Charlene shook her head in utter disbelief as she walked along the sidewalk toward Azalea Street. It couldn't be true! No! No! It couldn't. Still, Charles was not one to fabricate a story, nor would he have told her had he not believed it to be the truth.
Hot, salty tears stung her eyes and traced small rivulets down her partially sunbrowned cheeks. In the first place, she wished Charles hadn't told her and, secondly, she wished Charles had not heard it even. True, she was the young people's leader in church and, in this respect, she guessed she was the right person for Charles to have come to with the story. But who got it started? Where did it have its beginning? And, most important of all, was it true? Yes, this was the big question: Was it true?

Her head drooped and her shoulders sagged, so heavy had the burden become since hearing the story. Missy was her friend; a very close friend, to be quite explicit and honest. And, until three months ago, Missy knew nothing whatever about the Lord and His power to save and sanctify the soul. Truth of the matter was, Missy said that until she, Charlene, had met her and told her that she, Missy, had a soul that would live on and on forever somewhere, either Heaven or Hell, she had not known she had a soul, even. It was a startling revelation for her.

Charlene marveled at their meeting. It was by no mere coincidence, nor was it a chance meeting, this she knew: God had arranged it all. It was of His planning. She hadn't wanted to go to the garage sale that day but Maribel, another church friend, had wanted her to go. "It is a home where," Maribel declared, "I've always found good, clean and well taken care of clothing for sale. I've gotten most of my school clothes there," her friend had said. "Mother's been taking me with her for years. She knows where to go and where not to go," Maribel added. "Now that I'm older, and earning money of my own, I go whenever I'm able. Mother can't go along today, so how about you coming?"

And that's how meeting Missy had come about. Though she hadn't wanted to go to the garage sale with her friend, something inside her being prodded her gently, seeming to encourage her to go with Maribel.
Missy was looking at the same dress which Charlene was interested in. Their eyes met. Charlene noticed the look of sadness in the clear blue eyes which were fixed upon her.

"You take the dress," Charlene said, with a smile lighting up her face. "It looks like it's your size."

"Yours, too," the girl replied.

"The green picks up the hint of red in your hair," Charlene added.

"Oh, thank you, came the quick reply. "I really do like the dress. Are you sure you don't mind?"

"Not at all," Charlene replied. "And, by the way, I'm Charlene Crawley. Do you attend church anywhere? If you don't I'd like to invite you out to my church."

The young woman looked stricken, momentarily, then a strange smile tugged the corners of her mouth. "You mean you go to church?" She sounded incredulous.

"I do, and I love it. God meets with us in our church services."

"God? I . . . I guess I thought nobody gave Him too much thought in this modern day and age. We've progressed beyond those old fashioned beliefs. Our college professor told us it was all right for those long-ago by-gone days when people didn't do much thinking for themselves But we're living in the age of reason now. It seems strange to me that you should be going to church. Isn't it dreadfully boring and . . . and dull? You look like an intelligent person, Charlene. Don't you get bored?"

"O my no! Not in our church. Like I said a few minutes ago, God visits our services with His mighty
presence and power. Nothing can ever be dull or boring when the presence of the Lord is present. Have you ever been born again, of God?"

"Now isn't that a strange question! When one is born, he's born; that's it. He can't be un-born and then be born again. Reason tells me this much. Reason, and logic."

That's when Charlene had told her what Jesus said to Nicodemus in John's Gospel. And when she told her about the soul that would never die, the young woman had grabbed hold of her arm and said, "Is this true? Really and honestly, true? Where did you hear about it?"

That had opened the way for Charlene to tell her, from the Bible, so many things. She learned that the girl's name was Melissa Kemp, Missy for short, the name which she said she preferred being called and addressed by. Missy had invited her to her apartment. "I must know more about these things," she told Charlene.

Week after week, Charlene had visited Missy on her day off at the hospital, where she was a registered nurse. Each week, Missy was nothing short of a question box and, always, Charlene had answered her questions by giving her Scripture. "This is God's Word," she had said. "And God's Word is truth, Missy."

It was a beautiful and touching day when Charlene stepped into the neat apartment and Missy greeted her with, "I have no more questions, Charlene; I'm convinced. I'm ready now to change. Will you pray with me, please?"

And pray she did! God stooped low; all heaven came down; Missy was born again. From that moment on, she was changed. Wondrously and radically changed. She began attending church regularly, not missing a single service when she was not on duty at the hospital. She walked into the light of Holiness and, after her experience of entire
sanctification, she grew marvelously in the grace of God. Her zeal for the Lord, and her Spirit-filled life, was a real blessing to the church, as well as to the world. Through her, the young people's services received a new spark of fire, for Missy's testimonies were filled with the fire of Pentecost, like her life. And now this . . . this devastating story!

