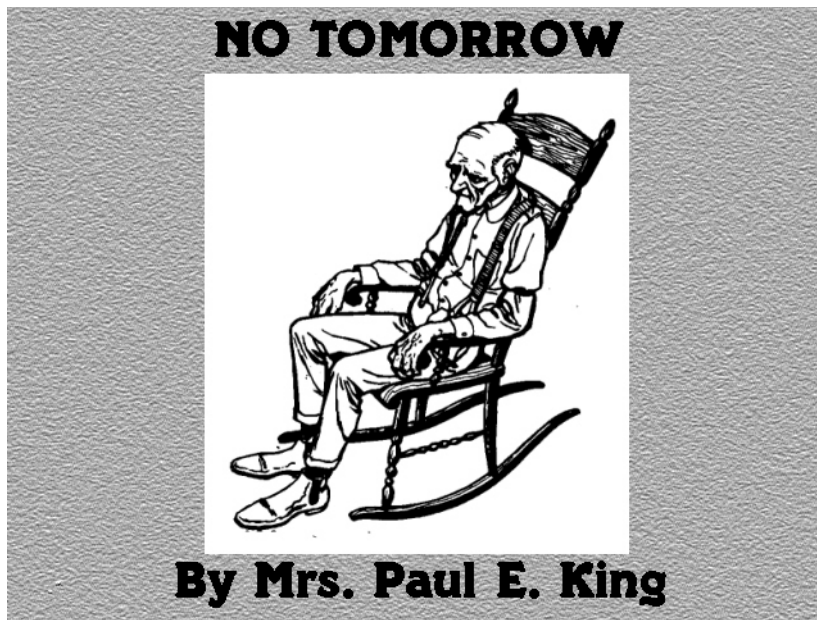


Copyright 2001 By Lucille King  
All Rights Reserved and Duplication  
Of This Publication Is Forbidden,  
Except For Personal Use

\* \* \* \* \*

Digital Edition 10/22/2001  
By Holiness Data Ministry

\* \* \* \* \*



## **NO TOMORROW**

**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

From the June 12, 1983 Sunday School Beacon

Harvey opened his eyes and looked around the room, bewildered and dazed. Where was he? Oh, yes, he was in a room in General Hospital. He remembered now. How vague and distant everything seemed the past two weeks of his confinement to the hospital bed.

He watched the early morning sun make shadows on the wall as it stole silently, warmly in and out of the thickly leafed trees beyond the window. He was alive, still here, he reasoned, watching the darting shadows on the wall.

He had been so fearful that he'd go during the night. If only he knew more about death and dying, he thought, as his face contorted in another paroxysm of pain.

He wanted to turn on his side. How good it would feel to change his position. But he couldn't; the pain dictated his body's movements . . . the pain and the mass of tubes dangling from his shriveled, wasted frame.

He looked toward the closed door. It must be six or seven. He could tell by the sounds in the hallway..., sounds of busy, soft-soled shoes walking in the corridor and carts rolling and the smell of food seeping in beneath the door.

He looked at the plastic tube connecting his arm to the IV solution above him. He wanted to run--to get away. But he couldn't. He was too weak. Besides, he was fastened on each side by tubes. Soon the nurses would open his door and begin working on him, chattering gayly like magpies, telling him how well he was looking and saying that he'd soon be strong enough to leave and go back to his few rooms.

But I won't, he thought. I'll never go back there again. My time's up. He closed his eyes. Death was creeping up on him. He had known it for months, ever since he had moved into the apartment complex for the elderly. He hadn't wanted to sell his neat little bungalow, but he knew he had to. His body told him he could no longer handle the work that went with owning a house and its accompanying lawn. So he sold out and moved into the apartment complex, his pain and misery all the while becoming more acute and intense.

"Good morning, Mr. Peal," the dark-haired nurse said, breezing into Harvey's room with a smile. "How are you this morning? Have a good night?" she asked, pausing and fingering the pouch. "I'm just in time, I see," she remarked, slipping a thermometer into his mouth and watching as the last drop of the solution moved down the plastic tube and disappeared into his vein.

Harvey looked on with glazed eyes. Oh, if only he knew more about dying. Would the nurse be able to help him? he wondered. But no, he could tell by looking at her that she couldn't. Furthermore, she may even laugh at him were he to ask.

He turned his head on the pillow. A tear darted out of the corner of his eye. It was so hard to die when one had made no preparation for it.

"Someone'll be in to bathe you shortly, Mr. Peal. Then we'll start a fresh IV," the smiling nurse said.. "Your breakfast, I'm afraid."

Harvey looked toward the wall. How many days had he survived on the IV? he wondered. All it was doing was prolonging his life. He knew this, but they didn't realize that he knew. Time was running out. Yes, the sand in the "hour-glass" of his life was almost gone. Oh, why hadn't he done something about preparing his soul for this hour, especially when the small white church was within a stone's throw of his house. The minister had visited him, wanted to help him. Some of the church folks, too. But he had turned them away. Told them he wasn't interested. Just like he'd turned salesmen away. He hadn't thought it would come to him, this thing called death. He was too healthy and strong to think about it even. But now...

