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Miracle Of Grandma

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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I dumped the last sack of wheat into the now almost-overflowing bin then I stepped back and drew in deep draughts of the sweet-smelling grain. Deep down inside, I was glad that grandpa had never gone to the modern combine. I loved shocking the golden wheat and pale gray-green oats into neat, beautiful shocks. Better still, I never ceased to get really excited when I heard the first blast of the old steam engine as it chugged down our lane, headed for our barn, from where the grain was to be threshed.

I picked up a handful of grain now and, putting some of it in my mouth, I began chewing on it, at the same time sifting others through my fingers in thoughtful concentration. I had to talk to someone. I just had to!

I couldn't go to grandma; she wouldn't understand. Furthermore, she was busy as a beaver cleaning up the dinner dishes. What a dinner she had prepared! And how those twelve hungry men had made the food disappear! No, I couldn't bother her.

I gathered up the burlap sack where I had dropped it on the granary floor and started toward the door. Grandpa walked in just then.

"Tremendous yield, Jim!" he exclaimed. "Far better and greater than I expected even. God is good. So good!"



"Grandpa," I began, "I have something to tell you."

"He sure is, grandpa," I said, surveying the full bins. "But I wouldn't be the least bit surprised when I get to heaven to learn that He gave you extra measure because of the sacrifice you made for missions last year. God has a record of the mortgage you put on the farm to get the mission station in Nigeria on its feet."

Grandpa drew his tired, drooping shoulders up their full height and, walking over to one of the full bins, he said softly, "Jim, that was no sacrifice. Nothing I do for God's cause is a sacrifice. Nothing! You see, Jim, I owe Him everything! I was an extremely wicked and selfish man before He saved me. I can never repay Him. Not if I live to be as old as Methuselah."

I swallowed the wheat I was chewing. My time had come to say what I needed to say. "Grandpa," I began, "I have something to tell you."

He turned from the golden grain and fixed his faded blue eyes on me.

"Yes?" he said.

"You remember when I got converted?"

He nodded, a heavenly light brightening up his eyes and illuminating his face.

"You remember when I got sanctified, too?"

"Oh, Jim, how could I ever forget! You made your aging grandfather the happiest man on earth that night!"

"Well, I... I've got to preach." I said it bluntly, as tears from my burdened heart filled my eyes and spilled down on to the granary floor.

"I've got to preach," I repeated. "Ever since I got converted I felt it was either preach or burn."

Grandpa stood in deep reflection, his horn-rimmed glasses clutched in his hand, his eyes roving over the bins of grain, through the doorway to the hills blurred in summer haze, then back to me.

I knew that he was sensing and evaluating all the factors that would give him a clue to what to say -- just as he had done when I'd wanted to mow the Timothy hay, and he wasn't sure it was quite ready for mowing.

I allowed my words to sink in. Grandpa was not to be hurried. Always, he tried the spirits and always he took his glasses off and held them in his hand when he wrestled with some obstacle or other. "I can see better that way!" he would say.

And he could, I was sure. Not those things that were right there in front of him . . . for he had to use a magnifying glass to read the fine print of his Bible . . . but the things that were not visible to just anyone.

I saw a blurry mist cloud the kind eyes, then grandpa's callused brown, work-worn hands were laid in silent benediction upon my broad shoulders. "Praise the Lord, Jim. Praise the Lord!" he shouted. "You have my blessing," he added hoarsely, brokenly.

"Thanks, grandpa; that helps. I've got to go to Bible School to prepare. I feel it burning on my heart and I well, what will you do? You can't work the farm by yourself."

"God will provide for me, dear boy. God will provide!"

I felt ashamed of myself, and rebuked. Grandpa's faith in God was as clear and unwavering as his thoughts about life itself. It didn't matter to him that he couldn't see God with his every-day eyes; he could see and feel God's presence in almost everything around him. When he would say, "The Lord will provide," or "The Lord will look after His own," it wasn't a mere pious cliché; it was a clear statement of faith. I had no reason to doubt that it was so, and I grew up believing that God was a resource to draw upon whenever there were decisions to make or obstacles to overcome.

"I'll have to leave early to get a job," I said, knowing full well that grandpa kept sending every single dollar he could 'UP' . . . where thieves don't break through and steal and where moth and rust can't corrupt.

Grandpa fingered the glasses momentarily then he spoke softly, "I'm sorry, Jim, that I can't offer you much help by way of money; but God will provide!"

I wished then that there were some way I could tell grandpa just how much I valued his godly counsel and words of encouragement, but he was a man who wanted no praise nor flowery words bestowed upon him; God should have the credit, he said. So I said simply, "If you say God will provide, I believe it!"

Grandpa smiled into my face. That was all the compliment he wanted. It was all the encouragement I needed. But now to tell grandma!