Charlene wiped the fastly-falling tears from her eyes now as she walked. Story! Story! That's all it was, she was sure. She would go to Missy and find out for herself. It was not true; she was sure of this. She would do everything possible to have Missy cleared of what Charles had said was being spread around about her.

She walked with determination and purpose. In her heart, she knew Missy was innocent Missy had made a break with sin and the world three months ago. It was real then; it was real now. Charlene felt strongly about this.

She found Missy outside, sweeping the sidewalk, when she arrived.

"Hi, there!" Missy greeted her with a bright smile and a hug.

"Am I ever glad to see you, Charlene!" she added. "It seems like it's almost forever from one church service to the next. Isn't it this Friday night that our young people's group is to go to the new nursing home? Or is it next Friday night? Usually, I don't forget, nor get dates mixed up like this. But two of my handsome male cousins flew in from the West Coast, totally unannounced and unlooked-for by me. They kept me going, believe me! Drew rented a car from Hertz, and he and Dale and I went to every Museum and place of interest we could scrounge up around here within a hundred mile radius. What a whirl-wind of activity those few days were!"
Charlene wanted to shout and laugh and cry at the same time. Tearfully, and silently, she hugged her friend.

Missy giggled softly and, motioning Charlene into the house, she said, "I told my cousins I found the perfect angel when they got ready to settle down. You'd like them Charlene, I promise. They're twins. On my mother's side of the family. They make money like you wouldn't believe."

"Did they notice your change, Missy?"

"Did they ever! Outside of Dale's 'Hi, Miss, how's our favorite female cousin doing these days?' he noticed immediately. 'Something's different about you. You .. you look radiant,' he said. 'Shiny-bright when you talk. What is it, Missy? Out with it.'

"Oh, Charlene, it was wonderful! I talked for hours about Jesus Christ and what He did for me. And the amazing thing was that they listened. They seemed captivated. There's power in the Word of God. It has an arresting force about it. Like you did to me and with me, I answered all their queries and questions with the Word of God. Drew was fascinated at first. Then, like Dale was from the beginning, he became convicted. Oh, Charlene, God gave me my first two sheaves to lay at His feet when I get to Heaven: My cousins were gloriously converted right here in my living room!"

The two wept joyfully together. It was a time for rejoicing. A sacred moment; God's presence filled the place.

"All the while we were going from one place to another, they were learning about God and what He said about any given thing. Like myself, they have been well-versed and trained in earthly ways and things but they had no training whatever about God. Drew said he
frequently wondered what man's purpose in life was. He said he felt within himself that it had to be something higher and nobler and more rewarding than merely being an achiever in business and book-learning, etc. which he and his twin are. And have been. They're brainy, believe me. But so ignorant where God was concerned.

"But now the Light has come to their heart, Missy! Oh, blessed be God forever!"

"Talk about happy! I've never seen my cousins like this before. They could scarcely wait to get from their motel room to my apartment in the morning, so I could tell them more about God. I gave them my already much-marked Bible to read and study and to take back home with them. I miss it dreadfully; It seemed to be the dearest earthly treasure I possess. But I bought another like it. Only, it doesn't have all my markings and written notations in it yet. But it will soon; I can't stop reading it, Charlene. Oh, I wish you could have been here when they got converted, Charlene! I was almost as happy as when I got saved. It was wonderful!"

"And the end is not yet, Missy: Your cousins will now become witnesses for Christ. Only God can see how extensive and far-reaching their witnessing will be. We must pray earnestly that they will get into a sound Holiness preaching and teaching church. They need their hearts purified and cleansed by the power of the Holy Spirit."

"I told them about this, Charlene. They're open and ready, like I was when God led you to me. They said they'll be calling me whenever they have any questions they need answered. Oh, I'm so excited! I'm doing something worth-while for the Lord now. And you know Mrs. Flannigan whom I told you about; the patient on my floor? She's not far from the Kingdom: She asked me to please pray for her. My life has real meaning since I found Jesus and let Him come into my heart."
Charlene's heart was overflowing with happiness and joy. The "story" about Missy being out late at night with two young men was now cleared up. Beautifully and wondrously so. Now she must call Charles and all others who may have been repeating the gossip, and set things straight. And clear Missy, without ever letting her know what was being told about her! The tongue; what a fire of iniquity it could be!

Suddenly, Charlene knew what one of her young people's meetings would be zeroed in upon in the very near future: The tongue! Its blessing and its curse; its sweetness or its poison; its life or its death.

She visited a little while with Missy, had prayer with her, then left. She must call Charles -- and the others -- before the story spread any further. Walking briskly, she hurried home.