

Tarzan vs. Indiana Jones:
A message prepared by Brett Sisley
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As many of you have gathered by now, my family and I love to watch movies. We don't do cable, but we do Netflix, Amazon, and Blu-ray. There's a new Tarzan movie out. Have you seen it? It's pretty good, in my opinion. What's kind of cool about this rendition is that they've situated the fictional story of Tarzan within historically-correct timeframe. And while much of the story is new, the creators have managed to carry forward some of the more enduring elements of the aging tale.

Several months ago, I began to consider of aspects of Christian life that led me to images captured in a few films. It might seem strange to find such images played out in secular pop-culture. But, this is often how visualization works for me.

Take Tarzan for instance. You and I don't usually go around swinging from tree to tree. It's not our normal mode of transportation. Walking is. Yet despite this fact, I think that a lot of times our walking looks like tree-swinging. I think there's a little Tarzan in us all. Let me tell you what I mean...

Walking is frequently used in the Bible to describe the way we live our lives. "Walking," in this sense, describes our movement from day to day. How we conduct ourselves, what we think about affects our day-to-day. Romans 6:4, for example, states:

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

Those of us who have been buried with Christ by baptism into death have also been raised with Him to walk in newness of life. "Walk," in this sense describes a manner of living. Walking in newness of life is living life a new way. Those of us who are "in Christ" are new creations—we're not the same as we used to be; and here in Romans, Paul reminds us that it should show! There should be a marked difference in our day-to-day after becoming a Christian.

But what does this mean, *Christian?* Often times, "being a Christian" can devolve into two lists of activities: one composed of our understanding of "bad," and the other "good." And for reference, the kind of things we're talking about are things like: lying or not lying, hating or not hating, being stingy vs. generous, etc. For some, the lists might look more like: drinking or not drinking, smoking or not-smoking, having sex outside of marriage or abstaining.

You know what I'm talking about, right? Now, please hear me: I'm not saying it's wrong to have a sense of right and wrong; much less that there's something amiss with putting it into practice. I'm just saying... For many Christians, this kind of mindset goes a long way towards defining their Christianity; their "walk" has a lot to do with dotting I's and crossing T's.

I want us to consider something far greater this morning. Turn with me to 1 Peter 4, verse 1

*“Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,”*² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.³ For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.⁴ With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;”

With language similar to that of Paul, the Apostle Peter here emphasizes the connection of Christians with Christ through death. “*Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking...*” he says. And what is this way of thinking? It is: not living—or walking—in the flesh for human passions; but rather: living “**for** the will of God.”

Sounds reminiscent of the lists I mentioned a moment ago, doesn't it? On the one list you have the *bad*: living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, etc. And on the other list you have...what? Hmm? (PAUSE) I mean, if all of these bad things are on one list...what things are on the other?

Read through verses 1 and 2. The *good* that we're supposed to identify and practice isn't simply *not* living in sensuality, *not* living in vile passions, *not* getting drunk. The good stuff that's supposed to characterize our daily walk is: *to be “armed with the same way of thinking as Christ,”* and to “*live for the will of God.*” Can you see that? We don't get kudos for not indulging the flesh in lawless living. Us staying away from these things is assumed.

Think of it this way: how much time to the Gospel writers spend telling us that Jesus didn't get drunk, didn't commit fornication, didn't lie, cheat, and steal? Not much, right? The only time I can think of is when read of Him being tempted by the devil in the wilderness.

So here's the point: Jesus did what came naturally for Him as the Son of God. It wasn't natural for Him to lie, cheat, and steal. It wasn't natural for Him to commit fornication. I'm not saying He wasn't tempted—but that **His actions reflected who He was**. And because the lives we live are lived...*in Him*, it's as natural for us to practice evil as it is for a dead person to go to a bar and get drunk. Do you get that? It's just not us anymore. Having the mind of Christ—like Bryan shared last week—and living for the will of God is **who we now are**. To the same degree that we're no longer characterized by sinful, lustful pursuits—we are *now* to be characterized by Godliness.

