

**The World at War (With Us) – Part III**  
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**John 15:18-27, John 16:1-4**  
**April 26, 2015**

We begin reading at Verse 18, as we have been the last couple of Sundays. The title of the message we've been working through, this is the third message in the series titled 'The World at War'. We've seen that Jesus, on the night before He is to be crucified, is preparing His disciples for coming persecution that they will experience, the storm they are about to go through. The persecution they are about to experience in one sense, right away, Peter would succumb to. If you recall, he denies the Lord three times in the next few hours. But then after the Spirit comes, then they are fortified, but Jesus says these things to them to prepare them for the moments, and the trials that lie ahead.

So we've been looking at, as we've tried to unpack this text, which runs from John 15:8 to John 16:4, these 14 verses, is we've organized our thoughts around some questions. We said *What?* Two weeks ago we looked at *What?* and *Why?* What is your relationship, if you are a Christian, what is your relationship to the world? Well, in a word, 'war'. You are in a spiritual war with the world system. We don't mean with every individual person in the sense that they are actively engaged in hating you personally, but there is a spiritual reality going on that people don't understand. And that the war, the 'kósmos', is organized against God in everything that reminds people of Him. So we saw relationships mean we'll be hated. Jesus promises that we'll be hated, we'll be persecuted. Persecution will vary widely, geographically, and over time, but it is an inevitable reality.

And we saw the question *Why?* Why does the world tend to hate and persecute Christians? That is because if you are born again, you are not of the world. Jesus tells us this in the passage. Then last time we looked at the question *When? What? Why?* and thirdly, *When?* When will persecution flare up and become most intense? We saw that when the light gets brighter, and the darkness gets deeper, that's when you'll have more dramatic conflict between the Kingdom of Light and the kingdom of darkness, and that will be evident in more extreme persecution.

1) How?

Today we look at the question *How?* How do you prepare for persecution? How do you go through it? It is a very relevant question, an incredibly relevant question for the 11 men that heard this message that night, the 11 disciples to whom Jesus

spoke. Remember Judas has left, and Judas will later kill himself in an act of grief and despair after what he has done, rejecting salvation even in that, not turning back to Christ for forgiveness. But the 11, whom Jesus has chosen to bear the Gospel message through the world, the 11 He is warning them to be prepared for persecution. He wants them to know how to prepare, and how to go through it. Of those 11, ten would die martyr's deaths, according to history, and church tradition, ten would die martyr's death.

The first apostle that we have record of that was killed was James, the brother of John, the writer of this Gospel. James was killed probably about 44 A.D. by Herod, that is recorded in Acts 12:1-2. So one, he was killed with a sword. Five of the apostles were crucified. Peter was crucified in Rome upside down because he felt like he was not worthy to be crucified to die the same way his Savior did. He asked to be put upside down. Matthew was beheaded in Ethiopia. Thomas was killed with lances, with spears, in India. Two other apostles were beaten to death with clubs. So a total of ten of the 11 died when you add Paul, who was beheaded in Rome. Matthias, the one they chose in Acts 1 to replace Judas was also crucified. He was crucified and stoned. Tradition tells us that while he was being crucified they stoned him.

So for the recipients of these words of Jesus it was incredibly relevant, and necessary preparation for John's audience now. Remember John is writing this book, the one apostle who would not die a martyr's death, though tradition tells us they tried to boil him in oil, and he survived. God kept him alive to give us his Gospel, and the apocalypse, the revelation of Jesus Christ, the last book of the Old Testament. John lived to be an old man, way after all the other apostles had died, and his audience then, is receiving from him, he probably writes about 85 A.D., 40 or so years after his brother died in Jerusalem. And he is writing to Christians throughout the Mediterranean world, and to those who are considering the claims of Christ—Jews and Jewish proselytes, trying to convince them that the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ is true. And he understands that in inviting them to follow Christ, he wants them to understand what Jesus said about the cost of discipleship. And for them, it would be a very relevant message.

This chapter would have had incredible resonance with something that was very near to them. They were only 20 years outside of a major persecution, the Neronian Persecution. That is the persecution under the emperor Nero, an extensive persecution in Rome and the surrounding areas, around 64, 65, and a few years after that, A.D. Rome burned in 64, and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the city went up in flames. The fire burned for seven nights and six days, 75 percent of the city was destroyed. Can you

imagine that kind of devastation? The people blame Nero, and historians tend to think Nero was a lunatic, that he actually did start the fire, but Nero chose to make Christians the scapegoat. He blamed the Christians who were by then growing in number in and around Rome. And so a great persecution broke out against Christians, and they murdered them. You know, all kinds of terrible ways to die. Some of them they covered them in pitch, put them on poles, and burned them to death as lamps around Rome. Others they threw into to be killed by wild beasts. So it was something that just had happened 20 years before John is writing. Local persecutions were happening from time to time all over, and would continue for the next several hundred years. So it was a relevant message for the apostles who heard it, the disciples. It was a relevant message for the original audience, and it is a relevant message for us, and for Christians today. It has always been a relevant message because there has always been a level of persecution because as Jesus says, it is inevitable.

