

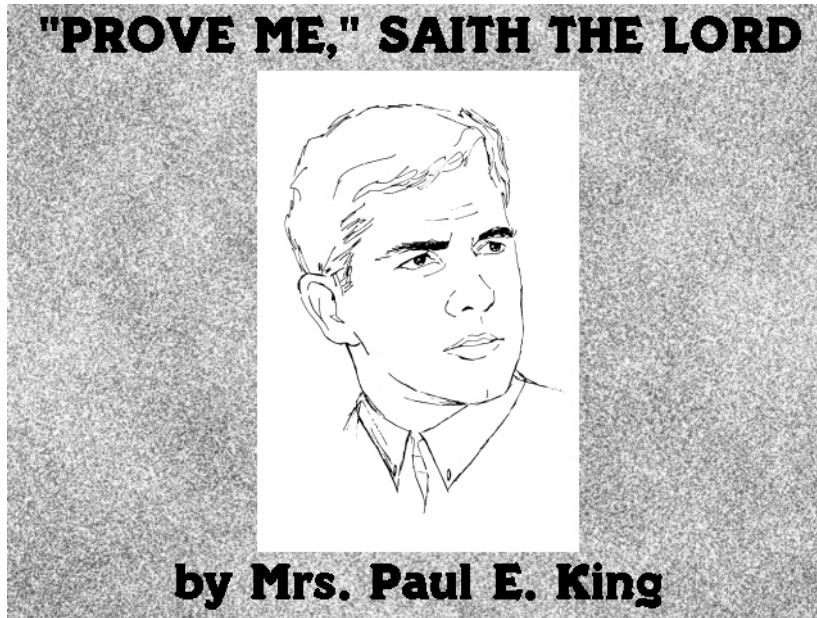
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Digital Edition 10/22/2001  
By Holiness Data Ministry

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The Sunday School Beacon  
June 17, 1990



**"PROVE ME," SAITH THE LORD**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

"Are you crazy, man?" Adrian asked, looking over Britt's shoulder as he counted out his tithe and offering money and dropped it into an envelope for Sunday's giving.

Smiling, Britt sealed the church envelope and slipped it inside the desk drawer.

"Honestly, Britt, sometimes I think you're ridiculous and . . . and as loony-crazy as one can possibly become. God doesn't need your money: He owns the world and everything in it. And besides, He knows you're making barely enough to make ends meet. We'll never be able to get a better apartment if you don't change and stop giving all your money to the church."

Britt looked at his brother and smiled. There was no need to say anything; he had been through the same thing too many times before. Words, with Adrian, were futile. Not until he settled some important things between God and himself would he understand, Britt knew.

"Please, Britt," Adrian pleaded, "let's try to save enough for a deposit on one of those apartments over on River Shore Drive. I've about had it with this one. What we're paying out here we could be putting on one over there."

"Plus one hundred and fifty dollars more, Adrian. At our present totally combined earnings I don't see how we can afford to change."

"We could, if you'd stop your foolishness and put what you give to the church every week into our apartment fund. Besides, we'd have heat over there. Here, it's anything but warm. When will you ever see that we'd be so much better off by moving?"

Britt swiveled the desk chair around until he faced his brother. "Father and Mother told us never to bite off more than we could handle properly, remember? In plain language, never go into debt or incur more expenses than you can comfortably and quickly pay off. I think it's good and sound advice, Adrian, and I intend to heed it and pursue it. We're just getting started in the printing business. In time, with God's help and His blessing, it will prosper. Especially if we put Him first and pay our tithes and offerings faithfully and religiously."

"You make me sick!" Adrian exclaimed, heading for the door. "God could care less about what we give Him or don't give Him. And as for me, I don't intend to get as fanatical as you are. Enjoy yourself!" He slammed the door and was gone.

Britt sat for a long while, not moving. He was shocked and stunned by his brother's words. And by the change that was taking place in Adrian. He

felt fear creep over him. Adrian was trying to get to Heaven on his own terms, and such a thing was an utter impossibility. God's Word, the Bible, had long ago marked clearly and plainly the route to Heaven, stating factually and without alteration that unless one was born again and, subsequently, was sanctified wholly, he could never enter the gates into God's Eternal City, Heaven.

Tears filled Britt's eyes. Adrian had perfect knowledge of the way. Like himself, he -- Adrian -- had been taught from infancy the Bible way of victorious living: their parents were God-fearing, Spirit-filled people whose supreme delight was to follow the Lord closely and humbly and to see their children doing the same.

It seemed almost unreal to Britt that his brother, eighteen months his senior, should, or ever could and would, take the attitude he took against tithing and paying offerings. At home, this had been as normal a thing to do as was daily eating and sleeping.

Feeling greatly troubled for Adrian, Britt dropped to his knees and prayed for his brother.

It was late when Adrian returned to the apartment. Without a word, he began gathering his belongings together and taking them out to his car.

"Are you leaving?" Britt asked kindly.

"You better believe it!" came the quick reply. "For some time, a friend of mine has been wanting me to share expenses in his apartment. This is the day I begin. And it's not an old run-down, dilapidated apartment, either! I'm sorry, Britt; but I'm tired of putting up with something sub-standard when we could have had comfort and class if you hadn't been so crazy over giving tithes and offerings. And one thing more, I won't be working with you any more. My friend got me on in the plant where he works. Talk about money!"

