

**Reading:** John 16:1-16

**Theme:** Predictions!

Before Easter, we finished looking at John 15 and this morning we will start looking at chapter 16. Personally, I have learnt a lot and been blessed in preparing and preaching the previous messages. My aim has been to encourage and comfort us from God's word in the Coronavirus pandemic and that is still my aim as we continue on in chapters 16 and 17.

As we come to chapter 16 there is a change of emphasis and theme - in chapter 14 there was a note, a theme of **consolation**; then in chapter 15 the emphasis is of **admonition** - teaching and instruction. The prevailing, the dominant theme here in chapter 16 is that of **prediction** - as Jesus teaches His disciples what would happen and come to pass.

The theme of prediction comes out as Jesus uses the future tense many, many times - "*this will, they will, I will, you will, he will*". Jesus speaks of persecution coming, of the Holy Spirit's coming and the specific work He will do, of what the disciples will go through, of what will be accomplished in prayer. It is a chapter predicting what will happen, yet as we look at it from our present time, we can see it was spot on and this chapter has much to teach us now, for it is relevant for us today and it includes our situations.

We are to remember that chapter 16 is a continuation of what Jesus has been saying. We looked at the last section of Chapter 15 before Easter and saw how Jesus spoke of the hatred of the world against believers and the reasons for it. He spoke of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, Counsellor testifying to them about Jesus and they would have the Holy Spirit's help and encouragement. We are to also remind ourselves of this, for there are times when we find ourselves feeling low, battered and isolated, but remember we are not on our own, we have the person and work of God the Holy

Spirit and He testifies to us - of Christ, the things of God and that we are a child of God.

With the Holy Spirit testifying to us, working in us, we can speak of the goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ and its effect on our lives. The Holy Spirit is given to enable us to be witnesses to Christ and all that He has done for us.

Here in chapter 16, Jesus continues to teach and instruct His disciples. Thankfully God the Holy Spirit has seen fit for this to be passed on to all generations, by having John record in his gospel what the Lord Jesus, our Saviour told them and still tells us – we are to look and learn from such. The Lord Jesus said amazing things - that may have shocked, even startled them, for Jesus spoke of the hatred the world would have for them. From the opening verses of chapter 16, I want us to note 2 things this morning:

### **1. The remarkable prediction.**

Jesus did not want the disciples or us to go astray (v1) and in v2 Jesus spoke of what the Jews in particular would do to the infant church, to Jewish believers. They would be put out of synagogues, the temple, be cast off as pagans by the Jews and some would be killed by the Jews in their zeal. This is a remarkable prediction. Understand that for a very short while, Christians were considered as a sect among the Jewish religion - following Rabbi Jesus, but very quickly this was not tolerated and many were put in prison, cast out of the temple, also synagogues and then the Jews actively tried to stamp out Christianity. Those who did such, did it out of zeal for God and His ways.

The early Christians told the good news that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ and the Jewish people on the whole rejected Him, the message about Him and also the messengers. The

message of God's grace provoked, resentment and open aggression.

We have only to read a little way into the book of Acts and we see this remarkable prediction fulfilled. We soon encounter someone like Saul of Tarsus who was fanatical in opposing Christians, would imprison many and even had them killed. He said of his opposition in Acts 26:9-11 *“I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.”*

The Jewish opposition, persecution was a type, a picture, a forerunner of the opposition and persecution which God's people have known through the millennia. This prediction still stands for our day. Yes, we can read of the suffering of believers, of churches in other lands and we should be careful to do so and pray for them. Such persecution should cause us to appreciate our freedom in our land. Yet it would only take a few small things and the flame of persecution could be rekindled in our land and Christians, we evangelicals, could suffer many things - whether we are young or old; the flame could come upon us all. We are speeding headlong into a secular society and our Christian standards and views are bringing us in direct collision with such a society and their reaction will probably be to initially marginalise and then persecute us. Even now Christians are being mocked, set as nothing, called evil, wrong, the bad guys and misguided. There are those who oppose the gospel, the Saviour we proclaim and us as believers also.

This remarkable prediction is as up-to-date as today's news, even moreso. The world will not like our God, the Saviour or the message of the gospel we proclaim and even indifferent ones, even our own loved ones, can so easily turn on believers, even those in their own family.

We can so easily be lulled into a false sense of security, a false sense of ease, but are we battle ready? Are we praying as those using a walkie-talkie in a battle - for necessary reinforcements, for provisions, for air cover so that we can advance or even maintain our ground, or are we praying like holidaymakers at ease and dozing after a big meal? The Bible tells all believers to be ready for and to expect trouble and persecution.

If we are living a godly life in Christ Jesus, we will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). This does not mean we ask or look for persecution, but we certainly ask God to be able to live a godly life in Christ Jesus! We are not to go out to provoke trouble. We are to do all we can to live peaceably. Yet as we live a godly life, it will provoke opposition of some kind. Some people because they are blundering, even bigoted, they unnecessarily provoke trouble for themselves - that is not what the Bible is speaking of. It is speaking of a life that is lived in a godly, wise way which will cause this opposition and persecution which Jesus and the Bible sets before us - it is not due to angular characters, blundering, and thinking actions or even unthinking zeal.

