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## Consistency's Payday

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Pat shuffled along the sidewalk; her feet made deep furrows in the brightly-colored leaves that lay on the ground. The air was pungently-sweet and clean smelling with the fragrance of the crisp fall air and her heart, washed in the Blood of Calvary's Lamb and puttied by the blessed Holy Spirit, felt as light and as carefree as the leaves, whose summer moorings were released by the receding sap to parachute lazily earthward.



"Personally," she said. "I can't comply with the new ruling—"

Shifting her armload of books, Pat walked leisurely, her eyes and ears open and keenly alert to the myriad sights and sounds and her. She was thankful for the three-quarter mile walk to school; besides the fresh air and the stimulating exercise it afforded her, she had a five-a-week enjoyable nature excursion and lesson plus plenty of time to mettle upon the good things of God.

A rosy-pink leaf dropped at her feet. Stooping, she picked it up and placed it carefully between the pages of her math book. She would take it home and share its beauty with Kara and Krista, the five-year old twins, she derided. It would make a beautiful addition to the scrapbook she was making for them.

"Hey, Pat!" a voice called. "Wait; I'll walk with you."

Turning quickly, Patricia saw Kellenda Sims hurrying towards her.

"You're kind of early, aren't you?" Pat said, smiling broadly at her friend who usually waited till the very last minute to do anything -- including getting ready for school.

Kellenda laughed good naturedly. "Guess I am," she admitted jovially. "But you always seem so relied and . . . and alert and vibrant in class that I decided I'd try leaving a bit early, like you do. I hope the shock doesn't kill Mother," she teased. "Frankly, getting up early was fun. I even enjoyed helping prepare breakfast and doing the dishes. Imagine!"

"That's great, Kellenda. Great! I'm sure your mother was pleased, and I rather suspect she'll survive the shock and still be alive when you get home this afternoon."

Kellenda laughed again, her usual, pleasant kind of laughter. "This new life of mine has really changed Dad's and Mother's attitude about church, Pat," she confided "But I have so many things to learn yet," she added quickly.

Giving her friend a quick sideways glance, Pat said, "Who among us doesn't, Kelle! I've been a Christian for almost nine years, and when I hear some of our older church people testify about the great and mighty things which God has done for them, well, I . . . . I feel so terribly insignificant. Take old Brother and Sister Helleman, for instance; they always have something wonderful to testify about."

"When we're as old as they, we'll be able to have just as many wonderful and marvelous things to tell, too," Kellenda said wisely. "Right now, with us being young and still in school, maybe all we have to testify about is how God is helping us in class and keeping us unspotted from the world and that sort of thing. But it's still a miracle and worthy of testifying to -- in these days, especially. But you wait till we're old, and have been married for half a century like the Hellemans; I'm sure we'll each have a tremendously powerful testimony, Pat."

Patricia's ripple of laughter floated out on the crisp morning air. "Oh, Kelle, how utterly brilliant you are! Why, of course we will. And I guess no one's testimony is really insignificant when they're testifying for the glory of God. And say, you and I ought to plan a sort of reunion fifty years from now, the Lord willing. Wouldn't we have a time! Maybe we -- you and I and our husbands -- would be as poor as the proverbial church mouse and, like the Hellemans, we'd have to pray in everything . . ."

"That's what I meant when I said what I did about their testimony, Pat. It's truly marvelous how God takes care of His own. But say, what are you going to do about gym? I hear Mrs. Kearney's really in with the in crowd and out with those who aren't in! Same things goes for Mr. Babbs, they say. So far as each of them is concerned, you're scum unless you take gym. They've threatened to make it rough for those who fail to cooperate and refuse to comply with their wishes."

Pat sighed. Repositioning her books and kicking gently at the beautiful leaves at her feet, she said, "Regardless of their threats, or what they plan to do to those who refuse to take gym, I won't succumb. I have a spiritual obligation to God and a moral obligation to my body, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Paul, in I Cor. 6:19-20 says, 'What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?'"

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

"So you see, Kellenda, I couldn't possibly take gym, and expose my person so immodestly and shamelessly. Besides, my parents see to it that I get all the exercise I need by helping in the garden, the orchard and the truck path, not to mention housework."

Kellenda caught a falling leaf and toyed with it for a brief moment before replying, "I'll admit it; I'm scared! These new teachers! Ugh!" She threw her hands out in an expressive form of exasperation.

"Well, I've never taken gym, and I believe the Lord will help me through this crisis again," Pat replied softly.

"I hope you're right, Pat. But these new teachers are something else. Seems they think everything pivots around spots and gym these days."

"That's true enough, but I'm confident that God will fight for those of us who take our stand for Him."

The two walked in silence the rest of the way, parting in the long hallway of the school to go into their respective homerooms.

