



The Shining Light®

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"Let the
words
of my mouth,
and the
meditation
of my heart,
be acceptable
in thy sight, O LORD,
my
strength,
and my
redeemer"
Psalm 19:14



THE BEST PUNISHMENT



A Quaker of exemplary character was disturbed one night by footsteps around his dwelling, and he arose from his bed and cautiously opened a back door to reconnoiter. Close by was a shed and under it was a cellar, near a window of which was a man busily engaged in receiving the contents of his pork barrel from another within the cellar.

As the old Quaker approached, the man outside fled. He stepped up to the cellar window and received the pieces of pork from the thief within, and after a little while asked his supposed accomplice in a whisper, "Shall we take it all?"

The owner of the pork replied softly, "Yes, take it all"; and the thief industriously handed up the balance through the window and then came up himself.

Imagine his consternation when instead of greeting his companion in crime, he was confronted by the Quaker. Both were astonished, for the thief proved to be a near neighbor, of whom none would have suspected such conduct. He pleaded for mercy, spoke of the necessities of poverty, and promised never to steal again.

"If thou hadst asked me for meat," said the old man, "it would have been given thee. I pity thy poverty and thy weakness, and esteem thy family. Thou art forgiven."

The thief was very happy and was about to depart, when the old man said, "Take thy pork, neighbor."

"No, no, I don't want the pork."

"Thy necessity was so great that it led thee to steal. One half of the pork thou must take with thee." The thief insisted he could never eat a morsel of it. The thoughts of the crime would make it choke him. He begged the privilege of letting it alone. But the old man was incorrigible, and furnishing the thief with a bag had half the pork put therein and sent him home with it.

He met his neighbor daily for many years afterward and their families visited together, but the matter was kept a secret; and though in after times the circumstance was mentioned, the name of the delinquent was never made known.

The punishment was severe and effectual. It was probably his first—it was certainly his last attempt to steal. Had the man been arraigned before a court of justice and imprisoned for the petty theft, how different might have been the results—his family disgraced, their peace destroyed, the man's character ruined and his spirit broken.

Revenge, not penitence, would have swayed his heart; the scorn of the world would have blackened his future, and in all probability he would have entered upon a course of crime at which, when the first offense was committed, his soul would have shuttered. And what would the owner of the pork have gained? Nothing. Kindness was the best punishment, for it saved while it punished. 📖

Selected

Angry Words

Angry words! O let them never
From the tongue unbridled slip;
May the heart's best impulse ever
Check them, e'er they soil the lip.

Love is much too pure and holy;
Friendship is too sacred far,
For a moment's reckless folly
Thus to desolate and mar.

Angry words are lightly spoken;
Bitterest thoughts are rashly stirred;
Brightest links of life are broken
By a single angry word.

In this world of tears and sorrow,
All should strive to smooth the way
Over which, perhaps, to-morrow,
We may sudden cease to stray.

Gently speak, then; tones of favor
Melt the angry heart within;
Imitate our blessed Savior,
Whose soft words turned men from sin.
Selected

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NO GREATER LOVE

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13

Sis. Rebecca Peters

Many years ago, two brothers lived together. The younger brother, Isaac, feared God and loved Him with all of his heart, but the eldest brother, Arthur, lived selfishly and recklessly and despised anything that had to do with God. Righteous Isaac fasted often and prayed daily that Arthur would turn to Christ, but he only scoffed and mocked at his brother's faith.

Too many times Arthur was caught up in evil deeds and almost put in prison. Often Isaac would go out on the dangerous streets searching for his wicked brother and drag him home, drunk and dirty. Out of his own pocket, Isaac would pay Arthur's great debts. With patience he reasoned with his brother, but in no way would Arthur turn from his recklessness.

One day Isaac came home and met a sight in his home which he kept so scrupulously clean. Along with his wicked companions, Arthur lounged about partying and boasting about the atrocious acts he would perform the following night. His obnoxious friends laughed uproariously and encouraged his base boastings. Immediately, Isaac proceeded to his room and pleaded with God to have mercy on his brother.

As the vile men were departing from the house, Arthur amongst them, Isaac called out to them entreating them not to land themselves in trouble again. Throwing his head back, Arthur scorned his brother's "worries." It was already past midnight, but Isaac mopped and wiped and cleaned up the filth which the despicable men had created. He sat up long after this task was finished, waiting for his thoughtless brother to return.

Finally, when Isaac realized that Arthur wasn't going to come home for the rest of the night, he reluctantly ascended to his room. It was with a considerably heavy heart that he laid himself down to sleep, only to awake from bad dreams.

Miserably, Isaac watched the daylight gradu-

ally increase and at length he arose and staggered to the jailkeeper's home. The jailkeeper had just finished hanging his great bundle of keys on the wall, when he saw Isaac. He regretfully denied the sorrowful man the privilege of seeing his brother. Because this was neither the first time nor the second time that Arthur had been admitted into this prison, he recognized the meek man who always paid the ransom to get his brother out. But this time, the offense was too great to be paid.



