

# A Struggle Ensued:

## The Struggle to Be Right with God


### INTRODUCTION

While I was in Winterpark last week skiing a young man on ski lift a few chairs in front of us slipped forward and was dangling from the side of the chair lift. He was about five poles up the hill already. He was about 30' feet off the ground. Now I don't know how he slid off the chair. I don't know if he had the safety bar up or down. All I know was that the instant he slid off the side of the chair, he was engaged in a hopeless struggle.

He was wearing his skis and ski boots. His hands were in gloves and no matter how hard he struggled to pull himself back up onto the chair he failed. The two people riding the lift with him were of no assistance. They couldn't pull him back up. He just hung there.

He fought a good fight. He held on longer than many would have held on. But ultimately he could hold his weight no longer. He fell. He was fortunate the snow below him was unpacked deep powder and he would be okay.

That skier's plight reminded me of the struggle that ensued the moment that Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden. Things had once been Good, but then trouble came. Because of that trouble Human kind became locked in the a desperate struggle. A struggle that attempted to restore that which had been lost. A struggle to restore the relationship with God we were created to share. From the moment he forever hid the garden humankind has been struggling to find its way back to God.

 **TO HEAR THE JOURNEY CALL FORCES US TO  
ACKNOWLEDGE THE HOPELESS STRUGGLE  
THAT HAS ENSUED SINCE THE FALL OF  
HUMANITY.**

Turn with me to Isaiah 64:6 and hear the plight of our struggle.

**Isaiah 64:6**

6 All of us have become like one who is unclean,  
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;  
we all shrivel up like a leaf,  
and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

In this passage our hopeless estate is portrayed in four vivid word pictures.

First, we are compared to one who is unclean—a leper. Lepers were not even allowed to live within the city or Camp. (Num. 5:1-4; 12:10-15, etc.).

Second, are attempts at righteous acts are compared to dirty menstrual cloths. Items of no value disposed of immediately. Anyone in contact with a menstrual cloth was declared unclean and not allowed into the tabernacle or temple. (Leviticus 15:19-33; 20:18).

Third, we all shrivel up like a leaf.

Fourth, we are swept away by the wind of our own sins.

In simple terms. We are helpless. No matter how hard we struggle, we could not bridge the gap that had been created between us and God.

Hearing the Journey Call Forces us to acknowledge the hopeless struggle that has ensued.

Through the struggle we learn that

I. Merely acknowledging God is not enough

### **Genesis 4:2-7**

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. 4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

Cain had adopted the common practice of merely acknowledging God. It was kind of a tip of the hat. His heart was not right with God, yet he wanted God's favor. So he tipped his hat to God and did half hearted sacrifice.

Cain acknowledged

- ✓ God's existence.
- ✓ His debt—he sacrificed.
- ✓ His desire for some type of relationship with God.

But acknowledgment isn't enough.

## 11. Being born into a right family is not enough

### **Genesis 9:18-26**

#### **The Sons of Noah**

18 The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) 19 These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth.

20 Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. 21 When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. 22 Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. 23 But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father's nakedness.

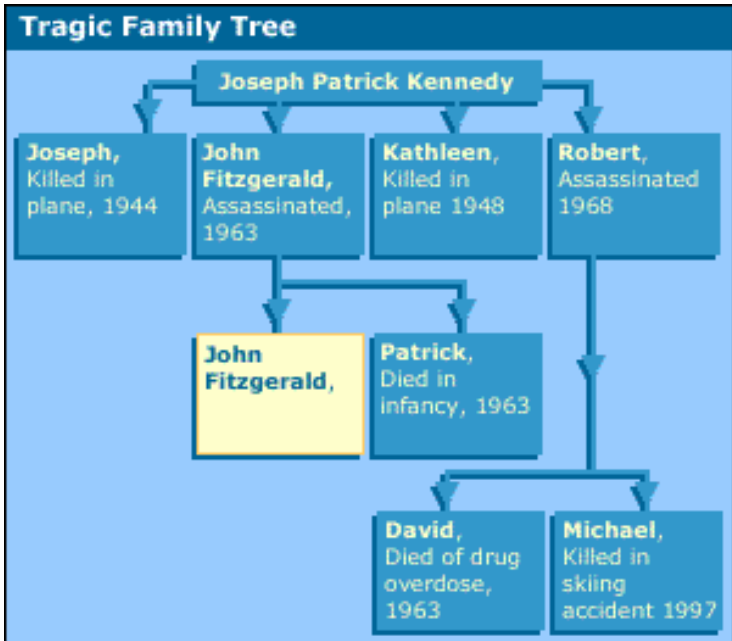
24 When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, 25 he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers."

26 He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem.

Canaan had been saved from the flood.

He was the son of the most righteous man alive. But merely being born into a blessed family is not enough.

The Kennedy family is considered to have been American royalty. But all their fame. All their power, all their prestige was not enough. Look at the Kennedy family tree.



Just being born into the right family is not enough. It wasn't enough for Caanan and it isn't enough for us.

There is a third thing we learn from the struggle.

III. Raising ourselves to lofty status is not enough.

Some people think that if they can just raise themselves up high enough they will some how fill the void of what was lost in Eden.

Marlena Dietrich used to make records of the ovations she received at public appearances. Not only that she used to play them for her guests when they came over.

### **Genesis 11:1-4**

#### **The Tower of Babel**

1 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. 2 As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

Raising our selves up with self achievements is not enough.

Our struggle ultimately shows . . .

IV. Trying to Keep the law is not enough.

### **Exodus 24:7**

7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey."

**CLEVELAND:** A jury convicted Mahoning County Sheriff Philip A. Chance on all counts in a racketeering and extortion trial based on charges he took \$65,000 in payoffs from alleged Youngstown mob boss, Lenine Strollo. Chance, 49, was tried before U.S. District Judge Kathleen O'Malley on charges of racketeering, extortion, obstructing law enforcement and two conspiracy counts. The most serious charge, racketeering, carries a possible 20-year sentence.

📖 **TO HEAR THE JOURNEY CALL FORCES US TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE HOPELESS STRUGGLE THAT HAS ENSUED SINCE THE FALL OF HUMANITY.**

Hearing the Journey Call reminds us of our helpless situation.

## **The Struggle that Ensues Teaches us that**

**Merely acknowledging God is not  
enough.**

**Being born into a right family is  
not enough.**

**Raising ourselves to lofty status is  
not enough.**

**Vowing to keep the law is not  
enough.**

## Conclusion

### **Romans 3:10-12**

10As it is written:

"There is no one righteous, not even one;

11there is no one who understands,  
no one who seeks God.

12All have turned away,  
they have together become worthless;  
there is no one who does good,  
not even one."

## Challenge

### **Romans 5:8**

8But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.