

# Bible Studies for Life: April 3

*A Life of Persecution • John 15:18-25; 16:1-4a*

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Some things in life shouldn't surprise us. In fact, there are some things that we should expect. For example: I can expect that after my wife and I get our two-year-old daughter Kati Beck dressed in the mornings, she will want shoes and a hair bow to match her outfit. We have learned to expect this.

I've also learned to expect that when we are discussing where to eat lunch after church on Sunday, our four-year-old son Patton is going to want, in his words, "Mexico."

Some things are just predictable, aren't they? Today I want you to know that as a follower of Christ, persecution in our lives is predictable. In fact, Jesus commanded His disciples to expect persecution. Notice the following phrases from our passage today: "the world hates you (15:19 ESV)," and "whoever kills you (16:2)."

Jesus is not telling His disciples to expect lives free from trouble but to anticipate persecution. Why is this the case?

First, we have to remember the world hated Jesus. Jesus says in verse 18, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you (ESV)." All acts of hatred, animosity,

and hostility by this world that we encounter in this life are rooted and grounded in a hatred towards the God who created those people.

Jesus makes a direct connection between persecution and lostness when He tells the disciples in John 16:3, "they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me." Man's hostility towards God was born when Adam and Eve fell in the garden.

Sin had such a devastating impact on humanity that Paul describes lost people as "hostile in mind (Colossians 1:21 ESV)" and as "following the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2 ESV)," otherwise known as Satan.

The Gospel is the power to break their chains of hostility and rejection and this is precisely why we can't let persecution stop us from advancing the Gospel! Praise God! The same Gospel that broke through our hostility to God can break through anyone else's!

We cannot take persecution personally. If they hate us, it's because they first hated Christ. Don't lose heart if you're facing persecution; you're in good company!

Secondly, we have to remember that we will experience persecution because Jesus has made us holy. Jesus reminds His disciples in verse 19 that they "were not of the world, but He chose them out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

This is not a revolutionary thought, but we can't help but be reminded upon reading these verses that followers of Jesus should look and live differently from the rest of the world. We have been chosen by Jesus. He saved us, made us alive, redeemed us, sealed us, broken through our hostility, made us holy, and now has sent us back into the world with the mission to make disciples of all nations.

How could we not look any different than the rest of the world

around us? It's impossible! We will be persecuted simply because we live differently than the lost world around us. The Apostle Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 4:4 that lost people will be "surprised when we do not join them in the same flood of debauchery" and that they will "malign you" (ESV).

I think it's important here to remember that holiness is always worth it. If a person is not experiencing persecution for the sake of Christ, it could be because that individual is living a life that fails to demonstrate the change that Jesus has supposedly wrought in him/her.

As we close this lesson, we must see the warning that Jesus gives to His audience and to us regarding persecution. In 16:1 Jesus warns His disciples against deserting the faith because of persecution for the sake of Christ.

While it is impossible for a true Believer to lose their salvation, it is very possible that persecution will reveal that many who are supposedly Christians were never saved to begin with. They will prove to be the seed that was sown among rocky ground in Mark 4:16. They will ultimately reject Christ when persecution and tribulation arises.

Now more than ever, we must be prepared to suffer for Jesus with the knowledge that any suffering we face here on earth fails in comparison to the suffering we deserve in hell.

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