

## Introduction

One day when I was living in Ahwaz, Iran, I was playing golf. After I had teed off on the 18<sup>th</sup> hole, a village woman carrying a scythe walked towards my caddie and I. She began cursing at us and then she threw her scythe at me. Fortunately, she missed and I ran down the fairway out of her way. She obviously was upset and angry that foreigners were in their country. The word in Farsi was kadagie, which means foreigner. I had done nothing to provoke or cause this woman to be angry with me. I had not ever seen her or spoken with her. She was just angry with all foreigners in her country. I was persecuted because I was a foreigner, not because I was a Christian. In fact, at that time in my life, I was not yet a Christian.

Most Christians in America have not experienced much persecution. In the news this year, Samantha Fulnecky, a student at the University of Oklahoma, received a failing grade on a paper for citing the Bible about only two genders. She was failed because she was a believer and what she stood for. Subsequently, after examination of the facts, the professor's employment was terminated.

On September 11, 2025, Vice President J.D. Vance tweeted, "All over the world, Christians are the most persecuted religious group." Worldwide, "millions of Christians face persecution every day, ranging from harassment and property destruction to death and imprisonment. Open Doors, a Christian organization... found that more than 380 million Christians suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith."<sup>1</sup> They reported that "in 2025, 4,849 Christians were killed for their faith and 67,843 were beaten, threatened, or abused, physically and psychologically. More than 5,000 were sexually assaulted, harassed, or forced into a marriage with someone of a different religion, and 224,129 were forced into hiding or exiled from their country."<sup>2</sup>

Lifeway Research states that "in 1970, there were more than 3.7 million Christian martyrs over a 10-year period. That dropped to 1.6 million in 2000 and is now down to 900,000. Projections do, however, see that number increasing slightly by 2050 to around 1 million."<sup>3</sup> If we do the math, that is about 90,000 believers being put to death each year, a much higher number than Open Doors recorded. The fact is that believers are being persecuted for their faith, and there are some regions of the world where it is particularly prevalent. Here is Open Door's list of the countries where the most severe persecution took place in 2025.

Countries ranked for the severe persecution of Christians (2025) <sup>4</sup>		
1. North Korea	6. Syria	11. Afghanistan
2. Somalia	7. Nigeria	12. India
3. Yemen	8. Pakistan	13. Saudi Arabia
4. Sudan	9. Libya	14. Myanmar
5. Eritrea	10. Iran	15. Mali

In John 16:1, Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling." What things was He talking about? He was referring to our text today, beginning in

<sup>1</sup> <https://christianfreedom.org/worldwide-2025-global-list-of-persecution/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://catholicvote.org/open-doors-releases-new-christian-persecution-report-2025-deadliest-year-in-recent-history/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://research.lifeway.com/2025/02/11/9-encouraging-trends-for-global-christianity-in-2025/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/>

John 15:18. Jesus shared that they were going to be persecuted, and He did not want persecution to take them by surprise, and to cause them to stumble. They needed to expect it, and be ready for it. Jesus gave three reasons why they were going to be persecuted. First, He said that they will be persecuted because the world hates them, just as the world hated Him. Second, He said that the world will persecute them because the world does not know Christ. Third, He said that the world will persecute them because of their witness or testimony of Christ.

### **Why the World Persecutes Believers**

1. Because the world hates believers
2. Because the world does not know Christ
3. Because of a believer's witness of Christ

(Jn 15:18–16:4) “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. {1} “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.”

#### **1. Because the world hates believers**

The first reason that the world will persecute believers is that the world hates believers. He said, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.” The world hated Jesus, and if the world hated Jesus, they will also hate His followers. Hatred is a strong emotion and passion. It is the opposite of love. The Greek word is *miseo* (Strong’s G3404), and the Word Study New Testament Dictionary says that it usually implies active ill will in words and conduct, a persecuting spirit where it stands as opposite to *agapao*, the Greek word for God’s perfect love.

(Jn 15:18) “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated you*.”

In Luke 14:26, Jesus contrasted love to family with love to Himself, saying, “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.” Jesus was not telling people that they must hate their family members and themselves; He was using the contrast to teach that a person’s love for God must be so much greater than our love for anyone else. Hate is the opposite of love, and Christians are persecuted because the world hated Jesus, and now hates His followers.

(Lk 14:26) “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.”

Earlier, in John 7, Jesus’ brothers were getting ready to go to the Feast of Booths. They encouraged Jesus to go and show Himself to the world. At that time His brothers were not believers. Jesus told them, “The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. Go up to the feast yourselves...”

