

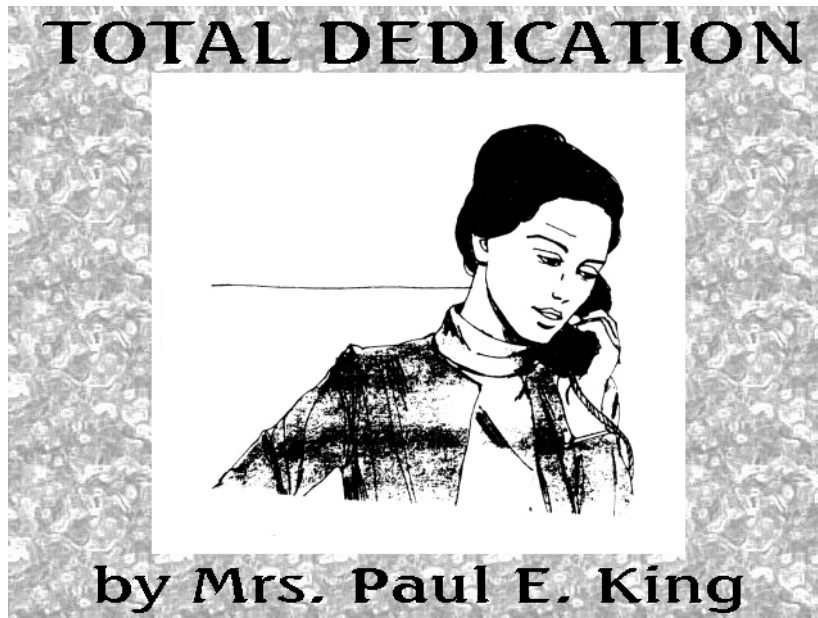
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TOTAL DEDICATION
By Mrs. Paul E. King

"Barbara Renee Stamm Crismond." It sounded good; much like it belonged together, the brunette thought, as she repeated the name aloud for the second time. She thrilled with the thought that, soon, God willing, she would be changing the Stamm family name to wear that of Crismond. And she would wear it proudly and carefully, too, and see to it that no stain of any kind was brought upon the name. Just as she had kept her maiden name --

Stamm -- untarnished and noble. Not that any name could be said to be noble, other than that of Christ, she knew, because it was the bearer of the name and not the name itself that either made one think of good and noble things or ignoble and infamous things.

Four months, one week and three days, then she would be Mrs. Neil Crismond, God willing. She had the timing down to all but the hours and the minutes, she thought, as she hung her sweater inside the closet she shared with Kim Brooks in their room at Piney Woods Bible School.

She walked to the double windows, which long, slender, rectangular panes opened outwardly and listened to the soft, sweet singing of the birds, all the while praying silently for the Lord to help her to break the news of Neil's and her call to minister abroad to her parents, who could not understand why she had chosen a Bible school over their beloved alma mater. She was disgracing the family, they had told her, when she informed them four years ago that she was going to Piney Woods. But, then, they had told her the same thing when she was converted and, subsequently, sanctified wholly, and had told them of the glorious transformation within her heart and life.

Barbara sighed deeply, wondering again, as she so often did, when her dear father and mother were going to change. They were so proud; so worldly and worldly minded and vain. Her glorious heart change had seemed to only humiliate them in the presence of their friends, who frequently remarked about "how different" she looked and was.

"You don't do much socializing any more, do you, Barbie?" Norma Brownstaff had asked with a generous hint of sarcasm laced through every single word. "You really are an odd child," she had added with equal sarcasm and cynicism, as Barbara's mother excused herself and fled from the room.

Barbara felt tears sting her eyes with remembering. After all too many incidents like the one with her mother's best friend -- Norma -- she decided rather than embarrass her parents -- her mother especially -- that she would rent a small efficiency apartment near the Bible school for the summer months and pay only an occasional visit home, which was so much easier since she worked in an office at the nearby hospital.

Kim burst into the room with a song on her lips. Seeing Barbara framed in the windows she stopped singing and said, "You still haven't told your folks, Barb: I can tell it. What are you waiting for, dear friend?"

Barbara swung around quickly. "Oh, Kim, how do you tell someone who has no religious interests whatever that God has called you to be a missionary? Especially after -- and when -- they scoffed and made light of Neil when he told them that he was called to preach.

"Called to preach!" Mother screeched. 'Whoever heard of anything so utterly ridiculous! You're crazy,' she added. 'And so is our daughter. Now don't mention this to us again. Not ever!' It was a command.

"Daddy wasn't quite as bad, but almost; he told Neil he was a rank fanatic and that he didn't believe in a thing like a 'call to preach,' adding sarcastically, that he -- Neil -- was just too lazy to work and that he was 'taking the easy way out' -- Dad's words -- and becoming a preacher so he wouldn't need to punch a work clock early each morning. Whatever will they say when they hear that we'll be leaving for Brazil six months after we are married, God willing?"

"I know how to find out, Barb. . . ."

"You do; how?"

"Call them now and tell them. You know you're going to have to do it sometime."

"I know. But it's so hard. Oh, Kim, I had hoped and prayed, when I became converted, that my parents would turn from their sinful ways and their wickedness and turn to the Lord like I did. I was so happy and full of joy and peace that I felt sure everybody whom I talked to about Jesus would repent and be converted and follow Him joyfully. My parents especially."

