

Learning from a Dog

by H. Osby Weaver

As I backed out of the garage, the car lights focused on the skin-covered skeleton of a bird dog. Cowed, he moved out of the lights and farther into the corner. Thinking that he had just borrowed a night's lodging, I paid no more attention to him until the next day when I saw that he was still in the same corner. In fact, he would never have been anywhere else without help. He was so very thin and feeble from hunger and fatigue that this corner was about to become his tomb.

I made my way cautiously toward him expecting the worst, but one look into those apologetic eyes dissolved all my fears. It was clear that this animal, almost dead from starvation, was not just a common, community bum. He was high calibre, but his going had been rough. He had apparently been on the road a long time. His feet looked worn and sore. He had a mission - a point of destination which he was unable to reach without a lift, but he would die trying. His breeding was better than his appearance indicated. I fed him generously.

The next morning he was gone. "A mess of pottage" had not caused him to forfeit his birthright nor robbed him of his initiative to reach his goal. He was no parasite that thought the world owed him a living and expected an easy hand-out. A free meal had not enslaved him. He needed temporary help, yes, but the help became a means to an end and not the end itself. His graceful departure at the earliest possible moment was his way of saying "thanks" for the boost given, and it could not have been said more eloquently.

He did me a favor in stopping by. He taught me some things. I know he had a home and reaching it was uppermost in his mind and only death could prevent it, but somehow, I wish he'd stayed!

I learned that anyone of us can be down on his luck at one time or another and need a lift. But it ought to be just that - a lift, and not something that robs us of our initiative and destroys our ambition. 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 says: "If any will not work, neither let him eat." This, of course, takes into consideration that one is able to work and has an available job. The passage continues: "We hear that some walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."

I learned that one ought to have an aim in this life that nothing but death can prevent. That aim ought to be, among other things, the desire to get home - that heavenly home, and if necessary, we will be "faithful unto death" - even if it causes our death (Rev. 2:10), that we might "have the crown of life" - the one thing worth more than anything else.