

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 1/19/03 Brad Brandt

John 16:1-4 "Living in Enemy Territory" **

Main Idea: In John 16:1-4 Jesus warned His followers what it would be like to live in enemy territory. Jesus' warning serves two purposes for us.

I. Jesus' words protect us from doing the wrong thing (1-3).

A. We have a duty (1).

1. When hard times come, we must not be surprised.
2. What's more, we must not get sidetracked.

B. We will face danger (2).

1. For some, there will be excommunication.
2. For others, there will be execution.

C. We are dealing with darkness (3).

1. A person is in the dark if he doesn't know the Father.
2. A person is in the dark if he doesn't know Jesus.

II. Jesus' words prompt us to do the right thing (4).

A. We must remember what Jesus said.

1. It doesn't make the problem go away.
2. It does give us security.

B. We must remember what Jesus did.

1. He was once here.
2. He left by way of the cross.
3. He is coming again.

Make It Personal: There is cost involved in true Christianity.

1. To be a soldier of Christ you must know Christ.
2. To be a soldier of Christ you must follow Christ wherever He leads.

Here's a humbling thought. Do you realize that while we are sitting here this morning in comfort the same cannot be said for countless fellow believers around the world? Many of our brothers and sisters are in prison because of their allegiance to Christ. Let me share some true stories:

Let's consider China first. It's been estimated that there are more Christians in prison in China than in any other restricted nation.

Baishun Bao was arrested at the age of 23 for "illegal preaching." That happened in the year 2000. He was sentenced to a four year prison term.

At 42 years of age, Shuxian Ding was arrested for "illegal evangelistic activities" in 2001. She was sentenced to a three year prison term.

Ping Li was 22 years old when she was arrested for "illegal evangelistic activities." That was in April 1996. She was sentenced with a fifteen year prison term.

On June 9, 1996, Aiqing Zhu was arrested for the same so-called "crime." She was forty then and is now serving a twenty year prison term.

Zhong Chen was arrested for "illegal evangelistic activities and disturbing social safety" in the year 2000. He was 32 at the time. His prison term is unknown.

Zheng Yunsu, a Christian leader, was arrested in June 1992 with thirty-six other community members,

including his four sons. Their arrests are thought to be the result of the community's efforts to prevent security forces from tearing down their church. The elder Zheng was charged with holding 'illegal' religious meetings, disturbing the peace and resisting arrest. Sentenced to 12 years of imprisonment, he is thought to be held at the Shengjian Motorcycle Factory labor camp. Public Security Bureau officials raided the church compound in June 1992, leveled the church and confiscated personal property.

This past year ten leaders of the South China Church received prison sentences from 3 to 8 years. Their crime? They started an unregistered children's Sunday School. Unregistered churches and Sunday schools are illegal in China and children under 18 are not allowed to attend.

Let that sink in, dear friends. We have brothers and sisters who consider Sunday School so important that they've been willing to go to prison for it. How important is Sunday School to you? Surely, we will give an account for what we have and so often fail to appreciate.

The persecution certainly isn't limited to China. Christians in Egypt face many forms of direct and indirect maltreatment. There are reports that the kidnapping of Christian girls has become a weekly routine in Egypt. It is believed that 300 have been kidnapped in recent years, a recent case being Amal Zakarey Botros. The authorities rarely catch those responsible or bring back the girls.

The hatred is seen in Pakistan, too. Saleem and Rasheed Masih, two brothers from the city of Pasrur, were jailed May 30, 1999 on blasphemy charges arising from a dispute with a Muslim ice cream vendor. The vendor refused to serve the Christians in the same bowls used by the Muslims and told local police that they had then made "bad remarks" against Islam and Muhammad. The families of the two brothers fled their homes for fear of retaliation by local Muslim extremists. A year later they were sentenced to 35 years imprisonment and a fine equivalent to five years' wages. Rasheed, 32, is married with five children. Saleem, 28, has a wife and three children.

Another persecuted believer in Pakistan is Pervaiz Masih. This Christian high school principal was jailed by authorities two years ago for alleged blasphemy against Islam. Last June, he was attacked while asleep in his cell. He was struck twice in the head before he awakened enough to wrestle with his attacker and call the jail guards.

One other country, Vietnam. Dinh Be, Ho Hoang Duy and Tran Van Vui are being held in Quang Ngai prison for illegally preaching the Gospel. Tran Van Vui has already spent two years in prison for illegally preaching the Gospel. He was released in late 1997 for two months before being re-arrested in December 1997. He has been sentenced to three years for teaching from the Bible in Bato village. Christians at the Quang Ngai prison must endure hours of forced labor every day.

Let this sink in. These are *real* people, real brothers and sisters of ours who are suffering for Christ even as I speak. By the way, if you would like to write a note of encouragement to any of these brothers and sisters, you can obtain their addresses by accessing www.persecution.com.

It's not popular to be a Christian in a non-Christian world. But Jesus never said it would be easy. In fact, before He left the earth He plainly told His followers what it would be like to live in enemy territory.

