

PROLOGUE

The article below was written in the summer of 2009. If you read it, you will see that at that time I expressed appreciation for Lance Armstrong's achievements as a cyclist, but sadness over the fact that he interpreted his recovery from cancer in a way that was God- and gospel-denying.

As I write this prologue in October of 2012, Armstrong's athletic achievements are now the source of sadness in their own way. To say the least, Armstrong's persistent claims to have competed cleanly all those years have now been seriously challenged by the recently released findings of the United States Anti-Doping Agency. As a result, his competitive results achieved since August, 1998—including his seven Tour de France victories—have been officially disqualified.

Rather than edit the article below in light of recent developments, I prefer to let it stand as it was published in 2009. Let the reader bear in mind when it was written. And let us ever entrust ourselves to the one from whose sight no one is hidden, and to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:13)—and who is faithful and just to forgive the sins of those who come to him in repentance and faith (1 John 1:9).

On Sunday, July 25, 1999, under a brilliant blue Parisian sky, Texan Lance Armstrong rode down Paris' famed Champs Élysées straight into cycling glory by winning the Tour de France. It would turn out to be the first of his seven straight Tour victories. The previous three weeks had been grueling—2,405 miles, over 91 hours of riding—but victory was sweet. Armstrong's hard work had paid off in the form of a most marvelous reward.

On Sunday, July 25, 1999—the same day that Armstrong rode into Paris and triumphed and celebrated—I was days away from the fifth of six chemotherapy treatments in an ongoing campaign against non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, with which I had been diagnosed just three months before. Those treatments were grueling in their own way, and sweet victory—that is, survival—was by no means certain.

From that introduction, if you know anything about Lance Armstrong, you will know that he and I have something in common: Lance Armstrong and I are both cancer survivors. In July, 1999, his battle with cancer was behind him. Mine was still raging.

¹ Adapted from a lesson taught for New Hope Presbyterian Church, Fairfax, Virginia, June 7, 2009. Published in *The Banner of Truth* 551-552 (August-September 2009): 40-54.

Surviving cancer is not the only thing that Armstrong and I have in common. There is also this: he and I have both written books about our experiences. Everyone who survives a serious illness has a story to tell. Only a few of us are given the opportunity to tell it in written form like Lance and me.

I recently took the time to read Armstrong's chronicle of cancer and lessons learned: *It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life*. Every cancer survivor who reads the book cannot help but compare and contrast his own experiences—and, more importantly, his own *interpretation* of his experiences—with those of Armstrong. I am no exception. The following are reflections on Armstrong's chronicle from the vantage point of a fellow cancer survivor.

Facts & Figures

Lance Armstrong was born on September 18, 1971, the same year I was born. He grew up in Plano, Texas. He was already a champion cyclist years before his cancer came along. But then it did come, and fiercely so. He was diagnosed in October, 1996 (at the age of twenty-five) with testicular cancer that had spread to his lungs and his brain. He was treated throughout the rest of 1996. Thankfully, his treatments worked: surgery and chemotherapy combined to rid his body of that dread disease.

Then, gradually, after cancer, after treatment, Armstrong got back into shape, and back onto his bike. In 1998, not only had he returned to cycling, but he achieved some impressive results in competition. On July 25, 1999, that sunny Sunday, the comeback was complete: victory in the Tour de France. The world rightly marveled. So did Armstrong himself. 'I'm in shock. I'm in shock. I'm in shock,' he said as he addressed the press after crossing the finish line.²

Similarities

Armstrong recounts all of this and more in *It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life*.

Not surprisingly, I found that I could relate to many of the cancer-related experiences that Armstrong describes in his book. I say 'not surprisingly' because nearly everyone who gets cancer must endure the same sorts of medicines and emotions. Here are a few similarities that caught my reading eye:

1. I have my date which will live in infamy, the day I was diagnosed: April 23, 1999. Armstrong has his date which will live in infamy, the day *he* was diagnosed: October 2, 1996. He refers to it several times throughout the book in ominous terms. It appears to be emblazoned on

² Lance Armstrong with Sally Jenkins, *It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life* (New York: Berkley Books, 2001), p. 257.

his memory the way my diagnosis date is emblazoned on mine. Near the very end of the book, Armstrong writes this about a cancer patient's diagnosis date:

In the world of cancer patients it's a very significant date, and for me personally, it was the most important date in my life, more important than any birthday or any holiday. No victory or loss could compare to it.