But there have been times of intense persecution throughout history, and so we need to know how to prepare for it. Think about believers around the world who are suffering, great threats of physical persecution—ISIS, the Sudan, China, North Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia, many places where Christians live in fear of losing their lives. Today in America, the circumstances are becoming more and more conducive to that kind of thing, as far as it seemed just 20 or 30 years ago. It is amazing how much has changed.

You may have seen the news about the couple in Oregon who run the bakery that had baked cakes, and so a lesbian couple wanted them to make a wedding cake for them, they refused sometime back, and they filed a law suit. And so they have been commanded by the court to pay \$135,000 of damages because they refused to bake the cake because of their religious convictions that marriage is between a man and a woman. They could not violate their conscience and the state of Oregon has already wiped out their business, this is going to take their home. Isn't it amazing that the lesbian couple was offended and therefore they are entitled to \$135,000. How about the Christian couple? And you see that people are in the dark. It is irrational, it doesn't make sense. So we see that these things, the environment is becoming more hostile to the Gospel. We may not experience what our brothers and sisters are in other places, we may or may not, but we ought to be prepared nevertheless.

So the question is: How do you prepare for persecution? And when it comes, how do you go through it? It is important to prepare for it mentally, to be ready, but then when it happens, when it comes upon you, that is the real moment of truth.

How do you go through it? That is the question today, *How?* And so let's read these verses together, John 15:18 through John 16:4.

*John 15:18-27 ~ "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 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. 20 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. 21 But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 He who hates Me hates My Father also. 24 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. 25 But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.'*

*26 "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, 27 and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*

*John 16:1-4 ~ "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. 2 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. 3 These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. 4 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.*

Let's pray.

*Father, we come to You aware again of our great need. We continue to be those who are poor. In and of ourselves Lord, we are empty, but we come to a Savior who is fullness, and we ask that by Your Spirit, You might work now. The Spirit of Truth, the helper whom You have sent, that He might lead us into all truth. That He might testify about Jesus even in these moments together. We pray in His name, in Jesus' name, Amen.*

How do you bear up under persecution? How do you go through it? When you find yourself under a small level of persecution where you are just being maybe ostracized or avoided because you are a Christian, and because you have let it be made known your opinion about some issue. If you are a Christian, it is really not our opinion that matters, it is what God's word says, and so we try to bring that to bear. You know it really doesn't matter what I think about this, this is what God says. So when you say that, you may find yourself ostracized. If not openly, and outwardly, maybe behind your back. But when that happens, how do you go through it? Or when you find yourself with opposition around you where everyone seems against you, how do you deal with that?

It is so important not to approach this unprepared. This is why Jesus says these things. He said in Verse 1 of Chapter 16, "***These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling.***" He realizes that even these 11 who have been with Him for three years, they need these words He's giving them right now so that they will be kept from stumbling. Do you see that? That they even could stumble, and that it is the word of God that He's giving them right now, that they need, that will keep them from being led astray, and from really falling away. One of the translations reads that, '*from falling away*'. The word '*stumbling*' in the New American Standard translates the Greek word '*skandalizó*', from which we transliterate our English word '*scandalize*'. And to be scandalized, the real meaning of this word is not quite exactly, it is related to our English word, but our English word is different. The Greek word actually comes from the idea of entrapment, and the scandal was the trigger of a trap, a snare. So the idea would be, an animal, if you wanted to trap an animal to eat it, you know you want to catch a rabbit, or you wanted to catch another wild animal, you would bait something, and then as the animal eats the bait, then the trigger is activated, and the animal is trapped. That is how a snare works and that is actually the root word here. The idea that the scandal itself is the trigger, is what traps you. And so when He says, "I don't want you to be scandalized," the idea He is picturing is, "I don't want you to be suddenly caught and seized with this surprise so that you are trapped, and caught, and held." And the word has the idea of the emotional fear, and the sudden terror that comes on a person. So Jesus says, "I don't want you to be scandalized. I don't want you to stumble. I don't want you to fall away by being suddenly captured." The idea, how do you not do that? Well, you're prepared. You are not surprised when it comes.

