

LIFE AS AN ADVENTURE

"He went out, not knowing whither he went." Hebrews 11:8.

Abraham is one of the colossal characters of history. There are other names that have come down to us from those early days, but his name stands out from among them as the moon stands out in a star-filled sky.

In some mysterious way there came to him a call to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees and go out into a strange land. Others of his time may have dreamed of venturing forth into regions beyond, but Abraham did not merely dream or talk about it. When he started on his famous journey, he was all uncertainty. He did not know his destination. He went out, leaving the land of his birth, the people whom he knew, the comforts of his home, and the polytheistic religion of his fathers. Can you imagine this man going forth in the dawn of religious life into an unknown country in pursuit of a new and beautiful ideal "looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God?"

He made of life an illustrious adventure, and the verdict of the age is that he was gloriously right. Text. That was Abraham's fascinating adventure. It was a risky business. What a word that is -- adventure! What a tang in the very sound of it. The lure of the distant in it. The thrill of the mysterious in it. Adventure! Who does not love it? Somebody has said that the greatest line in English literature is a line on adventure which we all learned at school -- "Over the hills and far away." Anyway those words are full of magic and romance. No more so, however, than our text.

In a sense, all of life is a perpetual adventure. Abraham's story is not exceptional. What a stupendous adventure is birth into this world! Why shouldn't there be that look of wild-eyed wonder in baby's face? Every birth is the beginning of untold possibilities. And then learning to walk. The father supporting the baby, and the mother a few feet off beckoning the little one to come. A moment of fear and hesitation. Then it starts forth, toddling its few steps, until caught in the mother's arms. What an adventure!

So life goes on -- just one round of adventure. School an adventure. College a tremendous adventure. Falling in love an adventure. Then there is the great adventure of getting married. Life is a series of adventures. No man can predict what will befall him or what severe test tomorrow may present. Wherever there is human relationship and activity, there is surprise. We come into this world and we depart from it not knowing what the future holds. And all that lies between the cradle and the grave is an adventure. Every voyage of discovery, every friendship, every advance in industry, every experiment in political freedom, every movement for reform, every investigation of science, and every approach to an ideal of truth and justice has its unpredictable elements. Every enterprise, whether of pleasure or business, has its excitement. Each new day is a bundle of unexplored potentialities. Who knows what a day or a year will bring forth? Who knows just where he is going? Who can draw up a schedule from which no deviation will be made?

Whether we like it or not, we are compelled to deal with the future. Life may sometimes seem dull and hard. But after all, there is no adventure like that of a human life. Is it not an adventure just to live, to go through the mysterious years, to meet life's tests and trials, its branching roads, its opening and closing doors?

Undoubtedly youth is the supreme time for the reign of the adventurous spirit. Whenever the trumpets call to adventure the feet of youth begin to move, and the heart begins to throb. It is hazard that appeals to youth. When we say farewell to that spirit we are old, no matter what our age.

What a gorgeous adventure the Christian life is! It is the adventure of adventures. It is an adventure at the beginning. Faith is a great venture of the soul. All the way through, the Christian life is an adventure. Think of the Bible stories, the adventure stories of the followers of God! Why, the Old Testament is a succession of romances. Think of Abraham, something tugging at his heart, pulling him out in search of final and ultimate truth, now battling triumphantly with giants of temptation, now overcome and beginning again, becoming in the end the founder of a new faith and the religious teacher of mankind. Think of Moses there in Pharaoh's palace, ministered to by servants, bowed down to by the multitudes, bidding goodbye to all that and venturing out into the unknown to lead a horde of slaves to a land of freedom. Think of him going on for forty years in the face of their murmurs and complaints, bringing them at last to the border of the promised land. He views it himself from the mountain height, and is seen no more.

