

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 2/20/94  
John 16:1-4 "Warning: Danger Ahead!"

**Next Week:** New Series "What Happened on the Cross?" {7 sayings of Jesus}

**Intro:**

Suppose you were driving down the road in your car, and all of the sudden, you came upon a sign that said this, "Warning: Danger Ahead!" What would you do? You might turn around! You might look for an alternate route. In the least, you would slow down and proceed with caution. Why do we have warning signs? Warning signs alert us to impending danger.

Our text this morning is a warning sign--John 16:1-4. In it, Jesus warned His disciples that there was danger ahead. Danger, not just for Him, for He had already revealed that, but danger for THEM.

We are living in enemy territory. The world hates Christians, just as it hated Christ. Jesus made that clear in ch 15 (v 18 "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you").

But in ch 16, Jesus' warning is more specific. He informs His followers that the world would not merely be mildly dissatisfied with them. No, the world would be disgusted with them. In fact, the world would resort to violent hostility to eliminate them.

READ Jn 16:1-4

Why did Jesus warn His disciples about the impending danger? So they could flee? Or look for an alternate route? No. Why then?

**Proposition: Jesus' warning in John 16:1-4 about the world's violent treatment of Christians serves two purposes.**

Jesus warns His followers that they can expect severe hostility...

- I. Jesus warns us so we won't Be Surprised (1-3).
  - A. We have a Duty (1).
  - B. We will face Danger (2).
    1. Excommunication
    2. Execution
  - C. We are dealing with Darkness (3).
- II. Jesus warns us so we will Be Secure (4).

Notice Jesus repetition of the statement, "These things have I spoken unto you that...(1, 3)." THAT indicates purpose. Jesus' warning serves 2 purposes. The first is negative, the second is positive.

**I. Jesus warns us so we won't Be Surprised (1-3).**

V 1 "These things have I spoken unto you that ye should NOT be offended."

NOT be offended. What's the first reason Jesus warned His disciples about the coming danger? So they wouldn't be surprised when it came.

So that we won't be surprised, Jesus speaks bluntly to us about 3 subjects.

#### A. We have a Duty (1).

What is our duty? Well, let's examine v 1 phrase by phrase.

"These things"--What things? The immediate context is 15:18-27, where Jesus told the 11 that the world would hate them (19), that His Spirit would come and help them (26), and that they were to bear witness unto Him (27). The overall context is the Upper Room Discourse of Jn 14-15, in which Jesus sought to prepare His followers for His departure. "These things have I spoken unto you."

No doubt, the unspoken question on the disciples' minds would have been, "Jesus, why are you telling us these things, this dismal news about the world's hatred?" Jesus' answer? v 1 "So you won't be offended." What does that mean?

"offend"--the word used by the KJV translators. It's the greek word, "scandalidzo." What english word do you hear in that? Scandal. We know all about scandals in our day, don't we? Scandals involving religious leaders, scandals involving politicians, and professional athletes, and music stars. A scandal is the result of someone tripping up.

By definition, the word in v 1 means to put a trap in the way which would cause a person to stumble. It carries the idea of surprise.

Illust: When I was growing up, I had a friend who was in to trapping. He trapped muscrats, mink, and other small animals, to sell the furs. I learned that a key to success in trapping is surprise. You don't set the trap where the animal can see it. Your aim is to catch him off guard. Put the trap in the place where he'd least suspect it. Surprise him.

Here's Jesus' point, "Danger is coming. The reason I'm telling you this is so that when it comes, you won't be surprised, tripped up, and disallusioned."

We have a duty. Our duty is to be loyal to Christ, to not get offended when things don't go our way. Or as the NIV puts it, to not "go astray."

Application: The Discipler is responsible to inform the Disciplee that the Christian life is not a bed of roses. When we disciple new believers, we need to follow Jesus' example and warn them that opposition is inevitable. We must tell them, "You're on high now, and that's great. It's thrilling to be a Christian! But remember, the same roller coaster that goes up soon comes down. Right now, you can't get enough of the Bible. You're so excited you can't be in church enough. You FEEL great. Remember that feeling. But don't base your Christian life on feelings. Feelings change."

Especially in light of what Jesus said next. We have a Duty. Secondly...

