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That He Might Serve

By Mrs. Paul E. King

From the January 16, 1972 Sunday School Beacon

Alan Gillam read and reread the telegram as mist gathered in his eyes. Mother and father dead? Impossible! Why, only Sunday he had talked to them on the phone.

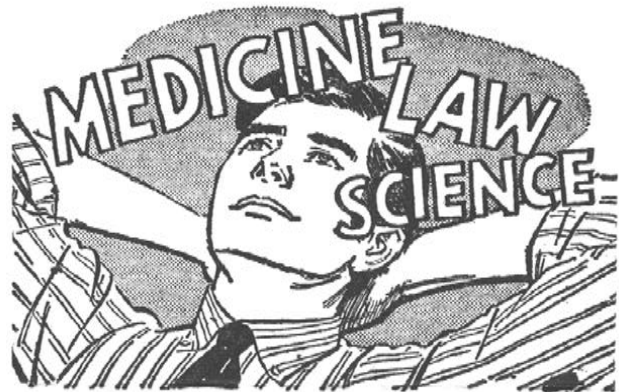
"Come home immediately," the telegram read. "Father and mother killed in plane crash. Estate needs immediate settlement. Signed, Ben Claypool."

Alan brushed his hand over his eyes. A fog seemed to becloud his thinking.

"Something wrong?" Kenneth McCurdy asked, coming noisily into the room he shared with Alan. He dropped his books on to the desk and stretched his body across the bed. "Whew! These teachers! They load more work on a fellow all the time. And tomorrow is the deadline for that theme, too! Yours finished, Alan?" he asked. "Say, what's needling you?" he looked Alan full in the face. "You haven't answered a single question I asked you. Doubt if you heard me, even. Something happen to Margaret?"

"Huh, What'd you say? Did you ask me something?" Alan asked, taking his handkerchief and wiping it quickly over his eyes.

"Why, Alan... surely not! You? Crying? I can't believe it!"



The question marks were all gone now. He knew his calling.

Pushing the telegram toward his room-mate, Alan said brokenly, "Read it for yourself. I... can't believe it. It can't possibly be true!"

Kenneth sank into the nearest chair. "I... I'm sorry, old buddy. I really am. Can any of us help you?"

"Thanks, Ken. It's generous of you, but there's nothing anyone can do. If only Charlie were here, he'd know what to do. Or what to tell me to do," Alan said disconsolately.

"Charlie? Who's he?"

"Some fellow who works for a neighbor of my parents. Nice chap, Charlie. Awfully religious; but level-headed as they come and solid, too. My folks never liked it that he and I were such good friends; but if they'd only have known it the boy's influence bore heavily upon my life and kept me from doing many an evil thing!"

"Now hear this!" Kenny said lightly. "And you with all the money you wanted at your finger tips! Is that why you have never indulged in drinking and participated in these wild parties some of us are throwing all the time?" he asked, curious to know.

"I told you the young man's influence has had a tremendous bearing upon my life," Alan said shortly, wishing Kenny would be quiet long enough for him to get his bearings.

"Well, Lawyer Alan... or is it "Doctor Alan? Have you decided yet which it shall be? You haven't got much longer to decide. In a few weeks you'll have to have made your decision so you'll know which course of study to pursue... but I can see for a certainty it won't be 'Lawyer' Alan Gillam: you're far too conscientious and honest to ever make it on that score. This 'common' laborer must be quite a chap to have influenced the rich boy so strongly!" It was said in mockery.

Alan's quick temper flared up. He felt like shouting for Kenneth to get out of the room and leave him alone just long enough for him to know where to begin. Instead, he began pulling underwear and socks furiously from his dresser drawer and throwing them into his luggage.

Seeing the tormented look on Alan's face, Ken apologized. "I'm sorry, Alan. May I help you?" he asked seriously.

"Thanks. No. Unless you want to call home and tell Ben to have the chauffeur meet me at the airport on the 7:02 plane."

"Will do," Kenneth said, hurrying from the room.

Less than four hours later Alan was boarding a plane for home. At the airport, Ben himself met Alan.

"Where's Matt?" Alan asked. "Why didn't he come?"

"Alan," Ben began speaking in his well-modulated and calm voice, "I had to dismiss Matt and all the household help, too."

"Dismiss Matt? Why? And why turn out all the household help? Don't you know I can't cook! What am I to do?" Alan's voice rose with his mounting color.

"I knew it would be a shock to you but I had no alternative. Believe me, Alan, things are in a pretty bad mess around here."

"No alternative? Don't be ridiculous, Ben! I know you've been father's lawyer and confidant ever since he struck oil and became wealthy but you . . . you had no right to do all you've done without first consulting me. I'm the sole heir, am I not?"

