

## THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

May 5th, 2019 – The Celestial Railroad

Part 14 – Simple Pilgrims at The Fair

Do you remember the two Christian Pilgrims walking the narrow pathway that those on the train scoffed and laughed at as passed by? Today, we'll read about them as they too, had to pass through Vanity Fair on their way to The Celestial City. Please read it by [clicking on this link](#) and read 'Simple Pilgrims at the Fair'. If you'd like to review this part in Pilgrim's Progress, please [click on this link](#) and read Chapter 21.

At first glance when you see the word 'simple', you may associate it with a handicap person or the simple and foolish things of the world. But this is not the situation here. We read in The Celestial Railroad the following; *"Day after day, as I walked the streets of Vanity, my manners and deportment became more and more like those of the inhabitants. The place began to seem like home; the idea of pursuing my course to the Celestial City was almost obliterated from my mind. I was reminded of it, however, by the sight of the same pair of simple pilgrims at whom we had laughed so heartily when Apollyon puffed smoke and steam into their faces, at the commencement of our journey."*

The more one embraces and hangs out with the world or Vanity Fair, the more you'll become like it and your passion and desire for heaven, the Celestial City, will diminish and lose its appeal.

Let's look at a couple of pilgrims in the Bible, Paul and Silas, who visited Ephesus, a city that was given over to the worship of idols. We read about it in **Acts 17:16-21**; *"16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. 17 Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. 18 Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? 20 For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore, we want to know what these things mean. 21 For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. 21 For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing."*

Does this not sound a lot like today's social media, which promotes the latest and greatest or revives the old with a new spin on it, to distract you from your God given purpose and ultimately see to it that you don't fulfill it? How many Christians today are full of, 'could have's', 'would have's', and 'should have's', because they allowed the social media to conform them to their image, instead of allowing Jesus to conform them to His image and fulfill His call on their lives?

We continue to read in The Celestial Railroad; *"One of them – his name was Stick-to-the-right – perceived in my face, I suppose, a species of sympathy and almost admiration, which to my own great surprise, I could not help feeling for this honest couple. It prompted him to address me.*

*"Sir," inquired he, with a sad, yet mild and kindly voice, "do you call yourself a pilgrim?"*

*"Yes," I replied, "my right to that appellation is indubitable. I am merely a sojourner here in Vanity Fair, being bound to the Celestial City by the new railroad."*

*"Alas, friend," rejoined Mr. Stick-to-the-right, "I do assure you, and beseech you to receive the truth of my words, that that whole enterprise is a bubble. You may travel on it all your lifetime, were you to live thousands of years, and yet never get beyond the limits of Vanity Fair! Yea, though you should deem yourself entering the gates of the Blessed City, it will be nothing but a miserable delusion."*

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This here is a solid truth; those riding the Celestial Railroad are riding a **miserable delusion**. Their new train of thought is delusional and holds no substance at all.

Mr. Stick-to-the-Right sounds like a good description of Paul the Apostle. We read from [Biblica, The International Bible Society](#) the following about Paul. *“Paul gets the award for writing the biggest chunk of the Bible in the shortest period of time. He wrote more than half of the New Testament over a period of 17 years—and about half of that was written over a period of three years, from 61 to 63 A.D. During this time, he wrote Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians, Hebrews, 1 Timothy, and Titus. He wrote four of these letters in prison, which might explain why he was so prolific!”*

Paul didn't waste time on Vanity distractions, for he was focused on fulfilling the call on his life and nothing else mattered. Our lives should always be sticking to the truths found in the Bible. At times it may seem to appear legalistic, especially when you mirror it with the idol worship of this world. But that's why we don't use the world as a mirror to obtain God's image, but rather His Holy Bible is our mirror. Often, when this 'legalism card' is pulled on a Christian, the one who throws the accusations are often very mad, insinuating that your stance is very legalistic. When you mirror sin against the world, of course it's going to look very legalistic. Our image, whether spiritual, external or physical, is to be conformed to Christ's image, not that of the world. Our reflection is to be that of Jesus and not of the vain things of the world. Looking to the Bible for how we're to live as a Christian, is the norm.

**James 1:21-25** says; *“21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”*

The Apostle Paul says in **1 Corinthians 13:11-12**; *“11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.”* Only when you die will you see Jesus face to face.

In **Romans 12:1-2**, Paul also says this; *“12 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

Don't hold up the world and social media as your mirror that you are to conform yourself to, look at the Bible. The renewing of your mind is not brain-washing, but removing the worlds unrighteous thinking that you've had up until your born again.

So many ask what God's will is for their lives. It's simple. Read and study the Bible daily and the Holy Spirit will reveal to you what God's will is.

We continue to read in The Celestial Railroad; *“The Lord of the Celestial City,” began the other pilgrim, whose name was Mr. Go-the-old-way, “has refused, and will always refuse, to grant an act of incorporation for this railroad; and unless that be obtained no passenger can ever hope to enter His dominions. Therefore, every man who buys a ticket must lay his account with losing the purchase-money – which is the value of his soul.”*

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The loss is the value of the soul when you embrace this train of thought that ‘Believism’ will get you to heaven without being born again. These Pilgrims were walking the straight and narrow and appeared to be the foolish ones when mirrored by the world, but when mirrored by the Word of God they appeared to be wise.

