Benjamin slammed on the brakes of the car and came to a sudden and abrupt halt. Shifting the gears to reverse, he backed to where he was sure he had seen the sign. Ah, he was right; "Windy Acres," the sign declared.
For a while, he sat looking around him while the car idled. The land, for the most part, looked poor, and deficient in the proper minerals and nutrients, he thought. With the thought, Ben wondered as to the wisdom of his decision in purchasing the land. But he had; so the only thing to do was to make the best of the situation. Foolishness or good judgment, he had bought the place. At least it belonged to him; the first time ever that he could lay claim to something that was his and his alone. Sure, he had the car; but everybody had to have a car to get to and from work, he reasoned silently.

"Windy Acres," he said aloud. "You're mine. So I better get acquainted with you. Here I come." With a gentle push on the accelerator, the car moved forward in a slow and leisurely way.

Ben stared across the vista of grass and gray rocks to the sea beyond. A smile tugged at the corners of his mouth. At least he would be able to catch fresh fish whenever he took the notion to do so, he thought.

His mind went to the sign then, which was nothing more nor less than a rough wooden plank with the words "Windy Acres" painted on it in white. Beside the sign, and leaning like a tottery old man, was a covered mail box on which was also printed "Windy Acres" and beneath that, the name of the former owner. He would have to make a decent sign first thing, he decided. And a new mail box, too, with his name painted neatly on its side.

The road curved around the side of a small hill and as he rounded the bend, Ben saw a field of tall grass. Beef cattle! he thought. That's what he'd get. With a grain supplement, the cattle should fatten quickly. He drove more slowly now, looking from left to right; right to left. Maybe it wasn't a bad investment after all, he soliloquized. At least he hoped it wasn't; he had little more money to spend. He hoped his remaining amount would cover major repairs. He was sure there would be many of these to be made on the buildings.

It was a long way to the house. The road ran up and down, parallel to the shoreline below, then veered east with the headland that stuck out into the sea. The tangy sea airs gave Ben a feeling of exhilaration. As he topped a small rise, the house finally came into sight. He let out a groan.

It was ugly. It had no special shape and was in dire need of paint. Like modern art, he thought; ugly and with no special shape or lovely form. It sat
baldly on the crest of the headland, totally unprotected by the spruce, fir, and pine that grew in a thick copse farther back. Except for two isolated and gnarled and bent trees around it, the house stood alone, a solitary and lonely looking structure with no architectural design whatever. It was bleak and looked unhospitable. Ben was sure that the raw-cold sea winds lashed the building mercilessly.

Again he groaned. He should have come up before buying the place, he decided, with a sinking feeling churning inside his stomach. But Ellis had told him it was a good buy. "Almost a give-away price, Ben," he had said. "It's a great investment." He had added this in his usual salesman way. "You'll need to do some remodeling, of course. But it will make you a fine house. I promise. And all that land! You won't be sorry you bought it."

Looking at the house now as he parked the car and started towards it, Ben was filled with doubts. He should not have been so gullible. What had caused him to buy without first looking and seeing for himself? he wondered as he turned the key in the door's lock. By nature, he was cautious. Overly-cautious, perhaps. But he had trusted Ellis. The realtor was known for his integrity among Ben's circle of friends, which were few in number, he had to admit candidly now.

He swung the door open and stepped inside. Instantly, the coldness "grabbed" him. The heating bills would be astronomical, he was sure. Then he saw a stove in a room ahead. He walked through the big gloomy hallway, which opened out to two equally gloomy rooms, and was soon into the kitchen with its huge old-fashioned range. The answer to his heating problems, he thought thankfully.

He glanced around the country looking kitchen and was pleased to see the sturdy hand-hewn table and its six matching chairs, much-worn and in dire need of paint, but sturdily and solidly ready for him to begin his housekeeping. There was even a kitchen cabinet with a roll-back top along one of the walls and another smaller cupboard not far away.

He walked to the stove and opened the oven door. Then he examined the stove pipe that ran upward and finally elbowed its way into the chimney which was positively sound looking and ready for use. Ellis had told him there was furniture in the house, hadn't he? But Ben hadn't given it too much thought at the time. Especially so, when he learned that the property was an
estate settlement of long standing and that the parties involved were now eager to get the place sold and have the hassle over with.