(Jn 7:2–8) “Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. {3} Therefore His brothers said to Him, “Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. {4} For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be *known* publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.” {5} For not even His brothers were believing in Him. {6} So Jesus said to them, “My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. {7} The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. {8} Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come.”

Then Jesus told them why the world hates them. He said, “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.” The world hated Jesus because He testified that its deeds are evil. Jesus’ brothers were not hated because they were still in the world. Since Jesus has chosen us out of the world, we will also be hated, just as He was hated.

(Jn 15:19) “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.”

Jesus told His disciples that a slave is not greater than his master. Therefore, if they persecuted Him, His disciples would also be persecuted. Jesus was hated and persecuted. Therefore, we His disciples, will be hated by the world and persecuted.

(Jn 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; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”

Jesus said that He chose us out of the world. When a person become a believer, He is a new creation. The old things in his life pass away and new things come. He does not live the same life as he did before becoming a believer. When we receive Christ into our lives, our lives begin to be transformed. We are a new creation, and we begin to look different than the world. We do not fit into the culture of the world. Jesus said, “but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.”

Notice what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17. “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” The new birth and creation are instantaneous, but the changes in our life are not instantaneous, but occur over time. Transformation is a process. Paul also wrote that He who began a good work in us will be faithful to perfect it or complete it. That work begins at salvation, and continues until the day of Christ Jesus.

(2 Co 5:17) “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

(Php 1:6) “*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*”

I have met some people in the church that do not believe they will be hated and persecuted. However, Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:12 that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” That is not a maybe, but a promise; all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. We live under different laws, principles, standards, moral values, and ways.

(2 Ti 3:12) “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

In 1989, I was working as a Head Professional at a golf club in Orlando. The owner of the club wanted to play in the Oldsmobile Scramble with his group of partners, which included his brother, his lawyer, and the manager of his office building. The Oldsmobile Scramble had a minimum handicap requirement for the group, which was forty-three. Unfortunately, the combined handicap of his group was lower than the minimum of forty-three. Therefore, his brother turned in some high scores and did not turn in any of his low scores. Likewise, he only turned in his high scores, and they got their handicaps raised to meet the requirement. Since I knew what was going on, I would not sign the entry form with their bogus handicaps. He told me that unless I signed the entry form, he would fire me. I told him that I could not sign it, so I was relieved of my job. We had just had our sixth child, and used all of our savings to buy a fifteen-passenger van, so we needed the paycheck. But I was unwilling to compromise, and trusted God to provide for us. I fasted for ten days seeking the Lord. Then our PGA section had their championship tournament and I played in it. I won the tournament and God provided money for us, and a lot of media exposure about what had happened to me. The owner called me and offered me my job back, and a promotion to become the General Manager. Christians live by a higher set of laws and values, and sometimes we will be persecuted for taking a stand.

Here is just a very recent example. In the news this week, they said there was a condom crisis at the Winter Olympics in Italy. The Olympics are committed to helping the athletes have safe sex while there, so they provide free condoms. They initially stocked 10,000 condoms in the Olympic Villages for the 2,800 athletes competing, but in the first three days they ran out of condoms. The Olympic Committee scrambled and brought in more. While the world promotes and encourages sex between unmarried people, the Bible calls this fornication. Christians are not to have sex outside of marriage. The rest of your teammates may be going out to party at night, but you will not be going out with them because you have different moral values. The world hates you for this, and you may be persecuted for your desire to live a godly life.

In Romans 12:1, Paul exhorted us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, and not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. The world wants to squeeze us into their mold; they want us to be conformed to their standards and practices. God tells us not to be conformed, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We have to fill our minds with the word of God, and apply the word to our lives so that we can prove the will of God in our lives. There is an obvious and recognizable difference between the ways of the world and the ways of God, and the world hates it.

We live in a day where many choose to compromise with the world rather than be persecuted. We do not testify to others because we might offend them, or we cut off our relationship. We go along with what the world is saying because we don't want to make waves. We don't testify because we want to fit in. Paul said not to be conformed to the world, so whatever excuses we may have for conforming to the world, we need to repent. In Matthew 10:32–33 Jesus said,

“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”

(Mt 10:32–33) “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. {33} But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”

Similarly, Mark records that whoever is ashamed of Jesus and His words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. It is not just a matter of being denied by Christ; He will also be ashamed of us if we deny Him and are ashamed of Him and His words.

