

He Who Fights and Runs Away : Choose Your Battles Wisely

Part 1

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He Who Fights And Runs Away Lives To Fight Another Day, Peter And The Roman Soldiers, Peter Chops Off Malchus' Ear In The Garden Of Gethsemane, Souls Won By Love And Not By The Sword, Jesus' Sacrifice Of Love, Our Christian Sacrificial Service, Peter's Failings: Sea Of Galilee, Rebuking Jesus, His Denial, Faith Tested And Persecution In Our Modern Day, A Prudent Man Foresees The Evil, Flee To The Mountains, When They Persecute You Flee Elsewhere, Don't Try To Fight City Hall, Don't Be Ashamed Of Your Faith, Fleeing Is Not A Weakness Or Denying Your Faith, Retreat Is A Smart Tactical Decision, Be A Bold Witness, Wisdom And Spiritual Discernment, Don't Purposely Provoke Unreceptive People, Consequences Of Resisting The Powers-That-Be, Apostles Go Underground After Crucifixion, Waiting For Promise Of Holy Spirit, Judaism Was A Religion Of Fear, Be Subject To The Higher Powers, Choose Battles Carefully, Jesus Preached With Both Boldness And Authority

The purpose of this article is to examine a particular aspect of Jesus' life and work with which some people may not be too familiar. Even though what I am about to share with you is really quite obvious in the Scriptures, because the information is kind of scattered throughout two of the Gospels, it may not be apparent to some people, in spite of the fact that it is right in front of their eyes. Many of my readers will no doubt be familiar with the old adage "He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day." From the time that we are young children in school, we have probably heard this wise saying from our parents, even if we did not understand its meaning at the time.

I recall watching a particular scene in a movie a number of years ago -- I am not exactly sure which film it was, it may have been 70 AD -- where the Apostle Peter is being pursued by Roman soldiers. While Peter attempted to evade the Roman soldiers and run away, he was ultimately apprehended by the same. Upon seeing this scene, my first reaction was to think to myself, "The real Apostle Peter would not have acted in that fashion. He would not have tried to run away. He would have boldly stood his ground until the soldiers grabbed him, instead of trying to flee like a coward." After all, this is the very same Peter who pulled out a sword and lopped off the ear of the servant of the High Priest, as we see in these verses:

"Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

John 18:10-11, KJV

"And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

Matthew 26:51-52, KJV

As I explain in such articles as "Palestinian Suicide Bombers and Middle East Peace", I am convinced that even at that late hour, Jesus was still endeavoring to instruct His flock. It is my opinion that being as the Lord had chosen Peter to lead the Apostles following His return to the Heavenly Realm, He wanted to send a clear message to Peter -- and to the rest of the Apostles -- that the Gospel would be preached, and souls would be won to God's Kingdom, not by the edge of sword, or by persecution and torture, as the Roman Catholic Church did to their own shame. Rather, souls would be won to the Kingdom of God through love, self-sacrifice, patience, perseverance and sacrificial service.

On a side note, violent Islamists have done the very same thing with their misguided faith as well, as becomes evident just by reading the Qur'an, and studying the violent history of the Middle East.

As all Christians everywhere know, Jesus led by example when He freely and lovingly chose to offer up His own self for the sins of the world. While it was difficult for Him in those final moments in the Garden of Gethsemane when His sweat fell as if it were drops of blood, when He heard the footsteps of the approaching angry crowd, Jesus did not attempt to shirk His responsibilities to His Heavenly Father by trying to run away. Rather, He chose to go all the way to the Cross for the sins of you and I. It is this same message of self-sacrifice and sacrificial service which Jesus taught us in the Gospels, and which the Apostles continued to share in their Epistles in later years, as we see by verses such as the following:

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

John 10:11, KJV

"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Mark 10:45, KJV

". . . If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

Luke 9:23-24, KJV

"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

John 12:25, KJV

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

John 15:13, KJV

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he [Jesus] laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

1 John 3:16, KJV

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Romans 12:1, KJV

"Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles."

Romans 16:3-4, KJV

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:"

2 Timothy 4:6-7, KJV

If you are interested in learning more about this topic, I encourage you to read my article entitled "Are You Crucified With Christ?".

At any rate, because of the bold, brash image that we have of the Apostle Peter -- who also said "We ought to obey God rather than men" in Acts 5:29 -- upon seeing this particular scene in the movie, my initial reaction was to protest in my mind and say "Wait! That is not how Peter would have really reacted in that kind of a situation. He would not have tried to escape and run away."

