

The Upper Room (John 15/16)

The Suffering of Genuine Discipleship (vv.18-25)

vv.22-24: The world was without excuse. They had the testimony of both the *words* (v.22) and *works* (v.24) of the Son of God. If the Lord Jesus had not *come* to earth (implying deity and pre-existence, 18.37) the nation would not have been guilty of rejecting the Son of God and His testimony of the Father. They 'had not had sin' does not mean they would have been sinless, but that they would not have been *blameworthy* of this particular sin. Their guilt is therefore now greater; they are utterly without excuse ('no cloke'). They have had the greatest possible revelation of Light and yet rejected, even hated Him. To reject and hate Christ is to reject and hate God the Father (v.23). Thus, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for Capernaum (Luke 10.12-15). **Gooding:** *The Bible teaches that people will be held responsible for the light, evidence and information about God and Christ they actually had or could have had if they sought it (Luke 12.48).* **Pink:** *To dwell in a land of open Bibles and preached gospel, places men on a very different footing before God than the heathen who have never heard of Christ.* Every believer should take note! Given our privilege in studying and hearing the word of God regularly, we have great responsibility (James 3.1).

v.25: The rejection of the Father and His Son was not something that came as a surprise. The OT (Psalm 69.4) had already given advanced warning, God having foreseen the actions of the nation. Remarkably this was written in 'their law', a term which sometimes refers to the ten commandments (Romans 7.7), the Pentateuch (1.17) or, as here, the entire OT (cf. 12.34). How ironic. The Jews' own Scriptures condemn their position. They hated the Lord Jesus 'without a cause' or 'freely' and 'gratuitously' (cp. Romans 3.24). The world's hatred is unjustified and unrighteous.

The Sustaining of the Comforter (15.26-16.15)

The ministry of the Lord Jesus throughout John 13-17 is one of **provision** for His own, and the consequent *responsibility* that is theirs to enjoy that provision. For example, John 13 describes the provision for our *positional* and *practical* sanctification that we might live holy lives in a filthy world. Here, Divine provision is found in the Person of the Comforter who gives power and strength to testify to a rejected Christ in a world of hostility and hatred. *Note. God does not abandon a world of wicked sinners to their deserved condemnation. He provides another witness to His saving grace.*

His Residence (15.26-27)

vv.26-27: The Comforter is sent by the ascended Christ as a witness to His heavenly glory. In 14.16 He is sent from the Father, furnishing another proof of the equality of Father and Son and the unity of their actions. The Spirit comes forth from the Father for the purpose of testifying to the glory of the Son in heaven. This testimony is both *to* and *through* the apostles to the world (Acts 5.31-32). **Hamilton Smith:** *The Son had come from the Father to bear witness of the Father; the Holy Spirit was coming from the Father to bear witness to the Son.* **v.27:** The Spirit would bear witness to Christ through the apostles because they had been with the Lord 'from the beginning' of His public ministry. They were thus especially qualified to tell of His Person and work and were granted a unique authority to be His official witnesses (Acts 1.21-22). **MacDonald:** *If anyone could have found any imperfection in the Lord, those who had been with Him the most could have. But they never knew Him to commit a sin of any kind.* There are practical lessons to be learned here! **First**, note the order of the chapter. There cannot be *witness bearing* for Christ until there is first *fruit bearing*. **Second**, although this verse primarily concerns the apostles, it teaches us that the secret of effective witness is living *with* Christ. We are here as His witnesses. The mind of God is not for us to conform to, or compromise with the world in order to attract them with our evangelism (dress, entertainment, music). Let us rather learn to daily live *with* Christ. **Leckie:** *As the world looks on me it should not see a life which consoles but condemns.*

The Sorrow of the Disciples (16.1-6)

