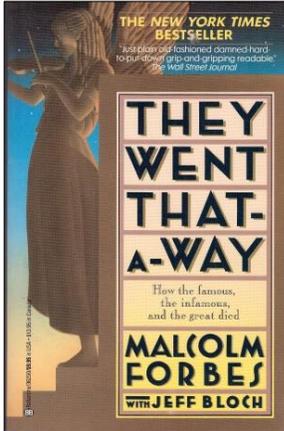


Way To Go

Confidence Confirmed by Actions

January 16, 2022

Today we're talking about running *toward* our greatest fears!



But before we get to *that*, answer me *this*: **How do you want to go?** One of my favorite old books is “They Went That-a-Way” by Malcolm Forbes – 175 insightful stories of how the famous and infamous *went*.

And Speaking of checking out, Shar and I survived our COVID quarantine. And when we finally got to go out, we went to this big antique store, where I got the *best* reaction *ever* to saying, “pretty good for down here.” The lady who asked how I was doing, looked at me and said, “Oh, are you Canadian?” I think she thought I was trashing all of America, “down here”. I said, “No, I just mean as opposed to *up there*.” And I pointed up. And we had a big laugh. **“Pretty good for down here”** is kind of our thing, our reminder to not only *endure*, but *thrive*, in the midst of the mess we’ve made *down here*. Because **it reminds us to keep our spiritual eyes fixed on the One who came to lead us home, up there.** Because *that* perspective of *faith* brings *peace* and *joy* even when facing *fear* and *pain* – like a woman giving birth ... without an *epidural*.

^{11:1} Now faith is confidence in what we hope for [as confirmed by our actions] and assurance about what we do not see [as confirmed by God’s Word]. ... ⁶ And without *faith* it is *impossible* to please God, because *anyone* who comes to Him *must believe* that He *exists* and that He *rewards* those who *earnestly seek* Him. ⁷ By *faith* [confidence confirmed by actions] Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in *holy fear* built an ark to save his family. ... ⁹ By *faith* [Abraham] made his home in the promised land like a *stranger* in a *foreign country* ... as did Isaac and Jacob ... ¹¹ And by *faith* even [90-year-old] Sarah ... was *enabled* to bear children *because she* considered Him *faithful* who had *made* the promise. ... ¹³ All these people were *still* living by *faith* [confidence confirmed by actions] when they *died*. They did not *receive* the things promised; [i.e. salvation through the sacrifice of God’s Son] they only *saw* them and *welcomed* them from a *distance*, *admitting* that they were *foreigners* and *strangers* [down here] on *earth*. ¹⁴ [You see] People who *say* such things [like us] show that *they* are looking for a country of their *own*. ... ¹⁶ a *better* country—a *heavenly one*. [Up there] Therefore God is not *ashamed* to be called *their* God ... ¹⁷ By *faith* Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac [his son] as a sacrifice ... [Because] ¹⁹ Abraham *reasoned* that God could *even* raise the *dead* ... ²⁴ By *faith* Moses ... ²⁵ *chose* to be *mistreated* along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the *fleeting pleasures* of sin. ²⁶ He regarded *disgrace* for the sake of Christ [coming 1,482 years later] as of *greater value* than the [currently available] treasures of Egypt, *because* he was *looking ahead* to his reward. [Christ!] ²⁷ ... he *persevered* because he *saw* Him who is *invisible*. [Christ!] ... ²⁹ By *faith* [confidence confirmed by actions] the people *passed through* the Red Sea [which had to be *terrifying*] ...