However, that is a lopsided view of Peter. While Peter may have hastily pulled out his sword and lopped off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest, in the Garden of Gethsemane; and while he may have also boldly confronted the Jewish religious authorities in the Book of Acts; it was also Peter who sank due to his obvious lack of faith when he tried to join Jesus who was walking on the Sea of Galilee. It was likewise Peter who foolishly rebuked Jesus when the Lord told them of His soon-coming death in Jerusalem. It was also Peter who, despite his claims of undying loyalty, denied the Lord three times as Jesus stood trial. Consider these verses:

"And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Matthew 14:25-31, KJV

"From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of

the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Matthew 16:21-23, KJV

"Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly."

Matthew 26:69-75, KJV

For a more in-depth look at the life of Peter, I invite you to read my article entitled "Peter: Faith Tried in the Fire".

While some of us today may look back at these events and try to tell ourselves, "Oh, I would have never done that. I most certainly would not have denied the Lord", such thoughts are really foolish, and are born of pride. I dare say that most of us have never really had our faith tested in the same way, or to the same degree, in which the First Century Christians had their faith tested. Many of them suffered both verbal and physical persecution. They were ridiculed, persecuted, thrown into prison, tortured and killed. Have you experienced any of these things to any serious degree? Allow me to encourage you to read the article called "Civil Disobedience and Christian Persecution".

But my point is this: In hindsight, the way in which Peter reacted in this particular movie was probably accurate. It wasn't because Peter was a coward that he was trying to get away. To the contrary, it is not only because he was smart, but it was also because he was obeying the wise counsel that we find in the Scriptures, that Peter may have chosen to try to escape from the Roman soldiers. "What? How is that?" you may be asking. Well, consider the following verses that we find in the Book of Proverbs:

"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but he simple pass on, and are punished."
Proverbs 22:3, KJV

"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but he simple pass on, and are punished."
Proverbs 27:12, KJV

Those two verses are basically the Old Testament equivalent of our modern adage "He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day." However, God must receive the credit -- and not some wise philosopher who has become lost in history

somewhere -- because they were no doubt written thousands of years before the modern popular proverb came into existence.

Clearly, the writer -- who is assumed to be King Solomon -- is saying that if a person has knowledge of an approaching danger or evil, then if he is a wise, prudent man, he will do everything within his power in order to prepare for the same. If it is possible, he will even try to avoid it. If he fails to take action, then it will be his own foolish fault, and he will pay the consequences for his actions, or lack thereof. Let me give you a clear Scriptural example. When Jesus spoke of the coming destruction of Jerusalem, do you recall what advice He gave to His followers? Consider this:

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes."

Matthew 24:15-18, KJV

"But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment."

Mark 13:14-16, KJV

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."

Luke 21:20-22, KJV

Notice carefully that Jesus clearly warned His listeners to flee. He did not tell His followers to remain in Jerusalem and be killed along with everyone else. He didn't tell them to stay in Jerusalem and fight against the Roman army as the foolish Zealots, Sicarii and other radicals did and ended up dead. What good purpose would that have served? Quite to the contrary, with the leadership of the First Century Church dead as a result of their stupid refusal to leave Jerusalem, we must wonder if Christianity would have ever even gotten off the ground, and much less propagated throughout the whole world. Let us also not forget that when the Lord sent out His first Disciples on the road to preach the Gospel, He gave them a wise piece of advice when He said the following to them:

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves . . . But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come."

Matthew 10:16, 23, KJV

Clearly, Jesus did not tell them to stay and fight city hall. He didn't instruct them to picket and fight for their rights. He said, "when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." Now, some people may argue that we are not supposed to be ashamed of our faith, and that by choosing to run away we are in fact demonstrating that we are ashamed of our faith. I wholeheartedly agree that we should not be ashamed of our faith. The Scriptures make this very clear. Consider these verses:

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
Matthew 5:16, KJV

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."
Mark 8:38, KJV

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."
Romans 1:16, KJV

"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."
2 Timothy 1:12, KJV

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,"
Hebrews 2:11, KJV

"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."
Hebrews 11:16, KJV

However, please understand that fleeing and running away is not a sign of weakness. Neither is it a denial of your faith, or a demonstration that you are ashamed of your faith. If you were really ashamed of your faith, you would not be out there boldly witnessing to people in the first place. Rather, you would be concealing yourself somewhere and hiding your light under a bushel. The whole reason why you are being persecuted in the first place, is because you were not ashamed of your faith. Rather, you were out there engaging in heated battle in the front lines, being a burning ember for the Lord. Let's be honest here. Every intelligent military strategist knows that retreating in the face of overwhelming opposition can be a smart, tactical move which can save lives in the long run, and preserve them for future battles. He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day.

