The Sunday School Beacon
September 29, 1985

THE AWAKENING
By Mrs. Paul E. King

I couldn't believe my ears. I could not! There I sat, in Harry's Sweet Shoppe, digging the very last drop of goopy, buttery-delicious butterscotch out of that narrow-bottomed sundae class, when I became suddenly aware that Skip was there. And he was talking about me. Worse still, he was with Maureen, my best friend. At least, I had thought she was my best friend.
I was shocked, disgusted, and hurt. I felt waves of heat flush my cheeks, then just as suddenly, I was an icy-cold, as the blood seemed to plummet to my feet. How could Maureen do this to me? I wondered. She knew Skip and I were dating. She knew it. And yet she . . .

I didn't know what to think nor what to do. I wanted to leave, but knew they'd see me when I paid for my sundae up front at the cash register. They were on the opposite side of the divider in the booth behind mine. At least, I thought it was that booth; their voices seemed to be coming from that direction. The divider was high enough to keep one from seeing over and the myriad hanging baskets and pots with vines and plants was the perfect finisher-divider-screen from there up to just below the ceiling.

I squeezed into the far corner of my booth, wishing I could escape through a window or a crack -- just put my money on the table and vanish. I didn't want to see Skip. Not ever again. Nor Maureen. They had double-crossed me.

I came suddenly alert, hearing my name mentioned again -- something about "Barbara said I should . . ." But that's all I heard. My mind had been in a sort of mental-block stage when the words penetrated and reached through. Why hadn't I paid more attention . . . tried to eavesdrop, if possible . . . instead of sitting there wondering what to do and wishing I could go through an escape hatch in the floor? Why? I asked my overwrought heart and mind.

Tears stung my eyes. I felt something like anger boil and foam up inside of me, and I was shocked. Once, when I was a six-year-old, I had seen a neighbor man storm into our house in a fit of anger. His jaws worked furiously before he spewed off, and his nostrils actually dilated, reminding me then of one of the fierce bulls I had seen at my cousin's farm. This same man's eyes had a steely-cold and dangerous look in them. I remembered having run and hidden behind my mother's full skirt out of fear. And now, here I was, feeling what I'm sure that irate man felt those many years ago. And I was helpless, completely helpless. My distress and, yes, my anger over knowing that Skip and Maureen were together, and this behind my back, well, I couldn't help myself. At least I thought I couldn't. Maybe it's because I didn't want to help myself. But, of course, I wouldn't give a second's time to even dwelling on that thought. Skip and Maureen were sneaks! So far as I was concerned, they were. And how long this could have been going on and
me be blind to it was a matter merely of conjecture. My conjecture. "I'm sure, however, that it didn't have its beginning today!" I told my jealous, suspicious heart.

"O Maureen, I've waited so long for this . . ."

Skip! You two-timer! I shouted in my heart as I heard his words of glad surprise come floating across the top of the divider through the beautiful maze of jungle-like plants and vines straight to my ears. Oh, it was dreadful. Dreadful! I heard what he said!

I looked behind me, trying to see if, after all these years, I had been too happy and too carefree to notice whether or not there was an exit out that way. If so, I would leave the total amount of money for my bill lying on the table and I would be gone quicker than ever I had left before.

But my searching, probing eyes discovered nothing. Nothing other than a beautiful, new, free-growing, gracefully-flowing vine above and over what once was a small, cubby-hole type of window.

I felt myself grow hot then cold again, in that order. So, Skip had "waited so long for this!" It was sickening, I thought. Sickening! He had been deceiving me all along. And I had believed him. Believed he cared for me! Oh' we weren't serious. Not exactly. My parents would have "un-serioused" me in short order if they had thought we were. Mom and Dad were of the older belief and persuasion, practicing and teaching each of us that no girl got serious with a boy until she was well out of high school and had a year or two, at least, of Bible school or college training behind her. And I was only due to graduate from high school in June. Still, Skip and I did like each other. A lot.

That wasn't his real name, of course. His older brother, Carlson, thinking Matthew Jonathan Henry Sayes was entirely too long a name for any boy, had nicknamed him Skip for short, and the name had stuck. In all the years I'd known him, I knew him as Skip. No one ever called him Matthew Jonathan Henry. No one. And Carlson had teased him a time or two that when and if he deceased, his death certificate would almost have to have Skip written on it somewhere so the family would recognize whom it was that passed away.
At the time Carlson had said that, I thought it was funny and humorous. But not today. No, not today! Nothing seemed humorous today. I was in a great, black mood, and all because of my best friend and Skip. Both were Christians. Or, at least, they said they were.

