

Adventuring in Faith

A Topical Sermon

by Earl I. West

A recent issue of *U. S. News and World Report* had a special article on Antarctica, the region around the South Pole. It mentioned some of the stations where several scientists and explorers are studying the Antarctica. Of all the places on the globe, the article pointed out, this is the windiest, the driest, and the coldest spot on earth.

The reporter asked a young man from California, "Why did you want to come all the way from America to live in a place like this?" His answer was this, "There is no place else I could go where I could find more adventure than I can find right here."

In the hearts of all of us, there is an innate interest in adventure. We have a love and longing for it! Perhaps as a child you read Robinson Crusoe or King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. I can remember reading those stories and being so fascinated with the adventure that unfolded in them. Likewise, as we grew older, some of us remember reading Zane Grey's western stories. Within all of us there is a love for adventure!

In the Bible, we meet great people of God—the bravest who have ever lived. When they followed Christ by faith, they experienced the greatest adventure anyone has ever had.

Galina, a 24-year-old young Russian lady, was arrested in August of 1979 for merely teaching the Bible to a group of children. She was sent to prison for three years. While there, she worked for ten hours every day at hard labor. In addition, she lived on weeds and grass. She lost her teeth and her hair, and became emaciated. Still, she taught the other women in the prison about the Lord, and for this she was again condemned. They took her to a room, and one of the prisoners beat her while two others held the door. Finally, three years went by and she was released and sent home. A KGB agent asked her, "Why don't you go to the state church?" She replied, "Because I want to be faithful to Christ." She tried to

board an airplane to leave Russia. Some of the Russian agents put some narcotics in her suitcase. They called her to one side and one of the agents went through her suitcase and found the drugs. Now, she is back in prison in Soviet Russia. She is having a mighty battle against an entire nation. Her only interest is simply to be able to bear witness to Christ and be faithful to Him!

Though our lives may never be as dramatic, still all of us find great adventure in following Christ. At times, we will become discouraged and feel all alone; but, in the long run, if we are faithful to Christ, there is always victory.

When two Christian young people fall in love and get married, they begin an adventure. They soon recognize that society no longer places a value on purity or faithfulness. Instead, divorce is claiming 50 percent of all marriages. Likely, there would be many more divorces if it were not for the fact that there are thousands who are "shacking up" without getting married at all. Our society is decaying! Therefore, these young people have to make a decision. Will they go the way that the rest of the world goes, or will they try to remain true to the Lord Jesus Christ? Will they be faithful to Christ in a world that doesn't put any premium on it?

The young married couple encounter problems as they select a job. One position is offered to the young man. It pays more money, but he realizes that he will need to sacrifice some of his Christian principles if he takes it. The young couple talk it over. What kind of decision will they make? Will they be true to Christ? Will they make the search for money the real goal and object of their lives? Will it be an adventure in faith, or will it be a surrender?

In time, children join that family, and the young Christian couple walks by faith and realizes that the Lord wants them to instill faith in their children. The Lord wants them to instill a love of God in them and point out the pitfalls of

the world. A decision must be made: Will life be a continuing adventure in faith? Will they have confidence that victory will come someday, or will they sacrifice Christian principles and go in another direction?

Every Christian family faces an adventure of faith. Their faith in Christ guides them, and yet there are moments when they doubt. They ask, "Is this really the right direction for me? Is it better to forget about faith and sacrifice the principles of Christ and no longer be faithful to Him?"

Faith in our Lord is not a dull existence. It is an adventure in and of itself. It is fraught with all kinds of dangers and pitfalls. But, the way ahead, if we are true to Christ, is a way that leads to a certain victory in our Lord.

Many heroes are found in the Bible—people who dared enter this adventure by their faith. We recall Daniel, Hosea, Amos, and Job. They had a marvelous adventure in following God by faith. Two seem to stand out.

I. ABRAHAM'S ADVENTURE OF FAITH

One of these was Abraham. In Hebrews 11:6, the Bible says, "By faith, Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance, and he went out not knowing whither he went." Abraham lived in Ur of Chaldees where he was surrounded by pagans who knew nothing about God. God revealed Himself to Abraham and said, "Over there is a land that will belong to you and your children." So, Abraham went out, not knowing where he was going. The Hebrew author says that Abraham went out by faith and God led him to his goal.

