

# **Bible Studies for Life Series for April 29: Maintain a steadfast faithfulness through Christ**

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# **Maintain a steadfast faithfulness through Christ**

- John 15:18-16:4

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The *Voice of the Martyrs* website told a few weeks ago of a family in Pakistan arrested for blasphemy: “Daniel, an 11-year-old Christian boy, refused to play with his Muslim friends, resulting in them beating him. Daniel’s family confronted the Muslims, who called the police and made a false report saying Daniel’s family had blasphemed the name of the Holy Prophet.”

Rashid Masih, Salamat Masih, Sahba Masih Motta, Bao Masih and Sheela Masih are living under threat of attack by Muslim extremists: “The Muslim family told other Muslims at a religious gathering that Christians had disgraced the Holy Prophet, tore a holy sticker and beat it with a shoe. This has led to tension in the city. Christians in the area fear Muslim extremists

will attack the family. There is fear there will be attacks this week during celebrations leading up to Easter Sunday,” Voice of the Martyrs sources said.

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If convicted under blasphemy laws, the Christian family faces three years imprisonment, a fine and the death penalty, or life imprisonment and a fine. Pray God protects these believers and provides a way of escape for them.

We often wonder why Christians face such anger and such hatred from the world.

Our lesson this week reminds us we should not be surprised at such hostility from the world against Christ and his followers. The great German believer, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, said, “If we would bear the image of his glory, we must first bear the image of his shame.”

In our final lesson from the Gospel of John, we will consider hatred from the world, testifying for Jesus and martyred for God.

### **Hated by the world (John 15:18-25)**

We live in a world marred by hatred, where God is rejected daily. Believers sometimes experience hate from the world because of their faith and obedience to Jesus.

Jesus had just given his great teaching about Christians loving one another. In a marked and emphatic contrast, Jesus went on to warn the believer would face hatred in the world as he did.

Jesus predicted persecution will be a reality, and every believer will confront it. Jesus warned, “If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you” (v. 18).

The world can be defined as the created world, all of the people in the world, or the world system without God. Jesus recognized the world as a mass of humanity indifferent and opposed to God and his purposes. The world is in direct opposition to Jesus and rejects him, hates him and stands against him. The believer is “called out” from the world and “called forth” unto God to live for him and his purposes. Because we are called out from the world, we often stand in the way of the world’s assaults and hatred.

### **Testifying for Jesus (John 15:26-27)**

Help is on the way! Even though we face rejection by a hate-filled world, God sends his Comforter, who walks alongside every believer. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and will convict the world of sin. The Holy Spirit will empower believers and fill them daily with the power they need to testify triumphantly for Jesus in spite of hatred from the world.

Jesus does not want us to withdraw into our comfort zones of convenience where we are always accepted, always liked and always approved. We are to march forward into hostile territory armed by his Spirit as our witness and boldly declare Jesus is enough to see us through any storm of life.

### **Martyred for God (John 16:1-4)**

Since more Christians were martyred for God in the 20th century for their faith than all other centuries combined, believers can know Jesus' message about persecution and hatred was not just a first century message. Jesus reminds us, "All this I have told you so that you will not go astray" (v. 1). He will give us the strength that we need to face the moment.

Linda Lee Johnson has written a beautiful hymn that illustrates the strength we can receive from Jesus. In the words of "Be Strong in the Lord," she writes: "Fear not the battle, for the victory is always his; he will protect you wherever you go. Be strong, be strong, be strong in the Lord; And be of good courage for he is your guide."

As we face obstacles, rejection and possibly death, we are assured of Jesus' strength and deliverance from any enemy we face.

### **Discussion questions**

- How do we respond to rejection?
- What persecution have you encountered for living your faith?
- Is it possible to live triumphantly in today's world?

Texas, the BGCT, the nation and around the world.