

# The Four Martyrdoms

by Dick Brogden

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*The American church is called to the red martyrdom, the green martyrdom, and the white martyrdom to reach the world for Jesus.*

**Duration:** 35:01

**Scripture:** John 12:20

**Topics:** "Martyrdom", "Sacrificial Living"

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## Description

Dick Brogden delivers a powerful sermon titled 'The Four Martyrdoms,' emphasizing the call to follow Jesus through various forms of martyrdom: red, green, and white. He illustrates the necessity of dying to oneself and embracing the cross, as Jesus did, to reach the unreached peoples of the world. Brogden challenges the church to not only accept the physical sacrifice of red martyrdom but also to engage in the green martyrdom of community and the white martyrdom of sending their best to serve in difficult places. He urges believers to live with the understanding that life is fleeting and that true fulfillment comes from glorifying God through sacrificial living. Ultimately, he calls the church to rise up and embrace the radical obedience that Jesus exemplified.

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## Transcript

Well, it is a joy to be here tonight. We are on the open house circuit. How many know what I'm talking about? Yes, going to all the graduate open houses right now.

Beck and I were out this afternoon, heading back out later tonight, and of course tomorrow hosting one for our own graduate with Connor, and kind of exciting to see your children grow up. And I heard Pastor Justin say, you don't get a day off until they graduate. I don't think it's then even.

You know, it doesn't happen. They just get more expensive. How many know what I'm talking about? So anyways, but it's great to be with you.

I am thrilled to introduce the pastor, the minister, that's going to be preaching the word this weekend. Of course, I'm off this weekend. I'm on vacation, of course, being dad.

And you've noticed that a little bit in the last couple weeks. There's just been a focus. I guess when your child's graduating, there's just kind of a focus.

The final senior recital, the final concert, the things that only you can be there as a parent for. And this is one of those weekends, again, where I'm off being dad. But I had to introduce our guest, even though I'm technically here.

Even the staff saw me. They said, you're technically off right now. You know that.

And I said, but I'm part of this church. I love this church. I love what God's doing.

Pastor it for nothing. Because I just love this church. I love what we do.

I love the honor of being able to do this and be able to be a pastor here. I love that you're part of the church. You put a smile on my face every time I see you in church.

So glad to be here. Our speaker, I don't want to take any more of his time. He was our first missionary that we ever supported.

He and his wife and their family. First one. And sometimes, you know, you just fall into something that's amazing.

And I'm convinced that sometimes people will say, that was an amazing strategic decision. And I don't even know that it was for us. It was just God's so good, he gets you to the right spot at the right time at the right place.

And this is one of those missionaries that he's put us in proximity with, in contact with, that it's a joy to be able to support and bless him and his wife and their family as they minister. And I just feel this about Dick Brogdon. I feel like he's been with Jesus when I'm around him.

I just feel like he's been with Jesus, and he challenges me. And I look forward to this day. I look forward to this weekend because I know it's what we need.

It's part of the spiritual diet that God has for us. And I just want you to open up your hearts and your spirit to receive what the Lord has given him to share with us. And will you welcome someone I greatly respect, Dick Brogdon.

Good evening. If you have your Bibles, would you take them and open to the Gospel of John? I'd like to read from John chapter 12, verse 20 to 26. John chapter 12, verse 20 to 26.

Now there were certain Greeks amongst those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from the state of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we wish to see Jesus. Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn, Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

But Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it produces much grain.

He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, let him follow me. And where I am, there my servant will be also.

If anyone serves me, him my Father will honor. We want to see Jesus, say the Greeks, and when they do, Jesus says, If anyone serves me, let him follow me. And where I am, there my servant will be also.

What was Jesus talking about? Where was Jesus that we might follow him? The context of the passage helps. It's Passion Week. Jesus is just a few days away from Calvary.

He knows, chapter 13, verse 1, that his hour has come. And Jesus is saying to the Greeks and to you and to I, You want to see me? You want to serve me? You are welcome. But you should know that I am going to the cross, and anyone who would follow me must go there too.