With a surge of excitement, Ben left the kitchen and walked into the two other rooms on the first floor. In one room he found a sofa; its fabric was faded but its structure of hardwood was as sound as ever. Near one of the three long, narrow windows a rocking chair with a companionable table by its side, faced toward the sea. Two other chairs, a library table and a kerosene lamp completed the furnishings in the room. The second room was totally empty except for the long runners of hand-woven carpets which covered the floor in its entirety.

A smile pursed Ben's lips. He had everything he needed in the way of furniture downstairs. If there was even just one bed upstairs, he'd be happy. Perhaps his father's and mother's prayers had been following him and . . .

He pushed the thought out of his mind. Hadn't he purposed within himself that he would forget!

He hurried into the gloomy hallway and climbed the steps to the second floor where he was greeted with bursts of warm sunlight filtering through the rotting curtains at the windows at each end of the narrow hallway. Three bedrooms and a bathroom! He was pleasantly surprised to see the tub and sink in excellent condition.

His exploration of the three bedrooms was gratifying. In each room was a sturdy, old-fashioned bed, a chest of drawers, a bureau and a chair, one of which was a rocking chair. This latter mentioned chair he found in the largest bedroom; somehow, he felt that this must have been the room belonging to the husband and wife and the small rocking chair was used, no doubt, for rocking the colicky babies to sleep at night.

Ben stood for a long while inside the largest room. His being had a sudden, totally unasked-for homesickness for voices. Two voices, especially. But no, he had set his heart and mind to forgetting, hadn't he?

He stepped out into the hallway and, pushing the curtain aside at one of the windows, he looked toward the sea. What a view he had! It was positively postcard pretty. The lighthouse stood as a solitary sentinel, strong and sturdy, guarding and guiding the sea ploughing vessels, he noticed. The
gulls, dipping and swaying, swaying and dipping, added an even greater serenity to the total picture.

A sudden feeling of love for the place washed over his being and he was glad that he had taken Ellis' word and bought the property, sight unseen though it had been.

A bit more scouting around, on the outside now, revealed to the young man that, besides the house, he had also acquired a shed and a barn. No large barn, to be factual, but a medium-sized barn which, with little expense to his remaining bank account but much work on his part, could be made into a decent and wonderfully-useful barn again. Everywhere he looked inside the barn, he saw boxes and more boxes. The building looked more like a stacked-high storage thing, he thought. It would take months to go through all those boxes, he knew, and to make a place for the horses which he planned to buy and several milk cows also.

He closed the doors behind him, then headed for the house. The barn would have to wait until he had gotten the house in a livable condition. No way could he live in a dirty house. He had been brought up in a clean house by God-fearing, clean-living parents and. . . .

Ben shook his head as though trying to shake the too-frequently-entering thoughts out of his mind. But try as he may, they had a subtle way of returning. Not just occasionally, but often. Truth of the matter was, they seemed always to be lingering hauntingly nearby. Even when he wasn't thinking about them, they were stored indelibly somewhere inside his brain. Much like the up-to-date computer he used at work, he thought with no little bit of annoyance. The difference was that he could turn the computer off and forget about the figures with which he was working while the computer, word processor inside his head kept reminding him! Of what? Of things past. Happenings. Beautiful happenings. Wonderful times. Joyous years.

In an effort to forget, Ben consulted Ellis' written instructions inside a piece of paper in his suit jacket. Soon the water was turned on. As he allowed it to run through the long-unused pipes to clear away everything rusty or dirty, he hurried outside after kindling.

The fire in the big kitchen stove chased away the penetrating cold and filled the house with a warmth which, in its comfort, made the young man
forget about the ugliness of the house's exterior and made him eager to begin housekeeping in his house.

He found an up-ended bucket inside a small pantry off the kitchen and checked its bottom for holes. "None," he said aloud to himself, smiling a bit. The bucket would be ideal for heating water. Once he had the water, he realized. The enormous tank on the stove held gallons of water, he was sure.

He removed his top coat and his suit coat, dusting off the top of the kitchen chairs before hanging the coats over them. Rolling up his shirt sleeves, Ben went to the car for the cleaning supplies which he had brought. The wind was raw-cold. He was truly grateful for the warmth which the big kitchen range transmitted to the inside of his house.

His house! The thought rolled around inside his head in a most gratifying way. "Remember, Ben," his parents used to say, "everything any of us has belongs to God. We are only stewards, or custodians, over that which He has entrusted us with."

