

Breaking Somebody's Heart

by Bill Crews

My father became a preacher of the gospel many years before I was born and continued long after I was grown and gone from home. He was 53 years old, when I changed course and, conscience-driven, decided to become a full-time preacher; I was all of 17. He could have taught me a lot more than I allowed him, and I could have learned a lot more than I did. By the time I decided that I had to at least try to make of myself a preacher, I had already lost most of the opportunities of which I had not taken advantage. So I had to start learning the hard way – by experience – about things I could have learned from him, things about people in general, about brethren in particular, about congregations, about the Scriptures, about problems preachers encounter, about religious errors, etc.

My first full-time work came when I had just turned twenty-one and was single. I recalled hearing my father say, on many occasions, "People are funny." Though I knew he did not mean "ha ha" funny, I didn't have the details; but soon the details began to come. One early lesson I learned is that many young church members grow up, marry and leave home for some distant town where they forsake the Lord and quit the church. They thus renounced the confession of Christ they made, disowned the songs they had sung, surrendered all the Bible they had learned, and bade the Lord farewell.

These sons and daughters, now grown up, don't want their dear old parents to know; so whenever the parents visit them, they take them to church services like clockwork, and try to make them think that they attend services on a regular basis. Well, we had a young couple there who did this very thing. Every time his parents came for a visit, they attended services, but they rarely came any other time. One Lord's day an older brother in the congregation took the visiting father aside and said to him, "Brother _____, I know you think that your son is a member here and that he comes to services all the time, but I think you ought to know that he has never placed membership and hardly ever attends except when you come to visit him. He just wants you to think that he is a member and that he is faithful." That was the end of that young man's fooling his father.

However, I firmly believe that most fathers and mothers in the church know about the unfaithfulness of their grown sons and daughters. In their own imperfect, but sincere, ways they tried to rear them right. They sacrificed for them. They tried to set a good example for them. They took them for years to Bible classes and worship assemblies and gospel meetings. Their greatest hope they had for them was that they would grow up to be faithful Christians of which they could be proud.

This bulletin may reach the hands of such sons and daughters. You became Christians; you have been taught better than how you are living now; you know better; you could live right and serve the Lord faithfully if you wanted to. I would like for you to consider three things:

1. **First, you are breaking your parents' hearts.** They will never have any peace of mind as long as you are not living as faithful Christians should live. It is not job security or financial prosperity they want for you. It is not material gifts they want from you. To hear that you love the Lord, respect His word, and are serving Him and are living for eternity would mean more to them than anything else on earth. They shed tears over you, lose sleep because of you, and pray again and again for your return to God. I think it not amiss to appropriate the words of the apostle John just here. "*Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth*" (3 John 4). But does this also not imply: "Greater grief have I none than this, to hear that my children are not walking in the truth"?
2. **Second, you are breaking God's great heart.** He is your God who gave you life, breath and all things. He is your heavenly Father by virtue of His sending His Son to die for your sins, forgiving you, and making you His child. He loves you and grieves for you. He knows what you once were (if you were sincere); He sees you wasting your lives; He stands ready to receive you with open arms. Have you ever read the beautiful story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32)? You are in that story.
3. Third, one day you are going to break your own hearts – unless you change your course and come back to God. The longer you stay away, the more difficult it will be to return, the easier it will become to justify your unfaithfulness in your own minds, the less your consciences will disturb you, the farther you go from God, and the closer you get to an eternal hell that is going to break your hearts – **forever**.

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