

Fil-Am Community Church
Pastor Rolly Estabillo
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LIVING DANGEROUSLY
(The Risks and Rewards of Being a Christian)
Key Verse: 2 Cor. 4:8-11

Have you seen the movie “The Year of Living Dangerously?” Or maybe you’ve heard about it. It came out many years ago and starred Mel Gibson. Well, I’m not going to talk about it or ask you to watch it. I just thought that that phrase, “living dangerously” is an apt description of the way we live as Christians.

Living dangerously, that’s how we can characterize the way we live as Christians. It’s not easy to be a Christian. Someone who tells you otherwise doesn’t know the words of Jesus in John 16:33, “*In this world you will have trouble.*” Christians are as susceptible to troubles as people who don’t know Jesus. And sometimes even more. Because aside from financial troubles, relationship troubles, health troubles, etc., we can also have persecution troubles. It may come from your own family or friends. In other countries, like China and Saudi Arabia, it comes from the government and your neighbors.

Some preachers on TV, however, make it seem like being a Christian should be like lying in a bed of roses. That you just say “I’m rich” then you’ll be rich. Or “I’m healed” then you’ll be healed. And if you are not,

you lack faith. Joni Earickson-Tada had been paralyzed since she was 17 and prayed for healing but God did not heal her. Did she lack faith? The apostle Paul implored the Lord to remove his thorn in the flesh, whatever it is, and God didn't answer his request. Did he lack faith?

Friends, be careful of the Name-It-And-Claim-It or positive confession teaching. If there's anything positive that you need to confess, it is that "Jesus Christ is Lord." Amen? **Our words don't make things happen, it is God who makes things happen.** So, don't put faith in your words, but put faith in God's Word. If you are attracted to the Word-Faith Movement. I suggest you read the book "Christianity in Crisis" by Hank Hanegraaff, the Bible Answer Man, wherein he exposes the excesses of this movement.

Anyway, what really rankles me are those who claim that a Christian's life is a bed of roses. But I would agree with that if they said that it's a bed of roses with all the thorns.

It's dangerous to live as a Christian. **Because it poses some serious risks.** But Jesus never called us to live a life of comfort and luxury. He called us to **suffer, endure**, and to **carry our cross daily**. He says in Luke 9:23, *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

Despite the risks, it has its rewards nevertheless. Because the Christian life may be dangerous but it is victorious. After saying that we'll have trouble in this world, Jesus assures us, "*But take heart! **I have overcome the world.***" And the apostle Paul tells us in Romans 8:37, "*We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*" Let me now mention a few of those risks that we encounter. First,

I. YOU RISK LOSING YOUR MONEY

You won't get rich by becoming a Christian. In fact, you may even lose your money in the process. But, of course, we know that there are some wealthy Christians. You may know personally a wealthy Christian. If you know one, let me know. In these tough economic times, it'll be nice to have a friend like that.

Seriously, there is nothing wrong with money. And money is a necessity in this world. But, God may ask you to lose your money for him. In early 1991, while I was working in Australia, God impressed upon me to undergo missionary training. That meant leaving my job because he directed me to a Discipleship Training School under YWAM in Hawaii. I struggled to obey, even though that was Hawaii, because at the time I was sending money to the Philippines, and it was some amount. It was to pay for the mortgage, for utilities, for schooling of my siblings. If I stopped working, what would happen to

my siblings? My parents were here in the States already. They were living with my sister and her family in California but they didn't have enough to send. Being single and eldest brother, I felt obligated to do it. I really worried even though a number of people confirmed God's call in my life. Yet, I couldn't say "yes" to God that easily.

Then I learned that my younger sister was being hired as a singer by a Restaurant owner in Japan. I told myself, "If she goes to Japan, then she can take over the expenses. So, I'll wait till she leaves then I'll leave for Hawaii." I told her about my plan and she agreed.

The problem is, she couldn't leave because she couldn't get a visa for some reason. I was in a dilemma. If I said "no" to God, I'll be disobeying. If I said "yes" I couldn't send money anymore. In the end I said "yes" and just left it to God. Right after I made that decision, my sister's visa was released. And she went on to shoulder the financial responsibility.

