

The Young Man and the Road

Have you ever been told you couldn't expect God to save a certain person because after all - "they have a free will?" Why do some people turn to God when they are in desperate circumstances and others give up in despair or bitterness? Do your prayers make a difference?

Once upon a time there was a young man who decided to go visit his cousins who had recently moved to a distant city. He got his car ready, filled it with gas, and bought a map. But just as he was ready to leave, his father said to him, "Son, the map you have showed a freeway leaving the highway twenty miles out of town. Don't turn onto it because it was never completed and is a dead-end road. Stick to the old main road and you will be fine."

But the young man had not been getting along very well with his father and was still mad at him from an earlier situation. So he thought to himself, "He's always telling me what to do. He thinks I don't know anything and can't take care of myself. I'll show him I can make this trip just fine without his advice."

He drove along for quite awhile until he reached the place where the freeway led off. There was a big sign, "Centerville 100 miles" in white letters on green background. The road leading off was a new 4-lane divided highway. It looked like a very good road compared to the main highway which was only two lanes. There was a much smaller sign on the main highway, "Centerville 150 miles." "Why I could save 50 miles by taking the freeway, and it would be faster as well as saving gas. Surely they wouldn't start such a fine freeway without finishing it. Dad just isn't up with things, in tune with the times. He doesn't know what's going on. I'm sure they've finished it since he was here last."

So the young man made his decision and turned to the left to take the freeway. The road was very nice, wide and smooth, and no traffic, so he made very good time. He had driven about 5 miles and was congratulating himself on what a wise decision he had made when the freeway came to an end and was replaced by a regular 2-lane highway. "Oh, I guess they haven't finished all of it yet. Must be a narrow strip here that isn't done. Well, the road's still fine, just as good as the one I turned off of. So, I'll just keep on. I'm sure the freeway will pick up again shortly."

He went on for several miles and the road kept getting narrower and narrower until the pavement ended in a gravel road. But he kept on believing that just over the next hill it would surely be paved again. This had to be just a small segment unpaved. However, it continued to get worse. The gravel ended and he was now driving on a dirt road filled with huge chuck-holes and deep ruts. He was going very slowly now to avoid the larger holes, continuing to tell himself, "It's got to get better ahead."

Once in awhile, he thought of going back, but no, he said, "I will never admit my dad was right and I'm going to prove I can make it my way." So he kept on. He hit a very deep hole and "Ssss - fizz" went a tire. He had to stop and get out and change it. He then continued even more cautiously but soon, another tire blew and he didn't have another spare - so he continued driving on the flat tire.

The car was being shaken greatly and being an old car to start with, it was more than it could take. Something started coming loose under the car and there was an awful screeching, grinding noise and a wheel fell off. He couldn't drive without a wheel. The car was useless. He was out in the middle of nowhere and hadn't seen anyone since he turned onto the freeway. But he was still determined. "I'm going to get there my way." So he got out of the car and started walking.

It wasn't long before the dirt road became a dirt path and the path became overgrown with thistles and brambles that he had to push his way through and scratched himself as he passed. "It's got to get better," he kept telling himself. "If I can just make it a little farther, I'll find help and the road will pick up again." However, each time he told himself it would get better, it got worse.

Finally, he came to a deep canyon. Across it was a rickety, old foot bridge made of rope and pieces of board laid crosswise and tied in place. A few of the boards were missing and the ropes were a little frayed. It didn't look very safe and he was severely tempted to turn back. He put one foot on the bridge. It shook and then he looked down--two hundred feet down. There at the bottom he could see the remains of others who had fallen to their deaths. A chill of fear swept over him.

"Is it worth my life just to spite my dad? Yes, I will die before I give in," he said to himself. And with those thoughts, he started across. The bridge swayed and he had much difficulty in keeping his balance. He was making his way across very slowly when a gust of wind came up and knocked him off balance. He found himself hanging in mid-air, frantically clutching the rope but unable to pull himself up to get back on the bridge. When he slipped, he knocked a few boards loose and he saw them fall into the canyon. Watching that, he struggled harder and almost made it, but he just wasn't strong enough to pull up and get his legs over the rope. He knew no one was around and his arms and hands were rapidly tiring. He knew he couldn't hold on much longer.

"I'm done for," he thought. "There is no way out now. Why didn't I listen to my dad? I've been a stubborn, rebellious fool." His fingers were slipping. There was no hope. Then, all of a sudden he heard a noise, "Clippety-clop, clippety-clop." Around the hill came a horse-drawn wagon with an old man driving.

"Help! Help! Please help!" the young man began to scream. With renewed hope and energy, he clutched the rope tighter.

The old man, dressed in overalls and an old straw hat, stopped the horse, got down, and shuffled over to the edge.

"Appears you got yourself in quite a predicament, sonny. What can I do for you?" he asked.

"Get me out of here!" the young man shouted desperately.

"Well now," the old man said, "I can get you out of there. But I can't get you over to the other side where it looks like you was fixing to go. Sure you want to come back to this side?"

"Yes, yes, anything's O.K. I don't care where I go or how I get there. Just get me out of here! Quick!"

"O.K. I'll toss you a rope," the old man said as he got a rope out of the wagon. He tied one end to the back of the wagon and turned the horse and wagon around. He then made a loop in the other end of the rope and threw it to the young man who caught it and with some difficulty, managed to get it under his arms.

"Now, you let go of that bridge, and my rope will keep you from fallin' into the canyon," the old man instructed.

The young man was afraid, but he knew he had no choice if he wanted to live. He let go of the bridge and swung clear to the side of the canyon.

"Get up, Nellie." The old man led the horse and wagon away from the edge, pulling the young man to safety. He was a humbled, shaken, and grateful young man.

"Where was you plannin' to get to?" asked the old man.

"Centerville," was the reply.

"You'll never get there this way. Have to go back to the main highway. Your clothes are a mess and it 'pears you haven't had much to eat or drink for awhile. Here, help yourself to this food and water and I've got some clothes here for you." With these words, the old man proceeded to pull some new clothes out of the back of the wagon and brought out a lunch basket and a canteen of water. After the young man had eaten, drank, and changed clothes, the man took a look at his numerous scratches and helped wash them off, applying salve and bandages to the worst ones.

When the young man was feeling a little refreshed and was starting to regain his strength, he asked, "How come you just happened to be here when I needed you?"

"I didn't just happen to be here, young man," he said. "Your mom's a good friend 'o mine and she knew you'd be needin' me at some point along this road. So she called me to come and follow you. I've been taggin' along behind you for a long time, just awaitin' for you to call out for help. No sense in tryin' to help you afore you wanted it. You'd just hop out 'o the wagon first chance you got and make off down the road in the direction you was aheadin'. I had to wait until you was willin' to change directions afore I could help you."

"Well, I'm ready now," said the young man.

"Good. I'll take you back to the main highway. There's a fillin' station there has a tow truck; they can send back to get your car and they'll get it fixed and have you on your way in no time a'tall."

The young man made it to his cousins' and the first thing he did was to call his parents. "Dad," he said, "I'm sorry I didn't take your advice. I was stubborn, prideful, and rebellious. Please forgive me." And to his mother, "Mom, thanks so much for not giving up on me, and for sending that old man to rescue me. I love both of you very much."

Of course, his parents forgave him and their final words were, "Son, we love you very much, too."

Scriptures for discussion:

Daniel 4:37

Prov. 1:30-32

Prov. 14:12 & 14

Matt. 7:13

Prov. 13:15

Romans 9:16