

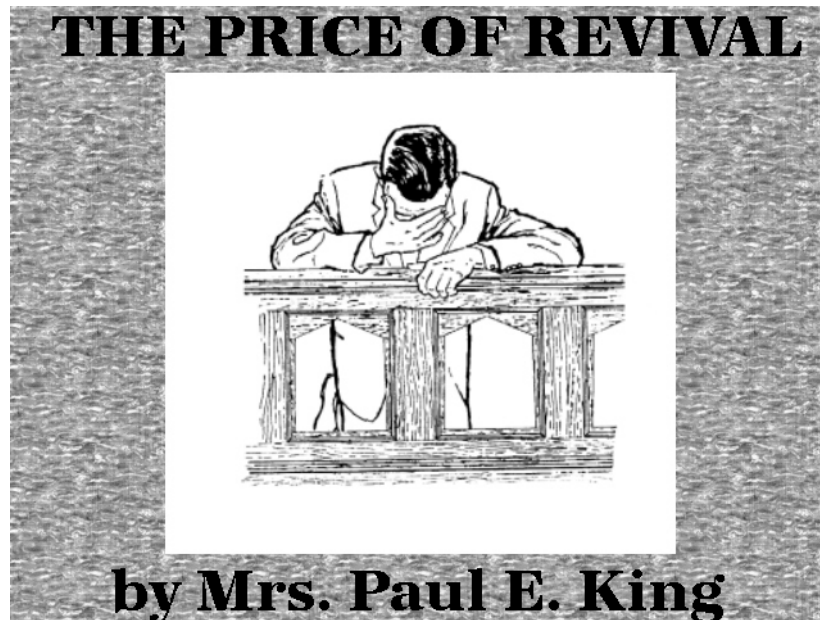
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THE PRICE OF REVIVAL
By Mrs. Paul E. King

I finished shelling the last load of corn Dad told me to do then, tying up the corn-filled burlap bags and cleaning off the old but still sturdy and durably dependable hand-turned corn sheller, I looked over to the Bender farm. It was the very closest of all the farms in the valley to ours; so close, in fact, that we Hollisters and the Benders could talk to each other from outside the barns. It made it nice, I thought, since, like us, the Benders were deeply

religious and very spiritual people. Time was, when the four Bender children were home and growing up, that my three older brothers and the two oldest Bender boys got together regularly to harmonize and sing gospel songs. Dad says they sang the glory down in church almost every time they were asked to sing, which was often.

I was later than the others at making my arrival into our family so I was deprived of hearing their spiritual and Spirit filled singing, a thing I often regretted, since, by the time I was able to walk and talk, already two of my brothers and both the Bender boys were away in Bible schools preparing for the work they felt God had called them to do. Following their graduation from Bible school, each married and left for the field of his calling. Then, one by one, the nest in our home emptied, as it did for the Benders, until I alone remained in the Hollister home and the Benders' nest was completely emptied.

There were grandchildren now, to be sure, traipsing joyously home to the old home-nests of their parents. Many grandchildren, to both farms; but only on special occasions and on one-year furlough after four to five year stays on mission fields. The Benders looked lonely and, at times, very old, I thought. They had no one now; my parents still had me at home with them. Frequently I ran from our barn to Uncle Bob Bender's barn and chatted with him. He was no relation whatever to me, but from childhood he had become "Uncle Bob" to each of us Hollister children. Uncle Bob and Aunt Edith.

I looked over to his barn now and saw him sitting beneath the ancient looking gnarled summer ramba apple tree that still produced a yearly bounty of some of the most tasty apples for eating and cooking that could be found anywhere. That tree had been there, Uncle Bob told me once, so long as he could remember, which was a long time, since Uncle Bob was born and raised on the farm, which he bought from his parents after his marriage to Aunt Edith.

I closed the barn doors now then meandered over to Uncle Bob's barn, where I found him sitting on a grassy mound beneath the tree, whittling and crying.

"You're crying," I said, feeling the love I had for Uncle Bob tug at my heart strings.

"Guess I am, Benjamin Peter." He snapped the pocket knife blade shut, laid down his whittling and looked at me for so long that I became as mute as he.

"Oh, Benjamin Peter! Benjamin Peter!" he cried. "I think I'll die unless. . ."

"Unless what, Uncle Bob?" I asked, falling down beside him on the thick grassy mound.

"Oh Benjamin Peter, what's happened to us? To the church? To the world?"

"I . . . I . . . well, I . . . I don't know as anything's happened to us, Uncle Bob. I . . . I mean, so far as I know, the Hollisters are all fine. We had a glorious time in family devotions this morning; God met with us around the family altar in a wonderful way. Then Dad and Mother had to run into town for a few things -- a part for the corn planter, some flour and sugar for Mother; things like that. They left with God's glory on their faces and with all of us loving each other and everybody we know. So I don't think there's anything wrong with us, Uncle Bob."

"That's a good report, Benjamin Peter. I . . . I didn't mean 'wrong' like that. I mean, well, where's the glory in our midst in the churches? Time was when God's glory was so mighty, so ever-present, so powerful, that sinners feared and trembled and got converted in stores, in bars, on streets, and . . . and anywhere. The Christians prayed and prayed, and prayed some more, until they were so saturated and filled with God's glory and His awesome Presence that sinners trembled with fear and, crying to God for mercy and deliverance from sin and the burning, fiery hell they knew they were headed for, they were converted on the spot."

"Well, God hasn't changed, Uncle Bob; you know this and I know it too," I answered simply.

Uncle Bob now looked into my face with hope shining in his eyes.

"Of course He hasn't, Benjamin Peter," he remarked. "I want you to forgive me for sounding so morbid and . . . and so faithless. It's just that I . . . I . . ."

