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**INSTANT OBEDIENCE**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

It was one of those blustery-cold days in mid-February. I had just gotten home from my part-time job, taken my heavy insulated jacket off, hung it up inside the closet and settled down comfortably and cozily in my favorite chair with a cup of steaming-hot chocolate when the door bell chimed musically.

Groaning with fatigue and weariness, I vacated the chair and went to the front door, hoping with all that was within me that the "interruption" would not be lengthy: I had studying to do. I was in my last year of college, studying for the ministry.

I opened the door, and Julian rushed in with a fierce blast of cold Arctic air that nearly set my teeth chattering.

"Whatever brings you here on a day like this?" I asked, shutting the door quickly behind him.

He grinned his usual and familiar grin; then he went to the kitchen cupboard and helped himself to a packet of hot chocolate mix, poured milk into a cup and; while the milk was heating up in the microwave oven, he said, "I can't get away from it, Mark. I honestly can't."

"Can't get away from what?" I asked, sitting down at the kitchen table and sipping the hot chocolate slowly.

"I know you'll think I'm crazy, the weather being like it is and all that, but I have this continuous, gentle, nudging, all-compelling urge to drive out to the beach."

I set my cup down and looked at Julian, who was my best friend. We grew up together. All our lives, we'd known each other. If ever there was a fellow who had a true-blue friend, I was that fellow. More than that, Julian was an unwavering, steady, level-headed, real Christian. There was neither pretense nor hypocrisy with Julian. I knew that if he said he felt he should do a certain thing or not do a certain thing, he was right in his feelings, for, you see, Julian was never one to make haste: He had learned to "try the spirits," whether they were of God or not, as I John 4:1 instructed us to do. Today, however, well . . . and to the beach!

"You think I've flipped, huh?" Julian said, removing the hot milk from the microwave and dumping the pack of chocolate into the cup.

"It's bitterly cold," I replied emphatically. "And . . . well, the beach will be deserted. Who'd think of going out there in this weather? Even the gulls seem to hide out or . . . or hibernate, or. . . ."

"I know. But this gentle nudging . . ." and Julian sat down across from me and dropped his face in his hands.

"You . . . well, you know I have confidence in you, Julian. Utmost confidence. But frankly, today I . . . well. . . ."

"You have your doubts."

Julian took the words right out of my mouth. When I looked across the table at him I saw that his piercing, dark brown eyes were pools of swimming, shimmering tears.

"I don't hold it against you, Mark," Julian said when I made no reply. "In fact, I myself wondered if I was wrong. But after waiting upon the Lord in earnest and fervent prayer, and sensing the urge stronger than ever, well, I knew what I must do."

Julian never ceased to amaze me. He too was a ministerial student; attending the same Bible school I did, which was not far from where both his parents and mine lived. My mother taught English there; Julian's father was a professor in missiology there. Julian excelled in anything related to missions. Anything. And everything. And not merely in his 4.0 average grade, either, but by every day practical demonstration of the same.

We sipped our hot chocolate in silence now. Outside, the wind raced around the house in a state of frenzied urgency, whistling shrilly as it turned the corners and rattled the shutters.

Tears coursed down Julian's cheeks now. Swallowing the last bit of hot chocolate, he got to his feet, saying, "Get your coat, Mark. Let's be going. I feel we don't have a minute to spare!"

"I have studying to do," I remonstrated. "And I just got home from my part-time job, Julian. I can't go. I really can't, not with the test coming up in the morning."

"But you are to be a part of this. . . ."

His sentence dangled like the string of a kite and for a while I was in real doubt about everything. Then I remembered that Julian never did things

on impulse and I hurried to the closet after the heavy jacket and was soon following him outside.

It was bitter cold in Julian's old car and I was especially thankful that I'd thought to bring along a ski cap I had bought for a mere pittance at a thrift store in our area. That inexpensive but very-warm cap served me well in my walks to and from the college campus on cold mornings and late afternoons.

"Didn't you get the heater fixed?" I asked Julian. "Dad and I are working at it, Mark. He's sure I'll need a new part. Meanwhile, I'm getting excellent, practical, hands-on mechanical experience, all of which will serve me well on the mission field."

"If you don't freeze before getting there," I remarked, laughing.

Julian smiled, saying, "I'm sure this will be mild compared to some of the extremes a missionary faces on the field. And I'll be able to look back with pure desire and longing to this much-loved old icebox when and if I go to a field where the temperature stays pretty much in that 100ø bracket."

"You've got something there," I admitted, as I turned the coat collar upward, more closely around my neck.

"Direct us, Lord," Julian prayed, as he turned and headed for what we called the beach road.

"Wouldn't you hate being out on a little dinghy today?" I asked Julian as I looked out on the churning, tumbling sea.

"Or a dory! Why, Mark, this 'ice box' isn't half bad, in comparison. At least it's good and tight and keeps the bitterly-cold biting wind off us. Always, there is reason to be thankful," he added, finishing with a reverent, "Thank You, Lord, for this car. At least the heater works spasmodically."

I added a heartfelt and sincere, "Amen."

We made several more turns and soon we were out on the wide-open, wind-swept beach. It looked desolate and forlorn; completely different from late spring and sunny summer days when, so far as the eye could see, there were thousands of busy, playing, romping, laughing adults and children.

"It looks lonely, doesn't it?" I asked Julian. "The beach, I mean. And we'll certainly not have a problem identifying the person -- or persons -- for whom God sent you out here, Julian: It's deserted. Totally deserted."