If most of us had been in Abraham's place, we would have found many reasons to argue with God. We would have said, "Lord, you want to send us to some place we have never heard of. How do we know we will be happy there? How do we know we are not going to starve over there?" But Abraham believed all that God said, and the Bible says he went out, although the trek across the land was hard and dotted with many trials. When Abraham arrived, some of his own kinsmen were kidnapped and had to be rescued. Abraham was a man who was involved in having a great adventure because he had faith enough in God to do what God led him to do.

At another time in Abraham's life two angels appeared to his wife, Sarah. The angels said, "In due time, you are going to be the mother of a son." She laughed. I can understand that. Abraham and Sarah were aged. From the viewpoint of nature, it was impossible. Most of us would have argued with the Lord about this promise. The Bible says, however, that Abraham never staggered. Paul was referring to this event in Romans 4:18, when he said of Abraham, "Who in hope believed against hope to the end that he might become a father of many nations according to that which he had spoken, so shall thy seed be." Though Abraham could not see how he could ever be the father of a nation, Abraham hoped against hope when it made no sense to hope. He believed because of his faith in God. Later, in verse 20, Paul remarks, "Yet looking unto the promise of God he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith giving God the glory." Talk about an adventure, Abraham had it! He had it because deep inside him was the kind of faith that did whatever God ordered.

Moreover, when their son reached about 12 years of age, God said to the patriarch, "Take your son and go up into the mountain and offer him as a sacrifice unto me." Abraham did not say a word. I believe if I had been in his place, I would have done some first-class arguing with God. I would have said, "You told me that I would have a son and that You would make out of me a great nation, and now You say to kill that son. Lord, You surely are contradicting Yourself." The Bible says, "Abraham staggered not through unbelief." He proceeded to do everything God had told him to do.

In time, of course, Abraham did become the father of a great nation, and Paul speaks of him as the father of the faithful. He left this legacy. All of us look back on him and remember him for his faith. Abraham had a marvelous adventure because he had enough faith in God to follow Him.

II. MOSES' ADVENTURE OF FAITH

Another man whose faith led him into great adventure was Moses. In Hebrews 11, that great faith chapter, we read, "By faith, Moses when he was grown, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing to share the ill

treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." In verse 27, we note, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." What sort of man was Moses at this point in his life? He was reared in the house of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Egypt was the largest and richest land in the world. Moses would have had great blessings had he remained in his place in that country. But, he decided to forsake Egypt. It is interesting to notice that in all of his experiences "he did not fear the wrath of the king."

Fear is one of the biggest reasons many do not find the faith that leads to an adventure. We are so full of fear! We are afraid that if we do God's will that bad things will happen to us. We are also afraid that if we do God's will, great blessings won't come our way. Fears crowd in on us every time we think about being true to God. Moses could have been afraid of the king of Egypt, but he wasn't! Why not? He had faith in God. He was determined to go wherever that faith led him.

III. YOUR ADVENTURE OF FAITH

The Old Testament is full of stories like Abraham and Moses. All of us should be able to see that being faithful to God is not always easy. But out of all the excitement and adventure, we must always have the confidence that God's promises are always true, if we do His will.

Some did not have a faith which was strong enough to lead them into this adventure: What a tragedy followed.

In Numbers 14:6-12, there is an interesting account of the children of Israel traveling across the wilderness. In verse 8, the account says, "If the Lord delight in us, He will bring us unto this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey," Up to this point on their way to Palestine, they had delighted in doing the will of God. But the adventure passed in verse 11, and God became angry with these people and said to Moses, "How long will this people provoke me? How long will it be before they believe me because of the signs I have showed them?" God was thoroughly put out with them. They didn't make it to the Promised Land because of a lack of faith.

What was true with the children of Israel is just as true of us. Without faith we will not reach

heaven. Do you know the reason many congregations end up not doing much for the Lord? It is not because they do not have enough money. The real problem is they do not have enough faith in God to say, "Lord, what is Your will? We are going to trust You to lead us." If we do not have that kind of spirit, we will not really carry through with an adventure of faith. It will cost too much. We will end up doing very little for the Lord. We fail so often because our faith will not lead us into the real adventure.

Faith brings understanding. Augustine once said, "I believe in order that I might understand." Those people who do not believe do not understand many truths.

The writer of the Hebrew letter says, "By faith we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God." The world is full of people who do not have faith in God. Faith helps us understand much that we would otherwise never comprehend.