It's dangerous to live as a Christian. You risk losing your money. Also,

II. YOU RISK LOSING YOUR FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES

There was another reason it was hard for me to say "yes" to God. I was afraid of how my relationship with my parents was going to turn out.

They were not Christians then and I thought they wouldn't understand. If they learned I was quitting my job, how would they react? Would they label me a fanatic? Would they say I was crazy to give up my job for religion? Mind you, they were aware that I nearly ruined my career when I became a Jehovah's Witness. Would they choose not to talk to me anymore? Worse, would they disown me? This was a possibility because in the church I was attending in Australia, our missionary recounted how he was disowned by his own non-Christian parents.

It really weighed heavily on my mind and heart. With much nervousness, I traveled from Australia to California in order to break the news to them. And by God's grace and with much prayer, they graciously accepted my decision and did not say, "Get out of the house." Praise God for understanding parents. And because of God's mercy, they came to know the Lord during my two-week stay in California.

That was the risk I ran. Some of you may have actually lost friends and loved ones when they learned you became a Christian.

So, it's dangerous to live as a Christian. You risk losing your money. You risk losing friends and loved ones. Also,

III. YOU RISK LOSING YOUR LIFE.

So, I went to Hawaii in January 2, 1992, where I attended lectures for three months, and then proceeded to Russia in a little town called Krasnodar for our outreach for two months. But a few days before we were to end our outreach, I went through a most terrifying experience that I thought would also end my life on earth. It went like this.

Three days before we were to come back to the US, I contacted my friend Sasha, an officer in the Russian Air Force. I asked whether it was okay to distribute Bibles in the air force base where he was stationed. The next day, he told us that our request was approved by his superiors and four of us went – our Russian interpreter, one Swiss, one American, and myself. We realized how much they have opened up to the Western world after years of Communism. So, we went with our Bibles. But it was actually Sasha who went inside the buildings and gave out the Bibles.

When we were finished, Sasha, wanting to be a most gracious host, eagerly took us to one building where we entered a room. It was a room where they did flight simulations. In the center of the room was a sawed-off MIG 15, you know, the Russian fighter plane that you see in the movies. All around the room were monitors and switches and lights. Excitedly, we took turns going up and getting inside the cockpit of the fighter plane. When it was my turn, I felt like I was inside a real plane. I turned on the switch and the screen in front of me lit up and

then showed the sky with clouds and mountains like it was a movie and I felt like the plane was pulling up then turning right and left and diving. It was a simulation of a real flight.

I didn't see any American planes though and I doubt whether I would fire upon them. That was the best video game I ever played. Better than the Wii.

I was in the middle of this glorious feeling when suddenly, Sasha called out with a sense of urgency in his voice. "Rolly, come down. Come down." So I went down and asked, "What's the problem?"

And he said, "My boss is coming this way. This is actually off-limits to unauthorized people. I made a mistake."

Then, he told us to go inside a little room. He told us to wait while he tried to distract his boss. Then, he left the flight simulation room.

The little room we were in seemed to be like the sleeping quarters of his boss. There was a single bed, a desk, a clock, a lamp and a number of books on the bookshelf. We were so quiet inside and very afraid. All you could hear was the ticking of the clock. We prayed nervously. I wondered whether God would rescue us by an earthquake like what he did for Paul and Silas. I was thinking, if his boss found us out, what would he do, what would they do to us? Would they imprison us?

Would they accuse us of spying? Would they execute us? Would the outside world even know about it? My heart was beating fast. And like Stephen, I practiced saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

Then, we heard footsteps and the door opened. We saw armalites aimed at us. They fired. But the bullets bounced off our bodies. **Just kidding**, it was Sasha and in a soft voice, he directed us to one side of the control room where we entered a narrow passageway that led to a steel door. Sasha unlocked it and opened it for us. He said that he was able to stall his boss but he was coming to the room any moment.

