

Why God Warns Us

Acts 21:1-16

Warning passages are not meant to make us fearful. They are meant to help us remain faithful and fruitful even in the darkest times.

"One of the ways we experience the loving fatherhood of God is in his unrelenting commitment to warn us of the various dangers of life in this fallen world." Paul Tripp

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold." Matthew 24:9-12

"The gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to the nations , and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14

"But understand in the last days, there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good..." 2 Timothy 3:1-3

"Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted... But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it." 2 Timothy 3:12-14

The warnings in Scripture are designed to produce by the Holy Spirit greater faithfulness and fruitfulness for the kingdom.

I. Biblical Warnings Lead Us to Pray (Acts 21:1-6)

"And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem...And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed and said farewell to one another." Acts 21:4-6

"But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.' ...And they were afraid to ask him about this saying." Luke 9:44-45

"When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem." Luke 9:51

The warnings of the Bible are meant to produce a vigilant and praying people.

"And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.' And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed..." Luke 22:39-41

"And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.'" Luke 22:45-46

Prayerlessness is recklessness. Not praying means not preparing. Faith is not revealed by bracing yourself for what it to come. It is revealed by humbling yourself before the mighty hand of God.

II. Biblical Warnings Strengthen Our Resolve. Acts 21:7-14

"Then Paul answered, 'What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.'" Acts 21:13

"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." Acts 2:17-18

"And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.' Mark 8:31-33

Suffering and persecution are not just accidental events in the life of the Christian but intentional for the advancement of the gospel. We are to strengthen our resolve to represent Christ well.

"Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." 1 Peter 4:1

"Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" Polycarp, 155 A.D.

III. Biblical Warnings Assure Us of God's Will. Acts 21:15

"And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, 'Let the will of the Lord be done.'" Acts 21:14

"And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, 'Thus says the Holy Spirit, "This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." Acts 21:11

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed." 1 Peter 4:12-13

Biblical warnings actually serve to encourage God's people during hard times that God is at work in and through their lives just as He said He would.

IV. Biblical Warnings Engage and Align God's People. Acts 21:16,17

"After these days, we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. And some of the disciples from Jerusalem went with us, bringing us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, and early disciple, with whom we should lodge." Acts 21:15-16

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too." 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

Anticipating and experiencing suffering as believers is meant to strengthen a community to shoulder one another's burdens and to share in one another's sorrows for the sake of the gospel.

Suffering for the gospel is meant to produce fellow sufferers for the gospel with Paul. Sharing the gospel through imprisonment would be made possible because Christians would step up to serve and to support Paul as he carried out his mission for the gospel.