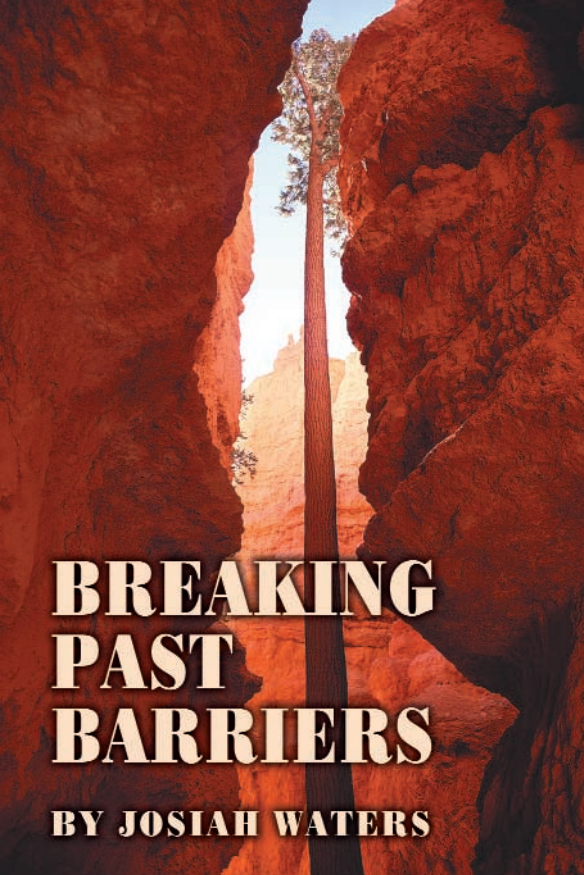




BREAKING PAST BARRIERS

BY JOSIAH WATERS

IT was October 14, 1947, a day long to be remembered in history. It was 6:00 am as test pilot Chuck Yeager traveled to Edwards Air Force Base in the Mojave Desert of California. The plan seemed routine in many ways, for after all, this was going to be his ninth powered flight aboard the Bell X-1. The test crew poured over that day's scheduled flight, planning to increase the speed record up to Mach .97, just a hair's breadth away from that formidable and seemingly dangerous barrier, Mach 1, but still within what seemed to be the envelope of safety.

At approximately 8:00 am, Yeager climbed aboard the mother ship, a B-29 bomber, specially designed to carry the rocket plane in its bomb bay. The crew completed the checklist and took off as planned. As the bomber climbed through 12,000 feet, Yeager climbed down the ladder and into

the cramped cockpit of the X-1. Everything was going perfectly, as they continued on up to the assigned drop altitude of 20,000 feet. Yeager methodically went through his checklist, finishing up just in time to hear the B-29 pilot call down to him to get cleared for the drop. The climb speed on the heavily loaded B-29 was only 180 mph, while the X-1 had a stall speed of 240 mph. This made it necessary to put the bomber into a shallow dive before releasing the plane hanging below. Yeager gave the go-ahead for the bomber pilot to release him when ready.

Within a few seconds, he heard the familiar "Crack!" of the shackles as they dropped the X-1 toward earth. But alas! The speed at which he had been dropped was too slow, and the plane immediately went into a perilous stall, plummeting earthward for several hundred feet. Yeager, a seasoned pilot, brought it quickly back under control, and, picking up speed in a shallow dive, fired all four rocket engines in rapid sequence and proceeded to climb to 42,000 feet. Leveling off, he continued on 3 engines as he watched the Mach Meter speed toward the unbelievable. The needle tipped the scale! In that brief moment, he wondered if he could even believe his eyes. There had been no violent shaking as he had expected, but instead simply a brief buffeting of the aircraft and there he was! Little did he realize how far-reaching his achievement would be for the future generation of supersonic flight. He had overcome the unknown and broken the sound barrier.

I would like to parallel this simple, yet historically profound story to barriers that each one of us face in our Christian experience, barriers which are caused by us being fearful of really surrendering ourselves completely to Christ, or barriers that arise as a result of that unwillingness and end up breaking our connection with Christ, causing family discord, and leaving us feeling miserable. Think with me for a minute and reflect over the past few days. I'm sure you can think of at least a few barriers that you faced, and either broke past with the Lord, or will have to face again sometime, maybe under completely different circumstances. With that in mind, let's look at how we deal with these in real day-to-day life.

2 Cor. 12:9 says, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness...” **Breaking past barriers requires a simple choice of faith.** Up until the point that Yeager broke through the sound barrier, man had been comfortable staying within the limits that he decided were reasonable. After the barrier had been broken, he experienced a whole new realm of possibilities and freedom opening up that had hitherto been unknown.

The same is true for us. If we are afraid to give a complete surrender to Christ because of what it may cost us, we will never be able to experience true freedom in Him. We will try to make ourselves comfortable in how we are, comfortable with the way we live our lives, but there will never be peace in that kind of Christianity. God promises that His grace **is** sufficient to meet every need and if we choose to accept that by faith and surrender our self completely to Him, He will take us beyond those barriers that are presently holding us in bondage and we will experience new heights of freedom!

This past winter was remarkably colder than most of the winters that we have had here in our part of Montana for the past several years. The temperatures were much colder than normal and stayed that way for a longer period of time than I can ever remember in the nearly 18 years we've lived here. Well, needless to say, with cold temperatures comes frozen water, which is great as long as that frozen water isn't in the pipes. Well, this Spring when my father went out to turn the water system on in our guesthouse, it didn't take very long to figure out that there was a major problem! Water came flooding out from the wall that divides the bedroom and bathroom, soaking the bedroom carpet in seconds. Father quickly raced back across the yard to the main shut-off valve and turned off the water. I immediately ran to see what I could do to help him.

Broken pipes are usually enough of a trial without the added pressure of having soaked carpet to dry out before our company came the next day. To make matters worse, the pipe that appeared to be broken was inside the wall. So out went the furniture, and the trim and wall paneling all had to be taken off. After a little bit of looking around, we located the broken pipe which turned out to be a T-joint in the cold water line (right next to a stud of course!) and we proceeded to fix it. We allowed time for the glue to set and then turned the water back on to test it. Another leak! “Shut it off!” I shouted as I grabbed a towel.

Before I continue, I want to share with you a very important element in this article that is illustrated well by this story. It seems that often, at least with these particular kinds of trials, they seem to get bigger the closer we think we are to surmounting or breaking past them.

Self does not like to die without a struggle, nor does Satan want us to be successful in breaking beyond them through Christ. The barriers arise when we don't choose to allow Christ to keep us in our trials. When we decide to take the management of situations back into our own hands, we create a barrier between our souls and our Saviour who is waiting to save us from ourselves.

As the story continues to unfold, not only was there a second leak, but a third as well. It seemed that every time we fixed one, we found another. God was, in His love, using these circumstances to see if we really would face that great barrier of self and break beyond in His power, or fall short of the mark. I'm thankful to say that we saw it as a learning experience, actually able to laugh together about it instead of having to face it again in another form, or a different set of circumstances. And the added blessing in this situation was that because we both chose to allow Christ to keep us by His power, there was no need for any barriers to arise within the family either, as very often tends to happen in similar situations.

The issue at hand is this: whatever form of barrier we find ourselves up against, regardless of what circumstances seem to have brought it to view, it is in the mercy of God that He reveals to us another layer of self that needs to be dealt with and overcome. By taking hold of Christ in a personal, practical way, each one of us can overcome every barrier that we face, so that we can have that experience found in Isaiah 40:4 “...and every mountain and hill shall be made low... and the rough places plain.” Through Christ we **can** overcome!