

The Two Paths

An Allegory for Walking in the Spirit
Drew Stephens

Nailed to the cross are the sins of the saints. Their deeds past, present and future are washed in the blood of the Savior that flowed down from His head, His hands, His feet and from the spear that pierced His heart. His perfect blood covers their sin so that it is never seen again by heaven.

At the foot of the cross lay the burdens of the saints. Bundles of guilt, shame, despair, and fear have been cast aside by the grace of the Savior who bore our burdens and condemnation.

Two paths diverge from the cross.

The Path of Happiness

The first traveler chose the path that extended from the left of the Cross called the *Path of Happiness*. The path is worn smooth by the feet of many who have gone before. Its way is broad and accompanying the path is the sound of many travelers.

Shops and booths line the street offering their wares to all who pass by. The traveler enters the *Shop of Significance*. Inside the shop is lined with mirrors on every wall. At each turn he catches a new reflection of himself. He begins to feel important. He has much to offer. Here he thinks to himself, I have found happiness. He gladly buys a mirror from the shopkeeper, and returns to his path.

As he walks, the traveler is careful to keep one eye on the mirror so he won't lose sight of his significance. But in so doing within just a few paces of the shop he runs into another pedestrian on the path. She too was engrossed in the mirror she purchased along with a beautiful cloak off the *Rack of Reputation*. As the two collide the mirrors fall. The traveler stumbles and in his fall he is cut by the shards of glass from his mirror. As he stands bruised and bleeding, he realizes that the happiness he sought seems even farther away.

He kneels down to pray. He seeks the Savior. "Lord rescue me," He pleads "I feel so empty, something is missing. I thought it would be so different once I had You." He listens but the voice of the Savior seems muffled by the sounds of the crowd. He looks for Him but He seems distant, just beyond reach.

As he begins to rise he notices that the beautiful white clothes he received at the cross are now stained and muddy. The stench of sin clings to each thread and he longs to be clean again but his pride keeps him from turning back to the cross.

Wearily the traveler moves on. He ponders, "Perhaps another shop will have the happiness that I seek?"

Down the road on the left he sees the *Castle of Comfort and Prosperity*. It looks so inviting. He steps in and sees warm offerings of the castle. He sits upon a couch and watches the world outside through the pane of glass. A waiter caters to the travelers every desire. He feels at ease. But as time goes on he notices that the attention of the waiter seems to become distracted. And the couch which once felt so comfortable now has a lump that prods his back.

Over time the traveler begins to question, "Is this all there is? This is nice but it does not satisfy. There is still an emptiness in my soul."

Soon his weariness with comfort drives him from the castle once again to travel the path in search of happiness.

Down the street is an active place. People are coming and going at a blistering pace. Those going in and out seem to be driven by a mission. He knows the savior but something is missing. "I must do more," he says. "Here I can do it, here I have found a sense of purpose." Expectantly he enters the *Brothel of Busyness*, eager to find an answer to missing peace within.

As before however with time the busyness begins to wear on his soul. He has accomplished much or so it seems, but the missing peace is still missing.

Wearily he discovers that there is no happiness on the path, only a desperate sense of loneliness. In truth the path he has traveled was the path of *Self*. And no lasting happiness can ever be found on the path of *Self*.

The Path of Joy

Another traveler chose the path to the right of the Cross, the *Path of Joy*. This path is narrow and rough-hewn. At first it is difficult to get one's footing for the path is steep and wet with tears.

Along its side lay the former possessions of the sinners made saints. "Comfort" lay in a small hollowed hole just to the left and below the path. On the opposite side of the path lay the garments of "Reputation" to which their former owners once preciously clung. Shards of "Success" lay scattered across the ground. That which once brought such a sense of value and prestige is now trampled underfoot and forgotten.

There is a stillness, on this path; a quiet reverence that flows from a secure assurance that the traveler is not alone. Although he sees no other companion there is a presence that is inescapable, which brings rest to his soul as he travels.

A short distance from the Cross rose a steep hill called *Abandonment*. A smooth gentle stream flows down the hill. As the traveler bends down to drink and be refreshed he catches sight of a distorted reflection.

Here in the sparkling reflection of *Living Water* the traveler sees himself for who he really is. As he gazes at the reflection he sees two images. One is resplendent in beauty and bears the distinct resemblance of the Savior. The other however is a gaunt reflection of his old life that has followed the traveler at a distance waiting for a chance to take the lead.

A still small voice whispers in his ear, "He can go no farther. If you wish to follow Me, you must abandon your friend. For he cannot travel the *Path of Joy*, nor can he ascend the hill of *Abandonment*."

As the traveler looks up from the stream he sees on either side of the path lays the discarded ruins of pride. That which once seemed so vibrant and important is now revealed for what it truly is, the corpse of sin and self.

The stench of his own death penetrates the nostrils of the traveler. Its pungent aroma almost causes him to be sick but then the bouquet of real life flows from the Cross blown by the wind of the Spirit and brings a refreshing reminder that the old life is dead and that the Savior has given him a new life.

He denies himself, "I am not my own," He says. "I have been bought with a price, the blood of Christ my Savior, I have been crucified with Him it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me; therefore glorify God in your body, traveler." "You are dead, *Old Self*, but in Christ Jesus I am alive, I am born again. You must stay at the cross my old friend," He announces.

As he spoke the gaunt old self is revealed to be but a decaying shell, groomed by sin to have the appearance of life, but it was just a façade.

As the traveler begins to ascend the hill he feels the bony clutches of *Pride* seeking to pull him back down and regain control. From above the Traveler hears the gentle call of the Savior, "Come unto Me all you who are weary. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Pride loses its grip and much to his surprise the traveler finds the hill much easier. He suddenly feels lighter. He senses a freedom he has never known before, as if heavy weight was taken from his back.

Cresting the hill the Savior Himself waits. "Let us travel together," He says. "Never will I leave you nor forsake you. For I am with you always even to the end of the age."

Although the traveler had known Jesus for many years He had never before experienced His presence with such intimacy and freshness.

“Why did I not know You in this way before?” he asked the Savior. Jesus replied, “You were not meant to travel this new life on your own my son. I was always there. But there is no room on the *Path of Joy* for three. As long as you clung to your *Old Self*, he blocked your sight of Me. As long as you listened to *Pride* cry out, “What about me!” you could not hear my voice.”

“I told you in my Word, if any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me.”

This is the secret to the *Path of Joy* for it is the Path of Christ alone. We must travel this path with empty hands, walking in the Spirit as He guides our steps. When we release our grip on self, pride, comfort, reputation and sin we discover that the joy we longed for was with us every step. We had simply been too occupied with ourselves to enjoy His presence.

The deception of the enemy is that something is missing. We are right to recognize that something is wrong. But we are deceived to think that something is missing.

How can we have more of Jesus? He gave us His all. He sits at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us. He demonstrated His love for us in that while we were yet sinners He died for us. What more can He give?

There is nothing missing my friend. There is something, rather someone in the way. Perhaps Jesus greatest gift was that He not only saved us from our sin, but that He has also saved us from ourselves, for often we are our own worst enemy.

It is “Self” that robs us of joy and it is pride that limits our entrance into the Lord’s presence on an intimate and daily basis.

Abandon the *Path of Self* and then we will meet the Savior face to face on the *Path of Joy* as you walk by the Spirit.