"I'll be praying for you, Kellenda," Patricia called over her shoulder.

"Thanks, I'll need it -- especially since this Christian way is so new to me. But my heart tells me it's wrong for me to participate in this in any way, shape or form. Thanks, again, Pat. You're a dear!" And Kellenda disappeared through the classroom doorway.

Patricia slid quietly behind her desk. Bowing her head reverently, she prayed for her friend.

Kellenda's changed life -- her radical transformation from deep sin and wickedness to righteous and holy living -- was the talk of the school and the town. The effect was like that of an exploding bomb, so unbelievable and shocking was the news of the girl's conversion and, ultimately, her sanctification.

Of all people least expected to "go off the deep end" (the student's phrase for Kellenda's change of heart and life), she was considered the most unlikely. All seventeen years of her natural life were given over unreservedly to having "a good time." She had sown the proverbial "wild oats" to its fullest, only to come face to face with death and stark reality one stormy night and realize that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

After her narrow escape with death and her miraculous rescue from the turbulent waters which claimed the lives of six of her companions (the small craft in which they were reveling having been torn apart by fierce gales), Kellenda immediately sought Pat, known as "the goody-goody girl" among the school's high-brows. Unburdening her heart and admitting her need of God, Kellenda wept. In the Brackbill home, surrounded by love, compassion and understanding in the persons of Pat and her mother, the once-wicked, wayward girl prayed through and was gloriously converted.

Recalling the past now, Pat knew that Kellenda would come through this present, impending ordeal all right and that she would be the stronger for having had to face it.

Midway through the afternoon's schedule, Pat was summoned to the principal's office. Her departure elicited smug smiles and we-knew-it-was-coming stares from her peers, who seemed to take special delight in the fact that, finally, she would be challenged on her stand -- her convictions.

Humbly but fearlessly she entered the principal's office.

Motioning her to a chair opposite his desk, Mr. Moorehead removed his glasses. Staring at her myopically, he said, "I understand that you refuse to take gym, Patricia, and that you won't try out for the girl's basketball team. Is this correct, Patricia?"

Mr. Moorehead called all the students by their full name -- no Pat or Tom or Bill or Jan with him. Always, it had to be Patricia, Thomas, Janice and William. It was one of the man's peculiarities and for a brief moment Pat forgot why she was in the office. Her obsession with the humor of the fact brought a smile to her face.

Suddenly aware that the principal was studying her face, she sobered, and in a calm, even voice she replied, "In all the years of my schooling I've not taken gym nor played on any team, Mr. Moorehead. This is not new to you. In fact, you have excused me each year."

The principal took a handkerchief from his pocket and cleaned his glasses vigorously, holding them before him every now and then to make sure his efforts were producing the desired results.

With a grand flourish of his hands, he held the glasses high, giving them a final inspection. Then quickly he deposited them on the bridge of his nose, heaving a great sigh and settling back against the cushioned chair.

"I don't know if you're aware of it, Patricia, but we are trying to put Maple High on the map," he said, breaking the silence. "Figuratively speaking, that is. It was with this thought in mind that the school board hired Mrs. Kearney and Mr. Babbs. They're super."

Easing forward in her char, Pat said softly, "If you are intimating that I must take gym and go out for sports, well, there's no way that I can do it, Mr. Moorehead. As I told you when I first enrolled here, I am a born again Christian, a Christian with Biblical standards and convictions. Personally, I can't comply with the new ruling that every one physically able be compelled to participate in the sport's program and also take gym. I'm not trying to sound uncooperative nor be disobedient, Mr. Moorehead, not where essential and scholastically sound principles are involved; but I can't violate my God-given convictions and still maintain a vital and close relationship with God. Without meaning to sound rebellious or dogmatic, I must inform you that my first obligation and commitment is to God. I mean to wholly follow Him and His Word and to continue on in the same way you have always known me. If it means failing in school for me, so be it. I love the Lord too much to fail Him."

Mr. Moorehead cleared his throat; a smile pulled at the corners of his mouth. "Have no fear, Patricia," he said emphatically in a hoarse, emotion-packed voice. "I was just testing your depth. You will not need to take gym nor go out for spots. Today consistency is having its payday -- receiving its reward, if you please! You are, here and now, forever excused from anything that would bring a shadow upon your Christian experience. So long as I am the principal, I shall see that this is enforced. You have lived your life consistently, day after day after day. Not just here in school, but outside of school as well! And your dress code has remained the same also. You are excused, Patricia, you and Kellenda; no questions asked. Now run along to class. I'll take care of everything."

"Thank you, Mr. Moorehead," Patricia said, "and may God bless you."

She could hardly wait till school was dismissed and she could see Kellenda. They would have a prayer meeting of thanksgiving and praise, she derided, as she hurried back to her class.

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