³⁰ By *faith* the walls of Jericho fell, *after* the army had marched around them for *seven days*. ... ³² I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, ³³ *who through faith [confidence confirmed by actions]* conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and *[ultimately] gained* what was *promised*; *[i.e. being raised with Christ (Is 26:19; Dan 12:13)]* who shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the fury of the flames, and *escaped the edge of the sword*; ... ³⁵ There were others who were *tortured, refusing to be released* so that they might gain an even better *resurrection*. ... ³⁷ They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were *killed by the sword*. ... ³⁹ These were all commended for their *faith, [confidence confirmed by actions]* yet *none of them received [during their time down here]* what had been *promised*, ⁴⁰ since God had planned something *better* for us so that only together with us would they be made *perfect [through Christ]*. ^{12:1} Therefore, since *we are surrounded* by such a *great* cloud of witnesses, let *us* throw off everything that hinders *[our own faithful actions]* and the sin that so easily entangles. And let *us run with perseverance* the race marked out for *us*, ² fixing *our eyes* on Jesus, the *pioneer and perfecter of faith*. *[Confidence confirmed by actions!]* For the *joy set before Him He* endured the *cross, [without an epidural] scorning* its shame, *[which was nothing compared to bringing forth His children]* and *[after that – and because of that]* sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider Him who *endured* ... so that *you* will not grow weary and lose heart. ... ⁷ Endure hardship as *discipline*; *[not punishment, but basic training, like potty training, because]* God is *treating you as His children*. *[And we must trust that this is just what must be done for little gods created in our Father's image (Jn 10:34; Ps 82:6)]* For what children are *not* disciplined by their father? *[Illegitimate ones!]* ⁸ If *you* are not *disciplined* ... then *you* are not *legitimate*, not *true* sons and daughters at all. ... ¹⁰ God disciplines us for our *good*, in order that we may *share in His holiness*. ¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the *time*, but *painful*. *[That's just how it has to work down here]* Later on, however, it produces a *harvest of righteousness and peace* for those who have been *trained* by it. – Hebrews 11:1-12:11 NIV



I want you to want to go running toward what would otherwise be your worst fear, with enthusiasm, without an epidural, for the joy set before you!



I had the vaccine. The *one-shot*. Because it was only *one shot*. And I did pretty good. I've told you about my needle phobia. Well, it's gotten much better as I've gotten older; but when I was young, it was almost debilitating. You've probably seen a show where someone has to face a phobia, like a spider or snake or plane ride. And the person knows, logically, not to be afraid, but some deep-seated, subconscious, fight-or-flight warning system is haywire and off the rails. That was me with needles. And phobias can usually be traced back to a childhood trauma when these subconscious systems were forming. Mine goes back first grade in the gymnasium at West View, standing in line for a mass-immunization. The little girl in front of me jerked to the side when the nurse gave her the shot, and the needle broke off in her arm. And there was screaming by her, and yelling for help by the nurse, and general panic by everyone, until they carried the girl out of the gym. Then the nurse took a breath, looked at me, and said, "Next." Fight or flight, baby! Pure adrenaline! The strength of a 3rd grader! From that point on. Mostly the strength of a third grader.



Eight years later, as a freshman, I earned the right to say I can relate to giving birth, without an epidural. I woke up suffering from a serious (and seriously embarrassing) condition called *testicular torsion* (an interior knot). Men's Health (11/99) ranked pain on a scale of 1-10. #4 was having wisdom teeth pulled. Guess what made #10! "To ease the pain," they write "beg the doctor to knock you out, quick. A hammer will do." On a medical site, I read that "women who have passed kidney stones often say the experience is similar to childbirth". And then I read a guy who wrote, "I have broken my arm, both collar bones and had a kidney stone, and WITHOUT A DOUBT my testicular torsion was the worst pain ... it's honestly hard to put into words." Another testimonial said, "The surgeon told me it is far and away more painful than giving birth." It happens to 1 in 26,000 (under 18); that's the lottery I won! And there's only a 4-8 hour window until – you don't want to know. Well, **I refused to reveal my humiliating, intensifying pain all day.**

So I'm being prepped for emergency surgery, momentarily alone and totally expose, when a female nurse (yeah, it gets worse) walks in with the *biggest syringe* I'd ever seen ... filled with pain-killer ... *also* the most *beautiful* thing I'd ever seen! The *needle*, not the *nurse*. And I *ran* – okay, *hobbled* – to her, naked and unashamed, arm outstretched: "Gimme!" She couldn't *stab* that jabber in *fast enough*! I remember the peace and joy of watching it pierce my skin and sink into my arm. **Fear? Pain? Naked shame? Didn't exist. Didn't matter. Cuz it didn't compare.** That shot is my best experience for helping me understand what compelled Jesus to come down here to go up on that cross. **Its horrific pain didn't compare to the pain of sin and shame and separation it was taking away.** And in that same way, **we need to face the pains that bring relief**, to ourselves as well as those around us. So, **what action of faith would you take if every fear was gone?** Doing *that* is *faith*.

