

# JOHN CHAPTER SIXTEEN

## Jesus Warns His Disciples

*(John 16:1-4)*

“When the father of the great **Emmanuel Kant** was an old man he made a perilous journey through the forests of Poland to his native country of Silesia. On the way he encountered a band of robbers who demanded all his valuables, finally asking: ‘Have you given us all?’ and only letting him go when he answered, ‘All.’ When safely out of their sight his hand touched something hard in the hem of his robe. It was his gold, sewn there for safety and quite forgotten by him in his fear and confusion.

“At once he hurried back to find the robbers, and having found them, he said meekly: ‘I have told you what was not true; it was unintentional. I was too terrified to think. Here, take the gold in my robes.’ Then to the old man’s astonishment nobody offered to take his gold. Presently one went and brought back his purse. Another restored his book of prayer, while still another led his horse toward him and helped him to mount. They then unitedly entreated his blessing, and watched him slowly ride away. Goodness had triumphed over evil.”<sup>1</sup>

I believe we could also add that the moral of this story shows us that one who speaks the truth ultimately wins out over one who spends his/her life lying. Among other things, we will see in John chapter 16 that the truth does beyond a doubt set us free.

Let us read through the first fifteen verses of John chapter 16:

John 16:1-15 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*

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<sup>1</sup> Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers.* Garland TX: Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

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>5</sup> "But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'

<sup>6</sup> "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.

<sup>7</sup> "But **I tell you the truth**, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

<sup>8</sup> "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning **sin** and **righteousness** and **judgment**;

<sup>9</sup> concerning **sin**, because they do not believe in Me;

<sup>10</sup> and concerning **righteousness**, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me;

<sup>11</sup> and concerning **judgment**, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

<sup>12</sup> "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

<sup>13</sup> "But when He, the **Spirit of truth**, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

<sup>14</sup> "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.

<sup>15</sup> "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

Go back with us now if you will to the first four verses, which will be our focus for today.

#### 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.

Jesus begins the chapter in verse 1 by saying to them, “*These things I have told you.*” What things? Well, let us go back to chapter 15 and review the highlights.

- “You have already been given the outline for a joyful and peaceful life both here and for eternity by the message I have given you (verses 2, 3).
- If you remain faithful and obedient to me, I will always be available to you (verse 4).
- Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. I am your source of righteousness. Everything good that comes from the Father will come to you through Me because of your faith in what I tell you (verse 5).
- Anyone who does not believe Me and have faith in what I will do for you is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned (verse 6).
- If you have faith and trust in Me and obey my commands, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! (Verse 7)
- When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love (verse 10).
- Your joy will overflow! (Verse 11)
- This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you (verse 12).
- There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends (verse 13).
- You are my friends if you do what I command (verse 14).
- You are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me (verse 15).
- I have given you the responsibility of presenting my truth to those who do not yet believe so that the Helper can bring them the rest of the way to faith (verses 26, 27).
- This is my command: Love each other (verse 17).

Jesus spoke a great deal of truth to His followers in chapter 15, did He not? Well then why not go back to the other 14 chapters and find a whole lot more truth? Why did Jesus tell them these things? Well He makes that pretty clear by what follows: “*so that you may be kept from stumbling.*” Do you suppose that Jesus’ disciples were kind of clumsy and were inclined to fall down a lot? We doubt if that is what He means here. He is not referring to physical stumbling but to fainting spiritually. Jesus is telling them these things so that if they believed what He said and put it into practice in their own lives they would find peace and joy in their lives and not fall apart when the trials of life come at them. Which reminds me that on a recent trip to Ohio I saw a sign outside of a church that read: “Don’t give up! Remember that even Moses was once a basket case.”

There are not only degrees of rewards in Heaven, but there are degrees of punishment in Hell. The person who hears the Gospel that Jesus taught and rejects it has committed the granddaddy of all sins, which Jesus warns them about in this chapter. Chapter 16 begins with Jesus still talking about the hatred that the world has for Him.

Now in verse 1 where Jesus says: *"These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling,"* the meaning here of the Greek word that is used for **stumbling** (*skandalizo*) is **"offended."**<sup>2</sup> It would be more accurate to translate this verse: *"These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be **offended**."*

Jesus did not want the apostles to be offended, that is, to have hurt feelings or deep resentment regarding the way they would be treated by unbelievers because He knew what was coming. Now it is not at all **common** for the leaders of religious movements to guarantee suffering in one form or another to the people they are trying to convince to join and be part of that movement. The more current approach is to emphasize the happiness and potential rewards that such a faith system will bring to those who jump on board, and minimize the trials and hardships. But not Jesus. Remember He is the forerunner of the Spirit of Truth. He does not and cannot lie. So He tells His followers exactly what it is going to be like. They will be hated just as He was hated because they represent what He brought into the world.

