

## The Message You Don't Want to Hear

“Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”  
(Acts 15:26).

**T**he first missionaries, Barnabas and Paul had given glowing, victorious reports of what God was doing among the Gentiles. However, progress cost them risking their lives.

Commendation, appreciation, and honor in the Word of God were given to those who risked their lives.

The most important people within the church are those that are giving their lives to the primary focus of the church: evangelizing the lost. Evangelism secures that the Church goes on.

“Hazarded” is a gambling term that means to take or risk, or lay something on the line. These men laid their lives on the line for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Because of their commitment we read words of commendation and appreciation for the sacrifices they made for the cause of the gospel, and the name of Jesus Christ.

Someone has said that most churches and movements go through three stages:

- They began as risk takers.
- They grow to be caretakers.
- They end up undertakers.

A web-based article entitled “Our Real Mission” said, “These early disciples were so convinced of the lostness of men and women and the truthfulness of the gospel, and the necessity of missions and evangelism that they risked both life and limb to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to all.” They were “possessed and obsessed by the command of Jesus to take the gospel to everyone...They were consumed and committed to the mission.”

This article claims that we fulfill our mission by doing three things:

- We must bring people in.
- We must build them up.
- We must send them out.

General Patton said, “I don't want to receive any message saying we are holding our position. We are advancing constantly. We're not interested in holding anything except the enemy.” The church, and its ministry, should be on the offensive, aggressively, actively winning the world for Jesus Christ.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

H. C. Van Wormer in “The Challenge of Our Age” explains that men risk their lives for many causes:

- The soldier for victory and his country.
- The athlete for the excitement of winning.
- The explorer for gratification of curiosity.
- The artist for fame.
- The sailor for the love of the sea.
- The mountain climber for the thrill of reaching the top.
- The scientist for knowledge and discovery.

Van Wormer writes “So evidently we are in a day when there is no apparent lack of men and women who are willing to risk their lives in hazardous tasks, and attempt the impossible.”

Why should there be a shortage of those that will risk their lives for the gospel? He goes on to write about Paul, waiting in the courtyard of a Roman prison, while the executioner was grinding the axe to cut off his head. He calls for paper and ink, and begins to write. “Timothy, preach the same Gospel I have preached. Don’t compromise the truth. Endure afflictions...be instant in season and out of season; preach the truth at all seasons. Be a good soldier, Timothy.

I am ready to depart. There will be no opening of the jail this time. Rome is my last stop in the heavenly blueprint. I have finished my course. The next stop is Heaven. Good-bye to jails, bleeding, suffering, pain, shipwrecks, and unkind treatment. I am turning my face toward the dawning of God’s new day, in God’s eternal city, where no sorrow or sighing or pain or suffering shall ever come. Good-bye, Timothy. I won’t see you again until the Marriage Supper. Do the work of an evangelist.”

The Apostles literally preached until it hurt. These ordinary men accomplished extraordinary things for God. But it cost them their lives.

Much of the information that follows came from the Christian History Institute and their article “Whatever Happened to the Twelve Apostles?” They write, “It is safe to say that the apostles went far and wide as heralds of the message of the risen Christ. An early legend says they cast lots and divided up the world to determine who would go where, so all could hear about Jesus. They suffered greatly for their faith.”

- Paul was beheaded in Rome.
- Peter was also martyred there, crucified, upside down since he did not count himself worthy to die the same way as his Lord.

- Andrew went to the “land of the man-eaters” now called the Soviet Union. He was crucified in Greece.
- Thomas went as far east as India. He died there when pierced through with the spears of four soldiers.
- Philip evangelized in North Africa and in Asia Minor. There he converted the Roman proconsul’s wife. The proconsul had him arrested and cruelly put to death.
- Matthew preached in Persia and Ethiopia. Some reports say he was stabbed to death in Ethiopia.
- Bartholomew was a missionary in India, Armenia, Ethiopia, and Southern Arabia. He was martyred.
- James ministered in Syria. It is reported that he was thrown down from the temple, then stoned, and his brains were bashed out with a club.
- Simon the Zealot preached in Persia and was killed when he refused to sacrifice to their sun god.
- Matthias went to Syria and was burned to death.
- John led the church in Ephesus. Later he was exiled to Patmos where he wrote the Book of Revelation. He was thrown into a pot of burning oil, but miraculously escaped death.
- James, the son of Zebedee was put to death by Herod shortly after Passover.

In 1848, John Geddie, went to the New Hebrides Islands of the South Pacific. Living among man-eaters he was in constant danger. He taught them about Jesus. One by one the people gave up their idols. Six years later more than half of the islanders had become Christians and they started evangelizing other islands.

When the missionary died, this was placed on his grave:

“When he came here, there were no Christians.  
When he went away, there were no heathen.”

Erwin McManus in *An Unstoppable Force* said, “If those who prepare for leadership are looking for the safe place, who will lead the church into

the dangerous places?”

One persecuted Christian in the twenty-first century said, “I will preach the gospel of Jesus Christ until I die.” Can you say, “Amen” to that? Soreness, sorrow, suffering, solitude, and sacrifice are words of a message we don’t want to hear or eagerly anticipate. Sometimes, God causes us to move away from comforts to accomplish His higher purpose and to reach our lost world.

A little group, started over three hundred years ago, was concerned with lives lost in the Atlantic Ocean, within a mile from land. This little cluster couldn’t stand to think of people going down so close to their shores, so went into the life-saving business. They built little huts of refuge along the shoreline. Their motto was, “You have to go out, but you don’t have to come back!” They took their task seriously, and risked all, because they prized human life. Over

time the US Coast Guard took over the job and adopted the same values. Souls are lost on the seas and in the storms of life. Our commission has not altered. We are still going all out to reach our world.

**Study Questions**

1. Who are some of the most important people in the church? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Explain the word “hazarded” and how it relates to our lives. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. List three things that need to be done to fulfill our mission.  
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2) \_\_\_\_\_  
3) \_\_\_\_\_

4. “The church should be aggressive.” Do you agree or disagree? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. List three ways, reasons, or examples men risk their lives. \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. What conclusion did Van Wormer reach? \_\_\_\_\_  
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