As we stepped out to the open field, we heaved a big sigh of relief and praised God endlessly. I never thought I would live to tell you this tale.

Thank God we lived through that experience. But there are thousands, if not millions, of followers of Christ through the ages who suffered a different fate. To live the Christian life is to live dangerously. There are other things you may lose, like your most-cherished possessions, your childhood dream, even your great ambitions.

Do you know that Oswald Chambers, the writer of *My Utmost for His Highest*, the devotional that I gave out last time, was a talented artist? When he was in college, he became quite famous and earned money because of his paintings.

He dreamt of becoming a great artist who could be used by God in this field. But God had other plans. He called him to be a preacher and consequently he had to abandon his ambition.

Are you willing to risk losing something that you cherish for Christ? When he calls you and he says, “Christine, drop your music because I want to send you to a remote tribe in Africa to minister, will you go?” He’s not asking you to drop Merbin, only your music, will you go? I guess you would reply, if Merbin comes along.

There are risks involved when you live the Christian life. But, friends, the rewards far outweigh the risks. What are the rewards?

I. YOU GAIN GOD’S RICHES.

I often hear some Christians say, “I’m rich because my God is King.” That is true. The Bible says that God has a kingdom and therefore he is King. And being king his riches are limitless. He’s got a never-ending supply of resources. In fact, he is King of the whole universe and therefore he owns everything. In 1 Chronicles 29:11-12 (NLT), David says, *“Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O LORD, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things. Wealth and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything.”*

God owns and rules everything! And because he is the owner, he has total control over all these resources. And he can give us these resources when we need them. The Apostle Paul says in Phil. 4:19 (NLT), *“And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.”* As long as we need them, God will provide. God will supply. All we need to do is to turn the faucet and the water will flow. It is our prayer that will turn the faucet. Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6:11 (NIV), *“Give us today our daily bread.”* Bread represents a necessity, a need, not a want. God wants us to ask for those things we need. Sometimes we turn the faucet in the wrong direction that’s why the water doesn’t flow. We ask for the wrong things, for our wants, that’s why we don’t get the supply.

But sometimes even when we’re asking for the right thing, we don’t receive it. Why? **Because God wants you to learn how to wait.** He wants you to depend totally on him. When I arrived in Hawaii to start my missionary training, I had high hopes that my friends in Australia would support me financially. But you know what, no one sent me anything, not even a penny, during the almost three months I was there. It’s as if they forgot about me. Who helped me then? My fellow missionaries. People who themselves were in a tight budget like me. I developed a friendship with a Japanese guy who would always buy me snacks or personal things I needed. Then there was this German girl who paid for a book that I needed for the

training. Help came from unexpected sources. God used these people to show me he hasn't forgotten about me.

God hasn't forgotten about you. He knows your needs. He knows exactly what you need. And he has promised to provide for you. Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV) says, *"The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."*

Because of the economic crisis, some of you are worried. Will I find a job? Am I going to be laid off? Where will we get our next meal? If you're a child of God, you'll never lack anything. He will send you something, sometimes from unexpected sources.

As a Christian, you reap the rewards. You gain God's riches. Also,

II. YOU GAIN NEW FRIENDS AND FAMILY

One of the things that can happen when you become a Christian is that your friends will leave you. Greg Laurie, an evangelist and pastor of Harvest Fellowship in California, said that when he became a Christian in his teens, he didn't want his close friends to know about it because he was afraid they'd turn him away. One day, a friend invited him to have some fun in his friend's house together with others. So he went but as he approached the house, he realized that he was carrying

a Bible. He hid the Bible in a bush in front of the house and just like that entered the house and started to have some fun with his buddies.

Suddenly, the door opened and his friend's mother appeared with a Bible in her hand. "Whose Bible is this?" she asked. "I saw this under the bush while I was cutting it." Of course, Greg admitted it was his. He was so embarrassed and since then he resolved not to be afraid of losing friends.