When city authorities, shopping mall authorities and other types of authorities tell you to stop evangelizing on their property, they are not asking you to recant your faith. They are simply telling you to not do it there. We may not like

it, we may not agree with it, we may not think that the laws are fair and we may even view them as worldly, ungodly devils who only care about profit, but what alternative do we have? If you fight, you may end up spending a night -- or longer -- in jail.

It is wonderful to be a bold witness of our faith for the Lord. As the Apostle Paul writes, we should not quench God's Spirit -- 1 Thessalonians 5:19. As I point out in "Are You a Burning Ember for the Lord?", God will no doubt honor and bless our willingness to boldly proclaim the Gospel Message. The New Testament is full of verses which encourage us to be on-fire witnesses of our faith. Consider these sample verses:

"Now when they saw the BOLDNESS of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus . . . And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all BOLDNESS they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with BOLDNESS."
Acts 4:13, 29-31, KJV

"But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached BOLDLY at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake BOLDLY in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him."
Acts 9:27-29, KJV

"Long time therefore abode they speaking BOLDLY in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."
Acts 14:3, KJV

"And he began to speak BOLDLY in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."
Acts 18:26, KJV

"And he went into the synagogue, and spake BOLDLY for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God."
Acts 19:8, KJV

"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth BOLDLY, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."
Ephesians 6:19-20, KJV

However, at the same time, God's children also need to learn to exercise some degree of Wisdom and Spiritual Discernment when it is called for. It is important that we do not go out of our way to intentionally provoke those people who express no desire in hearing what we wish to share with them. To do

so is not only inviting a confrontation unnecessarily, and stirring up their ire, but it is also contrary to Jesus' own advice. Consider this verse:

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."
Matthew 7:6, KJV

If said people happen to be a property owner or a business owner, and if they are preventing us from reaching people who are frequenting their establishment, God will no doubt hold them accountable on the Day of Judgment, and not us. They will be the ones who will have some explaining to do before the Lord, and not us. Earlier, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also said the following to His listeners:

"Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."
Matthew 5:25-26, KJV

In short, if due to your pride, or some other stupid reason, you choose to purposely resist the powers-that-be, and you end up spending some time sharing a jail cell with drunks, prostitutes, drug users and other societal riffraff, then you will have no one to blame but yourself. You may convince yourself that you are suffering persecution for Jesus' sake, but are you really? What if the Lord really wanted you to get out of town, so that you could be a blessing to someone else in some other place? However, instead of following the leading of His Spirit, in your foolish pride, you decided to fight city hall and the powers-that-be, you chose to provoke that shopping mall proprietor or store owner, and now you are sitting in a cell wasting your time. It wasn't such a bright decision on your part after all, was it? Now the Lord will have to send someone else to reach the person in that other city that you missed. Think about it.

In the Gospels, we discover that after Jesus was crucified, the Apostles immediately went underground. While they stayed in Jerusalem, they did not venture out into the public due to their obvious fear of the Jewish religious authorities. While we may be tempted to view this as an act of cowardice on their part, at the same time, we should also remember that Jesus specifically told them to remain in Jerusalem, and to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit. Considering that their leader had just been betrayed by an angry mob, with the consent of the Scribes and the Pharisees, and that Pontius Pilate's primary concern was maintaining the peace in Jerusalem, we can only conclude the Apostles made a wise choice by remaining behind closed doors for the time being. Consider the following verses:

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you . . . And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas

with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you."
John 20:19, 26, KJV

"Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me."
Acts 1:2-4, KJV

If there is one thing that we can learn from the Gospel of John, it is that the Jews practiced a religion of fear. In addition to the previous verses where we find the Apostles remaining underground for fear of the Jews, there are a few other verses in John's Gospel where this very same fear is expressed. Consider the following:

"Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people. Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews."
John 7:11-13, KJV

"And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus."
John 19:38, KJV

Of course, once the Apostles had received the Gift of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, they underwent a great spiritual transformation, and it was a completely different story. As I explain in other articles, they became veritable firebrands for the Lord, and won many thousands of Disciples to the Lord. But concerning respect for secular authority, a number of years later, the Apostle Paul wrote the following in his excellent Epistle to the Romans:

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men . . . Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man

any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."