Ben Claypool clutched the steering wheel so hard that his knuckles showed white.

"Well, I am. Am I not?" Alan asked. "Being an only child am I wrong to expect as much?" he asked heatedly.

Ben drove on steadily and resolutely, looking straight ahead. "You would have been the sole heir had things turned out differently," he said meaningfully.

"What do you mean? Just what are you trying to tell me? That the Gillam's are paupers? Too poverty stricken to afford a chauffeur and a little bit of kitchen help and garden help?" Alan asked mockingly.

"Precisely. You answered your own questions, Alan," the lawyer answered, driving steadily on and looking straight ahead.

"That's impossible, Ben! Ridiculous! Absurd, too!"

"Wait till you see the figures, Alan, then make your exclamations and"

Alan interrupted him with, "Why, Ben that's ridiculous. The Gillam's bankrupt!"

Ridiculous but true, was the sobering reply. "But calm yourself: you have funeral arrangements to make. Let us show due respect to the dead. There'll be plenty of time to go over business matters after the funeral."

Alan sat silently the rest of the way home, his mind in a shock of confusion and disbelief. With Ben's help he unpacked his clothes then hurried into the kitchen to see what success he'd have with trying to fix his first meal; after which time he shaved and showered before dressing and hastening off to the mortician's establishment.

Upon seeing the cold silent forms of his mother and father his first thought was of their eternal destiny and whereabouts. Charlie had often told him for one to have eternal bliss and happiness in Heaven, he must be 'converted' or 'saved.' The terms had stuck with Alan. How was it with his parents' soul, he wondered. Had Charlie ever told them about salvation and how one could be 'saved,' he wondered, weeping softly over their still forms. He recalled vividly his mother's intolerance of the spiritual, religious young Charlie.

"He's too common for you to pal with, Alan," she used to say. "I want you to stay away from him."

"But Charlie's a wonderful chap," he could hear himself defending the young man. "He tells me lots of things I never heard before. He even reads to me from his Bible and I . . . like it, Mother." And he had liked it. He remembered how the words from the Book had brought comfort to his heart on more than one occasion. There were beautiful words in the Bible. Things that helped a fellow to know how to live.

The thought of his parents being 'lost', as Charlie had termed and phrased it when describing a soul who wasn't saved and died and had gone to Hell, sent chills of horror over him. He would look Charlie up as soon as possibly he could. Perhaps he would be able to read something from his much-used Bible that would comfort and cheer and console his aching heart like it used to do when they were youthful companions together in the field, Charlie working furiously and Alan merely talking and looking on.

He felt changrined now, looking down upon his smooth, unworked hands. They had never done a day's work in his entire life. If what Ben said was so he'd better begin learning something about honest labor. For all he knew his college days and higher learning might all be at an abrupt end. The thought shook him. He had never thought of this before.

The beautiful house seemed empty and lonely and forsaken as he prepared for bed that night. Ben had promised to be back in the morning to do whatever he could before his regular working and office hours began. Alan was thankful for all the assistance he could get but he was also glad to be alone.

In spite of exhaustion, sleep refused to come. Sometime during the late night hours Charlie's voice reached his heart again. Like several times as he had followed him hoeing Mr. Mullenhauser's corn, he heard him plead with him to get saved. "You're the best friend I have, Alan," he had said. "And I want to take you with me to Heaven.

Won't you repent of your sins and invite the blessed Saviour into your heart? Please, Alan?" His voice was filled with pathos and concern over him! It cut through Alan's heart like a dagger now. "This Christian way of life is such a happy way of life." Charlie had said.

Alan could see the sweat now as then, as it ran down Charlie's face and dripped from his chin. Coming to think of it, he had never so much as heard one word of complaint coming from the boy's lips, either! And him a poor, homeless orphan boy whom nobody wanted until Mr. Mullenhauser took him and for two scanty meals a day and a cot for his bed at night, had worked the boy like a slave.

"The Christian way of life is such a happy way of life!" Charlie's voice was calling to him again out of the past into the now, the present.

Alan was convinced. Charlie had something within that kept him happy and uncomplaining. Dropping out of bed to his knees, he heard the call. Charlie's voice seemed to be fading. He heard the call now from somewhere in heaven, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; Let him that is athirst come "

"I do, Lord. I do. I come. Oh, come into my heart! Save me. Be merciful to me a sinner. Make me ready for Heaven and give me what Charlie has. Please, Lord, make me happy within..."

A light brighter than a million suns seemed to flood his soul, the room and the house. Had lights come on somewhere! Then he realized. He was saved. The Spirit bare witness from within and he was happy. So happy, in fact, that he was shouting for joy. He had inner peace and rest. His sins which were many were all washed away. Forgiven. Oh, if only he had done this long ago! Maybe his dear mother and father would have been Christians, too!

