

REJECTION

Tom Stephens

Sometime in the Spring or Summer of 1971, my wife Linda and I began pastoring our first church after having recently graduated from Southwestern Assemblies of God College in Waxahachie, Texas. It was a small, struggling church in Fort Sumner, New Mexico and needless to say, I had to work outside the church in order to support my wife and four young children.

Fortunately, locating the right job at that time was easy for me. I was hired as parts man for a local Chevrolet dealership, and learned the job quickly. I remember that I tried to keep scripture verses typed up (home computers were scarce at that time) so that I could look at them during the day at work and keep my mind under subjection to the Spirit of the Lord. One of the verses I remember keeping on my desk at work went like this:

“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.”

Psalm 19:14

When you are called to do a work for the Lord, you cannot help but feel the intense desire to accomplish a great work for Him...not because you want admiration from those around you, but because there's something burning in your heart to see others come to Jesus. And when you are young in the Lord and also new in the ministry, you tend to be accelerated in your desires to win the lost, thereby making mistakes that may turn good opportunities into lost chances.

I was not appreciated by the mechanics of that shop. No, they didn't tell me they did not like me in so many words, but when I would come back from lunch, my scripture verse for that day would be face down on my desk, disappear, or I would find them wadded up and left on my desk, or floor. I remember feeling really bad because my intentions were not to antagonize my fellow employees, but to stay in a “right” mind, and to “let it be known” that I have a hope that will soon place me on the other side of the Jordan. I wanted others to know that I wanted to see them there, too. But I did not try to actively witness to my co-workers on the job.

“Pete”, a mechanic, was extremely hard toward the gospel, and therefore, I became a real stumbling block to him. I'm sure you've seen the type of person Pete was. Just knowing how hard he was should have been enough. But to say that he was observed breaking the law while preparing used cars for the lot...and that he was generally considered to be a real grouch... and considered himself to be a self-made man who had no ties to anyone, even God, was very much the truth from my perspective. Despite all that, I was beginning to care more and more about this man. Because he claimed to be Methodist, and his wife attended that church, the Methodist pastor often appeared in our mechanic shop. I'd quietly stand back and observe this very gentle pastor speaking to Pete. I could not hear the conversation, but I remember the prayer in my heart for Pete's salvation each time the Methodist pastor showed up.

Though we didn't socialize with other employees off the job, when the owner of the dealership became very sick and was hospitalized for tests because the cause was not known, Linda and I went to visit...and prayed with him.

When the weather was nice, we often took the kids out to walk, the twins in a stroller, the two toddlers walking beside us. I remember the smallness of the community, and how we always stopped to talk with folks on the street when we would pass their residences. I suppose we became a part of the moving land marks of the town. Sometimes we would be out till dark because our list of acquaintances

was growing.

One evening I remember in particular. The evening in question, before taking our walk with the children, I mentioned to my wife that I would like to go by Pete's house, and leave a periodical which was furnished by my church, also very fundamental in doctrine. When Pete's wife met us at the door, she invited us in and graciously accepted the magazine, while telling us that Pete was out. We visited with her a few minutes, then left, quickly forgetting about that event.

When I arrived at work the next morning, Pete was angry. In essence, he told me that if I EVER invaded his property again, I would be dead meat. I believed him. I never again attempted to bother him with the gospel.

Soon after that, we moved to another ministry in another town in New Mexico. But it was a few years later when we heard from friends in Fort Sumner that Pete had a fatal accident when an automobile which he was working under, slipped off the jack and crushed him to death.

Another unbeliever. Another rejection. Sooner or later, everyone becomes a believer. If sooner, they will leave this planet with life everlasting. If later, it's too late. I felt really bad about Pete's awful accident. But you know, I really feel a lot worse knowing that millions are alive on this earth right now and continue to reject our Lord. Why? Because men still have the option to decide for themselves, and they choose to follow their father.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden *is* light.” Matthew 11:28-30

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Romans 10:9-10

The Spirit says come.