

“Two Home Runs and Four Errors”

“If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1John 1:10 - 2:1).

In 1986, Bob Brenley was playing third base for the San Francisco Giants. In the fourth inning of a game against the Atlanta Braves, Brenley made an error on a routine ground ball. Four batters later he kicked away another grounder. And then while he was scrambling after the ball, he threw wildly past home plate, trying to get the runner there. Two errors on the same play. A few minutes later he muffed yet another play to become the first player in the twentieth century to make four errors in one inning.

Now, those of us who have made very public errors in one situation or another can easily imagine how he felt during that long walk off the field at the end of that inning. But then, in the bottom of the fifth, Brenley hit a home run. Then, in the seventh, he hit a bases-loaded single, driving in two runs and tying the game. Then, in the bottom of the ninth, Brenley came up to bat again, with two outs. He ran the count to three and two and then hit a massive home run into the left field seats to win the game for the Giants. Brenley's score card for that day came to three hits and five at bats, two home runs, four errors, four runs allowed, four runs driven in, including the game-winning run. (From "A Theology of Baseball," Preaching Today, Tape No. 115) Life is much like that mentioned above regarding Bob Brenley. When we sin, we should never give up or lose heart, but should repent, pick ourselves up, and strive to do better.

“Don't Do Anything”

“Also do not take to heart everything people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. For many times, also, your own heart has known that even you have cursed others” (Ecc. 7:21-22).

Once a man who had been slandered by a newspaper came to Edward Everett and asked him what to do about it. "Don't do anything," Everett advised. "Half the people who bought the paper never saw the article. Half of those who saw it did not read it. Half of those who read it did not understand it. Half of those who understood it did not believe it. And half of those who believed it are of no account anyway."

1Peter 2:12 says, “Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

“I Want Out”

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools...” (Rom. 1:20-22).

The story is told of an experiment involving a young chimpanzee who always tried to slip out of his cage when the door was opened. Some atheistic scientists, who were working hard in trying to discover the origin of man, thought this young chimp was very intelligent, and was a good specimen to teach communication skills. For fourteen years, project directors labored diligently and patiently with this chimpanzee, providing things in its cage to enable it to form certain syllables. Finally, the day arrived when it seemed that the chimpanzee was actually going to construct a sentence from the symbols it had been learning. Word went out, and other scientists crowded into the room and gathered around the cage. At last, the first message from the world's most pampered, most cared for, most patiently trained chimpanzee was about to come forth. Millions of our tax dollars had been spent, and many, many years of patient labor had gone into this project. The scientists could hardly contain themselves as they pressed around the cage. They watched breathlessly as symbols were formed into words and into a sentence. The chimpanzee said, "I want out!" (From Paul Harvey)

After this, the chimp soon forgot what he had learned and was never able to form another sentence. Thus, the scientists after all their efforts only learned what had been clearly demonstrated in the first place and, similarly, God's creation forever substantiates His eternal power and Godhead.

“Watching Over Me”

It was a sad day in May 2003 when “The Old Man of the Mountain” broke apart and slid down the mountainside. This 40-foot profile of an old man’s face, carved by nature in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, had long been an attraction to tourists, a solid presence for residents, and the official state emblem. It was written about by Nathaniel Hawthorne in his short story *The Great Stone Face*. Some nearby residents were devastated when The Old Man fell. One woman said, “I grew up thinking that someone was watching over me. I feel a little less watched-over now.”

There are times when a dependable presence disappears. Something or someone we’ve relied on is gone, and our life is shaken. Maybe it’s the loss of a loved one, or a job, or good health. The loss makes us feel off-balance, unstable. We might even think that God is no longer watching over us.

But “the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry” (Ps. 34:15). He “is near to those who have a broken heart” (v.18). He is the Rock whose presence we can always depend on (Deut. 32:4). God’s presence is real. He continually watches over us. He is rock-solid. The question is not where is God, but where isn’t He?

The Influence of a Dad

On a sign in the optometrist’s office: “Eighty percent of everything children learn in their first 12 years is through their eyes.” I began thinking of all that children visually process through reading, television, film, events, surroundings, and observing the behavior of others, especially their families. On this Father’s Day, we often think about the powerful influence of a dad.

Paul urged fathers not to frustrate their children to the point of anger, but to “bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Think of the powerful example of a dad whose behavior and consistency inspire admiration from his children. He’s not perfect, but he’s moving in the right direction. A great power for good is at work when our actions reflect the character of God, rather than distort it.

That’s challenging for any parent, so it’s no coincidence that Paul urges us to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (v.10). Only through His strength can we reflect the love and patience of our heavenly Father. We teach our children far more from how we live than by what we say. We honor fathers who not only gave us life, but who also show us how to live.

Forward Progress

Two of Australia’s indigenous creatures, kangaroos and emus, have something in common—they seldom move backward. Kangaroos, because of the shape of their body and the length of their strong tail, can bounce along with forward movement, but they cannot shift easily into reverse. Emus can run fast on their strong legs, but the joints in their knees seem to make backward movement difficult. Both animals appear on Australia’s coat of arms as a symbol that the nation is to be ever moving forward and making progress.

The apostle Paul called for a similar approach to the life of faith in his letter to the Philippians: “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (3:13-14).

While it is wise to learn from the past, we shouldn’t live in the past. We cannot redo or undo the past, but by God’s grace we can press forward and serve God faithfully today and in the future. The life of faith is a journey forward as we become like Christ. I will go anywhere—provided it is forward.