

Exegesis

Vs. 26-27 – For the *third* time (cf. 14:16-17, 26), Jesus assures his followers that the Paraclete will assist them in their witness: “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” The world's hatred is coming, but the Eleven will not have to face it *alone*. Jesus (not the Father, cf. 16:7) will send a Divine Comforter who will bear witness to the truth of Christ alongside the apostles. The opposition from the world is great, but the consolation from God is greater (cf. Rom. 8:31). Unbelievers may have Satan, but believers have the Spirit.

But why does Jesus choose the apostles? The Lord was concerned with the *historicity* of the gospel. Just as the Holy Spirit is the perfect candidate to testify about Jesus because God the Spirit has been with God the Son since *before* the beginning of beginnings (cf. 1:1-2; Gen. 1:2), so too are the disciples ideal witnesses because they had been with Jesus since “the beginning” of his earthly ministry. The OT and NT are not fantasy but firmly rooted in history and verified by reliable eyewitnesses (cf. Ac. 1:22). Being the last-remaining apostle, John was keen to establish that he was no storyteller; he is the Beloved Historian.

Furthermore, the Spirit “proceedeth from the Father” just as Jesus “proceeded forth and came from God” (8:42; cf. 13:3; 16:27, 28, 30; 17:8).¹ Given that the Spirit and Son share a common source—i.e., the Father—there is no better person to call to the witness stand than the Third Person of the Godhead. Together, the disciples and the Spirit will become mouthpiece, proclaiming and giving testimony about Jesus' words and work. Such witnesses will usher in the end times (cf. Isa. 43:10-12; 44:8).²

Without the Paraclete, the apostles would've failed as witnesses. Likewise, we can't live the Christian life without the Spirit's help. How many of us have tried to follow Christ by sheer willpower alone? It *never* works (cf. Rom. 8:8). Only when we rely upon the Comforter do we experience his comforting presence (cf. Rom. 8:9-15, 26). But contrary to how some would talk about the Holy Spirit, his interactions with us are no more mysterious than opening the pages of a book. After all, the clearest manifestation of the Spirit is the inspiration of the Scriptures (cf. 1 Cor. 2:12-13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). The greatest tool the Paraclete ever

¹ Admittedly, the verb used for “proceedeth” in 15:26 is **ἐκπορεύομαι** (ekporeúomai), while the verb used for “proceeded” in 8:42 is **ἐξέρχομαι** (exérchomai). However, according to Carson (1991), p. 528, the two terms likely refer to the same thing—i.e., both the Son and the Spirit go out from the Father.

² Köstenberger (2008), p. 468.

bestowed on the church wasn't healing, tongues, or prophecy, but the Bible. The Word of God has done more to edify the people of God than any other spiritual gift.

Vs. 16:1 – In 15:11, Jesus explained that the goal of the Farewell Discourse was so “that [his] joy might remain in [the Eleven], and that [their] joy might be full.” Likewise, his discussion about the world's hatred of Christians had a particular objective: “These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.” The Greek verb translated as “offended” is **σκανδαλίζω** (*skandalízō*), which, in its noun form, referred to a trap or snare, often called a “stumbling block” (cf. Rom. 11:9; 14:13; 1 Cor. 1:23; 8:9; Rev. 2:14).³ Thus, the Lord is telling the apostles about the hatred and persecution they'll experience so that they won't be tripped up, stumble, and fall away from the faith (cf. Mat. 24:10; 26:31). The greatest threat to believers is not plagues, wars, or famine, but *apostasy* (cf. 1 Jn. 2:19).⁴ A disciple not prepared to be hated for Christ's name's sake will not remain a Christian for long (cf. Lu. 8:13).

Vs. 2 – The Lord paints a rather bleak picture for the Eleven. He says, “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” If the man who was born blind was *kicked out* of the synagogue (cf. 9:34; 12:42), then what hope do the apostles have of evading *expulsion*? If Jesus would eventually be *killed* by the Sanhedrin for “blasphemy” (Matt. 26:65-66), then what chance do the disciples have of escaping *execution* (cf. Ac. 12:1-2)?

The paradox of these hardships is that Jesus' followers will face persecution from those who “think that [they] doeth God service” (cf. Isa. 66:5).⁵ Far from religious oppression being considered a shameful thing, persecutors are proud of their actions for they feel persecution is what God would want (cf. 2 Cor. 11:24). Before Saul became Paul, his *Jewish* convictions drove him to become the primary antagonist of the early church, a group which was entirely made of *Jews* (cf. Ac. 8:1-3; 26:9-12; Gal. 1:13-14; Phil. 3:6a). Thus, do not be surprised when the enemy wears a familiar face. “Christians have faced severe persecution performed in the name of Yahweh, in the name of Allah, in the name of Marx—and in the name of Jesus.”⁶ For this reason, we must be wary of a zeal that wields religion like a weapon. Despite what one might claim, anyone who does physical harm to others is most assuredly *not* a servant of God. Even in the face of death, the true follower of Jesus puts down his sword and lays down his life for the enemy (cf. 18:10-11).

³ Kruse (2017), p. 380, “To be forewarned is to be forearmed.”

⁴ Carson (1991), p. 528.

⁵ Köstenberger (2008), p. 469.

⁶ Carson (1991), p. 531.

Vs. 3-4a – “And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.” The apostles will be persecuted “because [their persecutors] have not known the Father, nor me.” This is an echo of 15:21. Ignorance of God and his Son is a breeding ground for brutality, cruelty, and inhumanity. And, again, why are the disciples being told this? The Lord explains, “that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them” (cf. 16:1). This is an echo of both 16:1 and 14:29. When these hard times come to pass, the apostle will remember that the Lord told them they'd come. And in the remembering, their faith will be bolstered. To experience a hardship without warning is worse than if one were to already know it was coming. It may not lessen the pain but will make it far more bearable.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Deep Dive: The Gospel of John | Week 62 | John 15:26-16:4a

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

Sadly, a believer will find no real friend in the world. Because unbelievers hate Christ, they will hate the Christians. But, if that wasn't sad enough, tonight, we'll also learn that this persecution will not come from foreigners or strangers. Religious oppression often wears a familiar face. Persecutors are frequently from one's own region; they even be neighbors or family members. Amazingly, they're rarely ashamed of their actions; in fact, most of the time, they're proud of how they hurt Christians. Many believers are persecuted by those who "think that [they] doeth God service" (Jn. 16:2).

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