I knew the minute I saw Kevin and Kermit Pandell what was coming. They knew. Yes, I was sure they had heard.

News travels with lightning speed in Merryvale. Maybe it's because Merryvale's a small town . . . 900 population; maybe it's because most everybody seems to know everybody else; where they live, who lives close to
whom, that sort of thing. Or maybe it's because some people like to talk. Or, maybe it's all those reasons, or a combination of them. I just knew by the look on Kevin and Kermit's faces, that they knew and that they had heard.

"Well, how's angel boy this fine day?" Kermit asked, winking at his twin.

I smiled.

"Yea, how'd things go last night at your church?" Kevin prodded, nudging Kermit with his elbow and snickering as he nudged.

I shifted the armload of books which I was taking down to old Mr. and Mrs. Pendergast as a gift and countered with a question of my own, "Would you like to come with me tonight?"

Kermit looked aghast. Kevin snickered and, with a silly look on his face, said, "We heard you got saved. Born again. Converted. The works."

"I sure did, fellows," I answered. "And it's the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me. At last, I have peace and joy."

Mocking, Kevin touched my shoulders in an exploring sort of way. "No wings yet, Kermit," he jeered.

"I'm not the same, fellows, believe me. No, I have no wings. But I'm all new on the inside: in my heart. The load I carried is gone! My sins are all forgiven and . . . ."

"Did you see the glory lights?" Kevin jeered again.

I remembered something which I had once heard old Brother Pendergast tell us in the Sunday School class, something about not arguing when non-believers and sinners ridiculed you once you were converted and had become a Christian. I merely kept on walking.

"Hey, you didn't answer me, angel boy. How about those bright lights? Were they pretty?"
"Maybe he heard trumpets blowing," the other twin remarked, winking at his brother. "I've heard of some who claim they did. Were they loud, Jack?" he asked. "And did you get a charge out if it?"

Stopping briefly, I said calmly, "Don't become sacreligious, fellows. Please! Make sport of me all you care to, but don't touch God's sacred things.., heavenly things. That's dangerous."

Throwing his head back and laughing heartily, Kermit said, "The preacher has preached us a sermon! Where's your halo, Jack? I thought surely we'd see one on your head, all shiny-bright and glowing. But it's not there." And he slapped a hand down on the top of my head, shaking the books out of my arms and scattering them around me on the sidewalk.

Turning, the pair ran away, with Kevin shouting, "Have a good day, angel boy. Maybe you'll have your wings the next time we see you."

"Yeah. And the halo, too," Kermit added.

I had known that I would be tested and tried. Dear old Brother Pandergast had told me so. He said it came to every true child of God. "But God will take care of you, Jack," he had said. "And He'll fight your battles for you if you learn to turn them all over to Him and keep your hands off. Remember one thing," he had admonished, "your trials and testings come only to make you strong and to prove how genuine you really are. Through Christ, we are more than conquerors. But only through Christ. You dare not lean upon Jack; only, always and ever, on Christ, who is our strength, our refuge, and help."

The words, given in such love and with such wisdom by my Sunday School teacher, the man who had influenced me to become converted, now served as a bulwark of strength and a great wall of defense and protection for me. I realized, with a sense of overwhelming joy and happiness, the meaning of the scripture verse, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

I picked the religious books up off the ground, brushed the dirt off their old, much-worn and badly frayed exteriors, then loaded my arms and once more started toward the Pandergast cottage-home.
"Hey, what's this I just heard?" a voice called from behind me.

I turned to see Susan Biggs following me. "What did you hear?" I countered, smiling.

"That you got religion, Jack." Susan looked shocked.

"Not religion, Susan; salvation," I told her. "It's the same difference," she replied.

"Wrong, Susan. Religion is the recognition of and belief in a superhuman power or powers to whom obedience, reverence, and worship are due. It is any system of faith in and worship of a Supreme Being or a god or gods. On the other hand, salvation means a saving or being saved. A saving of the soul; deliverance from sin and from the punishment of sin."