The book of Habakkuk contains only three chapters but it is a fascinating book. If one were to put the theme into one word it would be *faith*. In Romans, Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, . . . to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith." Paul was quoting Habakkuk. It is faith that brings us to victory. For example, in Habakkuk 1:4 we read, "Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment does never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth." The righteous people were surrounded by wicked people. The wicked people were dishonest. Habakkuk is saying that God's people are few in number when compared to the people of the world. We do not get a right judgment when we are surrounded by wicked people.

In the next verse, God says to the people of Israel, "I am going to work a work in this day which you will not believe. I am going to raise up the nation of the Chaldeans and they will deal with these wicked people." All one needs to do, the prophet is saying, is have enough confidence to know that if one is righteous, even though it looks like he is surrounded by evil, God will work things out for His people.

People who do not have enough faith to go into this adventure will never leave behind very

much of a monument. In Acts 6:8, we read, "Stephen was a man full of faith and power." In the seventh chapter he stands before the Jewish council and recalls the history of the Jewish nation and brings to them Jesus whom they crucified. They rose up against him and stoned him to death. Stephen was faithful to Christ in a time of great adversity. He left a great monument. We will always remember him because he had a deep faith that led him through that final adventure.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, he recalls that the church at Rome was spoken of throughout the world because of their great faith. They left a monument that lives on because of their faith.

Our lives stand as a monument to someone else's faith. When we were born to Christian parents, they taught us to love God, know His word, and have faith in God. Our parents who worked hard with us and prayed for us may now be gone. But, here we stand as faithful Christians, monuments to their faith and loyalty. We have a marvelous legacy that we obtained from someone else who was true to Christ when circumstances were adverse.

I think of a woman whom I know in Tennessee. Years ago, I went into her community to hold an evangelistic meeting. I remember the faithfulness of that woman, her husband, and children. She often told me about her father who travelled on horseback all over that country to preach the gospel. When she related her memories of him, there was a tear of emotion in her eye. I could tell that he had left a monument. What he had been trying to do was to get her to practice the same adventure in faith he and his wife had practiced. The years have gone by, and her parents have long since gone. Yet, she loves the Lord just as they did and is involved in the same adventure of being true to Christ.

Parents of small children can rejoice that the faith and love they are putting in their hearts will live in them long after they are gone. Through them, your faith can be passed on down to their children and to their children's children. They stand as a monument.

CONCLUSION

The Lord never told any of us that faithfulness to Him was going to be easy. He never said

a Christian's life was going to be without problems. It never has been easy! It never has been without difficulties. But faith brings great rewards. Some day it will stand as a monument to all that is grand, good, and holy in the will of God. Let your faith lead and guide you on into an ultimate victory in Christ!

ILLUSTRATIONS

by J. W. McGarvey

The Sculptor

If you go into the workroom of a sculptor you will see him hammering and chiseling on a block of marble which appears to you to be nothing but a block of marble. But take up a hammer and begin to work on it yourself and he will soon push you away. He would almost as soon you would strike him as to strike that block of marble. For he sees in it, instead of that rough block, the form of an angel that he intends to carve out of it. He keeps his mind and his heart on that which is to be developed by his skill and labor and that makes him love that block, and take good care of it. He has had to pay a large sum of money to have it quarried and shipped to where he is working on it. So with our blessed Lord. He sees in your soul and in mine a being yet to be made perfect; and he works on it with his hammer and chisel, cutting away its sins, imperfections and superfluities, that he may show to angels in the coming days the blessed work of his hands.

The Final Triumph

We love to sing of our final triumph over death and the grave, and some of our best hymns are devoted to this inspiring theme. I wish we could bring back into general use that inimitable composition in which the resurrection of our Lord and our own resurrection are so beautifully and triumphantly set forth.

The angels that watched round the tomb
Where low the Redeemer was laid,
When deep in mortality's gloom,
He hid for a season his head,

That veiled their fair face while he slept,
And ceased their harps to employ.
Have witnessed his rising, and swept
Their chords with the triumphs of joy.

Though dreary the empire of night.
I soon shall emerge from its gloom,
And see immortality's light
Arise on the shades of the tomb.

Then welcome the last rending sighs,
When these aching heart-strings shall break,
When death shall extinguish these eyes,
And moisten with dew the pale cheek.
No terror the prospect begets,
I am not mortality's slave;
The sunbeam of life, as it sets,
Leaves a halo of peace on the grave.

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