This is not to say of course that Jesus did not promise some wonderful rewards to those who followed Him. But many of those rewards would come when the believer arrived in Heaven. For example, John 14:2-3 NAS:

*"In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*

This is the promise of a joy filled life in a perfect place, which of course is Heaven. Jesus also makes it very clear that if we are going to be His followers, we must be willing to abandon all earthly desires. Jesus said in Matthew 8:20 NAS: *"The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."*

In Matthew 16:24 (NAS) Jesus says: *"If anyone wishes to come after me, He must deny Himself, and take up **his** cross and follow Me."*

Our cross, not Jesus' cross. We will have to bear similar persecution to what Jesus endured.

1 Peter 2:19 ESV:

*For this is a gracious thing, when mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.*

<sup>2</sup> Vincent, Marvin Richardson: *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Bellingham, WA: 2002, S. 2:254-255.

Isaiah 53:3 ESV:

*He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces He was despised and we esteemed Him not.*

John 16:33 ESV:

*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; **I have overcome the world.**"*

John 15:19 ESV:

*If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

Jesus made all of this very clear to His followers and never misled them into thinking that things on earth would be easy for them. So why do so many congregations today try to make the church experience so enjoyable and entertaining? Churches today use all kinds of marketing techniques and gimmicks to entice people to come to their church. What in the world are they doing? The purpose of the Church is first and foremost to teach the pure Word of God. That means teaching about all the joyous incredible experiences one has when they have a relationship with God, but it also includes teaching the reality of trials and sufferings. It means warning those who never come to faith, that they face Hell for eternity. When was the last time you heard about that from a televangelist?

Today the sermons are far too often about current events with a few carefully selected and/or edited Bible verses just to show people it is a church rather than a philosophy class. Today the worship music is as bad as the secular music and the local churches have allowed such poor taste to diminish their offering of glory to God. Today people focus on fellowship with one another rather than fellowship with God. Now there is nothing wrong with fellowship in the Church, but first and foremost the focus has to be on the throne. Too many church leaders are trying to make religion popular and attractive to an unbelieving world. God never said we should make Christianity popular, fun, and attractive. He told us to go make disciples of all the world. In many churches you will find people that do not believe the Bible. If the pastor is a true believer and resists their attempts to change his preaching style, he may find himself polishing up his resume'.<sup>3</sup>

**Vernon McGee** tells about a deacon in a church who destroyed three preachers. One man left broken in health, another simply left the ministry, and the third resigned. He also tells of a minister who is selling second-hand cars. He says he would rather deal with second-hand cars than with second-hand Christians. And if you stand firm for what God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit have to tell us in the Bible, those in this world who are under the control of Satan are going to hate you and try to make life miserable for you in every way they can. You will experience the same hatred that Christ experienced. In John 16:1, we

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<sup>3</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, under: "Chapter 16".

see Jesus warning His apostles about this in order to strengthen them and let them know what is coming. He also tells them that He will love them right on through to the very end, and He lets them know that He will be with them and that He understands what they are going through.<sup>4</sup>

When the world decides to go after people because of Christ, things can get pretty vicious to the point of persecution and death. Being put out of the synagogue (verse 2) refers to excommunication, something that every devout Jew would dread because it meant being cut off from their cherished heritage. This was a threat that all the early Jewish Christians had to come to terms with. The believer should expect persecution because Jesus told us it would come. Further, they might find it coming from the insiders of synagogues at the time of Christ and today from insiders in the church. Some of these people, believe it or not, actually believe they are serving God by hurting believers. Paul was a perfect example of this. He was looking for Christians to murder because He thought they were drawing people away from the Jewish faith and the true God.

Acts 22:3-6 NAS:

<sup>3</sup> *"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.*

<sup>4</sup> *"I persecuted this **Way** to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons,*

<sup>5</sup> *as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.*

Now after his conversion Paul speaks directly to this misguided zeal, Romans 10:1-4 NLT:

<sup>1</sup> *Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved.*

<sup>2</sup> *I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal.*

<sup>3</sup> *For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their **own way** of getting right with God by trying to keep the law.*

<sup>4</sup> *For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.*

Neither God nor Christ would ever want us to persecute or murder anyone in their name. Not every religion can say that of their deity.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Because the world have not known God or Jesus, they will persecute Jesus' followers. They could not, or perhaps more accurately, would not acknowledge that God the Father had to be working through Jesus in order for Him to be able to say and do the things He was saying and doing. The Jews should have known God because He trusted them with His Word and His Law. But they hardly paid any attention to that knowledge and were far from having a saving faith in God, who earnestly wanted them to believe in and accept His Son.