After a long period of rejoicing, he went to bed and was soon sleeping soundly.

True to his word, Ben came early the following morning.

Alan marvelled at his inner peace and calm through the sad funeral, and even after the funeral when the full details of the bankruptcy were revealed and shown to him, his inner peace and serenity and joy held him as an anchor.

"It's all right, Ben," he said finally. "God works in mysterious ways! I may be poor as the proverbial 'church mouse' but I may never have been converted if this hadn't happened. I'm happy God allowed it to come. I'll learn to work. One has to have a beginning sometime and somewhere. I'm just later than many others at beginning and learning, but I'll learn by God's help and grace. Maybe Charlie can teach me how to hoe corn and farm. At least that's honest labor."

"Charlie's no longer at the Mullenhauser farm, Alan."

"He isn't! Where is he?" Alan asked eagerly, feeling like he had to see his dear friend. He had meant to get over earlier but so many legal technicalities had arisen until he had been hindered in his going.

"Hadn't you heard?" Ben asked in surprise.

"Heard what?"

"That Mr. Mullenhauser died."

"No, I didn't know. But where's Charlie? What's he doing now?"

"I heard that he went over to help Mr. McDonald out for awhile. At least the McDonald's will be kind to him."

"Charlie always had hoped to someday go to Bible School and become a preacher," Alan confided.

"From what I hear, he's doing an excellent job without going away to school to learn," Ben said, toying with the pencil in his hand. "Old Mr. Mullenhauser got converted and sanctified a couple months before he died. He claimed Charlie lived conviction on him. Said he got so miserable he couldn't eat or sleep; so he called Charlie to him and asked him to pray for him. And he got it, too., whatever Charlie has. The old man really changed, I tell you, Alan. You wouldn't believe it!"

Alan paced back and forth across the room. "I wish I had only enough money to send Charlie to school!" Alan exclaimed. "I'd gladly forfeit my own education for his. He loves good books..."

"Speaking of money for schooling, Alan," Ben said, going over the figures again, "there's enough left for you to finish this year's College training. My advice to you is to return to college. The house and all properties must be sold and applied upon the debt..."

Alan sighed. "I guess that's the wisest thing to do. That way I'll be able to look for work before my small sum is totally exhausted," he replied.

The following day he headed for the McDonald farm in search of Charlie.

"He's not here," Howard McDonald told him. "He worked for me several months. Helped me get my work out of the way. I broke my arm, in case you didn't know; and if it hadn't been for Charlie I don't know what would have happened to us. He's a

wonderful young man! I guess you heard of the wonderful thing Mr. Mullenhauser did for him."

"Ben told me the old man got converted and sanctified because of Charlie. That makes two of us he's won to Christ. Four nights ago I prayed through and got saved. Charlie's influence was responsible. Bless that wonderful man!"

"He's got more than two of you saved!" Mr. McDonald exclaimed happily. "Because of his godly life Molly and I got converted. Then Susan followed and finally David. The boy's a walking missionary."

"Thank God!" Alan said, tears running down his cheeks.

"Well as I was saying, you remember how cruel and brutal Mr. Mullenhauser was to Charlie . . . what was never anything but goodness and kindness," Mr. McDonald continued, shaking his head sadly at remembering. "After the old man got converted he was different to Charlie. Loved him like a son! And after his death, when the old place was sold, he had it fixed that every dime of what the farm brought went to Charlie. Everything!"

"And when did Charlie leave you?" Alan asked anxiously.

Mr. McDonald scratched his head thoughtfully for a moment. "Why, it was the day after your parents were killed! So it was for a fact!" He exclaimed with excitement. "Said if I saw you to tell you he was still praying for you. He sure thinks a heap of you, Alan."

"And he left no address where he could be reached?" Alan asked hopefully.

"Not an address, Alan. Said he had business to take care of. He couldn't say just when he'd get back."

Alan thanked Howard McDonald then hurried on his way toward college, taking the car with him.

Upon arriving the following day, he was met by the dean of men. "A certified letter's waiting for you at the Post Office, Alan," he said. Better pick it up. It's been there for five or more days."

"Thank you, Mr. Byrd," Alan said, hurrying to the post office.

He signed for the letter then opened it eagerly. "Dearest of all friends," it began.

"I was shocked to hear of your beloved parents' death and of your dire financial circumstances. (These things have a way of getting out) Alan, Mr. Mullenhauser got converted and sanctified. After his conversion I was treated like a son. The dear man passed away several months ago. I was made sole heir of all that his farm brought, which wasn't a fantastic sum of money but which, I thought, was a marvelous price for as run down as the farm had been. I am herewith enclosing a check for nearly the full amount of money I received (excluding, of course, the tithe and offerings I gave to the church and the sum I gave for the beginning of a new church in Thorn River.)

