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## JOHN 15:18-16:4

### Expecting Opposition from the World

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#### DAY ONE Observation

John 1-12 record the public ministry of Jesus to the nation, while chapters 13-17 record the private ministry of Jesus with His disciples. Those who find the Messiah are taught what it means to follow Him.

*Jesus, in stating the attitude of the world, carefully forewarned the disciples of its hatred because He did not want them disillusioned when they met it. ...Jesus recognized it as a chilling reality; but He comforted the disciples by assuring them that He shared with them all the ostracism and contempt which the world could heap on them.* —Merrill Tenney

**Pray and ask God to speak to your heart as you read John 15:18-16:4. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Record the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.**

<sup>18</sup> “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it* hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. <sup>21</sup> But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.

<sup>22</sup> If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. <sup>23</sup> He who hates Me hates My Father also. <sup>24</sup> If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. <sup>25</sup> But *this happened* that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’

<sup>26</sup> “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. <sup>27</sup> And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

**16** “These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. <sup>2</sup> They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. <sup>3</sup> And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. <sup>4</sup> But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.

“And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. (NKJV)

**Complete the following phrases from John 15:18-25:**

*If the world hates you* \_\_\_\_\_

*If you were of the world* \_\_\_\_\_

*If they persecuted Me* \_\_\_\_\_

*If they kept My word* \_\_\_\_\_

*If I had not come and spoken to them* \_\_\_\_\_

*If I had not done among them the works which no one else did* \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you learn about the Holy Spirit from John 15:26-27?**

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**What reason(s) did Jesus give for telling His disciples these difficult things (16:1, 4)?**

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**DAY THREE**  
**Interpretation**

Jesus spoke these words to His disciples because He did not want them to be surprised or to stumble when they faced suffering or persecution in this world. **Read and reflect on the following passages. Circle and/or highlight the characteristics, reasons, or results of suffering in our lives.**

*It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. (Psalm 119:71)*

*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. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:10-12)*

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:1-5)*

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. (2 Corinthians 4:7-10)*

*Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:12)*

*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)*

*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 also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. (1 Peter 4:12-16)*

**What do you learn about suffering and persecution from these verses?**

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## DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following excerpt from J.C. Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on John*.

**15:18-21.** We are shown first, in this passage, *what true Christians must expect to meet in this world—hatred and persecution*. If the disciples looked for kindness and gratitude from man they would be painfully disappointed. They must lay their account to be ill-treated like their Master.

...Facts, painful facts in every age, supply abundant proof that our Lord's warning was not without cause. Persecution was the lot of the Apostles and their companions wherever they went. Not more than one or two of them died quietly in his bed. Persecution has been the lot of true believers throughout the eighteen Christian centuries of history.

...Ridicule, mockery, slander, misrepresentations still show the feeling of unconverted people against the true Christian. As it was in Paul's day, so it is now. In public and in private, at school and at college, at home and abroad, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3:12.) Mere churchmanship and outward profession are a cheap religion, of course, and cost a man nothing. But real vital Christianity will always bring with it a cross.

To know and understand these things is of the utmost importance to our comfort. Nothing is so mischievous as the habit of indulging false expectations. Let us realize that human nature never changes, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," and against God's image in His people. Let us settle it in our minds that no holiness of life or consistency of conduct will ever prevent wicked people hating the servants of Christ, just as they hated their blameless Master. Let us remember these things, and then we shall not be disappointed.

We are shown secondly, in this passage, *two reasons for patience under the persecution of this world*. Each is weighty, and supplies matter for much thought.

For one thing, persecution is the cup of which Christ Himself drank. Faultless as He was in everything, in temper, word, and deed—unwearied as He was in works of kindness, always going about doing good—never was any one so hated as Jesus was to the last day of His earthly ministry. Scribes and High Priests, Pharisees and Sadducees, Jews and Gentiles, united in pouring contempt on Him, and opposing Him, and never rested until He was put to death.

Surely this simple fact alone should sustain our spirits and prevent our being cast down by the hatred of man. Let us consider that we are only walking in our Master's footsteps, and sharing our Master's portion.

...For another thing, persecution helps to prove that we are children of God, and have treasure in heaven. It supplies evidence that we are really born again, that we have grace in our hearts, and are heirs of glory—"If you were of the world, the world would love his own—but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." Persecution, in short, is like the goldsmith's stamp on real silver and gold—it is one of the marks of a converted man.

Let us nerve our minds with this cheering thought, when we feel ready to faint and give way under the world's hatred. No doubt it is hard to bear, and the more hard when our conscience tells us we are innocent. But after all let us never forget that it is a token for good. It is a symptom of a work begun within us by the Holy Spirit, which can

never be overthrown. We may fall back on that wonderful promise, "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad—for great is your reward in heaven." (Matt. 5:11, 12.) When the world has said and done its worst, it cannot rob believers of that promise.

Let us leave the whole subject with a feeling of deep pity for those who persecute others on account of their religion. Often, very often, as our Lord says, they do it because they know no better. "They know not Him that sent Me." Like our Divine Master and His servant Stephen, let us pray for those who despitefully use us and persecute us. Their persecution rarely does us harm, and often drives us nearer to Christ, the Bible, and the throne of grace. Our intercession, if heard on high, may bring down blessings on their souls.

