

# **Dangers on the Safe Side (Part 4): Avoiding Persecution**

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Text: Hebrews 10:32-39

This is the fourth and final lesson in a series about dangers that exist “on the safe side.” This phrase means “avoiding danger, with a margin for error” (definition). Sometimes this is fine or even wise, but there is a difference between wisdom and safety. Sometimes they overlap, but not always. At times, staying “on the safe side” is actually dangerous. Erring on the side of caution can cause us to err when it leads to fear and compromise or results from a lack of faith. Faithfulness often requires us to venture out of safety. We must do God’s will regardless of the danger.

## **The “Safe Side” – Avoiding Persecution**

- The Hebrew writer contrasted two groups – those who endured and those who would shrink back; he commended these brethren for enduring persecution (Hebrews 10:32-34); however, there were others who would not endure this (Hebrews 10:35, 38-39)
- They endured ridicule, tribulation, imprisonment, and seizure of property (Hebrews 10:33-34) – they were encouraged later to be willing to suffer as Jesus did (Hebrews 12:4; 13:13); those who were not willing to do this would not be pleasing to God (Hebrews 10:38)
- Why avoiding persecution would be seen as “safe” – it was about physical safety; avoid harm; protect self/family

## **Why This Is Tempting**

- There is a natural desire for self-preservation – we must love our neighbor AS ourselves (Matthew 22:39; cf. Ephesians 5:29); [side note: there is a difference between avoiding persecution and fleeing persecution (cf. Acts 8:4); avoiding involves compromising/backing down; fleeing means doing God’s work elsewhere]
- We are afraid to lose what we have gained in this life – wealth produces worry (Ecclesiastes 5:12)
- We can convince ourselves that we will be bold later – same mindset of the rich land owner (Luke 12:16-21)

## **Why This Is Dangerous**

- We are not pleasing God (Hebrews 10:38) – this should be a “terrifying” thought to us (Hebrews 10:31)
- We will be tempted to become more like the world – we could avoid persecution by conforming (John 15:18-19)

- We will be hiding our light from the world – we are to let it shine to point others to Him (Matthew 5:14-16)

### **What to Do Instead**

- Instead of being displeasing to God – we must offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to Him (Romans 12:1; Revelation 2:10)
- Instead of becoming more like the world – we must be more like Christ (1 Peter 2:21); share His sufferings (1 Peter 4:13)
- Instead of hiding our light – we must continue to be an example for good (1 Peter 2:12; cf. Daniel 6:6-10)

### **Conclusion**

- The goal of persecution is to get Christians to deny or be silent about their faith – often this works
- Whether we face severe persecution or not, let us be faithful regardless of the consequences – we need to have endurance (Hebrews 10:36) in order to be faithful until death (Revelation 2:10)