When you keep to going the old way, the Bible way, your image will be that of God’s image to those around you. They will see a peace and joy on you that they don’t have, and like our passenger will have conviction and desire to have what you have.

Let’s read what Jesus said about himself in **John 10:1-5**; “*10 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.*”

When you’re born again, you’ve entered the sheepfold by the door (Jesus), you hear His voice and flee all other voices of the world, the vices of social media, entertainment and pleasures of Vanity Fair. Your image now is the Good Shephard who cares for you, loves you, and has plans and purposes for you.

The Lord of the Celestial City is Jesus, and He has made it very clear in His word that there is only one way to Heaven and that is by becoming born again, and without it, you are a Bible believer living in a bubble, and will be lead astray by thieves and a robbers (false shepherds), who didn’t enter by the door but climbed up some other way.

That’s why Mr. Smooth-it-away could say of the two pilgrims, "*these fellows ought to be arrested for libel. If the law stood as it once did in Vanity Fair, we would see them grinning through the iron bars of the prison window.*"

Are you living today in a religious Bible believing bubble, riding on the religious Celestial Railway bound for Heaven, with Mr. Smooth-it-away in the pulpit keeping you away from Mr. Sticking-to-the-right and Mr. Go-the-old-way?

Jesus is the Good Shepherd of Mr. Sticking-to-the-right and Mr. Go-the-old-way, and will be to anyone else who is willing to become born again of His Spirit.

Continuing on in **John 10**, we read in verses **7-15**; “*7 Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. 11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. 12 But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. 13 The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. 15 As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.”*

To be known and loved by the Good Shepherd both now and for eternity, is the gift for the Christian. There is no comparison in swapping it out for the temporal and fleeting pleasures of this world and its secular image.

The story continues; “*There was one strange thing that puzzled me; amid the occupations and amusements of the Fair, nothing was more common than for a person – whether at a feast, theatre, or church, or trafficking for wealth and honors, or whatever he might be doing, and however unseasonable the interruption – suddenly to*

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*vanish like a soap bubble, and be never more seen of his fellows; and so accustomed were the latter to such little incidents, that they went on with their business as quietly as if nothing had happened. But it was otherwise with me.”*

When you genuinely become a born again Christian, you get off the broad and wide road and leave the life of Vanity Fair by seeking out the straight and narrow road that leads to heaven. Your old man vanishes like a soap bubble and is never to be seen again, and you, the new man or woman, leave the life of vanity and you don't go back. You're a dead man or woman walking; dead to the old life and alive to the new. There is genuine conviction of sin that causes you to flee your old lifestyle.

It appears that these citizens of Vanity Fair turned a deaf ear to the conversions of their friends, family and acquaintances who 'vanished like a bubble', wanting to keep it hush, hush, maybe hoping that they'd change their mind and return. Their conclusion was to continue to eat, drink and be merry. When a sinner is in conversation with someone more righteous than themselves, they'll close it down in a heart beat. True conversion to Jesus causes you to flee the vain things of the world.

As it was with Noah when they scoffed at him for standing for righteousness and as they did with the pilgrims in this story, so it is today. And just as the flood surely did come upon the face of the world and destroy the wicked, so is the imminent return of Jesus now, and judgment of the wicked will take place.

The Apostle Paul knew about dying to the things of the world and becoming a new creation in Jesus. When he says 'passed away' in this scripture, it means the old things died and were gone. It says in **2 Corinthians 5:17**; *“17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”*

He also says in **Galatians 2:20**: *“20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*

**2 Corinthians 6:14-18** continues saying; *“14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” 17 Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.” 18 “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.”*

I don't think Paul could have been clearer in his speech, there is to be no fellowship, or communion, companionship, friendship, partnership or solidarity between the God-fearing righteous person and the lawless one who has broken God's laws. This goes beyond marriage too. It deals with every aspect of life. How deep can your koinonia fellowship go with non-Christians without getting sucked in and backsliding? You are in the world but not of the world. God has placed you in the world to be a part of His plan and purpose and for you to fulfill your call, and that is to preach the gospel, the good news.

When a Christian does have fellowship with lawlessness, they are conforming themselves to the image of the world. When you look at this scripture through the lens or mirror of the world, you would say it was terribly legalistic. But if you use the Bible as your mirror, you'd understand it to be a perfect image and something you want and need for your life. This is not legalism which God hates. We're talking about a relationship with a Good Shepherd who loves you, gave His life for you, full of mercy and grace. If, as a Christian though, you are conforming yourself to this world, then this scripture will look legalistic.

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**1 John 2:15-17** says; *“15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”*

Again, those looking at this scripture through the mirror of the world, would argue that it's legalistic because Christianity is based on love, so we're to love the world. But it's taken out of context. God does love the sinner in world and gave Jesus to be crucified for his sins. But we're not to love the sin in this world. Love the sinner, yes, but don't participate in their sin. The Apostle John is very clear to not lust nor love the sin of the world.

The promise that God has for us is that as we're obedient to His word, as we're obedient to come out from among the world and be separate, as we're obedient not to conform ourselves to the image of this world, but conform ourselves to the image of Christ and what His word says, then we will abide forever.