There were those annoying thoughts again! Why could he not rid himself of them? he wondered, as he prepared the now-hot water in the bucket for his long ordeal of cleaning.

Hour after long hour passed swiftly away as Ben worked. "May it always be said that our son is not lazy," his father admonished him frequently in those growing-up years. "Lazy I am not!" Ben exclaimed aloud to the silently-repeated thought, as he finished cleaning the entire downstairs and began cleaning upstairs.

He would have to buy curtains when he went to town, he knew. Those at the windows almost fell apart in his hands as he removed them from the rods so he could clean and shine the windows. Wouldn't Maureen laugh at him if she could see him now?

At thought of Maureen, Ben set the window cleaner on the floor and gazed a long while toward the sea. Why did he bother thinking about her even? Hadn't she betrayed him, like his parents had said she'd do? Hadn't she? Bitterness washed over him like a giant wave. He began to tremble. Bitterness was a dangerous thing, his parents had told him. Dangerous, and
deadly, too, unless one allowed God's Spirit to purge it out after one was forgiven of his sins.

Ben stood, looking out toward the sea and the giant lighthouse. Would he ever be the same as he once was before he had met Maureen? he wondered.

A sea gull, in mournful sound, screeched past the window.

(Chapter 2)

Ben worked furiously until late into the night. The kerosene lamps made faintly warm glowing shadows on the walls, and shed a gentle glow upon the bureau tops now clean and shiny with furniture polish. The house smelled fresh of cleanly scrubbed floors and furniture, and as he crawled between the warm flannel sheets on the bed in the biggest bedroom, he felt richly rewarded over seeing and smelling the change in his house. By the time he'd have curtains at the windows and new shiny-vinyl flooring on the kitchen's floor, and the myriad houseplants moved from his apartment in the city to his house by the sea, the place would look lovely indeed. All except the exterior. That, he decided, would change too, come summer. "The Lord willing," a voice from inside his head added. "Oh all right; the Lord willing," he said aloud, fluffing the bed pillow up. One thing was sure; his parents' teaching would never let him rest easy. Not so long as he was not heeding it, he knew.

Ben awoke the following morning to a faint chill in the room. Opening his eyes wide, he looked around the room. Then he remembered. His house! He was living now in his house. The apartment which he had rented for Maureen and him in the city, would soon be nothing more than a painful memory. He would have the movers to bring the furniture and the plants as soon as they could arrange it. The sooner the better, he felt, anxious to cut the final, painful tie with Maureen.

At the thought of his once bride-to-be, Ben felt the old bitter feeling wash over him again. As though in quick defiance of the thought and the wretchedly painful memory, he jumped out of bed and began exercising vigorously. Exercise always had a way of clearing his brain, he felt. If nothing else, it stimulated his circulation and made him feel very much alive. And wide awake, too, he thought with a smile.
He dressed quickly, taking a pair of trousers and a shirt and sweater from a hanger inside the clothes closet in the bedroom. Then he made the bed and hurried downstairs, where a few red embers remained inside the mouth of the old-fashioned kitchen stove. Adding a bit of kindling and some choice cuts of wood, he soon had a warm fire going inside the stove.

He stood for a moment and surveyed the beautiful transformation in the house before getting a heavy cast iron skillet off the pantry shelf and slipping bacon into it.

"Transformed, Ben; like your heart once was." Ben almost dropped the skillet over hearing the gentle conscience reminder, all of which was so true but also painful now. If he hadn't met Maureen . . .

He brushed a hand across his eyes in a gesture of trying to forget. But forgetting was impossible. For now, at least. He had loved her too deeply. And yet she had hurt him dreadfully. His father's kindly-spoken words came back to him now. Again.

"She's not the girl for you, my boy," his father had told him. Long before he had gotten any serious thoughts about her, Ben recalled now, as he drew water for the teapot. "She'll hurt you, Son," the kind father had warned with tears in his soft-blue eyes.

And he, Ben, had laughed in his light-hearted way. He remembered saying, "Oh Dad, don't worry; I'm only dating her. We're not serious."

"Courtship is meant for marriage, Son. It leads to marriage. I feel fearful for you when I pray over this, Ben. And your mother feels the same way. It's up to us to warn you. I must be faithful to you and to your soul. You've had a wonderful experience with the Lord; Maureen's not spiritual."

"She says she's a Christian, Dad," Ben remembered having replied.

