

## The Old Mule

This article, written anonymously and given to me by a brother in Tennessee, is wonderfully illustrative of how any downtrodden child of God can meet and face hardship. Remember it well.

A parable is told of an old mule who fell into the farmer's well. The farmer heard the mule braying or whatever mules do when they fall into wells. After carefully assessing the situation, the farmer sympathized with the mule, but decided that neither the mule nor the well was worth the trouble of saving.

Instead, he called his neighbors together and told them what had happened and enlisted them to help haul dirt to bury the old mule in the well and put him out of his misery. Initially, the old mule was hysterical! But, as the farmer and his neighbors continued shoveling, and the dirt hit his back, a thought came to him. He suddenly realized that every time a shovel load of dirt landed on his back, he should shake it off and step up!

This he did, shovel after shovel. The thought pounded through his mind, "Shake it off and step up ... shake it off and step up ... shake it off and step up." No matter how painful the shovelfuls of dirt felt or how distressing the situation seemed, the old mule fought against panic and just kept right on shaking it off and stepping up.

It was not long before the old mule, battered and exhausted, stepped triumphantly over the wall of that well. What seemed like it would bury him, actually blessed him, all because of the way he met his adversity! Our hardships and miseries, seemingly with the potential to bury us, often po James 1:2-3 says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." Furthermore, James 1:12 states, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Assess the ability to bless us, if we have faith enough to stand up to them.

Consequently, tragedy and suffering can work to our good. Suffering shows "the Lord loveth whom he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" and "... it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:6, 11). Perhaps it should be our prayer that the gracious Lord would grant us the courage and faith to "shake it off and step up" when misfortunes and distresses come our way.

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