

The Trail Machine

One time when working for the Oregon State Parks Department, I was en route to a bridge repair problem on Latourelle Falls Trail to take care of a major problem which had occurred on the trail. I was operating an eight wheeled wheel barrow type trail machine which I inadvertently brought too close to the bank side of the trail upon which I was operating it. As a result, it walked up the steep bank on that side and rolled over to the sloped side, sending me rolling through the blackberries and devils club vegetation down the steep slope.

This slope culminated in a drop off into Latourelle Creek. The tools I was carrying in the hopper of the machine were scattered through the brush, and I was left to my own devices about stopping my uncontrolled roll down the sixty degree slope of the hillside upon which the original trail was built. I was grabbing everything available, realizing that a handful of thorns was much preferable to an uncontrolled “dip” in the waters of Latourelle Creek and possibly over the 249 foot waterfalls not far downstream.

Fortunately I was able to stop myself from rolling through the brush and all the tools were recovered. However, this made me think about how we sometimes will mistakenly do what we think is best only to find out we have made a major judgmental miss-call mistake. Proverbs says that “there is a way which seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death[1].” Ecclesiastes cautions us about the folly and futility of striving after wealth, power, pleasure and toil[2].

We, as a society are in a somewhat parallel situation to me as I rolled down through the brush and berry vines. Just as I erred in getting too close to the embankment, causing me to dump over and roll downhill, we, as a society, spiritually speaking, have all sinned and fallen short of the Glory God created us for in the beginning of creation[3]. We find ourselves gravitating through Satan’s wiles toward despicable perversions in order to satisfy in a secular sense, what is a major spiritual break down[4]. Leaving a huge spiritual vacuum, we allow more and more wickedness to be “sucked into our souls” as we grasp at things that fail to “stop our sinful slide” into a certain oblivion as we succumb to the Devil’s evil temptations. The more we sin, the worse we feel about ourselves and the more we grasp at the not satisfying “straws” in our twisted meandering and aimless wondering through life. Romans 6:23 says “the wages of sin is death”[5]. Ecclesiastes cautions us in the common destiny we have with all mankind[6]; to that end we are, if we have no solid thing to grab onto, in a spiritual death roll.

My downhill slide was physical, and it ended up well. The downhill slide of mankind is spiritual and much more serious in nature than was mine. It, too, can end up well if sinners will, on an individual basis, accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The same verse of scripture which says that the wages of sin is death also talks about the free gift of God which is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord[7]. Available through the Grace and Love of God in the person of Jesus Christ, Salvation is our protective helmet to wear as we stand firm against the Devil. We are powerless on our own, but by accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we can put on our full armor of God, using the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the readiness of the gospel of peace on our feet and the protective shield of faith with which we can protect ourselves against Satan’s arrows of fire.[8] Thus we will be ready to march on to the glorious work God has for us both on the trail of life, and at the destination of the project he has for us in life.

[1] Proverb 14:12

[2] Ecclesiastes Chapters 1-8:1

[3] Genesis Chapters 1-3; Romans 3:23

[4] Romans 1:18-32; Galatians 5:19-21

[5] Romans 6:23

[6] Ecclesiastes 9:2

[7] Romans 6:23b

[8] Ephesians 5:10-18