

BOB PUTS GOD TO THE TEST

It was a cold, rainy afternoon. Tommy hated it when it rained because he couldn't go out and play. He had homework that he could do but he didn't feel like doing it. He turned on the television and nothing good was on.

He was so bored he didn't know what to do. Then he thought of a pamphlet that someone had given him the day before and he decided to read it. As he read the pamphlet he thought of the day before.

Tommy and his friends Roger and Bob were in the street playing ball when a young man approached them and started talking to them about how to go to heaven. Bob started laughing because he couldn't believe a total stranger would come up to three twelve-year olds and start talking to them about God. Tommy told Bob to stop laughing because he knew he was being rude and besides, Tommy wanted to hear what the man had to say.

The young man, whose name was Kevin, explained to the boys that heaven was a gift. Tommy had always thought that the way you got to heaven was by being good, but Kevin showed them from the Bible that good works don't get a person to heaven. When Jesus died on the cross He paid our way to heaven so that's why it's a free gift to go to heaven. Jesus said, "he that believes on Me has everlasting life."

After Kevin explained that it's just by believing in Jesus that gets us to heaven, he then explained why God wants us to be good. Being good is for rewards on earth and in heaven. God promises to reward His children that are good and He punishes His children that are bad.

What Kevin explained to the boys made sense to them and they all believed what he was saying. After Kevin left, the boys discussed what he had told them.

"Boy," said Tommy, "that really takes a weight off my mind."

Roger said, "Me too! I wonder why I never heard it explained that way before. I always knew that Jesus died for our sins, but I never knew He did everything that had to be done to get us to heaven. I always thought that we had to do our part too."

"Well," said Bob, "now that we know we're going to heaven it doesn't matter what we do wrong 'cause God will still accept us into heaven." "Bob," said Tommy, "you weren't listening very well. Even though God won't send you to hell if you're bad, He will punish you."

Bob, with a smug look on his face, said, "Who cares as long as you're going to heaven anyway?"

Tommy thought that Bob didn't have very much respect for God.

This all passed through Tommy's mind as he read over the pamphlet that Kevin had given him.

Since there was nothing else to do on this rainy day Tommy decided to get his Bible out. He never had spent much time reading it before so it was tucked away in his closet.

When he was looking through it he was surprised to see how many pages it had. He had no idea where to start reading so he just opened it up in the middle and started reading. He was reading from the book of Proverbs and he noticed that it was filled with promises of good to those who live good lives and warnings of punishment for those who live bad lives. Tommy thought that it would be a good idea for Bob to read Proverbs. He decided to call him and tell him.

When he called and told him about it Bob said, "Look Tommy, it's great that you want to read the Bible but don't try to push it down my throat. I really have no interest in reading the Bible."

Tommy was hurt by Bob's response. Didn't he realize that Tommy was telling him these things only because he didn't want Bob to be punished?

Tommy went back to his reading and the more he read the more interesting he found it. It was exciting to know that he was actually reading the Word of God and that God told people how to live their lives so that God could bless them.

Two weeks later at school some people from UNICEF were asking for volunteers to collect money for them on Halloween. Bob suggested that all three of them volunteer to go out together.

It sounded like a good idea and Tommy was surprised that Bob would want to do something unselfish. They decided to all go together in Tommy's neighborhood. When they were finished going from house to house, Bob offered to get everyone hamburgers from McDonalds.

After they sat down Bob pulled a wad of bills out of his pocket. Roger, who was shocked to see Bob with so much money, said, "Bob, where did you get all that money?"

"Evidently, you two guys aren't too observant," Bob answered. "When you were handing me the money for UNICEF I put some of it in the can and some of it in my pocket. It's great that people are so generous, isn't it?"

"Bob," said Tommy, "you put that money in the can where it belongs. That's not your money. It's to help people and that's why people gave it."

"Come on," said Bob angrily, "You didn't mind eating what I bought with some of that money."

Tommy responded, "If I had known that you had used some of the money we collected tonight I never would have accepted."

"Well it's a little late now wouldn't you say? So you guys are in this with me. The reason I even told you is because I want to share this money with you. Let's see here," Bob started to count all the money he had, "there's twenty-eight dollars here. Three goes into twenty-eight how many times?"

"Nine," answered Roger.

Bob then divided the money up so that each of them got nine dollars. "I'll keep the extra dollar," said Bob, "since I'm the one that came up with the idea." Then he said in a mocking voice, "And they say crime doesn't pay!"

Tommy felt really bad about taking the money, but he took it anyway. The more Tommy thought about it the worse he felt, so he decided to put the nine dollars in the can with the rest of the money he would be turning in the next day. He called Roger and talked to him about it and he also agreed to give back the money. But when Tommy called Bob, he just got upset with him and said, "If I had known that you guys weren't going to keep the money I would have kept it all myself."

The next day when all the boys were over at Bob's house, Bob said to his mother, "Hey Mom, I'm not going to be here for dinner tonight. Tommy's mother invited me over for dinner."

