

Absalom, My Son!
By Archie E. Proctor

"And David the king was much moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! (2Sam. 18:33).

Nothing in this world can tear at the heart of a parent who is a faithful Christian more than the spiritual death of a child. It is even more tragic when that child trapped in sin is caught into eternity by death in that condition. All the years of careful, patient teaching, nurturing in the Lord, the many times the precious soul was taken to the assembly of the church to hear the gospel preached and the Bible taught seem to be as nothing. Those patient faithful lives of mother and father lived as best they could, giving an example of how one should be a Christian, seem to have no meaning or effect.

David knew that feeling many times in his life. The death of Absalom was one occasion. Going into that upper chamber, he must have recalled the prophet's words, "behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house...", spoken to him by Nathan after David had confessed to the sin of adultery with Bathsheba. Now the consequences of that awful sin had come fully home. The death of an infant son, the murder of his son Amnon by Absalom, and finally, the slaying of Absalom by his general, Joab, all resulted as a consequence of his fall into sin.

Too often, however, parents of wayward children have done nothing to bring about such a loss of a child, either in sinning themselves or failing properly to teach the child how he should live his life. Yet many times, the guilt that David felt seems to come crashing down on the shoulders of godly parents who have seen that child go astray. To add to the burden, it seems Christians and friends, who should know better, assume that it must have been some failure of character or teaching that let the child go off, and that there surely was something that could have been done if the parents had done this or that.

Parents in this situation spend many hours in fervent prayer asking for strength, help, and the opportunity to say or do that one more thing that might reach the child before it is eternally too late. Night after night, sleep fades as the parents play the "what if" game in their minds. (What if I did or said this or that instead of what I did say?) Tears are shed without measure in regret and remorse. The sinning child can never know the burden he places on the heart of that loving mother and father by his actions.

What words of comfort can we bring to parents in this condition? First of all, we need to recognize that Proverbs 22:6 is a proverb, not an absolute. Children can be properly trained and still go astray. The Bible gives many examples of this. Perhaps the best known is Solomon. He was faithful in his youth; he asked the Lord for wisdom over wealth or fame or other things. But in his maturity, he let his wives turn his heart away from God. Faithful Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, yet only one was the son of promise and followed the Lord. Lot is called a righteous and vexed man, yet he lost all of his household to sin, even though he kept himself to serve the Lord. We need to realize that all men must stand before God and make their choice to obey Him. Being raised in the church is a tremendous advantage, but only if the opportunity is used and not wasted.

When parents have a child gone into error, rather than waste effort and time in regret, they should ask themselves the following questions:

- 1) Did he understand the terms of the gospel while he was under our care?
- 2) Was he exposed to sound gospel preaching, or did he get "sermonettes" while he was under our care?
- 3) Did we have caring, thoughtful Bible study at home on a regular basis while he was under our care?
- 4) Was he disciplined when it was needful?
- 5) Regardless of how much he did or did not want to come, did we insist on his attendance at every service of the Lord's church?
- 6) Did I attend myself at all times possible?
- 7) If the elders applied discipline to the case of my child's unfaithfulness, did I approve and do what I could to reinforce the lesson in my child's mind? Did this child know beyond a doubt that I would do so if his behavior required such discipline?
- 8) Do I continue to try to talk to my child about his unfaithfulness, and continue to encourage him to serve the Lord, and pray for him always?

Parents who can answer in the affirmative to these questions may take some comfort in knowing that they did all that was possible to teach this child, and must accept the fact that when he is an adult, he must stand before God and give account of his life. Nothing we do or fail to do at that point will cause him to save or lose his soul; it is between him and his God. (Condensed and reprinted from Guardian of Truth Magazine, June 16, 1994)

Terrorism Surfaces in Local Churches

Latest news reports are that five terrorist cell groups have been operating in many of our churches. They have been identified as Bin Sleepin, Bin Arguin, Bin Fightin, Bin Complainin, and Bin Missin. Their leader, Satan Bin Workin, trained these groups to destroy the Body of Christ. Their plan is to come into the church disguised as Christians and to work within the church to discourage, disrupt, and destroy.

However, there have been reports of a sixth group. A tiny cell known by the name Bin Prayin is actually the only effective counter-terrorism force in the church. Unlike other terrorist cells, the Bin Prayin team does not blend in with whoever and whatever comes along. Bin Prayin does whatever is needed to uplift and encourage the Body of Christ. We have noticed that the Bin Prayin cell group has different characteristics than the others. They have Bin Watchin, Bin Waitin, Bin Fastin, Bin Longin for their Master, Jesus Christ, to return. No Church Is Exempt! (However, you can spot them — if you bin lookin and bin goin). [via the Al Sandlin Report]

What Will the Neighbors Think?

A few years ago, Congresswoman Edith Green from Oregon and her secretary were on a visit to Moscow on Sunday. When the secretary decided to take a tour of the Kremlin rather than go to worship, the Russian guide said, "Oh, you are an unbeliever!" All the protests Mrs. Green's secretary could make didn't convince the guide, because

even a communist knows that Christians go to worship regularly! I wonder what our neighbors think about us when we don't attend.

A Moments Wisdom

Jesus did not die for "the church of YOUR choice." He died for the church of HIS choice. Men to whom God is dead worship one another.

They say God is everywhere, and yet we always think of Him as somewhat of a recluse. God is not a cosmic bellboy for whom we can press a button to get things.

God doesn't have to put His name on a label in the corner of a meadow because nobody else makes meadows.

There are two kinds of people: those that say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'All right, then, have it your way.' (C.S. Lewis)

The robe of flesh wears thin, and with the years God shines through all things.

Although God demands a whole heart, He will accept a broken one if He gets all the pieces.

If everyone swept in front of his house, the whole town would be clean.

Have courage for the great sorrows of life, and patience for the small ones. And when you have laboriously accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake.

(Victor Hugo)