Two weeks ago we began a series entitled, "Living with a Warfare Mentality." If you're going to like a God-honoring life as a Christian you must develop a warfare mentality. That is, you must live each day with the realization that you are at war. If you are a Christian you are a soldier, a soldier of Christ.

Listen to the way our first century ancestors talked to each other: Paul wrote, "To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, ²² to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow *soldier* and to the church that meets in your home (Philemon 1-2)." Later the apostle gave this admonition to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3, "Endure

hardship with us like a good *soldier* of Christ Jesus."

If you are a Christian, you are a soldier. You are called to live as a soldier. You have a mission. You're not here for personal comfort, but to accomplish the mission your Commander-in-Chief gave to us.

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 or 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. In John 16:1-4, Jesus warned His disciples that there was danger ahead, danger, not just for Him, for them, too.

But why did Jesus give us this warning sign? So we could flee, or look for an alternate route? No. Why then? We'll find out this morning. Here's what He said:

"All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you (John 16:1-4)."

Notice the repetition. Twice Jesus said, "I have told you this (verses 1 & 4)," and twice He told them why, "So that (again in verses 1 & 4)." Simply put, Jesus' words in John 16:1-4 serve two purposes for us, one negative and one positive. If you want to know how to live in enemy territory you need to take heed.

I. Jesus' words protect us from doing the wrong thing (1-3).

The scene was sober that night. Jesus had already told the Twelve many things. He told them about His impending death, the betrayal by one of them and the denial by all of them. They hardly knew what to say.

Our text begins with Jesus saying, "All this I have told you so that you will not go astray (1)." Which raises the question, "All what?" What had Jesus just told the disciples?

The overall context is the Upper Room Discourse of John 14-15, in which Jesus sought to prepare His followers for His departure. The immediate context is the latter half of John 15. There Jesus told the Twelve minus Judas that the world would hate them (19), that His Spirit would come and help them (26), and that they were to testify about Him (27). "All this I have told you."

I want you to listen to the very words Jesus had just said in John 15:18-27. Pay careful attention to the repeated use of the term "hate."

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.' "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning."

The world is going to hate you, Jesus said, just like it hated me. After I leave you can expect the hatred to turn against you.

Why did Jesus give them this dismal warning? Here's why, purpose #1, "All this I have told you so that you will not" do something. If we take Jesus' words to heart they will protect us from doing the wrong thing.

Jesus speaks bluntly to us about three subjects in verses 1-3.

A. We have a duty (1). Just what is our duty? We see it in verse 1.

No doubt, the unspoken question on the disciples' minds must have been, "Jesus, why are you telling us these things, this terrible news about the world's hatred?" What was Jesus' answer? Verse 1, "So that you will not go astray." The KJV says, "So you won't be offended." What does that mean?

The Greek term is *skandalizo*. 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 verse 1 means "to put a trap in the way which would cause a person to stumble." It carries the idea of surprise.

When I was growing up, I had a friend who was in to trapping. He trapped muskrats, 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, "Disciples, danger is coming. The reason I'm telling you this is so that when it does, you won't be caught off guard."

The same goes for us.

1. *When hard times come, we must not be surprised.*

2. *What's more, we must not get sidetracked.* We mustn't turn away from the Lord and choose the course of least resistance. That's not an option. We have a duty. Our duty is to be loyal to Christ, to refuse to "go astray" and get "offended" when things don't go smoothly.

By the way, don't miss an important sidelight here. The Discippler is responsible to inform the Disciplee that the Christian life is not a bed of roses. That's what Jesus did. When we disciple new believers, we need to follow the Lord's example and warn them that opposition is inevitable. We must tell them, "You're on a 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, and when they do, do not go astray."

We have a Duty. Secondly...

B. We will face danger (2). "They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God."

No, Jesus never said the Christian life would be easy. Just the opposite. He said, "Proceed with caution. There's danger ahead."

OOOOOne 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."

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. For some, there will be excommunication. "They will put you out of the synagogue." We might think, "Well, big deal, if you're forced to leave one synagogue, just find another one." That's a common attitude towards churches today. That's also 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. It was also the place of educational opportunity. Remember, Jesus' disciples were Jews. To be put out of the synagogue was to be ostracized from the community. It affected you financially as well as relationally. If you were put out you were cut off from your family and cut off from social contacts.

Barclay is right, "Sometimes loneliness among men is the price of fellowship with God." That's what Jesus said would happen to His followers. For some there will be excommunication.

2. For others, there will be execution. Verse 2 again, "A time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God." Jesus' words are solemn, "You will be killed for being My followers. You're going to face terrible persecution."

The book of Acts bears record to this. Stephen was stoned. James beheaded. So does the record of history. 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.

You say, "The hatred doesn't make sense!" No, hatred never does make sense.

Yet to this day the martyrdom continues. In the past century, five missionaries were murdered by the Aucas in Ecuador, and 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 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. Back in the '80's, an average of 3 pastors a week were being put to death in Ethiopia. Know this, "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 the will of God.

That's exactly what Jesus predicted. "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service (KJV)." The word "service" 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.

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 verse 3.

