

CHAPTER 1: MY FAMILY

Dad Memories – Part 2

Ephesians 4:26-27

Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.

Dad's Temper

My dad had a temper. I inherited my dad's temper. I tell these stories not to blame or shame him but to illustrate where I got my temper. My grandfather probably had a bad temper too, and I know my great grandfather had an evil personality and a bad temper. Later in life my dad told the story of going to his maternal grandfather's funeral and hearing the priest put him in the deepest hell saying, "This was the most evil man I have ever known." Dad said that made him furious and influenced him not to want to return to church.

As I previously stated my dad was saved when I was young. I'm glad dad got saved. Perhaps that was the only thing that kept him from walking off on his family. Mom, for all her good traits, was a nag. Like too many women she didn't have enough sense to let a matter go. She would harp on it non-stop until dad would blow up. I think he learned that blowing up was the only thing that would stop her. From my earliest age I remember dad's temper being his defining feature. Dad would sometimes throw violent fits of rage. I think it was to keep mom in tow. I thank God that to my knowledge my dad never hit my mom or was physically abusive in any way. Yet, dad had that temper.

My dad had his ups and downs spiritually. There were periods when he hungered after God. He became our Sunday School Superintendent and an elder in the church. I remember he even preached when our pastor was absent. I remember the sermon title, "Are you a Thermostat or a Thermometer Christian?"

The tenderest moment in my dad's life was during one of those spiritually alive periods. He and the pastor had been talking about going to visit my grandfather who was not a believer. Dad wanted to lead his dad to Christ but didn't know how, so the pastor agreed to go with my dad to talk to him about Jesus. They made the appointment but something came up that week and they had to postpone the visit until the following week. Early that following week my grandfather had a massive heart attack and died. I remember it vividly. As we drove to visit my grandmother Dad was so overcome with grief that he could not see to drive. He had to pull to the side of the road and wept bitterly. I can still see

him beating on the steering wheel and saying, "Oh, why, oh, why didn't we keep that visit. My dad is in hell today because I failed to lead him to Christ."

Dad's Work Ethic

Dad was a hard working man. When he came home from the war there weren't many jobs available because so many men had come back at the same time. I remember my dad saying he would go to the local paper factory every day and ask for work. Finally, when they began to hire dad was one of the first to be hired. The personnel manager told him he got hired because he proved he desperately wanted to work. Dad worked at Consolidated Paper Company the rest of his life, often working seven days a week, twelve hours a day, and at times pulling double shifts. Though my dad made good money while he worked, too often the company would go on strike and dad could be out of work for months. Other times they didn't have enough work and would lay people off. At those times dad would not be content to sit around pulling unemployment. He would work roofing jobs or whatever jobs that became available to bring us through.

Those were often tough times for my parents. In times of prosperity dad would buy a house, but within a couple of years layoffs and strikes would leave us penniless and they would have to sell the house. We moved quite a bit throughout my life. That was not easy on my parents and didn't make them very popular with us. Having to move from school district to school district, always being the new kids coming into classrooms, was upsetting to all of us.

Easter and Christmas

Mom and dad tried to give us the best. I remember always having Easter egg candies and squirreling them away in our pockets as we went to church. I can't ever remember a bad Christmas. Mom and dad would somehow find the money or credit to give us a good Christmas. I have fond memories of looking at the Sears catalog to pick out what toys we wanted for Christmas. We were to circle several items and put our names by it so mom and dad could keep straight who wanted what. Mom and dad decided it was too difficult to keep us in our beds until Christmas morning, so we had the tradition of opening gifts on Christmas Eve. My parents did not believe in teaching us to believe in Santa Claus. They would send us up to our rooms as they put our presents under the tree and around the room. Most presents weren't wrapped since we would only tear into them and leave a mess. It was always thrilling to walk into the living room and see the gifts under the lighted Christmas tree.

Being Poor

What I remember most about growing up was being poor. There were times when we would have to go to school with worn out knees in our pants that mom had ironed or sewed on patches. I remember the soles of my shoes coming

unglued and flopping as I would walk to and from school. Dad would dutifully glue our soles and put them under a leg of the kitchen table till morning and send us off to school or church only to have the glue come undone. We often wore hand-me-downs, either from older siblings or from used clothes from other church families. That was embarrassing because sometimes kids would recognize the used clothes we were wearing, and being kids, they would call attention to it having been theirs.

Saturday night was shoe shine night and religiously we were to lay out our shoes on newspapers and shine them with liquid black polish. I also remember having holes in the bottom of my shoes and having to stuff folded newspapers in them to keep from wearing out our sock through the gaping holes.