

Be a Martyr and You May Be Martyred

John 15:26-16:4a

June 7, 2026

What is John/ Jesus preparing the disciples for in John 13-17?

Who are the martyrs? Is everyone called to be a martyr?

“Witnessing is scary, not witnessing is worse.” (Penn Jillette)

Two Witnesses to a Fallen, Rebellious World v. 26-27

Who is the Helper? How does the Helper bear witness?

Who are the disciples? How do disciples bear witness?

The Danger of Falling Away v. 1

What does falling away mean here?

What is one possible snare?

Should witnesses expect ease or trouble? (Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12)

Put Out of the Synagogue/ Excommunication v. 2

What did excommunication mean back then?

Persecution comes from the world, and from religious leaders.

Are you a ‘condemn-y’ person?

Persecution is costly. Should you pay the price or avoid it?

Killing the Witness v. 3

Knowing the Father and the Son is the key to life. John 17:3

When Their Hour Comes v. 4

What is their hour?

Summary of the passage

Meditation

Among the many heroes of faith, the martyrs stand out. They take up a central place in our corporate identity because they so closely evoke Jesus’ faithfulness in the face of death. God honors the martyrs even to the point that He uses their deaths as a countdown to Jesus’ return. They [those “slain for the word of God”] cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before You will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. (Revelation 6:10–11)

God measures time by the blood of martyrs. I have not measured time this way. I focus on the return of Jesus in terms of how long I have to wait to escape intensifying day-to-day struggles. Pause on this for a moment and assume that our beliefs make a difference in how we live today. Second-coming-as-escape creates a certain lifestyle. We expect threats of hard times; we also expect that those threats will never quite reach us. Jesus will come in the nick of time. But if this is our belief, then suffering and trouble take us by surprise. And when suffering and trouble persist, Jesus doesn’t seem to be listening. Didn’t He promise to spare us trouble? The result is not so much that faith is ship wrecked as it becomes obsolete. Then we take matters into our own hands as we try to build a more comfortable world for ourselves.

The martyrs rearrange our theology. We remember that “in this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33). We expect trouble, and are better prepared for martyrdom. This makes the psalmist’s words, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints” (Psalm 116:15), more meaningful, more personal. One of these deaths will bring the final trumpet. Precious indeed. Our calling is unmistakable. Courage. I want courage. I need courage. We need courage. We want faith in Jesus that is steady when everything around us is not.

Ed Welch