(Mk 8:38) “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

The early church was very concerned about denying Christ in the midst of persecution. They took Jesus’ words about not denying Him very seriously. The early church suffered great persecution. Ignatius was an early church father and served as a bishop in the church of Antioch in Syria. That was the church that sent out Paul and Barnabas. He was arrested during the reign of Emperor Trajan and taken to Rome to be executed. He wrote letters to the churches encouraging them not to compromise in the face of death. In his letter to the Romans, he wrote, “Permit me to be an imitator of the passion of my God... Allow me to become food for the wild beasts, through whom it will be granted me to attain to God.”

Polycarp was another early church father. When he was ordered to curse Christ to save his life, he responded, “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?” He was then burned and stabbed, and his testimony is one of the most famous martyr testimonies.

Another well-known church father was Origen. He quoted Jesus, “If we deny Him, He will also deny us.” He endured torture during persecution under Emperor Decius and died from the effects of it. The early church was more concerned about denying Christ rather than dying. The church today has much to learn from their example, especially in the western world, where persecution is currently very mild.

We also have Old Testament examples to learn from. In Daniel 3, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down and worship the image that Nebuchadnezzar had made. When given an ultimatum, they responded, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” They refused to compromise their faith in the face of death. Their answer reveals that they had already made up their mind, and it was not something for them to even consider. They had a firm conviction to worship only God. The church today can learn from their example. We need to have a firm conviction that we will not deny Christ, even in the face of hate and persecution.

(Da 3:13–18) “Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king. {14} Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? {15} Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, *very well*. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?” {16} Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. {17} If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. {18} But *even if He does not*, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

## 2. Because the world does not know Christ

The second reason that Jesus gave the disciples for the world hating and persecuting them was that they do not know God. He said, “But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.” The world does not know God and they do not know Jesus, who was sent by the Father. Jesus is the only way and since they have hated and rejected Christ, they hated and persecuted Him. Notice that Jesus said, “But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake.” Followers of Christ, i.e., Christians, are also going to be persecuted by the world because of the name of Jesus.

(Jn 15:21) “But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.”

Jesus came and preached the gospel of the kingdom, and they rejected Jesus and the message that He preached. Because they have rejected Christ, the only way to be forgiven of their sins, Jesus said, “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.” Jesus has come, and the whole world is without excuse.

(Jn 15:22) “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.”

The thrust of the first few chapters of Paul’s letter to the Romans was about this. He said that the whole world has sinned, and there are no excuses for sin. Both the Gentiles and the Jews are without excuse. We have all sinned and are without excuse, and the wages of our sin is death.

People are without excuse because of the testimony of Jesus, and they are also without excuse because of the works that bore witness of who Jesus is. He said, “He who hates Me hates My Father also. 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.”

(Jn 15:23-24) “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.”

John only included a few of the works that Jesus did. He said the world could not contain all the books if they wrote of all the works that He did. Some of these would include turning the water

into wine in John 2, healing the royal official's son in John 4, healing the man by the pool of Bethesda in John 5, feeding the multitudes in John 6, healing the man born blind in John 9, and raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11.

(Jn 21:25) "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written."

<b>Jesus' Signs in Gospel of John</b>	
Turning water to wine	Jn 2:1-12
Healing of royal official's son	Jn 4:46-54
Healing of man by pool of Bethesda.	Jn 5:2-9
Feeding of multitudes	Jn 6:1-14
Walking on water	Jn 6:15-25
Healing of man born blind	Jn 9:1-7
Raising Lazarus from the dead	Jn 11:1-45
Feeding breakfast to disciples	Jn 21:1-14

Then Jesus said that they had done this to fulfill the word written in their Law, "They hated Me without a cause." When we think of the Law, we usually think of the Levitical laws given in Exodus and Leviticus. However, many times the use of the Law refers to the entire Old Testament, as is the case here. This is a quote from Psalm 69:4. Jesus had not wronged or sinned against anyone. Jesus lived a perfect life, and was without sin.

(Jn 15:25) "But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'"

(Ps 69:4) "Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; Those who would destroy me are powerful, being wrongfully my enemies; What I did not steal, I then have to restore."

### 3. Because of a believer's witness of Christ

The third reason that Jesus gave for believers being persecuted was for their witness. He said, "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, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning." Jesus was going to send the Holy Spirit to them, and one of the many roles of the Holy Spirit is to testify about Jesus. We saw earlier in John 14, that the Holy Spirit is called the Paracletos or Helper. He is also the comforter. He is the Spirit of Truth and will teach them things. He will also remind them of the things that Jesus had taught them. The Holy Spirit was going to be with them, and in them. Now, Jesus speaks about His role in witnessing; "He will testify about Me." Notice that the Holy Spirit is a person, not a power. "He" will testify about Jesus. A power does not testify, but a can person testify. The person of the Holy Spirit is the third member of the trinity, of the Godhead, and He is powerful. The eleven apostles were going to be filled with the Holy Spirit and they would also be testifying about Jesus, because they had been with Jesus from the beginning of His earthly ministry.