"You're wondering that God doesn't answer your prayers. Right, Uncle Bob? Those many times to the haystack prayers you've been praying?"

"You . . . you know about that, Benjamin Peter? I thought was going to my 'secret closet' without anybody but God knowing about it."

"In God's eyes you were, and you are, Uncle Bob. Only, you have someone over on the Hollister farm who loves you very much, and he keeps his eyes pretty much on yours and Aunt Edith's doings, making sure you're both all right and not falling down nor being sick. I've seen your many visits to the haystack; seen them for many months now. And best of all, God knows all about those 'secret closet' prayers. He has them in safekeeping. One of these days He's going to answer each and every one of the prayers you prayed. You'll be ever so happy then."

Uncle Bob pulled the big, square, red work handkerchief out of his overall pocket and wiped the tears from his eyes and his face, saying, "There are times, like today, when I feel I'll die unless I can see the men and women and boys and girls in this valley saved. Look, Benjamin Peter," he cried, waving his hand toward the many neat farms that were scattered all over our beautiful valley. "Look, Benjamin Peter," he cried again. "Lost. Lost. Most of the farmers and their families, lost! What are we doing to get them converted? What? I talk to them, weep over them, and pray for them, still they go on, unchanged. Unsaved. Unconverted. Lost! I think I'll die unless they come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Excuse me, please," he said kindly, "but I'll have to make another trip to my secret closet. I can't bear this alone: I must talk to my kind Heavenly Father about it. It weighs me down dreadfully: I feel I can't bear it some times."

He got to his feet quickly and started away -- toward the haystack in the cow pasture.

"May . . . may I come along?" I asked timidly. "Please, Uncle Bob?"

"Since one plus God is a majority, as the saints say, then two plus God ought to give us double majority, if there is such a thing. Come along, Benjamin Peter."

We walked away from the barn, through the meadow, lush with green grasses, on to the haystack, where Uncle Bob literally fell, prostrate, on the ground on the far side of the stack. Such agony and pleading came from his soul like I never heard before. It tore my heart. It grabbed at my soul. Then I, too, began to agonize and intercede for the lost ones in our valley. Good people, they were; excellent neighbors with helping hands, if necessary and when needed; but lost. The sudden realization of their lostness consumed me. They dare not go to hell; they must be converted. They must!

On and on Uncle Bob and I prayed, each oblivious of the other; each lost in the agony for souls; each feeling responsible for his neighbor. The battle was on: the battle for souls. It would be a fight to the finish; I knew this. Then the scripture came to me like a brilliant, heavenly light; "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matt. 11:12).

Take it by force! Take it -- by force! I couldn't get away from that part. It was as if God's Spirit was telling me we had a right to take some things by force -- from the enemy of our souls. With renewed strength and fervor and by the authority of the Word of God, I continued praying, pleading and interceding for souls and for revival in our valley until I knew God was going to answer.

"It's lifted," Uncle Bob said, joyously. "The burden's lifted, Benjamin Peter. God's going to answer prayer. Let's get back to the barn."

We walked in silence, not wanting to break into the sacredness of the Heavenly Presence with idle earthly chatter. Occasionally Uncle Bob's whispered but worshipful "Hallelujah" and "Praise the Lord" reached my ears, but aside from that, we walked side by side in a holy and reverential quietness; a stillness in which God's voice was heard and His Presence was felt. It was like a glorious camp meeting to me. My soul felt fat and flourishing and was running over with joy. I longed for the world to know and experience what I was experiencing and knowing and feeling -- the glorious reality of full salvation and freedom in Christ.

By the time we reached Uncle Bob's barn I saw Dad's car nose its way over the hill down our lane. My heart leaped with joy to see my parents returning home: I had completed each and every job assigned to me by Dad and I could greet him unashamedly and with joy. It was reward enough for me to feel his gentle and loving pat on my shoulder and to hear him say,

"You are such a dear, dependable son, Benjamin. You do your work so very well and with such care and diligence and excellence."

I wanted to hear the same from my Heavenly Father some day; only, His voice would say, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things . . . enter thou into the joys of thy Lord. Well done, good and faithful servant."

Dad saw me as I told Uncle Bob good-bye and started across the narrow strip of grass that grew up to the edge of the road that separated the two barns. He waved for me to go back. I stopped dead in my tracks, having been taught instant obedience from my infancy. I waited patiently for further orders.

"I have news," Dad cried joyously as soon as he parked the car and helped Mother into the house with the groceries. "Wonderful news!"

Uncle Bob Bender came from around the barn, saying nothing but listening intently.

"God is moving among us," Daddy declared. "Old Jake Weymeth got converted last night -- in his home. It's the talk of the town. Jake said he couldn't begin to tell how it happened, since he was alone and no one was near by to help him. He said he got this feeling, that nearly shook the shoes off him: it was a feeling that seemed to tell him he must get converted immediately or he'd lose his soul in hell.

"He couldn't get away from it, he told me. So he fell to the floor on his knees and begged God for mercy, confessing his many sins and repenting completely. Jake's converted. Converted! The town's stirred . . . God is moving. Revival is coming. Yes, it's coming to our community. Our pastor has called for a special meeting, starting tonight and going on until God has given us a Holy Ghost revival."

Daddy was wiping tears from his cheeks. I looked at Uncle Bob; he looked at me. It was a look of understanding: Revival was on the way. It was. It was! I knew it; Uncle Bob knew it. And God had used the old town drunk to get it underway!

I broke out sobbing and shouting and Uncle Bob, in his quiet way, sang the Doxology with his hands raised toward Heaven.