A key word in this text, I think that really deals with the issue of *How?* is a word He uses twice in the passage, and the word is '*remember*'. He uses it in Chapter 15, Verse 20, ***Remember the word that I said to you,...*** '*Remember*' is an

imperative there, it is a command. **Remember...** there are two commands in this passage that we read. Just two imperative mood words in the entire passage. Two commands, the first is **Remember...**, the second we are going to see in Verse 27 is **...testify...** But the word 'remember', repeated twice, is the word I want us to start looking at here. He says in Verse 20, **Remember the word that I said to you,...** In Chapter 16:4 He says, **But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember...** The idea is really not so much, as you might remember, the idea is, "Remember, when it happens, I told this so that you can remember." It almost has imperatival force there. "Remember this when it happens." Remember He is talking about, in those verses, when it really gets intense, in Verse 2 He had said, "They are going to make you outcasts from the synagogue. They are going to kill you and think they are offering service to God. When that happens, remember that I told you, and in remembering you keep from being scandalized, surprised, taken, and terrified, and led to fall astray." So the word 'remember', and I want us to organize our thoughts with that main word 'remember', around three points. There are three things I think we need to remember when we go through persecution, or as we prepare for it. Three things we need to remember. We're going to see that Jesus encourages us to remember three things. First of all, *Remember the Words I Said*. The second one is *Remember the One I Sent*. And thirdly, *Remember the Reason You are Here*. So those are the three points.

#### A) Remember the Words I Said:

Now first, *Remember the Words I Said*. Here you have the verses we just looked at where the word 'remember' is used. It is first of all focused on **Remember the word,...** Chapter 15:20, **Remember the word that I said to you,...** Chapter 16:4, **...remember that I told you...** So we want to remember the words, Jesus says, "Remember the words I said." Remember the words He said to us. He has made emphatically clear, the very real and imminent danger of persecution. He wants them to understand what He said. It is interesting actually, you don't see this in the English translation, but it is helpful to note this. If you've been here for a while, I've commented on this a number of times, how John will, as he is recording the words of Jesus, will make things emphatic, and show the emphasis in Christ's words, with the use of an extra pronoun. A key word in the book of John is the word 'ego', which we would normal transliterate, we translate it into an English word 'ego'. It comes from the Greek word 'ego', and so 'ego' is the Greek pronoun, first person singular, nominative pronoun. It means 'I'. It is the pronoun used as the subject of a sentence, but in Greek, verbs already contain the pronoun. It is not like English, we have to supply 'I'. If I'm going to say, "I said," I have to

say, “I said.” In Greek, they say ‘said’, and there is an ending that tells you, “Oh, I said.” It is in the verb. A lot of languages are this way. English is not.

So, in Greek, when the pronoun is already there, it already says, “I said,” when He says, ‘said’. When they add in ‘ego’ it is a way of making emphasis. He is saying, “Remember the words I Myself said.” Both places where it says this, “I said,” Chapter 15:20 and Chapter 16:4, “Remember that I told you,” ‘ego’ is there. He says, “I want you to remember what I Myself said.” The idea is, these 11 men were supposed to say, “We heard Him with our own ears. We know what He said.” Now you and I can’t hear Jesus with our own ears, but we hear the testimony of these who heard Him with their own ears, in a testimony that we mentioned earlier, they sealed with their own blood. So He said, “Remember the words that I said,” and basically what is He saying in these two verses? What are the words that He said? He is basically saying this, that persecution is always to be expected. That is what He says in Chapter 15:20:

***John 15:20 ~ 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;...***

A conditional sentence, *...If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you;...* Did they persecute Jesus? Yes. Well then they will persecute you. It ought always to be expected. Chapter 16:4, it will sometimes be extreme. It is always going to be a part of life, but sometimes it will be extreme. That is what He has basically said in these two statements. When He said, “Remember what I’m saying. Remember what I said to you. Always expect persecution, but remember that sometimes it will be intense, it will be extreme. And so don’t be surprised by it.”

I mean, I mentioned the first apostle to die, the first disciple was James, the brother of John, the author of this Gospel, but the first Christian testimony that we have of a Christian dying is in Acts 7, it was a Deacon, not an apostle, or one of the disciples, but the Deacon Stephen is stoned in Acts 7. In fact, turn over there for just a moment to Acts. Stephen has preached a sermon to them there in Jerusalem, an extended sermon where he has basically ended up saying, proving to them that Jesus was the Messiah of the Old Testament, the one sent by God, and he’s basically said, “And you killed Him.”

***Acts 7:54 ~ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him.***

Isn’t that amazing? Gnashing their teeth at him. They are so filled with rage that their rage has to express itself physically. Gnashing their teeth.

