

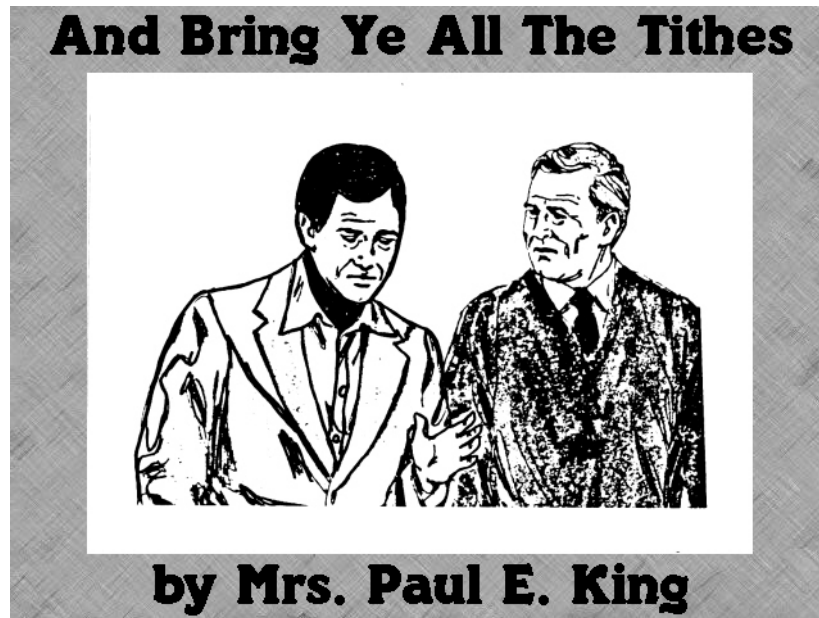
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AND BRING YE ALL THE TITHES
By Mrs. Paul E. King

"Know what I think about this nonsense, Bradley?" my father asked as he towered over me while I sat at the table and figured, trying to see if I'd be able to pay double tithes on my weekly earnings this week.

I looked up at my dad and, smiling, I continued with my figuring.

"I can't believe that a son of mine would practice, or believe in, even, anything so archaic! You humiliate me, Bradley. I hope no one finds out about this. In the first place, we are not under the Mosaic law and, secondly, you are not a Jew."

Dad's voice had risen to a high pitch as he finished speaking. I knew I'd be hearing more from him; I had heard the same thing numerous other times since I had become converted and had begun to pay my tithe and offerings.

"You're a fool, Bradley!" Dad exclaimed loudly. "That preacher's taking you for all he can get out of you. Probably lives like some rich guy, and has anything and everything he wants. I tell you, you're a fool, and it's about time you wised up and stopped this nonsense."

There was that word again -- nonsense; it cut into my heart each time Dad used it in relation to tithing. Again I kept silent, knowing that no matter what I'd say, Dad would lash out at me. Furthermore, he knew how I believed and exactly how and where I stood on tithing and giving offerings. I had told him several times that anyone who didn't pay his tithes was a robber and a thief, as stated in the Bible. But that served only to make him even more angry and agitated; so after that experience, I kept silent whenever he started on one of his tirades. Words from the book of Job always came to mind whenever he began castigating me; Job 6:25, to be exact and explicit, where he stated, "How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?"

I sighed now, not having any desire whatever to argue with my father, whom I loved dearly. Dad's attitude toward me since my radical heart change was anything but civil and kind. He seemed almost hostile to me at times. Worse still, he seemed like a total stranger to me. This hurt. Deeply! Heretofore, we had been extremely close, the father-son tie bonding and knitting us together like one, almost. We fished the streams in our area together, we hunted together and we played together. We never did go to church together, however. Mother -- bless her! -always went alone. Until a short time ago. . . .

"You ready to go to the golf course, Bradley!" Dad called up the stairway that beautiful, sunny-warm Sunday morning.

"Naw," I replied, stepping to the top step and looking down at my father. "I think I'll go to church with Mother for a change," I added.

Dad's face seemed to drain of all its color. He turned ashen-white, then red. "What's happening to you?" he demanded. "Are you a man or a sissy?"

