

Advocates & Adversaries

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[0 : 00] John chapter 16 is where we're at as we continue our study in his gospel.

Jesus is meeting with his disciples the night before his crucifixion.

He's been speaking with them in chapter 16. He continues, and he says to them, I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues.

Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father nor me. But I have said these things to you that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told them to you.

I did not say these things to you from the beginning because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you ask me, where are you going?

[1 : 13] But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, 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. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.

Concerning sin because they do not believe in me. Concerning righteousness because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer. Concerning judgment because the ruler of this world is judged.

May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? By the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, he had preached the size of his following way down.

At one point, tens of thousands of people flocked to Jesus. But by the end of his life, those thousands had dwindled significantly in number.

[2 : 23] Well, why was that? Well, they liked what Jesus did. As long as he was healing their sick, as long as he was feeding the hungry, as long as he was raising the dead to life.

They were with him. He didn't lose his following because of any of those things. He wasn't crucified for doing any of those things. It was when he spoke, it was what he said that diminished his following and decreased his popularity with the people.

It was his claim to be the Son of God. It was his claim to be the only way to the Father. The only hope for sinners to be saved from God's judgment. And it was what he said about what it cost to follow him that sent many away.

Look at what Jesus said in Luke 24, 25 through 33 about what it meant to follow him. Now, great crowds, great crowds accompanied him.

And he turned and said to them, Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish.

[4 : 10] Or what king going out to encounter another king in war will not sit down and deliberate whether he is able with 10,000 to meet him who comes with 20,000?

And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So, therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Jesus is saying that the cost of following him is great. As he said in John 15, verses 18 through 19, The world puts a target on those who testify, like Christ, that their deeds are evil.

Both Scripture and church history remind us that Christians will be persecuted. However, persecution has not and will not ever stop the advancement of the gospel.

In reality, persecution causes the gospel to spread farther and wider than ever before. Tradition tells us that every one of Jesus' disciples was persecuted for their proclamation of the gospel.

[5 : 31] Acts 12.2 says that James was put to death with the sword. Tradition says Peter was crucified upside down in Rome. That Matthew was killed from a wound inflicted by a sword in Ethiopia.

That James, the half-brother of Jesus, was thrown off the southeast pinnacle of the temple about 100 feet and fell to his death. Bartholomew, also known as Nathaniel, was whipped to death. Andrew was crucified on an X-shaped cross in Greece. Thomas was stabbed with a spear and died in India. Matthias, the disciple who replaced Judas Iscariot, was stoned and then beheaded. Paul, a former persecutor of the church who became an apostle, was tortured in Rome and beheaded by Nero. John, whose gospel we've been studying, was boiled in a huge basin of oil. And though he was miraculously delivered from death, he was sentenced to the prison island of Patmos, where there he later wrote the book of Revelation. In many places around the world today, believers continue to face intense forms of persecution.

[6 : 51] Muslim-controlled countries are especially hostile towards Christians. Many communist nations likewise seek to put down our faith by arresting and imprisoning and killing even the leaders of the church.

Back in 1997, 25 years ago, the New York Times published an article in which they reported that more Christians had died in that century simply for being Christian than in the first 19 centuries of the birth of Christ.

And I think as we're looking at this century, we can probably, if the Lord tarries before He returns, that that number will just continue to increase. But you know what?

Not one of those deaths was in vain. Not one of those deaths silenced the church or led to the demise of the church.

On the contrary, as the early church father Tertullian said, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. And so Jesus here is, He's already introduced the theme of persecution back in chapter 15, verses 18 through 25.

[8 : 03] And He continues with that same theme here in chapter 16 as He, again, meets with His disciples for the final time before He will be crucified.

And as He had done in chapter 15, verses 26 through 27, He is quick to remind His disciples that though they will face persecution, they would not face that persecution alone or in their own strength.

Their witness to the world would be accompanied by the power and the strength of the Holy Spirit who would comfort His disciples as they testified to Christ.

And as they saw, as a result of their testimony, sinners convicted of their sin and many of them coming to faith in Jesus. Although the context of this section is similar to that of chapter 15, there is a subtle difference in Jesus' emphasis here in these verses.

In chapter 15, Jesus instructed the disciples as to what they were to do. But here in chapter 16, He focused on what God would do for them by sending the Holy Spirit to indwell them with His presence and His power.

