soil, however rich. They come only through sap sent forth from the Father of lights in whom there is no shadow of turning.

This nutrition will cause you to remember that <sup>Mt5:10</sup> “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This Spirit will cause you to hear and obey the Word of Christ, <sup>Mt5:44</sup> “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” And by this nutrition you will stand fast, as <sup>Mt10:22</sup> “You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.” And along the path you will say with the disciples, <sup>Act4:20</sup> “We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” You will with great power give testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace will be upon you all.<sup>Act4:33</sup>