Kik [Kristin, Armstrong's wife at the time] calls my anniversary *Carpe Diem Day*, to remind us to always seize the moment. Every year we spend that day celebrating our existence.³

2. I spend most of Chapter 1 in my book describing all those mysterious symptoms I was experiencing, and that chapter ends with my most unexpected diagnosis. Armstrong spends most of Chapter 1 in his book describing all the mysterious symptoms *he* was experiencing, and that chapter ends with *his* most unexpected diagnosis. Perhaps there is an unwritten rule that the first chapter in a cancer chronicle must be written that way!

3. When I was diagnosed my instinct was to say, 'When will I play tennis again?' When Armstrong was diagnosed his instinct was to say, 'I'll never race again.'⁴ Admittedly, Armstrong was a far better cyclist than I was a tennis player!

4. When I was diagnosed I had to have surgery the very next morning. There was no time to wait. The same was true for Armstrong.

5. Before my cancer came along, I had very little experience with hospitals. Before his cancer came along, Armstrong had never spent a *single night* in a hospital.

6. After a lot of time in the hospital, I got used to the fact that there is a sense in which your body now belongs to perfect strangers. Doctors and nurses can only save your life if you give them access. This was no time for excessive modesty. Armstrong recounts the same realization.

7. When I was in the hospital a friend brought me beer to cheer me up. When Armstrong was in the hospital, a Frenchman brought him a \$500 bottle of Bordeaux. Yes, the Frenchman spent more, but it's the cheering up that counts: I *was* cheered up; Armstrong was not. Thanks go to my friend.

8. Before I went bald thanks to chemotherapy a friend prepared me by giving me a PNC Park baseball cap. (PNC Park is the baseball stadium—under construction in 1999—for my

³ Armstrong, p. 288.

⁴ Armstrong, p. 14.

hometown Pittsburgh Pirates.) Before Armstrong went bald a friend gave him a Mickey Mouse hat that his friend had recently acquired at Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

9. Thanks to chemotherapy my food tasted funny. Thanks to chemotherapy Armstrong's food tasted funny.

10. I have mementos from my cancer ordeal, including my cane. Armstrong has mementos from his cancer ordeal, including, of all things, the catheter that had been inserted into his chest through which he received his chemotherapy. Yes, we keep strange mementos.

11. After cancer I had to face the unanticipated challenges that face the one who survives. Armstrong describes the same experience.

Those are some of the similarities between Armstrong's experiences and mine that stood out for me as I made my way through his book.

When I bought a Trek bicycle back in 2005, the owner's manual came with a DVD. Understandably, the Trek Bicycle Corporation has not been shy about touting in its advertising the fact that Lance Armstrong rides a Trek. When I inserted that DVD into my computer, an introductory video began to play featuring stirring images of Armstrong conquering hills and navigating turns and celebrating on the victor's podium. At first these words appeared on the screen: 'Lance rides Trek.' And then these words appeared in the opposite corner: 'And so do you.' Nice touch, Trek! As I reflect upon Armstrong's book, I can add, 'Lance endured cancer and chemo. And so did I.' And so have countless others who have fought cancer before and after us.

Why This Book Is Inspiring

I indicated above that 'I recently took the time' to read Armstrong's book. Admittedly, it was not difficult to do so. In fact, what *was* difficult was putting the book down to take time to eat and sleep! I was engrossed. As a cancer survivor who is also a recreational cyclist, I found the book remarkable to read.

It is nearly impossible to fathom what Lance Armstrong endured and accomplished, both as a cancer patient and as a cyclist. My legs felt tired just *reading* about the Tour de France: those steep climbs, those fearful descents, those hairpin turns. And to think that he conquered those hills and descents and turns nearly having been conquered himself by cancer and body-wracking chemotherapy less than three years before. Mind-boggling.

Thus, it is no wonder that Armstrong has continued to inspire millions around the world, many of them proudly sporting the recognizable yellow wristband of the LIVESTRONG Lance Armstrong Foundation. Though I do not wear one of those bracelets myself, I do number myself among those inspired by his story.

Read the book, and chances are you will, too.

