

## Faith (and Flaming Darts)

Ephesians 6:10-15

#38 in our series from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, #7 on the topic of spiritual warfare.

November 16, 2013

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### Prayer

Father, we ask that you would help us now to preach, to proclaim what is true and not be stuck in a moment in this world of passing time, but to live in the reality of your eternal love. In Jesus' name Amen.

Clip from *Parenthood*

Grandma: You know, when I was nineteen, Grandpa took me on a roller coaster.

Gil Buckman: Oh?

Grandma: Up...down, up....down. Oh, what a ride!

Gil Buckman: What a great story.

Grandma: You know, it was just interesting to me that the ride could make me so frightened, so scared, so sick, so excited, and so thrilled all together. Some didn't like it; they went on a merry-go-round that just goes around...nothing. I like the roller coaster, you get more out of it.

That's Steve Martin in the movie *Parenthood*. He is extremely stressed over new life (the fact that his wife is pregnant with their fourth child) when Grandma walks in and gives a speech about her Dad and a roller coaster: "Up...down, up....down. Oh, what a ride!" A couple people sent me that clip this week. It's actually one of my favorites, so I thought I'd play it to remind you of our message last week and start our message this week.

Last week, we said that life is like a runaway train, and we're all losing control, but a roller coaster is also like a runaway train. On a roller coaster you have no control, but someone is in control. If you trust that someone is in control—that they don't have you....

[Image of monks on a roller coaster raising their hands and having fun!]

You can throw your hands in the air and scream, "What a ride!"

Last week, we ended by saying you're not on a runaway train; you're on a roller coaster, strapped in next to the Prince of Peace. According to Paul, He's telling you His story (history) and you are actually experiencing His life. You are on the "Jesus Christ Adventure Ride," and it's producing something. Grandma said, "Some didn't like it; they went on the merry-go-round that just goes around...nothing. I like the roller coaster, you get more out of it." Yes, you get faith.

Your life is to be a glorious adventure, full of twists and turns, mountains and valleys, even pain and suffering that ends in glory as you scream to your Father in Heaven: "What a ride! What a ride!" But in fear, we try to turn life into a merry-go-round...at least in our own heads. We shut our eyes, grab the safety bar and desperately try to seize control—we stop living. In other words, we try to save our lives, and we lose them. We're not living our lives; we're riding the merry-go-round.

It's 2:30 in the morning and a thought enters your head, and you start going round and round in your head. You're getting nowhere, and you just can't stop, it's like a merry-go-round of anxiety. Or you're at a party, and someone makes a comment, and you start going round and round in your head. You're getting nowhere, and you can't stop thinking about yourself, and so you can't see others; you can't

love others; you can't join the dance. You're stuck in a moment that's not a real moment, for it exists only in your head.

People can get stuck for the entire ride and even after the ride. Perhaps you did something fifty years ago, and now you're stuck in shame over that moment and terrified of a future moment—the end of the ride, and thus, you're not riding the ride but just going round and round, stuck in nowhere and nothing.

In the *Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis, a senior devil gives advice to a junior devil on how to tempt humans:

*The humans live in time, but our Enemy [God] destines them to eternity. He therefore, I believe, wants them to attend chiefly to two things, to eternity itself and to that point of time which they call the Present. For the Present is the point at which time touches eternity....in it alone freedom and actuality are offered them...Our business is to get them away from the eternal and from the Present.*

Writes Screwtape.

The present moment is the only moment in which we can experience real freedom, and the only moment in which we can have a relationship with a real person.

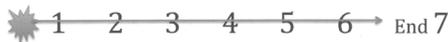
It's the moment "time touches eternity."

It's the moment in which we can love.

It's the moment in which we live the life God has for us.

"We live by faith," writes Paul.

Your life is like this line that we talked about last week:



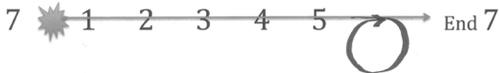
Space and time (as we experience it) is the story of God's creation in six days, and we're still living in the sixth day, being created. In other words, space and time is like a roller coaster with a perfect ending; for on the seventh day: "Everything is good."