**15:22-27.** ...We should observe, for one thing, how our Lord speaks of *the misuse of religious privileges*. It intensifies man's guilt, and will increase his condemnation. He tells His disciples that if He had not "spoken" and "done" among the Jews things which none ever spoke or did before, "they would not be guilty of sin." By this, we must remember, He means, "they had not been so sinful and so guilty as they are now. But now they were utterly without excuse." They had seen Christ's works, and heard Christ's teaching, and yet remained unbelieving. What more could be done for them? Nothing. absolutely nothing! They willfully sinned against the clearest possible light, and were of all men most guilty.

...Well would it be for all professing Christians in England, if this point was more thoroughly considered! Nothing is more common than to hear men taking comfort in

the thought that they "know what" is right, while at the same time they are evidently unconverted, and unfit to die. They rest in that unhappy phrase, "We know it, we know it," as if knowledge could wash away all their sins—forgetting that the devil has more knowledge than any of us, and yet is no better for it. ...To see light and not use it, to possess knowledge and yet not turn it to account, to be able to say "I know," and yet not to say "I believe," will place us at the lowest place on Christ's left hand, in the great day of judgment.

We should observe, for another thing, in these verses, *how our Lord speaks of the Holy Spirit*. He speaks of Him as a Person. He is "the Comforter" who is to come; He is One sent and "proceeding;" He is One whose office it is to "testify." These are not words that can be used of a mere influence or inward feeling. So to interpret them is to contradict common sense, and to strain the meaning of plain language. Reason and fairness require us to understand that it is a personal Being who is here mentioned, even He whom we are justly taught to adore as the third Person in the blessed Trinity.

...There is a close and intimate connection between the Spirit, the Father, and the Son. Why the Holy Spirit should be said to be sent by the Son, and to proceed from the Father, in this verse, we cannot tell. But we may quietly repose our minds in the thought expressed in an ancient creed, that "In this Trinity none is afore or after other—none is greater or less than another." "Such as the Father is such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit." Above all, we may rest in the comfortable truth that in the salvation of our souls all three Persons in the Trinity equally co-operate. It was God in Trinity who said, "Let us create," and it is God in Trinity who says, "Let us save."

Forever let us take heed to our doctrine about the Holy Spirit. Let us make sure that we hold sound and Scriptural views of His nature, His Person, and His operations. ...Let us take good heed that the work of the Spirit is not so buried under extravagant views of the Church, the ministry, and the Sacraments, that the real Holy Spirit of Scripture is completely put out of sight. "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Rom. 8:9.) No religion deserves to be called Scriptural and apostolic, in which the work of the Spirit does not stand forth prominently, and occupy a principal place.

We should observe lastly, in these verses, ***how our Lord speaks of the special office of the Apostles.*** They were to be His witnesses in the world. "You also shall bear witness."

...Let us never forget...that the position of the Apostles is that which, in a certain sense, every true Christian must fill, as long as the world stands. We must all be witnesses for Christ. We must not be ashamed to stand up for Christ's cause, to speak out for Christ, and to persist in maintaining the truth of Christ's Gospel. Wherever we live, in town or in country, in public or in private, abroad or at home, we must boldly confess our Master on every opportunity. So doing, we shall walk in the steps of the Apostles, though at a long interval.

**16:1-4.** For one thing, we find ***our Lord delivering a remarkable prophecy.***

...Excommunication, suffering, and death, are the portion that the Prince of Peace predicts to His disciples. So far from receiving them and their message with gratitude, the world would hate them, spitefully use them, and put them to death. And, worst of all, their persecutors would actually persuade themselves that it was right to persecute, and would inflict the

cruellest injuries in the sacred name of religion.

How true the prediction has turned out! Like every other prophecy of Scripture, it has been fulfilled to the very letter.

...For another thing, we find ***our Lord explaining His special reason for delivering the prophecy just referred to,*** as well as all His discourse. "These things," He says, "I have spoken unto you, that you should not be offended."

Well did our Lord know that nothing is so dangerous to our comfort as to indulge false expectations. He therefore prepared His disciples for what they must expect to meet with in His service. Forewarned, forearmed! They must not look for a smooth course and a peaceful journey. They must make up their minds to battles, conflicts, wounds, opposition, persecution, and perhaps even death. Like a wise general, He did not conceal from His soldiers the nature of the campaign they were beginning. He told them all that was before them, in faithfulness and love, that when the time of trial came, they might remember His words, and not be disappointed and offended. He wisely forewarned them that the cross was the way to the crown.

...No Christian is in a healthy state of mind who is not prepared for trouble and persecution. He that expects to cross the troubled waters of this world, and to reach heaven with wind and tide always in his favor, knows nothing yet as he ought to know. We never can tell what is before us in life. But of one thing we may be very sure-- we must carry the cross if we would wear the crown. Let us grasp this principle firmly, and never forget it. Then, when the hour of trial comes, we shall "not be offended."

What stands out to you from Ryle's words? Why?

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**DAY FIVE**  
**Application**

Re-read John 15:18-16:4 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of this passage to your daily life.

What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of John 15:18-16:4? Why?

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Have you experienced opposition, rejection, marginalization, ridicule, or suffering because of your faith in Christ? If so, what did you learn from that experience?

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We should not seek out persecution with some kind of martyr's complex or cause antagonism with people by being rude, obnoxious, or "a busybody in other people's matters" (1 Peter 4:15). On the other side of the coin, we are not to avoid opposition by isolating ourselves from the world or compromising our faith in order to fit in with the world. When opposition comes your way because of your faith, what do you tend to do? Become more aggressive and determined to get your point across? Become angry and fight back? Become more fearful and withdrawn? Become like a chameleon and blend in with the world? Why do you tend to respond this way?

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In what situations or areas of your life is God calling you to stand firm in your Christian faith or be bolder in your Christian witness?

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