

When Death Brings Life: How Martyrdom Can Spark Revival

The death of a righteous person should never go unnoticed. Throughout history, we've seen how the martyrdom of believers has often sparked revival, emboldened the church, and advanced the gospel in ways that might not have happened otherwise.

The Significance of Stephen's Martyrdom

In Acts 8, we see how Stephen's death became a pivotal moment for the early church. As the first Christian martyr, Stephen's execution triggered several significant outcomes:

- It scattered believers throughout Judea and Samaria, spreading the gospel beyond Jerusalem
- Those who were scattered "went everywhere preaching the gospel" (Acts 8:4)
- It planted seeds of salvation in Saul (later Paul), who witnessed and approved of Stephen's death

Stephen's martyrdom wasn't just a tragedy—it was a catalyst that propelled the church forward. While those who killed him only saw blood and violence, Stephen himself saw "the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). There was another whole side to the story that his persecutors couldn't see.

How Persecution Advances the Gospel

The Apostle Paul understood this principle well. In Philippians 1:12, he writes: "I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel."

Paul's imprisonment and suffering didn't hinder the gospel—they advanced it! His chains made the gospel known "to the whole palace guard" and emboldened other believers to "speak the word without fear" (Philippians 1:14).

When we face opposition or persecution, we need to remember that God can use these difficult circumstances to:

- Embolden other believers
- Spread the gospel to new places and people
- Create opportunities for witness that wouldn't otherwise exist

When Death Produces More Than Life

Jesus taught a profound principle in John 12:24: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."

Sometimes a person's death can be more impactful than their life on earth. Consider these examples:

- Jesus' death opened heaven's door and released the Holy Spirit's power
- When Elijah was taken up, a double portion of his anointing was released upon Elisha
- When Mary broke the alabaster box, the fragrance filled the room—sometimes our "breaking" releases a greater anointing

The Voice of Righteous Blood

Blood has a voice. In Genesis 4:10, God told Cain, "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." Abel's blood cried out for justice.

In Revelation 6:10, we see martyrs under the altar crying out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

But Hebrews 12:24 tells us that Jesus' blood "speaks better things than that of Abel." While Abel's blood cried for justice, Jesus' blood speaks of mercy. Similarly, Stephen's last words were, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin" (Acts 7:60).

The blood of a righteous person has power. It speaks. It moves God. It can bring transformation.

How Should We Respond to Persecution?

When we see persecution or martyrdom, we shouldn't just sit back and say, "I think God's up to something." We need to:

- Take it to heart - Isaiah 57:1 says, "The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart"
- Get stirred up - Be the salt of the earth that preserves righteousness
- Stand up for truth - Don't be intimidated, but be emboldened
- Share the gospel - People are looking for answers in these troubled times

Remember, you are the move of God. You have the power through the gospel to change lives.

Avoiding Distractions and Division

During significant spiritual moments, the enemy always tries to counter God's work. If he can't stop a move of God, he'll try to muddy or pervert it.

Paul noted in Philippians 1:15-16 that "Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill. The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely..."

We must be wise and discerning:

- Don't get caught up in divisive rhetoric
- Focus on the gospel, not on criticizing others
- Keep your eyes on Jesus, not on the chaos around you
- Remember that "perfect peace" comes to those whose minds are "stayed on Him" (Isaiah 26:3)

Life Application

As we reflect on the power of martyrdom and persecution to advance God's kingdom, let's challenge ourselves to live with purpose and conviction:

- Live a righteous life so that your life (and potentially your death) carries weight in eternity

- Be willing to step out of your comfort zone to share the gospel
- Keep your focus on Jesus rather than getting caught up in worldly divisions
- Look for opportunities to show mercy, following the example of Jesus and Stephen

Ask yourself:

- Am I living in such a way that my life is making an eternal impact?
- What am I willing to sacrifice for the sake of the gospel?
- How can I be more bold in sharing my faith, even in the face of opposition?
- Am I allowing worldly divisions to distract me from God's purpose?

Remember, we don't fear death because we have eternal life. Our goal isn't just to survive but to advance God's kingdom, whether through our living or our dying.

Quotes

1. Sometimes persecution — even a person's death — can inspire people and move them to change.
2. If your life would bless many, but your death would change the world, what would you choose?
3. Stephen's death was worth it for the salvation of Saul, who became Paul and served the church in incredible ways for so many years.
4. Whatever the devil has done to wrong you in the past, get ready and be strong — it will backfire on the devil and turn to your good for God's glory.
5. Sometimes a person's death can be more impactful than their life on earth.
6. Sometimes a person's blood will cry out louder than any prayer they could pray while alive on earth.
7. A seed is most powerful after it dies — and in some cases that's true of people. Sometimes you can produce more for the kingdom in death than you did in life.

8. When bodies that contain heavenly treasure are broken, that breaking can release a great anointing that brings healing and deliverance to many.
9. The death of a righteous person should not go unnoticed; it matters spiritually and should be a big deal to us.
10. Don't just stand back and say, "I think God is up to something." No — Church, you are the move of God.
11. You have the power, through the gospel, to change a person's life.
12. I want to be righteous like Abel — a clean, holy man of God, washed in the blood of Jesus — so that whenever I die, my blood will have a voice.
13. Left or right — it's the same coin, heads and tails. We aren't tossing that coin; we live in a different kingdom and operate under different laws.
14. Stop fighting left and right. Get out of that mess and get into the flow of the Holy Spirit. Let's find out what God is saying and doing — that's our calling.
15. Lord, we fear no death. We are not afraid to die. No one takes our life from us; but if we must lay it down, we will lay it down.

Verses

1. Acts 8:1
2. Acts 8:4
3. Philippians 1:12
4. Philippians 1:14-15
5. John 12:24
6. Isaiah 57:1
7. Genesis 4:10
8. Revelation 6:10

9. Hebrews 12:24

10. John 3:16

11. John 17

12. John 4

Summary

Throughout history, martyrdom has often sparked revival and advanced the gospel in unexpected ways. Stephen's death in Acts 8 scattered believers who preached everywhere they went, while also planting seeds in Saul who later became Paul. Persecution can embolden other believers, spread the gospel to new places, and create unique witnessing opportunities. Jesus taught that sometimes death produces more life, like a grain of wheat that must die to produce a harvest. When facing opposition, we should take righteous persecution to heart, get stirred up for truth, stand boldly, and share the gospel without being distracted by division.