

THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

March 3rd, 2019 – The Celestial Railroad

Part 7

Do you remember the Hill Difficulty and the Valley of Humiliation from Pilgrim's Progress? Today, the message in The Celestial Railroad shows again that the broadness of contemporary Christianity has removed both of these places from the lives of those who choose to ride the train. Please read page 5 by [clicking on this link](#).

In our story we read: *“Thus pleasantly conversing on the favorable circumstances of our position as compared with those of past pilgrims, and of narrow-minded ones of the present day, we soon found ourselves at the foot of the Hill Difficulty.”*

The Hill of Difficulty can present itself in numerous ways; it may be health problems, it may be financial problems, it may be problems in family and marriage, it may be problems with addictions of one sort or another, it may be work related, school related, church related, the list of difficulties goes on and on. Because humiliation is what you're feeling when you're looking up the Hill Difficulty that you have to climb or that you're descending on the other side. You're in a great place of need.

Whatever the difficult hill you face in life, if it's health problems, medicine is our solution, if it's financial, money is our solution, if it's family problems, counselling is our solution, if it's addictions, rehab is our solution, etc....the list goes on and on.

Christian ends up at the Hill Difficulty, and there were two other roads that appeared to be available to get him to the same destination with out having to climb the Hill Difficulty on a straight and narrow pathway. Christian had his mind on things above and while at the foot of difficulty, he drank from the well of grace that God gives when needed to overcome the difficulties in life. The same applies for you and I today. No matter what you're facing, God's grace is available to you...if you're born again.

Let's read from BunyanMinistries.org, their comments on The Hill Difficulty and The Valley of Humiliation. It says; *“Christian drinks and ascends the Hill Difficulty. Feeling weary for the journey, yet strengthened by grace (Is. 49:10), Christian commences to soar up the hill like an eagle (Is. 40:30-31), even singing as he goes. His song perfectly expresses genuine pilgrim motivation; it also indicates how tribulation is productive of rejoicing, hope, and proven character (Rom. 5:3-4).*

This is key in our Christian walk. Whenever and however many times you are in the valley of humiliation, facing difficulty in your life, you can drink of the grace of God that you're entitled to.

There were two other pilgrims posing as Christians, named Formalist and Hypocrisy, who, at the foot of Hill Difficulty, one takes the pathway of danger and the other the pathway of destruction, supposing that they would get them to the same place as Christian and avoid the difficult hill climb. They were Christian imposters and oh how they've crept into the church.

Again, in BunyanMinistries.org, the commentary says this; *“Another, probably Formalist, enters the pathway named Danger. He, like his associate, is guided by the human supposition that this route will later rejoin the narrow way. In modern terms, he is convinced of the “prosperity gospel” which offers a comfortable pathway. Instead, he is lost in a great forest where devouring beasts dwell (Ps. 104:20).” Another, probably Hypocrisy, enters the pathway named Destruction. He is also guided by human supposition, except that it is contrary to the opinion of his associate. This is the inevitable result of humanism, whether it be of the liberal or conservative kind. As a consequence, he stumbles to rise no more (Prov. 4:19; Is. 59:7- 10) in the midst of dark mountains (Jere. 13:16)”*

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So, like Formalist, just when you think everything is going well in prosperous times, because you've chosen an easy wide road around the difficulty in your life, you too can be lost because you have chosen to get off the straight and narrow way that you've been commanded to walk on, even if it means climbing some tough hills.

Likewise, with Hypocrisy, trying to get around the difficulty of going uphill, you too can stumble and fall. Why? Because you've gotten off the straight and narrow pathway that Jesus has commanded you to walk on.

In our story we continue to read; *“Through the very heart of this rocky mountain a tunnel has been constructed of most admirable architecture, with a lofty arch and a spacious double track; so that unless the earth and rocks should chance to crumble down, it will remain a lasting monument of the builder's skill and enterprise.”*

Those on The Celestial Railroad are now able to avoid the Hill of Difficulty and bypass any need for God's grace. Religion, without a relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, will always have to make a way for you to get through difficult trials, being that the dispensation of grace is not available, so it has to be replaced with works of the flesh to avoid any discomfort.

