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Liberating Truth



Part 23 (970202AM)

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As you open your copy of God's Divine Truth this morning, turn to [Psalm 19:9](#). History records one tragic life lived off the pathway of truth. Let's heed it! ⁽¹⁾

Who really cared? His was a routine admission to busy Bellevue Hospital. A charity case, one among hundreds. A bum from the Bowery with a slashed throat. The Bowery ...last stop before the morgue. Synonym of filth, loneliness, cheap booze, drugs, and disease.

The derelict's name was misspelled on the hospital form, but then what good is a name when the guy's a bum. The age was also incorrect. He was 38, not 39.

The details of what had happened in the predawn of that chilly winter's morning were fuzzy. Would it have made any difference if she and those who treated him had known who he was? Probably so.

His recent past was the antithesis of his earlier years. The Bowery became the dead-end street of an incredible life. But all that was over. A 25 cent-a-night flop house had rooms you hear about, but never want to see...full of stinking humanity too miserable to describe. He was one among many. Like all the rest, he now lived only to drink. His health was gone and he was starving. On that icy January morning before the sun had crept over New York's skyline, a shell of a man who looked twice his age staggered to the wash basin and fell. The basin toppled, shattered.

He was found lying in a heap, naked and bleeding from a deep gash in his throat. His forehead was badly bruised and he was semiconscious. A doctor was called, no one special--remember, this was the Bowery. He used black sewing thread somebody found to suture the wound. That would do. All the while the bum begged for a drink. A buddy shared the bottom of a rum bottle to calm his nerves.

He was dumped in a paddy wagon and dropped off at Bellevue Hospital, where he would languish, unable to eat for three days...and die. Still unknown.

A friend seeking him was directed to the local morgue. There, among dozens of other colorless, nameless corpses with tags on their toes, he was identified. When they scraped together his belongings, they found a ragged, dirty coat with 38 cents in one pocket and a scrap of paper in the other. All his earthly goods. Enough coins for another night in the Bowery and five words, "Dear friends and gentle hearts." Almost like the words of a song, some thought. But who cared?

Psalm 19:9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. (NKJV)

This poor man died a slave to untruth. He was deceived by a false hope, namely alcohol. What happens we operate outside of God's truth? We are misled, deceived and captured by sin.

What Promises Happiness But Only Brings Despair?

Alcohol promises happiness, in the end, no happiness just bitterness, emptiness and lies. As drunken Elah, king of Israel found in [1 Kings 16:9](#) Now his servant Zimri, commander of half [his] chariots, conspired against him as he was in Tirzah drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, steward of [his] house in Tirzah. (NKJV)

Promiscuity promises happiness, in the end, no happiness just bitterness, emptiness and lies. As lustful Amnon found in [2 Samuel 13:1-3](#) After this Absalom the son of David had a lovely sister, whose name [was] Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. 2 Amnon was so distressed over his sister Tamar that he became sick; for she [was] a virgin. And it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her. 3 But Amnon had a friend whose name [was] Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother. Now Jonadab [was] a very crafty man. (NKJV)

Drugs of all kinds promise happiness, in the end, no happiness just bitterness,

emptiness and lies. As the addicts of the Tribulation find in [Revelation 9:21](#) And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries (pharmakeia) or their sexual immorality or their thefts. (NKJV)

Money promises happiness, in the end, no happiness just bitterness, emptiness and lies. As the wealthy business men find to their sorrow in [Revelation 18:15](#) "The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, (NKJV).
Divorce often promises happiness, in the end, no happiness just bitterness, emptiness and lies. As the unfaithful Jews found in [Malachi 2:14](#) Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant. (NKJV)

Selfish living for me first promises happiness, in the end, no happiness just bitterness, emptiness and lies. As the rich fool found on the night of his death in [Luke 12:19-20](#) 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, [and] be merry." ' 20 "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' (NKJV)

Pride promises happiness, in the end, no happiness just bitterness, emptiness and lies. As Lucifer the shining light bearing one found in [Isaiah 14:12-14](#) How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! [How] you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! 13 For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' (NKJV)

Where can we look to find truth? In a person who declared they were truth and life. Jesus Christ and His book, the Bible!

Where Can We Find True Happiness?

1. HIS PERFECT LAW RESTORES (v. 7a *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul*) = The Word of God is THE DIVINE TEACHER: God's truth that totally transforms, touching all of life, turning the whole person to God.

2. HIS SURE TESTIMONY MAKES WISE (v. 7b *the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple*) = The Word of God is THE DIVINE WITNESS: God's testimony absolutely trustworthy making us skilled in the art of holy living.

3. HIS RIGHT STATUTES REJOICES (v. 8a *The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart*) = The Word of God is THE DIVINE DIRECTIONS. God's statutes giving directions to only secure place in the universe, causing great joy because we know what is absolutely right.

4. HIS PURE COMMANDMENTS ENLIGHTENS (v. 8b *the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes*) = The Word of God is THE DIVINE DECREES: God's commands giving a clear portrait of God's non-optional absolutes, without any flaw bringing light on every area.