"But it doesn't happen that way all the time, Barb. Jesus said, 'A man's foes shall be they of his own household' Matt. 10:36. And I experienced this personally, just like you are. But I've proven God's grace and power sufficient for every new onslaught by my family, and for every hurt and all the sorrow. Oh, Barbara, I wouldn't trade what I have down in my soul for anything they may offer me. My folks aren't exactly poor; but they haven't given me a dollar

for my education here. Dad was going to pay all my college expenses plus a generous monthly personal spending allowance had I gone to the university in Boston. My plans were to go there. After all, who wouldn't accept an offer like that! But God. . . ."

Kim was silent for a while. Then, with tears of joy trickling down her face, she said, "How I wish I could see that little woman who walked up to me at the beach and asked me did I know Jesus and was I ready to die. She told me I could know I was going to Heaven if I should die right then by saying, Lord Jesus, I'm a wicked sinner. You died to save me. Forgive me for all my sins and come into my heart.'

"Where she came from and whom she was, I'll perhaps never know; nor, even, where she got to after speaking to me: she just seemed to disappear as suddenly as she had appeared. I remember she was dressed simply and plainly and that she had tears in her eyes while she spoke to me. But her words were like a bomb exploding in my heart. I didn't know I was ready for Heaven. In fact, for months I had been thinking that I'd have to change my way of living, since I was becoming more and more fettered and bound by habits and practices which were frightening. I wanted to quit and stop, but I was helpless to do so.

"The sun and sand lost its allure for me as her softly-spoken words were repeated to my heart over and over. I dressed hastily and drove away, trying to get my bearings and calm my troubled heart and my equally troubled mind. Where would I go if I died that very instant? Where? I wondered.

"I drove out into the country, away from the hustle and bustle of the city, wanting help but not knowing where to go to find it, when suddenly my car began sputtering then quit completely on me. I couldn't believe it had happened: I had a good car and it hadn't given me trouble of any kind; not ever.

"I began to cry. Then I looked down the road and saw a farmhouse. Drying my tears, I got out of the car and walked to the house, hoping there'd be someone there who knew something about cars; especially about sports cars.

"I wasn't quite up to the porch when a cheerful voice called to me, saying, 'Hello. Hello. Come right in here, child. I've been asking the Lord to

send somebody by so I could tell them about Him. I was getting a bit worried, for a spell, since not too many cars come this way anymore since they put those big, wide expressways through these parts. Come inside, my dear, if you please.'

"I was shocked, when I opened the screen door, to find a little old woman in a wheelchair surrounded by beautiful plants and flowers and vines.

"'This is God's and my little flower shop,' she explained as she noticed my look of surprise. 'God does the growing part and I take care of them for Him. Now honey, please have a seat so I can look at you better: my neck's got arthritis in it and it hurts me to strain it too much.'

"I sat down like an obedient child. I was fascinated by the cheerful and sunny disposition of this cripple.

"'God sent you here,' she said quickly. 'In answer to my prayers, He sent you. Now dear child, in order to be born again -- of God -- we must realize we are a sinner and be sorry for our sins. Are you sorry for all the sinful things you have done and for all the sins you have committed?'

"I was almost speechless with shock: How did this woman, whom I had never seen before, know about my sins and about what I was guilty of?.

"'Are you sorry, child? Really sorry?' she asked tearfully.

"'Oh, I am. I am!' I cried. 'But I don't know how to stop. It's like I'm on a merry-go-round; I want off, but I can't get off: I'm bound. Bound! Yes, I'm sorry. Very sorry.' By now I knew why my car had stopped.

"'Come here, dear child,' she told me. 'Kneel by my chair. Now I'm going to pray for you. And while I'm praying, please tell Jesus every wrong thing you can think of that you have done. Tell Him you are a sinner and then confess your sins to Him. Then ask Him to forgive you and to come into your heart.'

"I'll never forget that day, Barb. It was a day of new beginnings for me. Oh, I was so happy. That little shop became Heaven. I was gloriously converted. Mrs. Windress, that was her name, directed me to a little Holiness church -- her church -- where I began attending faithfully and where I was

sanctified wholly and received my call to serve the Lord as a missionary nurse.

"The family who had called me daughter and/or sister, as the case may be, turned their backs totally and completely upon me, and I have had to work hard and long and tiresome hours to get my training, but it has been worth it all. I am happy in Jesus alone, He fully satisfies the deepest longings of my soul. I don't regret one bit that I left the old life and took up the cross of Jesus Christ. I am joyful and happy serving Him. Now why not put that call through, my dear?"

"Thanks, Kim; I will. While you were relating your experience, I remembered the words of Jesus immediately following the verse you quoted to me. He said, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.'

"And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it' (Matt. 10:37-39).

"I was searching my heart all the time you were talking, and my 'sacrifice' is still bound to the altar. God's way is my way; His will is my will. I am as totally and completely dedicated to Him and His leading as ever. It's ever so hard to listen to a tirade of unholy words, however. But like you said, I'll have to do it sometime . . . pray for me, Kim. I'm going to do it now." And away Barbara went, singing softly, "Beneath The Cross of Jesus, I Fain Would Take My Stand."