

To Flee or Not to Flee

by Dick Brogden

The sermon emphasizes the importance of enduring persecution and boldly proclaiming Christ, even in the face of danger and opposition.

Scripture: Revelation 20:4

Topics: "Persecution", "Bold Evangelism"

Description

Dick Brogden emphasizes the importance of standing firm in faith and boldly proclaiming the Word of God, even in the face of persecution and tribulation. He highlights the examples of Jesus and Paul, who endured suffering and continued to preach boldly, never fleeing from danger but moving intentionally to the next hostile place to spread the message of the divine Savior. The sermon underscores the need for believers to stay rooted in their faith, endure hardships, and fearlessly declare the gospel, regardless of the risks involved.

Transcript

God's Word is both a comfort in affliction (Psalm 119:50) and a source of persecution. Revelation 20:4 tells of the souls who were "beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God." The Word of God both gets us into trouble and takes us through it. In these last days it is imperative that we continually point to Jesus as God and Savior, and that we continually stand on the Word of God. Neither one of these actions will endear us to our world; both of these acts of witness will bring suffering and tribulation upon us. Those that are faithful to Jesus will face increasing pressure and it is incumbent that we pre-decide whether or not we flee trouble when it finds us.

Paul's first missionary journey took him to places where the gospel was both welcomed and rejected. In Iconium, the city was divided (Acts 14:4). Unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren (v. 2). "THEREFORE [Paul and Barnabas] stayed there a LONG TIME speaking boldly in the Lord" (v. 3, emphasis added). It is critical to note that Paul's initial response to persecution is to endure it, to respond by speaking boldly. After sustained endurance Paul does indeed flee and escapes to Lystra (v. 6). Escape is a misleading word perhaps, for in Lystra Paul continues to preach boldly: "Turn from these useless things" (v. 15)! For his effort he is stoned and dragged out of the city. We often picture Paul as a somewhat wimpy academic. Intelligent as he undoubtedly was, his body resisted all kinds of abuse. Crushed by stones to the point that enemy and friend thought he was dead, Paul gets up-and goes back into the city that had just stoned him (v. 20). The next day he moved to Derbe

to preach again.

While for both Jesus and Paul a case can be made for occasional strategic withdrawal, note that these cases are the exception. The rule is: you stay, endure, and continue to preach the Word boldly. Further, when you do leave, it is important to note where you go-you go to the next hostile place to preach boldly again. Jesus goes intentionally to Jerusalem; Paul fixes his feet towards Rome. The gospel ever leads us on to danger and risk, and if we leave one hot spot, it is only to enter another to boldly proclaim the divine Savior there.

In this sense the ambassador of Christ never flees. We stand our ground in the face of great danger and opposition and boldly proclaim Christ. If we leave Iconium due to violent threats, it is to go to Lystra in order to be stoned. To flee or not to flee is not the question-it is our answer. Fleeing or not fleeing, we will open our mouth and boldly super-exalt Jesus. From frying pan into fire we purposely move, always at risk, always rejoicing in the bold proclamation of the gospel.

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