Our Universe, beginning to end, is like this line. God commanded the Jews to live every week in remembrance and anticipation of this line. Your life is like this line:



Jesus said, *“I am the beginning and the end.”* You see, Jesus is the meaning of every moment—Jesus is the plot. Jesus is the “author and finisher” of the story in Hebrews 12:2 we read that Jesus is also the *“author and finisher of our faith.”* Literally, the “beginner and ender” of our faith. The opposite of faith is sin, and last week we said sin is trying to seize control of the ride.

Maybe this is sin:



Maybe it’s trying to turn the roller coaster into a merry-go-round, your own little merry-go-round of control, shame, and fear (time empty of The Way–The Plot–The Meaning) empty time.

Well, that’s what happens on the sixth day of creation. That’s what happens to all of us. That’s what happens in the evil day. In Ephesians 5:15 Paul wrote, *“Look well how you walk...redeeming the time because the days are evil.”*

Now our text:

*Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all (circumstances) having taken up...*

Circumstances is added by the translator, who has also changed the tense of the verb.

So Paul actually writes:

*In all having taken up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.*

See? I think Paul is saying that all the armor is faith, and that “faith” is a *Thureos*, which comes from the word *Thura*, which means door, a shield that’s also a door or the size of a door. The *Thureas* was about the size of a door; it wasn’t the small shield that the Roman soldier might carry on duty, so the soldier didn’t move the shield to block individual arrows. It wasn’t the small Roman shield but the large. With the *Thureos*, Roman soldiers would form a *Phalanx*, a moving fortress and then advance on enemy territory. Actually, all this armor is for advancing and never retreating.<sup>1</sup> Roman armor didn’t cover your backside. So, if someone was kickin’ your backside, it meant turn around and fight.

With the *Thureoi*, the Roman army would advance on enemy territory. The greatest threat to that army was the flaming arrow, so the Romans coated the *Thureoi* in leather and soaked them in water before they went into battle so as to quench the flaming arrows on contact. Paul wrote, “*In all having taken up the Thureoi of faith...*” and what is faith?

In the twentieth century, much of the church began equating faith with the ability to be dumb. Some actually argued that faith was the opposite of reason. But Jesus is The Reason, The Logos, The Truth. We are to have faith in “The Reason.” So faith is not your ability to be stupid or your ability to be smart. Some have thought that faith is figuring it out: *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. So you get faith by taking knowledge, but in the Bible people often take knowledge so they won’t need faith. We think: “If I know enough about God...I won’t have to trust God. I can trust my knowledge of God and manipulate God.”

So, Biblical faith is not your ability to be stupid, and it’s not your ability to be smart. It’s actually not your ability, and that’s what makes it so hard to talk about: It’s yours—you have it, but the moment you’re proud of it it’s not it, and you don’t have it. Biblical faith is trust in another person’s judgment.

Sixteen years ago, we surprised the kids and drove them to Disney World in our minivan. Jonathan, Elizabeth, and I spent the first few days riding the roller coaster in Space Mountain, and then we saw a sign for “Alien Encounter.”

(I told some of you about it several years ago.)

Alien Encounter isn’t really a physical ride because you don’t actually go anywhere, but it is an emotional roller coaster, on which you can get stuck. There were warning signs all over, so Jon (who was nine at the time) kept asking me: “Daddy, will I be OK?” and Elizabeth (who was eight) kept lecturing him on courage and saying, “Look Jon, I’m not afraid. Look Jon, I have faith!”

John wanted my judgment. Elizabeth trusted her own judgment. She had faith in her own faith, which isn’t real faith. A better word for it would be: PRIDE.

