

Stand Where the Fire Has Been



Six miles northeast of Avery, Idaho, twenty-five year old William Rock was in charge of a crew of 70 firefighters. They had been directed to this strategic location in order to halt the progress of a very large forest fire which had already destroyed thousands of square miles of prime wilderness forest.

When the forest fire swept up to their fire line, it was apparent at once that with their shovels and mattocks they were overmatched. The swiftly moving blaze was being fed by strong winds. Like a



giant tidal wave, the orange leaping flames spread out as far as the eye could see. It was engulfing everything in its path. William Rock had never seen a forest fire of this great magnitude before. He knew the safety of his men depended on him. If they tried to stay and fight the fire, they would be swallowed up in its flame. If they broke and ran, the swiftly moving flames would overtake them on the rough terrain. Desperately he pitched about in his mind for a way to save his men. Then he remembered the area that had been burnt by a spot fire the day before. His men had been able to control this

burn and the small area had nothing left in it that might be fuel for the fire.

He led his men to this already burnt over area. Soon the high walls of leaping flames reached the spot. Smoke spiraled several miles high into the sky. Ashes and embers rained down on the already burnt over area but having nothing to feed on, they died out. So terrible was the sight all around them that one man panicked, bolted and tried to outrun the fire before the area was surrounded. He was the only casualty among the crew in the terrific holocaust that day.

If William Rock had tried to stay and fight the fire or had tried to flee on foot before the firestorm, his crew would have been lost. But he led them to an area where the fire had already been, and it turned out to be a place of absolute safety.

A place of absolute safety is what we need as sinners too. Because **“all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,”** (Rom.3.23) we have all earned the **“wrath”** or severe anger of God. **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”**(Rom. 1.18) God’s wrath must fall on those who die in their sins. They will be punished for all eternity in hell. **“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.”** (Mat.25.46.)



Because God is omniscient, or all-knowing, there is no use in pretending we haven’t sinned. Because he is omnipotent, or all powerful, no one should believe they can withstand his anger in their own strength. Because he is omnipresent, there is no use trying to escape his wrath by running away or hiding from him. **“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?”** (Ps.139.7) Each one of us will have to give an account of our lives to God.

The sinner’s only hope is to stand where the fire had already been. The Son of God, the creator of the universe, in love and mercy, became a man, and went to the cross and died for sinners. God’s wrath in all its awful power, in wave after wave fell on him. In the last three hours of darkness on the cross the Lord Jesus bore in his own body the sins of all those who would afterwards believe on him. **“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”** (1Pet. 3.24)

God is worthy of the highest praise from every heart for what Christ has done on the cross. Because **“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures,”** (1Cor.15.3.), men and women can find a place of absolute safety. When they put their faith in the name of the Lord Jesus, they stand as it were in the place where the fire has already been. They may go free because the Lord Jesus paid the supreme price for them.

You may not flee God’s wrath in the sense of finding some place to hide where God will not find you. You may not extinguish his wrath by doing **“good works”** even as the firefighters in the story were not able to put out the towering flames by throwing shovels of dirt at it. But by God’s grace alone, you may come to the Lord Jesus Christ who paid sin’s awful price. By trusting him with all your heart you may stand in the place of absolute safety.

This disobedient and unbelieving world is soon to pass into fiery judgment. Only the longsuffering of God holds back his wrath as he waits for sinners to repent. But the longsuffering of God will not hold back his wrath forever. The only place of safety is to stand where the fire has already been by trusting the Savior. Oh do come to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners before it is forever too late and the fire of God’s judgment breaks over you!

“This is a true saying and worthy of all acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” (1 Tim.1.15)