Anyone who wants to serve Jesus must end up crucifying. If we are going to reach the ethno-linguistic peoples that remain to us around the world, more than 6,000 peoples that are less than 2% evangelical Christian, if they are going to glorify God, someone in this room is going to have to live dead. I want us, therefore, to reflect on three martyrdoms this evening, three deaths that God wants us to live, the red, the green, the white, and at the end of the message, I'm going to ask you if you're willing to do so.

The red martyrdom, it's the most familiar to us, but the least common experientially, we call it red, because it literally refers to blood being spilt for Jesus. Church history tells us that Peter died in Rome, and according to one legend, he had moved there to pastor the church, a great persecution arose, and Peter and many Christians were trying to flee the city. On the way out of Rome, he encountered Jesus, and Jesus asked him, Peter, what are you doing? Where are you going? And Peter, surprised, returned the question, and he looked at Jesus, and he said, Quo vadis, Domini, where are you going, Lord? And Jesus responded, I'm going back into the city to die again for the flock that you desert.

And ashamed, Peter turned on his heel, went back into the city, and according to tradition, was crucified upside down because he didn't feel worthy to die in the same manner that Jesus did. Greeks and disciples through the centuries have been asking the same question, Quo vadis, Domini? Quo vadis? Where are you going, Lord? Where are you going? And the answer of Jesus has not changed. He is still going to the cross, and if we are his servants, we must follow him there.

Quo vadis, Domini? Where are you going, Lord? Jesus is still going to Libya. Jesus is still going to Afghanistan. Jesus is still going to Somalia.

Jesus is going to Yemen. Jesus is going to Syria. Jesus is going to Oman.

Jesus is going to the Muslim people around this earth, and if as a church, if as a Christian, you want to go where Jesus is going, it is back into the context and cities of death and destruction and oppression and war. It's to the unreached. It's to the Taliban.

It's to the Somali pirates. It's to the Bedouin Arabs. Where are you going, Lord? Quo vadis, Domini? I am going to my death.

I am going to die in an effort to save others. I am going where no one wants to go. I am going where everyone flees.

It's never been an unusual thing to die for Jesus, literally. It has happened all through history. Dying for Jesus used to be the way that Christians lived.

Elizabeth Elliot writes of her slain husband, Jim, he and the other men who were with him that died were hailed as heroes, martyrs. I do not approve, she says. Neither would they have approved.

Is the distinction between living for Christ and dying for Him after all so great? Is not the second the logical conclusion of the first? Furthermore, to live for God is to die daily, as the Apostle Paul put it. It's to lose everything that we might gain Christ. It's thus laying down our lives that we find them.

When was the last time that you lost anything because of Jesus? And yet, Roman Colosseums and Arabian deserts, communist jails, islands of the Pacific, for 2,000 years, men and women, young and old, have been dying for Christ. One Christian in India writes David Platt in his book *Radical*, while being skinned alive, he looks at his persecutors and he says, I thank you for this. Tear off my old garment, for soon I will put on the garment of Christ's righteousness.

Christopher Love, in antiquity, being held for his execution, writes a note to his wife, and he says, Today they will sever me from my physical head, but they cannot sever me from my spiritual head, Christ. And as Love walked to his death, his wife applauded while he sang of glory. And losing your head for Jesus is not just something from history.

This week, in Tunisia, if you saw the video, they sawed the head off of a believer because of his allegiance to Christ. It took him a minute and a half to cut through his neck with a rusty knife. Stand on the island of Hawaii, John Piper explains, and draw a straight line to Australia.

Somewhere in the middle of that line is a group of islands. They used to be called the New Hebrides. Today they're called Vanuatu.

In the mid-1800s, a ship took two missionaries to these islands, and in view of those watching from on board, they were caught by cannibals, killed, and eaten. Horrified, the shipweight anchor returned to England, where a man named John Patton heard the story. He was pastoring a small church, and God used it to call him to go back to the New Hebrides as a missionary.