Alien Encounter was one of these animatronic rides where they lock you in a chair and feed you a story. After some demonstrations of XS Industries amazing new teleportation technology, we were

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<sup>1</sup> A few months ago, I was praying through the armor with my wife, and she had a vision and it stressed her out. She said, “Peter, I saw the breastplate, I saw the armor, but there was nothing for your back.” Your back was scarred like you had been whipped, like the picture of that slave that you showed in church a few weeks ago.” She was really bothered that God hadn’t covered by backside. She said, “Why is that?” I said, “Well honey, I think God wants me to advance. Roman armor was only for advancing. I think I’m supposed to preach this sermon without fear and not retreat.” In the past I had retreated from the topic of that morning’s sermon; I even had scars to prove it.

ushered into a large room where we were strapped in harnesses surrounding a large glass and metal tube. Some strange looking people appeared on a screen and welcomed us to the main demonstration. One of them explained that he was the chairman of XS Industries and that currently he was on another planet, on the other side of the galaxy. Now, through this amazing new XS teleportation technology, he himself would be beamed through space and materialize in the giant tube in the center of the room...pretty cool!!

Jon and Elizabeth were doing just fine when...all at once...one of the technicians acted as if something had gone terribly wrong. She yelled, "I must re-calibrate! I've locked onto another planet in our transmission path. What is it? It's NOT HIM! It's an alien, and it's carnivorous. The transportation tube is starting to break!" By now, our chairs were rocking. Through the smoke and flashing lights we suddenly saw a huge dragon like creature in the teleportation module.

I looked at Jon; He looked at me; I smiled, and he was OK.

He had faith in me. He knew: "Dad loves me, and this is still part of the ride." He was OK.

I looked at Elizabeth; She was not looking at me; She was not OK; She was looking at the alien, and then I realized: "Oh no! She had bought the lie."

The technician yelled, "People of earth, do not worry as long as the force field beams are on, the alien cannot fly out." Just then, the power fails, and a voice shouts, "It's out! Get the alien back in the tube before it eats somebody!" All at once: You feel alien breath on the back of you neck, you hear the sound of an alien eating someone just above you; you feel liquid drip on your arms and head. Then, Elizabeth started screaming, "We have to get out of here...right now!" I looked over, and I'd never seen such a look before. It was a look of absolute and sheer terror.

I remember thinking, "She actually believes she is going to be eaten by an alien." My heart broke for her. I felt her fear, but I was locked into my chair, so I looked at her and started screaming, "Elizabeth, Elizabeth! Look at me! Look at me! Look at me! It's not real. It's not real. It's not real. It's a lie."

In that moment I couldn't *explain* my judgment:

I couldn't explain how the breath she felt came from air tubes in the back of her chair.

I couldn't explain that the liquid dripping on her head was tap water and not blood.

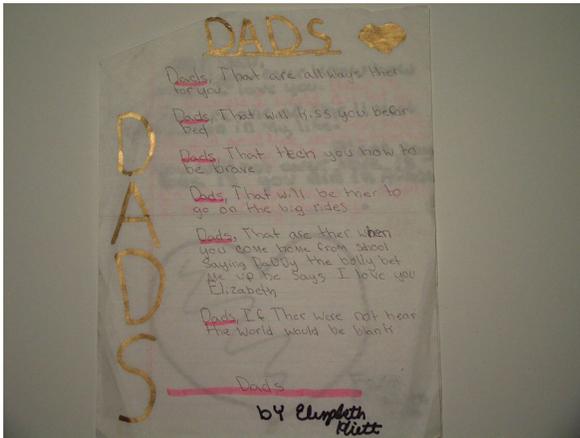
I couldn't explain the gears and levers that shook the chair while the soundtrack played.

I couldn't explain that at that moment she was far safer than she'd been the previous four days riding in the minivan. I couldn't explain it. All I could do was try to get her to trust my judgment more than her own judgment: "It's not real. It's not real."

Now...the air was real, the liquid was real, the shaking was real. All of that was true, but it took the form of a lie. Elizabeth had taken a flaming arrow to the chest, and now everything had taken a false meaning: The air meant alien breath, the liquid meant blood, and the shaking meant that we would all die. Elizabeth believed their little story and forgot the bigger plot. We were still on vacation, according to plan. I couldn't explain my judgment but hoped she'd trust my heart, so I screamed, "Elizabeth, listen to me, look at me." But she couldn't, and she didn't for she was trapped on her own little merry-go-round of fear. It started as a rather attractive lie she told herself and told Jon: "I'm in control," an attractive lie that turned into hell. After the ride was over, it wasn't over for Elizabeth. She sat on my lap shaking and sobbing for a half hour "stuck in a moment" and "imprisoned by a lie."

