

Chronicles of Diversity

Your leadership weekly



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Fractured Rapture Tales

Freedom's Odyssey

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Tale 18 Freedom's Odyssey

Odd, in this country much is said about freedom, but few really know true freedom. Freedom to Americans is defined as being able to do what you want to do. Freedom is not normally looked at as being freed from the bondage of your own selfishness.

The Bible in many places speaks of sin as "everyone did what was right in their own eyes." The most familiar passage to me is the last verse in the book of Judges in which the preceding phrase follows "In those days there was no king in the Israel." The Bible doesn't mention much about people doing evil that they believe is wrong in their own eyes. Is that because everyone knows it is wrong to do what you know is wrong, or rather that doing what is right in your own eyes is a more sinister sin than just being evil?

Evil for evils sake doesn't get much traction as a cultural moral. But doing what is right in your own eyes is the mechanism of self esteem and modern success. Doing what is right in your own eyes doesn't leave any room for a king but you.

We are all on a personal odyssey to eternity. So what is our destination? Heaven or hell, its your choice? In light of a world without a king, or any absolutes, heaven is defined by our choice. Everyone wants to go to heaven of our own design and so we shall be raptured to that eternity at the end of this temporal odyssey. Odd, could it be possible to make the wrong choice and end up in hell?

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So where in the world do you want to go? We are not talking about eternity here, we are talking about a place. How are you going to get there, what are the directions? How do you want to journey, by foot, bicycle, airplane, its our choice. Normally however, we do our traveling by using maps and relying on others who have the knowledge on how to get us to where we want to go. We believe where we want to go actually exists because we rely on the truth of the traveling absolutes we have been taught . Personally I would like to be translated by my thoughts. "Beam me up Jesus, I'm tired of this hell on earth."

"Well, that didn't work, and I called on the best King that there could ever be. Something must be wrong, I guess God isn't through with me yet."

I went to Spokane last weekend. A good friend and relative retired after many years of working for the government. Now he can do what he wants to do. I suppose I know more of what that is, more than anyone else, but still whether he will have time to get it all accomplished in the time he has left on this earth, I doubt it. What price temporal security?

Last weekend in Spokane was Bloomsday. For those of you who don't know, Bloomsday is the largest timed road race for runners in the world. I didn't plan on running in Bloomsday. In fact, I purposely left my good old running shoes at home. I hadn't trained for Bloomsday, I hadn't had time. Without a doubt for me to run in Bloomsday was about the most stupid idea, I could come up with. The last time I ran in Bloomsday I severely hurt my heel, so much so, that I had to limp the last five miles of this seven and a half mile race (12 km).

Seeing if there was something seriously wrong with my heel was the Odyssey that led me to the University of Washington Sports Medicine Clinic. Which eventually lead to my heart operation and that whole trip. This Friday I go to see a new cardiologist to see or explain how I am doing. "Well, last weekend I finished Bloomsday, without really training for it. It really wasn't that significant of a test when you get down to it, at least as it relates to my heart."

The new shoes, the fancy heel cups I got from the Sports Medicine clinic, and a little common sense and I probably came close to the time I would have completed the course with similar preparations in my younger and more foolish days?

What have you done that wasn't right in your own eyes recently? As I crossed the finish line they announced my name to the crowd, which happens to every few hundred finishers, I must have done something right, or wrong. No gut's, no glory. Out of the fifty thousand or so finishers, I may have had the fastest time of someone who had their aorta replaced fourteen months before. Probably, I was in a group of one, then again who cares.

What have you done recently that didn't seem right in your own eyes? Are we talking about risk, or faith? That is where the Asics meet the asphalt. That is what should happen commonly if we are to follow Jesus into eternal life.

John 17 records what Jesus prayed as he was about to go to the cross. In a way it is a prayer we should pray each and every day to see if we are on that path to eternity. While the whole chapter makes an excellent check list to see if we are walking in faith or in our own understanding of what is right, we can see very well in this first paragraph (verses 1-5) if we are on our own trail, or the narrow path that leads to that eternal Jerusalem.

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

These verses seem to imply that once you truly know God through Jesus Christ that you enter into eternal life. At the entry point you are given a job to do and all you will ever need to accomplish the task. Those provisions however require you to run in a race you have not trained for on this side of physical death. It is not a 12 kilometer race that you can finish in an hour and a half however, it is a race that takes every moment of every day.

The water stops and the rest areas are also there, each one prescribed for your faith's potential. If you are hopelessly tired, you have not pushed your faith and are not conditioned to God's pace, or you passed by the water point in the hopes of increasing your reward in your own strength.

Your training comes in hindsight, hence each day requires steps into the unknown. God calls that hindsight wisdom, to not repeat the steps of your own path's folly, when you were king in your own eyes. But this is not eternal life of eternal laziness we envision as our understanding of heaven.

At the end of the race your name will be announced and as you pass the finish line, instantaneously you will be joined by friends and loved ones who pass through the race before. Then and only then will you get an idea of your personalized race course and how well you did compared to your God given potential. This is eternal life, that you know that the race is not in vain. For the prize of eternal life is much more than a white shirt that says, "Bloomsday 2004 Finisher."

The Christian witness is not what you say about Jesus, it is how you did the work that the Father gave you to do. Those steps require you to move beyond your own arrogance of what is right in your own eyes and focus on the next step, and the faith that God will not let you die until you have finished your course.

At Bloomsday, the "Doomsday Hill" comes just before mile five, and stretches for a little more than a half a mile. After that, the course isn't exactly flat, but everyone who has run the race before knows that the worst is behind you now, both in difficulty and duration. All you need to do is to gut it out to the finish. The Doomsday Hill is just a passage of God's test of your faith and endurance and it shall pass.

But just between you and me, the next time I go to Bloomsday, I think I will do some training before hand. Wisdom says, God will only give you stories like this, to fill a need, after that it becomes foolish presumption.

We all run a race, true freedom is knowing that there is a King in your life, and it is not you. Not only should you believe it, there are times in the race of life that you will be called upon to prove it. Mostly to yourself, but also in the odyssey, true freedom's witness will not be bound by the limitations of what is right in your own eyes.

Seeds for Prayer

I went to Spokane not knowing how long I would be there, as it turned out the retirement and Bloomsday was about it. I had to return to Seattle to finish some work that was supposed to be ready for me on Tuesday and to start some other work on Wednesday. Since it was not ready for me to finish on schedule, I had time to finish this message and get some other things begun. (My legs are just a wee bit sore too, and my heels are much better today also.)

I had hoped to get some other things accomplished during the trip but as it turned out they will have to wait until I feel it is God's timing. I feel that my primary need is to have a place to live for the next segment of my race. North Central Washington seems like the place to me, but as of yet I do not have the financial resources or the time to move there or anywhere else for that matter.

I was too tired to pass any of the water stops at Bloomsday. Normally I bypass a couple of them to save some time. Perhaps there is some other lesson for me there. Please pray for my strength to rest in God. Through this Bloomsday race thing I can't help feeling that God is saying that he doesn't want me to act my (old) age. None of us are old in this life if eternity is before us. Why do so many people act so old when they are really just beginning.