***Acts 7:55-56 ~ But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; 56 and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”***

This is really an encouragement, the first martyr we have record of, that when he died, I mean, you could imagine the people watching it happen, the terror of it. Look at these people rushing at him. In a moment they are going to rush at him, drive him out of the city, they are going to stone him to death in rage. He is going to continue praising God, but I love the fact that we're told by the Holy Spirit here what he said, and what he saw. He was full of the Spirit, as he is bearing testimony, and about to die, he is not aware of the rage of the people as much as he is the glory of Christ. His eyes are open so that he sees Heaven, and he says, ...***“Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”*** Can you imagine? He saw Jesus. I mean, the risen Christ with his own eyes at this moment. He looks up and he sees the risen Christ looking down at him, and it is not like he sees it way off in the distance. It is like that is what he sees, and everything around him pales in comparison, it is what is out in the distance. He sees the glory of Christ. And I love this, he sees Him standing at the right hand of God. When Jesus ascended to Heaven, He sat down at the right hand of God, but the Son of God who is sitting enthroned, stands up, in a sense to honor His faithful witness, and to welcome him home. He stands up for Stephen.

So that gives us great hope that the worst case scenario, we know that God will be with us, and meet us, and show us the glory. And if you could ask Stephen, “Stephen, that must have been terrible. That must have been incredible having them gnash their teeth at you, and throw their rocks.” Stephen would interrupt you and say, “I saw Jesus. I saw Him looking at me.” “What about the rocks?” “Let me tell you what I saw about Christ!” “Would you change anything, Stephen?” “Are you crazy? What an honor it was. What glory it was. My heart was filled with everything I've ever desired in that moment. That moment was the happiest, most joyful moment that I ever experienced in my physical life.” But we see this persecution break out, and there was the sense in which it was natural, only to be expected because when the light comes, men hate the light, as Jesus has taught throughout the Gospel of John. And you see it growing even more intense. Look at Chapter 8:1:

***Acts 8:1 ~ Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death.***

Saul wasn't just sitting there watching, "Oh, poor Stephen." He was like, he's holding the coats, but he is urging them on. They think they are doing service to God, just like Jesus said. It is amazing how that is a continual refrain throughout history. When you're reading about the persecution of Christians in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, you know, the reformation time there were all kinds of persecutions throughout Europe as the Gospel went forth, and the light went back out into the darkness of the Roman Catholic medieval world. You see it in every country, there were people being murdered by the Catholic Church. In England, you know, just reading about it, you read the writing of the Catholic authorities, they really believe they are doing service to God. When they had someone drawn and quartered, or when they had someone beaten, or burned to death, they thought they were helping save their soul. Isn't that amazing? The darkness? And this is what was happening in Acts as well.

When you read on through it, and we're not going to take the time to do it. Let me just tell you what happens. It would be a good thing to do to read Acts this week and watch how, as the Gospel goes forward, what you're going to see. First of all, Saul is in hardy agreement, and it goes on to say that he is ravaging the church, entering house after house, in Verse 3 of Chapter 8:

***Acts 8:3 ~ dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.***

Saul is running into houses, ravaging the houses, tearing them up, finding the Christians, and dragging them away. Saul is doing that. In chapter 9, he gets permission from the high priest to go to Damascus, so he can go up there and ravage houses. "I'm done. I've found all the guys I can find here. Let me go get some new guys." So he goes to Damascus, but what happens? Jesus intercepts him, and Jesus says, and I love this too. He doesn't say, "Why are you persecuting My church?" but He says:

***Acts 9:4 ~ "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"***

"Because when you mess with them, you are messing with Me." Can you imagine what Saul thought at that moment? "What in the world? I thought I was doing service to God, and I find out I am fighting against God." The terror that came over him—he's struck blind, and for three days he waits. He doesn't eat or drink for three days, and then God sends Ananias to him. I love this. The Lord says to Ananias, the guy that lives in Damascus, "Hey, Saul is here and he's staying at so-and-so a place." He gives him the address. "Go talk to him. Tell him about Jesus." Ananias says, "Excuse me, do You know who You're talking about? Saul, he's

come up here to arrest guys like me.” It’s funny that in the Lord’s grace, that He doesn’t just say, “What are you talking about? Why are you asking Me if I know what’s going on?” God’s gracious, and Ananias goes and he preaches to Paul, the scales literally fall off of his eyes, and Saul the persecutor becomes Paul the apostle. That’s the grace of God.