The Lord Jesus tells His disciples this remarkable prediction, but we move on and see:

## **2. The reasons for these predictions.**

This was not just a piece of information which would be useful, fascinating to know. There were reasons, very practical reasons why Jesus revealed these things to the disciples. The Lord Jesus

did not want His people to be ‘offended’(AV), ‘to go astray’ (NIV)[v1]. The Greek word here means “scandalised” - put off, upset by this thing. The Lord Jesus tells them this for very practical reasons, so that they would not be shocked by the events. Although He had already warned them of such things a few moments ago, here He repeats, re-emphasises the warning. It was not that He wanted to alarm them or frighten them. He was not toying with them and causing their fear to grow. He was preparing them for what would happen to them.

In v4 He again stressed this - they were told so as to remember He had told them of such things so they would not give up, give in because they had problems. They may have had rose-tinted glasses on, especially after Jesus had risen from the dead, when they been empowered by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. They might have felt that surely nothing could stop them, what joy, praise, power they knew. What conversions - 3000 in one day! They might have felt that today it was Jerusalem, tomorrow the world!

Yet Jesus wanted the disciples grounded in reality, have their feet on the ground, as problems, persecutions would come, as the world, stirred by the devil, would oppose the work of God in subtle and openly aggressive ways.

The Lord Jesus, wisely and lovingly, did not want His people to go into His service with false expectations, with false ideas of what was involved. He laid before them honestly and realistically what they were to expect and so they would be forearmed by being forewarned! They were to expect to meet these things - slander, misrepresentation, being misunderstood, physical abuse, maltreated, mocked, being hurt, loss of their goods, jobs, family connections, even imprisonment and death.

Jesus knew the battle would not be an easy one and He didn't lie and entice them with tales of ease and glory. He offered the cross, He offers blood, sweat and tears, He offers hardships, but at the end of it all there is glory! In His love and faithfulness, the Lord Jesus laid before His disciples this prediction of real suffering. It has been the lot of many through the ages to know such.

The Lord Jesus would have us count the cost of following Him. Sadly, there are those who say in effect, "*Come to Jesus and all will be fine, wonderful, you'll be happy all the days of your healthy, wealthy, prosperous life.*" People can be stirred at a meeting, they say a prayer, or it may be a mere mouthing of words due to their emotions being stirred, or it may be a real work of God - as true and false conversions occur, but then they both encounter difficulties. The one in whom there has been a real work of God's grace, can so easily be rocked, devastated. If they are tender, they then may fear they are not a Christian, or a second-class Christian and they limp along in their Christian life and witness, as the false presentation of the gospel has crippled them in their Christian walk. The false professor, meets problems, and may say that Christianity doesn't work because they have problems etc. and they dump it along with a lucky rabbit foot and go off to something that seems to work.

We do no one any favours by painting a false picture of service for Christ. We need to stress the cost, as well as stressing the joys, the benefits, the glories of the Christian life. We are to let people know what Jesus says in **v3** and see that this world created by God, is antagonistic to God, to Christ and His people. We also are forewarned and are to be forearmed too!

Jesus told the disciples with Him, that He did not tell them this in detail at first. He had alluded to, pointed them to it, but He was

going away and they would feel the full force of it when He had gone, so He told them these things.

Until then, the hatred of the Jews, the world, the devil, was primarily directed against Jesus, but when He was gone away, they would have the storm break on and over them. Then, instead of Jesus bearing the brunt of the attacks, such would be directed at them by the Jews, by the world and the devil. They would do so because they hated Jesus and they did not know Him or His Father (16:3; 15:24).

I truly wish this could have been a heart-warming, uplifting, praise inspiring message. Yet this message is relevant for us here this morning - as a church, as families and as individuals. We are to understand that we can expect a hostile reception from a growingly pagan society. There will be opposition, even legalised opposition, there will be aggression also. We will be misrepresented, have abuse hurled at us. People will mock our faith, put us down, dismiss us as if we are evil or strange. They will urge toleration and acceptance - except to those who have a faith in God and want to live by His standards - we can, no doubt, see this growing most clearly in these times.

As and when such things occur, we are to remember, realise we can expect such and do so in order that we are not scandalised, offended or go astray from serving our Saviour. The Lord Jesus says these things to us His people with tenderness. He knows what lies ahead, He knows how we will feel, hurt, smart, grieve and He wants us to know we are not alone in such times.

If we had time this morning, my 3<sup>rd</sup> heading would have been “The Revealed Blessings” and we would have seen why it was beneficial, expedient, good for the Lord to go away – so that the Comforter, the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit would come.

Always keep in mind our Lord Jesus is touched by all we go through - our feelings of weakness and pain; grief and sorrow; our joys, dreams and aspirations. He is able to sympathise, to understand and most importantly to help us and to do so with exquisite tenderness in ways that are so right, especially through the person and work of the Holy Spirit He has sent.

He knows when His people hurt and grieve. There is tender link, a chain of holy feeling and sympathy that comes from the throne of heaven to our hurting lives. It was revealed to Saul of Tarsus when the risen Lord asks Him a question “*Why do you persecute Me?*” – that identity with, feeling and care to His people is still in place.

As Christians, we are to take heart. If we have to go through fierce fires, our Saviour not only feel such, but He is there with us to keep us and to bring us through such - refined and for His glory. I pray that we would learn to trust Him even in the fires of suffering and persecution and we are enabled to show and sing His praise in every area of our life.