"But is she, Son? Does her life display the fruit of the Spirit? Something's wrong there, Ben. I'm not the judge, nor am I presuming to sit upon the seat of judgment; but each time I pray the Holy Spirit sends me a warning for you. Please, dear boy, break it off while you still can; before you become serious minded about her."
Thus the tender, tearful pleadings had gone on, month after month, unheeded. And now, looking back, Ben had a painfully vivid recollection of his desire to obey his parent's God-given pleas and of his utter helplessness to do so because of his love for the dark-haired, dark-eyed Maureen.

When he could no longer stand to see the pain and the anguish he was bringing to his godly parents, Ben moved out. He found work in the city and lost himself in his employment, saving all he could possibly save for the day when Maureen and he would be married. He was intoxicated with happiness. She had pledged herself to be his wife. Month after month he worked, saved and planned. He moved out of the modest apartment into a luxurious one less than a month before their planned wedding day. And then she called him. "I can't go through with the wedding, Ben," she had said. "I love Rodney. I'm sorry.., for you. But I wanted you to know. It's kind of rotten of me, I know. But Rodney and I've been seeing each other ever since you left for the city. . . ."

Ben thrust the thought from his mind. He should have known. Yes, he should have known. Two just could not walk together unless they agreed. His loss was immense and immeasurable: he had traded the cross and its inexpressible joy and peace and love for a dark-haired beauty; a traitor. He had left the love and godly counsel of those who truly cared, intending and expecting to find a greater happiness with Maureen, only to find himself with an aching void and an emptiness like he had never before experienced or known. He was bereft of happiness and God was gone from his heart and life.

He poured himself a cup of hot tea and sipped it slowly while the bacon sizzled in the skillet on top of the stove. Then he added two potatoes, well-scrubbed and sliced, to the bacon grease and let them brown to a golden goodness before sliding two eggs into the grease beside the browned, stacked up potatoes.

Drawing one of the chairs up to the table, Ben poured a second cup of tea then sat down to eat the sumptuous breakfast which he had prepared. A warm feeling possessed him and a gentle conscience voice reminded him that the very least he could do was to give God thanks for the food which He had provided for him. And, without waiting to question why he should not give thanks, bitter or no, Ben bowed his head and offered the first prayer which he had prayed for months and months.
Was he softening? he wondered, as he ate. Recollections of former days' paraded somewhere in front of him inside his brain. They were the best days of his life, those former days: the years before he had been swept off his feet by Maureen and her beauty. He had been as steady as steady could be in his Christian experience and walk with God. His greatest joy and delight had been in feasting upon the good things of God and pleasing Him. Until Maureen captured his heart.

Ben groaned inwardly. Like the canvas of an unrolled picture, he saw with sudden clarity how Satan had sent Maureen into his life to rob him of his spiritual strength and power. His parents, far more wise and knowledgeable than he, had known and sensed this all the time. This was the reason for his father's tearful entreaties and pleas, the young man realized now. And to think that he had spurned those who loved him truly and deepest for one whose love was fickle and traitorous and untrue! His heart smote him.

He felt like a fool. Then a sudden thought sent a surge of happiness through his being. At least he wasn't married! He wasn't bound! For life, at that, to the traitorous Maureen. True, he had a broken heart. But broken hearts had a way of mending; a way of healing and of being mollified. Marriage, on the other hand, was a for-life thing; an until-death-do-us-part contract. And he was not bound; neither did he have a guilty conscience of loving too brashly and freely before the sacred wedding day was to have been. No, he had no feelings of guilt and remorse along the lines of his behavior and deportment while with Maureen. His one great remorse and deep hurt was in the fact that he had lost God's favor and His smile by dating Maureen, and that he had brought deep grief and anguish of soul to his parents.

He took his empty plate and the drained cup to the kitchen sink for washing. He was filled with wonder at the beauty beyond the window. The sky still wore some of its pink and gold dawn feathers, and the sea, with the eastern sun shining upon it, was somewhere between emerald and turquoise. It was beautiful, Ben thought. So beautiful that he felt like crying.

"Hey there!" he exclaimed aloud. "You're not a baby, so dry the tears." Quickly he turned away from the window. But the picture of sea and sky fingered and for a brief moment Ben felt an intense longing to see his parents. Were they, perhaps, this very moment on their faces before God for
him? He felt sure they were: the pull back to God, and to them, had never been so strong. Not since he had left home for the high-paying city job more than a year ago.