So that’s why we bear witness. Because we bear witness, God does things like that. The person that can be the most hateful, the most intensely opposed to the Good News, can be the person who is, in the providence of God, just like we sang about earlier, the one who’s about to be made into a follower of Jesus Christ, made to receive Him, made to enter in through the power of the word. But as you read through, what you find is Paul goes off, and God calls him to preach to, though he was a Jew like all the other apostles, and he was a zealot, the Lord when He converts him, he goes off to the Gentiles. God sends him to the Gentiles, the non-Jews, and he goes off preaching in all the cities throughout the Mediterranean world, and wherever he goes, he starts off though, he’s supposed to go to the Jews, and he goes to the synagogue. He’ll preach the Gospel there, and a few people usually will believe, and many will not.

t some point what you find again, and again, and again, is they basically run him out. Not only will the Jews persecute him and become enraged at him, but they’ll follow him from town to town. When he leaves one place and he starts having a ministry somewhere else, the Jews from that other town come over and they start rabbleroxing against him. They get him stoned and leave him for dead in Lystra.

So the Jews persecute, but then also later in his ministry, the Gentiles persecute him, and it happens along. There’s a little bit of a blending, and he gets persecuted in a number of ways. But in Acts 16:16-21, you’ll see that he’s messing up things for the folks in Philippi, the ungodly in Philippi, who have this slave girl. I mentioned this last week, and I conflated two stories. You have the slave girl who is apparently demon possessed, and she’s like a prophetess. People are profiting off of her prophesying. And when Paul and Silas get there, she starts following them around, saying, “These are servants of the Most High God.” She’s a strange woman, probably dressed weird, just acting weird. She’s a weird person, so there she is following them around and making a scene. I bet Paul’s associates were a little bit, “Hey, what can we do about this? This is a little weird.” But she just keeps doing it, and then finally they preach to her, she gets saved, and then the people that were profiting off of her were really mad, because their means of money was gone. They break out a persecution against Paul. So the Gentiles persecute him.

In Ephesus, they do the same thing, and I mentioned that. The idolaters are going to stop buying idols, and so they get angry with him, and they start persecuting him. And the sense is that the Jews and Gentiles think that they're doing a service to God when they persecute the Christians, the preachers of the Gospel. I mean, in Ephesus, they're worried that these Christians, now, are going to mess up everything for us in this city, because our wellbeing is tied up in the worship of Artemis or Diana. "If we don't worship her, bad things are going to happen. The Christians are taking away worshipers from Artemis and Diana, and because we're so superstitious (because they were), we believe that this is going to damage all of us. We've got to stop this for the good of our community." You see, that's their mindset.

In fact, back to the Neronian persecution in 64 AD, it's believed that Paul was executed as a part of this persecution, and that Peter was as well. Both men were in Rome. But remember I mentioned in 64 AD, in July, there was a fire in Rome and three quarters of the city was destroyed, and Nero made the Christians the scapegoats. The Roman historian Tacitus tell us that basically most of the people were in support of putting the Christians to death, though at times they felt like Nero took it a little too far. But basically, they were supporting it, because this was their crime, according to Tacitus. They were accused of Atheism and hatred of the human race. This is why the Christians were killed. First of all, how could they call a Christian an Atheist? Well, for them, an Atheist meant you're unwilling to acknowledge that the emperor is God, and so if you say the emperor is not God, you are guilty of Atheism. They had this superstitious mindset like we saw in Ephesus. In Roman civilization, Rome had all these different people groups together, with lots of different gods, and lots of different religions, but the one thing that they felt like united all of these diverse people was reverence for Rome, and particularly for the Roman Emperor.

So emperor worship, burning incense to the emperor, acknowledging him as a part of your pantheon, just basically the idea is set up a little place in your heart for the Roman Emperor, and everything's fine with you. You can worship whoever you want to, but you've got to also worship the emperor. We're not asking you for 365 days a year, all this kind of stuff. We're just asking you that at least once a year, you've got to be committed to it, and when it comes down to it, you've got to have this allegiance. So they saw Christians as those who were Atheists, and because they were Atheists, they were guilty of hatred of the human race, because they were going to bring destruction on the Roman Empire. That's the mindset behind the persecution of the first three centuries. They were upsetting the spiritual wellbeing of the empire.

So what would happen is when you would see these persecutions break out and flare up, not only would you have, like I said, increasing light and increasing darkness, but the darkness often would increase around a catastrophe. Something bad happens, and they look for somebody to blame. *It's got to be those Christians. The guy across the street, his friends, they're the ones. The gods are mad at us because of them.* So it was blamed on Christians. Superstition and ignorance led to this hatred and led to an outpouring of animosity and persecution against Christians. I said earlier that this is the kind of thing that's becoming more of the logic of today than it ever has been, at least in the last 200 years. We're accused of hate speech. We're the hatred of humanity because we say that the Bible says that marriage is between a man and a woman. And the idea of this kind of new age sort of philosophy that undergirds a lot of people's thinking. Isn't it amazing that people think that it makes a big difference—remember those bumper stickers *Visualize World Peace?* Just visualize it and you'll make it happen. Or the hash tags. I don't Tweet. I know enough to be dangerous, but hash tag. You hear talk radio and talking about how just the feeling, the goodwill that you offer. How about all the ribbons people wear? *I care about it. I may not give any money, I may not do anything for it, but because I care, I'm contributing, and I care more than you. You're a problem because you don't care.* It's this weird kind of darkened mind of modern man, and all of that fosters an environment where the persecution of Christians is more readily accessible. It's not so far to get there.