(Jn 15:26-27) "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."

Notice in Acts 1:8, Jesus was about to ascend to the Father and He told the disciples that they "will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." One of the primary functions of the Holy Spirit is to help believers testify with power.

(Ac 1:8) “but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

John Wimber wrote a book a number of years ago called *Power Evangelism*. He was convinced that the church was to receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon them, and they were to witness with power. He believed that Christians were to cast out demons, heal the sick, and model their evangelism after Jesus’ ministry. He used the phrase, proclamation and demonstration to describe Jesus’ ministry. Jesus had proclaimed the gospel and healed people, and when Jesus sent out the apostles, He told them to heal the sick, cast out demons, and to preach the gospel, so they began going through the villages preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. This is what John tried to pattern his ministry after. They needed the power of the Holy Spirit to do what Jesus commanded them to do.

(Lk 9:1–6) “And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. {2} And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.... {6} Departing, they *began* going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.”

Many people say that this was only for those twelve apostles, not for every believer. However, after sending out the twelve, Jesus sent out seventy others. What did He command them to do? He instructed them to heal the sick and to tell people that the kingdom of God has come near to you. They were also doing power evangelism; it was not just the twelve apostles.

(Lk 10:1–9) “Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.... {9} and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’”

After Pentecost, we see God doing signs and wonders through others that were not apostles. For example, in Acts 6, Luke records that Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. Stephen was one of the seven men chosen as a deacon in Jerusalem to serve widows so that the apostles could focus on the ministry of prayer and the word. Stephen was stoned to death for his proclamation of the gospel, and those that stoned him laid their robes at the feet of Paul.

(Ac 6:8) “And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.”

(Ac 7:58–60) “When they had driven him out of the city, they *began* stoning *him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. {59} They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” {60} Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Having said this, he fell asleep.”

Paul was not one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and yet God used him to perform signs and wonders. At Lystra, while preaching the gospel, he healed a man who had been lame from his mother’s womb.

(Ac 14:7–10) “and there they continued to preach the gospel. {8} At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother’s womb, who had never walked. {9} This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze on him and had seen that he had faith to be made well, {10} said with a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” And he leaped up and *began* to walk.”

While Paul was in Ephesus, “God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul.” The signs and wonders were not just limited to the twelve apostles of the Lamb. God used other people like Stephen, and other apostles to perform signs and wonders.

(Ac 19:11–12) “God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, {12} so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.”

Earlier I mentioned that I had been fired as the Head Professional and then had one the Section Championship for North Florida. During the final round, I was sharing the gospel with Robbie, another golf professional that I was paired with. After sharing the gospel, the Holy Spirit came upon me in a powerful way. I made a thirty-foot putt for a birdie. On the next hole, I made another thirty-foot putt for birdie. I was close to the lead before this happened, but after the Holy Spirit came upon me, I went on a birdie spree, and went on to win by four shots. It was not a healing, deliverance, or typical sign, but it was still a powerful sign of the Holy Spirit. I had not shared with this fellow professional so that the Holy Spirit would come on me; I had no idea that the Holy Spirit was going to powerfully come upon me. Many times the manifestations, signs, and wonders done by the Holy Spirit come as we boldly share the gospel with others.

## Conclusion and Applications

Jesus concluded this teaching by saying that He had spoken these things to keep them from stumbling. He said, “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. These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. 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.”

(Jn 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.”

Jesus did not want the persecution that they were going to experience cause them to stumble. Believers are going to be persecuted, and Jesus was forewarning them that they were going to be persecuted so that they were not alarmed or surprised by it. Just as this was applicable to the apostles at that time, it is applicable to believers today. Christians are going to be persecuted, and God does not want it to cause us to stumble. Depending on what source of statistics is correct, there are between 5,000 and 90,000 Christians being martyred every year. There are tens of thousands that are being tortured, imprisoned, beaten, and abused for their stand for Christ.

Jesus said they would be made outcasts from the synagogue. In John 9, after Jesus had healed the man born blind, they put him out of the temple. Earlier, in verse twenty-three, the parents did not want to confess Christ and be put out of the synagogue. In the message on John 9, I gave three levels of banishment from the temple. The first level was a temporary banishment, and a person could be restored if he repented. The second level was indefinite and it required the leaders of the community to be in agreement that the person had genuinely repented before the person was restored. The third level was permanent, and the most severe. All three levels were severe to a Jew at that time. Being put out of the temple meant that nobody could speak to you, be associated with you, eat with you, or do business with you. These were social and financial consequences, and they were severe. If you were the owner of a business, your business would fail. It had happened to the man born blind, and Jesus is telling His disciples that they were also going to be thrown out of the temple. He was warning them of one example of persecution.

