

The Uncut Pages of Life

***Philippians 3:13-14** – “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,” “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

I. INTRODUCTION – BOOKS, BOOKS, AND MORE BOOKS

- From my earliest memories, I have been a reader. I have fought the British with George (Washington, that is). I have fought b'ars (not bears) with Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. I have spent the winters pelting fur with William Cody, otherwise known as Buffalo Bill. I have spent time with the Hardy Boys. I have fought on the coasts of Normandy in D-Day as Steven Ambrose took me there. I have found the exciting world of fiction with Cronin, Douglas, Archer, and Francis, among many others. Books have made me dream, made me think, and made me hunger for a life that would be spent in diligent service.
- Some time ago, I purchased a set of books entitled “Little Journeys Into the Lives of the Great” by Hubbard. It took me two years to find this set of books and I felt like I had taken part of a major accomplishment once I secured them. Since they came at the recommendation of my brother, I thought that I would find him a set also. Several months later, I found another set for him.
- Both sets of these books are fourteen volumes and basically take great historical figures of the past and boil down their lives into a single characteristic that the author felt made them to be the men that they were. Some were noted for their ingenuity, others for their honesty, others for their courage, but in reading all of these men's lives, one understands that every man has been gifted in some area to do something with his life.
- Mark's set of books were a little more unique than were mine. Even though both sets were published in the early 1900's, Mark's had not been read entirely through. The reason that I knew this was because there were still several pages that had not been separated.
- In the old days, when the publishers would publish a book, the printer would use both sides of the paper and then the paper would be folded into a fan-fold method and then sewn in so the center binding would support the book. But in

the sewing process, the sheet would be folded in such a way that the first reader would need a pen-knife with him so that he could cut the pages as he read them.

- In Mark's set of books, I discovered that there were probably 15-20 pages in the fourteen volumes that had never even been read since their days of being published. The uncut pages merely defined that they had basically been unread.
- When I discovered this, something in my mind clicked. I had read a story more than ten years ago about the uncut pages of life. It is told by Roy Angell and it relates a story that emphasizes the tragedy of the more important things in life that are left undone. **It goes like this:**
- One day a boy came to his father and said, "Dad, it's just six weeks before I will be going to college and I was wondering if you were going to give me a going-away present. If you are, I have a suggestion to make." The father smiling answered, 'What is your suggestion, son?" The boy's eyes sparkled as he replied, "Dad, could you find me a second hand Ford? One that I could take with me and paint the sides crazy-like? " Still smiling, the father replied, "Wouldn't you rather have a brand-new Ford? One that nobody else has ever owned?" The boy's eyes grew wide with excitement at the thought. "Could I have a new one, Dad? Could you afford it?" Thoughtfully the father answered, "Maybe you can, but I'll not promise you definitely today."
- The next night when the father came in from the office, he brought the boy a book and asked him to read every page of it as a personal favor. The leaves of the book had not yet been cut. (Years ago, books were bound in a fanfold style where when bound together, every other page on it's outer edge was left uncut. You had to cut them yourself.) The father emphasized the fact. "Cut them as you read them."
- A week went by before the son asked his dad about the car. Immediately the father asked him about the book. How far had he read? "Only about half of it," he replied. Once more the father said, "Son, please read it all just as soon as you can." The boy went to his room and read awhile. As the days went by the son asked his father repeatedly about the car. Every time the father answered, "I haven't quite made up my mind. How about the book.?" Each time the son would say, "I'll go read right away."

- Then came the last night before college opened, and the boy sat down on the arm of his father's chair. Seriously he said, "Dad, I don't understand you this time. You and I have always been such pals and have always been so frank with each other. Tell me why I didn't get the car." The father responded, "Son, go bring me the book that I asked you to read." The boy stammered as he handed it over to his dad, "Dad, I read all but the last few pages."
- The father took out his knife and cut the remaining uncut pages in the back of the book. From between two of those pages a check made out to a local car dealership slipped out and fluttered to the floor. It was payment in full for a brand new Ford. The boy snatched it up and started dancing and shouting in glee. He suddenly stopped and stood very still as it dawned on him that the check had been there for him all along. Because he had failed to do what his father had asked, he had missed the joy of owning the new car for a whole month. His hands trembled as he tore the check up into bits and threw it into the fire. He turned to his dad, with tears streaming down his face, he said, "Dad, I don't deserve it."
- The father pulled him down onto the arm of the chair and spoke these words to his boy. "We miss a lot of things in life, son, when we leave uncut the pages of life that we ought to cut. I believe you have learned your lesson; so we will go get the car. It's been waiting for you for a month, full of gas and oil, ready to go."

II. THE MATTER OF THE UNCUT PAGES OF LIFE

- Life is very precious and if would we not give up all, with an emphasis on all, there are many things we would surrender rather than surrender to. A life that refuses to surrender will live under the tyranny of many things.
- One young man who was a Quaker was quoted: I shall be along this path of life but once, and so I must do all the kindness I can and all the good I can."

