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Barbara's Decision

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Barbara Holleyman walked down the sidewalk in the newly-fallen and still-falling snow, her armload of books encased in a thick sheet of plastic to keep them dry and unmarred. The world around her seemed locked in peace and tranquillity, a white world of almost total silence save for the occasional hum of a car as it made its way slowly down the street.

Glancing ahead of her, she saw footprints. Paul Goss', no doubt. Nobody... but nobody..., ever beat Paul to school-not even she. Paul must have disciplined himself from infancy, Barbara thought with a chuckle, to be up and out and doing "before the chickens were up." (Using her grandparents' phrase).



For a while Barbara tried matching her steps with those of Paul's, but in a very little bit she tired of the effort and settled down to her own shorter but equally brisk stride. Paul was just a fraction of an inch under the six-foot-one mark while she was a bare five foot; naturally, his stride would be considerably longer and his footsteps farther spaced than hers, she mused silently, plowing a furrow in the snow with her boots.

She shifted the heavy load of books to her other arm and looked heavenward. The sky seemed to be a swirling, dizzily-beautiful canopy of glistening white jewels. (Or was it a world of airy-light cotton fragments and eider down!)

Barbara sighed in happy contentment. She wouldn't miss these early morning walks to school..., and home again in the afternoon..., for anything. There was something

uplifting and faith-inspiring about walking alone in the quiet mornings and communing with God in silent meditation and prayer. Not that she didn't believe in private devotions; she did! Each morning, before she left for school, she had her hour of Bible reading and prayer. This hour of aloneness with God had been the stabilizing and keeping force in her life, affording her the needed strength and grace for whatever tests and trials or temptations came her way. She wondered then about the many whom she knew--those of her own age who professed to love the Lord but who admitted that their times of aloneness with God were never more than ten minutes, if that, even!

Barbara shivered at the thought, realizing that if such were her case, she would long since have been backslidden and would have been like Peter (in one stage of his life) where he followed the Lord "afar off" (Matt. 26:58). She saw vividly and clearly now what the Scripture meant when it stated, "... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" and the one in 1 Thess. 5:17 where the admonition was given to "Pray without ceasing." In order to be spiritual and to remain Spirit-filled, one had to pray and read God's Word, she realized afresh and anew. There was just no other way about it--no alternative.

A car went by her, its horn blaring raucously as it passed. Barbara looked up in time to see Ben Kool wave his hand at her. Ben had a car of his own and he delighted to drive the shiny new sport's model up one street and down another, honking his horn for all to see his newest and latest acquisition.

Barbara chuckled, watching Ben turn at the corner and drive regally down the Boulevard where many of the town's elite had their homes.

Poor Ben, she mused silently; he was such a nice fellow in so many ways, but so full of pride and strut. All her efforts at trying to win him to the Lord had seemed totally and completely futile and worthless. He had told her on more than one occasion that he had everything he needed and ever cared to have--that what she was telling him about being born again was fine for her and her life-style, but that it would never become him or fit him and his way of living.

A heavy burden settled down on Barbara's heart--a burden to win Ben and Paul to the Lord. Each was promising and likable, exerting great influence upon his fellow classmates and friends. They would make outstanding soul-winners, she realized, determining to pray more fervently and passionately for God to grip their soul and seize them with mighty conviction.

She was almost at the school's front doors when Paul's voice sliced into her serious thinking.

"I wondered if you'd be early," he said quickly. "In fact, I was hoping you would be."

"Oh, hi, Paul. Something bothering you?" Barbara asked, seeing the serious expression on the young man's face.

Paul nodded his head. "Let's go inside," he told her. "Mr. Hawkins just opened the doors. In fact, he's puttering around in the hallway now. So you won't need to worry about us having the 'appearance of evil' --as you once told me the Bible says a Christian should abstain from doing."

Barbara listened in silence, amazed to hear Paul's comment, and having the sudden feeling that not all of her witnessing had fallen on deaf ears. As Paul held the door open for her, she slipped inside.

"Now," he said, taking her armload of books and facing her, "I'd like to talk to you."

"Yes? About what, Paul?"

"About my soul. Ever since you witnessed to me and told me I'd have to be converted to get into Heaven, well, I've been troubled, Barb. I never knew that. Imagine! I've gone to church with my folks ever since I was a little 'shaver,' as the phrase goes, and never once have I heard this preached from the pulpit. Our preacher is more or less of an essay type preacher, getting his lectures and/or essays from I don't know where. Sophisticated? Yes."

"You . . . you mean . . . well, are you trying to tell me that you don't ever get preaching from the Bible, Paul?"

"Frankly, no. I never heard things like you told me; and truthfully, I'm scared. I guess the thing that really got me to thinking was Scott's accident and his untimely death. Scott and I were bosom friends, as you know. And almost as fast as I can snap my fingers together, he's gone--killed in a head-on collision with some stupid drunk fool."

Barbara was silent for a moment; then she raised her eyes to Paul's. "The drunk was no more a fool than are those who constantly and continually keep Christ outside of their heart," she said softly and meaningfully. "Each who does so will ultimately damn his soul unless he repents and becomes converted."

Paul looked at the floor. "Barbara," he said, speaking quickly and urgently, "you are the only person who has ever really cared about my soul and where it will go. From the very first time you mentioned that I needed a Saviour, something inside me has been troubled. Before that, I never gave a thought to what lies beyond death and the grave. But then, from all appearances of health and physical fitness, I had no reason to worry, no need to think such serious thoughts at this point in my life. Here I am feeling totally alert and alive and healthy, and wham-o, along you come, telling me I have a soul that

will never die! A soul that will live on and on somewhere after I die." "It will, Paul; the soul of man never dies."

"You've convinced me of that!" he exclaimed emphatically. "But what do I do now? I mean, how do I go about fixing things up and getting my soul ready for heaven? I've been waiting and waiting for an opportunity to ask you..., a time when we'd be alone."

Tears shimmered in Barbara's eyes. "Oh Paul," she exclaimed, "I'm so thankful you asked! God's plan of salvation from sin is given in His Word, the Holy Bible. Jesus Christ purchased and provided it when He bled and died upon the cross on Calvary. 1 John 1:9 tells us, 'If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' So, first of all, we must realize that we are a sinner, and then we must confess our sins to God and repent of them."

Paul's lips trembled. "Look, Barbara," he cried in anguish, "I may seem strong and athletic and all he-man on the exterior of me, but inside my heart's as soft as butter. What I'm trying to say is, I want things fixed up between God and me and I want it now. Between your witnessing and Scott's shocking death, well, I want to be ready to meet God when my time comes."

"Then we'll pray right now!" Barbara answered, leading out in fervent prayer for the contrite sinner.

Long after Paul's soul was saved, and as she sat behind her desk in class, Barbara's heart was singing. God had helped her to win one soul to Him; she would double her efforts to win more. This time, she would fast consistently--along with her daily praying--and who knew how God would work or what HE would do! Ben's case wasn't too hard for her God. No, not at all. She would continue to shine and witness--as the Lord opened doors for witnessing--and she would leave the results to Him, trusting Him to use His Word for the accomplishment of the purpose.

Glancing through the school windows, Barbara saw that it was still snowing. The flakes were larger now, but the snow was still as white and clean-looking as ever and, looking across the room at Paul's shining face, her heart cried out joyfully, "The blood's been applied, he is whiter than snow." What a beautiful way for him to begin the new year, she mused happily.

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THE END