

The Way- Fight or Flight

Sermon Notes

June 11, 2017

History of fight or flight: Crossing of the Delaware, Gettysburg, Dunkirk, Bastogne, injustice at work for a promotion or for a co-worker situation. A child who seems so bent on going a potentially destructive path. A friend who is making poor choices that could have severe ramifications. Something has been said about you that is limited in fact and therefore gives others a distorted view. Someone who is anti-faith and wants to argue and mock your faith.

Distorted accusations and ulterior motives. Acts 19:23-28

- For at least two years The Way under Paul's leadership had been growing in number, power, and influence in Ephesus—a strategic and influential city of the known world. (10)
- Worship of other gods was dwindling, thus the business surrounding the worship of the goddess Artemis was suffering as a result. (26)
 - Artemis was the Greek goddess of the moon, daughter of Zeus and Leto. She was seen as the caretaker of nature “for both humans and animals.”
 - She was believed to be both protector of humanity and provided fertility of humanity.
 - Her temple in Ephesus was one of the 7 ancient wonders of the world, thus intrinsically connected to the identity of this city.
 - Souvenirs and idols would have been a lucrative trade. (24-25)
- Motivated by the loss of income, shrewdly tapping into the emotional identity of Ephesus with Artemis, Demetrius launches an attack against Paul and The Way. (27-28)

The propensity to want to defend yourself in the heat of conflict. Acts 19:29-34

- Hysteria led to irrational behavior in arresting Paul's companions and the formation of a rioting mob. (29)
- Confidence from past experiences plus Paul's passion to defend his friends caused him to want to rush in and defend. (30)
- Disciples forbid him and “societal” leaders begged him to be restrained. (30b-31)
 - Though Paul was a Spirit-led man he was operating under human impulse.
 - Cooler heads among his peers were being wise counselors to him.
 - An audience that is intensely agitated but also in confusion is not where one does the work of winning a soul.
 - God is not a god of confusion or an opportunist in taking advantage of a person who is not in a place to make a sincere and honest decision of faith.

God intervenes in an unexpected manner. Acts 19:35-20:1

- A city clerk speaks reason into the crowd by appealing to law.
 - He affirmed the greatness of Artemis and such greatness could not be hindered by mere men. (35)
 - He stated facts as to why their accusations were not founded. (37)

- If any further accusations can be found take it to court. (38)
- Disperse lest you be found guilty of rioting. (40)
- The Way continues it's work in Ephesus and Paul moves on to other cities. (20:1)

Take Aways

1. Truth will often get distorted due to the limited use of the facts.
2. Truth will stand.
3. Discern carefully when it is appropriate to defend yourself from false accusation.
4. We are to always be more concerned for the outcome of the soul than winning the argument.
5. Speaking to people who willfully will engage you is far superior to reasoning with agitated and confused people.

Discussion Guide – “The Way—Fight or Flight” Pastor Tony

(Continued from Fall and Winter Series)

Questions by Pastor Ric

June 11, 2017

If we want to understand the history of the church, Acts is our book. This study will continue to give us a picture of how the early church handled its beginnings, struggles and subsequent growth in a culture not unlike our own—somewhat hostile but open to spiritual things. We need this.

Feel free to use more or less of these questions. They are here to move us from knowledge to obedience as God’s Spirit speaks to our hearts. Share what God is doing in your heart as a result and have others you trust hold you to account for the life-change God is working in you.

Text: Acts 19:23--20:1

1. What businesses today could stand to lose money if “The Way” became more influential in people’s lives? Targeting businesses that profit from secularism happens among some Christians. Should this be the goal? (see John 3:17, Message Version)
2. Distortion of truth is common especially in today’s political climate. How we respond to truth distorted, determines our ability to be heard. I have seen Christ-followers and Secularists debate on social media and sometimes it isn’t very pretty. How does one discern the best way and place to respond to personal and spiritual falsehood keeping in mind our desire to be Christ-like? Matthew 18 provides guidelines for helping us through conflict with other believers. The advice of others/pastors/elders is also helpful.
3. What are some specific reasons to stay quiet and allow Truth to “stand”? (Flight) When we see our faith under attack, or when we come under attack? (a high degree of conflict may indicate a context of quietness, despite our desire to defend/speak up)
4. “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” (1 PE 3:15) How does this scripture help us relate to those who engage us in spiritual argument (apology)? How does this relate to Christ’s command to, “make disciples”? (If we are being disciplined, we will be prepared) What, specifically, should we be prepared to speak of?
5. Discuss the passage in 1 CO 3:5-7. “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.” *How does an understanding of this text help us with being more concerned about the soul than winning the argument?*