

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, April 22, 2017

Ty Cobb died in the summer of 1961. My baseball career was taking off that summer and I remember the shock of hearing the news that the greatest baseball player of all times had died. Back in those days, Ty Cobb was considered the finest hitter in the game with a .366 lifetime batting average. To put his accomplishments into perspective, Cobb accumulated 4,189 hits in 11,434 official at bats over 23 seasons in the Major Leagues. During his career he only struck out 680 times and walked 1249 times. He also amassed 892 stolen bases in his illustrious career. Unfortunately, his character has been tarnished by unfounded stories about his life on and off the baseball diamond.

Cobb was a controversial character. He was also a fierce and fiery competitor who was respected by his teammates and his opponents. In recent years, Cobb has been exonerated from many stories made up by Al Stump, a sportswriter commissioned to write a biography on his life. A few months after Cobb lost his battle with cancer, Stump wrote an exposé for *True Magazine* entitled “Ty Cobb’s Wild 10-month Fight to Live” depicting him as a seedy character unworthy of the many accolades bestowed during his lifetime. After Al Stump’s death in 1995, the record was set straight by several sportswriters who passionately wanted to vindicate Cobb of those harmful fictional accounts. Then in 2015, sportswriter Charles Leerhson published *TY COBB: A Terrible Beauty*, which fully exonerates Cobb of the lies that were fabricated after his death.

Certainly Ty Cobb was no saint, but he was gravely misrepresented after his death and apparently it was all about financial gain for the fiction that was produced in volumes. So you may be wondering where all this is going. Well, there was a man in the first century who was greatly maligned and the stories denying his rightful place in history continue to this day. That man, Jesus of Nazareth, claimed to be the Son of God and yet the world continues to fabricate and spread stories to discredit His identity and His character. Yes, He’s considered a great prophet, but He is so much more.

I came to believe the Truth about Christ when I was forty and there’s no doubt in my mind that He is truly more than just a great profit and healer of those afflicted during His short time on earth. He is rightfully my Savior and Lord. I place all my trust in Him and His Father in Heaven and I cherish the Holy Spirit Who lives in my heart. You may ask, “How do you know this is true?” Well, it’s quite simple – I was there when it happened and I’ve seen the results of following Him all these years. Through the good and the seemingly bad times I’ve experienced His closeness and concern for me and those near me. He is real and He lives!

Let me tell you a true story about a local businessman’s encounter of Ty Cobb. For several years before his death in his home state of Georgia, Ty Cobb lived in Montecito. He was befriended by a Santa Barbara CBMC member, Al Pfau. Years after this encounter, Al wrote an article about his many meetings with Ty Cobb in his Montecito home. They would often talk about Christ and prior to his death, Ty wrote a letter to Al Pfau informing him that he had decided to follow Jesus right after Al left his home on that final meeting.

You may be wondering how a 70-year old man can possibly make such a life-changing decision so late in his life journey. Well, apparently Ty Cobb was once quite close to making a decision for Christ as a teenager, when he became distracted by a bird that flew into a window at church one Sunday morning. In his letter, Ty confided in Al that he used that experience to fiercely focus and increase his adrenaline when stealing bases. Ty Cobb will always be known as a great baseball player. What’s most important is he now has the peace that can only come from a personal relationship with His Maker.

If you've never made that decision to totally accept Christ, put the lies about Him behind you, study the scriptures and submit to Him as Savior and Lord of your life this day forward. You won't regret this decision the rest of your days!

Passages to Ponder: Matthew 28:8-10 & 16-20; Acts 1:3; Romans 10:9-13; I Corinthians 15:3-8

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Matthew 28:8-10 New International Version (NIV)

⁸So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Matthew 28:16-20 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Acts 1:3 New International Version (NIV)

³After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

Romans 10:9-13 New International Version (NIV)

⁹If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." ¹²For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 New International Version (NIV)

³For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.