So we need to be prepared for those reasons, and not be scandalized when it happens. Don't be surprised. Why would you expect anything different? That's really the point of Jesus when He says, "Remember the words I said. I told you it's always to be expected, and that sometimes it will be extreme. So when it happens, remember that." But secondly, not just, "Remember the words I said," but, "Remember the one I sent."

## B) Remember the One I Sent:

This is where the news gets wonderful, because He tells us in John 15, there's almost kind of an interjection if you think about it. It's important when you read the Scriptures, to take note of things like this. You're reading along, He starts in Verse 18:

***John 15:18 ~ "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.***

He goes on down through Verse 25:

***John 15:25 ~ But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'***

And look how seamless it would be to go to John 16:1.

***John 16:1 ~ "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling.***

But He didn't go from John 15:25 to John 16:1. He inserts Verse 26 and Verse 27. "What you need to know is some theology about the Holy Spirit. As I'm talking about persecution and being prepared for persecution, what you need to know is about the Holy Spirit."

***John 15:26 ~ "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father,..."***

That's actually another one of those—there are four times in the passage where the word *ego* is inserted to emphasize something. Here's another one. When He says ***...whom I will send you from the Father...*** it has the force of ***...whom I Myself will send from the Father...*** Listen, you're going to experience times of persecution. It's always to be expected. Sometimes it's going to be extreme, and when it does, I want you to remember the One I have sent to you, that I Myself have sent to you. He's the Helper." It's such a rich term that John unpacks for us in recording these words of Jesus that none of the other apostles record in their Gospels. There's so much theology about the Holy Spirit in these passages.

He says, "The Helper, remember the one I sent. The one I sent is the Helper." The NIV translates that word *counselor*. In the King James, the word is *comforter*. But the real root meaning of the word is to aid, to help, and to provide assistance in a time of need. It's the Greek word *παράκλητος* (*paraklétos*). We get *paraclete* from it. But it comes from two words, *para*, which means beside or alongside, and *kaleo*, which means to call. So the *paraklétos* is the one who's called alongside. The idea is that you're in need and you call for assistance, and then that's the assistance, the Paraclete.

An analogy would be you have a medical emergency, and praise God we live in a country where you can call 911 and they're there in just a few minutes, whether it be the police, or it's a medical team. It's amazing how skilled they are. I had an apparent heart attack five years ago now. It wasn't a heart attack, but it mimicked a heart attack, and so 911 came out, and I remember thinking, I was having a vagal

response. It was a big time vagal response, but it imitated a heart attack. So I remember thinking though, thanking the Lord, “I’m so glad that we’ve got guys like this.” They were taking care of me, dealing with stuff, and I was actually praising the Lord as we’re going through this, that at least He may be taking me home, I hope He’s not, it was two days before Maggie’s birthday, and I didn’t want to die on that day if I could avoid it, but actually I’m voting or not dying on any day. I’d rather Jesus come back, but I remember thinking, “Isn’t it amazing that you can call 911?” Patti called 911, and help came.

That’s the idea of this word. The Paraclete, He is the helper, and Jesus says, “He’s the one that I Myself have sent.” It gets even more wonderful than that. When He first talked about the Helper, when He used this word Paraclete, it was in John 14:16, and He said, “I will send another Helper.” There’s a lot in that. He’s saying that the Holy Spirit is another Helper. Jesus was the first Helper. He’s saying that everything that Jesus came to be, the Holy Spirit is to you now, so that whatever distress you find yourself, no matter what the circumstance—wouldn’t it change things if you were going to through persecution, and Jesus was standing right there? And you could say, “They’re hating me because they hate Him. I’m just standing beside Him. Look at how wonderful He is. Look at how the words are flowing from His lips, preaching with authority. Look, this is the Savior. You should worship Him.”

So they’re hating me because they’re hating Him. It would be so different if you could just stand beside Jesus, “There He is.” What He’s saying right here is when you go through persecution, it’s just like that. Jesus is with you, because the Holy Spirit is with you. The Father is with you because the Holy Spirit is with you. The Paraclete is there. The Helper is there. He takes Jesus’ place. He is God with us. He is Immanuel. He’s the one who has been called to your side, that you don’t have to call Him. You don’t have to think about it, because Jesus sent Him. That’s neat. You don’t have to remember to call 911. He’s already there.