Romans 12:18, 13:1-8, KJV

At this point, you may be wondering, "Well, what about the Lord? Did Jesus really follow His own advice? Did He follow this same code of conduct and strive to avoid confrontation with the political and religious authorities?" Perhaps the best way to answer these questions is by saying that Jesus chose His battles very carefully. He knew when to attack boldly, and when to retreat while His enemies licked their wounds. If there is one thing that the Gospels teach us, it is that when Jesus did preach, He did so boldly, with the Authority and Power of the Spirit. Consider these verses:

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

Matthew 7:28-29, KJV

"And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes."

Mark 1:21-22, KJV

"But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?"

John 7:26, KJV

Please go to part two for the conclusion of this article.

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He Who Fights and Runs Away : Choose Your Battles Wisely

Part 2

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Jesus Retreated To Tyre And Sidon To Preserve His Own Life, Gethsemane: His Father's Legions Of Angels, Jesus Chose His Battles Wisely, Jesus Fulfilled Law Of Moses Prophets And Psalms, Jesus Would Not Walk In Jewry, Jesus Secretly Goes To Feast Of Tabernacles In Jerusalem, Jesus Exposed The Sins Of His Unbelieving Enemies, Jesus Hides Himself And Escapes From The Temple, Jesus' Guerrilla Warfare Tactics, When Confrontation And Persecution Become Unavoidable, Standing Before Governors And Kings, Apostle Paul Stands Before Felix Agrippa Festus And Nero, God Has Not Given Us Spirit Of Fear, Persecution Comes With The Territory, Article Summary, Our Job Is To Remain Alive To Be Witnesses, The Foolishness Of Doctrinal Debates, Ask The Lord For Wisdom And Discernment

At the same time, there were also occasions when Jesus would purposely choose to retreat from the limelight in order to avoid further confrontation with His enemies. He knew that He had to preserve His life until the time of His departure from this world had arrived. One example, which is found in the Gospel of Matthew, reveals how Jesus apparently went to Tyre and Sidon incognito. Matthew seems to imply that Jesus purposely withdrew to Tyre and Sidon in order to avoid any harassment from His self-righteous enemies -- the Scribes and the Pharisees -- who He had in fact just lambasted, as we see by the following verses:

"Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men . . . Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us."

Matthew 15:1-23, KJV

While in the previous verses the word "departed" is used, the actual Greek word that is used -- "anachoreo" -- means to go back, return or withdraw. This implies that Jesus may have been there before. Furthermore, this same Greek word also refers to those who through fear seek some other place, or who shun sight. Perhaps this is also why the Disciples said to Jesus "Send her away; for she crieth after us." In other words, this woman was drawing too much attention to them, and that is what they were trying to avoid at that particular moment.

Lest anyone get the wrong impression, let me clearly point out here that I do not believe that Jesus was really afraid of His unbelieving Jewish enemies in Judea. As I stated a moment ago, that is not why He went to Tyre and Sidon. It was simply to preserve His life until the appointed time. Let us not forget that, as He told Peter during the brief confrontation that occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane, all of the Angels in Heaven were at His Father's command, as we see by this verse:

"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"

Matthew 26:53, KJV

Some of my readers may be very surprised to learn that Jesus -- who a lot of Christians often picture as a bold, fearless, fiery preacher of righteousness and truth -- would basically run away from His enemies. Perhaps you may even think that I have misinterpreted what is happening in the previous verses. However, there are a few other examples in the Gospels where we are clearly shown that Jesus was a very astute, guerrilla warrior of the Spirit who knew how to pick His battles. As I said a moment ago, He knew when He should stay and fight, and when it was wiser to run away, so that He could wage battle another day.

Jesus realized that He needed to remain alive long enough, not only so that He could train the Apostles, but also so that He could fulfill all of the Old Testament prophecies which had been written concerning Him. As the Lord informed His followers at the end of the Gospel of Luke:

"And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
Luke 24:44-47, KJV

For example, after He gave His "eat-my-flesh-drink-my-blood" sermon in John chapter six, we are informed that many people turned against Him and abandoned Him. As a result, we are informed that Jesus refused to walk in Jewry -- that is, in Judea, from the Greek "Ioudaia" -- because the Jews sought to kill Him. Therefore, He remained in Galilee. Consider the following verses:

"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve. After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him."
John 6:66-7:1, KJV

Let me share with you what happened right after the previous incident. In the Gospel of John, we are told that the Feast of Tabernacles was drawing near. As you may possibly know, this was a major religious event which was held in Jerusalem every year. Now, Jesus' brethren -- either His unbelieving biological brothers, or perhaps the people of the region of Galilee, depending on how you personally wish to understand the word "brethren" -- dared and taunted the Lord. They were basically saying "If you really are who you say you are, then stop hiding yourself. Prove it by going into Judea for the Feast of Tabernacles." Please notice how Jesus responds and

reacts in the following verses. Notice also that this occurs while the Lord is still in Galilee, from the previous verses that I shared with you:

"Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him. Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come. When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee."

