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Digital Edition 10/22/2001
By Holiness Data Ministry

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The Sunday School Beacon
August 21, 1994



MY TWIN, STEVE
By Mrs. Paul E. King

We were identical from birth, so our parents informed us. But though we were (and are) branded identical, we are as diverse and as different as different can be---in personality, likes and dislikes -- this sort of thing. Hi, I'm Samuel Lyesford and my twin is Steven. I stand six feet tall in stocking feet. Steve? Identical. (Seems our growth rate stayed "identical" all along the way.) My hair is what Mom calls "wheat-colored" and what I brand as golden-

tan. Steve's? Identical. My eyes are blue. Like a morning glory -- blue. Steve's are too. Get the picture? We're identical. But different.

I guess I never noticed -- or knew -- just how different we are, and were, until a couple of years ago at camp meeting when my twin went to the altar and was gloriously saved and, a day later, got wondrously sanctified wholly. Everybody there knew something glorious happened to Steve; he was running the aisles and shouting at the highest volume of his lungs. I tell you, it was marvelous. I sat spellbound, watching him go 'round and 'round that big tabernacle, bellowing like a jubilant fog horn, "He's come! He's come! He's come! The Holy Spirit's come! I'm sanctified! Sanctified!"

How I wished I could express myself like that! But all I could do was to laugh and cry and wave my handkerchief and exclaim, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord!"

Steve was the vociferous one; I was vocal but not vociferous. We were very normal boys, though, and we did the normal sort of boy things. You know -- like playing ball on the vacant lot near our big, old house whenever time and opportunity afforded us the privilege. And like skating on the nearby pond when it was frozen over solidly in winter. And playing "tin can" hockey. Steve was super at this. I was super too -- usually, my battered shins were the "pucks" instead of the cans.

I guess it was true what Steve said -- that I was clumsy when playing tin can hockey. But clumsy or not, we had the world's best kind of clean fun and wholesome enjoyment doing those normal boy things. Better still, Dad and Mom knew where we were and what we were doing. And even better yet, Dad often joined us in our games on the ice and on that big old vacant lot, which never did become overgrown with weeds because of the much usage of it. It was a super-right spot from which to fly a kite, too.

But back to our unidentical and different characteristics. Steve and I, ever lovers of farming (we both helped a nearby neighbor on his farm after school was dismissed for the day as well as on Saturdays and all through the summer) -- well, Steve wanted to study agriculture. So did I. We wanted to become agronomists, so we enrolled at a nearby college. The set-up was perfect: We attended classes during the day then went home afterwards. This was a real blessing, since we had no room or board to pay to the college.

We got on well with our studies, which also included much "hands on" training and involvement both in the fertile fields belonging to the college and the actual farming itself -- feeding and caring for the livestock, which included milking the cows, et cetera. Needless to say, we were right "at home" with what we were doing, and things were going well until another of the ag students became so angry with one of the cows that refused to go into her stanchion for milking that he exploded with a full barrel of the vilest, foulest expletives one could ever utter. I stood open-mouthed, praying silently for God to stop him. Not Steve.

"Hey," he called, as he rushed up to the fellow student who found a length of an iron rod and was ready to club the cow with it, "don't you lay a hand on her." It was an order. Steve's hands came down hard on the other's arms. "And no more cursing."

"Who says?" came the instant rejoinder.

"I do." Steve's voice was authoritative. "The One whose name you have been taking in vain so shamefully is my best and truest Friend. I love the Lord Jesus Christ. He saved my soul from hell. And unless you repent and ask Him to forgive you, you'll burn forever in the lake of fire."

"Take your hands off me!" the student demanded. "And stop preaching. That's outdated stuff." He tried to shrug loose of Steve's grip.

"Only if you'll stop that vile cursing and swearing will I turn loose of you," my twin declared, with that note of authority still very much evident and prevalent in his voice. "No one can take the name of the Lord -- my Lord -- and my God in vain and not expect a little 'preaching' -- a sermonette, if you please -- on how utterly sinful and wicked it is to do this. He loved you -- and me -- so much that He gave His sinless, holy life for us: He died for us! Say, that's love! Yet you dare to curse and swear and take His name in vain. It's dangerous, my friend! Dangerous! And the penalty for doing so, unless fully repented of, is the lake of fire, as I already told you. Once there, there is no escape; it's to burn forever and forever. Now, I'll see that the cow gets into her milking stall. Step aside, please. . . ."

Steve's hands released the other's arms. Speaking softly and kindly to the cow and stroking her neck gently, she was soon in her place for milking.

"No abuse!" he said sternly to the moody looking young man.

"You're not in charge around here!" came the barbed exclamation.

"Right. But if you'll look over your shoulder you'll see someone who is. And I'm not too sure but that he didn't see you with that upraised rod in your hand. . . ."

The rod dropped to the floor with a clatter. Steve and I walked away. I was proud of Steve.

"I wish I could be more like you," I confessed as we hurried down the barn to our respective assignments.

"Then you wouldn't be Sam," came Steve's quick reply. "God knew why He didn't make two of me," he quipped, laughing. "He only made one Peter Cartright, too. He needs some of the gentler kind, Sam."