As a Christian, even if your friends and your family leave you, you're not alone. Because you gain new friends and brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers in the Lord. Jesus says in Matthew 19:29, "*All who have given up home or brothers and sisters or father and mother or children or land for me will be given a hundred times as much.*"

That's the bonus of becoming a Christian. You have an instant extended family. And you can find this extended family anywhere you are on the planet. That's why when I arrived in NY from California because I found a job there, a Christian couple who I met in a Bible study adopted me. They allowed me to use one of their bedrooms for free and really treated me as family. When my late grandma came to join me a few months later, they accomodated my grandma too. And when my parents came to join us, well, that's when we moved to an apartment.

So you see, that's one of the perks of being a Christian, you readily and immediately find help when you need it. You need to move? We have a moving team here, Pastor Dave, Kuya Alex, Kuya Elvin, Merbin, Jim, Kuya July, Andrew, and all able-bodied men in this church. You need to go to the airport? Call Kuya Rey. You need a baby-sitter? Call Carina. You need house repairs? Call Kuya Alex or Andrew. You need counseling? Call Laura. You need prayers? Call Ate Esther. You need a shoulder to cry on? Call Ate Bebutte. You need money? Call 911.

The point is, a Christian is the closest you can have of Jesus in this world physically. A Christian represents Christ. As such, he or she should be Christ-like. Which should make us stop and ponder, "Am I being Christlike to my brother and sister? Am I exhibiting the character of Christ to others? Am I acting like family to him or her? Or am I just the opposite? Am I a stumbling block to others? Am I a negative person? Am I critical of others? Do I spread gossip? Do I talk behind the backs of others? Do I put others down instead of lifting them up?"

These are serious questions. Because non-Christians and Christians alike can trip over a word we say or we do not say. An attitude we have or we do not have. Jesus says in Matthew 18:6 (NASB), *"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."*

So, instead of being a stumbling-block, let us be a building block. Then, our brothers and sisters can say that they have found a real friend or family in us. Hebrews 10:24 (CEV) says, *“We should keep on encouraging each other to be thoughtful and to do helpful things.”*

As a Christian, you gain God’s riches. You gain new friends and family. And most importantly,

III. YOU GAIN ETERNAL LIFE

Forget about riches. Forget about finding new friends and family. Gaining eternal life is worth it all. Remember the thief on the cross? All he said before he died was, *“Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!”* And Jesus said, *“Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”*

The thief didn’t get a chance to experience God’s provisions in his life. He didn’t get a chance to meet other Christians. But he got the chance to be with Jesus for all eternity. That surpassed all other chances he could ever have on earth.

Jesus promised eternal life to his followers in John 6:47 (MSG), *“I’m telling you the most solemn and sober truth now: Whoever believes in me has real life, eternal life.”*

That is really sobering and reassuring. Even though you are not wealthy, even though you may not be famous, eternal life is what you can have as a follower of Christ. Riches and honor are desirable but to live forever in heaven is the main prize. It is the greatest reward. Paul says in Philippians 3:13-14 *“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”*

And this is what kept him going. Even though he was hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, struck down. He knew that one day the life of Jesus will be revealed in his mortal body. In short, he was expecting to be in heaven when he died.

If you're not a Christian, you too can have eternal life. It's not complicated. It's a no-brainer. What do you need to do? **Just come as you are to Jesus.** With no pretensions. With all your warts and pimples, to speak. Because he cares for you and he loves you. **He will forgive you of your sins.** He is ready to embrace you in his arms and say, “My dear child, I want you to spend eternity with me.” Do not think that your religion will earn you a merit badge. Do not think that your philosophy will garner you points. Do not think that your good works will give you an advantage.

Just believe that Jesus died for your sins. Believe that he alone can save you and no one else. Jesus says in John 14:6 (NIV), *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

Today people are so concerned about their survival. There is talk about recession, depression, inflation, deflation. People are nervous. They are getting insecure. The world could plunge into great economic turmoil and who knows what’s going to happen next?

The Christian, however, knows that in the midst of all these troubles, he or she can rest assured that God is in control. Amen?

The times are perilous. Living the Christian life is dangerous. But in Jesus the rewards are enormous. **Will you take the risk?**

Let Us pray...