Isaac wept when he learned that his brother had become a murderer and thief in the night. His heart smote him, and he rebuked himself over and over again for not trying much harder to keep his dear brother at home. Hardened, Arthur nonchalantly submitted himself to the officers that were taking him to a more notable prison. At his request, he was allowed to see Isaac, but his only selfish want of his brother was that the ransom would be paid as soon as possible.

Immediately, Isaac made gallant efforts to secure the release of his brother, but he was coolly informed that Arthur could not be released; he would face the penalty of hanging.

Isaac endeavored not to show Arthur his grief, but initially he could not hide it. He departed, and left his outwardly-hardened brother in the damp prison cell to ponder his fate.

Ultimately, Isaac understood that there truly was only one last thing he could do to give Arthur a last chance of eternal life, if he would take it. It was a desperate act, a radical act, but if it would save Arthur's life, spiritually and physically, he was willing. Putting his pen to paper, Isaac wrote a long, endearing letter to his immoral brother, pleading that this last chance, if taken, would be used to glorify God. He reminded Arthur to look to God, lift up his eyes to where the true help comes from, and let God lift him from the pit of sin. Isaac asked Arthur to daily step into his shoes and live godly.

Only a few hours stood between Arthur and his final trial, and Isaac had only those few hours to complete his desperate plan. He rushed to the cell of his brother, and when the guard ambled to the other

end of the long hallway, he beseeched his brother to trade clothing with him, and escape. Unbelieving and dazed, Arthur switched his blood-stained clothes with Isaac's fresh clothes. Isaac affectionately ran the comb, which he had placed in his pocket, through Arthur's hair, and fearlessly rumbled his own hair. Alarmed by the guard's return, he gave his brother a squeeze on the arm, prayed a quick prayer for Arthur's safety, and pushed him away indifferently.

Arthur was stricken dumb, for he was beyond amazed at what had just taken place. Since his face was ghostly pale and his eyes appeared to be filled with grief, the outdoor prison guards let him pass without an inquiry. Swiftly, he turned towards home. As soon as he arrived, he locked the door and shut himself up in his brother's library, and there found the precious letter which his brother had written. Hard man that he had been, Arthur could not help but break down in tears and sob like a child. He shed tears until he lay down, nearly



fast asleep.

Meanwhile, Isaac took the place of Arthur at the trial. The judge repeatedly asked whether he was guilty or not or whether he had committed the crime or not. Isaac looked straight in the judge's eyes, but refused to answer. His face was entirely calm. The judge was perplexed and bewildered. He wondered if this man was innocent after all, and yet the evidence of the crime was on the clothes. He wished to dismiss the case, and yet he had been at the site of the thievery. Helplessly, the judge announced the final verdict. The criminal must be hanged!

Instantly, Isaac was brought to the scaffold and the noose tied about his neck. He prayed a final

heart-wrenching prayer for mercy upon his brother, then gave himself over to the executioner. So nobly did he present himself, that the judge distinctly felt guilty that this was somehow an unjust hanging. He departed from the scene, his heart's cords touched which had not been touched for a long while, and he wondered why.

The next morning, the judge's breakfast was interrupted by a frantic knocking on the door. He opened a door to a wretched-looking man with a letter in his hand. Without saying a word, he gave it to the judge who soberly put up his spectacles and read the letter. Suddenly he saw the earnest, silent face of Isaac before him.

He turned to Arthur and asked, "Are you the man that ought to be hung?" Arthur could only nod. It was true. His brother had died in his place.



After this story, you can imagine what you wish, but I like to think that Arthur was a totally different man after speaking to the judge. I envision that after the judge forgave him, Arthur fully stepped into Isaac's shoes and lived that way too. Likely, his friends mocked him and scorned him for picking up religion, but I think it made him stronger in the faith.

Have you ever thought closely about what God has done for you? He let His only son die a painful death that you have never come close to experiencing. Too many times, we only think of it as if Jesus wanted to do it, but He didn't. He prayed in Gethsemane, that God would remove that cup far from Him, and God only seemed to bring it closer.

Through the crucifixion of Jesus, you and I are made joint-heirs with Him. We are made to sit in heavenly places with Him. Thank God for His great mercy and love towards us! 📖



THE JUDGMENT DAY

Sis. Crystal Keim

Timmy Dunlap is a lively seven-year-old. Sometimes he lives with his mom, sometimes he lives with one set of grandparents, and sometimes with the other. He hardly ever sees his dad, and he has two half-sisters,

Like most young boys, Timmy loves to play outside: snow forts, sledding, riding bike, climbing trees, water fights, you name it. He enjoys animals, reading, playing with his friends, and going to school. Sometimes he picks on his sisters, but that's another story. He also likes to ask questions.

One morning after jumping on the trampoline at his grandparents' house, Timmy came inside and plopped down at the kitchen table. As usual, he asked for a glass of chocolate milk.

"Grandma," he said as he stirred in the cocoa powder, "What is the judgment day?"

"The judgment day?! What makes you ask that question?" she asked. She spread out the apple slices in the pie shell she'd been working on.

