

Sermon Series: *The Gospel of John*

Third Sunday in Lent

Hard Words to Keep You From Falling

John 15:18 - 16:4a (ESV)

Kim Lackey reader

18 “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. **19** If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

20 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 also keep yours. **21** But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. **23** Whoever hates me hates my Father also. **24** If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. **25** But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’

26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. **27** And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.”

16:1 “I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. **2** 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. **3** And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. **4** But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

Introduction

In Nigeria a rash of [attacks by armed Muslim extremists](#) left more than **100 Christians dead**, including the elimination of an entire family including a pregnant woman.

Two months ago [two Christians were killed in North Korea](#) for receiving biblical training. One was shot while attempting to enter China for more training and the other died in a prison camp.

In December of last year in [Sudan 11 Christians were killed](#) as the Sudanese government dropped bombs on several villages in which Christians lived.

Last week in Zanzibar, [Tanzania arsonists burned down a Catholic church](#) just two days after a priest was killed.

Last week in [central India 30 armed men broke into a revival meeting](#), beating the congregants and sending the pastor running for his life into the darkness of the woods. He is still in hiding.

Christianity Today [reported just few days ago](#) that a group that monitors the Chinese government's treatment of Christians has discovered documents that indicate that there is an intentional plan to eradicate all Protestants affiliated with the house-churches movement unless they affiliate with the Three Self Protestant Movement, which is the government-approved church.

Open Doors, a organization dedicated to helping persecuted Christians, [reports that on average 100 Christians](#) around the world are killed each month for their faith in Jesus.

The persecution of Christians is very real.

What will keep Christians from losing their faith in such horrible conditions? What will keep the followers of Jesus from giving up hope? Answer: Listening to and believing the teaching of Jesus will keep them from losing their faith.

The Purpose of Jesus' Words

Jesus said these words as he was walking with the disciples, all except Judas (for Judas had left to betray Jesus), from the location of the Last Supper, through Jerusalem, en route to the Garden of Gethsemane.¹

In **16:1** Jesus clearly states his purpose for saying these words. He intends for them **“to keep you from falling away.”** The word translated “falling away,” is *skandalisthēte*. It refers to that which could ‘cause one to no longer believe.’² Jesus does not want the faith of his followers to fail. He knows the difficulties that lay ahead of his disciples and he aims to toughen their faith in order to help them endure what is coming.

Does this imply that the disciples could “fall away?” Does this mean it is possible that a disciple can lose his salvation? The answer to that question is no. It is no because ultimately the keeping of one's salvation is decisively dependent upon Jesus's ability to hold onto his disciples and not his disciples' ability to hold on to Jesus.

Jesus has done all that is necessary to ensure that one's salvation will not be lost. In short, a true believer (i.e. someone to whom Jesus has given his Holy Spirit) will never lose her salvation because Jesus is able to do God's will.

John 6:37-40 (ESV)

37 “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. **38** For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. **39** And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. **40** For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

¹ See Jn 13:2; 14:30; 18:1.

² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 2, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 222. The word can also mean ‘to cause to sin,’ or ‘to give an offense.’

Seeing to it that none who have been given to Jesus by the Father are lost is God's will and doing the Father's will is what Jesus came to do. And, he did it flawlessly. "All of those given to the Son by the Father will be raised up on the last day!

We could also look to John 10:27-30 (ESV).

John 10:27-30 (ESV)

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."

The disciples of Jesus (those given to him by the Father) will never finally fall away. Jesus has hold of them and he has prepared them for what they must endure.

Prepare for the Pinch

When I got sick when was younger and needed an antibiotic via injection, my doctor, before he stuck the needle in me, would always warn me about the pain that I was about to experience and he explained that it was necessary. He would stand there looking at me for a few seconds allowing me to prepare and say, "Here comes the hurt that will make you feel better." This helped me deal with the pain. Knowing in advance that something painful is about to happen, takes a significant portion of the sting out of the blow.

One of the means by which Jesus effects the security of his disciples, is to prepare them ahead of time for the persecution that they will have to endure. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed."³ Twice Jesus emphasizes that fact that he is telling them in advance of the incredible difficulties that are to follow. He says it in 16:4 and in 15:20.

John 16:4a (ESV)

4 But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2012/11/pictures/121113-venice-floods-italy-world-science-swimming-flooding/#/woman-standing-bench-venice-flooding_61190_600x450.jpg

John 15:20 (ESV)

20 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.

He knows the terrible tide of persecution is about to rage against his disciples. It seems to me that the cultural tide is rising against Christians. It appears that the flood of hatred the rest of the world lives under every day is fast approaching our waistline.

The only way to survive a flood is find something solid on which to stand.⁴ He aims at their endurance. The only way to escape being swept away by the coming flood of persecution is to



³ Colin G. Kruse, *John: The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, Vol. 4, Gen. ed. Leon Morris. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 327.