What does the Holy Spirit do? It’s not just who He is. He’s the Helper, but He also says, “He will testify of Me. He will testify about Me.” His ministry is to bear witness. The word *testify*, the word μαρτυρέω (martyreō), means to bear solemn witness and testimony to what one knows, and to establish the factual basis for some reality. So what He says is, “You have the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit when He comes to you, what He’s going to do is He’s going to first of all testify to you to who I am.” And that’s wonderful, because in the moments, it’s amazing how when you are surrounded by darkness, isn’t it true that the difference—I mean, one of the reasons God has us get together on a weekly basis or better, twice

a week even, right? Or even more than that as we're able to, but the reason that he says, "Don't neglect the assembling of yourselves together," is because we need to get together, and together with brothers and sisters, remember all these important truths, because you go out into the world, and there's just such a different reality, isn't there? You're surrounded by darkness. You can be in situations where on Sunday it seems so clear, but on Monday, the pressure is so great. We have to remember there are times when it's going to be intense, and darkness is going to come in like a flood, and we need to hold onto the light. What He's saying is, "Listen, when you feel like you're about to fall, remember whom He sent." The Holy Spirit is with you and in you, and look at Him to testify again.

What does it matter if all the people in the world surrounded you and say, "Jesus is not God," or say anything about anything, any lie that they want to tell, but you have God right beside you telling you this is the truth? Let every man be a liar, but God be found true. *It doesn't matter that all of you are lying. I have God right here telling me the truth.* That's what He's saying. You have the Spirit in you, with you, supporting you. He will enable you to do what He's called you to do. So, "Remember the words that I said," and secondly, "Remember the one I sent," and thirdly:

### C) Remember the Reason You're Here:

He says in Verse 27, after He says, "He will testify about Me."

***John 15:27 ~ and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.***

I mentioned earlier that this is actually, I believe, an imperative. The tricky part is that in Greek, this particular second person plural imperative, the form of the indicative mood and the imperative is identical. You'll see *will*, if you have an NAS, is italicized, but it's really not a future. It's a present tense verb, and the question is, is it present tense indicative, that is, *you are testifying*, or is it present tense imperative, as in *you must testify*. That's why I think it's imperative. The context, I think, says it. "The Holy Spirit will testify about Me, and you must also testify about Me."

In fact, the way it really reads in the Greek is there is the added pronoun there again. It's not an implied pronoun. He adds in the pronoun *you*. In the same way *ego* intensifies the meaning, here it basically says, "...and you yourselves must also testify, because you have been with Me from the beginning." Now, He's

saying to the apostles, “You guys must testify, because you’ve been with Me from the beginning,” and here we have their testimony, the Bible. But it also applies to us. In the moment of persecution, what are we to do? We’re not just to remember the words that He said. *It’s expected. Don’t be surprised. It can be extreme. This is not surprising.* We’re not just to remember the one He sent. We are to rely upon the Holy Spirit and look for His help. We can’t do it but He can.

In fact, one of the things I want to say about that too is you never feel able to do something that basically is impossible, until you’re in that moment. So don’t be trying to see, “I don’t feel like I could stand up and be persecuted, and suffer, and be burned or crucified, or all these other things.” I don’t either. I hate pain. I’ve had that dialogue with the Lord a lot. “Lord, I think You need to kill me a different way if I go.” You all keep that between us, too, okay? Seriously. But wait a minute, remember the one He sent. In our weakness, He’s strong. You won’t have the grace you need until you need it. He doesn’t give it to you early and say, “Hold onto this. You’ll need it in a few years.” He gives you the word now, but He gives you the grace when you need it. So you look to Him at that moment, and you say, “Lord, I know that You have this under control. You’re not surprised. I know You told me not to be surprised myself, and so You are going to give me the grace I need.” And when that grace comes, what are you supposed to do? Remember the reason you’re here. You’re here to bear witness. You’re here to testify yourself. Jesus said in Acts 1:8 to the apostles after the resurrection, before the ascension, remember, “You shall be My witnesses. You are to *martyreō*.” The word means to testify to what you have seen or heard, to what you know to be true, to bear solemn testimony to what you know to be true. So witnessing, your testimony is important, and your experience, but really the heart and soul of witnessing is telling people what you know to be true about Jesus Christ and the way of salvation. That is the heart of what you’re to bear witness to. You bear witness to Him. We only talk about ourselves to say, “Look, He changed me. Let me tell you about the one who changed me and what He did.”