Ben finished unpacking more of the boxes which he had brought in the station wagon with him then he hurried away to the nearest town for window shades and curtains. While he was shopping, he decided he may as well get the covering for the kitchen floor also and buy some fuses so he could have electricity in the house. He had forgotten to check if the power lines went to the barn and shed. He hoped they did; he'd be able to begin working at restoring order out there (after he got off work) at night if he had sufficient light. If not, he'd sandwich that task in whenever he had spare time during the daylight hours, he decided. And as God gave him the strength.

Ben smiled to himself. God was becoming a miraculously wonderful part of his thought life lately. He marveled. For so long, he had no time to think of God; his thoughts were all occupied with Maureen and the day he would make her his. Now, however, he had all the time in the world to think. And a strangely wonderful thing was happening to him. On the inside. He was beginning to not only think about God but he was beginning to want God. It gave him a wonderful feeling. Wise in the Scriptures from his youth, he knew that knowledge without action was vain and futile. It was he who was "a doer of the Word" who reaped the benefits of his actions.

Ben sighed. He knew what he must do. Yes, he did. He knew the way back. He knew, too, that the cross which he had laid down and thrust aside for Maureen was at the very spot and place where he had first laid it down. It was those who acknowledged their sins and confessed them, and did a thorough job of forsaking them who found pardon and mercy.

He parked in front of the hardware store in the little sea coast town just as the store manager was unlocking the door for business.

Ben liked the small town. It was quaint and picturesque with the smell of fish and lobster hanging heavy in the air. Looking toward the pier, he understood the reason for the heavy scent: fishing vessels of every size were docked, while weathered seamen worked busily away at readying their early morning catch of fish and lobster and shrimp for sale. Already many customers stood, waiting to buy directly from the sea-going men.
He stood, watching the activity along the pier for some time and deciding that he too, would take back with him a mess of fresh fish, then he stepped inside the hardware store and made his purchases.

Like all the business places he entered, the quaint General Store was situated on a cobblestoned street overlooking the pier and the bay waters. Its interior looked much the same as he was sure it had looked nearly a century ago. But this, he knew, was the drawing card for many of the sea coast towns..., their look and feel of antiquity. Their quaint beauty and charm.

Ben took his time looking over the curtains in the store, feeling the leisureliness of yesteryear's patrons and customers wash over his being. For the moment, he was catapulted back into time; an era when people had time to sit inside a general store and visit around a blazing pot bellied stove while members of the family made their selections of calico prints, shoes, corn meal, sugar, and fat, juicy pickles from a barrel; home-cured meats, freshly-ground peanut butter, cheeses of every kind, and penny candies, to name only a few of the myriad, diversified items in the store.

He fell in love with the store immediately. Its homey, old-time atmosphere and charm was captivating. He felt unhurried and relaxed. He had no idea that a store of its kind was in existence in his day. But it was, and he was the happier for having found it. He would patronize it whenever he needed anything that the store carried, he decided quickly as he pointed out which curtains he wanted to the store's owner, a Mister Jonas Boyd.

Even the name, Jonas, fit in perfectly with the store, Ben decided, feeling happier than he had felt for a long time.

Snow was falling lightly by the time he had finished his shopping and he wondered where the beauty of the early morning sunrise had gotten to. Then he remembered the old saying, oft-repeated by his father, "Red in the morning, sailor take warning; red at night, sailor's delight."

Tucking his purchases inside the station wagon, Ben drove slowly out of town towards home.

(Chapter 3)
By the time Ben got to the house, snow was falling in great, heavy sheets. How white and beautiful the grasses and fields looked around his house! And now, after seeing the antiquity of the quaint shops and stores in the little town, his house looked almost like it was perfectly befitting the landscape around him. Oh, he would add a few things come summer, Lord willing; a porch, two dormer windows upstairs. Possibly three. And the exterior of the house he would cover with gray-blue cedar shingles, adding white shutters at the windows.

He parked the car near the front door and turned the key in the lock. Then he carried his purchases inside where he was greeted by the warmth of the big kitchen stove. Already, the old-fashioned range seemed like a trusted friend, waiting to greet him upon his arrival home.

He put a fuse in the fuse box and turned the light on in the kitchen, thankful for electricity. He would need it by the time his refrigerator and other things arrived, he mused. Sure, there would be times..., many times..., when he would use the beautiful kerosene lamps. He enjoyed their soft, beautiful glow and the lovely shadows they made.