"Remember the Lord, Adrian! You've had much light; much will be required of you."

"Look, Britt, I'm not under Father's roof anymore; I'll do as I please. I believe in thinking for myself. Well, enjoy your work. And this apartment!" And Adrian closed the door with a loud bang and was gone.

It was quiet after he left, and Britt knew he'd miss his brother terribly. They had grown up together, slept in the same bed together for so long as he could remember, and they were so close in age and size as to frequently be mistaken for twins. The printing business had come quite naturally for them since their father had been a printer for as long as they could recall. It was their father, now retired, who had suggested that they take over the business of a friend of his in the city, some distance away. His friend's health demanded a change, so the two had accepted the challenge eagerly.

And now he was alone, Britt realized, wondering how he'd be able to manage everything by himself. Feeling overwhelmed by the shocking circumstances, he fell to his knees beside the bed and emptied his heart out in petitioning prayer to God. A deep settled peace enfolded him. He knew the Lord had heard and that He would answer Him. It was a sweetly-settled thing. With complete confidence in His God, Britt crawled between the sheets on the bed and was soon sleeping soundly and peacefully.

Two hours into his work day the following morning, the door to the little printing shop opened and Mr. Murchett, the friend of Britt's father, stepped inside.

"How are you doing, young man?" he called, smiling broadly. "Hey, are you alone?" he asked quickly. "Where's your brother? I'm feeling so much better that I thought I'd come by and give you a hand. Now, why are you doing everything by yourself?. There's too much here for one man to handle by himself, even though this isn't the largest kind of set up."

Britt's face brightened with a smile. "All I can say is that God sent you here, Mr. Murchett. My brother left. He said he has work elsewhere."

Mr. Murchett merely grunted. Then he remarked, "Well, I'm not surprised. I've been expecting it. Adrian wants to make quick bucks, and big; a thing one doesn't do always. In this business, one must have contracts to fill and deadlines to meet. I've received several large contracts -- orders -- Britt. Here, look these over." And Mr. Murchett placed the envelopes on the desk in the shop.

"Open them up, Britt," he said, smiling. "Spread them out. Do you think we can handle them?"

Britt could do nothing but praise the Lord when he saw the orders. He and Adrian had had nothing like them since they had taken over for the man.

"Can we fill them by the deadline, Britt?"

"I'll do my best, Mr. Murchett. With God's help, I'll fill those orders."

"Not I, Britt; we. My doctor said I have been doing so well physically that so long as you take the managerial responsibility, I may help out. Every day. Oh, I tell you, I don't know where to begin nor stop praising the Lord. I was too involved in this business. It took this illness to make me realize that unless we take time, or make time, for God, He has ways of allowing and causing us to do so. He will have first place or none in our heart and life. Some of us have to be reminded of this through illness. But the main thing is to get the message and then to heed it. Which, thanks be unto God, I did."

Britt was crying for joy. Only hours ago he was pleading with God and crying out to Him for help and, already, his prayer was answered. Mightily and wondrously so.

"I see you're almost finished with that Casky order, Britt. You've done a great job, my boy. I'm much pleased with your work. You take pride in what you do. It shows up in the printing . . . neatness, exactness, beauty. Perfection!"

"Thank you, Mr. Murchett. Some things are hereditary: my father -- your friend -- was quite the perfectionist in his work. I always admired Dad's work. To my eyes, his printing was a work of art. I tried hard to emulate him and his technique, always striving for perfectness, like he did. I loved working with Dad in his print shop."

"It shows in your work, Britt. Beautiful! Beautiful! And lest I forget, my wife suggested that we rent the apartment over the garage to you. She has taken great pride in fixing it up. It's finished nicely and it will be less rent than you are paying now. And you'll be so much closer to the shop, too. It's yours if you want it."

For a long while Britt was speechless. The Lord seemed to have opened the storehouse of His blessings and was pouring them upon him in "good measure, shaken together, pressed down and running over" fashion.

"It's an efficiency apartment," Mr. Murchett continued, when Britt made no reply. "It has a bedroom, a bath, a kitchen and a cozy sitting room."

"I'm speechless, Mr. Murchett, that's all. Last night, after Adrian left, I went to the only Source I have for help. While on my knees in earnest prayer, I told the Lord everything, my needs included. He gave me the sweet assurance that He had heard. And now, in a miraculous way, He has supplied two of my biggest present needs -- help here in the shop and a place to live where the rent would be cheaper, since I am now alone. Oh, my heart is joyously overwhelmed with His tender care for me! Praise His worthy name forever and forever! I want the apartment, Mr. Murchett. And I trust the Lord will repay you a hundred fold for your kindness toward me. Thank you, thank you, for everything. I appreciate it greatly and deeply. And please, when you pray, remember Adrian in prayer."

"Some people are set in their ways. Your brother is one of these. It will take God to up-set and un-set him, Britt. And until the day when he'll come to his senses, all we can do is to pray for him. God's ways of dealing with man are truly and unmistakably marvelous," he added, rolling up the cuffs of his long-sleeved shirt and starting to work.

Going back to his work on the almost-finished Casky order, Britt quoted silently, "and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).

His cup was overflowing with spiritual blessings. True to his promise, as always, God was opening the windows of heaven upon him and pouring him out a blessing, the like of which he had never before had.

He thought of the tithes and offerings inside the little envelope in the desk drawer and his heart felt strangely warmed.