#### B. We will face Danger (2).

V 2 "They shall put you out of the synagogues..."

Jesus never said the Christian life would be easy. Just the opposite. He said, "Proceed with caution. There's danger ahead." One of the great disservices of the "health and wealth" gospel preachers of our day is this. They minimize the danger.

William Tyndale knew that his duty involved danger. Tyndale lived in the 16th century. His sole passion in life was to translate the Bible into the English language so even the common people could read it. He met great opposition from the religious leaders. He was severely persecuted, and eventually burned at the stake. In spite of all of this, here's what he said, "I never expected anything else." (Barclay, 189)

He expected to suffer for Jesus. Sadly, too often we're ready to throw in the towel when someone takes our seat in church, and we have to move to a new spot!

Why are we surprised when we have to suffer for Christ? Jesus said we would face danger. What kind of danger? He mentions two...

### *1. Excommunication*

V 2 "They shall put you out of the synagogues."

Our mentality is, "Big deal, if you're forced to leave one synagogue, just find another one." That's a common attitude towards churches today. That's why we miss the severity of Jesus' warning.

For a Jew to be put out of the synagogue was a hard fate. Jewish life revolved around the synagogue. It was the place of worship. It was the place of teaching. To be out of the synagogue was to be ostracised from God and from the community.

Think about it (Barclay, 190) "Sometimes loneliness among men is the price of fellowship with God."

That's what Jesus said would happen to His followers. Excommunication.

### *2. Execution*

V 2 "Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth..."

Jesus' words are solemn, "You will be killed for being My followers. You're going to face terrible persecution."

Surely the book of Acts bears record to this. Stephen was stoned. James beheaded. Countless early Christians were hunted down like animals. Foxe's Book of Martyrs documents stories of believers who were burned at the stake, whose knee-caps were smashed, whose children were drowned, whose joints were systematically and excruciatingly dislocated. And why? Because they were bad people? No. Simply because they belonged to Christ (Carson, 129).

And don't think the hour of martyrdom has passed. In this very century, I remind you that 5 missionaries were murdered by the Aucas in Ecuador, who knows how many Christians were imprisoned and executed in the former Soviet Union, and in Ceausescu's Romania. And think of men like Dietrich Bonhoeffer who died at the hands of the Nazis. And we little know about countless numbers who died in China under Mao's purges (conservative estimates are 12 million), some because they were Christians. As recent as a decade ago, an average of 3 pastors a week were being put to death in Ethiopia. Listen to this (Carson, 129), "Most missiologists estimate that

there have been more Christian martyrs in the 20th century than in all of the previous centuries of the Christian era combined."

Do you know what is even more shocking than this? Some of the most severe persecutions in history past have come in the name of God. By religious people. By men who thought they were doing God a what?

V 2--A favor. "Whosoever kills you will think that he doeth God service."

The word "service" in v 2 is the same word used of acts of genuine worship and service in the Bible (see: Rom 12:1). Think of zealous Saul of Tarsus. Prior to his conversion, he hunted down Christians, convinced he was pleasing God. Think of the Crusades. People were killed by sincere zealots, in the name of religion. In the Spanish Inquisition, men thought they were serving God when they tortured heretics into accepting what they considered to be the true faith. As they saw it, they were saving men from hell (Barclay, 190).

And this is hard to fathom, yet true. When Archbishop Cranmer was burned, his executioners actually preached a sermon while he died!

You may wonder, "How could a person be so deluded to think that he is doing God a favor by eliminating Christians? It doesn't make sense, does it?"

No. That's what Jesus explains next, in v 3.

### C. We are dealing with Darkness (3).

V 3 "And these things will they do..."

"The world hates you," Jesus said in ch 15. But the world is not just the secular, but the religious. You see, biblical Christianity is offensive to cultural Christianity.

D.A. Carson observes (116), "Nowhere is the world's hatred more clearly set forth than in many people who judge themselves to be 'liberal' but who are most illiberal when it comes to Christian absolutes. They demonstrate their forbearance and large-hearted goodness when they confront diverse opinions, varied lifestyles and even idiotic practices. But if some Christian claims that Christianity is exclusive (as Jesus insisted), or that moral absolutes exist because they are grounded in the character of God (as the Bible teaches), or that there is a hell to be shunned as well as a heaven to be gained, the most intemperate language is used to excoriate the poor fool. The world hates."

