

Hazard at the Gates

Passage

Romans 1:16-17 HCSB (16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. (17) For in it God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 HCSB (17) Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (18) We all, with unveiled faces, are reflecting the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.

"...from faith to faith"

"...from glory to glory"

Both of these passages give reference to the transitional nature of the Christian life. For the child of God, change is not an option. As we grow, we continually move forward to new levels of maturity and experiences of grace through doors of faith and revelation. Repeatedly, God will bring us to experiences that both test what we believe and reveal further truths about God and our relationship with Him. These crisis of faith are simply gates to new and deeper places with our Father.

The Importance of the Gates

The Gate is the connection point from where we have been to where we are going. Much is at stake at these gates. To press on and walk through them is to become more like Christ and experience the ever-changing and increasing wonder of belonging to the living God. To shrink back and refuse to walk through them is to give the enemy foothold and lose precious spiritual ground.

At these thresholds the enemy lurks.

The Dangers at the Gates

1) Fear

The Unknown

- "What if?" is the question that torments and paralyzes.

Failure

- The fear of failure is a self-fulfilling prophesy.

QUOTE: *"The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred with sweat and dust and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes up short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, if he wins, knows the triumph of high achievement; and who, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."*

- Theodore Roosevelt

2) Doubt

Based on Past Failures and Hurts

- Some people cannot believe because their past continues to remind them of the pain of their faults and mistakes.
- Some people can't believe their life will be any better simply because it never has been.
- Some people would rather not hope at all than to hope and be disappointed again.
- **JESUS SPECIALIZES IN RESTORING HOPE!!!**

Based on Our inability to devise a plan

- Our attitude so often is: "If we can't see it, it must not be possible."
 - This is nothing more than the Deification of our own mind.
- a) **God's promises are always unobtainable in Human effort.**
 - If man could do it, why does God need to make a promise?
 - b) **How much has been lost because of the attitude, "I believe, but..."?**
 - i) To acknowledge the truth of God's promise but wilt in the face of opposition is to insult God:
 - * It insults His power - **It says He is weak and He can't do what He says He can do.**
 - * It insults His integrity - **It says He is a liar and He is not who He says He is.**
 - c) **Such a person is left to his own devices.**
 - God is a gentleman and won't go where He is not wanted.
 - What good is a promise if you don't believe it?
 - d) **JA Wood writes, "God gives the truth and the truth ... and the power to believe; but He believes for no one. While He helps the believer, the act of believing is purely the believer's and is voluntary."**
 - **We don't believe God's promise because it makes sense, we believe because He promised.**
 - e) **Too often** we don't experience God's promise because we don't believe we have the power to fulfill it. The tragedy of it is that **He never asks** us to have the power to fulfill it **He simply asks us to believe that He does and will.**

3) Discouragement

We begin to look out our limited resources.

We begin to look at the size of the obstacles we might face.

4) Presumption

James 1:5-7 HCSB *Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him. (6) But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind. (7) That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.*

The Difference between faith and presumption:

- Faith comes from a humble spirit.
- Presumption comes from a haughty spirit.

- Faith comes from an attitude of dependence.
- Presumption comes from an attitude of entitlement.

- Faith is trusting that God will provide what is needed to do His will.
- Presumption is expecting God to provide what we want to meet our agenda under the pretence of meeting His agenda.

- Faith believes God will act because He promised.
- Presumption believes God will act because we want Him to.

Making it Through the Gates

Believe: God Has Given Us Promises.

- 1) He has promised to fill us with power.
2 Timothy 1:7, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."
- 2) He has promised to heal our community.
2 Chronicles 7, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."
- 3) He has promised that we will find Him if we seek Him.
Jeremiah 29:12-13, "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

*These are PROMISES given to us.

Brace Yourself: The Territory God wants us to give us will not be taken without opposition.

- † *The Question is, is your God bigger than your Fear?*
- † *Are you willing to believe something simply because God said it in His word?*
- † *He gives us the truth and the power to believe. But we still have to believe.*

Isaiah 59:19 KJV So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.

ILLUSTRATION: Black Bart – A legendary Stage Coach robber in the late 1800's.

- His name was so feared that he could walk right up to a stage and rob it with out ever firing a shot.
- He was finally caught.
- Charles Boles (AKA Black Bart) was a 5'6 160 pound accountant who liked poetry.
- He walked because he was afraid of horses.
- He never fired a shot because the gun was not loaded.

If God be for us, who can be against us?

Are you willing to trust Him despite your fear?