"I feel led of the Lord to do this for you. You must not fail to put this to use toward the completion of your college training. It is sent for that purpose. Knowing you, I know it will be used for the purpose designated.

"You will remember that I had said I would like to go to Bible School some day and prepare for the ministry. Well, I'm convinced that is not God's will for me. I have prayed fervently and earnestly about this and always the sweet Spirit gives my heart the assurance that I am to be a good layman.., a witness in that capacity. And the Lord is helping me. Bless His name!

"But you, Alan... God has other plans and designs for you. I'm as sure of that as I am that I am writing this letter to you. Make full use of your God-given talents and abilities. Use them only for Him... after your conversion and sanctification, which is soon to take place. I got the witness about it.

"This check is for you. Every dime of it. Use it accordingly. Someday I shall hear the good news of your change of heart and this will be all the pay I care to receive!

"Don't try to locate me to return my gift. I have a good paying job promised me in a distant state. Someday, after I have earned a sufficient amount of money to keep her, I shall come back for Susan McDonald. All I ask is that you tell her this for me. Tell her to wait. She knows that I love her and she loves me.

"Make good, Alan. Amount to something for God. He is depending upon you and I am counting on you, too. You fill the place I had always wanted to fill but was never called to. You owe God a great debt.., after the way He suffered and died for you.

"My prayers are constantly with you, my friend. Sincerely your true friend, Charlie."

Alan stared dumbly at the check he held in his hand. He couldn't use it. He couldn't! Why, had he not been so unselfish, he and Susan could now have been making their wedding plans for the future, for a home. Charlie had sacrificed his own happiness for Alan Gillam's future! It was a staggering thought, this. He was sure of one thing, however: God had called him the night he got converted. Called him to

preach. He knew what course to take . . . only it would be from another College. A Bible College.

A female voice exclaimed in glad surprise, "Alan! you're back! I'm so happy."

Turning quickly, he faced Margaret! "It's good to see you!" he said eagerly.

"You were a much-missed man while you were gone," she said softly. "But something is bothering you."

"Yes, it is, Margaret." And Alan told her of Charlie's sacrifice. "And I'm not worthy of his benevolence and love for me!" he said emphatically, humbly. "It's because of him that I got converted while I was home. Oh, I owe him so much and he is... doing... for me!"

Margaret sighed deeply. "If you felt you were worthy, Alan, the very thought would prove you were not," she said quietly. "Self-sufficiency is its own contradiction, and carries with it the assurance of mental deficiency since it proves the character too small to see beyond its own abnormalities..."

"But, Margaret, all his life Charlie had wanted to go away to college or Bible School and..."

"Do you think success comes only through a college, Alan?" she asked suddenly. "There are other careers as noble, as worthy of attention, as sure of attainment, as beneficial to mankind, as the so-called 'professional' lines of work. It appears to me that Charles has forever placed himself above the 'common day-laborer' plane of life by the very deeds he is constantly doing. His act of supreme self-denial has raised him to a height which will broaden his understanding, build his character still finer, his ideals still higher, so that all things will take on new values and give him a loftier conception of the true meaning of life.

"Emerson the philosopher was right when he said, 'The reward of a thing well done is to have done it' because every such deed lifts us higher above the sordid things of life and makes us to qualify, too for His 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.' God is keeping the record, Alan and He's making accurate notations for Charles and his unselfishness."

"Thank you, Margaret. You have helped me. By the grace of God I shall throw myself into my studies for all I am worth and prove myself worthy of Charlie's sacrifice. I'll see you later," he said.

With a determined look on his face he started for his room. No longer were there question marks spinning around in his mind . . . Law? Medicine? Science...? Ah, no. The doubts were all settled and gone. God wanted him to fill a nobler calling. He

wanted him to preach the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ and His power to save. He had one more important thing to do. Charlie had often told him about a 'second definite work of Grace'. Holiness of heart, he had called it. Well, he would seek after it until he had received. Whatever Charlie had, appealed to him. And, were he to live as victoriously as Charlie, he knew he'd have to get it.

After he was sanctified he would go out and try to fill -- in a little measure -- the place Charlie had hoped God would someday call him to fill but hadn't. But Alan knew that when the rewards were given out Charlie would get a share. A large share!

With a happy heart and a light step the new Alan walked into his old dorm room. Someday, after he had become sanctified and grown more spiritually, he would ask Margaret to go with him. Now that he had become a Christian there was no barrier between.

He was whistling one of the hymns he had heard Charlie whistle so often while hoeing corn, when Kenny came into the room.

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THE END