[9 : 14] He would comfort them. He would strengthen them. He would aid them in their conflict with the world. You know, it's beginning to cost us more in our nation to live for Christ.

And with the course our nation is on, I believe that in the years to come, the cost will be greater. In fact, we may be less than a generation away from encountering the same forms of persecution here that our brothers and sisters in Christ are facing in other parts of the world.

And Jesus said that we should expect that it will happen. But how will we respond when it does? How are we responding right now?

Will we be scared into silence? Will we fear man more than God? I wonder, have we truly counted the cost of what it means to follow Christ?

Are you willing to die for Him? Are you willing to die for your faith in Jesus Christ?

[10 : 33] If it came down to it, is Christ more precious to you than your own life?

In these verses, Jesus warned the disciples that they would have many adversaries in this world. But He comforted them with the promise of an advocate, the Holy Spirit, who was coming.

And in these verses, He explained that not only would the Holy Spirit help them, but would also work alongside of them as they faced persecution from the world.

And He would work with them to convict unbelievers of their sin and bring them to faith, some of them, to faith in Jesus Christ as a result of their speaking, as a result of their testimony.

And so the main idea for this morning's sermon is this. This is what Jesus is doing. Jesus is preparing His disciples for persecution. Jesus prepares His disciples for persecution.

[11 : 47] He did then, and He continues to do it today. And what we see Him doing here is Jesus equipping His disciples to engage the world.

Isn't that part of what our purpose as a church should be? To equip disciples to engage the world and make disciples? And we know that as we do that, we will face hostility from a world that is desperate to reject Christ.

But in these verses, Jesus, again, He is preparing His disciples for persecution by explaining three principles here regarding it. But this wasn't the first time that He ever tried to prepare them for the persecution that they would face.

He'd been speaking about this for a very long time. In Luke 9, 23 through 26, early in our Lord's ministry, He said there, Then in Matthew 5, 10 through 12, Look at what Jesus says about persecution there.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

[13 : 32] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. And so we learn from these verses and from our text today that persecution is an expected part of the Christian life.

Persecution is an expected part of the Christian life. And it is not something, as we've listened to our Lord say, It is not something to avoid, but something to embrace.

And so Jesus gives three principles regarding persecution and the believer that I pray will encourage you to count the cost and deem that Christ is totally worth enduring whatever persecution you may face in this life.

And so the first principle He communicates to His disciples is this, that Christians will have conflict with the world. Christians will have conflict with the world.

He says in verse 1, I have said these things to you to keep you from falling away. The phrase, these things, refers back to Jesus' warning about the hostility they would face from the world in John chapter 15, verses 18 through 25.

[14 : 52] Remember in verse 18, He said, If the world hates you, know that it hated me first. And then in verse 20, He said, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

And so there in verse 1, the Greek word for falling away, as it's translated in the ESV or as stumbling or led into sin by other English translations of the Bible, is the Greek word skandalizo, skandalizo.

And its related noun refers literally to a bait stick. Any of you know what a bait stick is? Are hunters? Are trappers?

So a bait stick, I think many of you know. So today, you've seen a bait stick, probably didn't know what it was. You'll see someone take a PVC pipe and they'll drill holes in it, and then they'll stuff that pipe with bait, oftentimes peanut butter, and then they'll set it in the trap.

And what happens with the bait stick is the animal will smell the scent, and he will go to the bait stick, and he'll gnaw on it from the outside trying to get to the inside.

[16 : 05] And as he gnaws on it, guess what? He springs the trap, and he's caught, which eventually leads to his demise. And so the warning here really for us is against apostasy, against apostasy, to be enticed by the world, so much so that we forsake Christ, that we leave the church.

Many who face intense persecution are enticed with the promise that they will be set free. If you would just renounce your faith in Christ, they say, we will release you from prison, and we will set you free.

They use that bait stick. The Bible says that persecution has a way of revealing who has been truly saved from those who have only claimed to be.

Jesus used the parable of the soils to emphasize the reality of apostasy in the church. If you remember, back in Matthew 13, 5 through 7, he said, other seed, and the seed there is a symbol of the gospel, fell on rocky ground where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up since they had no deep soil.

But when the sun rose, they were scorched. When persecution came, they could not stand because there was no deep root. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them out, silencing believers because of their fear of the world and what people might do to them or what they might lose for testifying to Christ.