Then when we come to the New Testament times there was need of a new adventure for the world was dark with griefs and graves, with decadent philosophies and dead religions. And the great, great adventure takes place. What a thrilling romance the life of Jesus was! Born in a manger in an obscure village, cradled in the arms of a peasant woman, growing up in the little town of Nazareth, working in a carpenter shop until 30, then for three years was an itinerant teacher and preacher. He possessed neither wealth nor pull. His relatives were inconspicuous, uninfluential, and had neither training nor education. In infancy He startled a king; in childhood He puzzled the doctors; in manhood He ruled the course of nature, walked upon billows as if pavements, and hushed the sea to sleep. When He went out into the wide world, He went about doing good. He put His fingers upon rotten, leprous flesh and healed it, opened eyes of blind and ears of deaf, told dead men to rise to their feet, spoke such words as mortal ears had never heard, healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His services. His deeds were so brave and beautiful that men exclaimed, "We never saw it on this fashion," and they followed Him wherever He went.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never travelled 200 miles from the place where He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He never marshalled an army, nor drafted a soldier, nor fired a gun, and yet no leader ever had more volunteers who have, under His orders, made more rebels stack arms and surrender without a shot being fired. He had no credentials but Himself. He had nothing to do with this world except the power of His divine manhood. While still a young man the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. And when He died it was in no prosaic way. Crucified on a wooden cross between two robbers, wearing thorns on His brow and in His hair, grasping nails in His hands -- praying for His murderers. Nineteen centuries have come and gone, but He still lives, and is the centerpiece of the human race and the Leader of the column of progress. Herod could not kill Him, Satan could not seduce Him, death could not destroy Him, and the grave could not hold Him. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that One Solitary Life. He stands forth upon the pinnacle of the highest glory, proclaimed of God, acknowledged by angels, adored by saints, and feared by demons as the living, personal Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Then, He needed other adventurous souls to "carry on" after He was gone. And they were not lacking. There they go -- Peter and the rest of the disciples -- not exceptional men as a rule, but the boldness of Jesus had been breathed into them -- there they go, preaching to hostile multitudes that He was risen, winning thousands in a day, braving every danger, dying with their boots on, shouting to the last their songs of triumph. There goes Paul. Read those missionary journeys of his again. Why they are nothing but stories of adventure. And what an end he had! -- greeting Nero's axe with defiance and crying gaily, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course." And never from those days to this one has Jesus Christ been without adventurers to follow in His train.

Nor can we say that the Christian life is flat because it has no challenge. From beginning to end, it is a record of meeting one defiance after another. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Here is a call to heroic enlistment. It is a summons to pursue the highest as it is in Christ. I have never heard of one who rose to meet that challenge and was disappointed. The universal testimony of those who speak from experience is that the Christian life is anything but dull. It contemplates the highest ideal of character. It is dedicated to the most unselfish service. Life becomes exciting and promising not when we turn our backs on Christ but rather when we set our faces in His direction and follow Him. The best things in every relationship and activity of life are reserved for those who stand for something, who select a high goal and who are ready to perish in its pursuit.

Life's most thrilling and challenging adventure comes with Christ when He speaks that sweet and commanding call, "Follow Me." What a mistake many make! They are inclined to think that the off-color life -- drinking, gambling, immorality -- is the life that thrills with excitement and adventure. They think living for Christ and others is dull and tame and insipid. On the contrary the most original and interesting and exciting pursuit in the world is that of being good and doing good. It is the selfish and sinful who are always being bored to extinction.

Christ meets us with a challenge, with a dare to "live dangerously." He calls us to do something original and big. Christianity is not the soft, effeminate thing some people imagine. It demands, aspiration, courage, sacrifice, faith, and perseverance. Christ calls us to accomplish things which seem impossible. He dares us to make the gorgeous and illustrious adventure of going about being good and doing good.

We do not have to go far. For most of us it does not mean a change of locality, only a change in the spirit and purpose of life. Life is a thing to be dashingly used and cheerfully hazarded in the service of men. Each of you has inherent and unsuspected possibilities and potentialities in you. You do not know how much you can be and do. Go out and set the world on fire with the light of faith and hope and love!