

**“Guard Yourself”**  
**1 John 5:13-21**  
**Sermon #100**  
**5.16.21**  
**Easter VII**  
**62nd Sunday in the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**1 John 5:13-21 CEB**

**13** I write these things to you who believe in the name of God’s Son so that you can know that you have eternal life. **14** This is the confidence that we have in our relationship with God: If we ask for anything in agreement with his will, he listens to us. **15** If we know that he listens to whatever we ask, we know that we have received what we asked from him. **16** If anyone sees a brother or sister committing a sin that does not result in death, they should pray, and God will give life to them—that is, to those who commit sins that don’t result in death. There is a sin that results in death—I’m not saying that you should pray about that. **17** Every unrighteous action is sin, but there is a sin that does not result in death.

**18** We know that everyone born from God does not sin, but the ones born from God guard themselves, and the evil one cannot touch them. **19** We know we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. **20** We know that God's Son has come and has given us understanding to know the one who is true. We are in the one who is true by being in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. **21** Little children, guard yourselves from idols!

The Word of the LORD. **Thanks be to God!**

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Nearly eighty years ago, there were two siblings named Hans and Sophie Scholl. They grew up in a small southern city of Germany and were teenagers when the Nazis came to power in 1933. The Scholls were also Christian, so they didn't face persecution like Jews, other ethnic groups, and members of non-Nazi parties, but, their lives would change in other ways.

In the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's podcast, *12 Years That Shook the World*, host Erin Harper is joined by Dr. Rebecca Dupas and they discuss the Scholls' involvement in the resistance against the Nazis.<sup>1</sup> After the Third Reich replaces the Weimar Republic, even those who are not targeted ethnic or

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.ushmm.org/learn/podcasts-and-audio/12-years-that-shook-the-world/bad-conscience?utm\\_medium=socialmedia&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_campaign=otd&utm\\_content=sophiescholl100thbirthday20210509&fbclid=IwAR1oVZPhytNBjvLXyA-lrwGve2RVOvKasIY8gLQOkkZoNkceGUn6sUf4458](https://www.ushmm.org/learn/podcasts-and-audio/12-years-that-shook-the-world/bad-conscience?utm_medium=socialmedia&utm_source=facebook&utm_campaign=otd&utm_content=sophiescholl100thbirthday20210509&fbclid=IwAR1oVZPhytNBjvLXyA-lrwGve2RVOvKasIY8gLQOkkZoNkceGUn6sUf4458)

political groups are to swear their allegiance to Hitler. In the home of Hans and Sophie, their parents are outspoken critics of Hitler and his thugs. The family reads literature that had been banned by the Nazis and they also study various forms of art that had been outlawed, too. So, at a young age, the Scholl children are taught to resist.....to guard themselves from evil. While everyone around the family seemed to just stay quiet while the Nazis were destroying democracy, Hans and Sophie's parents showed them how to resist tyranny.

As time progressed, both children were expected to join the Hitler Youth. Yet, at this time in the late 1930s, Hans started his own youth group that studied the works of poets and other artists who

had been banned from the public. Eventually, Hans' group was disbanded by the government.

In the Fall of 1939, which was also the beginning of the Second World War, Hans Scholl entered the University of Munich. Sophie entered several years later and, ultimately, the two siblings are part of a group called the White Rose, which was made up of students and professors to resist the Third Reich.

Dr. Rebecca Dupas in the podcast mentions resistance is often thought of as a physical act that typically includes violence.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, that is an aspect of resistance, but there is another side to it: Spiritual. While the White Rose was no fan of Nazis, they were

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

trying to stir the spirit of the German people to resist Hitler by throwing away the propaganda that was being spewed through various forms of communication. The White Rose was urging people to think for themselves by asking questions, especially when they heard murmurings, which were ultimately true, of the Nazis murdering innocent people in concentration camps.

The White Rose picked up steam. They were able to fly under the radar and not get noticed by the Gestapo. In small amounts, they were able to buy the paper, stamps, and envelopes they needed in order to send out their homemade pamphlets to people who could be convinced to join their cause plus random people in the phonebook. Hans and Sophie Scholl and their comrades were not willing to go with the grain. They knew that the cost of resisting

tyranny would include their lives. Yet, they couldn't keep quiet.

They had to protest what they saw. People were being murdered for their dissent and for being who God created them to be.

The success of the White Rose took a bleak turn. On February 18, 1943, several in the group, including the Scholl siblings, decided to distribute the hundreds of leftover leaflets around the campus of the University of Munich while students were still in session. It seemed to be going well. Sophie took bunches of leaflets to the top of the stairs in one of the buildings and saw them fall three stories below while Hans unloaded leaflets on the ground. Unfortunately, they were being watched by a custodian who was a member of the Nazi Party. The custodian cornered them and the gestapo was alerted and quickly arrested Hans and Sophie.

After being separately interrogated for seventeen hours, Hans, Sophie, and another member of the White Rose were put on trial at the Palace of Justice in Munich. Three hours after the trial ended, they were taken to the guillotine and beheaded.

Hans and Sophie Scholl resisted oppression. They saw democracy fall as teenagers in the early 1930s and were taught by their parents to guard themselves against evil. These two could have turned the other way many times, but they were constantly guarding themselves against succumbing to the evils that were running rampant in their society. They refused to hate their neighbors because of ethnicity, beliefs, and orientation. Yet, many people around them, including those who claimed to be Christian, ingested

the constant garbage that was being spewed by the propaganda machine in the Third Reich to report Jews, dissidents, and anyone else whose life was deemed unnatural by the government to the authorities so they could be disposed of. Thankfully, people like Hans and Sophie Scholl continued to follow the call to guard themselves against evil through the end of WWII.

Guard yourselves.

The Elder in 1 John mentions the very thing to guard ourselves from in every scripture we've studied together during Easter: Hatred toward a sibling. There is absolutely no room in the Kin-dom of God for hate. Hate, like other idols, does no one any good. It cannot stand against the perfect love of God. Unfortunately, many people

in the Elder's community don't quite get it and they've tricked others into thinking that hate is ok.

That's why the author of 1 John has had to repeat themselves over and over again. And possibly, the Elder has been on repeat not only for the community of believers, but for the Elder, too! Seriously! It takes work to constantly be on guard. It can take all our energy to always be alert against the things that tempt our hearts and minds off of our Savior. Some things can be as blatant as what Sophie and Hans dealt with in Nazi Germany. Hate infiltrated every corner of the government and the established churches. There was nothing free about the country nor Christ-like about the State Church. People had buried their heads in the sand and allowed the Bible, Cross, and Christ to be replaced with hate, the Swastika, and

Hitler. People buried their heads in the sand to allow the mass genocide of millions of people.

In 2021, we've got our fair share of idols we must guard against: Traditions, cynicism, apathy, fear, violence, bigotry, and many others. These idols may be blatant or they may be subtle. But, they cannot and will not stand against the perfect love of God that is at work in our world. And it is by the power of the Spirit's perfect love that can and will keep us alert against the already defeated forces that seek to harm and destroy.

But, it will take work. It takes a lifetime of work to guard against these idols. It took Hans and Sophie Scholl years to constantly be on guard and to tell others to be on guard. It took the author of 1

John five chapters to hit this point home and thankfully, the Church has benefited from these words for 2000 years.

For us, it takes a lifetime to guard ourselves from the idols that tempt our sights off of our Savior. Yet, may we continue to devote ourselves in prayer to be perfected by the perfect love of God that is on the loose in our world.

Siblings in Christ, trust this Good News!

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.