[17 : 47] This happens in the church. John, in 1 John, addresses some people within the church who had left, and he says of them, they went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.

But they went out that it might become plain that they are not all of us. See, the world is always seeking to entice believers to adapt to its ways with the promise that if they do, they will gain their acceptance.

And, you know, sometimes that temptation to apostasy comes in the form of loosening our theology, of letting go of our doctrinal positions, of affirming false things that the Bible does not say, like all roads lead to heaven, or that there is no judgment, there is no hell.

And, you know, many churches and denominations have done that. We have many churches and many denominations that are apostate because they're afraid that, you know, if we teach these things, if we proclaim these things, people are going to be offended by them and they'll leave.

But as we read Scripture, we see, again, Jesus had large followings. He wasn't afraid to offend people. He wanted them to know the truth. But so many churches today have become apostate because they're more interested in drawing a crowd than they are making disciples.

[19 : 20] And may that never be the case for us. After warning against apostasy, Jesus explained two methods that the world will use to silence His disciples.

And the first is excommunication. In the beginning of verse 2, He tells them, they will put you out of the synagogues. Now, this was much worse than just being kicked out of church or being kicked out of religious services.

Those who were excommunicated in this culture from the synagogue were cut off from society. People would not buy from you. People would not trade with you. People would not sell to you. Your family would disown you. You were basically treated by your culture, by society, as if you didn't exist. They would act as if you were dead.

And that's exactly what happens in many places in the world today where persecution is severe. To come to faith in Christ for many of our brothers and sisters in the world means that you lose your job.

[20 : 25] It means that you lose your friends. It may mean that you lose your family. It may mean that you lose your spouse. And that you have your children taken away from you never to see them again.

It costs something. And as bad as that is, Jesus continued by explaining the other method that the world uses to silence His disciples.

Excommunication and execution. In verse 2, Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.

And so here is a bitter irony. The enemies of the Son of God will kill His people and in doing so, they will think they are offering a service to God.

We witness that primarily in nations today where in the name of Allah, militant Muslims violently oppose Christianity and put many of our brothers and sisters to death.

[21 : 31] Last year, I had an opportunity with a friend of mine to over the internet. We Skyped with a brother who had been in America.

He was originally from Pakistan and he was going back. And he went back to Pakistan and what he would do there is he would just minister and serve the church there and those who are persecuted and share the gospel.

And what he had done is he had gathered a church of Pakistani believers on top of a house. And he asked me and my friend if we would answer their questions and just encourage them.

And so we did. And we woke up at like 4.30 or 5 in the morning and we did that here in the church. It was nighttime there. I remember just seeing their faces and they were asking us about persecution that they were facing.

They were asking us, what does the Bible say about persecution? And, you know, I know for me and for him after we was talking about it, I felt like I faced nothing and I'm not facing anything right now compared to what they're enduring.

[22 : 37] All we did is tell them what the Bible said about persecution. And man, they smiled and they would clap for our answers. And it was just so incredibly humbling.

And then a day or two later, I saw a video of a Christian woman in Pakistan. They had dug a hole and they had stuck her in that hole and she was surrounded by men who were throwing stones at

her until she died.

I don't think she was on that rooftop. But man, how sobering that whole experience for me was. And I'd be thankful for the freedoms that we have, but to know that such a time could come for us and just to think of our brothers and sisters, that's somebody's mother.

That was somebody's wife. It was heartbreaking. And you know, when you experience things like that, it really causes you to reevaluate your life and your ministry.

What does real ministry success look like? It looks like a woman in a hole being pelted with stones because she will not deny Christ.

[23 : 58] And I wonder when I see those things or experience those things, how could people do that?

How could people seemingly religious and claim to know God commit such atrocities in the disguise of serving Him?

Well, before his conversion, we know that Paul was Christianity's most zealous persecutor. In his letter to the Galatians, he explained the motivation for the violence he perpetrated against the church.

In Galatians 1, 13 through 14, he said, for you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.

And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people. So extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. Paul is saying, you know, I was zealous.

[25 : 03] I was totally committed to what I believed. But look, if what you are zealous for and what you believe is incompatible with what the Bible says, then you are wrong.

It doesn't matter how zealous someone is about their beliefs if it contradicts the revealed truth of God. He thought he was serving God, but he wasn't.