I didn't know what to say for I had never seen my father like this before. After a while, I collected my thoughts and told him the truth. "It's just that I feel sorry for Mother," I said. "She always goes alone; no one goes with her; neither you nor I. We take off together to do what we enjoy and like to do and Mother always goes alone to church."

"She could go with us," Dad roared. "I used to ask her, but she had this religious inhibition and is too stubborn to bend an inch my way. Come along, Bradley; I want my son to be a man. Every inch and pound of him, a man!"

I stood as one glued to that top step, looking at my father as though I were seeing him for the first time ever, only this time he seemed like a total and perfect stranger to me. I didn't appreciate the mockery regarding my mother's religious beliefs. I loved my mother. I knew she was a genuine Christian; her day by day, moment by moment living Christ in and through her had long ago convinced me she had something truly wonderful and wondrously real. I knew that, someday, I would be taking her way. I had no idea when this would happen or take place, but in my heart I had long ago decided that I was going to follow in my mother's pathway. She had a serenity and a peace that was constant and perpetual, something which my father lacked completely and was absolutely devoid of.

"Are you coming?" my father's voice demanded as he stepped away from the stair banister and looked up to where I was standing.

"Not this time, Dad; I'm going to go with Mother. She'll be happy, I'm sure. I haven't told her yet; thought I'd surprise her. Why don't we make it a threesome by your coming along?"

If I would have detonated a bomb near my dad I don't believe it would have had the effect upon him that my simply-asked question did. He opened his mouth as though he were going to say something; his nostrils dilated in anger. His face was white with rage. Giving me a look of profound hatred and

loathsomeness, he turned on his heels and marched through the doorway, slamming the door as he left.

I heard the revved-up engine of the car and the squealing of the tires and knew my father was really angry. He never drove like that unless he was agitated or highly irritated over something.

I went back to my room and slipped a tie around my upturned shirt collar when I heard my mother come in from outside, where she had gone to cut fresh flowers for an ailing church member.

"Bradley, what happened to your father?" she asked, standing at the bottom of the stairs and calling up to me.

I made a knot for my tie, then hurried back to the top of the stairs, flipping the shirt collar down as I went. "He wanted me to go golfing with him," I explained, "and I told him that today I wouldn't. It's that simple, Mom."

"Where are you going?" my mother wanted to know.

I grinned broadly at Mother. "I may as well tell you now," I said, feeling extremely good and happy over my decision. "I'm going to church with you."

Tears danced in Mother's eyes. For a long time she couldn't speak; she seemed to be all choked up with emotion. Then, with a smile of pure joy on her face, she said, "Oh, Bradley, you'll never know how happy this makes me feel. I have been praying for this ever since I became converted and was sanctified wholly three years ago. It's almost time to leave. You look so nice in a tie."

I hurried back to my room, shrugged into my suit coat, took one final look at my general appearance then went whistling down the stairway.

Mother had the flowers in a vase by now and, in a little while, we were on our way to church, with me behind the steering wheel. It all felt so right to me. So very right.

"It's nice to have a man drive me to church," Mother remarked as I pulled along the curb in front of the ill woman's house and waited while Mother delivered the beautiful flowers.

I watched Mother as she came down the steps from the woman's house toward the car. Mother looked beautiful; not worldly beautiful, mind you, but like she had something inside her that radiated outward and shone through her from head to foot. I hadn't taken the time before to notice how radiantly lovely she was; but that Sunday morning I saw her for what she really was and, suddenly, I felt as though Father and I had had an angel living in the house with us and we had failed to notice and be aware of it. Her face wore a look of Divine peace and Heavenly contentment and joy. In that moment, I knew that I must have what she had become a possessor of. At any price or cost, I must experience this for myself.

Little wonder then, that that beautiful, sunny-warm Sunday morning marked a brand new beginning for me. I was hungry and eager to be changed; my heart was open and ready for the Lord to make a born again creature out of me. When the minister opened the altar for sinners to come for salvation and believers for sanctification, I was the first one to move out and hurry to the altar.

