

The Caretaker and the Garage

Have you ever been attacked by Satan's double whammy? First he puts evil thoughts in your mind and then gets you feeling guilty and condemned because they were in your mind, even though you did not allow them to stay. Does that cause you to avoid fellowship with other Christians and to run from God? Do you feel you are a failure as a Christian and may as well return to your old life?

Once upon a time there was a man who worked as a caretaker of the grounds on a large estate of a wealthy old man. The caretaker, when hired, had been promised a good salary with a lot of benefits: paid vacations, room and board, and other luxuries, such as his own sports car. However, after he started work, his salary kept getting smaller, his days off fewer, and he never did get his car. At first, he approached his boss to find why he hadn't gotten what was promised to him. His boss, who was really a very selfish, stingy, miserly, and grumpy old man, gave his excuses. "Business hasn't been going very well, but I'm expecting my big break any day. When it comes, I'll surely make good on my promises."

Meanwhile, things continued to get worse and worse. If the caretaker got paid at all, it was only a part of his promised salary. He was required to work longer and longer hours and barely given time off to sleep. He was to be provided a uniform, but as it became worn, it was not replaced. His tools began to break and were not fixed, nor was he given new ones. He was supposed to get his meals from the kitchen, but they had either just run out of food or had only a little soup left. The caretaker began to look ragged and gaunt. He began to get weak from malnutrition as well as lack of sleep. He could no longer keep the grounds up the way he was supposed to keep them. They started looking shabby as well.

Periodically, he would go to see his boss and implore him to give him what was promised. But by now, the stingy old man had changed his tactics. "You should be grateful to me for hiring you. Look at you. No one else would have you. Who would hire a caretaker that dresses in rags? And your work—you have become so lazy. It's a wonder I'm willing to put up with you at all."

After hearing this so many times, the caretaker finally came to agree with his boss and came to accept that "this must be my lot in life."

But one day, as he was out by the front gate trying to trim the hedges, he finally collapsed from exhaustion and starvation. He was just sitting there, staring vacantly, when a huge white limousine pulled up and out stepped an elderly gentleman with a kindly face and blue twinkling eyes. "What seems to be your problem, young man?" he asked the caretaker.

"I'm supposed to trim the hedges, but I'm just so weak I can't get up. My boss says I'm lazy and I guess that's my problem. I'd get another job, but no one else would hire me," he answered slowly.

"I'll hire you," was the kind gentleman's reply.

"You will?" the caretaker cried in amazement, fairly leaping to his feet in spite of his condition. "You really will?"

"Of course," the old man said. "Get into my car and I will take you to my estate. It's quite a bit larger than this one, but your duties will be fewer. In fact, I will give you charge over only one area of my estate, my garage."

The caretaker, scarcely believing that what was happening to him was real, climbed into the car and off they sped to his new home, new job, new boss.

After they arrived, he washed up and was served a good meal and given new clothes to wear. Later, he was given his own room with a comfortable bed and closet full of clothes and instructed as to when meals were served. All the servants had their meals together in the large dining room with the owner of the estate. There was always plenty of food for all.

After a couple of days, the caretaker was all settled in and had begun to regain his strength. The old gentleman called him in and said, "It is now time to explain your duties."

Then they went out together to see the garage that he was to be his charge. "Here is the garage," the gentleman said. "Your job is to keep it clean and free from junk and clutter. I am gone a lot and come home at unexpected times, and I want to be able to park my car in here whenever I arrive."

"Yes sir," the caretaker replied enthusiastically, as he thought to himself, "this job is a piece of cake compared to my other job."

The tools and equipment for cleaning were all neatly hung or placed on shelves in the corner. He immediately set to work, and in a short time, had the garage spotless. He felt so good and so thankful to his new employer for rescuing him from his old situation.

As days went on, he grew to love the kindly old man who had taken him in, and enjoyed the company of the other employees who would gather after their jobs had been done and play games, or visit, or whatever they desired, for all the facilities of the estate were available for their use: swimming pool, golf course, stables, library, conservatory, gardens, etc.

But one day, as the caretaker came out to start his morning job of sweeping out the garage, there—right in the middle of the floor—was a pile of garbage and junk. He started to wonder how it got there, but then, put the thought out of his mind as he hurried to clean it up thinking, what if his new boss came home that very minute? It took him quite a bit longer to get his work done that day, but he did get it finished in time to get together with his friends later. However, the next day there was a larger pile of garbage and junk and it smelled badly. It took even longer to carry everything out, clean the floor, and get rid of the smell.

That night he received the first phone call. "I've heard your boss trusts you, but he doesn't know how lazy you really are—having all that junk in the garage—how could you allow it! Your boss would be furious at you if he knew you had allowed that in his garage."

The caretaker had not recognized the voice as being that of his old boss because he had disguised his voice and it had been quite awhile now since he had heard him! The miserly old man had wanted to get his former caretaker back after he found out what had happened to him. The junk and phone calls were part of a plan to get the caretaker to voluntarily leave his new boss, as he knew that his new boss would never fire him.