⁴ Photo: *National Geographic Daily News*, [Photograph](#) by Manuel Silvestri, Reuters accessed 1 March 2013.

provide the disciples rock beneath the feet of their souls. Jesus aims to give them solid footing. So as Jesus walks under the star-lit Jerusalem sky, he offers five planks, or five rocks upon which his disciples can stand when they find themselves living in days of persecution. These truths were sufficient to guide the first-century disciples through their days of persecution and they will be sufficient to guide twenty-first century disciples though ours. We need to have these soak down deep in the marrow of their souls.

1. You are not of this world (v.18-19).
2. If you live like me, then you will be treated like me (v.20-21).
3. Whoever hates me hates my Father (22-25).
4. My Holy Spirit will help you speak (26-17)
5. There will be a deadly progression of their hatred towards you (16:2-4a).

1. You Are Not of This World

John 15:18-19 (ESV)

18 *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

First of all, we should expect the hatred of the world. We should not be surprised when we experience hatred from the world. *"Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you"* (1 Jn 3:13). Peter said, *"Brothers, don't be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you..."* (1 Peter 4:12). *"The **world** (Greek, kosmos), as commonly in John, refers to the created moral order in active rebellion against God."*⁵

Secondly, we should remember that our Master experienced the hated of the world long before we ever did. Jesus is our example, the leader to whom we look. Jesus was defined by a completely different set of priorities than was the rest of the world. He lived for the sole purpose of bringing glory to God by doing His will. Living for the glory of God rather than the living for the glory of other men invoked the hatred of the world. He was hated before any of his disciples were ever hated.

Thirdly, when Jesus called his disciples to follow him, he called them out of a lifestyle of living for themselves and into a lifestyle of living for God. The focus and values of their lives is **not of this world**. Being **not of this world** means that the followers of Jesus have an entirely different set of values, an entirely different worldview than do those who are not followers of Jesus. The followers of Jesus love different things than does the world, have different standards of conduct, entreatment, and ways of living. This fundamental orientation causes the world to hate all those who follow Jesus. We are not citizens of this world. We are strangers and aliens (or as in ESV 'sojourners and exiles') in this world (1 Ptr 2:11). This world is not our home. If we were of this world, then the world would love us as its own. But we are not of this world and so the world hates Jesus and any who follow him.

Application

So would people of the world be at home in your home? Or would they sense that they are in someplace different? Would the people of the world be content with the DVD's that are on your

⁵ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 525.

shelf? Would they be at home with you watch? Would they be at home with how you talk? Would they be at home with how you spend your time?

2. If You Live Like Me, Then You Will Be Treated Like Me

John 18:20-21 (ESV)

20 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 also keep yours. 21 But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

Jesus progresses his teaching. He moves it forward. Persecution is not merely a probable expectation, but a future certainty. **If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.** We know Jesus was persecuted and ultimately murdered. All the disciples were similarly persecuted and all but one, the author of this gospel, were similarly murdered. In so far as we live like Jesus lived, then we can expect to be treated like Jesus was treated. **A servant is not greater than his master.** If they persecuted Jesus, and they did, then they will also certainly persecute those who live and look like Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)

12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

Jesus then nails the deepest reason behind this persecution—the name of Jesus. **All these things they will do to you on account of my name.** All the animosity toward Christians flows from their identification with the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus, the holiest of all names, the name that is above all names, the name to which one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess allegiance, is a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.⁶ The name of Jesus is incredibly offensive and the world would rather not mention his name, unless of course it is used as a swear word, or the object of a Saturday Night Live blasphemous Quentin Tarantino parody appearing just three days after Ash Wednesday. The timing was not accidental.

The reason people hate the name of Jesus is because they **do not know God the Father who sent him.** We look at this more in just a moment. The people who mock and blaspheme the holy name of Jesus do not know God.

Jesus does offer a small ray of hope in this middle of this. **“If they kept my word, they will also keep yours”** (vs.20). The majority of the Jews persecuted Jesus, but some believed. In the same, Jesus explains to his disciples, the majority will persecute you, but a minority will believe. Both are certain. Persecution is certain, but so also are those who will believe!

3. Whoever Hates Me Hates My Father

John 18:22-25 (ESV)

22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 Whoever hates me hates my Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. 25 But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'

⁶ See 1 Cor 1:23.

Rejecting Jesus is tantamount to rejecting God. Jesus says, “**Whoever hates me hates my Father also.**” The incarnation of Jesus has forever changed the way in which man relates to God. The fact that Jesus is the one and only Son of God and that he came in the flesh has global implications for man’s relationship with God.

Jesus is the highest and greatest and most complete revelation of God to this world. In Jesus, God was revealing Himself to the world. To refuse to submit to Jesus as he revealed himself, is the same as refusing to submit to God. This is the most blameworthy sin. This is the sin of which Jesus is speaking. Jesus is not saying that the Jews were sinless before his coming. He is saying, “Now that God in me has revealed Himself to them and they have rejected me, they have also rejected God the Father.” No longer can they say, “We are the people of God,” for in rejecting Jesus they have demonstrated that **they do not know God the Father** (see 15:21). He is a liar who says, “I am a follower of God and yet I denies Jesus.” The person who rejects Jesus does not know God, no matter what he or she claims. The person who claims to know God and yet rejects Jesus, does not speak the truth.

