

Overcoming Hazards to Christian Enterprise

An Article for the Chalcedon Website

Ronald Kirk
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God commissioned Joshua to take Canaan to establish the ancient Israeli republic. In Joshua 1:5-9, the Lord declares to Joshua,

No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life...I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

A Vocabulary of Christian Enterprise

Here is a classic Biblical example of Christian enterprise according to God's calling. The Command to be strong and of a good *courage* and not be *afraid* indicates the natural dangers associated with godly enterprise. Though most endeavors do not pose the extreme risk of military action, any investment means a real risk of some kind, even if it is only one's time. The Bible is filled with commanded and covenantal Enterprises. Indeed, Jesus' emphasis on bearing fruit and Paul's on Christian works to walk in makes it clear that God sees Enterprise as the normal condition for Christians. Dr. Rushdoony appropriated the Biblical term *taking dominion* to identify this command for enterprise (Ephesians 2:10). However, we should understand that taking dominion does not mean we are some kind of easy chair heroes. Life is real. Rather faith is always required, because God's economy does not guarantee success. William Bradford, in documenting the American Pilgrim experience in his *Of Plimouth Plantation*, declared such enterprise requires "answerable courages."

Consider the language of enterprise in some depth. The following definitions come from Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language*. It ought to be clear that any enterprise is subject to loss, because it is in the nature of things under the curse of the Fall.

Adventure is an "enterprise of hazard; a bold undertaking, in which hazards are to be encountered, and the issue is staked upon unseen events." It is also that which is put to hazard. In an investment, the possibility of loss always looms. In Webster's day adventure held this sense and was "in popular use with seamen...Something which a seaman is permitted to carry abroad, with a view to sell for profit."

An *enterprise* is "that which is undertaken, or attempted to be performed; an attempt; a project attempted; particularly, a bold, arduous or hazardous undertaking, either physical or moral." This is the essential economic principle of the Christian way of life. Difficulty and the risk of loss require faith to undertake life on God's terms. To hazard or risk something means to expose to chance—an unexpected happening or that which comes or arrives without design or expectation. Regarding chance Ecclesiastes 9:11 says chance happens to affect outcomes. Solomon used the Hebrew word *pegà* or *impact*, from its more often used root *pagà* to *impinge by accident or violence*. We know God's providence rules chance. Yet subjectively, things happen we do not foresee.

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Adventure is to *dare*, “as, to adventure on ‘the tempestuous sea of liberty.’” To dare is *to have courage* for any purpose; to have strength of mind (valor) or hardihood to undertake anything; to be bold enough; not to be afraid.

Boldness is courage; bravery; intrepidity; spirit; fearlessness. Fortitude and firmness are also implied. Boldness is *liberty*, freedom from timidity, or confident trust. Confidence is a trusting, or reliance; an assurance of mind or firm belief in the integrity, stability or veracity of another, in the truth and fealty of a fact, or veracity, justice, friendship or other sound principle in another.

Bravery denotes courage, heroism; undaunted spirit; intrepidity; gallantry; fearlessness of danger; often united with generosity or dignity of mind which despises meanness and cruelty, and disdains to take advantage of a vanquished enemy. Courage speaks to “that quality of mind which enables men to encounter danger and difficulties with firmness, or without fear or depression of spirits.” Courage is *resolution*. “It is a constituent part of fortitude; but fortitude implies patience to bear continued suffering.” Fearlessness is freedom from fear that “painful emotion or passion excited by an expectation of evil, or the apprehension of impending danger.”

Fortitude denotes,

That strength or firmness of mind or soul which enables a person to encounter danger with coolness and courage, or to bear pain or adversity without murmuring, depression or despondency. Fortitude is the basis or source of genuine courage or intrepidity in danger, of patience in suffering, of forbearance under injuries, and of magnanimity in all conditions of life.

Fortitude’s opposite *despondency* is a sinking or dejection of spirits at the loss of hope; lost of courage at the failure of hope, or in deep affliction, or at the prospect of insurmountable difficulties.

An enterprising adventure, then, attempts something with dangers or difficulties inherent in it which must be overcome. Because of the possibility of dangers and difficulties, an adventure demands courage, and fortitude. In other words, in order to accept the consequences of trying something new, one must be ready to accept the consequences without depression of mind or spirit, and without despondency, but rather with hope, courage and fortitude. Most of all, enterprise requires a trust, an assurance that the hazard is worthwhile. Christians, upon God’s enterprises must learn to acquire our fortitude and courage from an absolute faith in our Savior Jesus Christ.

Examples of Biblical Enterprise

Biblical Enterprises are as diverse as the characters of Biblical history. We know that every human endeavor represents a sphere of action for Christian dominion, preparing the soil of the hearts of our neighbors through Christian influence. Consider some Biblical examples of enterprise: Adam tended the garden for God (Genesis 2). This example represents the exception to the danger and toil of any enterprise since the Fall. Noah built the ark and collected the animals, and his family, an enterprise of unbelievable magnitude and requiring centuries (Genesis 6-9). This enterprise required a huge investment which may have appeared a mere fool’s errand to Noah’s generation. Noah built an ocean vessel of a size not reproduced until the 19th century—before an ocean to float it existed. Abraham moved to another and unknown country (Genesis 12-22). Abraham was a frontiersman thousands of

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years before Americans explored the West. Moses led the world's first self-governing nation as its president, and this of a population at first of a decidedly slavish character (Exodus). Gideon, the least of his house, of the least tribe, became a general deliverer of Israel (Judges 6-8). God makes His heroic characters sometimes of the least likely folks. Accordingly, the shepherd David led God's people as a servant king (I & II Samuel, etc.). Solomon sought knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Here is a homely enterprise of peace, yet requires a great investment of time and effort. Moreover, Solomon was the architect of the Temple (I Kings, I Chronicles, Ecclesiastes). His father David commented that the Temple project was great and Solomon inexperienced (1 Chronicles 28). Sometimes God chooses babes rather than the great and wise, so that faith will rule and God will receive the appropriate glory. Nehemiah rebuilt the God's city under duress from within the Jewish community and without. Sometimes Christian enterprise requires resisting the defeating temptations of friends. Paul the Apostle propagated the Gospel, Good News which found resistance at every turn, sometimes to the despair of life.

Women may certainly claim a place in God's design for Kingdom enterprise. Esther was queen and the instrument of Israel's protection from destruction. In a time when men had apparently left a gross vacuum of spiritual leadership, Deborah and Jael opposed Israel's oppressive adversary Sisera of Canaan (Judges 4). Motherhood presents its own challenges of enterprise. Consider Moses' mother, Rehab the harlot of Jericho, the Moabitess Ruth and, Mary the mother of Jesus. Each bore a peculiar challenge in their calling as mothers, as motherhood typically requires, if it will glorify God.

Hindrances to Enterprise and Answers to Them: Fear

Fear of the unknown, fear of failure, fear of difficulty or discomfort, fear of man's opinion mark typical hindrances to Christian enterprise. Consider the typical Biblical answer to such human frailties in a very few examples among many. These passages require little or no comment.

Genesis 15:1: After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

Deuteronomy 20:1,3: When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt...And he shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies; do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them;

2 Kings 25:24: And Gedaliah took an oath before them and their men, and said to them, "Do not be afraid of the servants of the Chaldeans. Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.

Sometimes, enterprise is mere patience, working one's vocation and living a godly family life until God is ready to release a more active enterprise.

Psalms 3:6: I will not be afraid of *ten thousands* of people who have set themselves against me all around.

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Psalms 27:1: The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?

Proverbs 3:24: When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will
lie down and your sleep will be sweet.

Sleep is an act of faith. During great enterprise, rest is crucial. Worry opposes resting in God's provision.

Proverbs 3:25: Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the
wicked when it comes.

Isaiah 8:12: Do not say, 'A conspiracy,' concerning all that this people call
a conspiracy, nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.

Isaiah 44:8: Do not fear, nor be afraid; have I not told you from that time,
and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me?
Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one.'

Isaiah 51:7: Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, you people in
whose heart is My law: do not fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of
their revilings.

1 Peter 3:14: But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you
are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."

Courage, faith and confidence in God are the Biblical Answers to Fear.

Hindrance: Laziness with Lack of Preparation

David provides the positive example in 1 Chronicles 22:14: "Indeed I have taken much trouble to prepare for the house of the LORD one hundred thousand talents of gold and one million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond measure, for it is so abundant. I have prepared timber and stone also, and you may add to them." Foolish presumption fails to prepare for enterprise.

Here are a few Biblical answers to faithless laziness:

Proverbs 12:27: The slothful man does not roast what he took in hunting,
but diligence is man's precious possession.

Diligence, from its Latin root meaning *to love earnestly* or *choose*, means steady application over time.

Proverbs 30:25: The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their
food in the summer.

Deferred gratification through investment answers sinful laziness.

Matthew 3:3: For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah,
saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of
the LORD, make His paths straight.' "

This passage speaks to every Christian's ministry of light and salt, to prepare the heart of our lost neighbors through the influence of benign Christian friendship.

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2 Peter 1:5-8: But also for this very reason, giving all diligence (constant and minute application out of a spirit of love), add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hindrance: Laziness and Complacency because of Wealth and Ease

Revelation 3:17: Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'; and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

Luke 12:19-20: And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." "But God said to him, 'You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

The clear answer to this selfish complaisance is to put our material capital to work for Christ.

Conclusion for Christian Enterprise

God commands enterprise of His people, that is, taking dominion over the earth. Because any enterprise requires risk and investment of resources, enterprise is inherently dangerous. Thus, God requires faith in the form of preparation, fearlessness and trust in Him. This understanding launched early American Christian faithfulness, goodness, liberty and prosperity. We will never see true revival and Reformation until Christians generally once more become intrepid and bold in our Enterprises, putting whatever human and material capital we possess to work for God. However, many faithful Christians even now are fighting the good fight on the front lines or preparing themselves for the frontier of Gospel Enterprise. This is very exciting. We know that the victory is the Lord's, not by might, but by His Spirit, and the victory is sure. Therefore, we may trust that Gospel Enterprise will once more become the norm in this country. In the meantime, may we follow Joshua's lead.

Scripture quotes are from the New King James Version.