



*“**F**or rulers are not a terror
to good works.”*

Romans 13:3

Here Comes the Principal

Part 1

*Did Ronnie have a real reason to fear the principal in
this part of the story?*

Ronnie and his friend Ted liked second grade. They liked it better than first grade, **except** for one thing. They were afraid of the new **principal**. At least Ronnie was.

Last year’s principal was short. He looked old. He walked as if he were tired all

the time. He never went out and played with the students. But he was jolly. He smiled when he met you in the hall.

Mr. Dickon was not short. He was big and tall. Mr. Dickon was not old and tired. He was young. He walked with long, fast steps. He went out and played with the upper grade boys, but he was not jolly. The boys had not seen him smile one time yet.

One day Ronnie and Ted were sitting on the school bus behind two upper-grade boys.

One boy said to the other, "So you had to go to the principal's **office**! What did he do to you?"

"Never mind," said the other, with a short laugh. "Mr. Dickon is all right; but I hope I never have to go to his office again. I'm going to dodge him after this. Watch what you do, or he'll call you in too."

"I will watch myself," said the first boy.

“It looks as if he’s going to make us walk the chalk line this year!”

When Ted and Ronnie got off the bus they looked at each other.

“What does ‘walk the chalk line’ mean?” asked Ronnie.

“I don’t know,” answered Ted. “It is something those upper-grade boys don’t want to do.”

“You can tell they are afraid of the new principal too,” said Ronnie. “We had better watch out. I sure don’t want to go to his office!”

At the supper table that evening, Ronnie asked, “Daddy, what does it mean to ‘walk the chalk line’?”

“It means you must be careful to do what you are supposed to do.”

“Is that all?”

“Yes, that is all. Why do you ask?”

“I heard some of the upper-grade boys saying the new principal is going to make them ‘walk the chalk line’ this year. They sounded as if they were afraid of the new principal. They said they sure were going to dodge him.”

Daddy laughed. “That’s good. Some of those upper-grade boys *need* to be afraid of the principal. They *need* to walk the chalk line.

“But, Ronnie, you don’t need to **worry** about that except when you disobey. Do what you are supposed to do, and you will not need to be afraid of the principal.”

Ronnie said no more. But he thought, *I do need to worry. I am afraid of Mr. Dickon. He is so big, and he never smiles. How can I tell if I’m walking his chalk line or not? I’d better just dodge him if I can.*

The next morning on the bus, Ronnie told Ted what Daddy had said.

“Well then,” said Ted, “we don’t need to worry except when we do something wrong.”

“Maybe not,” said Ronnie, “but I’m going to stay out of his way. How will we know when he might want to take us to his office?”

Just then the bus stopped at the school building. The driver opened the door. All the children stood.

Suddenly Ronnie grabbed Ted’s arm and whispered, “Here comes the principal!”

Both boys sat down again. Ronnie dodged behind some of the other children.

Mr. Dickon came up the steps of the school bus. “Good morning, everyone. I just came to tell you that the bus will not be left at school today. It’s going to the shop to get fixed. Just be sure you take your books and everything with you.”



“I won’t forget my crutches,” piped up Justin from the front seat. Justin was in the first grade. He had a broken leg. His leg was in a cast. He always sat in the front seat so he could get off first.

Mr. Dickon stepped down on the sidewalk. He lifted Justin down, cast, crutches, and all. Then, carrying the little boy’s lunch box and book, he walked beside him to the school building. He held the door open till Justin swung in on his crutches.

Ronnie and Ted had waited. They wanted to be the last ones in. “That was nice of him,” said Ted. “I saw him smiling at Justin.”

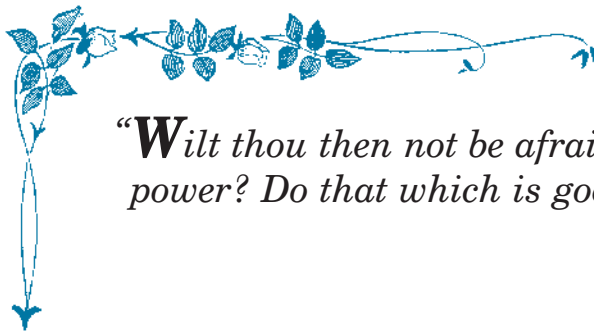
“Well, I didn’t,” said Ronnie. “I’m still going to stay as far away from him as I can.”

