

Faithful Cars

Charlie Brackett

(This article was written several years ago before foreign car manufacturers captured the hearts of most American drivers, when Fords and Chevrolets were more popular.)

The author of a book I read years ago suggested that people are like cars in regard to their faith. It seems to me it is so. Cars, like people, come in all varieties. Everything from the rare and unapproachable-by-most-of-us Rolls Royce or Mercedes to the familiar old family car. Some are elegant and showy. Mercedes. Cadillac. Lincoln Town Car. So elegant they may be used only on special occasions. Polished and groomed frequently, they are kept in the garage and parked away from other cars for dent protection. Often used by dignitaries, they are at their best in a parade.

Not so with Fords, Chevies and Plymouths. Special handling when they are new, perhaps. But soon they become common and ordinary and are expected to faithfully fulfill their intended purpose. Some do and some don't.

Some are frail and fragile, temperamental unless the weather is just right or the load is not too heavy. Just when you are counting on getting some important job done on time, the car doesn't want to go. By all appearances it seems okay and should be able to perform, but it coughs and sputters and refuses to go. Hard to start in cold weather. Quick to heat up in hot. It creaks and groans and dies just when reliable service is needed most.

Some, however, do perform as we expect them to. Turn the key and they are ready to go. Take the kids to school. Cart the dog to the vet. Carry the trash to the dump. Bring home the groceries. Take the family on a tour of the Smokies. No job is too big or too small. None too menial or too humbling. Dog hairs, spilled Coke, a stale French fry, muddy shoes. All must be taken in stride. The fender bender when Johnny turned sixteen and the nick in the hood when Dad was building Rex's doghouse and a nail ricocheted off the car. Put gas in her and go. "Did you check the oil?" "Yeah, but I don't remember when." Old reliable.

Cold mornings. Rainy afternoons. Always ready to go, ready to serve the intended purpose.

People are like cars. All people, I suppose, but especially members of the church are like our cars. There are those unapproachable by most others. Aloof. Sophisticated and elegant. They can be counted on most during special occasions, when there are dignitaries around. They like to be noticed and to be with those who are being noticed. Don't ask them to do anything ordinary. Just like their counter-parts in the automotive world, special treatment is part of dealing with "Cadillac" members.

And then there are the temperamental members like some temperamental cars. According to all appearances they are ready to serve, or should be. They are usually there at every gathering, enjoying the benefits of being among the members, but if asked to help, they can't. "I don't know if I can find the time." "I don't know how, and besides, you have to get there earlier than I can make it." "I might forget." "Oh, I might

teach that class later, but not now." "I haven't been feeling well lately so better pass me by this time."

When it comes to showing hospitality, picking up someone for services, sitting up with the sick, preparing a meal when needed, helping with flowers for the bereaved, inviting a neighbor to a Bible study and countless other important tasks, they fail.

Somewhere between hearing of the need, maybe even agreeing to help; somewhere between there and getting the job done they excuse themselves or just quietly fail to perform. Can't be depended upon. If they were cars, we would get rid of them and get one that could be counted on to faithfully fulfill its purpose. Thank the Lord for those members who are like the trusted, faithful old family car! Reliable servants.

In any kind of greatness, especially in service to the King, a necessary ingredient is reliability.

Can you think of some of those early Christians with a reliable Ford or Chevy kind of faith? How about Priscilla and Aquila? Always there (Acts 18:2,3). Always ready to support those who preached (Romans 16:3,4). Ready to teach those in error (Acts 8:26). Not for applause. Not only when convenient, but when the need arose.

And Andrew. One of the twelve. Not as obvious as others. Not delivering great sermons like his brother Peter, but if Andrew hadn't told Peter about meeting the Savior, Peter might have remained a catcher of only fish.

And many more. Rahab, Anna, Barnabas, Ephaphroditus. Thank You, Lord, for those in our own time with reliable "Ford or Chevy faith." Teachers who, out of love for You and the children of others, have prepared and delivered countless lessons. Sunday after Sunday. Often without "thanks".

Thank You, Lord, for elders who serve selflessly and, though the terrain may be rugged, continue to chug along setting the pace for those who follow.

Thank You, Lord, for preachers who continue presenting the gospel though it may seem that few are listening, and fewer are changing.

Thank You, Lord, for deacons willing to serve in inconspicuous ways, faithfully seeing that the job which needs to be done is done.

Thank You, Lord, for mothers and fathers who see that their children are at every Bible class, on time and with lesson prepared. Cold or rainy. Always there, always prepared.

Thank You, Lord, for members who quietly cut the grass, clean the building, straighten the books, prepare communion, greet visitors, prepare meals, encourage others; and for every member who helps the body of Christ in any way.

Thank You, Lord, for those who determinedly face down Satan every Monday morning when the camaraderie of fellow saints seems far away. In workplace, market place and schoolyard. Wherever life goes on.

Thank You, Lord, for all those reliable old cars of faith.