Skip wasn't sanctified. I knew this because he had told me so only last week. He said something had happened in his chemistry class and he had had a "flare up" over one of the classmates, a thing he knew would not have happened and taken place had he really been purged and cleansed from the old, carnal nature within his heart. "Maureen's sanctified, Barbara," he had stated emphatically. "She's consistent. Always the same. She's in my class, and what caused me to flare up never even phased her. She continued on just as sweet and kind and gentle as ever . . ."

I sat on the edge of the seat now. I should have suspected and known then, I thought, as I recalled Skip's adulation of Maureen. Why didn't he just come out and tell me? I wondered angrily Why string both of us along?

Again, anger boiled and churned within me. Without caring who saw me, I grabbed my billfold in my hand and, with my bill held tightly to me, I marched past the booths to the front where the cash register was.

"Was the sundae good?" Mr. Formen asked with his usual merry twinkle in his eye. "I never have to ask what Miss Barbara wants when she comes in," he teased. "Butterscotch must be your favorite," he added.

"You've guessed right, Mr. Formen," I answered quickly, a bit louder than usual. I wanted Skip and Maureen to know that I was there, too. Yes, suddenly I wanted them to know.

It was a horrible feeling, a defiant feeling, something I had never before realized that I was in possession of. It frightened me so much that I almost ran out of the Sweet Shoppe. I could never, never get into Heaven with something like this hiding and surfacing from inside of me, I realized with sudden, heart-stirring awakening. Heaven would no longer be Heaven if I were allowed inside with this evil, hateful, jealous, and defiant spirit. Wasn't it pride, and the spirit of wanting the supremacy, that made God cast Lucifer out of Heaven!
I was trembling like a leaf in a late autumn breeze, seeing myself with all its awful, its hideous, its devastating carnality. And suddenly, I didn't care anything about Maureen and Skip being in the Sweet Shoppe together. I was concerned only about my soul's wellbeing, about its "health," its spirituality.

I headed straight for the church, determined to stay there on my knees until I knew I was crucified and had had a spiritual resurrection of cleansing from all sin.

It was cool and quiet inside as I pushed through the doors. And so conducive for praying and doing business with God, too, I thought, as I knelt, broken and contrite, at the old-fashioned altar and began to pour my soul out in honest confession to Him. It was a time of true repentance, first of all; no one could have carnal manifestations without first repenting, I knew. So, giving myself something upon which to build holiness, I began with the humbling stones of confession and repentance and was richly rewarded and repaid, through Jesus' precious shed blood, with the glorious foundational work of salvation. I was born again; I had the joy of the Lord restored unto me again. Oh, I was so blest and so happy! But I dare not stop now. No, no! I must seek for, and after, this "more excellent way"; this way that makes one "more than a conqueror."

And seek I did! Until I knew, I knew, I knew, that I was dead and that the blessed Comforter, the Holy Ghost, was reigning, ruling, and abiding in me. Oh, it was glorious. Glorious! The old (carnal) nature within me died; I was resurrected in Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit and cleansed from all sin.

The moment I entered our door, Mom knew something wonderful happened to me. I testified to her then. This time, God gave a "ring" of victory to what I was saying. Mom and I wept together for joy.

"Skip and Maureen came by," Mom finally said. "They wanted you to know that they have real good news for you. Skip knew he wasn't sanctified, it seems. So, since Maureen's the Young People's Leader at church, he went to her for help. This afternoon, at the Sweet Shoppe, Maureen said Skip came in just as she was ordering her favorite malt. Skip told her how he had gone to the church and prayed until he got clear through. He said he had 'waited so long' for the knowledge that he was clear-through and was sanctified wholly and . . ."
"Oh, Mom, excuse me! Please! I must see Skip and Maureen. I must," I said. "I have some things to make right," I added, rushing out the door.

I would tell her everything when I returned, I decided. And never again would I be bothered with the torture of carnal thoughts and imaginations -- not so long as I remained sanctified, and gave God the Holy Ghost full rein and complete control of all of me, body, soul, mind and spirit.

Feeling free as a healthy bird on wing, I hurried toward Maureen's house to make full confession and to testify to the cleanness of my heart.