

THE EXAMPLE OF A

Faithful Father

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By Judson H. Flower Jr.

Economic survival during the Great Depression was no easy task. To make ends meet, my father farmed from spring planting through fall harvest, then hauled cattle or coal for a local trucker during the winter months. My mother added to our meager resources by teaching during the school year. As children, my brother and I were largely unaware of these financial difficulties, as our lives were in most respects like those of everyone around us.

By 1940, as the country gradually recovered from the severity of the Depression, my father's efforts to improve our financial condition began to bear fruit. During the farming season of 1941, he leased a large acreage of land that, aided by ample summer rains, yielded a bounteous crop of field peas. The sale of this crop, he was certain, would enable him to get out of debt and begin the upward climb to financial stability.

When the time for harvest arrived, my father joined a group of farmers who harvested their crops as a team, moving in sequence from one farm to the next. As it happened, my father's crop of peas was scheduled to be harvested last. When that day arrived, it fell on a Sunday.

I clearly remember a conversation between my mother and father that Saturday evening. It centered on my father's feeling that as the season was growing late, he should proceed with the harvesting on Sunday, which he would not normally do. He felt that



this circumstance was akin to the “ox in the mire” of the Savior’s teachings in the New Testament (see Luke 14:1–6). My mother, who recognized the seriousness of my father’s concern, did not attempt to dissuade him, but it was clear from the look on her face that she was disappointed that he would be harvesting on the Sabbath.

The next morning, my mother, brother, and I got up and dressed to go to church, not expecting my father to attend with us that day. But shortly before we were to leave for the meetinghouse, my father came into the room dressed in his Sunday clothes. We walked together to church and spent the Sabbath in meetings and other appropriate activities.

Later that evening, a terrific hailstorm completely destroyed my father’s crop.

That could have been a severe test of faith for any father. He had honored the Sabbath, expecting that by so doing he would bring down a blessing from heaven—and instead he received a ruinous hailstorm and the financial disaster it brought with it.

My father had always been the most patient man I ever knew. On numerous occasions I observed him when his long hours of labor were frustrated by something beyond his control: a balky animal; a newly repaired machine that broke down again; an irrigation dam washed out by a heavy thunderstorm; or other people failing to do the things they had committed to.

I have observed other men give way to outbursts of temper or profanity or even threats of violence in reaction

to some misfortune or supposed injustice. My father’s response, in similar circumstances, was typically to sigh heavily, shrug his shoulders, and start over on whatever task was at hand.

The loss of my father’s pea crop, though far greater in magnitude than other things that had gone wrong, was still met with patience and a firm faith that God had better things in mind for him, which would sooner or later come to pass.

His only observable reaction came after a few weeks of pondering his situation. He decided that he would cease to farm for his livelihood. Instead he enrolled in a training program for mechanics, having always had a natural ability in mechanical skills. Within a few months the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States entered World War II. My father soon found employment in the wartime aircraft industry, and our family moved to San Diego, California. There, his ability to provide for our family steadily improved through the years.

Though his accumulation of worldly goods was never more than modest, the “things of this world” were never his goal. Moving to San Diego proved to be a great blessing to me—it was there that I met and eventually married my eternal companion. Our life together and our family might never have been, except for my father’s failed pea crop.

I have ever been blessed by the example of a faithful father, and I have striven to emulate and honor that example throughout my life. ■

The author lives in Montana, USA.