And Jesus explained in verses 3 through 4 that the ultimate motivation behind those who persecute Christians, even if they do so in the name of some kind of false God, is this.

He says, and they will do these things because they have not known the Father nor me. In verse 4, he explained, but I have said these things to you that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told them to you.

People persecute the church because they don't know God, because they don't know Christ. But Jesus knew what they would face, and he knew that when they would face this persecution, they would remember his words that he spoke in this moment, and that would comfort them and strengthen their faith rather than persecution shattering it.

[26 : 14] Years later, in his first epistle, Peter echoed the same thing, the Lord's prediction of persecution and the comfort that those who are persecuted will experience. In 1 Peter 4, 12 through 13, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you, but rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings that you may rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

And look what Paul, an experienced pastor, shared with Timothy, a young pastor. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ, it's not might, it's not may, it's not even probably, it's will.

They will be persecuted. This is a hard truth that we all need to reflect upon. I think one of the questions I know that I asked myself this week and that I present to you is if you aren't facing any form of persecution right now in your life from the world, then why not?

Why not? Maybe the world has a much stronger grip on you than you care to admit or confess.

Maybe you're a lot more scared of men than you realize. Christ does not offer his disciples the way of comfort and ease, your best life now, but a hard and difficult path.

[27 : 55] He said, the gate is small and the road is narrow, but following Christ is well worth the strenuous journey for he says that his way is the only way that leads to eternal glory and everlasting life.

Thus, Paul could say in the midst of the persecution he faced in 2 Corinthians 4, 17, for this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

So which will you have? Which will you seek? Peace with the world which will end in death or peace with God through Jesus Christ which brings eternal life?

Jesus promised that his followers will have conflict with the world but he continues and he makes a promise next that though they will face such hostility they will be comforted.

And so the second principle Jesus explains here is that Christians will be comforted in their afflictions. They will have conflict but they will not be left alone to deal with that conflict.

[29 : 17] they will be comforted in their afflictions. The second part of verse 4 and then in verse 5 Jesus says I did not say these things to you from the beginning because I was with you but now I am going to him who sent me and none of you ask me where are you going?

Now if you've paid attention to our series of sermons here on this gospel especially here as we've been in beginning in chapter 13 with Jesus and these last moments that he has with his disciples if you've been paying attention you know that the disciples have asked him a question twice about where he's going.

First of all in John 13 36 and then secondly in John 14 5 Peter was the first one who asked that question Lord where are you going? And then Thomas asked Jesus the same question where are you going?

So it sounds like maybe Jesus is mistaken here did you not hear those questions? Did you just forget what's going on?

But we know that that can't be the case and so what is going on here exactly? I like how D.A. Carson explained it he says in the flow of the argument it's not clear that either Peter or Thomas was really asking the question formally represented by their words and so he uses this example of a little boy little boy who has plans to go fishing with his dad and they've made these plans for for a while and then his dad gets a call from his work it's an emergency and he can't fulfill that appointment with his son he has to go and meet this emergency and so the little boy will say dad where are you going?

[31 : 07] but behind the boy's question isn't really dad where are you going? Where you know where are you going to meet someone? What his question is saying really is asking is dad how could you do this to me?

How could you leave me? How could you do this to me? And so that's really the motivation behind Peter and Thomas' questions. Lord we're not so interested in where you're going we're interested in how could you do this to us?

How could you leave us right now? They felt that his leaving was unfair. One thing that is certainly undeniable is that the disciples were devastated by the news that Jesus was leaving them.

In verse 6 Jesus points that out but because I have said these things to you sorrow has filled your heart but now look at the amazing thing he says in verse 7 nevertheless I tell you 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.

R.C. Sproul said of this verse that the first time he grasped the implications of this text he literally jumped for joy in the streets jumping over fire hydrants and this is what he said Eureka I can't believe it all this time I felt like Abraham living in the Old Testament looking forward to the time of Christ coming or wishing that I could have been alive during Jesus earthly ministry because these people heard and saw him and his miracles if only I could have been an earthly eyewitness disciple of Jesus my Christian life would be so much better than it is now.

[32 : 46] It continues yet our Lord said that our situation now is better than that of his disciples when he was walking on the earth. I think that is one of the most difficult statements of Christ to embrace.

