

DESTINY BULLETIN

A commentary sent to the supporters of the ministry of Christian Destiny.

Dear “Special Friend” of Christian Destiny,

August 2006

THE HIGH ROAD AND THE LOW ROAD

While traveling here below, the believer does more than check off meaningless days. He progressively creates a record for eternity.

The child of God is a creature of eternal destiny. For him no day is without consequence, and no fleeting moment can be called incidental or unimportant. The hours he spends and the decisions he makes have implications that carry on into eternity. What he does today will matter a thousand years from today. The path of the just is like a shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day (Proverbs 4:18).

With the ungodly it is not so. They are like the chaff that the wind drives away (Ps. 1:4). Even those who are most important on earth are, in the final analysis, no more than chaff from a threshing floor. The refuse may make an impressive pile, but with the next breeze it will disappear like a morning cloud. The stories of those who refuse Christ and His salvation are accounts of wasted lives. They are made more tragic when we remember that for the unregenerate man life at its best is merely an unhappy prelude to a lost eternity. How sad that in this universe there should be so many who never aspire to live among the stars.

How sad also that even of those who aspire to “something more” here on earth, many never choose the golden staircase that begins at Calvary and leads to the Pleiades and beyond. Believing in their own abilities, leaning on the broken crutch of human possibilities, they miss the way of the cross. How different it could be! Futility is exchanged for eternal purpose when we place our faith in the finished work of Christ, completed on the cross for our redemption. To believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died for our sins on Calvary’s cross—that is what makes the eternal difference.

Salvation comes to us by grace alone, and all who believe in Christ are given the gift of eternal life, guaranteed by God. However, the path taken from salvation to heaven will not be the same for each child of God.

THE EARNEST CALL

We are told in the Word of God that there is a difference, even for the Christian, in the roads that lead from here to the skies. So diverse are these paths that we could call them the high road and the low road. Of course there are also many levels in between. Note the descriptions of two kinds of Christians in *2 Peter 1:8*: “*For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” That is the high road. “*But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*” (v. 9). That is the low road.

How important is the earnest call? “*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*” (vv. 10-11).

What a startling, frightening, important contrast! The believer who travels the high road to heaven, who builds "*these things*" Peter speaks of into his life, will be welcomed into the glory of heaven in a spectacular fashion. The citizens of the Roman Empire understood what that meant. Those who lived in Rome had seen the spectacular occasions on which a victorious commander of the Roman legions was welcomed home. The emperor declared a national holiday, and all of the citizens of Rome, bedecked in their best apparel, gathered at the gate to meet him. When the preparations were completed, the general marched his legions through the gate into the city amid the applause of admiring crowds. The bands played, the dancers performed, and the city rejoiced at the returning legion and its commander, who brought with them the laurels of victory.

The general kissed the hand of the emperor and officially delivered to him his addition to the empire, conquered and subdued through his skill and courage. The citizens rejoiced in that the emperor was glorified and the kingdom strengthened by the worthy commander they celebrated. It was customary for the emperor to lavish gifts upon the commander and soldiers. Large sums of money, usually the spoils of victory, would be distributed to the legionnaires. The commander, proportionate to the extent of his conquests, was given cities to rule, political office, fame, and glory. Upon special occasions, he was made a ruler second only to the emperor himself. Rome knew how to reward its best servants, which is partly why it was for hundreds of years the greatest kingdom on earth.

Such celebrations, well-known in Bible times, offer an appropriate illustration of the believer's arrival in heaven. Rewards are promised again and again in the Word of God to those who serve Him well. Best of all, the faithful child of God can anticipate the greatest reward of all: the privilege of hearing the emperor of the universe say, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant. . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord*" (Matt. 25:21).

SAVED YET AS BY FIRE

But Peter presents an alternate picture as well. The unfaithful, insensitive believer can expect no such glorious entrance into heaven. The stodgy, slovenly traveler on the road of life must be content with lesser rewards or, worse, none at all. Lacking "*these things*," he is blind. Even during his journey in this world, he will stumble along on the rocks, a bruised and bleeding traveler. Because of his blindness—or at least his nearsightedness—he can be expected to take wrong turns, losing his way in the brambles and the ditches. If he continues in his spiritual myopia, he will be ever confused, frustrated, and depressed over the lack of progress in his painful journey. When he finally arrives in heaven, he will be saved yet as by fire. No abundant entrance, no great congratulation will be his. Yes, he will have salvation, his solely by the grace of God. But the rewards of sacrifice and selfless service will escape him. He may bring, in his presumptions, a few pieces of wood, hay, and stubble, but they will quickly disappear, unable to stand the test of the fire.