"Just be patient, my friend. God never makes mistakes. Nor does He send us out on empty missions: Always, there is purpose and reason to His marching orders."

"And this is a fact indisputable," I remarked, scanning the beach for a sign of life. Not one gull could I spot nor, even, a single dinghy on the turbulent, churning water. Far out at sea, like a miniature moving thing, I sighted a ship plowing the troubled waters, but that was all. The surf rolled shoreward like a stampeding herd and crashed with thunderous sound upon the sandy beach and the shoals. No human form was in sight. Not one!

Julian turned abruptly and headed in a westerly direction, stating, "I believe we're about to be rewarded, Mark."

Immediately, I thought of Jude 22-23: "And of some have compassion, making a difference:

"And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

I thought it strange that the scriptural verses should so grab me and enfold me and sear themselves, as it were, on my mind with such great force and impact. I couldn't understand it; but I knew that God had a reason for it.

We were approaching a narrow reef now and Julian slowed the car to almost the proverbial snail's pace. Not a single soul anywhere. None whatever.

"Hey, there's a car over there, Julian," I said suddenly, sitting on the edge of the seat and peering through the window. "Where?"

"You can hardly see it; but it's there. Beyond that rock that has a sort of pyramidal appearance. See?" I said, pointing with my index finger.

"I see the rock, Mark: it's the only one that resembles a pyramid. But the car. . . . Oh yes, I see it! It's almost concealed by the base of the rock."

"But not quite so. Let's go. It won't be long until the sun will be setting."

"What sun?" Julian asked dryly with a smile as he accelerated more heavily, adding, "At least it's still daylight, even though it is cloudy and gray. Well, there's the car. And there's a man inside!"

He turned off the motor and was out of the car before I had my door open. "Hurry, Mark," he said.

We walked over to the car and Julian knocked on the window. Startled, the man turned and saw us standing there. And then I saw the gun beside him.

"Hello, good sir," Julian cried out above the rolling surf and the howling wind.

The man covered the gun with his big hand. Then he shuffled some papers over it. He seemed embarrassed. Uneasy. "What do you want?" he demanded in a booming voice that told us clearly we had no business intruding in upon his privacy.

"We wanted to talk to you about your soul," Julian answered.

"We're Christians, sir," I added. "The Lord prodded Julian -- my friend here -- to come to the beach and tell you about Jesus and His great love for you." I saw the window was now rolled part way down.

The man's face blanched. He looked like death. Unlocking the car doors he said, "Get in. It's too cold out there."

Julian got in the front seat beside the big man; I got in the back seat. Without any doubt, he was the biggest man I had ever seen, and the roughest-toughest looking one too. Every line of his face bespoke of sin and wickedness. It was written all over his features. He was dressed in an expensive looking business suit.

"We've been looking for you," Julian said with tears in his eyes. "I'm so glad we found you. God loves you, sir. How He loves you! And I'm so thankful He led us to you."

"Nobody loves me, young man. Nobody! I'm too mean and despicable for anyone to love," came the sad outcry from the big man.

"And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire. . . ."

Suddenly the scripture came alive for me. Sitting on the edge of the seat, I reached up and touched the broad shoulder gently with my hand. "We love you, sir," I cried earnestly. "And God loves you. Believe me; it's true. We were sinners, too, one day. We did things that were wrong and evil. Then Jesus came our way. He forgave our sins and changed our lives completely. He can do the same thing for you. God sent us here to help you, sir. To pull you out of the fire."

The man stared straight ahead. Then his mouth began to quiver and sudden tears spilled from his eyes.

"Give Jesus your heart," Julian said softly. "He loves you. He's been waiting a long time for you. He can even yet make something beautiful out of your life."

"I've . . . I've . . . made such a . . . mess of it." The broad shoulders trembled and shook. The man was sobbing.

"Jesus calls you to come to Him," Julian continued. "He can give you beauty for ashes, sir. Believe it; it's true."

"I believe it, young man. And I know it was God who sent you here. See this gun?" He moved the papers to the side, saying sadly, "I came out here to . . . to commit suicide. I felt that life was not worth living. I tried everything. Everything! Nothing satisfied. I'm ready to listen, fellows. A God who cares enough about me to send two young men after me -- a perfect stranger -- and to lead them to the very place where I thought I was concealed and hidden, must love me very much. I am now fully persuaded that there's hope for me. Please, pray for me. If you had not come when you did, I would by now not have been able to make this request: It would have been too late. . . ."

."

We prayed. How we prayed! And the big man's voice drowned our voices out completely. Talk about an "emptying out"; Julian and I never heard such confessing to God in all our lives! We prayed; he prayed incessantly. And when the big man touched God and Heaven and was gloriously converted, the car couldn't hold him. He threw the door open and raced outside. Up and down the beach he ran, shouting for joy at the top of his lungs and looking like a shining angel.

Before leaving for home, we got his address and he had an invitation to our house for Sunday dinner. After church, that is.

Julian and I were beside ourselves with joy. I felt revived. And either Julian's heater had decided to give us a bit more heat in one of its temperamental moods, or I was warmed through and through by the lingering experience of the transformed life of the big man whose name, we learned, was Raymond Specter.

Looking over at Julian, I thanked God for my true-blue friend who was ever alert to the movings of God in his life and who always manifested instant obedience to act upon those movings. Another few minutes and it would have been too late for Mr. Specter.

"Thank You, Lord, for Julian," I prayed silently. "Thank You!"