

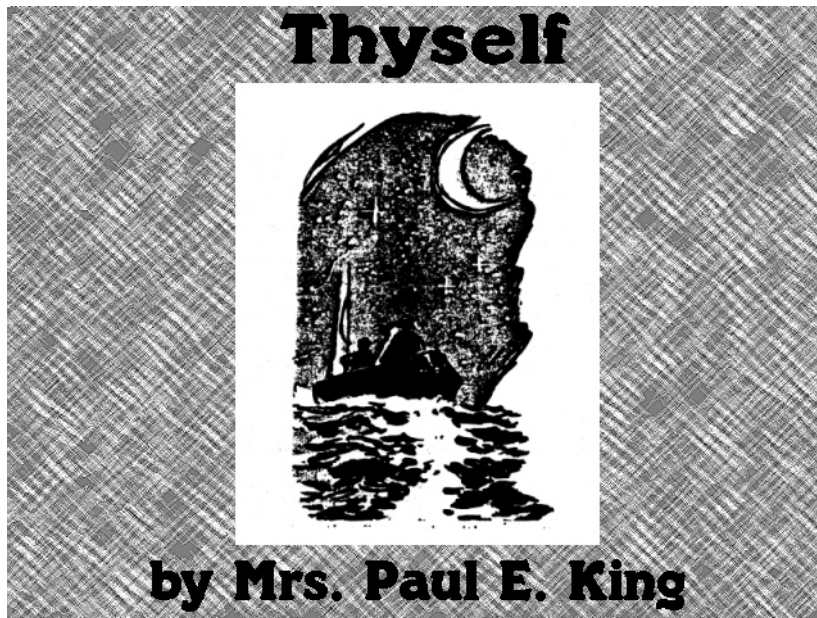
Copyright 2001 By Lucille King
All Rights Reserved and Duplication
Of This Publication Is Forbidden,
Except For Personal Use

* * * * *

Digital Edition 10/22/2001
By Holiness Data Ministry

* * * * *

The Sunday School Beacon
September 14, 1986



THYSELF
By Mrs. Paul E. King

I came in from that fishing trip with our pastor a whole lot different than I went out. Believe me! I had thought when he asked me to go with him to the White River to fish that that's what it would be . . . fishing. But was I ever in for a surprise! We fished, to be sure; caught some real beauties, too. To prove it, we had a cooler chock full of fillets to take home and be divided among my folks and the preacher's family. And were they ever delicious fried

fresh along the river's bank with rawfried potatoes and a couple cans of Van Camps beans and pork. It must have been some of the best and most satisfying meals I've ever eaten in all of my almost seventeen years of natural life. Mom thought I looked healthier, even, when I unpacked my fishing tackle and camping gear. Maybe I did. But I'm sure it wasn't all because of the fresh air and the exercise and food. You see, my pastor helped me to see myself in a way like I have never before seen me. The real me, I mean.

We were sitting around the camp fire that night watching the sparks fly upward and just enjoying the beauty of the night. Crickets were chirping and singing, toads were calling and owls were hooting and screeching. It was peaceful and so wonderful. Don, the preacher's son, had crawled into his sleeping bag and was sound asleep as his dad and I sat there in the silence, watching, and listening to the intense night sounds around us. Sounds seem so much more distinct and amplified on a still, clear night.

I sat crosslegged. My face was resting in the palms of my hands. I saw a shooting star and gasped in wonder and awe at its brilliance as it raced on a straight course earth-ward, its glory and brilliance fading almost as rapidly as its fall had been. "Wish Don wouldn't have sacked in so early," I said to his dad, my pastor. "He's missing out on some of the best of this camping-fishing trip." Don and I were buddies. Lacking one month and three days, I was almost as old as he.

Brother Kendall uncurled his crossed-over legs and leaned back against the trunk of a tree, saying, "I'm glad Don's sleeping, Jack; I have something I've wanted to talk over with you for a long time."

I looked at my pastor's face. By the light of the flickering fire, it looked serious and sober. I had no idea what was coming. "With me?" I asked innocently.

"Yes, with you, Jack. Who are you?"

Who was I? The question nearly knocked me over. Flat. I couldn't follow him. Stuttering, I said, "I'm Jack Owens." I felt kinda stupid.

"I know that," came the minister's soft-spoken reply. "I thought that's what you'd say. You're pretty basic, Jack, and that's a typical answer, to be sure. You are Jack Owens, and, like all normal people, you have two eyes

placed approximately one-third of the way down your face. Between them you have a nose. And then there's a mouth that can be arranged in different ways, some that make you look better and some that make you look worse. Even fierce. Then, behind, or inside of the mouth are the dentist's delight -- and his source of livelihood - -the teeth. Then there are the ears. You are pretty basic, Jack." He paused.

By now I had uncrossed my legs. What was Brother Kendall leading up to? I wondered. True, I was pretty basic. But then, practically everybody else was, too, for that matter.

"Is that you, Jack? The things I described?"

I gulped. "It's I," I admitted. "At least it's all a part of the total me." Was that the right answer? I wondered.

Again there was that probing pause and silence. Then, in a quietly-soft voice, the preacher asked, "Is what you see in the mirror really you? Is the real you measurable, Jack?"

I made pretty good grades in school and, generally, I took delight in thinking things through and in solving what looked like the hardest and most difficult problems or questions to solve or to answer. But my pastor's questions threw me. Maybe it was because I knew that the fellow who looked back at me in the morning from the mirror wished that he could be different and not so timid and shy. Or maybe it was because I knew that that same familiar fellow who looked into my eyes from the mirror wished that he could be a more effective witness for Jesus, and that he would be able to see souls won to Christ because of his testimony and his life.

