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Digital Edition 09/01/2001  
By Holiness Data Ministry

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## A Little That A Righteous Man Hath

By Mrs. Paul E. King

From the April 26, 1981 Sunday School Beacon

Ailena Arthur looked at the myriad noodles drying in her large, old style kitchen. Then, washing the flour from her hands, she stood for a long while inside the kitchen window and gazed out at the open lawn beyond, wishing secretly that Hal were able to do a bit of remodeling on the place, the kitchen especially.

Eskimo, the small, all-white, playful pup of no particular breed, darted full-speed from beneath the lilac bush after a piece of paper which the warm spring breeze was tossing carelessly across the lawn.

Ailena watched the dog, wanting desperately for Erika to see the playful antics and the innocent look of eager anticipation on Eskimo's face, but she checked the urge to awaken her youngest offspring, knowing full well the benefits of a midmorning nap for one so young as Erika. She watched, instead, until the puppy had the paper tightly secured between her little sharp teeth and with a proud toss of her snowy-white shaggy head had darted back to the security and the fragrance of the lavender, flower-covered lilac bush.

"Oh, well," she said softly aloud to no one in particular, "I guess I need to forget what all needs done to our big old house and focus my attention on the many beautiful things we have -- things like blooming lilacs and gold-covered forsythia bushes. Then there's the orchard; who all has an orchard in their lawn!"

Thus thinking and talking to herself, Ailena dropped the dishcloth into the hot sudsy water and hurried through the door. The dishes could wait, she decided quickly, feeling



**"You're terribly mixed up," Ailena said.**

she had already done enough work to merit a brief rendezvous with her flowers and the fast growing vegetables in the garden.

Once outside, all that needed done inside the house was forgotten in the greater, natural beauty of her surroundings.

Eskimo bounded to her side, shaking the rattly, crackly paper for all she was worth, begging to be noticed.

"OK," Ailena laughed, "you win. Here, let me get those burrs out of your fur. My, my! What a mess! You must have been down along the creek bed again with Tim and Brice."

Obediently the puppy laid down, and when the last burr was removed gently by loving hands, Eskimo gave several happy little sounds then darted away to the lilac bush again to play with an old worn out shoe of Brice's and a much-used rubber ball of Tim's.

Walking around the lawn was therapeutic for Ailena and her spirits. Perhaps their house was far from being a model for some magazine, she mused silently and thoughtfully.., like her sister Arleen's was . . . but at least it was durable and warm in the winter time. This was something for which to be truly thankful, she knew. Then, too, their lawn, so beautiful in both summer and winter, and so very spacious and well-planned by the old couple from whom Hal and she had bought the house, was worth something . . . something other than dollars and cents. (Who could ever put a price on the love, the energy and the countless hours of time spent by the aged couple in the making of a lawn and flower garden such as this!)

Ailena gathered her first pulling of green spring onions and radishes. Then she took a leisurely walk back to the house, not wanting Erika to awaken and find her gone.

Doing the dishes, she thought of her famous sister, an author and a lecturer, and of her equally well-known lawyer brother-in-law, Gerald Hadding. Each was known for miles and miles around for their respective successful vocations: Arleen's in the field of writing and journalism, Gerald's in law. Their house, set high on the crest of a picturesque hill, was a showpiece of modern architecture. It was the envy of many a less influential and less successful businessman and businesswoman. Tons and tons of beautiful natural stone was hauled up the hill's narrow, twisting road to cover the exterior of the beautiful house and with which to make walkways in the many-acred rose and flower garden, as well as to build up the sides of the moat which flowed in a sort of semi-circle from beyond the patio of the enormous formal dining room to around the back side of the house, emptying eventually into a narrow stream that meandered pleasantly and crookedly through the well-planned, well-tended flower garden and lawn.

Ailena laughed, comparing their old house with its dire need of much repair to her sister's magazine showpiece.

It was strange, she thought, how two sisters . . . identical twins . . . could be so different in so many ways. Arleen had chosen a liberal arts college in which to get her training; she, Ailena, had gone to an old-fashioned holiness teaching Bible school. And she had never been sorry of her choice. The teaching and preaching had served as a great medium in anchoring her already established convictions and standards more deeply and firmly to the written Word of God. There, too, she had met Hal. Arleen, on the other hand, met Gerald at some sort of college party; and when she married, she let it be known to her immediate family that she would never have any little feet dirtying up her beautiful, thick, oyster-white wall to wall carpet.