Talk about glorious and wonderful; my heart felt like it couldn't contain the joy and peace God gave me in return for my load of sin and guilt and condemnation! I felt lighter than a feather; tears of happiness and ecstasy ran copiously down my face. I was shouting loud praises to God. I was born again . . . converted . . . changed . . . made new in Christ . . . and I knew it: I had the Spirit's witness in my heart!

Mother was beside herself with joy; her many fervently-prayed prayers for me were answered. As I embraced her, she looked more than ever like an angel to me. Over and over, she exclaimed, "Oh, Bradley, I'm so very happy! Praise the Lord!"

If Mother was ecstatic with joy, my father was anything but happy! Truth of the matter was, he was furious!

I could scarcely wait to get home to tell him that I, like Mother, was all new in Jesus Christ and that I wanted him to get saved, too, so he could experience for himself just how real and wonderful the Lord was. But he wasn't home when Mother and I returned from church, nor did he come home for dinner. It was late into the night when I heard him drive up into the driveway and come, eventually, into the house.

"Dad! Dad!" I cried, rushing out of my room and down the stairway to tell him the good news. "I got saved this morning!" I exclaimed with tears of joy in my eyes. "Oh Dad, Jesus is real! I wish. . . ."

"Don't say anymore!" Dad roared. "I hate you! You and your mother have disgraced me. Do you hear what I said?" he asked, looking me full in the face. "Don't speak to me of this again. Never!" And seething with anger, he brushed past me and disappeared up the stairs.

I learned to pray now. And I mean pray! I could pray and talk to the Lord all I wanted to about my dear father even though I was forbidden to talk to him personally about my best and truest Friend or mention anything to him about his lost condition.

When Dad learned that I was tithing my income (consistently and religiously, too), he exploded in angry remonstrations and derisiveness. I don't know if he thought -- or hoped -- he could frighten me or intimidate me to the point where I would eventually cease my giving or what. But the more I read in the Bible, so much the more convinced I became that my system of giving was not mine at all but was God's system and that it was, indeed, required and expected of me as one of God's children, as per stated from Holy Writ -- all this in spite of my father's reasonings and angry outbursts.

I continued going to church with Mother on a regular basis, not missing a single service unless I just had to because of my part-time job. I walked into the glorious light of Holiness of heart and was wondrously sanctified wholly. My life took on a greater meaning than ever. God gave me power to witness to my friends and, praise to Him, some of them were gloriously converted and sanctified wholly. My father alone refused to allow me to speak to him about what took place in my heart.

"Did you hear me, Bradley?" my father shouted loudly now, as I sat figuring out how much above my regular giving I could give for the week. There was that missionary family in Peru, and the destitute family whom the pastor told us about, and. . . .

"Don't pretend you aren't listening," Dad exploded. "I want you to give up this nonsense. I am your father; as such you are commanded to obey me. Do you hear?"

I lifted my eyes to meet those of my father's. I felt tears spring to the surface of my uplifted eyes. "Oh, Dad," I said kindly, "I love you far more than you will ever know; but I love my Lord more. He is both Lord and King of my life. My allegiance to you goes only until you violate God's Word; then I must obey what the Bible says. I cannot violate either God's Word or His commands. This is a matter of Christian principle. I dare not violate this; I must obey God's word. I want to do this; it is pure delight to give and. . . ."

"You . . . you defy me, your father?"

Dad's voice rose and swelled like thunder. For a moment I thought he was going to hit me.

"I'm not defying you," I answered kindly. "I love you too much to do anything to hurt you. But Dad, I love the Lord more. I delight in doing His will. I dare not, cannot, will not rob God by not paying my tithes and offerings. I want to maintain a conscience void of offense toward God and man. Someday I'm going to stand before Him and give account for what I did or did not do. . . ."

"Quiet! Quiet!" Dad shouted as he stomped his feet and stormed out the door.

I watched now as he backed the car out of the garage and drove away in anger. My heart felt crushed and was heavily burdened. All my life, I was obedient to my parents. But Christian principle was now involved. By God's grace, and regardless of what it might cost me in suffering and verbal abuse, I meant to live up to what God's Word told me to do. I would continue giving my tithes and offerings; consistently and religiously so, and I would entrust my father to God.

I picked up the pen and continued with my figures. My soul felt blessed as I jotted an offering down for Peru and some for the poor family, too.