

THE ARCHANGEL . . . who started the ball rolling
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(DEUTERONOMY 34:5-6; JUDE 9)

The hillside was still; even the birds hushed their chatter. The grand old man of Israel stood gazing toward the land of which he had thought constantly for nearly forty years. Ahead lay the land of Canaan; behind, in the plains, were his beloved people - he would see them no more. His life was almost over; he had come to the mountain to attend his own funeral! The angels were preparing the grave when Moses turned and fell into the everlasting arms. " And God buried him in a valley in the land of Moab: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

The Angel Who Protected the Worship-Jude 9

The men were climbing the mountain. Their eyes were red with weeping, but a steady unflinching purpose filled their souls. Their beloved Moses was dead, but only]Dow had they come to appreciate his true greatness. They were determined to rectify matters. His body should be honored, and if necessary retained so that future generations could pay homage to the revered patriarch. Somewhere in the upper valleys of the lofty hills, they would find his grave; they would search until they succeeded. And just beyond the bounds of the visible, Satan smiled. He would stand, so to speak, over the secret grave and beckon the seekers. He would guide them; he would lead them to the spot. "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses . . . and said, The Lord rebuke thee " (Jude 9). Again and again the starching men walked past the grave, but the green turf gave no indication that it had become a shroud. Thus did God prevent Israel from committing a great sin. There is every reason to believe that had they found the body of Moses, they would have worshipped the casket. The archangel's intervention prevented the people from stumbling, and at the same time started a ball rolling through the centuries.

The Answer which Protected the Witness-Matthew 17:24-27

Simon Peter was preoccupied; his face betrayed the disturbance in his soul. Something was wrong! "And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute? He said, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? And that simple question uncovered the doubts in Peter's mind. Had they paid their taxes? He had no knowledge of any such payment. Would the officials be a nuisance and prosecute the Lord?-and Peter's face darkened. After a little instruction, (Christ said to His servant, " Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee." The Lord's precautionary measures prevented people from stumbling. His was a great example.

The Apostle Who Protected the Work-Romans 14: 13-23

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Christianity was not the continuation of Judaism, for in the fellowship of the new movement Christians enjoyed liberty unknown under law. Under the old regime it was an offense to eat certain meat; under grace, it was not. On the other hand, idolaters practiced rites which demanded certain offerings, and the meat associated with these was an integral part of something condemned by Christian teachers. It was no cause for amazement, therefore, when men began arguing as to whether certain meat should, or should not, be eaten. Finally Paul wrote his classic message dealing with this subject. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more . . . let no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way . . . But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died . . . It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak . . ." Certain things may be quite harmless, but a Christian manifests greatness in abstaining from such "for his brother's sake." We are living epistles, seen and read of all men. To abstain for my brother's sake is to walk a royal highway.

In conclusion, it might be beneficial to study a contrast. The New Testament church had at least one member whose carnal attitude kept many from the Lord's table. John wrote of him, "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, received us not . . . prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, he forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church" (3 John 9, 10). It is a sad event when the Sun of Righteousness is eclipsed by stupid people. The fact that my example may help or hinder a fellow man should stimulate me to walk circumspectly all the days of my life.

The Minister's Tears

During the summer of 1927, I visited the Overcomer Testimony Convention at Swanwick, Derbyshire, England, and met the quiet clergyman whose story I am about to tell. He was sad, and thoughtful. When a question was asked concerning the advisability of frequenting places of worldly amusement, he inclined his head. Others were eloquent in announcing their opinions, but the dignified minister held his peace. Later, my own pastor explained the man's reluctance to talk, and as I heard the following story, my soul was stirred.

That minister had been asked to visit a very sick lady; and when he entered the bedroom, he saw instantly that she was dying. Her face revealed signs of an unfortunate past; he realized he was in the presence of a great sinner. When he spoke, her attitude seemed rather cynical. Her smiles were mirthless; her scornful eyes were not in harmony with her face. The minister became nonplussed, and had difficulty in continuing the conversation. Then she asked her first question.

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"Do you know that I am dying?"

"Well, you are very ill, but-"

" I'm dying, and we both know it. But do you know why I am dying? Do you know what is the matter with me? Perhaps I had better tell you. I am dying because of my sin. My disease is not nice to mention-you understand. Do you know how all this came about?"

The clergyman was bewildered. Perhaps coming events were casting their shadows before-and the first shadows were already falling across his soul. With deadly purpose, she repeated her question. " Do you know how all this came about? I'll tell you. You led me astray. No, don't interrupt until I have told you everything. At one time you were a commercial traveler. I knew you even in those days. You were a leader in your church, but your duties took you away from home during the week. Do you remember being in a certain town-I was there, too. I saw you one night going into a certain place. I suppose you were a bit lonely; you had nowhere to go. It was a cold, damp night, and you seemed a bit fed up. Do you remember? I was surprised, for you were a leader of the church at home. I was cold and fed up, too, but I hadn't quite as much money as you had. I stood in the street and considered that if you could do that kind of thing, it would be safe to follow your example. So I followed you; but that night I met certain undesirable people, and before we were through, my soul had been damned. That was only the beginning. Many things have happened since then, and now I'm finished. My body is finished, and my soul is finished. You led me astray. If I had not followed your example, I might have remained a good woman. That's all; I wanted you to know what you did for me." When I met him, that minister was very quiet. He never argued; he was trying to forget the unforgettable.

The President's Choice

Little things can reveal a person's character. Our words can impress others, and make them think we are dedicated to a great task. But a small act, which we think goes unnoticed, may tear down all we claim to be. President William McKinley once had to decide between two men, equally qualified, for appointment as foreign minister. He told later how his decision was made. Years before, while the President was still a Representative, he boarded a crowded street car, and took the last empty seat. An elderly lady carrying a heavy burden entered the car. She walked its length, but no one offered her a seat. She paused by a seat in which sat one of the men the President later considered for an appointment. This man adjusted his newspaper so that he could not see the woman. McKinley arose and asked the woman to occupy his seat. The man never knew that his act, which he thought would be unnoticed, later prevented his attaining what might have 'been considered the crowning achievement of his career. So much may hang on so little; and it is this fact which should make all Christians extremely careful to avoid giving offense to any other person.

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" I Taught Him To Do It"

I shall not easily forget the heartbroken mother who asked me to pray for her wayward son. " Mr. Powell," she sobbed, " please pray for my boy. He is a slave to gambling. All his wages, all he possesses is being lost. He has a lovely wife, but oh, sir, he is ruining everything by his craving to gamble. He gambles on horses; he gambles on dogs; he gambles on cards' Mr. Powell, please pray for him. I'm breaking my heart.

" Where did he learn to play cards?" I quietly asked. " Did you teach him in your Christian home?" For a few minutes she seemed horribly frightened as the implications of the question reached her soul. Then she whispered, " God forgive me, I taught him to do it."

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