

Alpha Counseling
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Dear Friends,

A fable called "The Old Mule" has helped me to understand some of the Apostle Paul's explanations of the trials that we, as Christians, experience while living for Jesus.

The Old Mule

A farmer owned an old mule that fell into an unused well in the barnyard. Although sad for the old mule the farmer decided to bury the old mule in the well and save the trouble of having to dig a grave. Calling his neighbors to help they began to shovel dirt down the well. The mule had dirt by the shovel full hitting his back and in his discomfort shook himself and stomped his hooves. Every time a shovel load of dirt landed on his back, he would shake it off and STEP UP! Shake it off and step up, shake it off and step up, over and over again. It wasn't too long before the old mule, dirty and tired, stepped out of the well. What was meant to bury him actually saved his life!

There are many applications we can use this story to illustrate Bible truth! I can quickly think of Joseph and his brothers, and Moses with the wandering children of Israel. Jeremiah actually was thrown into a well or cistern and left to die.

My mind also went to a favorite section of Scripture, II Corinthians 4&5. Paul says in 4:7: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves." In verses 8 and 9 Paul describes all the dirt thrown at him and us. "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed... For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested (displayed) in our mortal flesh."

Verse 16-17: "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction, (or dirt falling on our back), is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." **Paul then goes on to say something we modern Christians often miss; what is visible or physical is less important than what is invisible and eternal.**

In Chapter 5, Paul refers to our physical body as our earthly tent! Full of groaning and burdened but in verse 6: "Therefore, always being of good courage and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord...for we walk by faith not by sight. And we are of good courage."

So many people we see at Alpha have had huge piles of dirt thrown down on them. Abiding in Christ, being faithful to forgive, learning to give good in return where evil is intended, gives us the ability to allow the life of Jesus to be displayed in our everyday life. I hope the story of the old mule will encourage you to shake off the dirt this world throws at you and step up closer to Jesus.

Thank you, each one, for the support you provide that enables us to work with those stuck down in a well.

God Bless YOU,

Richard