I think Hell is a merry-go-round of pride, shame, and fear. "Hades" is the Biblical word. It's inhabited with ghosts, under the dominion of the devil. People stuck in space and time, hanging on to their own control. Maybe Hell isn't God's judgment but a person stuck in their own judgment...and that begins here.

I found a video of Alien Encounter on YouTube. It's a bit discombobulating. You hear people screaming and sobbing in terror, and other people laughing hysterically on the very same ride. I really felt bad for taking Elizabeth on that ride, but now she laughs about it. It's one of our best memories. Last week, I shared with you the poem she wrote me:

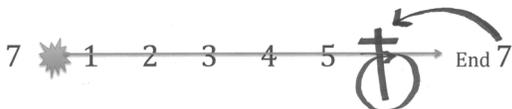


*Dads that are always there for you.  
Dads that will kiss you before bed.  
Dads that teach you how to be brave.  
Dads that will take you on the big rides.  
Dads if they were not here, the world would be blank—nothing.*

On that ride, Elizabeth grew faith...in her dad. Do you have faith in your Dad—The Father? See? Maybe that's why you're on this ride. He wants you to encounter the alien, and not be trapped by the alien but laugh at the alien's lies, with Him—your Dad—our Father in Heaven.

If you asked Elizabeth today, I think she'd tell you: "That was one hell of a ride," and then she'd laugh. On that ride and even after that ride, she grew faith or faith grew in Elizabeth. I mean, she sat on my lap sobbing and shaking for half an hour after the ride as I held her, kissed her, spoke my word to her and entered into her little merry-go-round of fear. And now, Elizabeth's little merry-go-round of fear has been incorporated into our story of love. It's filled with new meaning...expressed as faith.

In Ephesians 4 Paul told us that the Word of God-Jesus descended into the depths of this earth. He descended into the depths of our empty time. He descended into Hell and lead a host of captives free.



At the cross eternity invaded temporality, and meaning invaded chaos. At the cross, the Word was spoken into our void, making your merry-go-round part of His ride: *“Where sin increased grace abounded all the more.”* And if you trust that, “the plan for the fullness of your time,” if you trust Him—Emmanuel, God with you on this ride, you can laugh at the flaming darts of the evil one and enjoy the ride.

So Paul writes, *“In all having taking up the shield of faith with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the alien one—the evil one.”*

So what are the flaming darts?

Well, devil literally means “accuser,” and Jesus said, *“He is the father of lies,”* and he lies *“according to his nature,”* like he himself is a lie. And scripture records some of His lies, and they really are flaming arrows.

In Genesis chapter 3 he appears as a snake and shoots his arrows at the woman. It’s a bit surprising to see how much truth is on those arrows. I mean, their eyes were opened and as the devil said, they were *“made like God, knowing good and evil.”* God even agrees at the end of chapter three and says, *“Look, they have become like us, knowing good and evil.”* Yet they did die: *“The day you eat of it, you will die.”* That’s the sixth day, the evil day. Yet the lie wasn’t really even verbalized. The devil made an accusation which was true: *“You’re not like God,”* and then the devil suggested a solution: *“Take knowledge and seize control; make yourself like God,”* and it was all based on an implied lie, and this is the lie: *“God is not trustworthy.”* That’s the lie.

Next, in Biblical history, the devil tempts Job, and God lets him, for God desires a champion: One who will trust God though it seems he’s been forsaken. Job’s world falls apart, and then the arrows come through His religious friends’—accusations: *“Job you’ve failed,”* and suggestions: *“Job, this is how you gain control.”*

Then we read how Satan tempts David. It’s not sex, drugs, and rock and roll. *“Satan incited David to number Israel.”* (1 Chronicles 21:1) Accusation: *“David, maybe your army isn’t big enough, and that matters because maybe God isn’t big enough.”* Suggestion: *“You better seize control.”*

The Lord is so displeased that the Angel of the Lord stands over Mount Zion, with a sword, ready to destroy Jerusalem until David offers to die in her place. It was on that spot that the temple was build, and on that mountain that Son of David died for you: *“Where sin increased grace abounded all the more.”*

Next, in Zechariah 3, the prophet sees Satan standing in that temple accusing the High Priest whose name is “Joshua” pronounced “Jesus” in English.