The word '**go**' occurs *seven* times in John 16. The Lord Jesus is going to the Father (16.10). The first half of the chapter emphasises His going away in terms of what it would mean to the **disciples** (vv.1-15). The second half concerns His going away in terms of what it would mean for **Him** (vv.16-33). The theme of **persecution** is still prevalent in the early verses. Note the: *revelation* of (15.18, 20); *reasons* for (15.19, 21); *results* of (16.2) and *resources* for (16.7-15) persecution.

v.1: 'These things' refers primarily to the Lord's teaching concerning impending persecution (15.18-27). He had foretold them so that they might not be 'offended' or 'stumble over the obstacle' of opposition they would suffer at the hands of their very own people. The disciples were still expecting the conversion of the nation and the ushering in of the Kingdom, but their timescales were wrong. Because the Lord had pre-warned them, they would be encouraged to remain faithful in the face of such persecution. Note. The Lord's warning did not prevent their 'stumbling' in relation to His rejection that very evening (Matthew 26.31-33).

vv.2-3: The particular persecution they would face was religious (largely at the hands of Judaism initially). The book of Acts records many forms of opposition at the hands of the Jews (e.g. Stephen, Acts 7) including Paul who received 39 lashes on five occasions (2 Corinthians 11.24) – a distinctive punishment handed out by synagogue authorities (**Carson**). Much persecution of Christians around the world today comes from ‘religious’ sources. **Sir Robert Anderson** once said: *Pagan Rome slaughtered 15 million Christians; Papal Rome (Roman Catholicism) has slaughtered 50 million.* The disciples would be ex-communicated from synagogues and murdered. Christians were thus not considered worthy of Jewish privileges of worship, neither deemed fit to live. Excommunication from the synagogue was not just losing a place of worship. It would lead to the loss of fellowship, family and social privileges such as employment. Such a person would become a social outcast and disgrace. No wonder Paul could say he had suffered the loss of ‘all things’ (Philippians 3.8). Scripture and history tell us that every apostle was martyred for Christ. The coming ‘time’ or ‘hour’ refers to the period after the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus when the animosity of the world would be turned from Him to His followers. Although Jews thought they were persecuting Christians as a spiritual service for God (see the example of Saul of Tarsus, Acts 9.1-2; 22.4-5; 26.9-11), the sad reality is that they had ‘not known’ God at all (**v.3**). ‘Not knowing’ the Father is not *mere* ignorance. The Jews had the opportunity to recognise the Father as He was revealed in His Son, but they refused. This is **wilful** ignorance.

v.4: Again (cf. v.1), these impending difficult circumstances were to be expected and thus the disciples should not lose heart or be surprised, but continue to exercise confidence in God and His word (cf. 14.1). To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Thus, there was no fear on the part of the disciples when facing persecution – it was expected (Acts 4.29, 31)! The Lord had not *kept saying* these things to them from the beginning of His public ministry because He was with them. Whilst He was there, He Himself was the object of special attack and thus protected them (see 18.8-9). Although He had **hinted** at potential persecution (as representatives of a Jewish remnant, Matthew 10.21-24), now was the time to **explicitly** state these things – the disciples acting as representatives of the new Christian community.

vv.5-6: The disciples were ‘filled with deep grief’ and sorrow (v.6). Not only was the Lord departing, but they were going to face great persecution without Him. In fact, they were so preoccupied with themselves that they overlooked the great **blessing** His leaving for heaven would bring them in the Person of the Comforter (v.7). How often we ‘*magnify our afflictions instead of seeking to learn from them and dwell on the blessings they bear*’ (**Pink**). This is the basis of the Lord’s rebuke; not one of them had asked *where* He was going and *what* His place and *work* in heaven would involve. Had they considered the blessing this would bring Him *and* them, they would have been comforted, not sorrowing. Peter (13.36) and Thomas (14.5) had asked questions about the Lord’s departure, but in reality they were not so much concerned with the place of His going as making a protest to the fact of His going. It is delightful to see that, following forty days of fellowship with the Lord after His resurrection, their sorrow was turned to joy unspeakable. Their doubts and fears had been dispelled. **Luke 24.52-53:** *And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.*