

11th December 2016

So last time I spoke I talked about how we need “Strength for the journey” of life. If you can recall I spoke about the life of Abraham, touched upon the fact that he embarked upon it without a destination but with sincere trust in God. I gave 4 points for how to set yourself up for a good journey through life. They were:

- 1) You are going to have to develop patience and endurance
- 2) You are going to have to travel light and ditch the baggage
 - a. Of offence
 - b. Judgment
 - c. Masks and veneers
- 3) You have to recognise that there will be ups and downs successes and failures.
- 4) You were not meant to walk this journey alone.
 - a. In union with God and in fellowship with the family of God.

Today I want to look at and challenge some of the things that either stop us from even starting the journey or halt our progress in it.

Your Journey

It might be prudent to define at the very beginning of this message what I mean by “Journey”. When I speak of life’s **journey I am referring to the unique and Holy call on the life of every believer**. If you have ever asked the question

“What did you have in mind for me and on your heart for me when you made me?”

The unveiling of that answer and your journey towards its fulfilment is what I mean by our ‘Journey’. I’m not talking about life’s ambitions or plans or desires or goals, because your ‘Journey’ is far more than all that.

There are 2 great days in your life. The day you were born and the day you find out why.

Sadly, some Christians never do find out why and this sermon is designed to address some of the reasons why.

1st Reason = DESIRE FOR COMFORT

Everyone has an inbuilt soul level desire for safety and security. God meant for us to feel secure. We are programmed in our very being to need security, to feel safe. That kind of safety and security is found in God alone.

Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and our strength a very present help in time of trouble.

Psalm 62: 1-2

Truly my soul silently waits for God; From Him comes my salvation. 2 He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.

I’m not talking about that kind of comfort here though. I’m talking about the kind of comfort that would be applicable to the phrase ‘Comfort zone’. In other words a life of ease, a life of comfortable living without challenge, without difficulties, without meaning!

When Jesus calls you out onto the water, you want to stay in the boat.

Jesus said “He who seeks to save His life the same shall lose it, and He who loses His life for my sake the same shall find it”. The problem is a comfort zone will ultimately rob you of true life of and stop you from ever fulfilling God’s will and plan for your life. Comfort will keep you tied down with trivialities whilst the strongman plunders your house.

Let’s look at what happened to 2 people in the bible that were in comfort zones.

King David and Bathsheba

2 Samuel 11:1 onwards

It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

In the time when David was supposed to go out with his men and be at the forefront of the battle David remained at home. You may know what happens next. He spots a woman called Bathsheba bathing, has her sent for, commits adultery with her, gets her pregnant, and then has Uriah the Hittite her innocent husband killed in battle to try to cover up his sin.

How had this man who had a heart after God’s own heart got it so terribly wrong? We see this in the first verse. David remained at home when he should have been in the battle. **He got comfortable and in that place of comfort he came out of the will of God for his life and was tempted and fell into sin.**

The same kind of thing happens to us when we are not in the place that God wants us to be in. You know that this is true. When we take our proverbial ‘foot off the gas’ in our pursuit of God and ease into a comfort zone we cease to grow, to develop, we are prone to temptation, violence and idolatry (anything that replaces God as No.1 importance in your life).

It then takes a crisis to recrystallize our faith and bring us back to the welcoming arms of a loving, forgiving God.

If you’re living in a comfort zone. . .it’s because you don’t know something or you’re not willing to do something with what you know.

- Some people have become entrenched in their comfort zones. It’s like the First World War trenches. No one wants to go ‘over the top’ in case they get sniped by judgment or criticism. None of those things really matter to those that know their worth in God.
- If you are one of the ones judging, criticising, backbiting, gossiping then stop. Grow up (mature).

We cannot become what we are meant to be by remaining what we currently are.

A ship in a harbour is safe, but that’s not what a ship is built for.

Another example of someone in a comfort zone was Nehemiah

We see in Nehemiah someone who moved from comfort to conviction. Nehemiah was a displaced Jew living a thousand miles from Jerusalem in what’s known today as Persia, or Iran. He had risen to prominence as the cupbearer to the king of Persia. As a cupbearer he lived quite a comfortable life in

the king's palace. He would have worn fine clothes, slept on a good bed with fine sheets and pillows. He was living the good life!

Yet one fateful day, some Jewish friends of Nehemiah returned from a visit to Jerusalem. And he asked them a question that ended up changing his life: "How is it with the people of Jerusalem?" And they said, "Nehemiah, it's not good. The walls are down, the gates are burned with fire, and the people are living in shame and disgrace."

This report cut Nehemiah to the heart. He mourned and wept. Prayed and fasted. For 4 months this continued until he was brave enough to share his heart his Persian king.

Nehemiah allowed his heart to be changed. This is repentance. This is how we deal with our tendency to become comfortable.

2nd Reason = CONFIDENCE

When Rob spoke last week he shared part of the story of Gideon. Gideon was called by God to deliver the nation out of the hand of the Midianites. He was part of the smallest tribe, in the most insignificant house and saw himself as a nobody. To say he lacked self-confidence is a gross understatement!

This is just the kind of person that God can use!

We hide behind a lack of confidence so often when it comes to serving God. We are afraid that we don't have what it takes, that we are not equipped, not experienced enough, not gifted enough etc.

In short we as the clay look at the potter and tell Him He did a terrible job!

1 Cor 1:26-29

26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

None of those we read about in Scripture who were mightily used by God had any confidence in themselves or any adequate qualifications. They were ordinary folk like you and I, full of insecurities, fears and failures.

- Gideon (who am I that God could use me – I'm insignificant)
- Moses killed a man, ran off into the wilderness, met God in the burning bush and then complained that he was a rubbish speaker.
- David – A shepherd boy, youngest in his family
- The twelve disciples – Fishermen, tax collectors, (Men with bad tempers, competitive men)
- - But they did what they were asked to do anyway
 - Their confidence was in the Lord not in their own abilities

God chooses the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise. If you want to grow, stop saying 'No' to opportunity.

- Our Confidence needs to be in God (His character and nature, His faithfulness, His Love, His foreknowledge) = FAITH.

For me, confidence is not about what I can or can't do, it's about how faithful God is in the midst of what He has asked me to do. There is no point in self-confidence or a lack of self-confidence. Both are nought in the light of God's goodness, ever-presence, faithfulness and love.

The centre point in all of this must be the call of God. Whenever I have a wobble I remind myself that this wasn't my idea, but God's and He is faithful to complete what He has started in me. This is not MY problem, this is OUR problem God, so what are we going to do about it.

Most of you never knew me when I suffered from a chronic lack of self-confidence.

Fear

Both comfort and confidence issues have their root in fear. In fact, fear is the root of pretty much everything that is evil and anti-Christ. Fear's opposite is love and we know from **1 John chapter 4 that God is perfect love, and there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.**

Fear of the unknown (It might be unknown to you, but it isn't unknown to God who walks with you).
Fear of failure. Fear of man. Fear of judgment. Fear of death which is the fear of loss.

The only remedy for all of this is to move from fear to love. Only by being introduced and reintroduced to the love of God can we move from insecurity to security, from confidence or lack of confidence in self to confidence in God. This is a process, but it is worth it.

Come all ye that are burdened and heavy laden, and I will give you rest says the Lord!

Amen.