

WHAT NEXT? Can I ... Shall I ... go on?

by Paul E. Kealy

Here you sit, discouraged
You have been industrious.
You have enabled many other people to excel in their work.
You have created works with potential to last for centuries.
Life has passed by, and you have worked it hard.
Those efforts of a lifetime yielded barely discernable success.

Yet you push on, buried under a burden of financial distress.
You expend energy and time to create a work that would never exist
without your effort while others enjoy prestige for their effort,
basking in adulation and acceptance you have not achieved.

And on top of it all, you're not a college kid anymore.
You can't just go get any job out there.
You are overly qualified for simple tasks.
And bilingual? ... Well, you speak, English, French, German and Italian.

You are a genius, but you can't live on genius.
Friends without your genius enjoy ease of retirement.
You are ready to retire on ... what?
No bed of financial security awaits you.

This moment has crept upon you day by day as you worked and others played.

For all that your industry has accomplished, you COULD have played away your options
(as others did) and had nothing better or less to show than you do today.

You applied your mind and soul to the demands of discipline ...
You pursued a quality education and valuable learning experiences ...
For what?

You COULD have been content to party away life as did so many of your friends
who have more measurable success on display than your sacrifices produced.

Instead of dedicating your lifetime to help others achieve a better experience,
you COULD have elevated your own lifestyle, and today's world would be more prosperous.

Your future looms bleakly ahead of tomorrow.
Sad thing is you could have spent your lifetime more for pleasure and less for risk.
You never even took time to marry and have a family.

There seems to be only one alternative, since financial ruin is sure,
and that leads from the pending bankruptcy to the poorhouse.
But why even bother with that?

Oh, to be certain, some call you noble, but such nobility as that does not pay the bills. And certainly, people realize your genius, but that pays no bills, either.

Applying the energies of your entire lifetime has brought you to this moment of decision.

Enduring life to this moment should have produced a greater yield for your effort.

Maybe you should have continued in your training to become a lawyer. But that was years ago, and that was to please your father, the court surgeon-barber, who saw within you the potential for something greater than the musician you chose to become.

Oh, well, you still have your sense of humor. When your friends joked about the sparse attendance at a recent concert of yours, you joked back that the acoustics were better in an empty hall.

Although this is not the first time you've faced bankruptcy, you are 56 years old, and running out of options for future success ... you have mortgaged your goods and hocked your Rembrandt.

This one final concert will probably be your last shot. Then off to the poorhouse.

Your few successes have not been evenly balanced with too many failures. Your energy to drive yourself relentlessly has exhausted your health.

The church criticizes your musical compositions. They preach against your music from their pulpits and even schedule programs to compete with your performances when you book a secular hall to perform your religious music.

You have never been a quitter, but there is a limit.

You have maintained against frustration, setbacks, illnesses, attacks and persist with the dedicated energy and steadfast belief in God that would wear thin on people of a lesser resolve.

But you have been handed a new set of words and an opportunity to set them to music. Do you have any music left in you? These words seem to have potential - actually, they are all Scripture texts from the Holy Bible. They speak of hope, although you are buried in hopelessness ... can you transcend this to create music with lasting potential?

After this final concert performance of your life, you may take another look at this opportunity.

If you can pull yourself together enough for it, you may stay the execution of the bankruptcy long enough to create this one final opportunity ... a choral oratorio with the simple title of "Messiah."