I waited till supper was over before I mentioned anything. Grandma was the complete opposite of grandpa. She was irreligious -- or at least she appeared to be. The night I got converted, then later sanctified in my twelfth year, grandma seemed totally unmoved.

"It won't hurt you," she'd commented, after grandpa and I came home from revival meeting and I told her what had happened to me. "In fact, it might help you," she added tonelessly, continuing with her sewing.

My knees felt wobbly and weak with remembering as I helped her with the supper: dishes now. "You're tired, Jim," she said tenderly when I took a tea towel from the cupboard drawer and began drying the dishes. "You worked hard today. Better bathe and get ready for bed."

"Grandpa and you worked hard, too," I answered. "What's more, I want to help you. That was some dinner you fixed today! No one bakes better bread and cakes and pies than you do. And those baked beans and fried chicken and ham! Delicious!"

Grandma took a handful of soap suds and splashed it teasingly into my face. "You big flatterer!" she laughed. "I'm too old a woman to get the big head, Jim. You still hungry?" she asked suddenly, her face now quite serious.

"I couldn't eat another bite," I said, rubbing my full stomach. "But I meant everything I said. You're the greatest and best cook in the entire valley."

"Tsk. Tsk." she teased. "Anything tastes good when the appetite's whetted like yours and grandpa's."

We laughed together. "The Lord gave an abundant yield," I said. "Best ever, grandpa said. You must go out and look at those bins. They're full. Almost to overflowing!"

"That's what your grandfather told me."

"Grandma," I began, as I carefully put her 'fancy' dishes in the china closet, knowing full well we'd not use them again until grandpa invited the preacher home for dinner or until some 'special' company came to visit, "the Lord willing, I'll soon be leaving you and grandpa."

Her hands fell limp in the hot sudsy water, allowing the plate she was washing to slip suddenly beneath the surface of the water and sink heavily to the bottom. "Leaving us? Why, Jimmy my boy, where would you go?" Her eyes were troubled -- hurt and puzzled.

I took a deep breath and swallowed hard. My hands felt clumsy and the cut-glass dish I was putting inside the glass-encased china closet slipped through my fingers like slippery elm and would have smashed in bits on the floor had I not caught it in time. "God has called me to preach the gospel," I answered, neither turning nor looking at grandma.

When she made no reply, I turned quickly and looked her way. She stood as one petrified. For a long time I wondered if she had turned to stone, so rigid and immobile was she. The dish-water dropped slowly, drop by drop, from her fingers as they rested

on the edge of the dish-pan. Her face was pale. Surprisingly enough, her expression was one of neither belligerence nor scorn. I had expected both.

Standing, watching her, she now looked vulnerable; almost fragile like the china, I thought. Involuntarily, I rushed over to her and crushed her aging, petite form to my bosom. The tears were rushing from my eyes. "Oh, grandma, I love you and grandpa!" I exclaimed. "I shall miss you both terribly. But I must preach the gospel. I must! It's either preach or burn."

Grandma's hands reached up and found my face. Wrinkled and work-worn they were, but to me they were the dearest hands in all the world. She stroked my cheeks caressingly. "Jimmy, my Jimmy!" she crooned softly just like she used to when I had stubbed my toe or hammered my finger instead of the nail.

"I must preach, Grandma," I repeated again.

Her voice quivered and trembled momentarily then she squared her small shoulders and looked full into my face. "I knew it, Jim. From the day you got converted, I knew it. Maybe even before that, I knew it."

I was too shocked to make comment and I didn't try to stop grandma; she had to talk to someone. I felt it all over me.

"From the day your dear father and mother..., our only son and daughter-in-law... died with that fever on the mission field, and you were spared and sent home as a tiny infant for us to love and to raise, I knew I'd be sending another boy across... to preach the gospel!"

I gasped, too thrilled and surprised to say anything.

"You must go, Jim," she was saying, her eyes misty-bright with tears. "You must prepare. I've been saving up against this day . . ."

"God will provide!" Grandma's words exploded thankfully in my ears... in my heart.

"Ever since you came to us, I've been laying 'by' for this day, Jim. 'Twasn't much I could put back but it's added up all these years. I've got your clothes ready, too. I knew when you graduated this spring you'd be needing them for Bible School by fall. Yes, Jim, you must go! You... go with my blessings!"

"Grandma!" I exclaimed, in little more than a whisper. "Oh, Grandma!" My eyes were too blurred to see clearly.

"One thing more, Jim, I . . . I'd like to be your first convert. God knows how to break a stony heart. He's melted mine clear down. You and dear grandpa have preached

me a sermon every day by your Holy lives. I want to be like you both and . . . and, Jim, I want to go to Heaven, too!" She was crying hard as she finished.

We prayed; grandpa and grandma and I! Talk about miracles! We saw it that evening, grandpa and I! Neither one of us slept much. We rejoiced way into the night. But then, the angels did too!

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THE END