



**CHRIST**  
EVANGELICAL  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH (PCA)

## Sermon Reflection Guide; John 16:1-4

1. In John 16:1 Jesus says the greatest danger that followers of Christ face are not those of hatred and persecution from the world but that of falling away. What do you think are some common temptations that may cause professing believers to compromise their faith?
2. Read John 10:27-29. How can Jesus say that none will be snatched from his hand in John 10 and warn us about falling away in John 16? What is the difference between professing faith and possessing faith?
3. Jesus tells us in John 16:2a that following Christ can and will be costly. What are some of the costs that followers of Christ may face in the world today in our context?
4. In John 16:2b-3 Jesus says that those who persecute us will believe they are offering service to God. What might this look like in our world today?
5. Finally, Jesus offers us comfort in John 16:4. How is it a comfort to us that Jesus knew we would face this kind of persecution? What sort of perspective on persecution should we have in light of the victory of the cross?

### Sermon Summary

The last couple of weeks we have been considering Jesus' words from the end of John 15 concerning the world's hatred of both Christ and those who follow him. This week Jesus continues in that same vein as he teaches the disciples about the Danger, the Cost and the Comfort of following him in a world hostile to both Christ and his message of good news.

First, Jesus speaks to us about the true danger that professing Christians face. In John 16:1 Jesus says, "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away." In this verse Jesus strikes at the real danger for all those who *profess* faith in Christ. The danger, Jesus says, is that we may fall away. The real danger is not in the persecution that Christians will face from a world who hates them, rather the real danger that all professing believers must be warned of is that of falling away. Jesus says this is the very reason that he is telling us all these things, so that when we experience them, we won't be caught off guard and unprepared and tempted to fall away. To be forewarned is to be forearmed and to be fore-strengthened, this is the goal that Jesus has in telling us "all these things". This is the great danger, that we might compromise Christ's word in an attempt to gain favor with the world.

But we may ask ourselves, can a truly saved person really fall away from faith in Christ? The answer of course is no, a person who genuinely possesses faith in Christ cannot fall away from faith. However, Jesus is aware that there are many of his followers who are near him and around his disciples who are merely

professing to believe without actually possessing saving faith. The danger for people like this to fall away from a profession of faith under the pressure of the world's hatred is very real. One of the signs that we possess faith is that we take Jesus' warning to heart and we confidently face the world's persecution knowing we are secure in Christ's saving work. This is the great danger, that we might compromise Christ's word in an attempt to gain favor with the world.

Second, Jesus reminds us that there is a real cost that we face for following Christ. In John 16:2a Jesus says, "They will put you out of the synagogues." For many of us to be wrongly excommunicated from a church, while difficult, would not have the same ramifications that a 1<sup>st</sup> century follower of Jesus would have faced. For them being "put out of the synagogues" meant a loss of family, community, wealth and livelihood. You could say that for a 1<sup>st</sup> century follower of Christ to be put out of the synagogue was a fate worse than death. Yet even while we face such significant cost, we know that faithfulness to Jesus is always worth it. To trade faithfulness to Jesus for the approval of the world or to give into our sin rather than obeying Jesus is never ever worth it. The approval of the world and the gratification of our sin never deliver what they promise. Jesus however promises eternal life and abundant joy and he alone delivers on his promise. While the cost of following Jesus may at times be great in this life the reality is that the reward in the life to come is incomparable to what we may lose now. James 4:4, "You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." The Bible is clear that we cannot live for both God and the world. Therefore, we must ask ourselves which will we choose?

The reality is that we may not face the kind of extreme consequences that the followers of Christ in the first century did, but we can rest assured that all who desire to live a Godly life will face persecution of some kind. Jesus tells us that often times those who persecute us will be extremely sincere in their persecution believing it is the right thing to do. Jesus says in John 16:2b, "Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God." Sometimes the persecution we face will come from those who are extremely sincere in their beliefs, believing that what they are doing must be done. However, Jesus says that those who persecute us in this way know nothing of what is right and what ought to be done. Jesus says in John 16:3, "And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me."

Third, Jesus gives us comfort in this text as we face the sincere persecution of the world and the temptation to fall away because of these things. Jesus says in John 16:4, "But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you." When Jesus says "their hour" he is referring to the outbreak of persecution his followers will face after his death on the cross. Jesus calls it *their hour* with irony because it will appear that they have the upper hand. However, just like the cross where it appeared that Jesus was defeated it was in his death that Jesus defeated sin, Satan and death itself. So, the same is true for the followers of Christ, that while we face persecution, it may appear that the world has the upper hand, but Jesus has already secured victory for himself and his followers on the cross. Not a single bit of persecution is a surprise to God Father or to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit whom Jesus has sent to strengthen us. None of it is beyond his control and none of it can ultimately destroy us because Christ has spoken the final word against all his enemies, and he has secured victory for us now and forevermore.