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**Sometimes It’s Ok to Flee**

What the Book of Acts Teaches Us About Safety and

Security in the Face of Danger

by

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[](https://www.sats.edu.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/4A-Continuationist.jpg)

If you have any doubts about whether you were right to stay home because of the Covid19 virus, then perhaps you can find comfort in the Book of Acts.

When I read this book, I see miracles being performed by the apostles and the early church. However, in this same book, I see multiple cases where the believers either fled, hid, or took cover in the face of danger. The danger was primarily due to persecution, but in the interest of safety and security, the believers fled for their lives. They did what was necessary to survive, and there was no sign of guilt or cowardice. What this suggests is that sometimes, it’s OK to flee.

Back in April, when communities throughout the country began to shut down and people were urged to avoid meeting in church, a friend asked for my thoughts about church attendance. She wanted to know if I had to pray about it. When I said no, she asked for a verse of Scripture to support my view. I shared the following: **“The prudent see danger and take cover, but the simple keep going and suffer the consequences”** (Proverbs 22:3, *Berean Study Bible*).

Since then, the Covid19 issue has taken a life of its own. In no small way, it has become a political time bomb, resulting in mass confusion, armed protests, toxic rhetoric, and conspiracy theories. In spite of all the negativity, I believe we can still find insight, and hopefully, comfort, in the Word of God. I recommend a look at several passages in the Book of Acts.

**Fleeing Persecution in Acts**

Let’s begin with Acts 8:1. It shows how the persecution of the church began in the wake of Stephen’s death in Acts 7. The passage reads: **“Saul was consenting to his death. A great persecution arose against the assembly which was in Jerusalem in that day. They were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles”** (*World English Bible*). As a result of the persecution and suffering, the people dispersed. Their dispersion, however, led to something that was positive. It also resulted in the partial fulfillment of Acts 1:8.

Acts 8:4 notes: **“Therefore those who were scattered abroad went around preaching the word”** (*World English Bible*). Or, as the New Living Translation puts it: **“But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went.”**

According to Acts 11:19, the believers who fled persecution continued to preach the good news. They traveled to such places as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. In Acts 9, we have the story of Paul’s conversion. Soon after he begins preaching, his life is threatened by the Jews who **“conspired together to kill him.”** When Paul (also called Saul) learned of their plot, he fled with assistance from his disciples. Acts 11:25 recounts**: “But his disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket.”** Because Paul fled the scene, he lived to preach another day.

In Acts 14:4-7, Paul and Barnabas found themselves in dire straits. When they learned that people had **“made a violent attempt to mistreat and stone them,”** they left the area and traveled to a place where they could preach the Gospel. Then there’s the case of Paul and Silas in Acts 17:10, who were **“sent away by night to Beroea,”** in order to escape danger.

As we consider these passages, we can see that they are dealing specifically with persecution. However, I invite you to consider a broader application that includes any other crisis that threatens a person’s life, including Covid19. It seems to me that if Pentecostals can use this book of history as a model for speaking in tongues and evangelicals can use it as a model for missions and evangelism, can it not also be used as a model for persecution and suffering? I submit that the actions of the disciples, including the apostles, provide us with a model for dealing with threats and any situation that endangers our lives. At the same time, these experiences in the early church provide us with a few important lessons.

**Lessons from the Early Church**

First, when the early believers fled, they acted in the interest of safety, security, and survival. They had faced danger and they knew that their lives were all at risk. There appeared to be no hesitation. They simply ran for their survival. Such is the case with those taking steps to avoid the Covid19 virus. If you are following the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) by wearing a mask, staying home, washing your hands, practicing social distancing, or following church online, you have nothing to be ashamed of. Like the early church, you are simply acting in the interest of safety, security, and survival.

Second, they picked a time that was most suitable for dealing with their crisis. In one case, they fled under the dark skies of night. They might have tried moving during the daylight hours, but that would have been unwise. Thankfully, they showed prudence and forethought by leaving at the right time, the time that was more in their favor. In the case of the current pandemic, research shows that the sooner people comply with safety guidelines, the more lives can be saved. In other words, time is of the essence, especially during a crisis.

Time is now on the minds of pastors. Although many say they are ready to meet in church, some fear it is still too early. The Church of God in Christ (COGIC) is one of many denominations now grappling with this matter. This was highlighted in the May 26, 2020 issue of *The Christian Post*. The publication featured a sobering article with the headline, “COGIC, churches hit hard by coronavirus say they won’t reopen as disease not yet contained.” COGIC lost many leaders and laypeople to the coronavirus. Many, no doubt, wish the churches had acted sooner to prevent the virus from spreading.

Third, the believers facing persecution used the simple and most convenient means available for escape. In Paul’s case, travel by basket — at night — was the simplest and most practical thing to do. When facing a crisis, it is sometimes good to be practical and use common sense. Some situations do not call for brilliance. When we speak of the guidelines of the CDC, we’re speaking of simple steps and simple equipment that we can use to flatten the curve of the virus. Think about it. Hand-washing is simple. Masks can be made from a bandana or a T-shirt. Wearing gloves is simple. Whereas Paul used a basket, we can use a mask for our escape from danger.

Fourth, they used their new situation as an opportunity for ministry. The Rev. Mike Wells, a Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.) bishop and Doctor of Ministry candidate, suggests God has a purpose in all of our situations. In a message on Facebook, he posted: “God, I believe, allows a crisis to come into our life not only to shape our faith but also so we can share our faith.” This was true with the early church and it is true today, even during the current pandemic crisis.

**Conclusion**

There is certainly a time and place for suffering, as well as a time, unfortunately, for martyrdom. In some situations, particularly when facing threats, Christians may take a stand and pray. Some might even see miraculous answers to prayer. However, in other cases, as with the Covid19 virus, we would be wise to “flee” the danger by taking all of the necessary precautions. We can still pray and have faith even as we move, like the early believers, to a place of safety. If getting out of the path of danger was good enough for Paul and the early church, then it’s good enough for us.

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**Short Bio**: Roscoe Barnes III, Ph.D., is a prison chaplain, former award-winning journalist, and independent scholar of church history. He holds a doctorate from the University of Pretoria, South Africa, and a M.A.R. from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. Barnes is the author of many books, including *F.F. Bosworth: The Man Behind “Christ the Healer”* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), *The Guide to Effective Gospel Tract Ministry* (Church Growth Institute, 2004), and *Off to War* (White Mane Publishing, 1996). Barnes is the publisher of two blogs: *Bosworth Matters* ([ffbosworth.strikingly.com](http://ffbosworth.strikingly.com/)) and *Roscoe Reporting*

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