An elder in his church, concerned for the safety of his pastor, took John Patton aside. His name was Mr. Dixon, rebuked him. He said, John, you can't go to the New Hebrides.

You'll be eaten by cannibals. John Patton replied, Mr. Dixon, your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms. What does it matter if you are eaten by worms and I by cannibals? For in the day of resurrection, mine will be much more glorious.

If you know the story, Patton went and through a series of adventures, led many on that island to Christ, but not without cost. His wife died, his daughter died, he dug their grave with his bare hands. And here's the point of the story.

Should Jesus tarry, you are going to die. You are going to die. You're going to die.

Do you understand that? Do you live your life as one condemned? You are going to die. What does it matter how? Many through history have shed their blood for Muslims. 480 believers in Christ will die today because of their faith.

20 believers in Jesus, in the moments that I will speak with you, will die and be tortured and suffered. May they die well. The American church is not exempt from dying for Jesus.

The red martyrdom, it's not to be sought, neither should it be feared. And those that die for Christ, they should not be considered heroic or foolish. It's merely following Christ.

If anyone serves me, let him follow me. And where I am, the cross, dying to save other people, there my servants will be also. I have a friend who worked for years in this city among Somalis.

We asked him to leave this city and to go live in Somalia itself with his wife and three young children to lead one of our Live Dead teams. Live Dead is simply this. It's church planting through multinational teams amongst unreached people groups.

We say Live Dead because these people groups that remain to us are very difficult. The easy places are gone. And if you're going to go and do this and represent Jesus, you have to be willing to die to your flesh, to yourself.

He agreed to go. We sat with him at breakfast. I asked his wife, do you understand what this means? Do you understand what it could cost you? She took a few days and then she wrote this email.

And this is in the journal, if you will get it. In prayer, I cry with Jesus over these matters. Over the ramifications on our children, on my husband, on me, on our marriage, on the work, we cry together.

Jesus speaks to me comfortingly. All die. I know that these words may not comfort all, but they comfort me.

They mean so much to me, these two words. They give me such peace. They humble me.

They bring me clarity. They ground me with perspective for living well. Death is so normal.

Death touches all. Death often comes unannounced. I cannot control it, nor will I be ruled by some irrational fear of it, what fools who do.

I most likely won't know it's coming. It could come today or tomorrow, harm the same. I do hope, she writes, God isn't leading us to die in Somalia at the hands of hatred, but I will not be ruled by that possibility.

And I would be a fool to think that my life anywhere is free from death. I see it as a terrible, meaning huge and strong privilege to serve God amongst these lost. And I surrender with great joy to his plan, trusting however he intends to sow our lives.

You are going to die. And if in your death you can glorify Christ, why not? It's how he went. It's how he died.

On November 17th, 1957 at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, Martin Luther King Jr. preached a sermon titled Loving Your Enemies. And this is what he said, To our most bitter opponents we say, We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We shall meet your physical force with soul force.

Do to us what you will and we shall continue to love you. Throw us in jail, we shall still love you. Bomb our homes and threaten our children, we shall still love you.

Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our communities at the midnight hour and beat us and leave us half dead and we shall still love you. But be ye assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer. And one day we will win freedom, but not only for ourselves.

We shall so appeal to your heart and conscience that we shall win you in the process and our victory will be a double victory. Jesus wants his church not only to turn the other cheek, but to lay down your life for precious unreached peoples. He wants us to die for them.

He wants us to take our turn in a long line of others who have laid down their lives, who have spilt their blood, who have followed him to the cross, who have embraced the sacrificial death. God is calling the American church to the red martyrdom, to wear down Islam by our capacity to suffer, to live dead, to walk to our executions while our spouses clap and we sing glory. God is also calling us to the green martyrdom.