Why This Book Is Heartbreaking

As stirring as is Armstrong's story of conquering cancer and the Tour, there is more to his book than that. It is no exaggeration to say that there is theology in *It's Not About the Bike*. There is a creed in it. There is a gospel according to Lance. Obviously he did not write the book to be a systematic theology or a spiritual journal. But the theology is in there all the same.

Having read Armstrong's book, I am all the more persuaded that it is not what we go through that matters most, but how we *interpret* what we go through. Consider this from the opening pages. Referring to the story that he is about to tell, Armstrong writes:

Some of it is not easy to tell or comfortable to hear. I'm asking you now, at the outset, to put aside your ideas about heroes and miracles, because I'm not storybook material. This is not Disneyland, or Hollywood. I'll give you an example: I've read that I *flew* up the hills and mountains of France. But you don't fly up a hill. you struggle slowly and painfully up a hill, and maybe, if you work very hard, you get to the top ahead of everybody else.

Cancer is like that, too. Good, strong people get cancer, and they do all the right things to beat it, and they still die. That is the essential truth that you learn. People die. And after you learn it, all other matters seem irrelevant. They just seem small.

I don't know why I'm still alive. I can only guess. I have a tough constitution, and my profession taught me how to compete against long odds and big obstacles. I like to train hard and I like to race hard. That helped, it was a good start, but it certainly wasn't the determining factor. I can't help feeling that my survival was more a matter of blind luck.⁵

There it is. There is the creed: 'blind luck.'

As I read those words I was reminded of the words of John Calvin. In his *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life* Calvin refers to 'the foolish and wretched consolation of the heathen philosophers who tried to harden themselves against adversity by blaming Fortune, or Fate, for it.'⁶ It is no less foolish to interpret the alleviation of adversity in the same way.

⁵ Armstrong, p. 3.

⁶ John Calvin, *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life*, tr. Henry J. van Andel (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1952, 1987), p. 44.

Lest it be suggested that ‘blind luck’ serves in Armstrong’s sentence not as a creed but as an innocent and harmless expression, Armstrong explicitly describes himself later in the book as ‘completely agnostic.’⁷ By his own admission, then, this is a man who claims not to know whether God exists. Instead of believing in God, he says, he concluded during his cancer ordeal that ‘I believed in belief, for its own shining sake.’⁸ The content of one’s beliefs, he claims, is irrelevant, so long as you believe in something: ‘To continue believing in yourself, believing in the doctors, believing in the treatment, *believing in whatever I chose to believe in*, that was the most important thing, I decided. It had to be.’⁹ Thus, ‘blind luck’ is clearly not a throw-away expression in this book. Rather, it is Armstrong’s worldview. Lance Armstrong may very well be the world’s most famous cancer survivor, and his interpretation of having survived it is ‘blind luck.’

Perhaps it goes without saying—but I will say it anyway!—that a more jarring contrast between worldviews can hardly be imagined. In one corner stands the Christian worldview—the Christian’s interpretation of his joys and sorrows—which amounts to this: ‘Whatever my God ordains is right’ (to borrow the title of Samuel Rodigast’s 1675 hymn-poem). The Christian confesses that all that comes to pass has been brought to pass by the sovereign God of the universe, a God who is good and wise and powerful. He looks to this God as a loving heavenly Father who is ordering all things in such a way as to lead him to his heavenly home.

In the other corner stands the worldview of ‘blind luck.’ No personal God. No love or wisdom or power behind our circumstances. No Father to cry out to, to trust in, to hope in.

What struck me as I read Armstrong’s book was not only the jarring difference between his worldview and that of the Christian, but also the bitter fruits that the creed ‘blind luck’ tends to bear in the life of the one who espouses it. Make no mistake: creeds have consequences. The creed ‘blind luck’ has these three consequences, at least: ingratitude, self-righteousness, and hopelessness.

1. Ingratitude

To say that one’s survival is a matter of ‘blind luck,’ and then to identify oneself as ‘completely agnostic,’ is implicitly to withhold from God the thanks that he deserves.

Consider Paul’s grim testimony in Romans 1:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about

⁷ Armstrong, p. 164.

⁸ Armstrong, p. 113.

⁹ Armstrong, p. 113. Italics added.

God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened (*Rom. 1:18-21*).