In this passage from the last letter of the apostle Peter there is an earnest message for each of us today. We commonly hear reports that Christianity has a billion followers. Of this number, how many have given evidence that they are truly converted? How many have been saved by faith in the crucified One? Certainly not all.

Who could have predicted such a day as this within the Body of Christ? Who could have foreseen the disturbed lives, the broken homes, the distressed youth, and the depressed adults who populate the Church? Who could have foreseen the many who succeed materially but fail spiritually? We have reached the point at which our great churches and attractive homes can no longer hide the heartbreak that ravages them from within.

Furthermore, who could have foreseen the duplicity and foolishness that have been embraced and practiced by Christians, even at a leadership level? How many have begun as

humble ministers of Christ and then heaped the shrine of luxury, pride and lasciviousness with incense kindled at the Spirit's flame? Pity the blind; but do not appoint them to be the guides for the journey. Their condition need not, however, be permanent. Christian history is filled with accounts of those who testify that, even after they came to know Christ, they were spiritually blind. Then came the moment when they began to diligently pursue the will of God, and a clear vision of His purpose overtook them. They experienced "*the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 3:14) and their lives took on a level they had never known before.

The call to the high road is extended to all. The high calling of God in Christ Jesus must be heard anew by the Church and by each Christian. We must concentrate more intently on what Peter calls "*these things*." Such concentration will, we are promised, produce spiritual success in time and divine congratulation in eternity.

What are "*these things*"? What are the things with which our Christian life is an eternal success and without which we are blind and stumbling? We can rejoice in the fact that they are not mysterious, nameless feelings, forces, or fantasies promised only to a select few. Peter presents them faithfully and clearly in his letter to us. They are: faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. In the pursuit of these, we are enjoined, yes, *commanded* to be diligent. Diligence calls us to study seriously and consider carefully the words of Scripture. It forbids us to waste time pursuing lesser things, especially the meaningless, repetitive spiritual projects so common to our time. Diligence forbids the idleness that is common to many Christians today. How easily we allow the days to become months and the months years with nothing of consequence accomplished for the Savior. Yes, we have dreams. We have intentions. We have hopes, anticipations, and ambitions. None of these, however, produces anything but frustration unless we are *doing* what we dream, *producing* what we intend. Without this production the dreams of a slothful man tend to destroy him, because his hands refuse to labor. Dreams must not become the master of our lives.

THE PATH OF DILIGENCE

Before us are the imperatives, the path to them is diligence. We must note, however, that these qualities are not "the inevitables." The Christian will not *inevitably* grow in grace, live a spiritually successful life, and arrive in heaven to congratulations. If the imperatives were inevitable, there would be no need for the call to diligence.

This truth must not be missed. One may hear leaders, preachers, and well-meaning believers say, "If he doesn't go straight and achieve virtue, knowledge, and these other marks of a believer, he is simply not a Christian." How often have we heard the expression, "If Christ is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all"? Such a perspective is spiritually misleading. Salvation comes to us in the form of a ransom, we are purchased from our sins. The call to spiritual achievement is extended to *the Christian*. One who insists that we are saved by the lives we live is saying that the great qualities we are called to add to our lives are, in fact, inevitable in the lives all Christians. This view leads us to one of the many systems of salvation by works invading the Church today. "You must do this or that, or you are not a Christian!" is the frightening cry of those who succumb to this position.

The *inevitable* consequence of saving faith is eternal life, that great gift from God. Salvation is the gift of God to me, purchased with the sufficient blood of Christ. Spiritual success is my gift to Him, purchased with diligence, the singular pursuit of His plan, when I might have done otherwise. It comes, as D. L. Moody said, from "my human best, filled with the spirit of God."

THE PURSUIT OF THE IMPERATIVES

In our pursuit of the imperatives we have as our shining example Jesus Christ Himself. In the course of His ministry, Christ did not travel casually and aimlessly from one place to another.

He did not seek out the superficial subjects that characterize so many of our conversations. His entire life was the diligent pursuit of one goal. The life of Christ was not a set of happy accidents. It was the plan of God combined with the intense and singular effort of the Son, designed to accomplish those things without which the world would die. Jesus Christ is more than merely the greatest man who ever lived. He is the one person the world could not have done without. Christ diligently pursued the imperatives. Matthew reported, *“From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day”* (Matt. 16:21). Note the use of the word *must*. There was simply no alternative!