What I'm trying to get across here is that, as a Christian, there is no such thing as an identity of “not doing.” Who we are—how we walk has to be associated with some-*thing* real. It's like trying to add with negative numbers: any negative number added to any other negative number is going to be...guess what...a negative number; they will never add up to something more than zero. Finding your identity is Christ means there has to be something real in the positive column. To take it a step further, if your identity waivers, or is a bit unclear—it might just be the result of a low number in the identity ledger.

Here's the \$10,000 question: How much tangible, above-zero evidence of the mind of Christ and will of God is evident in your life? Think of yourself, think of preachers, think of teachers, friends, anyone—and consider: what makes them *like*-Christ?

I'm not trying to call anyone out here. I'm just simply trying to make a point; and here it is: **Christians are called to *do* like Christ.** *Not* doing “what those bad people do out there” isn't what we're called to. It isn't what the Great Commission commends us to. Not doing is... nothing.

Turn to 1 Jn. 4, verse 16. To arm ourselves with the same mind that was in Christ—and to live for the will of God requires that we first know something about who God is. Look at verses 16-18:

“So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”¹⁷ By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear...”

The first thing we need to know in order to live—or walk-out—the will of God is **the love that God has for us.** Do you know this love? Knowing first-hand the love of God is the first step to walking out our new life in Christ. Ephesians 3:14-19 reads:

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

God's love for us is so great that Paul bows his knees to pray: Please... Father... Strengthen your people with your Holy Spirit so they will be able to comprehend the magnitude of your love for them in Christ. To know this love, Paul says, is to be filled with **all the fullness of God.** Wow. Wow. That's a whole lot better than not-drinking, isn't it? A whole lot more real, and a whole lot more satisfying. Love is something you can build your life around.

Now let's turn back to 1 John 4, and pick it up at verse 17—because there is still more “above-zero,” walk of faith stuff we need to grasp: Verse 17 says:

“By this is love perfected in us, so we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as He is, so also are we in this world.”

“By this...” By what? By knowing God—look at verse 16—and believing the love He has for us, we realize that: God is love! **Abiding in, walking day-to-day in, this love is—quite literally—abiding in God, and is testimony to the fact that the Creator God lives in us.** Somebody *better* say AMEN!!!

So, verse 17 builds on this crazy awesome realization by saying “By this...” *Because* God abides in you (and God is love) love itself has been perfected in you. AND, the love of God being perfected in you, looks like, is demonstrated through, us having boldness on the day of judgment. We don't have to be afraid anymore! Because the love of God is perfected in us. God Himself is loving us, and the world through us, so perfectly that we no longer

fear...anything. We don't fear the devil's worst. We aren't afraid of who's in the oval office—or trying to get there. We don't fear. WE LOVE.

And don't miss the last bit of verse 17. It follows a semi-colon, which means it's adding further definition to what comes before. It reads:

“because as He is, so are we in this world.”

As He is. As sure as Christ lives... Because Christ lives... In the manner in which Christ lives... So. Are. We.

Being a Christ-ian is about so much more than lists. It's about being filled with all the fullness of God. And being filled with the fullness of God looks like mind-blowing, fear-destroying, life-changing L.O.V.E. Do we love people? Is love our knee-jerk reaction? When we say or consider: “How's the walk going?” what we really mean is: “How's the love flowing?” The substance of what we do, the rationale for doing X and *not* doing Y is for Christians, LOVE. In the Apostle Paul's words:

“...the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

We are “controlled by the love of Christ.” Controlled. Christ-ians live for the sake of Christ. And what does that look like? He tells us in verse 18:

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

Living for the sake of Christ, the “Christian walk,” is us—like Christ—imploring the world: Be reconciled to God! How do we do this? By loving them. Sometimes this looks like abstaining from drink. Sometimes loving the lost looks like not going to a party, or engaging in perverted talk. But that's not the extent of it! Loving someone is giving of ourselves to and for them. It demands sacrifice. Love isn't about us. Love is about a personal destination. It goes. Love goes; and it goes, and it goes and it goes. The Christian walk is walk of love.