In about 350 A.D., a young Romanized English boy was stolen from his farm, thrown into a leather-covered boat, bundled across the Irish Sea, worked there as a slave for many years. You know his name, it was Patrick. He escaped, went to the continent, back to England, trained for the ministry, assembled a team.

Unless you think that this is a call only for the young, some historians think that Patrick was 72 years old when he went back to Ireland. And he evangelized the Irish like few before or since, loving them, understanding their ways. And what the Celtic missionaries did was to create missional monasteries.

These were not like the monasteries of the desert fathers in Egypt who were trying to escape the world. They wanted to engage the world. And so they'd build their houses at the cross-section of major trade routes, put a fence around their homes.

In the middle of that fence there'd be a scriptorium, a place to copy the Bible. There'd be a chapel, there'd be a dining hall, there'd be a lodging house. And a monk would station himself at the gate, and as travelers would come by, invite them in, take them to the abbot.

He'd pray for them, ask of their news, turn them over to another monk. He would take them and get them fed. Give them a place to sleep, wake them up for vespers prayers.

And before the traveler knew what had happened, he'd been integrated into the life of the community. And this was the genius of Patrick and the Irish, because they felt like they belonged. The visitors felt like they belonged.

They put belonging ahead of believing. Now the Romans of the day and so many of us in the secular West, we do it opposite. We present some cognitive truth in our witness.

We establish some academic principle about God. And we ask the pagan or the secular humanist to change their thinking, to change what they think about God, before we've embraced them into a loving community, wherein that journey of faith can transpire. And we do this in missions.

We export our music, and we export our systems of sitting and arranging churches, and we expect people to become American Christians before they become followers of Jesus. And I'll give you a few humorous examples. A friend of mine, there's a church in Khartoum made up of Christian Arabs, who are segregated from the Muslims.

And over the last 15 years, about 200 Muslims have got saved in that church. Of those 200, less than 5 remain. Because the way that the church functioned was so foreign, so different to them, they weren't comfortable to stay in church.

And so the discipleship process never took root. Men and women sitting together, drinks in church. Do you realize that every woman in this building today would be considered immodest by Muslim standards? And so they just didn't have a comfort level where they could remain.

I took a friend of mine to the church like this. He's a big Arab guy. It was communion.

He didn't know what the emblems were. He didn't know what the Eucharist was. And as that communion plate was passed, he stuck his big hand in that tray, took all of the bread that he could, and popped it into his mouth like it was popcorn.

He thought it was snack time in church. Another friend of mine was traveling in Southeast Asia. Came across a congregation trying to mimic American worship.

Didn't quite get it right because their English wasn't up to standard. And this is what they sang. He calls me Fred.

Doesn't quite work, does it? But so often we unthinkingly export our preferences and our styles and our dress and our culture and our comfort. And Patrick didn't do this. And this was his genius.

And this was how the church was able to expand in that Irish context. Now, the point of this is very simple. The American church is not going to reach the world.

The white American church cannot reach the world. The African American church is not going to reach the world. The Hispanic American church is not going to reach the world.

We are going to have to work together with Africans and with Arabs and with Latinos and with Europeans and with Asians. And we're going to have to mutually submit to ourselves and to make a loving, vibrant community where Muslims and Arabs can feel like they belong. And within that place of belonging have enough time for the transfer of belief.

And you might say, well, that's wonderful because everyone wants to be a part of a team. Everyone wants to be a part of community. Why is this called a green martyrdom? What's to die for in this? Well, anyone that's been married or part of a church staff, you understand that theory and reality of team are two very different things.

If a marriage is going to work, you're going to have to die, die. And that's just first week, right? We have to lay down our hubris and our arrogance and our preferences and our convenience if this world is going to be reached by the gospel. We can't do it the American way.

We're going to have to die to some of our Americanisms in order for Jesus to be beautiful in community. We tried to be doing this in Sudan over the last 15 years. We have a multinational team.

We've got Africans. We've got Arabs. We've got Europeans.

