

If you've ever gone to the airport, you've probably seen one of those long flat ground level escalators. For illustration purposes, let's imagine that one of those escalators represents the road of life, spanning many generations. On one side of the escalator is the road to heaven and the other end is the road to hell, but instead of going the opposite direction, they are both slowly moving towards the same direction. Both are slowly moving towards hell. Since you were born with bad parents who smoked, did drugs, and were abusive, you are born closer to the hell end of the escalator than others are with a better genetic background.

Many people are born on the escalator, making their way down the path, but since the escalator is slowly moving towards hell, most people are born thinking that this is the natural direction they must follow. As a result, when they learn to walk, everyone just naturally starts walking towards hell. Some try to resist the pull at times, others stand still and let the escalator pull them alone, and others still even run freely towards hell, but every once in a while someone turns around and makes their way back towards heaven. Those who do this have to go against the natural pull of the escalator.

Often people get mad at those who resist the flow. Some watch and wait for these to fall, which they do at times, so they may mock them, still their falls don't deter them. They just get up and keep going against the flow. They at times are mocked because some people who are on the path to hell are closer to heaven than they are. You see, because they were born with worse genetic inheritances, they are not generally as good in as some who are on the way to hell and people mock them for this saying, "How can you get to heaven when you even atheists act better than you," but the difference between them is in the direction.

I've heard people say, "I know atheists who are better than Christians, so why should

God let these Christians in heaven?" It's simple. Some are born with better dispositions, so they are born closer on the path to heaven. They are born "better," but if they are travelling towards hell while the Christian is travelling on the path to heaven, the Christian will eventually become better than the atheist because the escalator is a symbol of character. As we make our way closer towards heaven, God continues to refine our character, making us better people.

While it is true that some people born with better characters, those who travel towards hell are slowly growing more selfish, while those who travel towards heaven are slowly growing more selfless. That means that over time atheists will slowly get worse. They will become more self-consumed, more proud, more covetous, and more sinful. Christians, on the other hand, will become kinder, sweeter, and more sympathetic. Even if some atheists are better now, God does not judge us according to where we are on the path of character. Rather, God judges us on the direction that we are heading down the road of character. That's important to understand.

At times people attack Christians and say, "I know many atheists who are nicer than them, so I don't need Jesus." That is foolish reasoning. At the same time, Christians often slip and fall, growing discouraged. They say, "I'm not good enough. Everyone else is better than me, so how could I possibly go to heaven." Again, this is destructive reasoning. We are not saved by our works, or on the basis of how good we become, but instead on the direction we are heading. If you are following Jesus, you will fall at times, but do not despair. Get up and keep following Him, trusting that He will get you to the end.

I was once watching my sister Debbie in her gymnastics class when 1 John 3:2 came into my mind saying, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that

when He is revealed, we shall be like Him." Even though we can't see our goodness, if we keep following Jesus, He will make us good just like the gym coach will make his students good, but the hope of the gymnast does not rest on their talent alone. It rests on listening to, trusting, and obeying the coach. It is the job of the coach to turn the kids into gymnasts. Similarly, it is God's job to turn us into Christians.

Just like the gymnasts at times fall, we too will fall at times, but we must not lose sight of our coach. Some people get discouraged when they fall and are ready to give up. This is just what the devil wants, but we must not listen to the tempter. Instead, when we fall we must rise up again. Whether we fall seven times, or even "seventy times seven," God will continue to forgive us if we will just stay in the class and keep following the teacher (Matt. 18:22). Again, just because someone is further down the road of goodness than you are is no reason for you to get discouraged or to give up.

What most don't realize is that in ways the atheist has an easier path than the Christian. It is not until the pressure is turned on that an object explodes and the Christian is living under more intense pressure than the atheist on many levels. Christians are walking against the flow of the escalator. They are travelling against the natural flow of the world and are viewed as strange when they resist the popular sins today. In addition, the devil is not fighting against the atheist, since he already has control of them, but he is constantly throwing traps for the Christian, trying to trip them, which means they may fall more, so they may appear worse at times.

Again, the good news is that God does not judge on the basis of how far we have travelled down the path, but on which direction we are heading. So someone may die on the path and appear to be a better person than most Christians because they had better genetic

qualities, but if they lived longer they would have grown more selfish. On the other hand, some Christians may die on the path who struggled with different sins and difficulties in life, but because they were moving towards heaven they were on their way to overcoming their sins, and God accepts this as their best, and permits them into heaven.

Again, this does not condone those who claim to be Christians and make no effort to live the Christian life. There are many people who claim to be on the escalator to heaven but make no effort to resist sin, and since the escalator is naturally moving towards hell, those who make no effort to resist will end up being pulled into hell. Only those people who are walking against the current show that they have truly repented of their sins and have accepted Christ. They reveal by their efforts that they love Jesus and long to serve Him, and God will accept this as an act of faith and permit them into heaven on the basis of the direction they were traveling.

You see, it is not the occasional good or bad deed that determines our destiny, but the direction we are travelling and many are playing Russian roulette with their souls. They are on the wrong path and if they died tonight they would be lost. The good news is that God will take you right now. Invite Jesus into your heart and start your way down the path to heaven, so you may rest assured that when death takes you, you may have the hope of eternal life.

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The Escalator Illustration