The **works that Jesus did** testified that he truly was uniquely chosen and sent by the Father. All that Jesus said and did was enough to lead people to the correct conclusion about who he was. However, because they saw the miracles and heard the teaching of Jesus and still rejected him, they are condemned as **guilty and have no excuse for their sin.**

The Jews rejecting (i.e. hating) Jesus was a fulfillment of a prophecy spoken by David in **Psalms 35:19** and in **Psalms 69:4**. They hated God without a cause. But the real reason men hate God is because God is light and “men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil” (Jn 3:19-20).

4. My Holy Spirit Will Help You Speak About Me

John 15:26-27 (ESV)

26 “*But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.* **27** *And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.*”

When Jesus returns to the Father, he will then send the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, to his disciples to be a helper to them. How will He help? He will help the disciples bear witness about Jesus. It is the job of the **Holy Spirit to bear witness about Jesus**. Notice the connection between the job of the Holy Spirit and the disciples. “**He will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness about me.**”

In the face of persecution for the name of Jesus, trust in the presence of the Holy Spirit to help you bear witness about Jesus. In moments of persecution, the followers of Jesus are never alone and the Holy Spirit will help you speak and bear witness about Jesus. In those moments when you are put on trial because of the name of Jesus, remember these words;

Matthew 10:16-20 (ESV)

16 “*Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.* **17** *Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues,* **18** *and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.* **19** *When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to*

20 speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. 20 For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

5. There Will Be A Deadly Progression to Their Hatred of You

John 16:2-4a (ESV)

2 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. 3 And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. 4 But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

Jesus explains that there will be a progressive intensity to the persecution. First, they will **put you out of the synagogue**. They will kick you out of the club. That will eventually lead not merely to excommunication, but to murder. They will kill you. When kicking you out of the club does not silence you about the name of Jesus, then they will kill you. And when they do this, they will claim that they are serving God.

You may have heard about the recent media firestorm over Tim Tebow's plans to speak at First Baptist Church of Dallas. The church is a conservative baptist church and their pastor Robert Jeffress has come under fire for claiming that Jesus is the only way to know God, homosexual acts are sinful, and that Mormonism is not orthodox Christianity. (Some of his trouble has come from the manner in which he has communicated these truths.) These assertions are completely in line with biblical orthodoxy. We would agree with each of these assertions.

Many sports commentators and other pundits were not shy about offering their opinions. Many were utterly shocked that Tebow would even consider speaking at a church that taught such things.

[Gregg Doyel of CBS Sports](#) warned, "Tim Tebow is about to make the biggest mistake of his life" by speaking at "a hateful Baptist preacher's church."

Benjamin Hochman of *The Denver Post* offered his own warning to Tebow: "After a season on the sidelines, the ball's in your hands, Timmy. Better not fumble this one."

One columnist for the LA Times wrote,

So, what will Tebow say when he speaks at the church? Who knows. He has spoken at other churches in recent weeks, with his talks focusing on being outspoken about your Christianity, not hiding who you are. Maybe he will speak against what Jeffress has said in the past. Maybe he won't mention it at all.

Until then, the speculation will continue. And you have to figure the Jets, who are trying to trade Tebow, will keep a close eye on what he says, hoping he doesn't say anything that will hurt his trade value.⁷

Notice the last line, which intimates that what Tebow says may "hurt is trade value." What out what you say Tebow, you might lose your job. You may get kicked out of the club—the football club.

⁷ Houston Mitchell, posted Feb 18, 2013 "[Tim Tebow to Speak at Controversial Dallas Church](#)" accessed 1 March 2013.

Amid all the buzz, Tebow decided to cancel his appearance at First Baptist Dallas.

[Paul Raushenbush, writing for Huffington Post](#) then wrote, “I believe that Tim Tebow was listening to the Holy Spirit when he made the decision to not associate himself with Jeffress and his worldview.”

Gregg Doyel concluded that Robert Jeffress’ theology was not Christianity and Paul Raushenbush understands the leading of the Holy Spirit. Clearly they know what God looks like.

The persecution will only get worse. First, they’ll kick you out of the club. Then they’ll kill you. And they will do this being deceived by Satan all the while thinking they are serving God. People who kill people because they love the name of Jesus do not know God. Luke remembered these words,

Luke 21:16-19 (ESV)

16 You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. 17 You will be hated by all for my name's sake. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By your endurance you will gain your lives.

Your endurance is what Jesus is aiming for. Giving you strength to endure persecution for the name of Jesus is the purpose of this passage we’ve looked at this morning. These are hard words, but I pray they will keep you from falling.

Verses for further reference:

1 Peter 2:23-24 (ESV)

[23] When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. [24] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

1 Peter 4:13-14 (ESV)

[13] But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. [14] If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

Acts 5:40-42 (ESV)

[40] and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. [41] Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. [42] And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.