We've got Latinos. It's like a multifaceted diamond that you rotate to accent points of greatest strength. And so when we need to meet with the government officials, I go as the white educated Westerner because that's what their racism dictates.

But when we need to buy something in the market or purchase property, do you think I go as the white guy? No, why not? Skin tax, right? The price goes up. I send my Malawian administrative assistant and he

gets the best deals in the market. What about if you need to cast out a demon? Don't send the American.

We don't know what to do. Send the Latino. He knows how to do spiritual warfare.

You understand what I'm saying? I'm speaking hyperbolically, of course, because Jesus lavishly gives all His gifts to all His children. But the different genders and the different nationalities and the different ages and the different marital statuses all have something to offer. And if we will submit to one another, we will be able to be beautiful and winsome before the nations in community.

An African story tells us, well, hunter went to the river and shot a hippo. And the hippo floated out away from him. Couldn't get it back by himself.

So he went into the village, got his friends. They got in a boat, tied a rope around the hippo, came back to shore. They all took a piece of that rope and began to pull on it.

They began to chant in unison. They said, Almost got it to shore. And the hunter said to himself, Well, hold on a minute.

I was the tip of the spear. It was my initiative. I assume the risk.

And so as he's pulling on the rope, he begins to say, So his friends got a big stick and started pushing that hippo back out into the water. Said, So he reformed his ways and again began to pull on that rope, saying with them, And the whole village shared the meat. Francis Xavier, the great Catholic missionary, he said, Come with me and change the world.

He really voiced the invitation of the Holy Spirit. And I'd like to extend that to you tonight. Die to your culture.

Die to your convenience. Die to your comfort. Die to everything that you've known.

And come with us and change the world. Become part of a church planting team amongst an unreached people group. And live and die mutually submitted to one another for the glory of Jesus amongst all peoples everywhere.

The last martyrdom I want to share with you tonight is what's called the White Martyrdom. Over time, something began to gnaw at the spirits of the green martyrs in Ireland. The monasteries were booming and blooming.

Everything was going well. Life was good. Food was plentiful.

Friends abounded. But something was missing. To be content and satiated, surrounded by friends and family was strangely not enough.

There had to be something more in the world. There had to be higher purpose than living well, raising and educating children so they could live well, doing the same for their children. There had to be greater meaning in life.

And of course there was and there is. Because the good shepherds not content to stay with the 99 safe ones, if even one was lost. And the missing witness, the White Martyrdom, was the witness of sending their best into the very uttermost parts of the world.

And I hope you understand that the American dream is a nightmare. The God of all history, the Lord of all creation, He did not bring you to birth. He did not sustain you all these years.

He did not clothe you and feed you merely so that you could work hard, that your children could get a better education and a better job and a bigger house and a bigger waistline. What kind of emptiness is that? Is that why you exist? Just to perpetuate your name? Just to propagate your progeny? Is that why God has brought you to this point of salvation? Just so that your family line can be extended? There's got to be more than that. And there is.

And God intends that you participate with all of your resources and all of your strength and all of your heart and all of your mind in His passion of being glorified by every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. And if you're living for anything else, you have missed it. Keith Green said, either send or go or disobey.

Kamalko was a disciple of Patrick. He was his right-hand man. And Patrick made a decision.

I'm not just going to extend my kingdom. I'm not just going to advance my little piece of this field. But I am going to take my best person.

I am going to take the person that I have groomed to replace me. And I am going to send him. White martyrdom is sending.

I am going to send him as a missionary to Iona, the island in between Ireland and Scotland, the trade route in the middle of the sea. And from there, all of northern Scotland and northern England was evangelized. And if you are Caucasian here today, and if your roots come from northern England, and if you have a Christian heritage, you ought to thank the Lord for Patrick because he sent his best that your family might be saved.

And as Kamalko sailed off that morning, Thomas Cahill writes, he was doing the hardest thing an Irishman could do, a much harder thing than giving up his life. He was leaving Minneapolis. He was leaving suburbia.

