

John 14–16, pt.12

The Persecution of the Saints

John 15.18 – 16.4

Introduction

1. Read Text
2. Voice of the Martyrs Video
3. Pray for the persecuted church
4. Websites: opendoorsusa.org; persecution.com; persecution.org; christianpersecution.info.
5. Central Idea: Hardship awaits those who follow Jesus.
6. Review context.

5 Gaurantees

- You will be hated by the world (15.18f.).
 - Kingdoms in Conflict – the Kingdom of God overcoming the kingdoms of this world; God energizes his kingdom and Satan energizes the kingdoms of this world (John 14.30, 16.11).
 - Dan.7.21–27
 - Rev.12.17, 13.7f, 10b.
 - Rev.16.12–16
 - Satan hates you, b/c you have more authority than he and you are taking his kingdoms from him. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and we carry on that same assignment. Salvation, healing, prosperity, deliverance, reconciliation, justice, truth, etc. are the virtues of God’s kingdom and they will overcome all that hell has to offer.
 - Illust of Dust storm approaching a city.
 - He can resist us, kill and destroy but he can’t overcome us!
 - Christians are an ever increasing force that cannot be stopped; don’t listen to the non–sense that says Christianity is loosing its grip.

- 82,000 people are coming to Christ every day, that's almost 30 million a year and the # is increasing
- You will be persecuted (15.20f.).
 - The hate moves into persecution; all the disciples were martyred for their faith with the exception of John.
 - Example A of how the disciples were martyred
 - Peter says, "Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you."
 - James says, "Consider it pure joy when you face trials of many kinds."
 - Paul says, "the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort in Christ."
 - The book of Revelation says, "This means God's holy people must endure persecution patiently, obeying his commands and maintaining their faith in Jesus."
- They are guilty (15.22–25).
 - They are guilty of their sin and rejecting God's plan.
 - When people persecute and reject you for your faith, it is the Father they are rejecting. It's not you; it's the One you represent.
 - Remember Saul's encounter with Jesus in Acts 9. "Saul, Saul! Why are you persecuting me?" Saul wasn't persecuting Stephen, Peter or the other apostles. Saul was persecuting Jesus.
- They Holy Spirit will assure your heart of Jesus (15.26–27).
 - Sometimes believers have succumbed to the pressure of their persecutors.
 - God has promised he will be a legal advocate to our spirits testifying as in a court of law that Jesus is who he claims to be. In the deepest and most personal ways, the Spirit of God will assure us of our faith.
 - This is especially important for those in the academic and family setting where persecution is happening..

- If you're searching for truth, ask the HS to testify about Jesus to you.
 - Illustration: Example B, C, D
 - If the HS assured their hearts under the most dire of circumstances don't you think he'll assure your heart too?!
- It will be very difficult (16.1–4).
 - This proved to be the case for the disciples.
 - Jesus warns them and us. He wants you to know what you're getting yourself into. Not all people will be appreciative of your faith or zeal for God.
 - 16.2 – This is how radical Muslims & Hindus feel about martyring Christians.
 - Many of us grew up in supportive families who encouraged our faith, and went to church much of our lives, even attended schools that weren't antagonistic to Christians, work at jobs where faith is respected, but that's not how many of our brothers and sisters in Christ live.
 - According to VOM, 200 million Christians are actively persecuted for their faith each year; 150,000 will die for their commitment to Jesus.
 - **Website review – Christianpersecution.info**

Types of Persecution in America

- A. Intellectual Persecution – academic level. We have a reasonable faith that can engage the mind and be intelligently presented and defended. There is no reason to segment faith matters from scientific ones. The God of my heart is the God of the cosmos. The faith community can benefit by seeing the wisdom of God in the details in all the scientific disciplines, such as biology, anatomy, geology, chemistry and physics; The scientific disciplines can benefit by seeing things from a wholistic perspective God's grand design.
- **Illust – Ben Stein's documentary, Expelled.**

