

## SOMETHING TO CHEW ON

A weight is a handicap, a hindrance, something which holds us back in the race to life eternal. A weight to be considered is other people's failure.

Of course, it is not a weight for everybody, but it is for some, especially the young. It occurs out of circumstances like this.

A Christian of long standing, competent in the exposition of the Word of God, faithful in defence of the Truth, strong in living the life of holiness, suddenly resigns and leaves the community. Or somebody respected for their sound, sensible understanding of the Truth in all its application confesses doubt and distrust and defects to agnosticism. Or somebody who is held in great esteem for the purity and integrity of his life is caught in some act of sin and, under the duress of exposure, denies the faith and goes into the world.

When these things happen almost everybody is affected. Sorrow, surprise, sadness settle on the spirit. How could it happen? There were no signs to warn us: everything seemed to be normal. Are we in some way to blame? Very often this kind of failure enforces on the mind just how frail we are, standing by ourselves. When faith is diluted self is encouraged. When attachment to the Lord is in some way weakened the tempter gets bolder, the old man has a lease of new life. Common sense compels us to ask how we would have fared under the same circumstances. When good disciples fall into awful failure it is a solemn thing, to be pondered and weighed carefully. These thoughts would go through the minds of most disciples in such a situation, but there are others who are affected differently. Not only are they disturbed, they are actually discouraged. Somebody else's failure becomes their weight. The process goes like this: we trusted his judgement; we felt that if his clear intellect found it true then we could trust it too: She was so certain and so convincing that we accepted her example gladly. Yes, we relied upon them: they were our mainstay and our mentors. If they are unsure how can we be so confident? If they of all people fail, how can we cope with any real assurance? So the sharp edge is blunted, the forward thrust loses its impetus, the eagerness is abated. The disciple is carrying a weight which is no help at all.

The lesson to be learned is that our faith must be our own. Our conviction must be certain in our own mind. The solemn truth is that one man's faith is not sufficient for two. We can share our belief but we cannot borrow it. Faith by proxy may seem to be all right for a while, but when the crisis comes it shatters. The best Scriptural proof is in 2 Chronicles 24 and the case of young King Joash. He began to reign when he was seven years old, and he was under the care and tutelage of his uncle Jehoiada the priest. Joash proved to be a good king, upright and straight. He was troubled by the disrepair of the house of God and the disorderly priesthood, and he made strenuous efforts to organise repair and reformation. He made sure that the artisans were properly paid and that the work was competently carried out. He was a model king. Verse 2 is the vital verse: "And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest". When Jehoiada died Joash went to pieces. The model king turned into a renegade. His faith was

circumstantial. Very soon he was influenced by bad counsellors and turned to folly and wickedness. He had leaned upon his uncle too much.

Learn the lesson: let your faith be your own: have salt in yourselves; and in times of crisis and defection it will stand.

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Centuries ago the prophet Amos wrote, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." Amos 3:7. Prophets receive messages from God and pass them on to the people. Thus Noah warned the antediluvian world of the coming Flood, and Jonah told Nineveh what to expect if it did not change its ways.

Today, with our age, our world, our civilization coming to an end, we should expect a similar warning, but on a global scale. However, the problem is much greater now than it was in the time of Jonah or Noah. For one thing there are many more people than there were in those far-off days, and they are scattered all over the earth. For another, they talk thousands of different languages and dialects, far more than were used after the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel.

The population explosion is adding a new dimension to the task, making it appear to some as utterly impossible. Ever more frequently the statement is made that Christianity isn't keeping pace with the number of new individuals who appear on the earth day by day, and that it will be left ever farther and farther behind as the explosion gathers momentum, as it surely will. Does this mean that God's plan will fail - that no warning will be given to this generation? Not so.

We need to remember that while the population is multiplying at an amazing rate, so also is knowledge. The whole world of science is literally "bursting at the seams," bringing forth a marvellous array of hitherto undreamed-of inventions, especially in the field of communication and transportation. It would appear that God has prepared for the emergency in which His cause finds itself today.

In other words, at the very moment when many are saying that it is impossible to reach the ever growing billions with the judgement-hour message, God says, "Look! See how easy it is! Just make use of the means I have provided."

One of these means is the transistor radio, "one of the most revolutionary inventions of our age", as Time magazine called it. "In much the same way that printing opened up vast new possibilities to fifteenth-century Europe," it said, "the transistor is letting in the world to hundreds of millions still isolated from the twentieth-century by geography, poverty, and exploitation."

Time went on to say, "On the grassy Tanzanian plain a stately Masai herdsman strides behind his scrawny cattle, a lion-killing spear in one hand and a country-music-blaring Japanese transistor in the other. Transistors sway from the long necks of plodding camels deep in the Saudi desert, and from the horns of oxen plowing the furrows of Costa Rica. Radios are replacing the storytelling dervishes in the coffee-houses of Turkey and Iran, and they are standard equipment in the tea stalls of Pakistan. Thailand's klongs echo to transistor music from peddler's sampans; a visitor to an Ecuadorian minga, in which the Indians come together for communal road building, calculated that at least one tiny transistor radio was sounding its unavoidable message every twenty yards along the two-mile road.

"Radio has long been the window on the world for isolated areas, but the cheapness and portability of the transistor set has given the medium a greater mobility and dimension - and a vast measure of influence.

In addition to the transistor radio, there is of course TV, which becomes cheaper and more accessible to the multitudes every day. There are verses in the Scriptures which could refer to TV such as in Revelation 1:7 where "every eye shall see Jesus when he comes on earth" and, in Revelation 11:9 where "all nations and kindred's and tongues shall see the prophets dead on the streets of Jerusalem."

Other equally marvellous inventions such as computers are making instant communication between people of many nations and languages not only possible but easy.

Let us not sell God short. He is well aware of the present problem and is more than able to meet it. Significantly, in the very passage of Scripture where He announces "the hour of His judgement is come," He pictures His last message being carried with the speed of angels in mid air to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Revelation 14:6-7.

And thus it shall be. The final warning will be given to the whole wide world, right on time.