TYLER'S TEST

(Part 1)
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Tyler Edwards got up from his knees (where he'd been kneeling at the church altar) and faced the congregation with a radiant and shining face. "Tonight marks a brand new beginning for me," he said with emotion. "I came here blind; now I see. I was lost; now I'm saved -- and found -- and sheltered in the Good Shepherd's fold. I was sad and depressed; now my heart is light
and full of joy. I was a wretchedly miserable sinner; now I'm a child of God. Oh what a difference since I am born again!

Turning to Mark Elliott, he said, "Thanks Mark, for keeping after me until I finally came to church with you."

Mark couldn't speak; his heart was too full to make a reply. He simply lifted his arms upward to God in a gesture of true gratefulness and praise while tears coursed freely down his cheeks.

The entire congregation was moved to tears and shouted praises to the Lord for Tyler's conversion. Tyler was the son of Vernon Edwards, president of City Bank and Trust Company and an avowed atheist. No small miracle, Tyler!

Tyler was beside himself with joy. He waved the tissue in his hand high above his head and shouted "Hallelujah" over and over, stopping every once in a while to thank Mark for keeping after him and for being God's light for him.

Mrs. Pinkston gave Mark Elliott the "once over" with her eyes. She could scarcely comprehend what Tyler was saying about this young man whom she had known from birth. Mark Elliott, the quiet, shy, always compliant child who always kept her wondering what he was thinking about.

She'd told her sister Emilie, when Mark got saved and then was sanctified wholly, that the change very definitely had had to have been within, since Mark had always acted like a mature Christian even before he gave testimony to being saved from his sins. Mark was like that. But to talk to Tyler Edwards about his soul -- about needing to be born again in order to get to Heaven! Shy, quiet Mark . . .!

Mrs. Pinkston felt a wave of shame and guilt wash over her. Three times -- no less -- the gentle Holy Spirit had urged her to speak to her neighbor about her soul and three times -- no less -- she had pushed it aside, "explaining" to the Lord that she was too timid and shy to do anything so daring and bold.
The silver haired woman bowed her head and sobbed loudly. "Give me one more opportunity, please God," she cried into the palms of her hands. "I'll do it, Lord! I will. Forgive me for my disobedience. . . ."

The glory-crowned service was dismissed after a while and each went to his and her separate home, Tyler going with Mark to the Elliott home for dinner and Mrs. Pinkston to her own neat little Cape Cod, but not before she had stopped at her next door neighbor's house and, sobbing brokenly, had asked how things were with her soul.

"I've had such a heavy burden for you," she told Mrs. Wickam. "Jesus loves you. Do you know Him?"

Mrs. Wickam was speechless for a time. Then, casting all caution to the wind, she said, "I used to know Him, Mrs. Pinkston. But the burdens and the cares of life crowded Him out. I've been so miserable since I backslid. I've been waiting for someone to help me back. . . ."

Cecile Pinkston went into her neat little house feeling as light as a feather; like she was inside Heaven's vestibule: Jewell Wickam was now a child of God and all because she, Mrs. Cecile Pinkston, had been obedient to the Spirit's gentle leading and prodding. It was wonderful to obey!

Tyler was barely inside the Elliott house when he asked for permission to use the phone. "I want to call Dad and Mother," he explained, "and tell them that I am saved and ready for Heaven. Then I want to call Amber and let her know."

He dialed home but received no answer. "Golfing, no doubt," he told Mark. "For Dad and Mother, golfing and yachting are the ultimate in sports. They're rarely ever home when Dad isn't at the bank, or away at a bankers' meeting. Oh, Mark," he exclaimed joyously, "I can scarcely wait to tell them! And now I'll call Amber. She needs the Lord Jesus so badly. Won't she be happy to know that, at last, I have found complete satisfaction and fulfillment in Christ!"

Tyler dialed Amber's number. Almost instantly, he heard her soft voice saying, "Hello. This is the Cornwall residence. Amber speaking."
"Amber," Tyler said eagerly, "this is you know who. And I have some wonderful news for you."

Immediately, Amber said, "Oh Tyler, don't keep me guessing. What is it? Please tell me. You know I don't enjoy guessing games."