- B. Moral Persecution – Peer pressure. Christian young people especially feel this. You feel pressured to act a certain way and do certain things, so you will be accepted. Sexuality, drugs, alcohol, gossip, speech, etc. Just as the gov't leaders of China, Iran, and Vietnam are forcing Christians to renounce their faith and conform to the norms of society, so too, are your peers try to force you to conform to their norms. You must resist.
- C. Cultural Persecution – Politically correct. American Christians and churches are caving into to this persecution by promoting a tolerance/inclusive message. We are encouraged to validate sinful behavior and call it alternative behavior. Today, many church leaders are preaching a neutered gospel that won't address sin and call people to repentance. It's a self help, positive thinking, Chicken Soup for the soul message without a cross. If the apostles were alive today and preaching in America, it's likely that none of them, including Jesus would not have a very large church. They probably would be rejected by most Christian leaders as too extreme.
- D. Religious Persecution – not so much from other faith groups, but from within Christian denominations.
- E. Personal Persecution – in families. As a spouse or child, your spouse or parent resists your faith expression. They don't like that you attend church or spend time with other Christians, or give your tithe to the Lord or your zeal for God. For some of you, it's a hostile and antagonistic environment and for others it is a more passive-aggressive one.
- F. Conclusion: In all these ways, you are suffering for the cause of Christ. Phil.3 says, "I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another, I will experience the resurrection from the dead."

Five Challenges

- You will be persecuted – 2 T.3.12–Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ will suffer persecution.

- If you seriously follow Christ you will experience persecution. People will either grow more aggressive in their anger or grow more distant in their love. The HS inside of you is a “fragrance of death” to some.
- I believe it will grow more and more hostile in America towards Christians.
 - i. Ill from July 5, '09 message. Subculture (1968–88); Countercultural ('88–'98); antithetical ('98–'08); Persecuted ('08–present).
 - ii. We are blessed to have a good school district, but with the current direction of our society and sin being normalized we might have to pull our children from the public schools. It's already happening in CA.
- Be prepared from a spiritual and intellectual stand point.
 - i. Intellectually – “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who ask you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” (1 Pet.3)
 - ii. Spiritually – “When you are arrested, don't worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time. For it is not you who will be speaking – it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.” (Mt.10)
- Appl – Some of you in your work place or school need to be more assertive with your faith in both word & deed. Don't let the fear of man and the opinions of others determine your Christian expression. I'm not suggesting you ignore work place protocol, but I am suggesting you break out of your self imposed gag order!
 - i. **Example E**
- The truth that sets you free will get you into trouble.
 - John 3.19f – ⁹ And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰ All who do

evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed.

- People hate the truth; the devil hates the light. Whenever we stand for truth, there will be a reaction.
- The truth can burn. It burns life into the heart of a believer and it can create pain in our heart of others. The reason some people so quickly reject the Bible or moral truth or Jesus is b/c they feel the heat of the truth bearing upon their conscience.
- Appl – Christian we can't shrink from this truth. It is the true source of life...We have to hold forth the standard of righteousness and faith. We cannot soft peddle the hard truth.
- As a disciple of Christ, you will be misunderstood and maligned. If they said Jesus was demon possessed, what do you think they will say about you?
- You can't please God and please people
 - You have to make a decision. Will you stand for God and his truth or will you keep riding the fence and looking at the crowd for your approval?
 - i. We see this most clearly with politicians who wave the banner for Christ, but when it comes to voting from a Christian worldview they vote according to their major supporters whims.
 - ii. We also see this among some Christian leaders and denominations. They don't want to create waves...I understand contextualizing the gospel so the culture can understand, but some Christian leaders are changing the gospel so the culture will approve it.
- We each have the mandate to stand for Jesus.
 - i. J.12.42f – Many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees (any major influence in your life – family, supervisor, teachers, politicians) they would not confess their faith for fear they would

be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men, more than praise from God.

- ii. You may have made a profession of faith, but are you confessing your faith?
 - You have to give up managing your image in order to look good in the eyes of others. As a disciple of Christ, you will be misunderstood, maligned and marginalized.
- You must have a group of close friends
 - During the most stressful times imaginable, Jesus asked James, John & Peter to go pray with him & even angels attended him; Just before Paul's death, he ask Timothy to come and bring Mark and join he and Luke.
 - If Jesus needed these close friends, during the height of his persecution, we need others too as we stand for Christ.
- Stand with those who have died for their faith.
 - Would you have stood with Jesus on the day of his crucifixion or would you have run away and pretended you didn't know him?
 - Will you die for him? These did.
 - Slideshow - images of believers who were martyred for their faith.

Conclusion

- Jesus makes it clear. Hardship awaits those who follow Christ.
- Jos.1.9. As Joshua was about to enter into massive conflict with the enemies of God, God said to him and he's saying to us...
- Matt.5 - God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven.
- Will you die for him? But, more importantly, will you live for him?