He was leaving the regulated and protected west. He was leaving Ireland. And if the green martyrdom had failed, here was a martyrdom that was surely equal of the red.

And henceforth, all who followed Kamalko's lead were called to the white martyrdom. They who sailed into the white sky of mourning, into the unknown, never to return. We can witness to Jesus by giving our physical lives.

We must witness to Christ by following him with surrendered wills and community. But Jesus is asking this church for the white martyrdom of sending your best to the inconvenient lost, to the most difficult places on earth. Send your best.

Don't send your castoffs sailing into the white sky of mourning. Send your best leaders. Send your influencers.

Send your richest and most educated. Send the ones you can't afford to send. We will send sons and daughters to die for flag and freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan, from the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli.

But will we release our sons and daughters? Will we bless our very own to go and live and die amongst unreached people, 60,000 troops in Afghanistan, hardly one missionary? Don't hoard the best resources to your overfed selves and catch the crumbs of the marginal before the nations. You walk away from everything. You leave prestige.

You abandon security. You walk away from comfort. You become a nothing that Jesus might become everything to one Muslim.

You. Yes. You.

Adoniram Judson entered Burma in July 1813. He's told not to go. It's too dangerous.

Missionaries had been killed. Others had evacuated. Civil war.

He went anyway. He was 24. His wife was 23.

Their first three children died. Judson lost three children and his wife in those first years in Burma. He was thrown in prison.

His legs were fettered. A bamboo pole was inserted in those chains, and he was hung upside down at night for 17 months. He did not lay on the ground even one night.

Only his head and shoulders would touch. He was marched through the jungle barefoot and emaciated, sick and weak. He remarried and his second wife died.

Third wife died. His brother died. His father died.

Another child died. He had to walk from village to village. Absolute poverty.

Begging milk from the poor just so his remaining children could survive. He knew great suffering. He was bruised by much death.

And after 10 years of this labor, after 10 years of suffering, there were only 18 converts in the church. He was a grain of wheat that fell to the ground and died. 199 years later, because of Judson's work to preach the gospel, because he was sent, because he was a white martyr to translate the scriptures, the Baptist Convention in Myanmar today consists of almost 4,000 churches and more than 2 million members.

The last words of Judson were written in his journal right before he died in agonized pain from sickness. And this is what he said. How few there are who die so hard.

How few there are who die so hard. John Piper picked up on that expression and he wrote a summary which so wonderfully encapsulates the green, the red, and the white martyrdom. And this is what John Piper said.

Life is fleeting. In a very short time, we will all give an account before Jesus Christ, not only as to how well we have fulfilled our vocations, but how well we have obeyed his command to make disciples of all nations. Many of the peoples of the world are without any indigenous Christian movement today.

Christ is not enthroned there. His grace is unknown there. And people are perishing with no access to the gospel.

Most of these hopeless peoples do not want followers of Christ to come. At least they think they don't. They're hostile to Christian missions.

And today this is the final frontier. And the Lord still says, Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Some of you they will put to death.

You will be hated by all for my name's sake. Are you sure that God wants you to keep doing what you're doing? For most of you, he probably does. Your calling is radical obedience for the glory of God right where you are.

But for many of you, God wants to loosen your roots and plant you in another place. So rise up, O men of God. Have done with lesser things.

Give heart and mind and soul and strength to serve the king of kings. Rise up, O men of God. The church for you does wait.

Her strength unequal to her task. Rise up and make her great. Lift high the son of God.

Tread where his feet have trod as brothers of the cross and Christ. Rise up, O men of God. We will all follow Jesus.

We will all live dead. The church of Christ will once again be consumed with his passion. Who has not heard? Where is there no church? Where has the gospel not gone? We will live dead, not because we are courageous, not because we're noble, not because we're morbid, not because we're cavalier, not because we are worthy, but because Jesus is worth it.

Jesus is worth all things. But Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come that the son of man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, lest a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it. And he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If anyone serves me, let him follow me. And where I am, there my servant will be also.

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