This rocky mountain tunnel thru the Hill of Difficulty reminds me of great Christian church structures and lofty buildings, that are full of formalism and hypocrisy, offering a comfortable religious journey thru the difficulty's in life but in the end lead to danger and destruction of their souls. Physical buildings like these populate our lands, so many of which are empty now, being used for anything but church.

Grace is only for those who are born again and is not available to those who only believe in the Bible but have not confessed their sins, repented and received Jesus, the Holy Spirit, into their body. It's God's mercy that draws you to repentance, and the Bibles says, *“for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”* **Ephesians 2:8**. Grace comes when there is salvation, then it becomes the wellspring of water that we can drink of freely. When you're not born again...you're calling out for God's mercy as the tax collector did in **Luke 18:13** where it says; *“and the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’”*

Hebrews 4:15-16 says; *“15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 also says; *“7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

When you're facing difficulty while standing in the valley of humiliation, and in the public eye it doesn't look like it's going very well for you, your response needs to be, 'it's going well'. Why? Because in your weakness and humiliation, you're strong in Jesus Christ and you're drinking from His grace to carry you through and keep you on the straight and narrow pathway. Like Christian, you're able to soar to the top of the difficulty like an eagle.

I'd like to share from Matthew Henry's Commentary on I Corinthians 12:1-10; *“Grace signifies two things: — [1.] The good-will of God towards us, and this is enough to enlighten and enliven us, sufficient to strengthen and comfort us, to support our souls and cheer up our spirits, in all afflictions and distresses. [2.] The good work of God in us, the grace we receive from the fulness that is in Christ our head; and from him there shall be*

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communicated that which is suitable and seasonable, and sufficient for his members. Christ Jesus understands our case, and knows our need, and will proportion the remedy to our malady, and not only strengthen us, but glorify himself. His strength is made perfect in our weakness.”

We continue in the story reading; *“It is a great though incidental advantage that the materials from the heart of Hill Difficulty have been employed in filling up the Valley of Humiliation; thus, obviating the difficulty of descending into that disagreeable and unwholesome hollow.”*

When you are truly born again and are in a Valley of Humiliation, and are looking up the difficult hill you need to climb, you’re able to draw upon supernatural grace to strengthen you when all the odds are against you in the natural.

Religious, Bible believing tradition, without being born again, is rooted in humanistic formalism and hypocrisy and can only offer you cheap grace that costs you nothing, and ultimately will cost you everything including your soul.

In BunyanMinistries.org referring to Pilgrim’s Progress, it says this about the character, Formalist. *“Formalist is a religious performer. (1) He personifies external religion. His prime religious interest is in outward form, religious pomp, ritual, vestments, gorgeous ceremony, pageantry, architectural atmosphere, set prayers, sacerdotalism, icons, complex material symbolism, etc., quite irrespective of the greater importance of the condition of the heart.”*

Jesus says this in **Luke 20:46-47**; *“46 Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, 47 who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.”* These scribes sound like Formalist don’t they.

Again, in BunyanMinistries.org it says this about the character, Hypocrisy; *“Hypocrisy is a religious pretender. (1) He personifies counterfeit religion. His religious charade involves feeding on the superficial recognition and congratulations of religious triflers, while he remains essentially irreligious. He masquerades as a Christian, and often plays the role deceptively well, while being unashamedly ungodly off-stage.”* Duality to the max, wouldn’t you say?

Jesus also addresses this type of person in **Matthew 6:2, 5**; *“Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.” “5And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.”*

Let me ask you a question today. Are you like Formalist the religious performer or Hypocrisy the religious pretender, riding on the Celestial Railroad? If so, it’s not God’s will that you spend an eternity separated from Him in hell, but rather that you repent of your sins today and ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins and receive His Holy Spirit into your body and become born again of His Spirit. Formalist and Hypocrisy do not go to heaven. They were fake Christians. Don’t be like them. There are only two kingdoms in this world, the Kingdom of God which is light, and the kingdom of the devil which is darkness. You can’t be of both, there is no dual citizenship. You have to give up the kingdom of darkness to enter into the Kingdom of light.

One simple example of eternity. You take a string and string it from earth to the moon. You take one little ant and have it carry one grain of dirt from the earth to the moon. By the time all the dirt and sand from earth are on the moon from that little ant ... eternity has just begun. I exhort you today, repent of your sins, be born again of His Spirit and look forward to spending eternity in heaven.

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