

Escape for Your Life

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God speaks. Sometimes He whispers by the still small voice of the gospel to us in tender overtures of mercy through the preached Word. Sometimes He speaks through His Word with power, warning us to turn from our iniquity. And sometimes He thunders through His divine, providential judgments of famine, war, fire, or some other tragedy.

On Tuesday, September 11, 2001, God spoke to us in thunder. He did so because we as a nation have not been bowing under His Word, have not been repenting under His stream of mercies showered upon us for decades, and have not repented under the smaller judgments He has sent our way. God sent a just, dreadful wake-up call to America—yes, to every one of us. The staggering destruction of lives at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the subsequent tales of horror, have left us stunned, speechless, and humbled.

Some heroically tried to save those in the buildings, and in the process, lost their own lives. Countless stories have been told of heroic deeds. One, little noticed, contains much spiritual instruction. A policeman, situated just outside the entrance of the buildings, shouted to the people as they streamed out,

*“Don’t look up; don’t look back;
run for your life!”*

Those words remind us of Genesis 19:17b, “Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.”

Let’s examine heaven’s message to us in this time of divine judgment by considering the theme, Escape for Your Life, in three thoughts:

1. Realize your danger—“lest thou be consumed”
2. Forsake all—“look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain”
3. Run for your life—“escape for thy life”

I. Realize your danger

When the cry of “Fire! Fire!” ran up and down the floors of the World Trade Center and filled the streets of New York City, people knew in a moment that danger was imminent. Flames are cruel tyrants and devour remorselessly. The very word fire can send chills down our spines.

But that word uttered by thousands of New Yorkers on September 11 is only a shadow of what Jesus called “hell fire” in Matthew 5:22. The eternal cry of “hell fire” that shall ascend from millions of lips in the eternal abyss on the Day of Judgment, comprehends weighty matters that only eternity can reveal. As dreadful as the events of the recent weeks were, they are all but child’s play compared with the wrath of God that will one day be poured out without mixture upon all those who do not repent and believe in God’s Son. God’s wrath against unbelievers has eternity and infinity and deity in it—and where these three oppose a person, woe be to that person! Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire of God’s wrath and with everlasting burning?

We deserve far worse than we have received, for North America has been unfruitful spiritually. We have slighted God’s gospel, despised God’s law, and served the Lord lukewarmly at best. We have neglected personal conversion and reformation. We have grown idolatrous, covetous, worldly, sensual, proud, and self-indulgent, addicting ourselves to a host of evils. We have become a nation of liars, backbiters, and murmurers. The blood of unborn millions is on our hands. Every three days we murder more babies in their mothers’ wombs in America than were killed in the New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania tragedies combined. We have called evil good, and good evil.

And yet, God is speaking to us from the ashes of the World Trade Center, “Escape for your life, lest you be consumed.”

Our danger cannot be overcome by any human help. Fire-engines went to the scene in New York, only to be burned up in the flames. Cranes are now picking up burned out fire-engines and casting them aside like toothpicks. The very means used to extinguish the fire were consumed by the fire.

That is your danger, so long as you are unsaved. No means of your devising can enable you to escape the fire of God’s wrath. There is a fire of sin within you that you cannot quench; there is a fire of hell outside of you that you will never be able to extinguish. You are in danger beyond your coping ability, so long as you don’t escape for your life to Jesus Christ. Your most strenuous efforts, naturally and spiritually, cannot deliver you from the wrath of a holy God who cannot dwell with sin and sinners. If you neglect the only way of salvation, how can you escape?

*O sinner, seek His face,
Whose wrath you cannot bear;
Fly to the dying Savior’s wounds,
And find salvation there.*

Escape for your life. Realize your danger. Don’t trifle with your own soul, with hell and heaven, with God and His bleeding, inviting Son.

Your danger requires immediate attention. Those people who successfully escaped the World Trade Center this week, didn’t stop to fill their briefcases. They escaped for their lives! They ran for the stairs. There was not a moment to waste. So it is with you. You have not a moment to lose. “Escape, Lot;” the angels say, “for your life—it is now or never. A few more minutes, a few more hours, and it will be too late.”

“Escape for thy life, lest thou be consumed” is a present-tense cry. “Behold, now is the accepted time—now is the day of salvation.” Now, now, now! Tomorrow’s faith is simply today’s unbelief. Good intentions will bring you to hell, not to heaven. Procrastination doesn’t only steal time; it destroys souls. “Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die and not live.”

