

# Lessons from an Old Rope

October 23, 2022

Sometimes I think rope has a mind of its own. I was sitting on the cabin top of my sailboat, sorting out a particularly nasty tangle in one of the lines. Then, with envy, I thought about Alexander the Great's solution to untying the Gordian Knot. Do you remember the story? The city fathers presented Alexander with an incredibly complicated knot. They told him anyone who could untie the knot would be made king of the city. Alexander studied it for a moment, drew his razor-sharp sword, and cleanly sliced the knot in two. I touched the hilt of my sheath knife while looking at the mess before me but then continued to untangle it slowly.

There is a beautiful word in our Greek New Testament, *katar-tizo* (καταρτίζω) that means: "to put in order, restore." (Remember our English Bibles are translations of ancient Greek originals.) When Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two fishermen, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, "mending their nets" (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19). They were repairing them and carefully folding the nets in preparation for the next night's fishing. It's important to put things back in their place and make sure they are ready to use again.

"Preventive maintenance" is easily neglected, but the long-term consequences can be dire. How often do you see people checking the oil in their cars when they fill



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up their tanks with gas? Some day that lack of attention will become an expensive repair!

As Christians, how often do we fail to put our spiritual life back in order? How much time do we devote to spiritual preventive maintenance? It's all too easy to neglect prayer, Bible study, and meditation. "Someday, I'll have time," we announce, but when? The Apostle Paul closes his second letter to the Corinthians with this prayer using our word in a most interesting way: "Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11, ESV).

The old King James and many others read, "Be perfect," but what

Paul is emphasizing is the sense, "put your life back in order so you'll be ready for what is ahead."

Sometimes we need some help putting things right, so notice Galatians 6:1, where Paul uses the same word: "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should *restore* him in a spirit of gentleness," (ESV).

There! I didn't have to use my knife. The line has been restored, and it is ready to be used the moment it is needed. I just pray my life is in order too! Maybe it's time for some spiritual preventive maintenance.

Blessings,

