Jeff kicked the covers off and threw his long legs over the side of the bed. Today was the day. He felt a constricting, choking sensation inside his chest. He sighed, started to dress, then slumped down on the edge of the bed. Running long fingers through his disheveled hair, he dropped his face
into the palms of his hands. Why did things like this have to happen? he wondered again, as he had done countless other times since his father broke the news to the family better than a month ago. It all seemed like one horrible dream.

"Hey, Jeff, stop mooning and shuffle around. There's work to do. Dad and Mother have been up for hours." And Dale disappeared as quickly as he had poked his head around the doorway.

Jeff got to his feet and flew into action. He folded all the bedding and stacked it in a pile at the bottom of his bed. His mother would be up in a little while, he knew, to pack it away. Oh, the pain of moving; the hurt and grief of tearing up "roots" and leaving bosom friends. Jeannie especially. Yes, especially Jeannie.

The pain in Jeff's heart was like nothing he had ever experienced before. It hurt badly. Crushingly. Why, Jeannie had been like a stabilizer in his life. Her God-like life and conduct and deportment had helped to make being a Christian and serving the Lord easy for him. She was so very devout and devoted to Christ. She had helped him far more than anyone would ever know, or than he could ever tell. And now he was having to move and wouldn't get to see her, he didn't know when. He moaned softly at the thought.

"Hey, Jeff, shuffle around, can you?" It was Dale, calling from the bottom of the stairs. "The movers will be here in another two-three hours and Dad needs help finishing up out in the garage."

"As fast as I can shave and make myself a bit more presentable, Dale," Jeff answered, hurrying into the bathroom.

Downstairs, at the breakfast table, Mr. Cowan opened the Bible and began reading from Psalms 34:1: "I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth . . .""

Jeff gulped. It was as though it was just for him. He knew that Scripture was in the Bible; he had read it many times. But this morning, its full meaning and impact hit home. Yes, it did. It took on an added dimension -- a depth. "I will bless the Lord . . ." Not some other person; but he, Jeff, "will bless the Lord." And "at all times," too. Not just when circumstances and conditions
were favorable and pleasant. No; "At all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth." It was like a new revelation to Jeff.

He thanked God for the Living Word, and during the praying, he unburdened his heart to His gracious Redeemer and was rewarded abundantly with the soothing, healing oil of the Holy Spirit filling his soul. By the time they began eating breakfast, he felt completely different.

Taking a bite of toast, Mr. Cowan looked at his family. "I know this move is hard on all of you," he said. "Susan and Pamela, you will miss your little friends dreadfully. But God will give you new ones."

"But, Daddy, I don't want new friends," Pam wailed softly in her eight-year-old voice. "I love Missy and Shannan and . . . "

"I know you do, honey. And you must never stop loving them. The old saying is, 'make new friends; possess the old: The former are silver, the latter are gold.' So you see, you will always keep on loving your little friends in a very special way, but you will also love the new friends you will be making."

"I guess I'll miss Jeannie most of all," Jeff admitted. "But I know that God is too all-wise to make a mistake by sending you to this other assignment, Dad. So I plan to do what the Scripture just said to do and 'bless the Lord at all times.'"

"I guess I feel especially sorry for you, Dale and Jeff; so near to graduation time. But God will help you," Mr. Cowan declared emphatically.

"I know He will," Dale said, looking from his father to his twin. "And I don't have any 'Jeannie' to leave behind," he teased, with a smile for his brother.

"Good-byes aren't always easy," Mr. Cowan said, clearing his throat. "Some are downright hard. Take the time shortly after your mother and I were married, for instance. The company sent me back to where I had been born and raised. It was a sentimental journey for me. Leaving your mother's folks and our many friends was not a sentimental journey, however. Believe me, it was hard! On your dear mother, especially."
Susan and Pamela cast sad eyes on their mother, who smiled reassuringly for them as their father continued:

"Your mother and I located a house not too far from the one in which I was raised . . . the house chock full of pleasant childhood memories. Naturally, I was both thrilled and excited over the prospects of renewing old acquaintances and old friendships, but I was rudely and quickly reminded of losses, too. Poignantly so! Mr. Bader, the druggist on our familiar street, was no longer there. He would never be returning. Old Jack Hunter, faithful janitor-custodian in our hometown church, was gone too -- died shortly after my folks did. The same with six or seven others in the church and four of my former high school classmates. What had been years ago could never again be recaptured except in fading memory."

Mr. Cowan paused, wiped a tear from his eyes and finished his cereal. "With silent nostalgia," he said, "I relived those earlier carefree and happy years and for a brief moment, I had an intense longing and yearning to return to those days when life was so much simpler and relative ignorance of the real world was a certain bliss. Mixed up in all my happy thoughts were my parents. This had been their city, the only place in which they had ever lived. They had raised six children here, providing adequately for us and instilling the principles of righteousness in us."

"How long did you live there?" Dale asked quickly, wishing he could have known more about his grandparents and their hometown.

"Four years," Mr. Cowan replied. "I remember the collage of memories that flooded my mind that first year there. I guess I have never done so much remembering in any other year. It is a marvelous God-given faculty, memory. The ability in some way mentally to hold on to the past gives continuity to life. It enables us to learn the lessons of the great schoolmaster called experience and it also helps us to better appreciate the value of significant persons in our history. It provides the means of sorting out our lives. I learned invaluable lessons by that move, which was so highly sentimental for me but exceedingly painful for your mother who left behind all who had been close and dear to her and to her heart."

"She had you, Dad." Jeff piped up, thinking of Jeannie.
"Yes, she had me. We loved each other very much, and still do, as each of you know. But it was not less painful for her. For me, it was a sort of catapult into the rosy hues of my pleasant boyhood years. However, I learned that one dare not do too much looking back. It can become an unhealthy habit unless one does so in grateful remembrance to what God has done; how He has led and helped. And, believe me, even when one does go back to where he was born and reared, things are never again quite the same. Dear, beloved faces are missing from around the table, in church pews and from your street; children become full-grown adults; the old ball lot, Andy's vacant lot really, houses a brand new supermarket, and things like that.

"We live in a world of change. We can't get away from this fact. But our God is the God of the future, just as He was of the past. He it is Who opens doors and/or closes them. It is our duty and privilege to enter His opened doors with an unwavering, unswerving faith in Him and His Divine leadership, and to accept any new challenge with which He entrusts us by simply replying, 'Lord, here am I; send met' this is why we are moving; I feel clearly it is God's divine will for me to do so."

"Then we have nothing to fear," Jeff exclaimed.

"And that means that I had better finish packing those last few things in the basement," Dale added brightly. "That moving van will soon be here." And he excused himself from the table and hurried away with Jeff trailing behind, grabbing his coat and heading for the garage.

Maybe moving wasn't so bad after all, he thought. He would always be able to write Jeannie. And who knew what the future held of marvel and glad surprise. Someday, if it was in accordance with the will of God, Jeannie just may become Mrs. Jeffrey Cowan. Yes, she may.

He found himself whistling while he worked. He would bless the Lord at all times and under every circumstance. What finer way to start a new year than by blessing the Lord!