

**A WHIP FOR A HORSE,
A BRIDLE FOR THE ASS, AND A ROD FOR THE FOOL'S BACK
(Pro. 26:3)**

David P. Brown

When I was growing up my mother and father would assign me certain jobs. In an effort to shirk my responsibilities I would whimper and complain. I would moan to my mother, "I can't do this. It's too hard." With no sympathy for her poor weak child she sternly responded with, "Can't never did do anything." She then added insult to injury by asking the following rude and unloving rhetorical question. "How do you know you can't unless you try?" With a half-hearted, lethargic effort I set out to show her that I could not do the job. Without mercy she goaded her pitifully deprived baby boy with, "You get around like the dead lice are falling off of you." Borrowing from the inspired Luke, I will sum up her library of terms employed to offend her castaway offspring's tender heart. *"And with many other words did she testify and exhort, saying, Save yourself from this untoward (crooked, ASV) generation"* (Acts 2:40).

If none of mother's implements of humiliation and pain moved me to comply with her wishes, daddy possessed the "power of reason" that did. Because daddy had received "The Great Wood Shed Commission" he extended to me "The Great Invitation." With the following graphic words he said: "Boy, you heard your mother. Now, come here! When I get through with you, your britches won't hold shucks." Sometimes he declared that he was going to tear me up like a sow's bed. If anyone has ever seen britches that won't hold corn shucks or a sow root up the ground to make a bed, you know that for me judgment day had come. All the lamentation and wailing that I mustered did not postpone my day of reckoning. After the "rod of correction" had driven foolishness far from me, I accomplished my work post haste (Pro. 10:13; 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15).

My mother and daddy were not rude, hateful, ungracious or unkind to me. I knew when I was wrong. I also knew that I was receiving my just deserts. I am eternally thankful to God for a mother and daddy who loved me enough to exercise preventive and corrective discipline. They knew the importance of respect for proper authority. They were determined that I learn to respect it also.

Furthermore, they knew me better than I knew myself. They realized that I could accomplish things I did not think I could. They knew that laziness, impudence, and foolishness handicapped my potential mental and spiritual growth. Hence, they dealt with them accordingly. They encouraged the good things in me, but they "strongly" discouraged the bad.

However, I did not realize that such family episodes of growth and development were preparing me to be a preacher and a trainer of gospel preachers. For almost thirty years (18 years old to the present) I have seen members of the church use every conceivable excuse in an attempt to justify their sins of omission and commission. Lazy, impudent and foolish spiritual children seek to dodge the Lord's work with the same lame excuses fleshly children employ to shirk their responsibilities.

Time after time brethren glibly excuse themselves with, "I can't do that. It's too hard!" Beautiful public prayers are said by brethren when it would take a nuclear explosion to get them to do half of what they acknowledge in their prayers needs to be done. They have never learned that God will not do for you what you can do for yourself (Phi. 2:12-14).

If a class concerning how to teach a person the gospel is offered, someone will invariably say, "I can't do that." If such brethren were informed that they could not do this or that because they did not have enough sense or ability to do it, they would be angry and humiliated. However, let them desire an excuse to attempt to justify themselves, and they will happily confess their imbecility!

Have they never read of the "One Talent Man," or how God dealt with Moses' excuses when he attempted to dodge the work God called him to do (Mat. 25:14-30; Exo. 4, 5)? It is obvious that some people have never grown up. They want to wear the name of Christ, but they want us to believe they cannot pour water out of a bucket with both ends out! They deceive no one but themselves with their childish excuses (Jam. 1:23).

What is the problem? Too many church members are attempting to keep one foot in the world while they keep the other one in the church. They have just enough religion to make them miserable (Mat.6:24). Such characters should be addressed with, "Can't never did do anything," and "How do you know you can't unless you try." These brethren need their spiritual britches "torn up" so they can't "hold shucks." We should be highly indignant with their ungodliness (2 Cor. 7:11). They need to hear from elders the words of Paul, "*What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness*" (1 Cor. 4:21)?

We must have patience with brethren who are "...ready unto every good work" (Tit. 3:1; Jam. 2:14,17, 22; Exo. 34:6-7; 1 Cor. 15:5 8). You can depend on these brethren to get the job done. However, we should have no patience with slothful persons and sluggards in the body of Christ who intend to remain such (Pro. 18:9; 19:15,24; 26:14; Ecc. 10:18; Heb. 6:12; 6:6,9; 10:26; 13:4).

From the pen of Paul we read: "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*" (Phi. 4:13). "*But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing*" (Gal. 4:18). How wonderful it would be to hear brethren declare: "I NEVER HAVE, BUT I CAN."

"*Open rebuke is better than secret love.*" (Pro. 27:5). "*Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth*" (Gal. 4:16? Also see Pro. 9:7-8; 13:1; 28:23; Ecc. 7:5; Luke 17:3-4; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 4:2; Rev. 3:19). ~