"Are you comfortable, Mr. Peal?" the nurse asked as she removed the thermometer and sliced into his frightened thoughts.

"I'm cold," Harvey replied in a faint, weak voice. The nurse tweaked his toe and went, "Tsk, tsk. It's a scorcher already outside and you're cold! But wait, I'll give you a blanket."

"Thank you," Harvey whispered, hardly aware that he was speaking at all. Things seemed to be fading from him. He tried hard to focus his eyes on the nurse's face. Oh, why didn't she sense his need and say something to comfort him? She seemed so carefree, so unconcerned. But then, what did she know about dying? She was healthy and young. But someday she'd know. Yes, someday she'd know. And how quickly it would happen. His own life seemed just a memory now though it had been better than 75 summers. It was like the "weaver's shuttle." (Now where had he heard that phrase?) Oh, yes, he recalled now. It was thundered to him from the open church window by the preacher on a hot summer night long ago while he sat on his front porch. But he hadn't waited to hear more. He had gone into the house and slammed the door shut. He could have prepared then, but he didn't. He shuddered now.

The aides came for the bath, chattering and joking. Did they always do this when someone was dying? Was it their way of trying to get his mind off the seriousness of the hour? Off the sobering fact that he was dying and was not prepared to meet death? he wondered.

"My, my, you look fine this morning!" one of the aides exclaimed. "Must be the beautiful sunshine that's helping you."

He wanted to shout, No! No! You don't know what you're saying. I'm dying. Dying. Today's my last day. But instead he merely turned his face toward the wall.

"Well, Mr. Peal," the doctor said, coming into the room, "you're holding your own. Tomorrow you'll be better."

Harvey fixed his glazed eyes on the doctor. In a faint voice he said, "There'll be no tomorrow, Doctor."

"Look on the positive side of things," the doctor replied, patting Harvey's arm then striding out of the room.

The positive side the doctor said, Harvey felt a sort of contempt wash over him for the entire hospital staff. How could they take death so lightly? In his young days when someone lay dying, everybody walked in hushed silence and talked in muffled whispers. No raucous laughter nor foolish, light-hearted jesting and joking. Oh, didn't they realize the seriousness of a soul departing this life to meet his Maker unprepared?

A nurse hurried into the room and started a fresh IV on him, her face a study of marvel and surprise. She hadn't expected him to make it through the night he knew. But he had fooled her. His time wasn't last night, but it was today. He knew this as certainly and as surely as he knew the sun was shining outside his window. God had given him a brief reprieve from death during those long, seeming-endless hours of the night. And he had hoped . . . oh, how he hoped! . . . that someone would be able to help him now that he was in the valley of the shadow of death. But there was no one. No one! What a fool he'd been, to wait until the eleventh hour.

By the time his bath was finished, he was exhausted. He wanted to rest. Oh, how he wanted to. But he was afraid to close his eyes--afraid he'd

never open them again. He turned his head toward the wall. Hot tears trickled from the corners of his eyes. "I played the fool!" he exclaimed in a muffled voice. "Hi, Pop."

He turned his head. Was that Glenn?

"How're you doing?" his oldest son asked lightly. Harvey shook his head disconsolately.

"Aw, c'mon, Pop, you're going to make it." Harvey looked around his bed. Why, they were all here--everyone of his five children. And his grandchildren, too. They knew. Yes, they knew; that's why they had come.

"You feeling better, Dad?" It was Mildred's voice. She was his youngest. Always gentle and kind. So like her late mother.

He shook his head. Tears trickled from his eyes. A gentle hand wiped them from his cheeks. It was Mildred's. "Can't . . . someone . . . pray?" he gasped, feeling breath and life departing.

Silence filled the room. Pray!?! Surely their father was delirious. He had never asked for prayer before. In fact, he had made light of it. The children looked from one to the other in bewilderment.

"It must be the medication he's on," Harvey heard another son say to the group standing around him. "Some medicines do this to certain people, you know," the son continued.

"Here, Dad," Myrna said, holding a picture before her father's glazed eyes. "This is the great granddaughter you've never seen. She was born three days ago. That's why I couldn't come sooner . . . Ginny needed me. She had a hard time."

With an effort, Harvey pushed the picture away.

"See, he's delirious," someone exclaimed. "He's not even aware that we're here. Poor man!"

Harvey wanted to shout, to tell them all that he was not delirious, but he couldn't. He had no strength. Their voices buzzed around him in unintelligible

monosyllables. He gasped for breath. Someone took a paper and started fanning him. Weakly, his hand came up from the bed and pushed the paper away. He felt like someone, or something, was sucking the very air from the room. "P... pr... ay!" he gasped in a barely distinguishable tone. Silence filled the room.

In a desperate effort to get air..., to breathe... Harvey tried to raise himself up in the bed. Then he sank down and his eyes closed.

"He's sleeping,,,' someone commented.

"Let him rest..."

And so he rested, a few days later, in the expensive solid cherry casket. But where was his soul?