

Homeless Man Leaves Fortune **By Tommy Thornhill**

What would you do, if you learned that someone had died and left you a fortune in his will? I dare say, that the majority of people would be so overjoyed at the news. They would probably be jumping up and down for joy. They would waste precious little time before claiming it. Not only that, they would find it very difficult to keep the good news to themselves, they would be sharing the news with others along the way. But not all people would react that way. I know this is so, as the following article, written by Douglas F. Parsons, reveals. It is entitled "Homeless Man Dies, Leaves Fortune."

Several years ago, a story appeared in the newspapers, about a homeless man found dead on the streets of Los Angeles. His name was Morris Stegel. On the surface he seemed like your average Los Angeles street-person roaming about in dark alleys, sleeping out-of-doors, carrying everything he owned in an old shopping cart. And he died the way you would expect a street-person to die, sprawled in an alley, dead of natural causes, heart trouble perhaps.

But there was something different about Morris Stegel. Maybe it was that he had three bank accounts, containing a total of \$207,421.00.

It seems that ten years earlier Morris' father had died and left the money to him. But Morris didn't want it. When Morris did not claim it, the Division of Unclaimed Property tracked him down, and his family tried to force him to take it. They even arranged a ceremony to turn the money over to him, but Morris did not show up for the presentation. Later, he allowed himself to take enough of the money to buy an old car; which he used to sleep in during bad weather. His relatives rented him an apartment, but he never lived in it. Finally on Dec.10, 1959, he died just as he lived, a homeless man of the streets; with three dollars in his pocket and an unclaimed fortune in the bank.

Does this story sound crazy? Well, figure this one out. Morris lived a wasted life and died a futile death, but don't be too quick to point a finger at him. He was only dealing with temporal things, while many people play the same losing game with an eternal, priceless fortune left to them by Jesus Christ.

Almost two thousand years ago, our Heavenly Father, ratified His will, and left all of His children inestimable wealth, life, peace, happiness, victory over all evil, and ultimately eternal life. To this day, many have used very little of this windfall, and some have even refused to spend any of it. Lost people shuffle down blind alleys of an empty existence, facing an eternity of emptiness and hopeless despair, and ignore the wonderful salvation promised us in Christ." (End of article).

The above article is supposed to be true, and several thoughts came to mind as I read it. These I want to share with you.

LESSON 1. The fortune was willed to Morris because his father wanted him to have it after his death. His father wanted him to have it because he was a child of his, and he loved him. In the same way, the Father in heaven has an immense fortune He wishes to share with His children. That is why He allowed Jesus to die for you and me, that we might become heirs to the riches of heaven for all eternity. Jesus "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal.1:4). Again, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2Cor. 8:9). The gift is "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away" (1Peter 1:4).

LESSON 2. Even though the fortune is a free gift, it is valueless until one is willing to accept it. Morris Stegel refused the fortune, and no one could force him to take it. In the same manner, the gift of God, eternal life (Rom.6:23), is free, but it will be of no benefit to and cannot

be enjoyed by, anyone who refuses to claim it. Jesus made salvation and heirship available to all. Those who receive Him have "the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" John 1:12). To claim the right of sonship, belief in His Name will lead one to be baptized. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal.3:26-27). Putting on Christ makes us a child of God, "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16-17). Refusing baptism is to reject Jesus, for "He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Heb. 5:9). "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark16:16). If you haven't claimed your inheritance, what hinders you from accepting it? It is nothing but your own stubbornness. If you treat this eternal inheritance as Morris Stegel did his temporal one, by refusing to accept it, you will regret it forever. You will have to pay the penalty for your sins by spending an eternity in hell with the devil and his angels. And just like Morris Stegel, you will have no one to blame but yourself.

LESSON 3. Enjoyment of the fortune depends on accepting all of it. Morris Stegel reluctantly accepted enough of his inheritance to buy a used car, but this didn't change his lifestyle. The fortune was unimportant to him, so, in the end he died broke and alone. Too many today want to sample the fortune offered, but not enough to make a difference. They acknowledge kinship with the Lord, but are unwilling to invest their lives and possessions in His service. They pretend to want Christianity, but when a full commitment is called for, they back off.

Someone described this attitude of reluctant Christians(?) as that of a yapping dog. It seems a dog in the neighborhood was always chasing the cat next door. Whenever he saw the cat, he would go after it full speed. So long as the cat kept running, everything was lovely. But, occasionally the cat would stop, and face the dog. Then the dog would put on his brakes and act as if the whole thing was a joke. Evidently the cat was to be chased but not caught. That is the way some people treat Christianity. They act as if their whole aim in life is to pursue Christianity, but when they finally catch up with Christianity, and realize what is really involved, they lose enthusiasm for it. They just want to chase it, not catch it. (via The Etna Enlightener, Etna church of Christ, Ozark, AR)

A Lump of Concrete

"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:12-13).

"I was driving down a bumpy country road when I saw a bag of cement beside the road. It appeared to have fallen off a delivery truck as it hit one of the bumps in the rough road. Being a person who does not like to see anything wasted, I stopped to pick up the lost bag of cement. When I reached down to pick up this heavy bag, to my surprise, I discovered it was not soft and limber as I had expected, but had solidified into an immovable piece of cement.

"Often our lives are like that bag of cement. They take on shapes that were not intended and become hardened in that shape. That bag of cement was meant to become a part of some beautiful structure but, because it did not reach its place of service, it became a useless rock in the form of a bag of cement." (Author Unknown)

Let us be meticulously careful not to be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.