

## *Friend Or Enemy?*

Joe Slater

At first the Galatians Christians counted Paul as a friend – indeed, as a beloved brother who had led them to the Lord. They would have done anything to help him, even to the extreme of plucking out their own eyes, had that been possible (Galatians 4:15). Now, however, false teachers had slandered Paul, and the fickle Galatians had fallen for it. The frustrated apostle asked in the next verse, *“Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?”* How tragically foolish to treat a faithful proclaimer of truth as an enemy!

But it was nothing new. Centuries beforehand, God sent Elijah to rebuke King Ahab for murdering Naboth to steal his vineyard. Ahab reproached the prophet thusly: *“Have you found me, O my enemy?”* (1 Kings 21:20). Truth be told, Elijah was Ahab’s best friend. Warning the king of impending judgment gave him opportunity to repent. But evil Ahab and his wicked wife, Jezebel preferred to kill the messenger!

Even before the time of Ahab, the apostate King Saul attempted to murder his faithful warrior David despite having sworn in the name of the Lord not to do so. Saul reprimanded his own daughter for hiding David, referring to him as *“my enemy”* (1 Samuel 19:17). Like Ahab and the Galatians, Saul’s own sins twisted his mind into treating a true friend as an enemy.

Loyal servants of God will not simply tell you what you want to hear. Because they are your friends, they will tell you the truth.

Do not expect worldly people to appreciate you when you speak the truth. They may well see you as their enemy! *“If the world hates you, know that it hated Me before it hated you”* (John 15:18).

## *Polish Your Shield!*

**“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!”** (Psalm 34:8, ESV).

The devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (I Peter 5:8). If you are a child of God, Satan’s eyes are upon you, watching for your slightest weakness, looking for a way to take you. You may not know it, but he is constantly chipping away at your shield until it becomes damaged enough for him to attack.

Our shield is our faith in God. Satan never ceases sending his flaming arrows at it, and they have many names: the death of a loved one; illness and pain; disappointment in ourselves and others; discouragement; the lure of the world, always tempting us to take the easy way out, enjoy ourselves, and give up on following God’s teaching and commandments; the lust for power, wealth, and the praise of men; false teaching.

Let’s face it. We are weak, and Satan knows how to tempt us. He is waiting for us to take our eyes off God and Jesus and let life’s circumstances get to us. We need to polish our shield now and not wait until one or more of Satan’s flaming darts pierces our faith.

So polish your shield. Look to the things above and not below. Take refuge in God and His Son. Reach for His hand to guide you as you study His Word for encouragement and strength. Pray always. Wait for our blessed hope, the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Remember that you are heirs of eternal life and look forward to the hope of glory in heaven with God and Christ. A strong faith in our God who is our refuge will keep you from Satan and His schemes.

--Donna Wittlif (Denver, CO)

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

The story is told of a man who tried to steal gasoline from a motor home. Attaching a siphoning hose to the vehicle, he started to work; but police found him shortly afterward writhing in agony in the street. It seems he had attached the hose, not to the gasoline tank, but to the motor home's sewage tank! The owner declined to press charges; he was too busy laughing.

Facing the consequences of our sin, though, is no laughing matter. Colossians 2:25 says, "He who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done" (NASV). And we have to face those consequences even if we seem to "get away" with what we have done.

Two guys who were not known for being overly smart were driving a delivery truck down a road when they came to a tunnel. The sign said "Warning: Maximum Height 10 feet zero inches", so they got out and measured their truck. Unfortunately, the truck was just over 12 feet high. They didn't know what to do, when finally one of them looked both directions and said, "I don't see any police, let's go for it!"

As ridiculous as that sounds, there are many folks who take the same approach to sin. "If nobody sees us, then it's OK to go ahead and do it. We can get away with it!" But just as surely as driving a 12-foot high truck through a 10-foot clearance will result in bad stuff happening (even if no one is watching), so will involvement in sin result in negative consequences, even if no one is watching (of course, we know that God is always watching!)

Moses warned the tribes of Israel who wanted to remain on the east side of the Jordan River: "If you arm yourselves...and all your armed men cross over the Jordan....and the land is subdued....then afterward you may return...and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out." (Numbers 32:20-23)

The words of Moses serve as a needed reminder to all those who think that they can violate the law of God without consequence.

--Alan Smith (via Bulletin Gold)