The next day there was more junk as well as another accusing, insinuating phone call that night. The junk and phone calls continued daily. The caretaker was spending so much time on cleaning out the stuff every day that he was beginning to miss meals and sleep and getting weak again. Each day, he became weaker and more afraid his boss would return and find out about the junk and would kick him out. The phone calls continually hinted at that. "What kind of a caretaker do you think you are? You should be there 24 hours a day to work, work, work! Keep that stuff out!" He was under constant pressure from guilt and fear.

Then one day, as he came to the garage, there in the middle, sat an old junk car. It had leaked radiator fluid, oil and grease all over the floor. Two of the fenders had fallen off and lay to one side, and the hood was missing. At first, he thought maybe he could push it out. But two of the tires was missing and the gearshift came off in his hand as he tried to put it into neutral. The thought came to him of asking help from one of his fellow employees, but he was too ashamed and embarrassed to admit he could not perform the one job he had been given by himself. He sat down in despair. Now what could he do? He was tired—tired of the struggle which kept getting harder and harder, and now—something he couldn't get rid of. He could stand it no longer: the guilt, the secrecy, the fear someone might find out. He would leave—leave now so he wouldn't have to face his boss's disappointment and anger. He would go back to his old boss. Maybe it wasn't as bad as he remembered. Besides, his new boss would find out any day now and when he did, surely he would be sent there anyway. It would be best for him to go now, on his own.

He went to his room and began to pack. But just then, one of his fellow employees stopped by—quite unusual and unexpected for this time of day. "We haven't seen much of you lately and we wondered if everything was OK." Then he saw the suitcases out and asked, "What are you doing?"

At first, the caretaker tried to avoid the question and make up another reason for having his suitcases out. But then he decided, "Since I'm leaving anyway, it won't matter if they know or not." He started by saying, "I'm leaving," and then the whole story—garage, junk car, phone calls all spilled out. When he finally finished, he expected his friend to look on him with disgust and disdain; instead, he burst out laughing.

The caretaker, believing his friend was mocking him, started to get upset and angry. "What's so funny?" he asked gruffly.

His friend replied calmly, "Did you ever stop to think how the junk got there? Who was responsible for it? Or who was calling you on the phone?"

"Why, no," he said slowly, thoughtfully. "I was just so busy trying to get it out."

"It was your old boss," his friend replied with a smile. "These were all his tricks to try to get you back. You know how I know? He tried those same tricks on me, too, when I first got here. All of us here used to work for him and he's tried it on each one of us. It unfortunately works on some, but the ones who get smart don't run. You want to go back to a lumpy bed with bed bugs when you do get to lie down which wasn't often? You want to go back to watered down soup with cockroaches when you do get to eat? Forget it! Not me!"

"Well then, what can I do?" asked the caretaker. "I can't go on living like this."

"Go to our boss," was his friend's reply.

"But won't he fire me?" the caretaker questioned. "I've failed him so badly."

"Just go and talk to him and then if you still want to run, go ahead," was his friend's advice.

The caretaker thought awhile on his friend's words. "The worst he can do is fire me and I've already decided to leave, so I'll risk it."

He went that very hour to talk to his boss who just happened to be home then. He entered the room with his eyes to the floor and his shoulders slumped down, trying to make himself smaller and less noticeable. Had he looked up, he would have seen the love and acceptance in his boss's eyes. It would have given him courage and eased his fear. But he didn't look up once as he was mumbling through the whole story.

When he had finished, the kindly gentleman said, "Look up at me." As the caretaker did so, he saw that the old man was not disgusted at him. He was not mad at him. In fact, a broad grin spread over his face and the twinkle in his eyes grew brighter. "Son," he said, "I've known about your problem with the garbage and junk all the time, but I've given that garage to you as your responsibility and I couldn't do anything to help you with it until you asked me to. I've already made provision to take care of it. I've got a special garbage detail to come and pick up big loads and a junk car towing service for clunkers, because, as your fellow employee told you, this happens all the time. Here is a phone—they'll come right out and give you a hand, and you'll have it all cleaned up in time to enjoy yourself the rest of the day."

The caretaker was shocked. His mouth fell open. He could not believe his ears. All that worry, all that fear, all that guilt and anxiety, were all totally unnecessary. Why hadn't he come to his boss in the first place? He saw how ridiculous the whole thing was. It was a plot, a set-up by his first boss. And he had fallen for it. He had been a fool. He started to laugh and he laughed and laughed. It felt so good to have that heavy weight gone. And the old gentleman laughed with him.

As the days went on, the caretaker faithfully called the garbage detail when anything he couldn't handle easily, showed up. Finally the old boss, realizing that he had been exposed and his plan would not work, quit picking on him and went off to pick on someone else. The caretaker enjoyed all his days in peace, joy and contentment, without guilt or fear. He had learned whenever he came upon a problem, to go immediately and see his boss, who had become his loving father.

Rom 8:1
Rev. 12:10
Rom 8:31-35
Rom 16:18
Col. 2:13-16
Ps. 16:11
Rom 6:23
Prov. 11:18
Rom 6:16-18