

Greetings!

When was the last time you did something stupid? I'm not kidding... Think about it for a moment. Now, who had to put up with your foolishness? Maybe after this week you'll want to add the line that I've been praying for years to your prayers.

Alice and the Four Bears

It was almost time for the church service to start as we stood in our Sunday morning prayer circle at the altar. With hands clasped together, the various prayers went up one by one until it was my turn, as the pastor, to give the final prayer. I began, "Father, I've done a lot of stupid things in my life. Help me not to do any of them today. . . "Except for a couple of chuckles and a hearty amen or two, I was left alone with my confession of stupidity.

Some may have thought I was trying to be cute, but I was extremely serious. It was one of those "naked moments" when we bare our souls for all to see who we really are. I'm not sure what had occurred that morning to cause me to ask God for such a thing, but it has become a regular part of my prayers ever since. Maybe it is age, or possibly wisdom, that has brought such insight into my life. Whichever it was, it was needed.

Stupid stuff. We've all been there haven't we? A friend of mine jokingly called it a "spirit of stupid" that comes upon us. Maybe the next time I preach I'll give an altar call for those with the "spirit of stupid". On second thought, maybe not. I'd probably be there for hours praying over people who lined up for deliverance from stupidity!

Did you know that David even had a problem in this area? Yes, even the mighty shepherd boy who became a king sometimes did stupid things. You don't believe me? Listen to his confession from Psalm 69, "O God, You know my foolishness." If I may translate his words for you, "Lord, You know the stupid things I've done." Remember, David was just a boy when God called him from a field of sheep to become a king, and boys do boyish things. Possibly, his father had been embarrassed by his daring more than once and that's why he, at first, didn't bother to call David from the field to meet with Samuel when Samuel was checking out Jesse's sons for kingship.

I'm sure that right now you're thinking of some foolish things that you'd like to erase from your past. I know there are some that I'd like to erase from mine. Why, there was this time . . . never mind! When I look back over my life, I wonder, "How in the world did some people put up with my foolishness?" If I could erase the moments, the hours or the days that I did stupid things, instead of fifty-four, I would only be around forty something. Okay, maybe only in my thirties. The point is, I'd be a lot younger with those times missing from my life.

On one beautiful Florida day, I stood before the morning class I taught each Sunday at my church in Sopchoppy. I was the pastor of the church and this was the adult Sunday School class. I can't remember a single subject that I taught them, but I'll never forget that moment of revelation. With her frail hand raised into the air, she spoke softly, "Pastor Chris, I have a problem with the four bears." I stood frozen like a deer caught in the headlights with no idea

what to say. So, confused I asked, "Mrs. Alice, what four bears?" She replied with a grin that can come only from an aged lady of her fine quality, "You know the ones the Apostle Paul talked about." Still confused, I stepped into the trap. "Mrs. Alice, Paul never talked about any bears." And then it came. "You know Pastor, where he said 'forbear one another'." Apparently the other "old timers" knew what was coming as their laughter was aimed at the "kid" teaching them about life. Mrs. Alice had crossed the seventieth year hurdle of life, and I was the ripe ole' age of twenty-two.

Looking back now I suspect that my foolishness at this age, and being her pastor, I was the one that she often had to "forbear." Don't think so? Now tell me, how many pastors have you known that drove a Dodge Demon with Monroe air shocks, Headman Headers, traction bars, wide back tires and side pipes to church each Sunday? The kids loved it! The ole' folks, I'm sure, had to "forbear" as their pastor bounced down the dirt road with pipes rumbling.

Yes, I confess, I've done some stupid things in my life, and I'm sure that there are more of those moments to come. My only hope is that God will grant to those around me the grace to "forbear".

How about you?

And that's just a thought . . .

"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."
Ephesians 4:2 (KJV)

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any:
even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Colossians 3:13 (KJV)

My Final Word

What a fine lady Mrs. Alice McKenzie was. She didn't speak often and when she did, she spoke very softly. Her smile was unforgettable, as was her charming nature. There are some people who come across our lives, and they leave a wonderful impression on us. Mrs. Alice, for me, was one of those very special people.

I will forever remember the lesson of the four bears, and I agree with Mrs. Alice, often the "forbears" are the hardest for me to deal with in my life. There will always be people who challenge us to live like Jesus. One Bible version says, "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves." I wonder, how often has Jesus called upon me "not to please" myself with a reaction to someone else but, to bear with their "scruples"?

Lying at various places around our house, I have placed several small rocks, and on each rock is

a verse that reminds me that it is the person without sin who should cast the first stone. Certainly, I don't qualify for stone casting, but oh what a challenge it is sometimes! Each time I want to throw a stone, I'm reminded that I've also done a lot of stupid things and, *to expect grace, I must give grace.*

As David said, "O God, You know my foolishness." I think sometimes God smiles, or even laughs at the crazy things we do, but then there are those times when I'm sure He wonders, "What in the world were they thinking!"

After picking my grandson up from school the other day, I decided to help my daughter out a little by encouraging him to cooperate with his mom in the mornings as they prepare to leave the house. His excuse, "But when I go to sleep at night my brain turns off and when I wake up in the morning I don't have enough power to turn it back on!"

Maybe that's an excuse I can start using when I do stupid things, "My brain was turned off and I didn't have enough power to turn it back on!" Think it'll work?

Father, I've done a lot of stupid things in my life. Help me not to do any of them today!

Chris