So in fact the word martyr is an important word to understand. I said *martyreō* is the word here. It means bear witness. You will testify. He will testify. It’s a word John uses over 40 times in his book, in his Gospel. The word martyr comes from the word *martyreō*. Our English word transliterated is from this word. Our word martyr is transliterated from the word *μάρτυς* (*martus*) in Greek, which means a witness. Isn’t it interesting that we call people who die for their faith, a witness, one who bore testimony? That’s really what it means. It doesn’t focus on the fact that they died. The focus of the word is the testimony they bore. They gave testimony by their willingness to die. They didn’t prize their life in this world. Like

the author of Hebrew says, they didn't love their lives to the point of death. They were willing to lay them down if they could lift up Jesus.

The reason that we're here is to lift up Jesus. If there was any other reason, if we didn't have that reason, He would take us home. When you got saved, you should just be taken home. You were a child of darkness. Now you're born again. The Spirit of God comes to live inside of you. You see the Gospel. You repent of your sins. You turn from living for yourself. You place your faith in Jesus Christ. You believe the message, the testimony of the apostles that Jesus is fully God. He came to the earth, He lived a perfect, sinless life, tempted in every way, yet without sin. He gave Himself as a sacrifice, a propitiation for our sins, a substitution. He bore in His own body, God's wrath for my sins, on the cross, and He gives me His righteousness. And to show that God accepted His sacrifice, He raised Him from the dead. When you believe that, you are justified forever, it can never be changed, and you become a child of God. Regeneration, conversion, sanctification, glorification—why not just go to glorification? Well, you would. I love this in Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones." It's a really interesting verse. When I first read that years ago as a young man, I was like, "Wait a minute. What's precious about death? It's our enemy." It's precious in the sight of the Lord, because His godly ones are coming to Him. He wants us to be with Him. Jesus' High Priestly prayer is going to say, "Father, that they may be with Me, that's what I want," but until then, He leaves us in the world why? Not just to suffer for the sake of suffering, but to bear witness to Him. So that's what the purpose of it all is.

So He says, "Listen, when you find yourself being persecuted, remember the words that I said. Remember that I told you it was going to be this way. I made it emphatically clear." And like we saw in Matthew 5, one of His first sermons, He's saying that right up front, remember? "Blessed are the poor in spirit," and He ends up with, "Blessed are the persecuted." There are nine times that He says, "Blessed are..." but there are really only eight beatitudes. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful, etc... I'm not going to try to get them all. All the way down to the last one is, "Blessed are you when they persecute you, and blessed are you when they say all kinds of things against you." He doubles the last one. You're doubly blessed if you're persecuted. You're doubly happy. "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad," He goes on to say, "for great is your reward in heaven."

This is what John and Peter did when they were beaten, and what the apostles did. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ. God gives you grace and strength in those moments, to walk through that, and then He fills you with joy that, “I can’t believe that He used me to do this.” That’s what they were thinking too. They were thinking, “I didn’t feel like I could do it.” Remember Peter thought he could before he could, and some of us struggle with that kind of thing. Of course, the Lord has a way of showing you that pride goes before the fall. But I think after he had the Holy Spirit, he had a whole different attitude. He said, “The only way I can get through this is if You help me,” and the Lord helped him.

So we’re not to seek persecution. In fact, when you see all the persecution that broke out in Acts 8, I told you to read through Acts this week, you’ll see what happens is Paul and all of them start going through houses, and they’re ransacking Jerusalem trying to find all the Christians, and it says that what the believers did is they scattered. It’s okay to scatter, apparently. You don’t have to stay and sit there as they come for you with the knife. Now, circumstances may be different, but it’s interesting that what he says is they scattered. But what did they do when they scattered? They went everywhere they went, preaching the word of Jesus. That’s what’s non-negotiable. Wherever you go, if you have to run away from somebody, whenever you get where you’re going, tell them why you came. They’re chasing me because I’m telling about Jesus, and let me tell you about Jesus, and when you do that, that’s the reason you’re here, and God will be glorified. He will enable us. He will keep us. Our confidence is not in ourselves. Our confidence is with Him.

Let’s pray together...

*Father, we thank You for the high calling that You’ve given to us in Jesus Christ, the wonder of being made Your children, that we were Your enemies, the wonder of a perfect righteousness, because You are a God of loving-kindness and compassion, and we are sinful from our mother’s womb. We praise You for the gift of new life and the gift of faith. Lord, we pray that You would help us to take more seriously our walk with You, so that we could continually be abiding in Your presence as we’ve been talking about in this 15th chapter of John, to abide in the vine to walk close to You, to bear fruit, so that in these dark days when people so desperately need to hear the message that we have, that You would help us be more confident, more loving, but more clear that Jesus Christ is the hope of a lost world. Help us be faithful, oh Lord. We pray in Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

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