I want to show you a short video clip. You might have seen or heard that the title to today's message is “Tarzan vs. Indiana Jones.” And, sitting here you might be wondering how the Christian walk relates to either of these fictional, Hollywood characters. Well...in my mind, they do! Please bear with me here, because you're going to be blessed if you do.

PLAY VIDEO CLIP 1

Probably everyone here has heard of Tarzan. He is the “Lord of the Jungle.” A baby, stranded in the jungle, rescued and raised by apes—he is the epitome of the *noble savage*. The two most well-know features of this ape-man are his call (HAVE WAYNE ROLL AUDIO CLIP 1), and the fact that he swings through the trees on vines. This second feature of Tarzan is what brings him here today.

According to Hollywood lore, Tarzan's preferred mode of transportation is swinging—swinging as opposed to walking. When he walks, he does so like the apes that raised him. Walking for Tarzan is awkward. He's no longer the man he was born to be. And as I say these words, you are perhaps beginning to see the tie in: **Tarzan's daily walk is more a process of managed catastrophes.** Each time he grabs a vine—in-between the two—looms the jungle floor, far beneath. And what if one of the hanging vines were to break? No so great. But he does it. And so far, it's worked out pretty well for him.

Something else about Tarzan is his isolation. Aside from Jane, and the company of apes, he has little-to-no interaction with others of his kind. "His kind" is kind of a fuzzy point itself. But this doesn't seem to bother him. **For Tarzan, progress is measured one swing at a time.** He goes from place to place. But he's really not concerned about going *somewhere*.

I think there's a little Tarzan in each of us. Maybe a little more in some than others. Wayne, for instance, seems very ape like to me. Or maybe Matt... Seriously though, when it comes to walking-out the Christ-life, it's all too easy to think firstly about ourselves. Right? What am I doing? What am I *not* doing? As I said earlier: there's nothing wrong with this. But as we saw in 1 John: walking this earth the way Christ did means loving. And loving requires others.

Maybe, like Tarzan, we've forgotten to walk the way we were designed to. As a result, maybe we've taken to swinging: trying to practice our faith by managing one catastrophe after another. God! Help me! I'm going to fall! The ground is long ways away. And there are viscous beasts down there waiting, mouths watering, to devour me! Because He is love, and because He is God, He hears us—and He saves us. **But is this what He sent His Son to live, die, and rise again for? Living from one perilous life-swing to another? Losing touch with who He created us to be?**

I can't help but feel like God, our loving heavenly Father, sits up there, hearing us cry (ROLL AUDIO CLIP 1) and sighs: Oh, son. Oh, daughter. If you only knew... I've got so much more for you. But you've got to get beyond yourself! You've got to lose yourself to find your purpose. Open yourself to me. Open yourself to my love. And watch fear drown to death. Walk the way I made you to: one step at a time. Love, because you are loved.

It's a beautiful truth. God's sharing with us this morning. It's for all of us. It's for me. This is love "*being perfected in us.*" It not only irradiates fear, it spills out of our lives and attacks fear in others. Love is a fear-seeking missile. And as far as fulfilling the Great Commission: Love Never Fails.

Like the well-known commercial, ask yourself: What's in *your* witness?

Our other guest today is Indiana Jones. What I'd like us to do is compare the way Indie walks with Mr. Tarzan. Indie doesn't swing on vines. He does sometimes swing on his whip. Nevertheless, for the most part, Indiana Jones gets around by walking. I want to play another video clip—this one from the movie, "The Last Crusade." If you've see this movie, you will no doubt remember this scene.

ROLL VIDEO CLIP 2