Ben unwrapped the fish which he had bought, fresh from the catch, and readied them for frying. He was surprised how hungry he felt. In the city, thinking about Maureen and her Dear John phone call, his appetite seemed to have fled. But working in his house had restored it. It was therapy for him, he realized suddenly, as he slipped the seasoned fish into the hot skillet and sliced potatoes into a second skillet. Pork and beans would taste good with the fish and potatoes, he decided, and opened a can.

While he ate, Ben turned the small radio on. Softly-sweet strains of Silent Night filled the room. Christmas Carols! he thought, turning the volume up just a bit louder. Christmas Carols! Was it that time of year! But of course it was! He had been stopped in time. Maureen's broken promise had done it to him. It was as though everything had stopped for him.

Quickly, Ben opened his billfold and extracted a small calendar from inside its folds. Less than a week till Christmas! He had been so absorbed in his grief that he had forgotten all about Christmas, the birth of his Savior.

His Savior! Again the deep hunger and longing possessed him. Jesus Christ could become his Savior if he allowed Him to come within his heart,
Ben realized. Everything depended upon him and what he did or didn't do. He knew this. In fact, he knew so much that at times it had frightened him over how many times he had disobeyed and over-ridden what he knew to do and had not done. And now, God was once again giving him another opportunity . . . a golden opportunity . . . to come back to Him. What was he going to do about it?

Without waiting any longer, Ben did the noble thing: he dropped to the floor on his knees and called upon God for mercy and pardon and forgiveness. The victory came; joy was restored; peace flowed like a river through his soul. The miracle of salvation was wrought instantaneously in his soul. His Savior! Jesus as once again His Savior. Oh, he was so happy!

He finished his meal, now cold but still delicious, washed and dried the dirty dishes and pots and pans, then took the curtains and window shades out of their bags and boxes.

The curtains were in need of pressing, so Ben tackled the job with a joyful heart. He was gratified with the results and thanked God for helping him to do something which he had never done before. Certainly, ironing curtains and putting them up at the windows was a woman's work. But when there was no woman. . . .

It was after he had fastened the last shade in its window bracket and hung the last pair of curtains at the final window, that he stood back and surveyed his work with complete satisfaction. The ruffled, creamy white muslin curtains belonged to the house, he decided. They complimented and softened the harshness of the stark, narrow, long windows. And by him extending the curtain rods on either side of the windows, the curtains gave the illusion of a wider window. He was pleased with the transformation at each of the windows. The overall picture reminded him of some other home. A wonderful home!

Nostalgia, sweet and painful, swept over him as he compared his newly-bought, freshly-hung curtains with those of his mother's. Was that the reason he had chosen the ruffled curtains? he wondered. Instantly, his heart told him the answer: it was. And in that moment Ben realized how deeply ingrained were their teachings in his heart and how very much like them he actually was. In all ways! He had nothing to be ashamed of where his parents were concerned. Their lives were lived spotlessly pure and clean for God.
And now that he was converted, by God's grace, his life would be a pattern of both God's and his parents.

Ben added more wood to the fire in the kitchen stove; then he sat down and sorted through a sheaf of papers he had brought from work. He would file them categorically, he decided, then do the finished work on them. With the two weeks he had off, he should easily get them finished, God willing, and have everything ready for filing when he returned to his job.

As he sorted, Ben's mind wandered to his parents. He must give them the glad tidings of his salvation as soon as possible. Perhaps, if he could get through the snow in the morning, he could find a pay phone and call them, God willing. They would be overjoyed. Then another thought entered his mind: why not have them out for Christmas, the Lord willing? He would pay their plane fare. It had been almost a year and a half since he had last seen them. And he knew, now, that it had been a time of many tears and much groaning and pleading with God for his soul's salvation.

Tears ran down Ben's cheeks as he thought of all the pain and anguish and the hurt which he had brought upon his parents. And they didn't deserve it. Not any of it. He had just sort of dropped out of their life and out of their world.

"O God!" he suddenly cried aloud. "How could I have been so cruel to those who have been so wonderfully kind to me! Oh, I'm sorry. I have inflicted such pain and grief upon them."

Laying the papers aside, Ben went to the door and looked outside. He would make that phone call now, he decided. If he could make it through the snow, he would call home before he did another thing.