"Well, you went down to the altar last night, I heard. Doesn't that mean you got religion?"

"No, it doesn't. Let me try to explain. I go to the little Holiness church on Meadbrook Lane. I believe in what they preach and teach. In other words, this is my religious belief. But this is not salvation. I can believe in and assent to their teaching and preaching from now until the day I die and could still be lost and go to hell. You see, I must do more than recognize and believe in a superhuman power; I must act upon what I know God's Word teaches, and repent, confess, and forsake my sins and ask God, for Christ's sake, to forgive me of all my sins and to come into my heart. I did this down at the altar last night Susan, and I received the forgiveness of sins. I know I am saved -- born again. Converted. This is salvation! There's quite a difference between the two, don't you agree?"

"I have to say yes, Jack, there is. But don't you know you've stirred up quite a hornet's nest by going down there last night? The fellows are angry and the girls are upset. That may be all right for old people like the Pandergasts and the Huggins, and those kind. But you're too young a fellow to get all tangled up in something so serious and so profound. You used to be the life of all our parties and of our get-togethers."

"Susan," I said, as I turned down the street on which the Pandergasts lived, "have you ever given your soul any thought? You have a soul, you
know, and it will live on forever and forever. The soul of man never dies. There are only two places for the soul to dwell; heaven or hell. We decide in this life which abode it will be. We make the choice, not God. If we want to go to heaven and dwell eternally there, we must make adequate preparation here, and become saved -- born again. That's what I did last night. I am now born again. My heart is changed. Radically so. I no longer want to do the things I once did, nor go to the places I one time went to. And believe me, I'm the happiest young man you've ever seen."

Shrugging her shoulders and giving her long, dark hair a toss, she remarked, "And you'll have no friends, Jack Wickers. Mark my word!" Turning, she walked briskly away.

I stepped up on the porch and tapped lightly on the screen door with my knuckles. Mr. Pandergast came quickly to the door and relieved me of my heavy load.

"Where did you find all of these?" the man asked. "I heard someone say there was to be an auction of all of the Manning's household items. And, long ago, I had heard one of the fellows my age say that Mr. Manning was, in his words, 'a religious fanatic who loved his Bible more than anything.'

"I went to the auction and found these books. In Sunday School, you sometimes quote things that some of the old time preachers used to say. I remembered some of those preachers' names. So, when I saw these books were for sale, by some of your favorite authors, I bid on them and bought them."

Mr. Pandergast's eyes filled with tears. "Why, son," he remarked, "you found some of the books which I have wanted for a long, long time. These are Holiness books, written by Holy Ghost filled men of yesteryear. Thank you. Thank you. I want you to begin reading them for yourself. Now that you are converted, you need to go on to the deeper work of entire sanctification, also called heart purity and Holiness."

"I want everything that God has for me, Bro. Pandergast. Everything! I have never been so happy in all of my life; nor been so full of joy and inner peace," I replied.

"How has your day gone so far?"
"Wonderful! Glorious would be more fitting, I guess. I've had a few testings. But they only made me realize just how precious and real Jesus is to me."

"There'll be a few more of these along the way to Heaven, Jack. But hold fast the profession of your faith; pray much, read your Bible often, and never give up. 'Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.' And, '. . . He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' These are some of the wonderful promises from God's Word, son. Cling to them. Learn them. Believe in them. The first one is found in 1 John 4:4; the second, in Philippians 1:6. If you hide God's Word away in your heart, you will be an overcomer. A victorious Christian. Especially so, after you have had your personal Pentecost, when God the Holy Spirit deals the death blow to the self life . . . to Jack and all his ambitions, wishes, and desires."

"When may I obtain this, Bro. Pandergast? I want everything the Lord has for me. Everything!" I felt so hungry for what he had just told me about.

"You may have it now, Jack. Let's pray, and do serious business with God."

Together, we knelt in the humble cottage where many a prayer reached through to the Pentecostal skies, mine among them.