Next, we read about Satan in the book of Matthew. Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the Devil. And check out the flaming darts: The devil tempts Jesus to turn stones into bread. Isn’t that good? Satan tempts Jesus to seize control of the good. Then the devil tempts Jesus with scripture.

Did you know that the devil quotes scripture? Maybe he quotes it to you?

The devil knows scriptures but hates the plot.

He hates the meaning and the meaning is Jesus—“God is Salvation.”

The devil quotes scripture, and aren’t scriptures true? Well, they’re certainly accurate.

Maybe that’s what an accusation is: Truth used for evil.

Maybe that’s what a lie is: Stolen truth used for evil.

Jesus said, *“I am the truth.”* So to lie is to kill Him, cut Him up, and use Him for evil.

Well, Satan tempts Jesus with knowledge of truth. But Satan hates the truth. He tempts Jesus to seize control rather than surrender control to His Father. Next, Satan speaks through Peter. Right after Jesus commissions Peter and calls him: *“the rock on which I’ll build my church.”* Peter says, *“Jesus you can’t suffer and die,”* and Jesus says, *“Get behind me Satan.”*

So the flaming arrows can come through talking snakes, calamities, and religious friends, and even your best friend, like Peter. They can even come in the form of scripture and anxieties in your own head. They will contain truths and yet not *be* true (Like bits of fire stolen from the altar.) At the root they’re all the same: A bit of truth like: *“You sinned,”* and then the lie: *“God can’t be trusted, so you better seize control of the ride. You better trust your own judgment.”*

The Old Testament reveals that every child of Adam seized control of the ride and trapped themselves in a prison of pride, shame, and fear...until the last Adam, God’s Champion—the Son of David—our High Priest remained faithful unto death...faithful unto death...such that even though He bore the sin of the world, even though He had descended into our hell, even though He didn’t know why He felt forsaken, He cried out to God and surrendered His Spirit. He is the first Adam to be faithful...*unto death...and the “first born from the dead—first born of all creation.”*

The book of Hebrews tells us that He became flesh: *“...that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death—that is the devil and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.”*

And you know, that’s what Elizabeth feared, on the Alien Encounter Ride. Death is the ultimate loss of control, and we’re dying every day. Fear of death is why we try to seize control of the ride. We think death is the end. We think death is the final judgment. Some even agree that endless death is God’s final judgment on those who haven’t maintained control on the ride.

Well, in Colossians 2 Paul tells us that in Christ’s death and resurrection, God disarmed the forces of evil, for *“we were buried with him in baptism and raised with him through faith.”*

In Galatians 2:20 Paul writes, *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith OF the son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.”* It’s like faith in Paul was the life of *Christ* in Paul or covering Paul.

Imagine the flaming arrows fired at Paul.

Accusation: *“Paul, you persecuted the body of Christ in the name of God.”*

*“Paul, you are the chief of sinners.”*

(Is that true? Well, yes, it’s scripture, written by Paul.)

Suggestion: *“You ought to judge yourself, curse yourself, shut up and die.”*

Yet...these flaming arrows were quenched, for Paul saw something—he saw Someone.

He saw that Jesus had already been cursed on his behalf and that God, His Father, was in Jesus, reconciling the Cosmos to Himself. He saw that God is love and God is a consuming fire, and flaming darts are no problem for consuming fire. He saw that Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead is God’s judgment. Jesus said, *“Now is the judgment of this world.”*

We can’t fully explain God’s judgment, but we can see God’s judgment:

*“Greater love has no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends.”*

In Jesus, your Father laid down His life for you.

In Jesus, your Father takes all your flaming arrows

and delivers your old body of sin to destruction in the flames of His own love,

outside the city in the valley of *Gehenna*.

In Jesus, your Father gives you His own righteousness.