A smile tugged at the corners of Ailena's mouth and her lovely face beamed with motherly pride as she thought of her three children. Each was a gift from God to Hal and her. Moreover, each was a long-awaited-for and most welcome member. She only realized as God sent each new addition how empty the big house had been before the children came.

Taking the now dry noodles off their drying racks, she began bagging them for the trip to Hartley's Delicatessen Shoppe where they would be sold to a long list of satisfied customers before the afternoon was half gone. It was her way of helping to pay missions and school pledges as well as meeting the needs of certain household expenses.

The phone rang just as she finished securing the top of the last bag, and when she picked up the receiver, Ailena knew immediately that something was seriously wrong with her twin.

"I must see you!" Arleen exclaimed tearfully. Ailena looked at the stacks of noodles, now bagged and tightly secured at the top and ready to be boxed for delivery to the delicatessen store.

"Please, Len!" Arleen implored, addressing her sister by her pet name. "I... I... I've got to talk to you!" she added on a pitiful note.

"I'll be waiting for you, dear," Ailena said. "By all means, come over!"

The noodles could wait, she thought, hanging the receiver back in place and putting her bagged, home-made product in the big cardboard boxes that stood nearby.

The minute Arleen stepped out of her sleek, expensive, silver-gray Lincoln Continental, Ailena saw that her sister's eyes were red from weeping. Her right cheek was puffy looking and bore the unmistakable imprint of a hand. The area was fast turning black and blue.

"Arleen! Arleen!" she cried, rushing to her twin and flinging her arms around her. "Whatever has happened?" she asked quickly.

"Gerald." Arleen managed the single word between her shoulder-shaking sobs and her trembling voice.

"Gerald! Oh no, Sis! He wouldn't hurt you." Finding the big over-sized rocker in the kitchen, Arleen dropped into its amply cushioned seat, giving unrestrained vent and freedom to her tears.

"He . . . he's a brute!" she exclaimed bitterly between clenched teeth and a fast-swelling upper lip. "A brute!" she repeated. "This isn't the first time he's hit me..."

Her sentence trailed meaningfully; it's a full impact hung heavily and darkly in the room. Ailena shivered.

"Oh, Len!" the beautiful, well-coiffed society sister cried. "You have so much to be thankful for. So very much! Hal's so good to you, and.., and he loves you."

"Jerry loves you too, Arleen," Ailena answered quickly. "I know he does. Perhaps, if you stayed home more . . .

"Don't! Don't say it, Ailena. I'm cut out to be a career woman, not a housewife."

"And you're terribly mixed up, Sis. God's plan is for the younger women to marry and bear children; to be keepers at home.., to mend broken hearts as well as broken toys . . . to create -- at all times -- an atmosphere of love and security for those she loves and to make a heaven on earth. It's the most satisfying and gratifying vocation there is when one's life is given over entirely and unreservedly to the Lord."

Drying her tears and getting quickly to her feet, Arleen said, "It's plain to see you don't understand; so I'll be going. All the preaching in the world won't change my love for what I'm doing. I love work, Sis, and if it comes to making a choice between my home and my career, well, you can rest assured I'll not give up the latter..."

Long after her sister had taken her hasty departure, Ailena pondered over what had been said. Yes, she thought happily and contentedly, she did have "so much to be thankful for," as Arleen had stated. Perhaps their house did need repair and a complete remodeling job, yet its walls rang with laughter and happiness. Peace and love were the order -- the norm -- for each 24-hour day. Hal's love was as stable and durable and secure a thing as was the fact that the sun rose and set each day of their lives. His gift to her and the children was of far greater worth than were the bars of silver and the wedges of gold over which Gerald and Arleen were selling their souls for.

Erika came running across the kitchen floor just then, her enormous blue eyes sparkling-bright, her curls damp with perspiration and her chubby arms extended outward. "Mommie! Mommie!" she cried joyously, laughing merrily. "I 'wove oo!"

Gathering the little girl into her arms and pressing her close to her tender mother heart, Ailena said softly, " 'Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith.' "

Erika traced the smile on her mother's lips with her own tiny index finger, asking softly, "What you say, Mommie?"

Kissing the bundle of love and sunshine on the tip of her little turned up nose, Ailena replied, "Mommie was just counting her blessings . . . her riches; she was quoting something from the book of Proverbs."

"We rich?" Erika asked, wiggling free from the loving arms and hurrying toward the back door from where she heard inviting laughter from her two brothers.

"Yes, darling, we are rich. Very, very rich!"

But Erika never heard; already she was outside romping with her brothers and the bouncy, playful Eskimo.

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THE END