According to Paul in that passage, everybody knows deep down, not only that God *is*, but also that God is *good*, that God is to be *thanked*. In other words, everybody knows deep down that it's not about 'blind luck', but about a God who is personal, good, wise, powerful—and most *un-blind*. And yet, says Paul, the vast majority *keep* that knowledge deep down, smothered, suppressed, as best they can, so that they do not give God the thanks he is due.

Armstrong testifies that he was turned off from organized religion as a young man because his stepfather was a Christian hypocrite. Of course, hypocrisy on the part of Christians is reprehensible, but even Christian hypocrisy is no excuse for the creed 'blind luck' and for the ingratitude that it bears.

I can imagine the response to this charge of ingratitude. Someone might say, 'No, I'm grateful. You have no idea how grateful I am. I'm grateful to family and friends, to doctors and nurses, for every breath I draw, for every sunrise I see. I'm grateful. I'm just "completely agnostic" about whether there's anyone else, anyone higher to thank.'

My answer is this: 'I don't doubt that you're grateful to family and friends and to doctors and nurses. But as long as your creed is "blind luck" you will never give thanks to One who most deserves it.'

We can even imagine *God's* answer: 'Your "journey back to life." Is that the subtitle of your book, Mr. Armstrong? Who do you think brought you back to life? *I* brought you back to life. *I* led you on that journey. *I* gave you strength for every hill you've ever climbed.' Consider the words of God in Deuteronomy 32:39: 'See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal.'

The story of Jesus healing ten lepers comes to mind:

And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.' When he saw them he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, 'Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?' (*Luke 17:12-17*).

Ten percent. One in ten went back and thanked him. ‘Where are the nine?’ Did the nine go on their way muttering about ‘blind luck’? Just think of all the people in human history whose lives were preserved through cancer. Now, how many of us in faith went back to God and said ‘thank you’? ‘Where are the nine?’

Where is Lance?

2. *Self-Righteousness*

When your creed is ‘blind luck’ you have taken God out of the picture (that is, out of the picture of your own thinking). But that creates a vacuum in your thinking, and that vacuum must be filled. You *will* fill it somehow. And we sinners are prone to fill it with ourselves, with our character, with our performance, with our good works—because we tend to be so terribly impressed with ourselves. In the most explicitly theological passage in the whole book, Armstrong writes this:

How do you confront your own death? Sometimes I think the blood-brain barrier is more than just physical, it’s emotional, too. Maybe there’s a protective mechanism in our psyche that prevents us from accepting our mortality unless we absolutely have to.

The night before brain surgery, I thought about death. I searched out my larger values, and I asked myself, if I was going to die, did I want to do it fighting and clawing or in peaceful surrender? What sort of character did I hope to show? Was I content with myself and what I had done with my life so far? I decided that I was essentially a good person, although I could have been better—but at the same time I understood that the cancer didn’t care.

I asked myself what I believed. I had never prayed a lot. I hoped hard, I wished hard, but I didn’t pray. I had developed a certain distrust of organized religion growing up, but I felt I had the capacity to be a spiritual person, and to hold some fervent beliefs. Quite simply, I believed I had a responsibility to be a good person, and that meant fair, honest, hardworking, and honorable. If I did that, if I was good to my family, true to my friends, if I gave back to my community or to some cause, if I wasn’t a liar, a cheat, or a thief, then I believed that should be enough. At the end of the day, if there was indeed some Body or presence standing there to judge me, I hoped I would be judged on whether I had lived a true life, not on whether I believed in a certain book, or whether I’d been baptized. If there was indeed a God at the end of my days, I hoped he didn’t say, “But you were never a Christian, so you’re going the other way from heaven.” If so, I was going to reply, “You know what? You’re right. Fine.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Armstrong, pp. 112-113.

Oh, Mr. Armstrong, when you stand before God you will have lost all that Texas swagger.

Notice what Armstrong claims in that passage:

1. The final judgment—if there is one, of course—will be all about one’s own works and nothing more. Thus, the gospel according to Lance is, ‘Be good enough.’

2. Armstrong is confident that he *has* been good enough, and has done enough, that he can expect to stand in that judgment.

3. If it turns out that there is a god and that that god has a different standard than Armstrong’s, then Armstrong does not want anything to do with him and his heaven anyway, so it will not be a tearful parting.

