

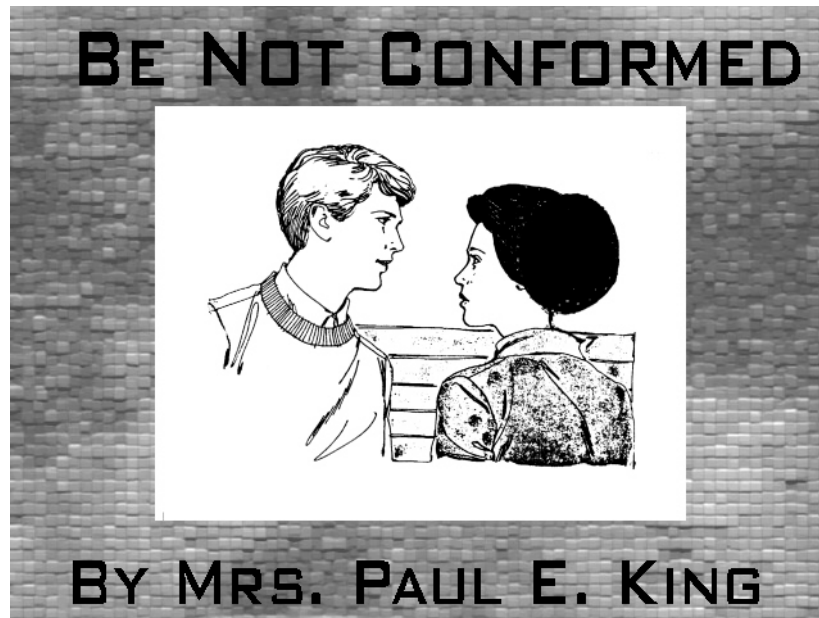
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BE NOT CONFORMED
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Jocalyn Winters could scarcely keep her thoughts on what Ken Gibbes was saying to the group of young people who had gathered at the church for the special called meeting. Where was Jack? she wondered, turning every once in a while to look at the door and see if her tall, broad-shouldered brother was coming through the swinging doors and into the church sanctuary.

"What do you think about the project, Jocalyn?"

Ken's voice sliced down the middle of her troubled thoughts and evoked a smile from her previously somber and serious-looking face and lips.

"I . . . I'm sorry," Jocalyn apologized. "I honestly don't know what you said about a project, Ken. Forgive me. I'm sure it's something great, though: you always do wonderful things."

"Thanks for the compliment," Ken said. "You're always so gracious and kind to everybody. I suggested that our group of young people do something to help half a dozen or more elderly-poor families."

"Oh, that's great," Jocalyn remarked. "I'm for it. When do we begin, and where?"

"How much money do we have in the treasury, Tom?" Ken asked.

"With the offering from old Simon Peters, we have a total fourteen hundred dollars and some odd cents," Tom replied.

Ken scratched his head thoughtfully for a moment. Then he said, "Fourteen hundred dollars won't go far at shingling roofs and painting houses, but we'll see just how far we can stretch it and what God will do in honoring our faith. The Boolis house is in dire need of a new roof, we know, and it needs paint just as badly. So does the Sowers' house."

"And don't forget about Hiram Kraske's roof," Chad Allers reminded. "His leaks almost like a sieve. It's almost unbelievable. I've been there a number of times when it was raining, carrying wood in to his wood boxes and emptying the ashes for him. He has buckets and pots and pans standing all over the place to catch the water from his roof. I feel so sorry for him. He's got such a very little to live on. My folks help him out with food stuffs regularly. And since his wife died, Mother sees to it that he gets one good, hot meal a day. She always makes more of whatever we have and I take it over to him."

Ken smiled. Then he quoted, "'He that giveth to the poor, shall not lack.' This is God's Word. Let's gather around the altar and ask God's special

blessing upon everything we do. He knows how to send us everything we need for each of these poor families, and for each project."

"Before we pray," Beverly Enders said, "I'd like to know what we'll be doing. Roofing is man's work. So is painting a house. Oh, we'll be able to help paint the lower areas, to be sure. But what will we girls be doing?"

"Housecleaning," Ken replied immediately. "There'll be windows to be washed, inside and out, and walls, too. And don't forget the curtains at the windows. When we are finished with each house, we want it clean and neat inside and out. And the lawns too. There'll be plenty of work for everybody. Some of the houses which we have on our list need only a good, thorough inside cleaning job. That's where you girls will shine, and take over. Some need inside cleaning and outside lawn care. The fellows will do the lawn work while you girls clean the house."

"Sounds great!" Beverly exclaimed. "When do we begin?"

"As quickly as possible," Ken answered. "We'll try to work everyone in somewhere, around your part-time jobs. Now let's have a good season of prayer before we leave."

After everyone had left, Jocalyn walked to her home, less than two blocks from the church. Where was Jack? she wondered, feeling uneasy and troubled over him. She had reminded him of the youth meeting, at the supper table, and he had responded with, "I heard the announcement, Jocci."

She entered the house quietly and deep in thought, remembering now that Jack hadn't said he'd be at the night's meeting. Where was he? she wondered, as other things began doing a troubled playback on her memory. Jack hadn't testified in the church services for weeks -- he was seen hobnobbing with some of the town's wildest bunch of young men on more than one occasion -- he always had an excuse when their father or mother asked him why he was so late getting home from his part-time job. On and on the replay went and Jocalyn felt suddenly weak with fear and alarm for her twin.

"Jocci," her mother said, meeting her half-way across the living room floor "please run down to that new ice cream place and get a gallon of their butter pecan ice cream. We just got a call that some friends of ours from

college days past are out on the freeway and will soon be stopping in to see us. They're on their way east, vacationing, and they wanted to stop in for a couple of hours. The ice cream will go well with the chocolate cake I baked yesterday. Here are the keys to the car. Now run along, dear, and be careful."