Brother Kendall's eyes were on my face; I saw it by the light of the flickering shadows.

"I suppose the real me is the one God sees and knows," I answered thoughtfully, as light began to dawn upon me. "God's mirror, His Word, reveals and/or reflects the real me."

"Right, Jack. Right."

"I know my sins are forgiven; Brother Kendall, and I know the sweet Holy Ghost abides. I remember the night when God put the death blow to the carnal nature within my heart. I felt the purging, cleansing, refining fire of Pentecost cleanse my heart then fill it with Divine Love. I know this. There is no doubt in my heart or my mind. The Lord is very real to me."

Brother Kendall smiled. "I know He is, Jack. I know this. Now, by nature, you have been shy and timid. There's nothing pushy or forward about you. This is commendable, to a degree, in these days especially. But where witnessing for Christ comes in one must exercise a bold faith. Notice, I didn't say brash."

"I have been trying," I replied.

"True. And the more you do this, Jack, the easier it becomes."

"Testifying has come naturally since my conversion and subsequent sanctification," I said. "It's going to strange homes, where I don't know a soul, that gives me the weak knees," I confessed. "And you'll never know the many tears I've shed over this nor how many earnest prayers I've prayed, especially when I see how easily and naturally Ted and Ned Hawkins can talk to perfect strangers."

Brother Kendall drew his right knee up toward his chin. "Be thyself," he said, looking at me. "You are not Ted Hawkins; neither are you Ned. God made you uniquely yourself . . . Jack Owens. It has pleased Him to make you like you are . . . a saved and sanctified vessel fit and meet for His use. I'm afraid you have been so intent upon watching Ted and Ned that you haven't been carrying your end of the load."

I jerked to attention. I had never thought about that. But it was the truth. "You're right," I admitted, as new light poured into my being. "They're so outgoing and zealous that I just stand by and listen and watch as they talk and witness."

I felt something new stirring inside my being -- a holy and burning desire to do my own witnessing for Christ, not just to be a stand-by listener-admirer.

"I suppose I am at fault for telling you to go with them on our calling night," Brother Kendall said. "Now I can see that this was not the best idea. So, come Thursday night, the Lord willing, I am assigning you to some apartments and homes alone. You will go by yourself."

"Not really, Brother Kendall," I replied. "I will have the companionship and the fellowship of God the Holy Ghost."

"That's what I wanted to hear you say, Jack. Now, you go in the strength of the Lord and not in the glow and zeal of the Hawkins twins and God will honor you and your efforts. Some people have a natural and an easy time of talking; for them to talk is almost second nature. And these kind of people, unless they are really very careful, must be watchful that they don't exclude God, by not seeking His help when they witness. For them talking's no problem; like I stated, it's natural and comes easily."

I was all ears now, beginning to understand what Brother Kendall was getting at. Or trying to make clear to me.

"You, on the other hand, have not found talking to strangers an easy thing to do. So, what do you do before you go out calling? You beg God's help. You pray earnestly for Him to help you, realizing that without His help you can't do the job. Each of you.., the talker and the shy . . . needs God's help; the one, so that his natural, easy-speaking way won't exclude God and try to do the job by his own ability; you, so you won't shirk the job because of your more introverted ways and manner."

Talk about seeing things in a new light; I did! "You know, Brother Kendall," I admitted, "I never realized that Ted and Ned had a danger zone like that, by their just-natural, easy-to-talk-to-people manner and way, I mean. I thought it was basically only the timid and shy ones, like myself. I have spent hours, literally, talking to God and asking Him to please make it easier for me to be more like Ted and Ned."

"A bit like Moses, huh, Jack? 'I am not a man of eloquent speech.'" Brother Kendall quoted from Exodus, adding God's answer by His question, "'Who hath made man's mouth?' God didn't answer those prayers in the way you wanted Him to or had hoped He'd answer them, did He?" he asked.

"Why, no, He didn't, come to think about it."

"Do you have any idea why He may not have answered them according to what you wanted and how you prayed? Who are you, Jack?" Again that question.

"I'm beginning to see," I said quickly. "God made me me. He will work through me exactly as He made me, now that I am saved and sanctified wholly. My entire being will be utilized and used to its utmost potential in Christ and through Christ. Oh, I see it! I see it! Regardless of our makeup, when one is wholly and entirely yielded to Christ and is dead to self and alive unto Him, that one becomes a special vessel to be used in the up-building of Christ's Kingdom."

It was as though a whole new world of understanding and enlightenment had opened up for me. I could scarcely wait till I could go to those apartments and homes.

"I want to pray for you," the minister said. "God has a work for you to do, and no one in this wide world will be able to do it like you, Jack. There are millions of lost souls in the world; will you help me to reach as many as possible in our community and try to win them to Christ? Our community is a part of the world."

"I will," I promised solemnly, feeling a weight of responsibility settle heavily in upon me.

Brother Kendall prayed for me then. What a prayer! I felt the contact he had with God; it was powerful and mighty. And it was the stimulus I needed. I knew his prayer was answered. Yes, I knew it.

We crawled into our sleeping bags then, but I couldn't go to sleep. Not for a long while. I was too excited. And joyful, too. I listened to the steady, even breathing of my best friend, Don, and of his dad. Then I thanked God for a pastor who was a shepherd indeed -- a shepherd who knew of and felt for his sheep's needs, of whatever nature. And a shepherd who knew how to bring the best out of a timid and shy young man and challenge him until with Christ's help he felt bold as a lion.

I rolled over in the sleeping bag and was soon fast asleep.

