***5***

### ***Overcoming Rejection***

***John 15:18-16:16***

Rejection, for whatever reason, always hurts. Often it makes us want to run away, as this line from an old poem captures: "I turned and fled; I could not face humiliation and disgrace." Christ's gospel, entrusted to us, invades people's comfort zones and challenges their pride, and so guarantees profound hostility and frequent rejection. Satan, too, in his unending cosmic battle with God, constantly stirs up opposition to Christians and their message. So witnessing believers must expect trouble and disheartening feelings.

But not only trouble; triumph, as well! For the Spirit witnesses through us, convincing people deep down that Christ was righteous and right in everything, that unbelief is sin, and that Satan, for all his rampaging, is already a condemned, defeated foe. So conversions will happen, God's kingdom will advance, and through all the conflict Christ will be glorified.

Stand steady, then, and keep on keeping on!

**GROUP DISCUSSION.** What are some subtle or not so subtle ways that people reject one another?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION.** Would you say that you have a thick or thin skin when it comes to rejection? Reflect on what this might show about your concept of self and how you experience security.

***29 Overcoming Rejection***

While much of Jesus' last conversation with his disciples up to this point has focused on comfort and encouragement, he did not want his disciples to enter the next phase of their ministry unprepared. Life was going to get hard-and soon. *Read John 15:18- 16:16.*

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1. What hardships could the disciples expect according to this passage?

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2. Why will people reject Jesus' disciples (15:18- 16:4)?

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3. Jesus says, "All this I have told you so that you will not go astray" (16:1). If you had been among those early eleven disciples, do you think you would have had enough information here to endure what lies ahead? Why or why not?

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4. Jesus says of their future persecutors, "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" (15:22).

How do you interpret this rather strange statement?

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***Abiding in Christ 30***

5. In view of the kind of reception Jesus tells his disciples

to expect, why do you think he still tells them, "You also must testify [about me]" (15:27)?

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6. In what ways can you expect to participate in the

rejection described here-and also in the mission assigned?

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7. Even though Jesus promises his disciples much

hardship ahead, he also offers help. What various forms

of help do you find in 16:5-16?

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 8. Jesus says that when the Holy Spirit comes he will convict

the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (16:8). Of what

value would it be to an unbeliever to be convicted of sin, righteousness and judgment?

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9. What work does Jesus say the Holy Spirit will do among Christ-followers (16:12-15)?

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***31 Overcoming Rejection***

 10. Jesus describes a cosmic battle in this section of John. Where do you see yourself in this scene?

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What do you hope from yourself?

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From God?

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*If you are able, pray, asking God to place you in the front*

 *lines of his cosmic battle. Ask also for enough vision of*

*the spiritual cosmic scene to endure rejection when necessary, and to persevere in a faithful telling of the good news of Jesus.*

**Now or Later**

Many Christians around the world experience severe

suffering because of their faith in Jesus. This week

begin a deliberate participation with them. Actions

to consider:

1. Write a letter of encouragement to a spiritual brother

or sister who lives in an area where practicing the Christian

 faith is a difficult challenge.

2. Send a message to an authority in an oppressive government, or to one of your own political leaders, urging them to exert influence for spiritual freedom.

3. Begin to read and pray your way around the world one

country at a time by using a resource such as *Operation World.*