That morning on the playground, the second-graders wanted to play dodgeball. Miss Neff said, “Ronnie and Ted, will you run

to the building and get us two good balls, please?”

Away went the boys. They pulled open the big doors. They ran for the hall closet where the balls and bats were kept. Just as they got there, someone called, “Boys! No running in the building!” It was the principal, coming down the hall with long, fast steps.

–Ruth K. Hobbs



“Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good.”

Romans 13:3

Here Comes the Principal

Part 2

Did Ronnie have a real reason to fear the principal in this part of the story?

Ronnie and Ted dodged into the closet. They turned on the light. They pulled the door partway shut. They took a long time picking out the balls they wanted. Any minute they were sure the principal would

put his head in the door. But he didn't.

At last Ronnie whispered, "Is he still out there?"

Ted peeped through the crack of the half-open door. "I don't see him," he whispered back.

Then the boys turned out the closet light. They looked out. No one was in sight except an upper-grade boy sweeping the hall.

As they came by, he said, "You little boys had better watch out! If you ever have to go to the principal's office, you'll be sorry!"

Ronnie and Ted looked at the big boy, but they did not say anything. They walked quietly down the hall and out the door.

Outside, Ronnie asked, "What do you think Mr. Dickon would do to us if he took us to his office for running in the building?"

"I don't know," said Ted. "But it's like

your dad said; if we do what we are supposed to do, we don't need to be afraid. It would be our fault if he called us in. We ran in the building. We know we are not supposed to do that. We just better walk the chalk line so we don't need to be afraid of him."

"Well, it's hard to remember everything all the time," said Ronnie.

At noon that day, Ted and Ronnie sat on the grass and watched the upper-grade boys playing softball. The inning was over. One team was coming in to bat. The other team was going out to the field.

Suddenly Ronnie jumped up. He whispered, "Here comes the principal! Let's go!"

"Why?" asked Ted. "He's not going to do anything to us."

"How do you know? He might be coming to get us for running in the building."

“Aw, no,” said Ted. “He would have come to the closet when we were in there, if that’s what he wanted.”

“Well, I’m afraid of him. I don’t want to go to his office. We can run to the other side of the field and watch the game from there. Come on, Ted!”

“Miss Neff said we should not cross the field when they are playing,” said Ted.

“They aren’t really playing now. They are just changing sides. Come on!”

“No. Look, Ronnie, they are throwing the ball back and forth, and Miss Neff said . . .”

But Ronnie was gone. He was dodging between the boys who were coming in to bat, and those going out to the field.

Suddenly he heard two boys shout at the same time, “Watch it, Ronnie! Look out for Ronnie!”

