**Missions: Not Safe But Good**



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A quick search produces a dozen missions organizations advertising "safe" mission trips. But they cannot guarantee this promise, nor do they have the biblical authority to do so. While these organizations make promises they cannot keep, the apostle Paul was more honest with Christians when he said, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). Suffering, an expected element in Christian living, should not be hidden from the faithful.



It is sad how in recent years the words *sacrifice*, *martyr,* and *submission* have become less popular and considered more extreme in evangelical churches. We teach believers today to avoid pain and suffering, even if it means avoiding Christian service. Hudson Taylor, the 19th century pioneer missionary, did not agree. Taylor said, "For our Master's sake, may he make us willing to do or suffer all his will." Jesus himself told us, "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account" (Matthew 5:11). In the next verse Christ said we should "rejoice and be glad" when we are persecuted. We were never promised a lack of pain or suffering, only the unwavering knowledge that the Creator of the Universe loves us.

**Your Body Is Not Yours**

To be clear, I'm not telling you to put yourself in harm's way. Christians should not be foolish, dangerous, or cavalier. Missionaries are no exception; we should neither crave danger nor seek martyrdom. But never forget, this body we covet and try to protect was not intended for our use, but for God's glory.

Our modern church culture seeks false safety at the cost of service to God. We are making an idol of our control at the expense of God's sovereignty. If God is sovereign, and he controls all, there can be no tragedy or mistake, only the divinely orchestrated rolling out of his perfect will. If we were less focused on comfort in this life and more focused on the kingdom of God, our idol of safety would not infest our decision to serve. In John Piper's [*Desiring God*](http://www.amazon.com/Desiring-God-Revised-Meditations-Christian/dp/1601423101/?tag=thegospcoal-20) *[1]* he tells us, "This is God's universal purpose for all Christian suffering: more contentment in God and less satisfaction in the world."

God created us, breathed life into us, and purposed us for his glory. The grace and mercy he gives warrants our love and obedience. Jesus Christ endured an inconceivable persecution and death to pay for our sins. In response, we boldly proclaim his greatness.

**Missions Is Sacrifice**

Missions is a form of sacrifice in the name of Jesus. However, not only missionaries are called to sacrifice. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who gave his life for Christ in Nazi Germany, said, "A Christian is someone who shares the sufferings of God in the world." God's love for us is deeper than any other love we have known. This comfort and joy should defeat all our fear and worry. Paul declares, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1).

The Bible never says missions is safe. In Isaiah 40:9 we are instructed in a single verse to both "herald the good news" and "fear not." Evangelism and suffering are again joined when Paul says, "As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5). We are called to make a sacrifice in our lives to help spread the gospel around the world.

Truly submitting to the gospel of Jesus can only result in a heart turned towards saving the lost, feeding the hungry, and healing the sick. Charles Spurgeon, the 19th century British preacher, said, "A man is not far from the gates of heaven when he is fully submissive to the Lord's will." Sacrifice in the name of missions is not seeking martyrdom—it is submitting to whatever the Lord wills in our lives.

**Christ Is Worth the Cost**

According to Martin Luther, "A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing." When we can acknowledge our perceived security is false and that safety is an illusion, we can begin to risk everything and accomplish great things for God's glory.

If you can manage your own life, you have not sold out for Jesus. The life he wants for you is full of risk and peril and requires relying on him.  "God, who foresaw your tribulation, has specially armed you to go through it," said C. S. Lewis, "not without pain but without stain." We must trust God's sufficiency and serve him completely, no matter the cost.

Our life on this earth is only a blip in time. We do not seek false safety and fabricated security. Glorifying God should be our purpose. In the end of life on earth we hope to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:21).

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