



# The Principles Of Courage And Perseverance by Paul Peterson

By:  
Joe Tye

As he caressed the cover, a thousand memories raced through Paul's mind; the same compression of reality he had experienced in the fall from Shay's Point, but without the terror. He gently lifted the cover and read the first heading:

## *Caring Is the Root of Courage*

Though Paul did not remember having written the lessons, they were clearly part of his story; over a lifetime they were the principles he had learned and had taught to many.

"You are not finished with your teaching, my friend."

"I hope not, Rafe. It would be unfortunate if everyone had to learn these lessons from scratch."

Rafe laughed with the deep, rich tenor that had once led Paul to expect to see Moses. "Paul, the universe is very efficient. Nothing is ever wasted, especially not the lessons of life. It's been said on earth that when the student is ready, the teacher appears. And I believe that your first student is nearly ready. So we had better hurry up and teach you to fly on your own. At least better than you did at Shay's Point," he added with a laugh.

Paul felt the weight of the book suddenly leave his hands and, looking down, saw that there were no hands there at all.

"It's really quite easy, Paul. Stretch your wings, lean forward into the wind, and give a little push with your legs."

Paul tried to respond, but could only make a shrill squawking noise.

“Don’t worry. Your voice will come back to you when you need it again. Now, follow me.”

Paul was amazed at how precisely he could see the finest details of the eagle perched beside him, and at how clearly every distant tree and stone appeared on the periphery of his vision.

Rafe squawked at Paul, spread his wings, and pushed off into the wind. As he watched his old friend silhouetted against the setting sun, Paul realized that he would not need lessons to learn to fly.

Paul Peterson spread his new wings and leaned forward into the sunset.

The eagle soared down from the North Rim along Bright Angel Creek. Paul had never seen the Grand Canyon so fresh and green. Gliding up and down the Canyon walls, from the dark metamorphic stone near the river to the sandstones and limestones higher up the towering cliffs, he could see the unfolding of over a billion years of the earth’s history.

At the junction of Bright Angel Creek and the Colorado River, he wheeled to the east and soared out over the Tonto Plateau, freshly watered blackbrush giving it the hue of a green chalkboard. Catching an updraft, he rocketed up and over Zoroaster Temple, in his mind the most sacred of all the Canyon’s rock cathedrals, and then spiraled down around its flanks, chasing off a pair of ravens. Playing out the wind, he kited eastward along the river all the way to Marble Canyon, then wheeled back around, flying into the setting sun.

No human had ever seen the Canyon this way, and none ever would. Paul longed to stay a little longer, to watch the sun’s setting transform the Canyon into a living sculpture. But his sharp eyes saw the gray pickup truck pull into the parking lot at Lipan Point and come to a stop fifty feet short of the guardrail.

Paul raced the wind as the sun approached the horizon. Although he was still nearly a mile from the point, he saw white smoke belching out of the truck’s tail pipes and, inside, the driver’s arm moving as he put it into gear.

At the moment the sun kissed the earth, the truck’s tires started to spin, blowing off a gale of white smoke. They caught with a shriek, and the truck lurched forward and bounced over the curb. As it smashed through the railing and hung suspended, Paul saw the look on the driver’s face through the side window, grim and determined. In the seat next to him, invisible to human eyes but now, finally, evident to Paul, was the ghost of fear, every bit as hideous as he’d ever imagined.

The pickup quickly lost its forward momentum and the hood turned downward. It fell free for several seconds before the front bumper caught on a rock outcropping, yanking

the headlights in toward the Canyon wall and flipping the truck bed outward. The somersault slammed the roof into the rock wall, crushing it flat; on the second roll the bed broke away from the cab, rupturing the fuel tanks. Though it seemed to Paul that the sparks floated in the air forever before igniting the gasoline, he knew it was only microseconds.

The flaming wreckage avalanched its way past hundreds of millions of years of rock creation before landing in a pyre of metal and rubber far below the dangling guardrail of Lipan Point.

Even at his altitude high above the wreckage, Paul could feel the updrafts being created by the inferno four thousand feet and 500 million years below. He spiraled around the billowing black plume as he waited for the miracle to begin.

It wasn't obvious when time reversed its course. He'd expected to feel some sort of wrenching sensation, like when he'd rejoined his own physical body after the leap off Shay's Point. But the first indication was the sight of people running backward away from the guardrail. The black smoke stopped its upward drift and slowly started to work its way back down toward the truck.

Paul swooped up over the parking lot, not having any desire to get closer to the truck in its present condition, and landed in a pine tree. Presently he heard a horrible grinding noise coming closer and closer, and then the tail end of the pickup exploded back through the guardrail, pulling the splintered pieces back into place as it came, engine gunning and tires squealing.

Then it was totally silent.

The sun was barely above the horizon, and frozen in place. Paul gingerly climbed out of the tree, glad that in solidified time no one saw the clumsiness of the human body that felt so burdensome compared with the efficient feathered frame waiting for him in the tree.

John Parker was standing near the guardrail, about fifty feet from where his truck would soon go barreling by. His hair blowing in the wind was the only movement on the frozen landscape; his image sat behind the wheel of the truck, unaware of the ghost of fear at his side.

Paul felt the light breeze coming from the west, opposite its direction when time was moving forward. Rafe had promised him that his voice would come back when he needed it. Never Fear, Never Quit. Paul placed his hand on John Parker's shoulder.

*It's a beautiful evening for flying, isn't it?"*

THE END