In Jesus, you pass through God's judgment of fire, and now Jesus is your shield.

And you see, the flames can't burn where they've already burned. Jesus is the armor of God that will not burn. (Flaming darts can't hurt the one who dwells in eternal fire.) It was Jesus walking around with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace.

So, what are the flaming darts of the evil one?

They must be stolen fire—stolen truth used for evil. The flaming darts are Satan's judgments that become your judgments. But Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead is God's judgment incarnate in a resurrected, indestructible, and eternal body that includes your body.

Ephesians 2:16 *"He reconciles us both in one body through the cross."*

Ephesians 2:10 *"The plan for the fullness of time to unite all things under one head in Christ Jesus."*

That's God's judgment.

You won't be burned by Satan's judgments if you trust God's judgment. He's sitting right next to you on the ride.

And so, I looked at Jon and smiled. He looked at me and enjoyed the ride. I looked at Elizabeth and began yelling, "Look at me, look at me, look at me!" (In the moment, I knew I couldn't explain my judgment, but if she saw my face, she could trust my judgment.)

Faith is not your ability to be stupid or your ability to be smart.

Faith is not your ability.

Faith is trust in Another's judgment, and you can't be proud of it because then...

it's not their judgment...but your judgment.

Trust is the product of someone proving themselves trustworthy. Faith is the product of someone being faithful to you. History is the story of God's faithfulness and the creation of your faith. The ride creates faith, and faith is how you travel. So when the flaming darts start coming your way, look at your Father... and where's your Father? [Peter turns and looks at the cross.]

On the sixth day, Friday, after communion, Jesus said, *"If you've seen me, you've seen the Father."* (John 14:9) *"From this time forth, you've seen Him, and you know Him."* (John 14:7) Jesus is the presence of your Father, and the judgment of your Father. That's why you should read your Bible; that's why you should go to church; that's why you should focus on Jesus. Jesus is the presence of your Father. Jesus is your Father's judgment, and in the moment of His crucifixion, He jumped on all our merry-go-rounds, for He bore all of our sin, making all our merry-go-rounds part of His ride, proving Himself faithful in every way, and now in space and time, He's showing you.

So, when the flaming darts start coming your way, look to Jesus...crucified and risen from the dead. People may quote scriptures that fill you with fear, but look at Him, Jesus is the plot. People may say all sorts of things about Him, but you know Him. Look at Him...how He loves you, and He's risen...See! God controls the ride. People may teach you to run from God's judgment, but look at Him, He is God's judgment, and *"IT IS FINISHED."*

For too long, the institutionalized church has acted like faith comes from fearing God's judgment, when faith comes from hearing God's judgment—His Word. God's judgment creates faith, for God's judgment reveals that God is faithful. For too long we've been speaking Satan's lies and creating theological merry-go-rounds of fear. We say, "You're saved *IF* you decide to be saved...from your bad decisions" or "You might be saved *IF* God decided to save you from your bad decisions, and you'll know if He's decided to save you because *you'll* decide that He has decided." NO God's decision is eternal, and God's decision is Jesus. God's judgment is salvation, and *my* judgment is damnation. Good News:

God's judgment saves me from my own judgment. Good News: God is in control of this ride. When I see that and hear that, I have faith, I let go, I lose my life and find my life; I live each moment of my life and it must look something like this:

Clip from *Parenthood*

[Mr. and Mrs. Buckman are at one of their children's plays. All the children are dressed in dwarf costumes and are running around chaotically. Mrs. Buckman smiles. A woman in the audience looks at Mr. Buckman and yells, "He's ruining the play (referring to the Buckman's son). He's ruining the whole play!" The play is falling apart as children begin misbehaving, arguing, and pulling the set apart. Mr. Buckman is sitting in his seat. The clatter of wheels on a track and happy screams can be heard. From our perspective, it appears Mr. Buckman is starting to go on a roller coaster ride; he starts swerving from left to right. People around Mr. Buckman are smiling and laughing. He covers his eyes. He then slowly uncovers them, and the noise of the roller coaster ride subsides. Now the entire set is falling down and children are hitting each other. Mr. Buckman smiles, then laughs. He sees his daughter put a beard on his son. Smiling, he turns and notices his wife who has been smiling all along. His love for her is evident. She is smiling and laughing, he joins her as he begins to embrace the "ride" of his own life.