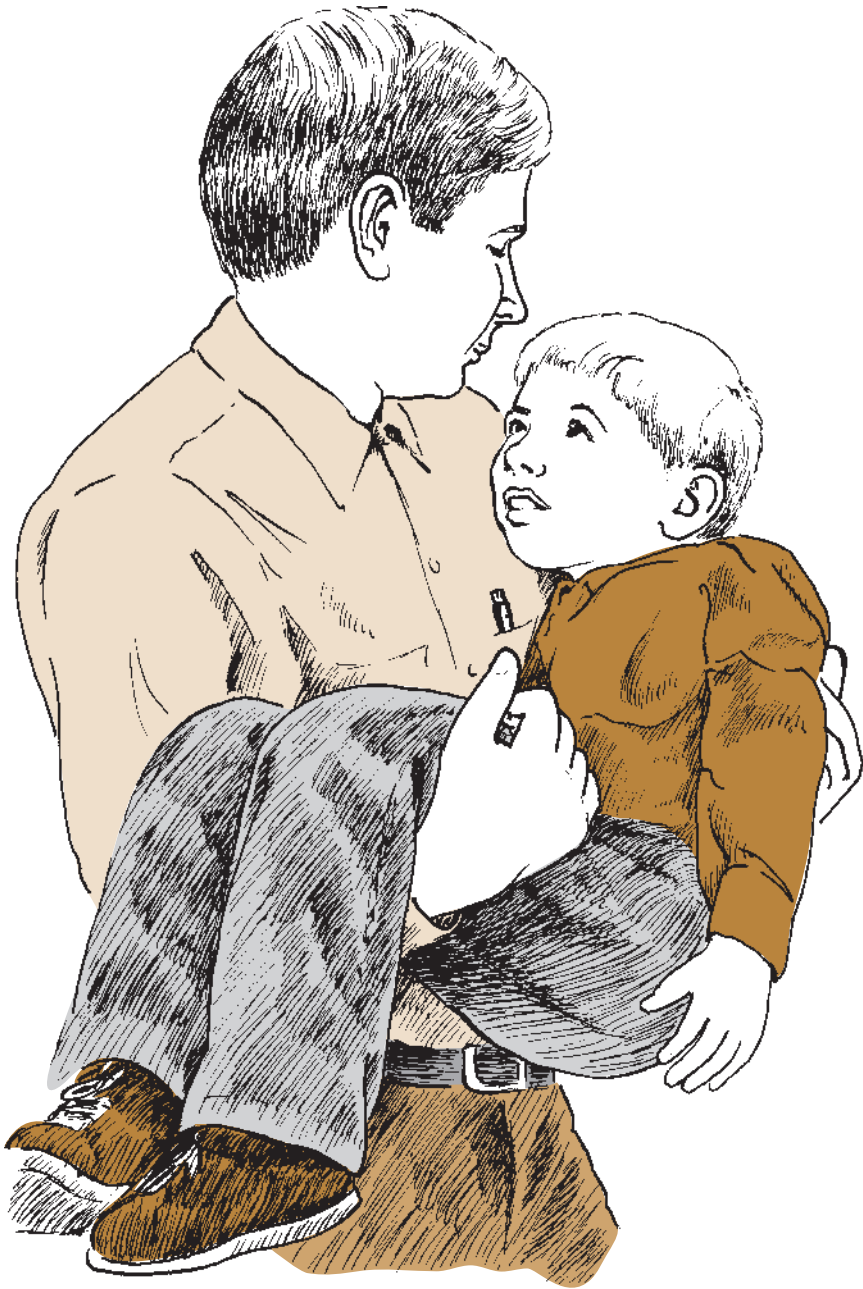
Then he felt a blow on the back of his head. It felt as though someone had hit him with a hammer! Down he went. A thousand stars spun around and around in his head.

When he opened his eyes he saw scared, white faces looking down at him. Just before darkness came over him, Ronnie heard another shout, “Get back! Here comes the principal!”

When Ronnie came to again, someone was carrying him. Someone was saying his name quietly over and over, “Ronnie? Ronnie? Ronnie? Can you hear me?”

He opened his eyes and looked into the face of Mr. Dickon. He tried to sit up, but the principal held him gently. He smiled and said, “I’ve got you, Ronnie. Don’t worry. You are going to be all right.”

“What happened to me?” whispered Ronnie. “My head! It hurts!”



“I’m sure it does!” said Mr. Dickon. And he smiled a bigger smile. “A ball hit you. But you’ll be all right pretty soon.

“I’m taking you to my office where you can lie down till you feel better.”

To the principal’s office!

Ronnie opened his eyes wide! He looked for one long minute into the eyes above him. And suddenly he wasn’t afraid anymore. And he knew why.

Now they were in the building. Someone held open the door to the principal’s office.

Mr. Dickon carried him in and laid him on a sofa.

Pain began to beat in Ronnie’s head; but he looked up at the principal and said, “I’m sorry I ran across the field. It was my fault. Miss Neff told us not to. I’m going to walk the chalk line after this. You’ll see.”

–Ruth K. Hobbs