

Powerful Christian Living

Chapter Four

Fear and Believing

Adventure! I love that word. The dictionary defines the word adventure as an unusual or exciting experience which may pose a hazard or risk. Ah, there's the key word "risk." One of my favorite contemporary Christian songs is called "The Great Adventure." The lyrics are as follows:

Saddle up your horses

Started out this morning in the usual way
Chasing thoughts inside my head of all I had to do today
Another time around the circle try to make it better than the last

I opened up the Bible and I read about me
Said I'd been a prisoner and God's grace had set me free
And somewhere between the pages it hit me like a lightning bolt
I saw a big frontier in front of me and I heard somebody say "let's go"!

CHORUS

Saddle up your horses we've got a trail to blaze
Through the wild blue yonder of God's amazing grace
Let's follow our leader into the glorious unknown
This is a life like no other - this is The Great Adventure

Come on get ready for the ride of your life
Gonna leave long faced religion in a cloud of dust behind
And discover all the new horizons just waiting to be explored
This is what we were created for

BRIDGE

We'll travel over, over mountains so high
We'll go through valleys below
Still through it all we'll find that
This is the greatest journey that the human heart will ever see
The love of God will take us far beyond our wildest dreams

Yeah... oh saddle up your horses... come on get ready to ride¹

¹ Stephan Curtis Chapman

What exciting words – “frontier,” the “great adventure,” but what about the hazards and the risks in the “mountains so high” and the “valleys below”? Life is full of risks. When you walk you risk falling. When you laugh you risk looking foolish. When you cry you risk appearing sappy or sentimental. When you reach out to love you risk not being loved back. Everyone risks something at sometime. And so life can breed a tremendous amount of fear. Therefore you can start living life based upon your fears. You can think about every possible problem and zero in on the potential pitfalls. Or we can “follow our leader” Jesus Christ and rely upon “God’s amazing grace.”

In the Old Testament David faced a great adventure, but it almost cost him his life. King Saul was set on killing David and he fled to the Philistine town of Gath. But then they turned on him as well. In his great distress he cried out to God.

Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up;
Fighting all day he oppresses me.
2 My enemies would hound me all day,
For there are many who fight against me, O Most High.
3 Whenever I am afraid,
I will trust in You.
4 In God (I will praise His word),
In God I have put my trust;
I will not fear.
What can flesh do to me?
(Psalm 56:1-4)

Have you ever felt like David? Have you ever felt like some days there are many who fight against you? The great antidote to the fear life’s problems can create is to trust in God and His amazing grace. But why do we so often find it so difficult to trust God? There are two basic reasons. The first is that we are ignorant of God’s character—His goodness and love. And the second reason is our own sin. Let’s examine the first point, God’s character.

The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed,
A refuge in times of trouble.
10 And those who know Your name will put their trust in You;
For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.
(Psalm 9:9, 10)

Those who know God’s name will put their trust in Him. And to know God’s name means more than knowing that His name is Yahweh. It means to know Him intimately. It is to understand His love, righteousness, goodness and mercy. It is to understand that God will always be there for us. The Old Testament prophet, Hosea said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”² Hosea wasn’t speaking about a lack of knowledge concerning science or

² Hosea 4:6

politics or sports. He was talking about a lack of knowledge concerning the character and will of God. If you do not know someone intimately how can you really trust him? So let's look at a few sections of Scripture that tell us about God.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
(Genesis 1:1)

What do we learn about God from the first verse in the Bible? First we learn that He is and that He is the Creator of everything. And as the Creator He stands independent of everything and everyone. He is in need of nothing. God is therefore the one who gives meaning and significance to everything. Therefore if you do not know Him your life will lack meaning and purpose.

Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like You, glorious in holiness,
Fearful in praises, doing wonders?
(Exodus 15:11)

From Exodus 15, we learn that God is matchless in His perfection. He is glorious in holiness. In other words He is absolutely pure and distinct from others. He is pure in power, in wisdom, in goodness and mercy. There is no evil in God at all. The apostle John wrote,

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you,
that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.
(1 John 1:5)

There is no evil or darkness in God at all. Just as the sun cannot but produce heat and light, so God cannot but be righteous and do what is right. God is also extremely powerful as the following verses indicate.

Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem,
in the house of the LORD, before the new court, 6 and said:
"O LORD God of our fathers, *are* You not God in heaven, and do You
not *rule* over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand *is*
there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?
(2 Chronicles 20:5-6)

And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven,
and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and
praised and honored Him who lives forever:

For His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion,
And His kingdom *is* from generation to generation.
35 All the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing;

He does according to His will in the army of heaven
And *among* the inhabitants of the earth.
No one can restrain His hand
Or say to Him, "What have You done?"
(Daniel 4:34, 35)

Remember the former things of old,
For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like Me,
10 Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times things that are not yet done,
Saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
And I will do all My pleasure
(Isaiah 46:9, 10)

God is the most powerful being in the universe. And the amazing thing about Him is that He is gracious and shares that strength with His people who trust in Him.

Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the LORD,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable.
29 He gives power to the weak,
And to *those who have* no might He increases strength.
30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,
31 But those who wait on the LORD
Shall renew *their* strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.
(Isaiah 40:28-31)

God is also faithful, loving, compassionate and good. He will never forget us or forsake us.

Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens;
Your faithfulness *reaches* to the clouds.
6 Your righteousness *is* like the great mountains;
Your judgments *are* a great deep;
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
7 How precious *is* Your lovingkindness, O God!
Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.

8 They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house,
And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.

9 For with You *is* the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light.

(Psalm 36:5-9)

Forever, O LORD,
Your word is settled in heaven.

90 Your faithfulness *endures* to all generations;
You established the earth, and it abides.

91 They continue this day according to Your ordinances,
For all *are* Your servants.

(Psalm 119:89-91)

Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.

23 *They* are new every morning;
Great *is* Your faithfulness.

24 "The LORD *is* my portion," says my soul,
"Therefore I hope in Him!"

25 The LORD *is* good to those *who* wait for Him,
To the soul who seeks Him.

(Lamentations 3:22-25)

Sing, O heavens!
Be joyful, O earth!

And break out in singing, O mountains!
For the LORD has comforted His people,
And will have mercy on His afflicted.

14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me,
And my Lord has forgotten me."

15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child,
And not have compassion on the son of her womb?
Surely they may forget,
Yet I will not forget you.

16 See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands;
Your walls are continually before Me.

(Isaiah 49:13-16)

In a world where people forget us or lose their love for us, in a world that is as stable as shifting sand, it is wonderful to know that God is pure, holy, faithful, powerful, and compassionate. It is comforting to know that He will renew our strength and that He will never forget us. The apostle Paul wrote to encourage us in our daily struggles and said,

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. 14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry
(1 Corinthians 10:13, 14)

Not a one of us ever needs to fear or worry that we are ill equipped to handle all the challenges and temptations of life. There is nothing in our lives as Christians, as people who know their God that is more than we can bear. Divine wisdom and patience and strength is available to all of God's children, because God is faithful to His Word and to us.

What a difference we would see in our lives if we trusted in God and committed our lives to His loving, gracious and tender care. So how can we develop such great faith? The answer is that "faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."³ Without a knowledge of God's Word, without reading it and hearing it we cannot have faith and thus all that we are left with is our fears. But when we know God, when we discover who He is through Scripture, we can place our faith and trust in Him and experience all of His goodness.

Secondly, we live lives of fear separated from God because of our sins. Sin separates you from God as we learn from the story of our first parents, Adam and Eve.

Now the serpent⁴ was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.

5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the

³ Romans 10:17

⁴ This was Satan, the Devil

presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.
9 Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"
10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."
(Genesis 3:1-10)

Sin causes us to be afraid of God and to hide from His presence, just as Adam and Eve did. Sin causes us to feel unworthy to stand before a holy God. But God has made a way for us to be cleansed of all of our sins through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Before the birth of Jesus an angel appeared to Joseph, Mary's betrothed husband to explain what the life of Jesus would accomplish.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. 20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."
(Matthew 1:18-21)

Jesus Christ was born so that He could save us from our sins.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.
(John 3:16)

The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death.⁵ That is the destiny of every man, woman and child without a relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. But now God has in mercy and grace redeemed us from the penalty of sin. And if He did this great work for us then surely He will meet our every need. As it declares in the New Testament letter to the Romans,

What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?
(Romans 8:31, 32)

⁵ Romans 6:23

There is no need for us to live in fear. Our God who gave His Son for us wants us to know Him and trust Him so that we can live a life of great faith and join in the great adventure.