"Alright," she answered, "but be home by nine."

As soon as they left the house Tommy said to Bob, "Why did you lie to your mother and say my mom had asked you over for dinner?" "Because," he answered, "I want to go to that carnival over by your place and I knew she wouldn't let me go if I asked." He then said, "Why don't you call from Roger's house and say you'll be having dinner at my place and Roger can tell his mother he's having dinner at my place too, and then we can all go to the carnival together."

Tommy thought about it for a minute and even though it did sound like fun, he thought about what he had read in the Bible. Bob was looking for trouble. He had stolen money the night before and now he had lied to his mother. Tommy wanted no part of it and said, "Bob, don't you know that God is going to punish you if you keep being bad?"

"You know Tommy, you're getting to be a real drag. Why don't you go home and play with your dolls."

Of course Tommy didn't have dolls. Bob was just saying that to let Tommy know that he thought he was a sissy.

Then Bob said, "Roger do you want to come with me?"

"No thanks," he answered.

"Well, I guess I'll just go have a good time all by myself," said Bob with obvious disgust in his voice. "See you two sissies later."

"Bob," said Tommy, "don't you realize you're putting God to the test?"

It was clear by the expression on Bob's face that he didn't want to discuss it. He simply said, "Good-bye," and walked away.

Bob had the ten dollars with him that he had gotten the night before. He used the money to get into the carnival and to play a lot of the games they had. He also went on some of the rides. He knew he had to leave the carnival around quarter 'til nine to get home by nine so at eight-thirty he decided to go on one last

ride. He got on the ferris wheel and was having a really good time until the ferris wheel started making a strange noise and then came to a stop. It didn't stop because the ride was over but because something had gone wrong with it. Bob was stuck in a seat all by himself at the top of the ferris wheel. He could hear people below him complaining and finally, after about five minutes a man started yelling to all the people on the ferris wheel telling them that it had broken down and that it might take a while to fix it.

Bob couldn't believe it. He knew that time was slipping by and that at nine o'clock his mother would be concerned if he weren't home. He kept looking down at his watch and getting more upset as each minute passed. It was terrifying to be so high in the air and he was trying hard not to panic.

He couldn't help but think about what Tommy had said to him about God's punishing you when you are bad. He knew that it was wrong for him to have taken that money and to have lied to his mother.

At nine o'clock when Bob didn't come home, his mother started worrying about him. She called over at Tommy's house to see what time he had left his house. When Tommy's mother told her that Bob hadn't been there she wanted to find out from Tommy where he was. When she found out that Bob had gone to the carnival she asked Tommy if he would come with her to try and find him.

She picked Tommy up and they drove to the carnival together. As they got there a fire truck drove up. When they went into the carnival they found out that the ferris wheel had been stuck for over an hour and because they couldn't fix it they were going to have to have the firemen lift the people off it. The fire truck had something like a cage that went very high so that a person could get in it and be brought safely to the ground. Since they rescued the people that were at the top first, Bob was the first one down. Waiting for him were his mother and his friend Tommy. His mother grabbed him by the ear and dragged him to the car. Tommy followed behind. She wanted to know where Bob had gotten the money to be able to get into the carnival and to pay for the rides. It was obvious that his mother was in no mood to be lied to and Bob told her the whole truth about how he had taken the money they had collected for UNICEF.

When Bob's mother dropped Tommy off at his house she said to him, "Tommy, you're going to be seeing Bob only during school hours for the next two months because he is going to be coming directly home from school. He'll be doing different odd jobs after school and on weekends so he can give the money he earns to charity."

That night when Tommy was in bed he thought over what had happened the last few days. Bob had thought it didn't matter how he lived and now it was evident that God had punished him.

The next day Bob came up to Tommy at school and said, "What was the name of that book in the Bible that you wanted me to read?"

"Proverbs," answered Tommy.

“Well,” said Bob, “I think I’ll read it. I did some thinking when I was on the ferris wheel last night. Crime doesn’t pay after all. I thought you and Roger were sissies for wanting to be good and now I see I was a jerk for thinking the way I did. It’s rather obvious God doesn’t let you get away with being bad.”

Tommy was really happy that Bob had learned that lesson. He didn’t want to see any more bad things happen to Bob. And since Bob was going to be reading the Bible Tommy wanted Bob to know that the same book in the Bible that warns of punishment for those who were bad, also promises good things to those who were good. So he said, “I wanted to let you know that when you read Proverbs you’ll see a bunch of promises that God has for you if you’re good.”

Bob, with a big grin on his face, said, “If God can get me stuck on a ferris wheel, it’s pretty exciting to think what He could do for me if I obey Him. As a matter of fact, I plan on finding out what it’s like.”

Bob’s life dramatically changed after this. He found life exciting when he saw the Lord working on his behalf. He had prayers answered and he experienced a peace and a joy he had never known before.

All the boys came to find that the only life worth living was a life lived for God.