How wrong—how chillingly wrong—he is on all three counts. In God’s book a very different standard is set forth: ‘we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ’ (*Gal. 2:16*). Justification—that is, the divine act in the divine courtroom of pardoning and accepting sinners—is received by faith alone in Christ alone because Christ alone, by his perfect life and atoning death, satisfied the justice of God. Armstrong is fatally wrong about the standard, and he is fearfully wrong to suggest that he will say ‘Fine’ should there be a god who finally tells him so. No, it will not be fine.

Elsewhere Armstrong puts it this way:

I wanted to live, but whether I would or not was a mystery, and in the midst of confronting that face, even at that moment, I was beginning to sense that to stare into the heart of such a fearful mystery wasn’t a bad thing. To be afraid is a priceless education. Once you have been that scared, you know more about your frailty than most people, and I think that changes a man. I was brought low, and there was nothing to take refuge in but . . .¹¹

Now, pause there. Pause and consider the drama of that moment in the book. Armstrong is saying this: ‘I wanted live. But I knew I might die. And I was afraid of dying. And so I knew I needed a refuge. And I knew there was only one refuge in the face of the fear of dying.’

Now, tell us, Lance: what is that one refuge? He answers:

¹¹ Armstrong, p. 96. Ellipsis mine.

I was brought low, and there was nothing to take refuge in but the philosophical: this disease would force me to ask more of myself as a person than I ever had before, and to seek out a different ethic.¹²

There you have it. There is Armstrong's answer. The only refuge in the face of the fear of dying is this: be better. Be a better person. Seek out a different ethic and then live up to it.

I say, God help us if that is the only refuge. And anyone else who knows himself well for the sinner that he is will say the same.

3. *Hopelessness*

Listen to Armstrong one more time. In his opening chapter he writes, 'People die. That truth is so disheartening that at times I can't bear to articulate it. Why should we go on, you might ask? Why don't we all just stop and lie down where we are?'¹³

Again, pause there. Pause and consider the weightiness of that question: in the face of death, why go on? Armstrong has put his finger on one of the great questions of the human condition. So, what is his answer? Here it is:

But there is another truth, too. People live. It's an equal and opposing truth. People live, and in the most remarkable ways. When I was sick, I saw more beauty and triumph and truth in a single day than I ever did in a bike race—but they were *human* moments, not miraculous ones. I met a guy in a fraying sweatsuit who turned out to be a brilliant surgeon. I became friends with a harassed and overscheduled nurse name LaTrice, who gave me such care that it could only be the result of the deepest sympathetic affinity. I saw children with no eyelashes or eyebrows, their hair burned away by chemo, who fought with the hearts of Indurains.

I still don't completely understand it.

All I can do is tell you what happened.¹⁴

¹² Armstrong, p. 96.

¹³ Armstrong, pp. 4-5.

¹⁴ Armstrong, p. 5.

There is Armstrong's answer. In the face of death, why go on? Answer: 'people live.' In other words, some people survive cancer. Some people even *flourish* in the midst of cancer. Trials can bring out our best. Trials can afford us moments of 'beauty and triumph and truth.'

I want to say, 'Yes, Lance, people live, that's true. But no, Lance, that is not "an equal and opposing truth.'" To survive cancer—even to survive it and then live for years afterward, years that are full and rich—no, that is not 'equal' to death. If all you have is long life, death wins, because death strikes last. Death ends life, and earthly life is powerless of itself to mount a comeback and end death in return. You may have rallied and passed death several times as the race progressed, pounding at your pedals with all your might, but in the end death passes you one more time and reaches the finish line first, and then your race is over. Yes, people live, but the people who live will still die one day, and there is nothing equal about that.

I want to say, 'Lance, death laughs at moments of "beauty and triumph and truth" if Christ isn't in them.' This is not to deny that there are moments like that, even in the midst of cancer. I knew moments like that myself. But it is to deny that those moments—even the sum total of them—truly and deeply answer the question, 'Why go on?'

Here is how I put it in my own cancer chronicle:

This is where the cancer patient has got to plant his flag: on the true promises of God's Word. In the moment when you learn that you have cancer, there is only one thing strong enough to hold you up. It is not the love of your wife. It is not the support of your family and your congregation. It is not the odds of your being healed—even if those odds are very good. The only reality that can truly, deeply sustain you in that moment is the hope to be found in Jesus Christ, the one who laid down his life for his people and who then crushed death as God's resurrection pioneer.¹⁵

Apart from that reality, there is no true and lasting hope to be found.