Jocalyn took the shore road. She loved the drive along the beach. Houses, sat far back from the road and snuggled in among trees and flowering bushes, made her think of some of the stories she had read about the rich and the wealthy and their maids and servants and butlers. Often, she wondered what the beautiful houses were like on the inside. Curving, winding stairways, no doubt, she thought, as she drove slowly along the road. Stairways and marble floors and expensive chandeliers and silver tea sets and. . . .

Sudden tears stung her eyes. The rich, so very rich that they had everything their carnal heart could wish for and desire, and more. And the poor, so very poor that pots and pans and buckets had to serve as catch-alls for a roof that leaked almost like a sieve.

She drove along the beautiful tree-lined and tree-shaded road with a pain in her heart and a catch in her throat, thankful that her father's modest earnings were being "broadcast" on many waters besides only at home. Her parents were laying up treasures where moth and rust could never corrupt and where thieves could not break through and steal.

Jocalyn looked toward the huge body of water, shimmering magnificently in the last rosy-pink rays of a glorious sunset. She steered the car off the road and sat for a while, reveling in the splendor and the grandeur of the beauty all around her. She was caught up in its spell and awestruck in its glory. Figures moved up and down along the beach; surfers rode inshore on the waves and children built sand castles and forts and palaces in the sand. She seemed oblivious to all but the magnificence of the fastly-fading sun and its canvas of colors on the ocean. Then suddenly she saw a figure dart out from an overhang of rock. She gasped. Jack. it was Jack. What was he doing here? she wondered.

Taking the keys out of the ignition and grabbing her purse, she was out of the car in a flash, running toward the massive rock, calling, "Jack. Jack. What are you doing here? Why weren't you at the meeting? We missed you."

Before her brother could answer, a blonde haired girl came to Jocalyn, saying, So you're Jack's twin. Nice to meet you. Come join the party. It's a sumptuous picnic for now, catered by The Ritz Deli, then a video party up at my folks' house. And what a show! These aren't like anything you've ever seen. I have a friend who works in an office across the border; he brings them for me."

"Jack," she said, fearing she was going to cry, "come home with me. This is no place for you. Please come."

"Let him alone," the blonde said. "He's finally learning how to live. He's enjoying himself. Ask him if you don't believe me. I think, at first, some of the things he saw were a bit shocking to him. But he's adjusted well, and he's as hooked on these videos as much, or more, than those of us who have been 'addicted' to them from the first time we saw them. Come on, Jack, let's eat." And the slender young woman grabbed his arm and led him to where the picnic was spread out in grand fashion.

"Please, Jack, don't lose your soul," Jocalyn cried, as she turned and ran toward the car, the jeers and mocking laughter from the group following her.

Once inside the car, Jocalyn slumped over the steering wheel and sobbed like her heart was broken. And, indeed, it was. Slowly but clearly the answers came to her long-silent but questioning heart and mind regarding the whys and the wherefores of some of the things Jack was saying and doing -- or not doing, as in the case of skipping the evening's special called meeting by their youth leader. Her brother, hooked on degrading, vile and immoral video movies.

She now recalled the clear and fearless message of their pastor less than two weeks ago "sounding the trumpet" loudly, clearly, and unmistakably about loving the world and the things of the world.

"Some of you," he had declared with tears streaming down his cheeks, "are letting the world squeeze you into its mold. You are conforming to its ways and its evils and wickednesses. Your spiritual life and vitality is gone, choked out by the world and its evils. Turn! Turn," he had cried, "while there is still hope. You are sneaking around and watching vile and filthy videos.

You are corrupting your morals, eroding your mind, numbing your senses, and feeding your base desires on things that will haunt you forever in the fires of hell. Forever! Forever! Eternity! Oh, why will you die? Turn! Turn!" he had cried again.

Jocalyn sat up straight now. Their pastor knew, she was sure. Had he heard something, perhaps, about Jack sneaking around? Perhaps, she thought. But then another thought came to mind: God! He was still able to reveal specific sins to His ministers; sins which those in the congregation were guilty of and thought they were keeping secret.

Her thoughts raced quickly to the prophet Elisha and how he had warned the king of Israel, saying, "Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down.

"And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.

"Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?

"And one of his servants said, None, my lord, o king; but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber" (II Kings 6:9-12).

Slowly, Jocalyn eased the car back onto the road and headed for the ice cream place, marveling that finite man -- yes, even Jack, her twin -- could be so blind and deceived as to think he was concealing and covering up his wickedness and his sin, when the Bible so plainly stated that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3). And, too, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).

She purchased the ice cream then took a shorter route home. Her heart felt heavy and sad. She prayed and cried as she drove. Her brother, yes, her biological twin, was being squeezed into the world's mold. And Christ was once again on the outside.

Jack had always seemed to want to play both sides, she recalled now. He didn't like being branded as different. He wanted the smile and approval of Christ and also of the world. And this, according to God's Word, was an utter impossibility -- "No man can serve two masters," said Jesus in Matt. 6:24.

"Jack. Jack," she cried aloud, knowing the world would make ever wider and greater encroachments upon him and his soul. And, ultimately, unless he repented and was forgiven, it would drag him down to hell.

A burden settled in upon her heart for her twin. It may take time for her to see the answer, but by God's grace she meant to pray and fast and fast and pray until the Almighty God would unsettle and disquiet Jack and he would seek the throne of mercy for pardon for his sins. God alone could deliver him and set him free, she knew, and break the world's mold from his heart.

Praying earnestly, she pulled into the driveway.