You may be thinking: "Yeah, that's cute, but my life includes far more trauma than a ruined children's play. It's a ruined life that ends in death." Well remember, your life is to be an experience of Christ's life, a communion with His death and resurrection, and that's one hell of a ride.

Almost ten years ago, I watched my father die.



I gave him communion saying: "This cup is the covenant in His blood; drink the cup." I put it to His lips, He drank, and the last thing he said to me was, "Thank you." Since then, for me it's been one hell of a ride that strangely resembles my father's ride, and even Jesus' ride...with a lot of flaming arrows and too often they stick.

Just before I was publicly tried and defrocked by my denomination, one Sunday at church six years ago, having given communion, my wife grabbed me and said, "I saw Dad." (I've told you before, but I'm still coming to grips with what it means.) "He was standing right in front of us, and he was so alive, and his eyes were filled with fire. He was so very excited." You see, his face said, "What a ride, what a ride!" Susan continued, "Peter, he held out this bowl and said, 'Susan and Peter, do not be afraid to drink the cup the Lord has for you,' and then he disappeared."

For six years, I've been pondering what that means. I think it means: "Peter, don't be afraid to live your life. Have faith and enjoy the ride. What a ride!"

## **Communion**

On the sixth day, that night, the beginning of the sixth day, He took bread, and He broke it and said, "This is my body given to you, take and eat." And He took the cup saying, "This cup is the covenant, the eternal covenant, in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins; drink of it all of you, and do this in remembrance of me."

And by the way, death is NOT the end of the ride.  
Why does the church keep threatening people with endless death?

1 Corinthians 15:26 Paul writes: "*The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*"  
Verse 24: "*Then comes the end.*" Who is the end? Jesus. And He is the life. Jesus is the End; He's the Life, and this table is an altar of eternal fire. So we invite you to come to the table. Come to an altar of eternal fire and remember: You have been judged, and you are eternally forgiven. Believe the gospel, in Jesus' name, Amen.

## **Benediction**

Now, you may be thinking: "If that's true and I was judged at the cross, and judged from the foundation of the world. If God has already made up His mind about me...well, why not sin...that grace may abound?" Paul would say to you: "You don't get it! To sin is to trap yourself on the ride. At the root of all sin is a refusal to look at your Father, who loves you, because you don't see Him because you're trapped in your own fears. So, you may be saying, "What do I do if I'm trapped in my sin, and my fears, and my shame?" Look at your Father! And where's your Father? "*If you've seen me, you've seen the Father,*" said Jesus.

So, right now, some of you have flaming arrows sticking in your side, your back, and they burn. Well, let's look at our Father. Close your eyes, and ask the Lord: "Lord, what are the flaming arrows that I've believed? What are the arrows that stick in my flesh?" You know...a lot of times it's hard for me to figure out what they are, but if I just look at Him, they drop away.

So, you're standing there...maybe you know what the arrows are maybe you're not sure. Now, just picture this: Jesus is in front of you. Lift your eyes and look at Him. There are wounds in His feet, wounds in His hands, wounds on His side, but He's not angry. He set everything up so He could do this for you. Do you see how much He loves you? The Father made up His mind about you long before you ever began riding the ride. How silly to think that something on the ride could change His mind, for He is the One who exists beyond space and time. Look at Him. Do you know what He is? He is consuming fire manifest before you. Walk into the fire. Don't fear the Consuming Fire.

And you see, once you learn to not fear the consuming fire, once you trust the Father's judgment...who cares about Satan's judgment? In Jesus' name, you have been judged, and you *are* forgiven...from the foundation of the world. Now, *be* forgiven in your own mind, your own heart. Your Father loves you, and *He* controls the ride. In Jesus' name, believe the eternal gospel. In the Revelation it says it's an *eternal* gospel; believe it, Amen.

*Disclaimer: The following document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*