John 7:2-9, KJV

It is evident then that when things got too hot in Judea due to the unbelief of the Jews, Jesus would sometimes flee to either Galilee or to Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia on occasion. In short, Jesus knew that His time had not come yet, so He was trying to stay alive as long as possible so that He could fulfill His mission. As I stated in part one, he who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day. Being the smart strategist, spiritual warrior and tactician that He was, the Lord obviously believed this as well.

But look what happens next. After Jesus' brethren had left for Jerusalem, Jesus secretly went up also. In other words, He chose His battle, and slipped in unnoticed. However, once He had quietly slipped into Jerusalem, in the middle of the Feast of Tabernacles -- it lasts for a period of seven days, and is also known as Sukkoth, or the Feast of Booths -- He began to boldly preach in the Temple. As was to be expected, His actions immediately raised the ire of the unbelieving Jews once again, which resulted in yet another confrontation, as we see by the following verses. For the full story, please read verses ten through thirty in your Bible:

"But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret . . . Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught . . . Why go ye about to kill me? The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? . . . Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him . . . Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come."

John 7:10, 14, 19b-20, 25-26a, 30, KJV

The final example I would like to share with you regarding Jesus' guerrilla warfare tactics is mentioned in the eighth chapter of the Gospel of John. As occurred in the previous confrontation, Jesus accused the unbelieving Jews of trying to kill Him. It is also in this same chapter where He tells them that they are of their father the Devil. By now, Jesus was using both guns, as they say, just as He likewise did in Matthew chapter twenty-three. He was not holding back the truth from them. He was fully exposing their rebellion, lies

and sins. As He would later say in this very same Gospel:

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin."

John 15:22, KJV

At any rate, for the sake of brevity, and to not overburden you with too much reading, I have only included some of the key verses from John chapter eight which reveal the intense confrontation that occurred between Jesus and His rebellious, unbelieving, self-righteous enemies:

"I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father . . . But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father . . . Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it . . . He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil . . . Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."

John 8:37-38, 40-41a, 44, 47-49, 51-52a, 59, KJV

As you can see, when the unbelieving Jews picked up stones in order to stone Jesus to death, we are informed that He "hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." Exactly what this means is a bit ambiguous. In this sentence, the verb "hid" is derive from the Greek word "krupto". In Thayer's Greek English Lexicon we find the following definitions:

----- Begin Quote -----

- 1) to hide, conceal, to be hid
- 2) escape notice
- 3) metaph. to conceal (that it may not become known)

----- End Quote -----

The previous sentence could simply mean that Jesus covered His head and face with His prayer shawl so that He would not be easily recognized, which would thus facilitate His escape from the Temple. If we consider that this incident occurred in the middle of the Feast of Passover, during which time a lot of people -- many thousands in fact -- would be in the city of Jerusalem, it could also mean that when Jesus saw the angry Jews coming for Him, He quickly got lost in the crowd, and so slipped out of the Temple.

But what I find odd about this sentence is that we are told

that He went "through the midst of them, and so passed by." You would think that even if Jesus covered His head with His prayer shawl, surely someone would still recognize Him in that huge crowd. After all, it wasn't like He was a stranger in Jerusalem, or to the Jewish religious elders. So it makes me wonder if these verses are describing some more mysterious wonder, such as Jesus actually disappearing before their very eyes. It is just a guess, and I obviously do not know for certain.

At any rate, the point I wish to emphasize is that once again we see the Lord striking His enemies hard, and then making a quick exit. He was -- and is -- a seasoned Warrior of the Spirit who knows how to take advantage of guerrilla warfare tactics in order to catch His enemies off-guard and defeat them. In this last example, He again made His point, and then disappeared before the angry Jews began to throw rocks in His direction. As we learned in part one with the verses from the Book of Proverbs, Jesus saw the evil coming and chose to flee the scene. He was wise enough to avoid further conflict, because His hour had not yet come. He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day. Remember that.