It's very strange to find yourself running *toward* what would otherwise be your greatest fear, simply because it can't compare to **your greatest joy**, which, by the way, **may not seem anything like happiness**. Like a fireman or a father rushing into a *hellish deathtrap*, for the "joy" of saving someone whose life they fully and firmly believe to be worth the risk – or even the death – of their own. Like those described in Revelation, who overcame the enemy:

They *overcame* him by the blood of the *Lamb* and by the word of *their testimony*; [because] they did not love their lives so much as to *shrink* from *death*. – Revelation 12:10-11 NIV

It's like a soldier dying in peace-that-passes-understanding, by knowing he or she has saved others who would otherwise have perished. That's a joy that only the truly heroic will ever fully know. We all gotta go sometime, in some way. **So, how do you want to go? Shrinking from death, or running toward life?** Because, I want *you* to *want* to go "running toward" what would otherwise be *everyone's* worst fear. Because, when it's time for our spirit to depart:

No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, and no one has power in the day of death. There is no *release* from *that war*, – Ecclesiastes 8:8 NKJ

He has redeemed my soul in *peace* from the *battle* that was against me, – Psalm 55:18 NKJ

For the *joy* set before Him He endured the cross, *scorning* its *shame*, – Hebrews 12:2 NIV

As a woman with child is in pain and cries out in her pangs, when she draws near the time of her delivery, so have we been in Your sight, O Lord. – Isaiah 26:17 NKJ

Until you fix your eyes on the “Perfector of *faith* (i.e. confidence confirmed by actions)”, **you’ll remain in bondage to the fear and shame of much lesser mini-pains that only threaten to momentarily sting** – rather than *face* the pains that bring relief, and ultimately declares:

O death, where is your *victory*? O death, where is your *sting*? – 1 Corinthians 15:55 ESV

Because it just can’t compare. You see, **Jesus wasn’t a victim of the cross. He was a conqueror!**

I will ransom them from the *power* of the *grave*; [says the Lord] I will *redeem* them from *death*. O Death, I will be *your plagues*! O Grave, I will be *your destruction*! – Hosea 13:14 NKJ



He watched the tree grow from which His cross was cut. He planted the iron in the ground from which His nails were cast. **If He had to climb up there and hammer himself in place, He would’ve done it!** It wasn't soldiers, or Pharisees, or the mob who killed Jesus: it was His *passion* for us.

[He] *made* himself *nothing*, *taking* the very nature of a *servant*, being *made* [by himself] in human *likeness*. And ... He *humbled* himself and became *obedient* to *death*— even death on a *cross*! – Philippians 2:7-8 NIV

Because, **you were “the joy set before Him”**. Because *you* were, are, and always will be *His* supreme love. And to the degree that you truly see that you *are His*, He’ll *be yours*. And your confidence will be confirmed by your actions, because nothing can compare. And it’ll produce a harvest of righteousness and peace, the thrilling, fulfilling, daily delight that comes, in spite of the pains and shames down here, from knowing, in the core of your being, just how much you are truly loved by your Creator and Father.



We must be overwhelmed with *passion* for our *Savior* and *com-passion* for His *children*. Imagine a fireman unwilling to enter a burning building. That’s not a fireman. Imagine a mother unwilling to give birth. That’s not a mother. Imagine a child of God, a disciple of Jesus, unwilling to lay down their life as a living sacrifice to bring the light of Christ to a dark world. What’s *that*? He’s conquered the cross *and* the grave, only thing left is your heart. Our choice is between the **long-term pain of living a lie**, and the **short-term pain of facing the truth that brings relief**. If ever there was a true and everlasting *pain* and *shame* killer, it’s *Jesus*. So, **are you ready to reveal your humiliating pain? Or, do you need to suffer some more as it intensifies?**

The Great Physician is patiently waiting. But why in the world is the *patient*?!