(Jn 9:34) “They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?” So they put him out.”

(Jn 9:22) “His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.”

A second example of persecution to be expected was martyrdom. He said, an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.” The Apostle Paul is a perfect example of that. When they stoned Stephen to death, he was holding the robes for those stoning him to death, and was in full agreement with them. Then, he began to ravage the church, imprisoning Christians and having them put to death. He was zealous for God, and he thought he was offering service to God. Eleven of the twelve apostles of the Lamb were martyred. Only John died of natural causes, and church tradition says that they tried to put him to death, but was supernaturally spared by God. Jesus’ warning to His apostles was accurate, and it was given to keep them from stumbling in the face of death for testifying about Jesus. That same warning is applicable to believers today, and there are many that are suffering this persecution around the world.

(Jn 16:2) “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.”

The disciples are going to be hated by the world. Just as they hated Jesus, the world will hate the apostles, and for that matter, all believers today. Second, they are going to be persecuted by the world. They persecuted Jesus, and they were going to persecute the apostles, and all believers. They would be persecuted for their testimony of Jesus. Jesus finishes by reminding the apostles why they will persecute them. They will do these things “because they have not known the Father or Me.”

(Jn 16:3) “These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me.”

Jesus spoke these things in advance, so that when it came to pass, they would remember that He had told them these things. He did not want it to take them by surprise and cause them to stumble. Jesus was always looking out for the interests of His disciples. He did not say these things to them at the beginning, because He was with them. Jesus took care of them while He was with them. He led them, and kept watch over them. Now that He was about to leave, He would not be with them in the flesh, so He wanted them to know these things.

(Jn 16:4) “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.”

Our first application is that we need to expect persecution. We must accept what Jesus said would happen to believers. Believers are going to be hated and persecuted for their faith. Not every believer will be martyred, but Paul wrote that all who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted. We need to expect persecution.

Our second application is to have the right attitude in persecution. We should be willing to accept the consequences, and have the same attitude as the early church. In Acts 5, Peter and John were arrested again for preaching Jesus and healing the lame man. The Sanhedrin Council had them flogged and ordered them again not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. As they left, they were rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name, and they kept on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. We need to have a similar attitude when we are persecuted.

(Ac 5:40–42) “They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and *then* released them. {41} So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name. {42} And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.”

Our third application is that we should make a commitment to take a stand for Christ, even if it means persecution. We should be bold in sharing the gospel, and for upholding Biblical principles. The apostles kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus. We should pray for boldness, and then be bold in our witness for Christ.

### Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for this warning about persecution. You did not share this to scare us, but to keep us from stumbling. Thank You for warning us in advance so that we do not stumble. Help us to love those that hate us. Help us to love those that persecute us. Help us to rejoice and have the same attitude that the early church had. Help us to be bold witnesses for you. It is in the name of Jesus that we pray. Amen.

### Discussion Questions

- What are some reasons that people shy away from sharing the gospel with others?
- Is there a balance between conducting ourselves with wisdom and letting our speech be seasoned with grace, and just boldly proclaiming the gospel to anyone at any time?
- Have you ever been hated by someone? What are some ways that you knew that you were hated? How did that hatred feel to you? What was your response?
- Have you ever been persecuted for your faith? How were you persecuted? What were you doing that led to you being persecuted for your faith?
- In the face of persecution, what did the early church do? See Acts 4:23-31 and Acts 12:5. What should the church today be doing today?
- What was Jesus’ attitude when He was enduring hostility by sinners against Him? See Hebrews 12:2.

## **Why the World Persecutes Believers**

### **Introduction** (Jn 15:18-16:4)

- 1. Because the world hates believers** (Jn 15:18-20, Lk 14:26, Jn 7:2-8, 2 Co 5:17, Php 1:6, 2 Ti 3:12, Mt 10:32-33, Mk 8:38, Da 3:13-18)
  
- 2. Because the world does not know Christ** (Jn 15:21-25, Ps 69:4)
  
- 3. Because of a believer's witness of Christ** (Jn 15:26-27, Ac 1:8, Lk 9:1-6, 10:1-9, Ac 6:8, 7:58-60, 14:7-10, 19:11-12)

### **Conclusion and Applications** (Jn 16:1-4, 9:34, 9:22, Ac 5:40-42)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.