Of course, as occurred with the Apostles and Disciples in the New Testament, there may be times when you will not be able to avoid confrontation and persecution. As a result, you may find yourself standing before a judge, or possibly even spending a night or more behind bars. As Jesus said, the children of this world are wiser -- and I would add, more crafty -- than the children of light -- Luke 16:8. If they are out to get you, they will find a way to legally do so when you least expect it. If that is the case, and they haul you off to be judged by some secular authority, just remember that the Lord must have a reason for allowing it to happen to you. Remember too that He promised to be with you, and that He said that He would put His words in your mouth, as we see by the following verses:

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."
Matthew 10:16-20, KJV

"But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost."
Mark 13:9-11, KJV

"But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."
Luke 21:12-15, KJV

"And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor. And he wrote a letter after this manner: Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting. This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell. Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris. On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall."
Acts 23:23-35, KJV

"And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him. To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar. Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him. And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the

place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth." Acts 25:13-23, KJV

"But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

Acts 27:21-25, KJV

"The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen. [The second epistle unto Timotheus, ordained the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians, was written from Rome, when Paul was brought before Nero the second time.]"

2 Timothy 4:22, KJV

Just remember that God has not given us a spirit of fear. If anyone should be fearful and afraid, it should be the people who unjustly persecute us because of our faith in Christ. In God's chosen time, they will be given their "reward", unless they repent. Whether in bonds or free, wherever you are, and in whatever situation you may find yourself, just continue to be a spiritual light and a burning ember for the Lord. If the day arrives that persecution comes your way, just remember verses such as the following:

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me." John 15:18-21, KJV

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12, KJV

Allow me to again encourage you to read my article entitled "Civil Disobedience and Christian Persecution".

It is clear that as modern-day witnesses for Christ, we can all learn some valuable witnessing and survival lessons from reading about the actions of Jesus and the Apostles. Let me emphasize again that running away, or taking cover, is not being a coward. It is not denying your faith or abandoning Jesus Christ. It is not being ashamed of your faith. In the truest sense of the word, being ashamed of your faith would entail actually denying your belief in Jesus Christ when you are questioned about it. Running away simply means that you will live to preach the Gospel another day. It can be a very

smart strategic move. Hit and run spiritual guerrilla warfare can be a very effective mode of operation, as it keeps your enemies off-balance. They never know from which direction you are going to strike next. Just remember; we are to preach the Gospel in Love, and for no other reason.

In conclusion, the Lord needs us alive so that we can finish the job that He has given us to do. We can't very well do it if we are dead or locked away in some prison cell. So please be as wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. Don't provoke legal authorities, shopping mall proprietors, store owners, or anyone else unnecessarily due to foolishness and pride. If the heat is on, try to flee if it is at all possible. Fight your battle, be a powerful witness, but then run away so that you too will be able to live to fight another day. It is the wise thing to do, and there is nothing to be ashamed of. If persecution is unavoidable and you find yourself in bonds, then strive to be a bold but loving witness as much as lies within you by His Power and Spirit.

While the counsel which I have offered in this article is primarily directed at people who are involved in real world witnessing -- such as on the streets of big cities, from house-to-house, etc. -- it can be equally applied to online witnessing as well. It has been my observation that there is a lot of online debate occurring, even between our very own Christian brethren. For reasons which I explain in my article "Should Christians Engage in Doctrinal Debate?" I find this behavior between fellow Christians shameful, divisive and unnecessary. Furthermore, insofar as our outreach to the unbelieving world is concerned, such behavior only serves to hinder our witness, so please don't do it. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

". . . Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."
Romans 14:5b, KJV

I pray that you have found this article informative, and I hope that it has been a blessing in your life. I also pray that God grants you both Wisdom and Spiritual Discernment, so that you will know when it is wise to remain and fight, and when it is wiser to run away so that you can live to fight another day. As the Apostle James wrote:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."
James 1:5, KJV

If you have been blessed by this article, I encourage you to please consider sharing its URL link with all of your online friends. Likewise, if you have a user account with Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would also appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of resources below which were mentioned in this article, and which are likewise located on the Endtime Prophecy Net server:

Civil Disobedience and Christian Persecution
Should Christians Engage in Doctrinal Debate?

Are You a Burning Ember for the Lord?
Are You Crucified With Christ?
Peter: Faith Tried in the Fire
Palestinian Suicide Bombers and Middle East Peace

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