

**Review (75): *It's a Wonderful Life: The Hole Left in Bedford Falls by George's Absence*; Application of Principles from the Doctrine of Divine Decrees**

- 33- Clarence's observation became obvious the moment he and George entered Nick's bar. The people of Pottersville are so discouraged they have collectively engaged in a frantic search of happiness. Their unhappiness results from the absence of certain causes and effects that have had negative impact upon their lives.
- 1) Emil Gower, stricken with grief over his son's sudden death, mistakenly filled a prescription with poisonous pills that were subsequently given to a sick child in town. The boy's death resulted in him spending 20 years in prison after which he became the town drunk. No George Bailey to correct the error.
  - 2) The city itself, now dominated economically by Potter's influence over its financial institutions, reflects the debauchery that occurs when a discouraged people enter into a frantic search for happiness. No George Bailey to help them with low-interest loans and a decent lifestyle at Bailey Park.
  - 3) Ernie Bishop is an example of those who were instead trapped in shacks at Potter's Field. His wife was so frustrated she fled the corruption of the city taking her child with her and leaving no forwarding address.
  - 4) The old house at 320 Sycamore that Mary refurbished and converted into a home has never been touched and remains an abandoned wreck. Instead, Clarence informs George that Mary never married since he didn't exist and consequently, he has no children.
  - 5) His mother still lives at the family place but has obviously come upon hard times and is outwardly bitter. Her only son, Harry, died at age nine and her husband's sudden death left her a widow. The only person left to run the family business was Uncle Billy whose inefficiency enabled Henry Potter to gain control of the Building & Loan. Uncle Billy lost his mind and Ma Bailey had to resort to renting out rooms in her home in order to survive.
- 34- Stubbornly, George continues to deny the reality of his "non-existence" and maintains that he is under some kind of a spell.
- George: I've heard of things like this. You got me in some sort of a spell or something. Well, I'll get out of it; I'll get out of it. And I know how, too. The last man I talked to before all this stuff started happening to me was Martini.
- Clarence: You know where he lives?
- George: Sure I know where he lives. He lives in Bailey Park.
- 35- From his mother's house, George hurries over to that part of town he helped develop. With loans from Bailey Building & Loan, numerous families were able to own their own homes and raise their children in a nice neighborhood away from Potter's Field. When George arrives he finds that it is not the nice subdivision called Bailey Park but a cemetery.
- Clarence: Are you sure this is Bailey Park?
- George: Nah, I'm not sure of anything anymore. All I know is this should be Bailey Park. But where are the houses?
- Clarence: You weren't here to build them.
- 36- George sees a tombstone that has the inscription: in memory of our beloved son Harry Bailey 1911-1919.
- Clarence: Your brother, Harry Bailey, broke through the ice and was drowned at the age of nine.

George: That's a lie! Harry Bailey went to war. He got the Congressional Medal of Honor. He saved the lives of every man on that transport.

Clarence: Every man on that transport died. Harry wasn't there to save them because you weren't there to save Harry.

37- To reassure himself, George brushes the snow away from bottom of the tombstone to double-check the dates. As he does so Harry gives him his fourth nugget of wisdom.

Clarence: You see, George, you really had a wonderful life. Don't you see what a mistake it would be to throw it away?

38- Clarence thus comes up with his fourth statement to George designed to focus his attention on the doctrine of divine decrees:

- 1) At the tollhouse keeper's office Clarence grants George's wish to never have been born, "You've got your wish. You've never been born. You don't exist."
- 2) After being thrown out of Nick's bar and again informing George that he does not exist, Clarence says, "You've been given a great gift, George, a chance to see what the world would be like without you."
- 3) Standing outside his family home after his mother had just slammed the door in his face, Clarence drives the point home further, "Strange isn't it? Each man's life touches so many others' lives. But when he isn't around, he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?"
- 4) And as George turns away in shock from his younger brother's tombstone, Clarence delivers his fourth zinger, "You see, George, you really had a wonderful life. Don't you see what a mistake it would be to throw it away?"