We are dealing with darkness. What did Jesus say is the reason the world hates? What motivates people to try to get rid of biblical Christianity? V 3 "And these things they do because they have not KNOWN the Father, nor Me." (also 15:21 "But all these things will they do unto you...because they know not Him that sent Me.")

It doesn't make sense that the world hates Christianity. It's illogical. But Jesus predicted it would be so. 2000 years ago, He talked frankly to His first followers about these three things: Duty, Danger, and Darkness. He put up a WARNING sign. Why? So they wouldn't be surprised.

Tran: There's a second reason Jesus offered this warning. Stated positively...

## **II. Jesus warns us so we will Be Secure (4).**

Have you heard the story about the pastor who was preaching about heaven? He warned his people that death was coming, and asked the members of his congregation to stand if they could answer yes to one of two questions: "Are you going to heaven? And, if you don't know for sure, do you want to go to heaven?" One little boy remained seated. The pastor singled him out and said, "Son, do you mean you don't want to go to heaven when you die?" The boy replied, "Sure, when I die. I thought you were getting a bunch together to go today." (from Handbook of Contemp. Preaching, 206)

The boy was obviously confused about the future. But a second reason Jesus warned us about future danger was so we would Be Secure.

V 4 "But these things I told you, that when the time shall come..."

Notice the word "when." Not "if" but "when." Hostility is inevitable.

Important question--What did Jesus want His disciples to DO when they were ridiculed, excommunicated, and even killed? REMEMBER.

"that...ye may remember that I told you."

Remembering Jesus' words gives us security. How's that? When we feel the world's hatred, it actually strengthens our faith in Jesus. How? We remember, "This is exactly what Jesus predicted would happen. He is in control of my life!" And another thing. If the trials happen just as Jesus said, I can count on the triumphs He promised too!

Key: Jesus doesn't give us this warning to scare us off. No, Jesus warns us, first, so we won't be surprised. And second, so we will be secure.

What Jesus just announced was new information to His disciples. He waited until the night before His crucifixion to tell them. Why not earlier?

V 4b "And these things I said NOT unto you at the beginning..."

Yes, He had told them they would be persecuted (Mt 5), but until now, He had not spelled out the details quite so vividly. Why had He waited?

Because as long as He was with them, the venom of the enemy was directed at Him, not them. He shielded them. But now, He was leaving (5).

Illust: When do you tell your child that he/she is going to get a shot from the doctor? There's two basic approaches. One is the surprise technique. Don't give them a clue as to what's happening until they see the Dr. pull out the needle! The other is to tell them about it ahead of time--not a week ahead of time, for that would create needless anxiety. Just before leaving, to prepare them.

On His final night with His men, Jesus warned them about the pain that would be ahead. Why? One, so they wouldn't be surprised, and stumble. And two, so they would be secure.

**Conclusion:**

Friends, there is a cost involved in following Jesus. To follow Jesus is to travel the way of the Cross. Yes, the blessings are great, and the rewards are eternal. Yet the danger is inevitable.

The name William Borden probably means little to most of us. Borden was a missionary who prepared to serve Christ in the Muslim world. He was born with wealth, yet he poured his riches into missions. He sought the best training possible, first at Yale University, and then at Princeton Seminary. Then he went to Egypt to work for Christ. Almost immediately, he contracted a terminal case of cerebral meningitis. Was all that training and sacrifice a waste? Listen to Borden's dying testimony that lives on: "No reserve; no retreat; no regrets." (Carson, 131)

The church today needs men and women, boys and girls, who will count the cost, who will exalt Christ no matter what.

C. T. Studd was such a man. He was born to privilege, gifted as an athlete and student. He was trained at Cambridge. Yet C. T. Studd turned his back on wealth and served Christ for decades first in China, and then in Africa, at great personal cost. He penned these words:

"Some want to live within the sound of a church or chapel bell;  
I want to build a rescue shop within a yard of hell." (Carson, 131)

That's the kind of passion we need today. A passion that looks danger in the eye and says, "Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb? And shall I fear to own His cause, or blush to speak His name? Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas?" (Isaac Watts)

Are you willing to follow Christ on those terms?