5. HIS CLEAN FEAR ENDURES (v. 9a *The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever*) = The Word of God is (eternal life) THE DIVINE CONDITION. This is fearing God, lovingly acknowledging by my actions God sees me.

6. HIS TRUE JUDGMENTS LIBERATE (v. 9b *the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether*) = The Word of God is (REV.19). THE DIVINE DECISIONS. God's judgments, His final word on everything! Non-negotiable living.

- *Liberating truth comes by realizing God's eternal plan* . [Ephesians 1:4](#) just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, (NKJV). Remember that holiness was God's purpose for all his people when he planned their salvation.
- *Liberating truth comes by seeing Christ's dying purpose* . [Ephesians 5:25-26](#) Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, (NIV) Remember that holiness was Christ's purpose for all of us when he died for us.
- *Liberating truth comes by living as new creatures in Christ*. [Ephesians 2:10](#) For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (NIV) Remember that it was for holiness that we were raised to life in Christ.
- *Liberating truth comes by learning the message of grace*. [Titus 2:11-12](#) For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, (NIV) [Ephesians 4:21-24](#) 21 Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (NIV) Remember that the gospel that calls us to Christ summons us also to holiness.
- *Liberating truth comes by Christ liberating us from sin*. [Matthew 1:21](#) 21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. (KJV) Remember that holiness, which is another name for the life of deliverance from sin, is itself a part of the salvation that Jesus brings us.
- *Liberating truth comes as the only way of seeing God*. [Hebrews 12:14](#) Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. (NIV) Remember that ... without holiness no one will see the Lord ([Hebrews 12:14](#) NIV) not because a Christian's final acceptance has to be earned

by holy living, but because, just as only through a sound eye can one ever see a view, so only through a pure heart can one ever see God (we have that on Jesus' authority).

- *Liberating truth comes by opening fellowship with God* **Psalm 15:1-2** LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? 2 He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart (NIV) Remember, too, that holiness makes for the happiness of fellowship with God, which the unholy will miss.
- *Liberating truth comes by securing a place of pleasing service for god* . **II Timothy 2:21** Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. (NKJV) Remember also that holiness is the precondition of usefulness to God.
- *Liberating truth comes by growing through God's pruning* . **Hebrews 12: 7-8** If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. (NKJV) Finally, remember that holiness is in any case the only way of life that is natural and fulfilling to anyone who is born again... As the great preacher of over a century and a half ago prayed, Lord, make me as holy as it is possible for a saved sinner to be. Can we pray that this evening?

Why ⁽²⁾ in the world would a forgotten drunk carry around a line of lyrics? Well, maybe he still believed he had it in him. Maybe that derelict with the body of a bum still had the heart of a genius. For once upon a time, long before his tragic death at age 38, he had written the songs that literally made the whole world sing, like:

*"Camptown Races"
"Oh! Susanna!"
"Beautiful Dreamer"
"Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair"
"Old Folks at Home"
"My Old Kentucky Home"*

And two hundred more that have become deeply rooted in our rich American heritage. Thanks to Stephen Foster, who nobody knew. And for whom nobody cared.

Makes me think of a few lines out of an old poem preachers once quoted:

*And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,
Much like the old violin.
A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine;
A game --and he travels on.
He's "going" once, and "going" twice,
He's "going" and almost "gone."*

Almost. Almost gone. Until someone cares. And steps in. And stoops down. And, in love, rebuilds a life, restores a soul, rekindles a flame that sin snuffed out, and renews a song that once was there. As Fanny Crosby put it:

*Touched by a loving heart,
Wakened by kindness
Chords that were broken,
Will vibrate once more.*

Deep within many a forgotten life is a scrap of hope, a lonely melody trying hard to return. Some are in prison. Some in hospitals. Some in nursing homes. And some silently slip into church on Sunday morning, terribly confused and afraid. Do you care? Enough to share the truth that can set them free? That was Christ's ministry. Is it yours? Some might look like bums from the Bowery, but they may have a song dying in their hearts because nobody knows and nobody cares.

Psalm 19:9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. (NKJV)

Stephen Foster died a slave to untruth. He was deceived by a false hope, namely alcohol. What happens when we operate outside of God's truth? We are misled, deceived and captured by sin.

Where can we look to find truth? In a person who declared they were truth and life. Jesus Christ and His book, the Bible!

1. 0.1 Swindoll,

2. Swindoll,

3. Donald McCullough, *Waking from the American Dream* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1975), 15.

4. Adapted from Swindoll, *Shedding Light*, p. 61.

5. As told by Charles R. Swindoll in *Come Before Winter . . . and Share My Hope* (Portland, Oreg.: Multnomah Press, 1985), p. 34.

6. Euripides, as quoted in *The Home Book of Quotations*, 10th ed., comp. Burton Stevenson (New York, N.Y.: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1967), p. 377.

7. *From Heaven*, by J. Oswald Sanders, p. 148-49.

8. *Maier, The Book of Nahum*, p. 127. Diodorus's work is called the *Chronicles*. The material on the fall n in turn from *Persica*, a chronicle of Assyria and Persia in twenty-three books by a Greek physician named Cresias, of which only fragments survive.