39- It is slowly beginning to dawn on George Bailey the tremendous negative impact his absence from history has had on everyone in Pottersville. His tour through the Virtual Reality of his own non-existence has revealed the deaths or non-existence of possibly hundreds of people:

- 1) A little boy was unwittingly killed by his parents because George was not there to stop Mr. Gower from putting poison into the capsules.
- 2) George's four children were never born because he never existed to meet and marry Mary Hatch.
- 3) Harry Bailey drowned as a boy because George was not there to save him.
- 4) Hundreds of servicemen died in World War II because Harry was not alive to shoot down the Japanese aircraft attacking their ship.

40- In just a brief tour around town it has been revealed to George that his absence from history has had a grave negative influence resulting in dire consequences for a number of people, both family and friends:

Emil Gower, Nick the bartender, Violet Bick, Ernie Bishop, Mary Hatch, Ma Bailey, Uncle Billy, Mr. Martini, and the citizens of Bedford Falls.

41- But even as he stands by his brother Harry's grave, George still doesn't really comprehend what Clarence is trying to tell him.

Clarence: You see, George, you really had a wonderful life. Don't you see what a mistake it would be to throw it all away?

42- Here are some principles from the doctrine of divine decrees that can be applied to the life of George Bailey:

- 1) God's decree rendered all things certain to occur and that they would exist. In doing so, God did not interfere with angelic or human free will.

**NOTE:** God decreed to select George Bailey in eternity past and thus he *did* come into existence. By imputing to him soul life, George's volition was free to act and in doing so had positive historical impact.

- 2) In eternity past, God's omniscience fed all the facts of human history into the computer of divine decrees while ignoring all the possible alternatives.

**NOTE:** One possible alternative was the non-selection of George Bailey. It was ignored simply because his biological life was a fact of human history and his soul life was decreed to be a sovereign imputation by God.

- 3) Thus, when God decreed the fact that George Bailey would exist as a free agent, He also decreed that his every thought, decision, and action would take place.
- 4) God knew every situation George would face—the sudden death of his father and the post-graduate offer of a job by Harry's father-in-law, both of which kept George in Bedford Falls. God knew of Potter's offer of a job to George and that Uncle Billy would loose the Building & Loan's \$8,000-deposit. He knew that George would seek help from Potter and that Potter would call the sheriff. He knew George would react with suicidal tendencies. On every occasion, God had a problem-solving device. On every occasion, personal integrity served George well until he cracked under the pressure of the apparent loss of his personal integrity.
- 5) No matter what difficulties we face, no matter how frustrated we might become in the face of problems, one doctrinal conclusion remains constant: complaining is not an option. And wishing you were never born is a major complaint that is blasphemous to the grace of God.
- 6) George's volition was involved in one, all-comprehensive, interdependent system of causes and effects. God new in eternity past what would have been involved had George Bailey never been born.

**NOTE:** The drama seeks to illustrate how the subtraction of George's thoughts, decisions, and actions would have impacted the lives of all those with whom he was destined to come in contact.

- 7) Therefore, not the slightest confusion could exist as to one of even the smallest events, much less the non-existence of a person, without confusion to all events.

**NOTE:** All events are interwoven and interdependent. The subtraction of even one person destroys the interconnected sequences of causes and effects throughout the computer.

- 8) Consequently, the decrees must be unchangeable and certain. Nothing could ever arise to necessitate a change not even the attempted suicide of a single individual.

**NOTE:** Since God only deals in reality, the decrees cannot change. But through dramatic license we saw the disastrous results of what would have happened if just one man had been left out of history.

- 9) Fortunately, there are no erasures, corrections, or deletions. Our mistakes, our bad decisions, our wrongdoings, and our sins are as unalterable as are our successes, our good decisions, our acts of divine good, and our spiritual growth.

**NOTE:** It is often necessary for us to be brought low in order for God to lift us up. We cannot deny our failures. We must confront them in order to learn from them. The grace result is that the mercy of God forgives us and restores us. George was so discouraged he wanted out of life. But as he said earlier at Uncle Billy's house, "One of us is going to jail and it's not going to be me."