C. We are dealing with darkness (3). "They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me."

"The world hates you," Jesus said back in chapter 15. But the world is not just the secular, but includes the religious. You see, biblical Christianity is offensive to those who have mere religion, including those who possess cultural Christianity.

Ponder this observation by D. A. Carson, "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."

And here's why. 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? Verse 3, "They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me." (see also 15:21).

According to verse 3, who is in the dark? If one of the following two factors are true, a person is in the dark.

1. *A person is in the dark if he doesn't know the Father. And...*

2. *A person is in the dark if he doesn't know Jesus.* These two go hand in hand. If you want to know the Father you must know His Son, Jesus. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except by me." Who said that? Jesus did (John 14:6).

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.

Jesus' warning serves a second purpose. First, His words protect us from doing the wrong thing. Secondly...

II. Jesus' words prompt us to do the right thing (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."

The boy was obviously confused about the pastor's instructions. Jesus doesn't want us to be confused, so He made it very clear.

When it comes to living in enemy territory, here's the wrong thing to do—"I have told you this so you *will not go astray*." Here's the right thing to do—"I have told you this so that when the time comes *you will remember*."

What must we remember? Two things...

A. We must remember what Jesus said. "I have told you this, so that when the time comes..." Notice Jesus said "when" not "if." Hostility is inevitable. And what did Jesus want His disciples to DO when they were ridiculed, excommunicated, and even killed? REMEMBER. "When the time comes you will remember that I warned you."

"What good does remembering do?" you ask. That's a good question.

1. *It doesn't make the problem go away.* Remember, it's *when* not *if*.
2. *It does give us security.* How's that? When we feel the world's hatred, it can actually strengthen our faith in Jesus. It gives us the opportunity to remember, "This is exactly what Jesus predicted would happen. He knows what's happening in my life!" And another thing. If the trials happen just as Jesus said, I can count on the glory to follow, too!

There's something else we need to remember, first what Jesus *said*, then...

B. We must remember what Jesus did. Verse 4 again, "I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you."

Please keep this in mind. Jesus didn't give this warning to scare us off. No, Jesus warns us, first, so we won't be surprised and go astray. And second, so we will be secure and *remember*.

What Jesus had just announced was new information to His disciples. Yes, He had already told them they would be persecuted (Matt 5:11-12), but until now He had not spelled out the details quite so vividly. He waited until the night before His crucifixion to tell them.

Why not earlier? Why had He waited? Here's the answer He gave (4), "I did not tell you this at first because I was with you." There's why He waited. As long as He was with them, the venom of the enemy was directed at Him, not them. He shielded them. But that was about to change. Now, as He says in the next verse, He was leaving (5).

If we're going to do the right thing while living in enemy territory we must remember not only what Jesus *said*, but also what He *did*. What did He do? We're told three things right here.

1. *He was once here.* "I was with you," He said. But He couldn't remain on earth forever, not the first time He came. He came to do a work. What work?
2. *He left by way of the cross.* You see, the work Jesus came to do was to save a people by giving His life as a ransom payment for their sins. He did for you what you cannot do, live a perfect life, and when He died on the cross He took upon Himself the penalty you deserve to pay for your sin. Three days later He rose again. He who was once here left by way of the cross. Today He offers forgiveness and new life to anyone who will repent and receive Him as Savior and Lord. That includes you.
3. *He is coming again.* For Jesus the suffering was temporary. So for His people. "In a little while you will see

me no more, and then after a little while you will see me," He said in verse 16. And in verse 22, "Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy."

When do you tell your child that he or she is going to get a shot from the doctor? There are 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 do the *wrong* thing, be surprised and stumble. And two, so they would do the *right* thing, remember what He said and did.

Make It Personal: There is cost involved in true Christianity.

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. If you want to be a Christian, it will not cost you anything to be saved, for Jesus paid it all. But it will cost you everything to live for Him in enemy territory.

Vance Havner says that at the Nicene Council, an important church meeting in the 4th century A.D., of the 318 delegates attending, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or lost a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith.

Archaeologists digging in the remains of a school for imperial pages in Rome found a picture dating from the third century. It shows a boy standing, his hand raised, worshiping a figure on a cross, a figure that looks like a man with the head of an ass. Scrawled in the writing of a young person are the words, "Alexamenos worships his God." Nearby in a second inscription: "Alexamenos is faithful." Apparently, a young man who was a Christian was being mocked by his schoolmates for his faithful witness. But he was not ashamed; he was faithful.

That's the kind of devotion we need today, a devotion 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? Someone asked C.S. Lewis, "Why do the righteous suffer?" "Why not?" he replied. "They're the only ones who can take it."

That's what the church needs today, men and women, boys and girls, who will count the cost, and exalt Christ no matter what. Simply put, the church today needs *soldiers*. The church is not a country club. It's a training ground for soldiers.

If you're interested here's what it takes, two things.

1. *To be a soldier of Christ you must know Christ.* You must know Him as your Savior and have a growing knowledge of Him in your daily walk. Do you know Him?
2. *To be a soldier of Christ you must follow Christ wherever He leads.* Are you willing?