Our Lord could have taken a holiday at the seashore in Galilee or a vacation on the Mediterranean for needed rest and contemplation. He had many options, but none of them took priority over His mission. He said He *must* go to Jerusalem, for the purpose of His life was to give Himself a ransom for many. Apart from His fulfillment of that purpose, there would be no redemption. This purpose was clear to Him, but not to His disciples, as we see from Peter’s response to Christ’s statement. *“Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from You, Lord: this shall not be unto You, But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: you are an offence unto Me: for you savor not the things that be of God, but those that be of men”* (vv. 22-23).

SATAN’S PROGRAM--SPIRITUAL SUBVERSION

We see how anxious Satan was to divert Him from God’s plan. He used Peter’s voice and sympathies in an attempt to dissuade Christ from accomplishing His purpose. Christ recognizes this in His denunciation of Peter, *“Get thee behind Me, Satan: you are an offence unto Me”* (v. 23). Peter did not understand the imperative nature of Christ’s mission, for he did not understand the things of God. Satan will try to use the same program of spiritual subversion on you and me. It is his goal to take us from imperative living to inconsequential living. How many a potentially great servant of God has been beguiled away from God’s path because he heeded the voice of the devil, sometimes coming through the lips of a friend, saying, *“Be it far from You.”* Had our Lord not committed Himself to accomplish the imperative of His life, there would be no salvation. Had He turned aside to other pursuits, the story of the world would be a far different and infinitely more dismal one. To turn aside from the pursuit of the imperatives is to turn from the accomplishment of God’s purpose for us. It is to guarantee spiritual failure.

Christ demonstrated the same degree of purposefulness when He spoke of taking the Gospel to the world. He said, *“Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd”* (John 10:16). Again He used the word *must*. This task is not optional for Him—or for us. If we need a motivation for taking the Gospel to a lost world, we need look no further than the words *“them also I must bring.”*

Once when visiting the home of my pastor and mentor, Lance B. Latham, I saw a striking illustration of this. Before we sat down to a lovely dinner, Lance took perhaps twenty minutes to play the piano. His talent and ability were apparent as he played pieces by Bach, Beethoven, and other great masters. He followed that with beautiful renditions of some great hymns. I was still lost in the mood of it when Lance turned to me with a look of pensiveness of his face. He made the astonishing remark, *“Dave, only God saved me from music.”* He was saying that music—while something magnificent—was for him less important than preaching the Gospel. There are few Bible teachers today who can teach the book of Romans the way he could. There are none who believe it with a greater passion than he did. The world might live without music, but it could not survive apart from justification by faith. Lance B. Latham pursued many of the higher things of life. His ultimate diligence and dedication, however, was reserved for the accomplishment of his ultimate mission. That was to preach and teach the Word of God in the most effective way possible to as many as possible. The results of that dedication continue in the lives of multitudes across the world today.

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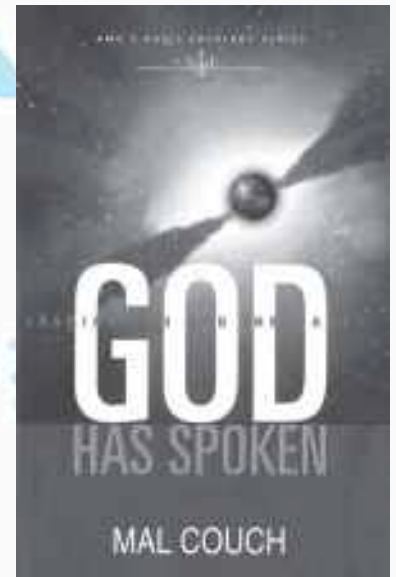
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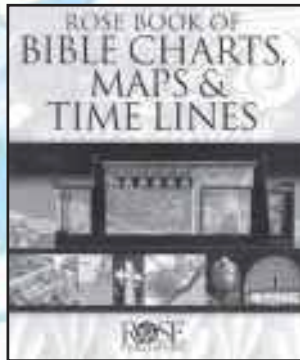


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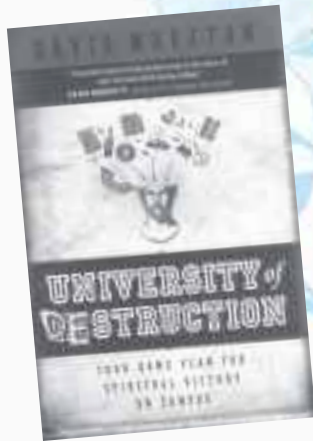
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