Why Such a Hard Word?

It might be asked, 'Why write such an article as this, criticizing a book written by a man who's done so much good in the world? You yourself have admitted that he didn't set out to write a systematic theology. So, why go out of your way like this to take on his book?' I have wrestled with that question myself.

The answer is twofold.

¹⁵ Paul D. Wolfe, *My God Is True! Lessons Learned Along Cancer's Dark Road* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), pp. 44-45.

First, it is spiritually profitable for Christians, if only occasionally, to stop and think carefully about the bankruptcy of the worldviews that have been erected in opposition to the gospel. Like Asaph in Psalm 73, we might find ourselves tempted to envy those whose lives are ‘untroubled’ with concern for God. But then, also like Asaph, we stop and think and come to our senses, and we remember that there is nothing ultimately enviable in their lives after all. This helps us to press on. This also helps us more thoughtfully and lovingly to bear witness to Christ in a world where such un-Christian thinking reigns.

Second, as I indicated above, whatever Armstrong’s intentions may have been in writing the book, the theology in it is inescapable, and that theology is nothing less than an affront against the God who was pleased to preserve his life. Armstrong’s book is a New York Times bestseller, and in its pages he confesses his creed with confidence—even arrogance. It is by no means inappropriate that such a book should be answered.

Yes, Lance Armstrong has done great good in inspiring others. Yes, Lance Armstrong has accomplished athletic feats that must rank with the greatest of his generation. But what does it profit a man to survive cancer and win the Tour de France—even to win it seven times, even to win it seventy-times-seven times—and lose his soul? The man who dies believing what is professed in *It’s Not About the Bike* will have lost his soul. And his victories, too.

Where is Lance? Does he still believe what he wrote in this book? Does he stand by the creed that it contains? In many ways I admire Lance Armstrong. I admire him when it comes to cancer and cycling and inspiring others. He has inspired *me*. But I weep for him, too. I weep for him because the one who makes ‘blind luck’ his worldview is the one who is truly blind. We are amazed—and rightly so—when we gaze upon the edifice of Armstrong’s accomplishments. But then we look down at the foundation that underlies that edifice, and what do we see? Sand.

Different Creed, Different Fruits

Will we end on that note? No, we will not. There is a better way. There is a different creed. I described it earlier: the Christian believes and sings, ‘Whatever my God ordains is right.’ The Christian gladly acknowledges and rests in God as his good, wise, and powerful heavenly Father. Out of that very different creed grow very different fruits:

1. Instead of ingratitude, the Christian goes back to God and says ‘thank you’ for daily bread and daily grace, acknowledging him as the giver of ‘every good gift and every perfect gift’ (*James 1:17*).

2. Instead of self-righteousness, the Christian gladly admits his need as a sinner of the saving righteousness of Jesus Christ—and he rejoices that he has it by faith alone!

3. Instead of hopelessness—instead of a mere ‘people live’—the Christian has this: ‘Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he

live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” (*John 11:25-26*). You see, instead of ‘people live’ the Christian stands on this foundation: *Christ’s* people, though they die—and we *will* die—will live forevermore.

Conclusion

Christian, do you understand that all around you—in your neighborhoods, in your workplaces, sadly even in some churches—men and women are living by the creed ‘blind luck’? Lance Armstrong is not alone in this respect. All around you are those who are interpreting their joys and sorrows, whether major or minor, in terms of that empty worldview. Will you show them by your life—by your faith and hope and love—that yours is a very different creed? In the way you handle your profound sorrows—like cancer—and even your relatively minor frustrations, will you show the world that you believe in a very personal, very sovereign, very un-blind God?

What a gift it is to have such a God, and to confess such a creed! May we never take it for granted, that our eyes have been opened and our tongues loosed to give him praise. And may we never lose sight of the Savior who never loses sight of us. He once made a trek that no cyclist will ever understand—the pathway that led to the cross. And then in his resurrection he made his own journey back to life—eternal life. And now he triumphantly leads us to the same glorious end. Victory is ours. Victory awaits us. Hail to the Victor, even Jesus Christ!