



table talk

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“Lessons from Spook Hill”

One of the fondest memories of my childhood was heading to the old homestead in Bonifay, Florida for a day or two in order to “visit the elders and cousins.” Without fail, at least one evening after supper, we kids would sit on the porch with the “Old Timers” and listen to their oft-repeated tales. Most had to do with stories about history and our family, but, fairly frequently, old ghost stories were the evening’s entertainment.

I don’t necessarily recommend that you do so, but the West Florida culture of that time was like a lot of regions in the South which were deeply religious. However, it mixed in some other “stuff” in their legends and lores.

Everyone had seen “some things,” and there was almost no question about the validity of the “some things.” As kids, we sat transfixed to hear of strange things going on. My Daddy was one of the best storytellers, and several of my Great Uncles were preachers. They all attested to the “goings-on” in Holmes County, describing it as “the ghost capital of America.” They knew some of it was demonic but also some was simply unexplainable.

Several times on vacation during those years, my Daddy would drive through Lake Wales, Florida to show us boys a place called Spook Hill. It is a National Register of Historic Places site that you can still visit.

When I was a child there was almost nothing built near the spot. Now there is Spook Hill Elementary School, who use “Casper the Friendly Ghost” as their mascot.

Here’s what happens. Park at the white line at the bottom of Spook Hill. Put your car in neutral and take your foot off the brake. Look out the windshield, and, within a few seconds, your car will slowly roll

backwards a few yards UP THE HILL then stop without rolling back down.

According to the legends, either a frustrated pirate ghost (Captain Sarsaparilla) is buried there, or a giant alligator was, and he/they are pushing your car away to keep it off their grave.

We loved it, and it was obvious we were going uphill! The legend was certainly true!

But here's what I found out: Spook Hill is classified as a type of optical illusion referred to as a "gravity hill." These hills are usually surrounded by natural hills and few, if any, buildings nearby. The bottom line is this: though you are CERTAIN you are rolling uphill, you are actually rolling downhill. The unique lay of the land and lack of perspective convinces your mind that something impossible is happening.

Note: I'm not sure the patriarchs of my family ever fully accepted this explanation.

I think the "Spook Hill Syndrome" is a good example of what has happened to many Christians in this present time. More than any other generation in history, we are over-loaded with reports, news and opinions that are designed to weaken our faith and lessen our confidence in God's great power! We listen to brief soundbites without context, we see things with our own eyes, and our senses declare them to be true. But we don't know that we are being deceived. Up is really down, and down is really up!

Loved Ones, don't lose your confidence in God's Word! Even when our senses are assaulted with distorted, fake stimuli, make every effort to keep your roots deeply in the foundation of Scripture!

I believe the greatest battle of this generation is whether we will keep God's Word in the primary position of our lives. Jesus said it best: "Heaven and Earth will pass away, but my Words shall never pass away."

"Whose report shall you believe? We shall believe the report of the Lord!"

I love you,
Pastor Stephen