Certainly the disciples struggled with it but between the time when Jesus announced his departure and the day he actually ascended to heaven they took it to heart for they were able to return to Jerusalem with joy.

They saw that when Jesus left them he was going to his coronation. He was going to enter into the heavenly sanctuary to sit down at the right hand of the Father and be their great high priest. Christ. And so I know for me verse seven is one that I want to commit to memory and I encourage you to do the same.

Because I know that I've been in the same position as R.C. Sproul has been. You know if I was only alive when Christ was walking the earth my faith would be so much greater. or even being jealous of those who were. But Jesus is saying here that it is to our advantage.

[33 : 57] We have the advantage that he has gone to heaven and that we have received his spirit. And so we can never act as if the spirit is some kind of inferior substitute to Christ.

The Holy Spirit of God is with his people. not just with his people he lives inside of his people. If you know Jesus Christ you are indwelt by the spirit.

That's an amazing thing to think about. It should cause us to be filled with joy. Jesus promised that when the Holy Spirit came he would give them eternal life in John 7 37 through 39.

That he would indwell those who follow him. John 14 16 through 17. That he would also instruct his followers in John 14 26 and empower them in their witness and activate for them the promises of God in their lives.

The Bible says that Christians have two paracletes, two advocates. Christ as your high priest in heaven who advocates for you there, who intercedes for you at the right hand of God the Father and the Holy Spirit here who guides you on earth.

[35 : 15] When persecution comes we are not without help. We are not without hope. And the third principle Jesus explains here is that Christians will be the agents through which the Holy Spirit convicts the world in verses 8 through 11.

Christians will be the agents through which the Holy Spirit convicts the world. And when he comes Jesus says he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. Concerning sin because they do not believe in me.

Concerning righteousness because I go to the Father and you will see me no longer. Concerning judgment because the ruler of this world is judged. Now these are difficult words to understand at first glance.

And in the Greek they're written pretty, it's difficult. And so there's a lot of debate amongst biblical scholars as to what exactly they mean. but always we know that context determines meaning.

And so Jesus here in the context is talking about his going and the Holy Spirit's coming. And that when the Holy Spirit comes to be with his disciples it will be to their advantage because he will extend the ministry of Jesus in ways that the disciples could not foresee.

[36 : 30] They will bear witness with the Holy Spirit together and he will use them to minister to the world and to convict the world of sin. No one comes to faith in Christ without first being convicted of their sins.

Conviction leads to repentance and that work is a work of the Holy Spirit alone. Jesus says the Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning three things.

The first thing Jesus says is that the Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning sin. The Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning sin. The singular form of sin there in the Greek indicates that Jesus is referring to the ultimate sin.

That is the sin of refusal to believe in him. The sin of rejecting him. This is the sin that ultimately condemns people as Jesus said in John 3.18.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God. And then in John 8.24 Jesus warned, I told you that you would die in your sins for unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins.

[37 : 47] Next, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit convicts concerning righteousness. Now this is the flip side of what he has just said. Not only does the Holy Spirit convict unbelievers of their sin but also of their necessity to be sinless and their inability to live perfectly and meet God's perfect standard.

I don't know as a Christian if you have experienced this but I know as a pastor that I have, when people find out that I am a pastor they act a lot differently around me than they did before.

The language that they use completely changes. And I know a lady who cuts my hair, you know, she was using some colorful language and well what do you do?

I work at the, I'm a pastor of that church just, you know, up the street. Oh, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry for, you know, what she said. And, you know, and I asked the question in that case and others, why are you sorry?

You know, or get around to it. Why are you sorry for that? And then hopefully that starts the conversation to talk about sin. You feel guilty for what you've done. You know it's bad.

[38 : 56] Why? Because you know you shouldn't. Why do you know that you shouldn't? Because God's written it on your heart. And so we do that to the world. That's how we convict the world.

That's how the Holy Spirit uses us. When they see the church acting like Christ, it is convicting to them. When Jesus says, because I go to the Father and you will see me no longer, he's providing

the supreme evidence of the fact that he is totally righteous.

He can enter into the Father's presence because he is totally perfect. As Habakkuk 1.13 says of God, you who are purer of eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong.