"Listen closely, Amber: I'm a new Tyler; old things have passed away for me and all things have become new. I'm a Christian, Amber; a born again Christian. I've found complete fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to know and love Him too -- like I do."

There was a shocked gasp on the other end of the line. Then, angrily and suddenly, Amber said, "Don't try to cram religion down my throat, Tyler; I don't want it."

"It isn't religion, Amber; it's Jesus the Savior. There's quite a difference. Oh, my soul is so happy and so free. I love Him, Amber."

"And I guess you don't love me anymore, is that it? Well, you may just keep your religious crutch, or whatever it is. But I'm not interested!" And Amber slammed the phone down into its cradle.

Tyler stood with the phone in his hand, feeling numb with shock and disappointment. "I guess you heard her," he told Mark, with a note of sadness registering in his voice as he placed the phone back in place.

"That's to be expected," Mark declared matter-of-factly.

Tyler gasped. "It . . . it is?" he asked, incredulous.

"But Mark, this is the most wonderful and glorious thing that ever happened to me! My heart found its rest and its peace. I . . . I want everybody to love Jesus like I do."

In his quiet way, Mark said, "Multitudes of people crowded around Jesus to hear what He had to say and to see the miracles which He performed, but only a few of them became His true and devoted disciples and followers, Tyler. It costs something to be a Christian; many times it's the loss of old friendships and of once-cherished relationships. But it's worth it, Tyler."
Tyler was silent for a long while. "I . . . I . . ."

Again he lapsed into silence.

"You thought Amber would understand."

It was as though Mark could read his thoughts, Tyler felt, answering, "I guess I'm shocked, more than anything else. As you know, Amber and I've been dating for a year. I was sure she'd want to get saved too, after hearing what Jesus did for me. But instead of rejoicing with me and being happy, she became angry. Why, Mark? Why?"

"The way of the cross and the way of the world are at odds with each other," Mark explained simply.

"One road is wide and broad, Jesus said; the other way is strait and narrow. Many people travel the broad road, His Word says; but only a few are willing to take the strait and narrow road. . . ."

"Do you mean . . . well, I guess what I'd like to know is, do you think Amber doesn't want to be saved?" Tyler asked with concern.

"I can't answer that, Ty; I don't know. For one thing, I doubt that Amber's ever been exposed to anything very much religious. She may be open and receptive to the gospel if she'd come to church and hear about Jesus. Then, too, she may not. Pride is keeping many a soul out of Heaven. We'll band together in prayer for Amber."

"But why, Mark; why wouldn't anyone want to come to Jesus? I never had anything in my life like this. For once, my heart is fully satisfied. And I'm so happy and full of joy and peace."

"The world, Ty; it has too strong a grip and a hold on them. They love its pleasures and its fun, transitory though it is. Time will tell about Amber. . . ."

Tyler was silent; he was deep in thought. Mark bowed his head in prayer. He knew Tyler would be having a battle where Amber was
concerned. He must buoy his friend up in prayer. Would Ty stand up for the Lord or would Amber draw him back?

(Part 2)

Immediately following Tyler's wonderful conversion and his subsequent experience of entire sanctification, he became insatiably hungry for God's Word and for doing the will of the Lord. He faithfully attended every prayer meeting and church service and became a faithful witness for the One whom he loved and served. His parents, while being less than enthusiastic over their son's radical heart change, did nothing to hinder him in his walk with the Lord nor did they discourage him or try to dissuade him. Manville Cox, from the church, said that Tyler's grandfather -- Vernon's father -- had had a wonderful experience with the Lord and that he had even done some "exhorting" in his day. This may have explained in part, at least, why the senior Edwards took his son's conversion as casually as he did. Needless to say, everybody at church was greatly relieved and deeply thankful that Tyler was not being agitated, abused or punished by his parents -his father especially and particularly so -- for becoming a Christian.

Tyler and Mark became a twosome at witnessing for Jesus Christ. They took it on themselves; no one gave them orders or an assignment. They were motivated by their deep love for the Lord and the burden they carried for the lost, their peers especially. Each Saturday, after their part-time jobs were finished, they went out seeking to rescue the perishing and bring them to the Lord Jesus. They met with much opposition from the younger set.