He walked toward the station wagon, checking the depth of the snow, and then he felt the wind. A strong northeast wind, it was. That meant drifting. Much of it. He knew he dare not go. Shivering, he hurried inside the house and closed the door. Again, he was thankful for the big kitchen stove and the warmth it provided. This time, Ben paused to thank God for the added blessing of furniture in the house. The stove especially.

He added more wood to the fire then got back to his papers, working late into the night.
Wind moaned outside his bedroom windows as he crawled between the covers that night. It shrieked shrilly as it raced around the sharp corners of the house, fading to a ghost of a moan only to return in more violent velocity and cadence.

Ben lay and listened to its wildly-fierce sound then, praying and entrusting himself to the Everlasting arms of his God... his Savior... he fell asleep. Soundly so.

He awoke to a late dawn the following morning and to a world wrapped in white. It seemed as though every bit of landscape was sewn or tacked together in one vast, endless sheet of white. Even the two gnarled trees outside the window looked as if they had been tucked in and were tied down securely into the sheet or blanket of stark white. The sea seemed nearer, Ben noted; the thick covering of white giving the illusion of pulling the waters closer inland. Everything looked pure and clean and white. Transformed. Like his heart and life was.

He stood for a long while, looking through the sparkling-clean, ruffle-curtained windows to the winter wonderland outside and the words of a song came strongly and forcibly to his mind.

He began to sing it. Then tears flowed down his cheeks. "O make me clean. O make me clean. Mine eyes Thy Holiness have seen. O send the burning, cleansing flame. And make me clean, in Jesus' name."

Ben was weeping fiercely by the time he finished singing the chorus. A deep hunger for the cleansing, purging fire of Pentecost filled his soul. He wanted a holy heart. A cleansed heart. He needed the Holy Spirit. Oh, he did!

He was on his knees by the window, praying, weeping, and pleading to be made clean and holy, quoting, with passionate longing and desire, the verses:

"With aching heart, and spirit sore distressed, I came to Thee, and Thou didst give me rest. Now, Lord, I pray, and long with deep desire
"I hate the sin, which grieves Thy loving heart;  
Come, precious Lord, and bid it all depart.  
Thy temple cleanse, and make my heart Thy throne.  
Come, King of kings, and reign Thyself alone."

Such an intense hunger and desire to be wholly sanctified filled Ben's heart and soul that he felt he'd die unless he received the witness. On and on he prayed, asking God to utterly slay and crucify the awful carnal nature within his being. Then the words of the last stanza came forcibly to him. With upraised hands, an obedient heart, and an unwavering for-time-and-all-eternity yieldedness and total submission, the Holy fire fell. It burned up all sin and eradicated the dreadful nature within his heart; that nature which "is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be."

Oh the resurrection! The infilling of the Holy Spirit! The glory of God's Divine Love, as billow after billow and wave upon wave washed over his soul! Over and over, Ben sang,

"'Dear Lamb of God, I yield my all to Thee:  
Thine, wholly Thine, for all eternity!  
Now in my heart, I feel the sacred flame;  

He makes me clean, O glory to His name. He makes me clean; He makes me clean. . . ."

Breakfast came late that morning. Ben's appetite for spiritual food kept him long in the Word. He feasted and drank until his soul felt like a well-watered garden.

He hurried downstairs, singing the song worshipfully. The miracle of the new birth and entire sanctification had brought new life to his soul, new joy to his heart, and rivers of peace and satisfaction to his inner being. And how wonderful that the glorious happenings had taken place within him during the time when the birth of his Savior was being commemorated and remembered! His was indeed a miracle at Christmas!

While preparing his breakfast, Ben made loving but quick mental plans for the day. First, he would find a pay phone and call his parents. With God's
kindness and graciousness to him, they would be together for Christmas. Then, too, like he had done yesterday, he would shop in the lovely, quaint General Store and buy his father and mother each the finest gifts he could find for them. He would begin to make up to them the year-and-a-half which the "canker-worm" of sin had destroyed and devastated.

He would never be able to erase the lines which his disobedience had traced into their dear faces, he knew, nor would he be able to erase the memory of their long prayer vigils and their accompanying tears and anguish of soul from their minds. But he would make them happy beyond any describing with the good news of his salvation and his subsequent sanctification.

Even now, Ben could see their pained expressions fade away; the worry lines eased; the tears of joy and the smiles of relief.

He hurried with his breakfast, anxious to be on his way. Today, he would be the bearer of good tidings as he related the miracle of God's power in his life. The miracle wrought during the week of Christmas!

(The End)