"I don't know. I was just thinking about it. What does it mean?"

His grandma paused to think for a few seconds. She was starting to get used to his questions. He was not from a Christian home, and the depth of his thoughts amazed her.

"The judgment day is a day that comes at the end of the world. Everyone who has ever lived will stand before God, like in a court room. God is the judge, and all the people will be sentenced according to what they have done during the time they were alive."

"Everybody?!" he exclaimed. "There are over seven billion people on the earth, plus all the people who have died already... that will take a long time!"

"Well, when you consider that at

this point, the earth will be burned up, and the sun and stars will be gone, you'll realize there will be no way to keep track of time. We will have entered into eternity, where there is no time. Time is what keeps everything from happening at once, and we won't need it anymore in eternity."

"No time? That sounds kind of crazy," said Timothy.

"Anyway," his grandma continued, "The Bible talks about the judgment day in the book of Revelation, toward the end, I think. Let's look it up!" She went to the living room and got her Bible from the end table.

"Let's see...here it is! Revelation 20:11-15. It says there is a great white throne where God sits. All the things you've done are written down in big books. God gets them out and reads them! Everyone will be judged by what is written about them in these books."

"So, the angels are watching me and taking notes?" asked Timmy.

"Basically," she said as she put the pie in the oven. "And there's one book that is very, very important. It's called the book of life! God checks this book, and everyone whose name is written in it gets to go to heaven and spend eternity with God."

Timothy interjected, "When does the devil get thrown into the lake of fire?"

"We'll get to that part in a minute," answered Grandma. She continued, "If someone's name is not found in the book of life..."

"They go the other way?" he offered.

"It says in verse 15 that 'whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire,' so, yes."

"Couldn't those people just tell

God they're sorry right then and ask Him to quickly add their name to the book of life?" Timmy asked.

Grandma shook her head sadly. "I'm sure people will try that, but it doesn't work that way. At that point, it will be too late. People make the choice in life either to serve God or to live for themselves. Once you get to that white throne judgment, it's too late to change your mind."

Timmy looked a little confused. "That doesn't seem very fair."

"I understand why you would think that," she said, ruffling his hair, "but let me explain something to you. God is very fair. In fact, He gives us more chances than we deserve."

"What do you mean, chances?" he asked.

"Well, God gave us the Bible. He gave us preachers to tell us how God wants us to live. He sent Jesus to become a man and tell us about God and His ways."

"But not everyone knows about Jesus—not everyone has a Bible!" Timmy interjected.

"That's true," Grandma said patiently. "Let me ask you this. Have you ever been tempted to do something wrong, but then you heard a voice in your head that said 'Don't do that, it's wrong.'?"

"Um, yeah."

"Have you ever told a lie and then felt bad about it?"

"How did you know that?"

"Because God's Spirit, called the Holy Spirit, talks to everyone," Grandma explained. "He tells people they shouldn't do bad things."

"Oh," said Timmy looking thoughtful, "I didn't realize that was God's Spirit talking to me." He finished his chocolate milk, thanked his Grandma, and darted back outside. 📖

Biblical Alphabet

Fill in each blank with a name that begins with the letter listed!

- A _____ caught his hair in an oak tree (2 Sam. 18:9).
- B _____ name means “the son of consolation” (Acts 4:36).
- C _____ was a centurion who believed in Jesus (Acts 10:48).
- D _____ was the father of Solomon (1 Kings 1:13).
- E _____ was a priest with whom Samuel worked (1 Sam. 1:25).
- F _____ trembled at Paul’s preaching (Acts 24:25).
- G _____ appeared to Daniel in a vision (Dan. 9:21).
- H _____ was one of the Hebrews taken captive to Babylon (Dan. 1:6).
- I _____ is another name for Judas (Matt. 10:4).
- J _____ was sold as a slave (Gen. 37:28).
- K _____ was the father of Saul (1 Sam. 9:1).
- L _____ was the brother of Mary and Martha (John 12:1).
- M _____ was the man whose ear Peter cut off (John 18:10).
- N _____ wouldn’t sell his vineyard and was killed (1 Kings 21:16).
- O _____ was a converted slave of Philemon (Philemon 10).
- P _____ denied Jesus three times (Matt. 26:69-75).
- Q _____ was a man Paul called brother (Rom. 16:23).
- R _____ was a harlot who hid Israel’s spies (Josh. 6:22).
- S _____ was known for his strength (Judges 14:5-6).
- T _____ was a companion to Paul (Acts 16:1).
- U _____ was Bathsheba’s first husband (2 Sam. 11:3).
- V _____ was a beautiful queen who replaced Esther (Esth. 1:9).
- W _____ came from the East, seeking a newborn king (Matt. 2:1-2).
- X _____ another name for King Ahasuerus (Esth. 1:2/Strong’s Concordance).
- Y _____ maiden who directed Saul to Samuel (1 Sam. 9:11).
- Z _____ was the man who climbed a tree to see Jesus (Luke 19:2).