Ephesians 1:22-23 NLT:

<sup>8</sup> *The Lord says, "Don't harden your hearts as Israel did at Meribah, as they did at Massah in the wilderness.*

<sup>9</sup> *For there your ancestors tested and tried my patience, even though they saw everything I did.*

<sup>10</sup> *For forty years I was angry with them, and I said, 'They are a people whose hearts turn away from me. They refuse to do what I tell them.'*

Jesus **did not** give His apostles **this** warning earlier in His ministry because the world's hatred was directed against Him. He protected His disciples as long as He was the focal point of the Jewish leaders' hatred. But now they would be replacing Him as the major spokesmen for Christianity. All the hatred the world had for Jesus would now be directed against the disciples. In Matthew 10:16-20 Christ told them they will be persecuted and He promised that the Holy Spirit will help them.

Matthew 10:16-20 ESV:

<sup>16</sup> *"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.*

<sup>17</sup> *Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues,*

<sup>18</sup> *and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.*

<sup>19</sup> *When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour.*

<sup>20</sup> *For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

As you read through the Book of Acts you see incident after incident of Christ's followers being persecuted: Peter and John were jailed; Stephen was stoned to death; Paul was imprisoned frequently.

Persecution happens today also around the world. In **Eritrea** 37-year-old **Azib Simon** was imprisoned and tortured for her Christian faith in December 2007. She died of malaria in Eritrea's Wi'a Military Training Center in late July 2008. Christians in the prison are rarely given medical attention, and sources said authorities refused to provide treatment for Azib's malaria. Five Christians have now died in Eritrean prisons after



being tortured for refusing to recant their faith.<sup>5</sup>

And in Pakistan a Christian couple has lost custody of their two daughters, aged 10 and 13. The girls were kidnapped and the court awarded custody of the daughters to the alleged kidnappers. Why? Because the Pakistani court based its custody decision on the girls' testimony of having converted to Islam. Under a strict interpretation of Islamic law, a Christian cannot have custody of a Muslim. The couple is appealing the decision.<sup>6</sup>

Now let me ask you a question. During the recent Olympics of August 2008, do you think persecution of Christians in China increased, decreased, or remained the same? Raise your hand if you think persecution in China increased. Now raise your hand if you think it decreased. Finally, those of you who think it remained the same, please raise your hands.

In reality persecution in China increased prior to and during the time of the August 2008 Olympics. Reports from members of the underground church in China indicated that Chinese authorities cracked down on unregistered churches more severely than at any time in recent memory. The Chinese government made attempts to appear tolerant to Christians for the world to see, but the reality is that the church in China is facing as much persecution now as ever before.<sup>7</sup>

Some of that may seem far removed from home and from your current life. But even here in the United States, people are being discriminated against in the job market and are being harassed when they have the courage enough to live by their Christian convictions. If you have not yet experienced this, you may quite soon as we continue to lose more and more of our religious freedom and the spiritual foundation that was the basis of this country and many of its laws. Our culture is changing. In Canada, our neighbor to the north, pastors are being prosecuted for teaching certain truths in the Bible, and there is a movement to try to pass those laws in the United States as well.

We have Christ's statements in John 16:2 and 15:20 that if we truly love and follow Him, we will be persecuted. Paul repeated that when he wrote in

2 Timothy 3:12 ESV:

*Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

Our reaction to this persecution can take one of two forms (three if we count falling back and not serving Him at all). First, we can hide and be fearful, keeping a low profile. Or secondly, we can respond as the disciples did in the first century.

Acts 5:40-41 ESV:

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<sup>5</sup> Source: *Open Doors USA newsletter*, September 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



<sup>40</sup> when they [the Jewish leaders]<sup>8</sup> had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

<sup>41</sup> Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.

Philippians 1:27-29 ESV:

<sup>27</sup> Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

<sup>28</sup> and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

<sup>29</sup> For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.

When suffering and persecution come, our attitude should be: to rejoice, to trust the Holy Spirit to help us, and to obey Christ's commands to "love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44), "pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44), "be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16), and "count it all joy" (James 1:2; Hebrews 12:2). That may sound like a tall order and it is true we cannot do it in our own strength. But the Holy Spirit will empower us. "Do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matthew 10:19, 20). What a tremendous promise from an all-powerful God!

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<sup>8</sup> Brackets mine.