- That is exactly what Paul was saying long before the young Quaker ever opened his mouth. You must not allow any pages of your life to remain uncut.
- Consider what the following Scriptures allude to concerning life:

Psalm 90:9 – “. . . . we spend our years as a tale that is told.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 – “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:” “A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;” “A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;” “A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;” “A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;” “A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;” “A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;” “A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.”

A. The Apostle Paul’s Spirit

- The Apostle Paul’s attitude embodied everything about having such an attitude toward life. He wanted nothing in life to hinder his walk with God. Therefore, everything that he approached about life and the work of God was accomplished at a full tilt.
- If there is one single act in his life about accomplishing this it would be his attitude toward going to Rome. He was bound for Rome

B. Our Uncut Pages That Must Be Opened

- I want more than anything in this life to be useful to God, I want to influence men in their service toward God.

- When the last bit of life has been squeezed out of my body, when the last bit of breath has been exhaled, I want my life to have been an honor to God, I want my life however brief or lengthy it may be to be an exhalation of worship, purpose, and victory.
- But to do that, there are still some uncut pages of life that must be opened.

1. **The Page of Learning**

- The quest and hunger for learning must be discovered. The Word of God is the highest book that we may study. None have the ability to settle our lives like the Word of God.

***2 Timothy 2:15** – “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*

***Psalms 119:11** – “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”*

***Psalms 119:105** – “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”*

2. **The Pages of Vision and Dreams Must be Opened**

- Dreams are not the lethargy of the soul, but rather the steam to press and push us into the place that God desires for us to go.
- It was the dreams of Joseph that took him from the dungeon and to the diamonds.

- ***The Impossible Dream -- Joe Darion***

*To dream the impossible dream,
To fight the unbeatable foe,
To bear with unbearable sorrow,
To run where the brave dare not go.
To reach the unreachable star!*

*This is my quest,
To follow that star,
No matter who hopeless,
No matter how far;
To fight for the right, the unrightable wrong
To love pure and chaste from afar,
To try when your arms are too weary,
To run where the brave dare not go.
To reach the unreachable star!
To dream the impossible dream!*

- The page of vision opens us up to work, to challenge, to blood, sweat and tears. Don't give me some smooth way. Give me the demanding teachers. Give me the homework. Give me the late nights. Give me the tired body and weary mind. It is out of those situations that the greatest fruits of our lives are grown. -Parent's don't give up on your children. Don't give up on your husband or wife. Don't give in to the challenge. Soar higher with the vision that captures your soul.

3. **The Page of Prayer**

- **Luke 11:5-8** – The Illustration of the Friend at Midnight. The dogs are barking. The man doesn't want to be bothered.

4. **The Page of Sacrifice**

- **Genesis 22:1-14** – Abraham offering Isaac as a sacrifice. God is quite aware of our sacrifice

The place of sacrifice became the place of provision:

- ▶ The little cruse of oil and barrel of meal.
- ▶ The cloud the size of a man's hand.
- ▶ The little boy's lunch.
- ▶ Rahab's scarlet cord.
- ▶ Samson's jawbone of the mule.

- That is why sometimes that we must praise God on credit. Praise him for something He has not did yet.

5. The Page of Worship

- The Alabaster Box of ointment – Found in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 7. There was something about this act of worship.
- Don't hoard your life away from all the hurts and disappointments and the difficulties, it is those things that creates feeling inside of us.
- That one single act of this woman, caused her to find a place in the history of the church. It became a memorial.
- What if she would have hoarded away her worship and never allowed the seal or the box to be broken? Nothing would have happened. She would have lived the rest of her life with a "what-if".
- Instead her single action changed the entire scope of the room. What is that fragrance?

6. The Page of Victory

- Jehoshaphat's great victory told of in 2 Chronicles 20. There were overwhelming odds and difficulties

***2 Chronicles 20:22** – "And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten."*

- We don't really grasp the concept of what happens when we worship. There are things going on right now outside of this building because of worship.
 - **Sing whether you feel like it or not:**
 - I Feel Like Traveling On, I Feel Like Traveling On, Oh Yes I Feel Like Traveling On.

- When Pangs of death seized on my soul, unto the Lord I cried,
and praise the Lord, the work was done, I would not be denied.
.....
 - Won't it be wonderful there, having no burdens to bear,
joyously singing with heart bells all ringing, won't it be
wonderful there.
 - Some glad morning when this life is o'er, I'll fly away, to a Land
where joy shall never end, I'll Fly Away.
 - What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting
arms, I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, leaning on
the everlasting arms.
- Our faith begins to rise when we invest our hearts and mouths in singing
the songs of Zion.