

RISING TO THE OCCASION

Series: "7 Spiritually Healthy Habits"

Perth Bible Church Sunday, November 8, 2009 AM

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INTRODUCTION:

As His children the Lord God Almighty has presented us, by grace through faith in salvation through Jesus Christ, with an abundance of blessings and opportunities. **With these blessings and opportunities, He has also charged us with a purpose and a pre-plotted course for our life's journey.**

Like all great adventures, however, it is a long journey across many very different lands and terrains and that requires the completion of many smaller challenges before the Ultimate Quest is completed. Over the course of the journey He has set before us, there are paths of ease and paths of great difficulty; destinations where we will find rest and peace and destinations where we will find opposition and challenge; places where we will have the opportunity to meet and be joined by faithful companions and places where we will meet up with those intent upon our destruction; experiences that will increase our awe of God's goodness and beauty and experiences that require us to face an evil and ugliness that threatens to overwhelm us. **This, my friends and fellow travelers, is LIFE unplugged!**

Jesus has given and preserved for us His Word and sacrificed Himself upon the cross for a reason and purpose that is far broader and greater than the simple salvation of our eternal souls. **The salvation of our eternal souls and re-birth of our spirits is but the starting point and foundation for our living out the fullness of His life!**

John 10:10 *A thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance.*

Philippians 2:12-15 *So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who is working in you, enabling you both to will and to act for His good purpose. Do everything without grumbling and arguing, so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world.*

I've mentioned before that an important part of my early discipleship as a follower of Christ was Scripture-based Christian music. One of the first and most powerful such messages, which remains constantly echoing in my mind to this day, was a song by the pioneering group Petra. Just listen and read along with the lyrics:

Beyond Belief

**We're content to pitch our tent
When the glory's evident
Seldom do we know the glory came and went**

**Moving can seem dangerous
In this stranger's pilgrimage
Knowing that you can't stand still, you cross the bridge**

(Chorus)

There's a higher place to go, beyond belief, beyond belief
Where we reach the next plateau, beyond belief, beyond belief
And from faith to faith we grow
Towards the center of the flow
Where He beckons us to go, beyond belief, beyond belief

Leap of faith without a net
Makes us want to hedge our bet
Waters never part until our feet get wet

There's a deeper place to go
Where the road seems hard to hoe
He who has begun this work won't let it go

And it takes so long to see the change
But we look around and it seems so strange

We have come so far but the journey's long
And we once were weak but now we're strong

Our third habit necessary for spiritual health, then, is the habit of rising to the occasion of our lives and journey.

PRAYER

A responsible survey of Scripture clearly exhorts all followers of Christ to . . .

RISE TO THE OCCASION IN:

1.) OUR **CALLING**

- That is, Christ's purpose, desire and commission to all of His followers *regardless* of their individual distinctives or circumstances.

Matthew 28:17-20 *When they saw Him, they worshiped, but some doubted. Then Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

- Jesus makes it clear that following Him involves far more than just worship. It involves ceaseless ACTION for His glory until the 'end of the age.'

Luke 9:23-24 *Then He said to them all, "If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will save it."*

- He has saved us, not to live or acquire abundance for ourselves, but to give up these things for Him and those others He loves.

2 Corinthians 4:7-10 *Now we have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us. We are pressured in every way but not crushed; we are perplexed but not in despair; we are persecuted but not abandoned; we are struck down but not destroyed. We always carry the death of Jesus in our body, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.*

1 Peter 4:10 *Based on the gift they have received, everyone should use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God.*

2.) OPPORTUNITIES TO LOVE

- Remember, love – real, godly love - does not come naturally to the flesh. Time and time again, with each opportunity, it is something we must choose.

John 13:34-35 *"I give you a new commandment: love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

John 15:8-13 *My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples. "As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in My love. If you keep My commands you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commands and remain in His love. "I have spoken these things to you so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is My command: love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends.*

Remember, Perth Bible Church exists to be a family of imperfect people who are nevertheless unrelenting in our desires and efforts to be like Jesus in character and in action – loving God absolutely and loving others sacrificially.

3.) LIFE'S ADVERSITIES

- EVERY life, *especially life in Christ*, is loaded with adversities. The question our lives must answer is not 'why?', 'where?', or 'how much?' Rather, the question our lives must answer IS "How will I respond to life's adversities?"

Psalms 18:28-30 *LORD, You light my lamp; my God illuminates my darkness. With You I can attack a barrier, and with my God I can leap over a wall. God--His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is pure. He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.*

Psalms 27:3 *Though an army deploy against me, my heart is not afraid; though war break out against me, still I am confident.*

Psalms 30:5b *Weeping may spend the night, but there is joy in the morning.*

Romans 8:37-39 *No, in all these things we are more than victorious through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will have the power to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!*

1 Peter 4:11-13 *If anyone speaks, his speech should be like the oracles of God; if anyone serves, his service should be from the strength God provides, so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. Dear friends, when the fiery ordeal arises among you to test you, don't be surprised by it, as if something unusual were happening to you. Instead, as you share in the sufferings of the Messiah rejoice, so that you may also rejoice with great joy at the revelation of His glory.*

Charles Swindoll (from his book, Why God?): “... We witnessed on September 11 the limitless depths to which he [our enemy, the devil] will go to bring us down. But America will neither fear nor fail. We will not consider any sacrifice too great or any cost too high. Because we know that in the end God always wins, we know we will win. Let us walk directly into the sneer of the enemy with relentless resolve. Let us kneel before the Lord our Sovereign God with fresh faith. Let us trust Him through Jesus Christ our Savior with repentant hearts, quiet confidence, and absolute dependence. By doing these things, we can be certain of the final outcome, as the Psalmist once declared: **'Through God we shall do valiantly'** (Psalm 60:12 KJV). Still, in our heart of hearts we whisper, 'Why, God?'"

(as excerpted in The Highest Call: Resolve in the midst of sacrifice, Elm Hill Books, 2003, pg. 25)

4.) ETERNAL SIGNIFICANCE

Matthew 9:37-38 *Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."*

Galatians 6:9-10 *So we must not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.*

Philippians 1:20-21 *My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all boldness, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For me, living is Christ and dying is gain.*

THE CHALLENGE TO RISE TO THE OCCASION:

George Verwer, founder of Operation World in his book, The Revolution of Love:

"I challenge you to be a marathon runner for God in this great task of world evangelism. And when you're knocked down, just get up, and get back in the race and start running. When you fail, when you fall, get up! As soon as you feel your hand touch the ground, get up! And you'll discover that some day, twenty or thirty years from now, just like me, you'll still be running the race; weary sometimes, wounded sometimes, but still pressing on for Jesus Christ. Let's press on together for the kingdom of God and world evangelism." (pg. 124).

Let us, each and every one, RISE TO THE OCCASION in our calling, our opportunities to love, amidst our adversities and in order to accomplish lives of eternal significance!

Let us rise in His power and for His purpose – together as His people!