"I can't understand Amber," Tyler told Mark one Saturday as they called from door to door.

"Still no melting, huh?" Mark asked, slipping a gospel tract in the mailbox after receiving no answer to his knock on the door.

"Melting!" Tyler exclaimed sadly. "There isn't even a glimmer of hope. She's bitter. Bitter! Mark, she acts like she doesn't know me. Like she's never known me. Imagine it! And that after we dated for a full year, too! I can't understand it. I believe she actually hates me now. I never miss a week without going by to try to see her and witness to her."
"Oh, she sees you then?" Mark seemed surprised. "Indeed not. Her mother, or one of the sisters or brothers, comes to the door and courteously informs me that Amber doesn't want to see me. I've talked to them about Jesus and how much He means to me. They listen politely but that's the extent of it. Always, I get a benign smile and a, 'Thank you, I'm not interested,' and then the door closes in my face. It feels strange, almost like I'm an outsider who has no business being there."

"I'm sure it hurts, Ty; but the rewards of being a Christian far outweigh the hurts and the pain of a few earthly losses. And the best is yet to come!"

Tyler looked at Mark. Tears were in his eyes. "At first, I thought I couldn't stand not seeing Amber," he confessed. "I loved her, Mark. I mean it. We had a lot of good times together. Amber is fun to be with. I felt she was the girl I wanted to marry someday; after graduation and when I could support her properly, And she loved me, too. I have no doubts about this. I was shocked when she slammed the receiver down that day after I told her what the Lord had done for me, and she all but shouted that she was not interested and wanted no part of it whatever.

"You know, Mark, I felt she'd soon come to her senses and that she'd call and apologize for her erratic behavior, and then she'd ask me to tell her more about what happened to me. But she didn't; and she hasn't. And oh, how I long for her to become converted! She's lost without Christ. This is what hurts so badly. She won't even give me an opportunity to talk to her.

"I saw her walking near Steece's lake one day and I was sure my time for witnessing to her had come. I pulled along the side of the road and asked her could I please take her wherever she was going. Know what she did?"

Mark shook his head negatively.

"She jerked her head straight up, threw her shoulders back, and kept right on walking like she'd never heard me speak even.

"I called her name and nearly begged her to allow me to speak to her, only to be rebuffed again in the same way."
"I pulled back onto the road and drove away, letting a gospel tract flutter out of the window and drop along the road, hoping that maybe she'd humble herself enough to pick it up and read it.

"I guess my biggest battle, to date, has come via Amber and her total rejection of and apparent abhorrence for me. I have spent many hours on my knees, weeping and praying for her and over her. I've asked the Lord to guide me and lead me, and Mark, He's done it! He gave me the scripture from II Corinthians 6:14; 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: . . .' Since reading this, its settled. My heart is fixed: I mean to follow the Lord regardless of the cost. I'm asking the Lord to remove all the love I had for her from my heart, and to fill it with the kind of love He has for her soul. Already I am receiving the answer to this prayer."

Mark brushed tears from his eyes. "Tyler," he said softly, "I have been praying earnestly for the Lord to give you complete and total victory over Amber, if she will not take the way of the cross. And now my prayers are being answered. Oh, how wonderful the Lord is! In God's perfect timing, you and I will each know the one who is the right girl for us."

"I thought Misty was your special, Mark. Did you break up?"

"Actually, we've never gone steady. She's the only girl I've ever dated. Or ever cared to date, even. She's very special to me. But she and I both are praying earnestly, to make sure this is God's will for us."

A smile turned the corners of Tyler's mouth. "Isn't it wonderful," he cried, with shining eyes, "that God cares so much for us and our future lifetime happiness that He has prepared a very special someone just for us individually! I confess, Mark, it's beyond my human comprehension and understanding, all that God has done for us. I've just begun to live since I found Jesus."

"And you passed the test," Mark remarked softly.

"I what...?"

"I was thinking out loud, Ty. I said, 'You passed the test. There'll be more of them, to be sure. But for now, I feel like shouting Hallelujah."
"Amber?"

"Yes, Amber."

Tyler pointed upward. "Through Christ, Mark, Victory!"

The End