There is but a step between us and death. Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, trembling and needy sinner, and you shall be saved. Don’t repent and don’t believe, and you will be lost. John 3:36 says, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

II. Forsake all

Lot had to forsake his former friends, who were not believers—including some family members. He had to forsake his former comforts. He had gone to Sodom to live a comfortable life. No doubt he had a well-furnished home. But now, he had to leave everything behind.

Lot had everything at stake. If he had stayed in Sodom, he would have lost all. He would not just have lost his home, his furniture, and his family, but he would have lost himself.

Lot had to forsake all from his heart. His wife escaped, but not with her heart. She looked back and became a pillar of salt. “Remember Lot’s wife;” Jesus warned (Luke 17:32).

If you don’t forsake all to follow Christ—if you try to cling to this world, or allow your self-indulgence or possessions to stand between you and Christ—one day, soon, you will lose everything, including yourself. What will it profit you if you gain the entire world, but lose your own soul? If you don’t forsake all for Christ, Christ will forsake you on the great day, and if your soul goes lost in that day, it would have been far better for you to have never been born. Far, far better to enter heaven like Lazarus than to be the rich man cast into hell (Luke 16:19-31).

Escape for your life. Don’t look behind you. Don’t stay in the plains of this world. Forsake evil friends, materialistic bondage, worldly toys—yes, forsake all to follow Christ. Take up your crosses, deny yourself, and follow Christ.

Escape for your life—your immortal life, your eternal life. Will you be content to lose your life; content to perish in your sin? If your house was set on fire tonight, and the cry arose, “Fire!;” would you not immediately leave everything behind and run out of your house to save your life? Today God calls to you that the fires of hell are stoked and that you must escape for your life.

Dear child of God, you have known what this is. You have forsaken all in the past. Are you still forsaking all in the present? Or, are you like Lot, lingering too much in this world, becoming too cozy with worldly people? Are you in danger again of perishing with the world?

Don’t forget: if Lot had not escaped, he would have perished with the Sodomites. God, of course, graciously preserved him. But that doesn’t mean that Lot didn’t have to forsake all and escape for his life.

III. Run for your life

“Escape for your life, Lot;” the angels said. Lot must not stop to argue. Nor must you. You don’t need more evidence of your need. Your conscience tells you that you must be born again, that you must repent and believe.

As Lot must run from the doomed city of Sodom; as the people had to run from the doomed Trade Center, so you must run from this present, evil world, this City of Destruction. Run for your life.

But where must I run? Run to the mountain. Symbolically, that means don’t return to sin and Satan, for that is looking back to Sodom. Don’t rest in yourself or the world, for that is staying in the plain. But run to Christ and heaven, for that is escaping to the mountain. Entrust your soul, your all, to Him for this life and a better.

If you won’t entrust your soul to Christ, whom can you trust? Will you trust yourself?

Why do you linger? Is not Christ the Physician and His blood the balm that you need? Why are you not recovered (Jer. 8:22)? Your conscience tells you that God is more willing to save you than you are to be saved. You know the good news that Christ came to save sinners. You know that the chiefest of sinners is welcome with Him. Even the dying thief on the cross—whose record may well have been able to compete with the terrorists behind all of this recent destruction—found mercy.

“Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out,” Jesus said. Oh, may God help you to come now, for Christ’s sake.

Yes, but how do I come? You come, by the Spirit’s grace, just as you are, with all your sin, repenting, believing, surrendering all into the arms of God, pleading on God’s promises to save the lost. You come trusting wholly in the blood of Jesus Christ to save your soul, forsaking the ways of sin. You come in gracious response to the free offers and promises of the gospel as a poor, needy sinner, trusting in the full righteousness of Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. You come trusting Christ’s perfect, active obedience to the law and His perfect, passive obedience in paying for sin to be your satisfaction of God’s holy justice; to be your only ground of reconciliation with God, as Paul tells us. You come, saying with a poet,

*A wounded, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ’s kind arms I fall;
Be thou my strength and confidence,
My Jesus and my all.*

Oh, I beseech you, run for your life; run straight to Christ. Don’t run to ceremonies, feelings, ministers, works, orthodoxies—but run straight to Christ. Fall into His arms—the arms of the evangel, the arms of the Savior who Himself is the gospel.

Don’t look behind you. Run for your life. Be ye reconciled to God.