In Philippians 2.9, it says there, therefore God, speaking of Christ, has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name. And so there we see that God cannot look on evil, but here he testifies to the righteousness of Christ, that his name is above every other name. And those who are convicted by the Spirit's testimony about their sinful depravity and Christ's perfect righteousness and respond to the gospel in genuine faith, the Bible says, are instantly clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

[40 : 08] He takes our sins and he imputes them to Christ. He credits them to his account and we receive his righteousness and that is credited to our account. He's paid the debt for our sin in full and we are clothed in his righteousness, meaning that we are justified before a God who is holy.

Our sins have been totally forgiven. And when he looks at us, he sees the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Finally, the Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning judgment because the ruler of this world is judged.

We know who the ruler of this world is. The Bible identifies him as Satan. Certainly Satan, certainly the opponents of Christ, his adversaries, when they saw him bleeding, nailed to a cross and dying, they thought that that was their greatest hour of triumph.

When in reality, it was what sealed their doom. Though Satan has been defeated and though he's been judged, the final sentence against him will not be carried out until the end of the millennium in Revelations 10 or 20 and 10, his fate will be shared by those who likewise refuse to repent and reject Christ.

As we share the gospel, as we're empowered by the Spirit to do that, we will get a response. And either that response will be conviction, or it will be conviction.

[41 : 44] Neither that conviction will lead to repentance, or it will lead to rejection. And here's the thing. We know that we have been commanded by our Lord to go and make disciples.

And we know that as a church, our duty should be to equip disciples to engage the world to make disciples. But we can never lose sight of the fact that it is God who saves.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to save people. I love this quote by George Whitefield. He said, A man may speak to the ear, but it is the Spirit of God who can speak to the heart.

Yet we know we have an obligation to speak. Will you speak? Or will you be afraid to speak? Will you be silenced into fear, holding on to this world that is passing away?

Or will your hope be secured in what is eternal in Christ? And knowing that living your life for Him and testifying to Him now is the greatest thing that you could do for anyone.

[42 : 48] The main point of application for this sermon is this, that the Holy Spirit will empower your witness and comfort you through persecution. Do not be afraid that God is with you.

Do not be afraid what man may do to you or do to us. Persecution will come, but it will not, it will not put an end to the church.

It cannot. And many will be saved as a result of our witness. Four questions of application for us to discuss in our community groups tonight.

Question number one. In the opening verses of this chapter, Jesus repeats some things that He's already said. What is repeated and what new things does He emphasize in these verses?

So dig back. Go back and look at what He's already said. What new things does He add here in these verses? And what things is He really emphasizing in verses 1 through 11 in chapter 16?

[43 : 48] Question number two. What is your reaction to Jesus' statement that it is for the disciples' good that He goes away? What is your reaction to that?

Why is this a good thing? And what good comes from Jesus' departure? Question three.

What does, or excuse me, how does this passage and its promises give you courage and confidence as you bear witness with the Holy Spirit about Christ?

What are the things that the Lord wants you to take from these words, from His instruction? What courage, what confidence does He want you to have from His words for you to use as you witness for Him?

And then finally, has a person accurately shared the gospel if they do not mention sin, righteousness, and judgment? Why or why not?

[44 : 52] Has a person actually shared the gospel if they do not mention sin, righteousness, and judgment? Why or why not?

Let's pray. Lord, this is a heavy message, God. We live in a nation, Lord, that is comfortable. And we are a people, Lord, who seek to be comfortable. And we get angry by anyone or anything that would challenge our comfort.

And Lord, I confess personally, and I know many of us would likewise, that too often we are silent when we should speak. Too often we sit when we should take a stand because we know that doing so will not be comfortable.

God, in those moments where we are tempted to do the comfortable thing, we pray that Your Spirit would remind us of Your teaching, remind us of these words, and that, God, we would follow Your example, that we would count the cost, that we would take a stand and not sit idly on our hands, that we would speak and not be silent, that we would declare how great You are without fear of what men may do to us, but that we would speak that message, the gospel, in love, in the hopes that others will be saved as You have saved us.

[46 : 35] God, we don't know what the future holds for us as far as what kinds of persecution we may or may not face in the years to come, but, Lord, we know that You hold the future, and, God, we know that we can trust in You, and so, Lord, may we as Your church be a people who are courageous, who are bold, and who are used by You in powerful ways to engage this world, that they would know the hope that we have in Christ.

Embolden our witness, I pray, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen.