

Break Free...

*A Thought for the Week From Patrick Kemper at
No Strongholds Ministries*

Week 21

Risky... or Resourceful?

Psalm 89:8 (NCV)

⁸ Lord GOD All-Powerful, who is like you? LORD, you are powerful and completely trustworthy.

2 Samuel 7:28 (NIV)

²⁸ O Sovereign LORD, you are God! Your words are trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant.

I absolutely hated church as a kid.

Throughout the '70s and '80s (childhood into my teenage years), my parents dragged me to church (under duress) every Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night. Somehow, I believe they thought they were being responsible, but there is such a thing as doing the right thing for the wrong reasons... and in all the wrong ways.

I languished through childhood hating a particular truth... I loathed church. I felt guilty that I so despised going to the "House of God." When I imagine going to someone's house (if the prospect is voluntary), such an idea creates an immediate feeling of excitement and optimism. Going to hang out with someone I like is appealing to me and causes me to have positive expectations.

If the visit to someone's house – like my grandparents' house during my childhood – is not voluntary, it is an entirely different story. Feelings of apprehension and dread overtake me, leaving me whiny and completely antagonistic.

This is the way I always felt about going to church.

During this same time period secular music was breaking all the boundaries and creating life-long memories for me, but the music of church had only one mode – torturous. I know there are many people who simply adore the old hymns and find they feel closer to God as they listen to them - but I am not one of those people. I hear an old hymn and my guts implode.

As I have gotten older, I have tried to give the lyrics of these old tunes an opportunity to reach me, but many times there is just too much history and baggage for me to connect with their original intention. I physically feel the need to run as though someone just lobbed a grenade into the room.

Anyone who grew up in the Midwest, going to church during this era, quickly became familiar with a few selections from the hymnal that always came at the end of church services. Television and movies continue to perpetuate the less than positive connotation that comes along with songs like *Just as I Am* and *I Surrender All*. Old school altar calls always utilized these in an effort to goad people into going forward to throw themselves on the mercy of the musty-smelling carpet that covered the steps leading to the stage.

The truth is... the enemy has done an effective job on people like me.

Such inspiration, birthed in the hearts of people who loved God with their lives, was meant to rescue captive hearts and lead them to the freedom that Christ died to provide, but instead (for someone like me), it produces a reaction that is completely the opposite.

I want you to know, though, God has not stopped using His inspired efforts to reach damaged souls like mine. I may not be able to stave off the full-body shiver when I hear a piano clunk out the intro to one of those old vestiges of the past, but I have grown to a place where the truth in the message has, over time, been able to seep through the cracks, working its way deep into the parts that become scared and overwhelmed; places begging for hope, comfort and deliverance.

There is powerful truth in the words of a song like *I Surrender All*. I suspect you have heard these words at some point in your life, but I want you to read them again. If you have to, pretend they are a text message (that's what I do) and consider what they are trying to encourage you to do - the authentic, intentional, voluntary submission...

All to Jesus I surrender... All to Him I freely give.
I will ever love and trust Him, In His presence daily live.
I surrender all. I surrender all. All to Thee, my blessed Savior. I surrender all.
All to Jesus I surrender, Humbly at His feet I bow.
Worldly pleasures all forsaken; Take me, Jesus, take me now.¹

Everyone who reads (or hears) those words will come away with an opinion. For truth seekers, those desperate to be in step with the purpose of their existence, the question becomes, "Isn't submitting everything I have (and everything I am) the riskiest thing I can choose to do?"

Do the words of the song *I Surrender All* bring about immediate, panicky thoughts of missionary work in the darkest parts of uncharted Amazonian jungles replete with cannibalism and malaria-toting mosquitos? Does "...worldly pleasures all forsaken..." induce chest pain because it might mean changing the direction of your current financial plan and the ability of your family to function at some level... above resentful? Does "...humbly at His feet I bow..." make you to fold your arms in defensiveness and cause your face to flush with anxiety?

I was having to dig deep to submit my life during my worship time today and began thinking about those words – how uncomfortable and scary it is to voluntarily give away all of life as I have come to know it, for whatever God asks of me - what it means to authentically surrender it all.

¹ Source: <http://www.hymnal.net/hymn.php/h/441#ixzz2nwD3vjJs>

I thought of Jesus who gave up His position, His rightful place of honor, to be humbled (beyond anything *I* could ever attempt, or grasp), yet He remained flawlessly focused on what His Father sent Him to do. Jesus never varied (not even slightly) from His Father's instructions.

As I thought about this, I came to the conclusion that I will never come close to giving up what He did – even if I were to lose (give up) everything I currently have.

I found my heart being reminded, as I struggled to submit completely, of the truth of how God knows me, knows my limits, and how I can responsibly trust Him (without reservation) to not demand I do something outside my abilities, gifts and interests.

God, our Creator, our doting Father, knows us better than we know ourselves and, being holy and merciful, righteous and just, cannot be irresponsible, careless, callous or vindictive. He is not susceptible to momentary lapses in judgment, instances of cruelty or attitudes of indifference.

Application

Elohim (God the Creator) was intentional when He made you. You were designed and fabricated with premeditated purpose. In you, God Himself implemented strengths, desires, dislikes and loathing. There are things you love to do and do well. Also inside you is discontentedness and intolerance for certain things and concepts... and these will never change. This was all intentional. This was all part of the deliberate design necessary for you to achieve what you were created to accomplish.

God also engineered you with a set of gifts matching these tendencies and characteristics. Upon entering into an authentic, reciprocal relationship (where He leads and you follow), these gifts are activated and brought to life for service.

Would it make sense to assume that, in spite of all this undisputed intentionality performed on your behalf, God would (at your relinquishing control to Him) place His creation in a situation in which it would not do well (or would likely fail)? Would the Designer and Engineer of a product ever desire to place His invention in an environment where it would not absolutely thrive? What would a decision to do so reveal about His heart, His compassion... His intelligence? Would it be possible for His creation ever find the courage to trust Him if He did?

The most resourceful (not the riskiest or most irresponsible) choice you can make is to submit all you have been given (and all you have been allowed to become), for *whatever* God asks you to do. Refuse to listen to the enemy when they try to convince you He is so easily (and thoughtlessly) willing to carelessly and intentionally disregard all His knowledge about you just for the opportunity to be a poor steward with what He created in you (remember what I said about no momentary lapses in judgment...?).

The creation (you) can never be more fulfilled than when it is doing what it was created to do. Any direction followed, any path taken, any avenue pursued *other* than what God requests or where He points, is disobedience... and a wasteful misuse of resources.

The creation (you) can pursue other, less compatible avenues and probably experience a relative lack of total failure, but is that the way you want your life to be defined? Until you function in the manner in which you were designed to operate, complete success (in

your assigned purpose), consummate productivity and realization of your full (assigned) potential will never be a possibility.

All to Jesus I surrender... All to Him I freely give.
I will ever love and trust Him, In His presence daily live.
I surrender all. I surrender all. All to Thee, my blessed Savior. I surrender all.
All to Jesus I surrender, Humbly at His feet I bow.
Worldly pleasures all forsaken; Take me, Jesus, take me now.

Jesus submitted, completely, to the will of His Father and followed every syllable of the plan laid out without questioning or hesitating. Did the Father screw Him over and leave Jesus hanging... ever? Why would it be different for you?

Luke 6:46 (TLB)

⁴⁶ "So why do you call me 'Lord' when you won't obey me?"

John 14:21 (TLB)

²¹ "The one who obeys me is the one who loves me; and because he loves me, my Father will love him; and I will too, and I will reveal myself to him."

Psalm 111:10 (TLB)

¹⁰ "How can men be wise? The only way to begin is by reverence for God. For growth in wisdom comes from obeying his laws. Praise his name forever."

Submitting the remainder of your assigned days (BTW, how many do you have left?), completely to what God asks of you, is not the risk the enemy wants you to believe it is. Submission and obedience is the most resourceful, liberating decision you will ever make.

