

## **John 16: Persecution**

**09-04-16 PM**

In John 16 Jesus warns His disciples that they will face persecution from those who hate Him. In John 15:18-25 Jesus explained that the world hates Him, and that because we are His, the world will hate us. The world and God are enemies to each other, and to be friends with the world is to be an enemy of God (James 4:4). Therefore, all Christians must be read to be persecuted, as it is a certainty (2 Timothy 3:12).

We don't think we are experiencing persecution, but sometimes it is because we do not understand what persecution is. Paul persecuted the church by dragging people out of their homes and arresting them (Acts 8:4); he states that he persecuted the Way "unto death" (Acts 22:4). But Jesus said that persecution also includes when men speak evil of us (Matthew 5:11). Indeed, Jesus was persecuted by the Jews (John 5:16) by their evil intentions and communications.

There are several ways which we are to be prepared for persecution. First, in 1 Peter 4:3-5, Peter says we must be ready to be persecuted when we do not engage in the lifestyle of those around us. They will speak evil of us for not living as they do.

Second, we must be ready for persecution for holding ideas in faith that they, as unspiritual people, do not. In 2 Peter 3:3-4 Peter warns of being mocked for believing that Jesus will one day return and end the world. Christians do not fear global annihilation or the earth becoming overpopulated or dying; we know that this world will end with men on it when Jesus returns. We believe by faith the world was created in six days (Hebrews 11:3), while the world mocks us for not believing evolution.

Third, we should know that we will be persecuted for knowing and practicing truths that the world hates. In Acts 19:23-29 Christians were persecuted by the Ephesians for denying false idols. The Ephesians were furious that Christians did not believe in the veracity of idols. The world has plenty of ideas it embraces and loves (promiscuity, drinking, homosexuality), and when we hold and practice a different truth, the world hates us (as Jesus promised).

Now we need to make a note to say that not everything we suffer by the world is persecution. When David sinned with Bathsheba, even though he repented, Nathan the prophet warned him that he would still suffer consequences at the hand of the world (2 Samuel 12:10). Sometimes we suffer the very penalties of sin, by the church (1 Corinthians 5:4-5) or the world (1 Peter 2:20). The world too may disagree with us, but disagreement is not persecution.

Finally, we need to be averse to taking on a persecution complex. We need to avoid over-emphasizing persecution, or seeking it when it is not present. We should not be easily offended (2 Timothy 3:10, 4:2). We need to avoid trying to be persecuted, but instead avoid it when possible (Peter in Acts 12:17, Paul in Acts 22:25-26). In a similar vein we must not return evil for evil (Luke 6:35). Finally, we need to avoid a mindset that believes that persecution must only get worse; Scripture reveals the worst has already past (Matthew 24:21). We need to believe that God watches over His people, and will not permit it to continue (Psalm 27:13-14).