"But you . . . you seem so fearless. In my heart, I feel exactly like you do. And if I'm asked -- anytime for a reason of the hope within me, I can give a reply easily and readily. And it's easy to tell a person, anytime or anywhere, why I believe the way I do when and if they ask. But you don't wait to be asked: you just stand right up and take your stand for the Lord. Like a few moments ago. I was so hurt over the oaths. But all I did was pray."

"And it was your prayers, no doubt, that helped give me the courage to do what I felt had to be done, Samuel. Now, no more wishing to be like I am: God made us identical, but different in makeup and personality."

I guess I should not have been so amazed and awed when, sometime later, Steve came running to me from the hog barn at our neighbor's farm where we were working one Saturday, exclaiming, "Sam, I've got to do it! I must! I can't get away from it."

"Do what?" I asked as I finished mixing a big batch of pig feed.

"You know that sermon we heard last Sunday night," he said as he ran his fingers through his hair.

"It was a great one," I answered. "Sure made me feel good that my tithes and offerings are paid up in full. But I never do let them get in arrears. Neither do you, Steve. So what's bothering you? What can't you get away from?"

Steve leaned against a post in the hog barn. "I've got to do more. Give more," he stated emphatically.

"But . . . Steve, we're in college; working our way through. We pretty much stay broke and. . ."

"I know. It's pretty rough sometimes, Samuel. I know this. And I know that we're so 'identical' that we take out our tithes and offerings first thing after we're paid. But I've become so accustomed to the sweet, gentle voice of The Shepherd until I know I've got to do more. He wants me to pledge for that new missionary field that's opening."

I stood in awe. "Where . . . I mean . . . well, how can you, Steve? We make only so much working here, And after our tithes and offerings are taken out and given to the church and we pay for the college books and other necessary supplies, well, we're both pretty well broke. No complaint; none at all: God is good to us. At least we have steady work here after our classes are over for the day. But my former statement about our financial circumstances is an indisputable fact, as you well know. I don't see how you can give more. How will you do it, Steve?" I asked.

Raising his head, my twin looked at me. Tears shimmered in the depths of his morning-glory blue eyes as he said in what was little more than a whisper, "Faith, Sam. Faith! God is asking me to trust Him: to launch out by faith. Joyfully and willingly, I will obey."

I gulped. "How much, Steve? Do you know? I mean, do you have any idea what you'll be able to give?"

"I have nothing more I can give, Sam. Like you said, we don't have it. But God's storehouse is full. He has unlimited and limitless resources. By faith, I must pledge five hundred dollars."

I gasped. "Five hundred dollars! Are you sure, Steve?"

"I am every bit as sure of it as I am that you and I are discussing it this very minute. Since hearing that message on going beyond our regular giving, my heart has not ceased to be stirred. Over and over, in tones as gentle and as sweet as a dove's, I've felt Him challenging me to launch out and by faith to pledge five hundred dollars. And, Sam, since settling it in my heart that I'll do it, I have been blest almost beside myself. I feel like Heaven itself has witnessed my consent, silent though it was when I made the commitment and the promise. Oh, it is glorious to obey. Glorious!"

I felt tears surface. "If you can do it, Steve, so can I," I remarked. "Only, I'm not sure my faith is as strong as yours. For five hundred, I mean."

Steve came over and laid his hands on my shoulders, saying, "Look Sam, just because we're identical doesn't necessarily mean you must do what the Lord is asking me to do. He deals with us in areas that are many times different from each other. We're identical, but different. God deals with us individually."

"But I love to give to God's cause too," I answered quickly. "It's pure joy for me to give to Him."

"I know that, Sam; and God knows it, too. Why don't you pray over what to give; how much, I mean? After all, you never have been 'tight-fisted' with money the way I was before the Lord got my attention and saved my soul from the downward slide I was on. From a little tyke on up to our present years, you've always been pliable and open and obedient to the Lord. And to our parents, too. That's why you were saved and sanctified so young. Me? I guess I inherited a double dose of stubbornness and of feeling I could do everything and anything I wanted to do by myself. Until God gave me that dream about hell. That set me to thinking. And thanks be to God, I did more than just think about it. I've never known real joy and peace until that blessed night at camp meeting when the Lord forgave me of all my sins."

"You're certainly different, Steve."

"Different indeed! And since the Holy Spirit burned out every trace of inbred sin, the stubbornness is gone. Oh, Sam, it's blissfully wonderful to be dead to self and alive unto Christ. He has been making me like you have been -- pliable, and like putty in His hands. I delight to do His will."

"It's the most wonderful thing on earth," I answered. "And, like you suggested, I'm going to pray about that missions project. If you can do it, Steve, I want a part in this also, whatever the amount may be."

I guess that was one of the best years my twin and I ever had spiritually. Our combined pledges of eight hundred dollars kept us on our knees for funds from Heaven. And since we hadn't told a soul about this between-God-and-us commitment/pledge, our faith grew by leaps and bounds as the monies came into some from relatives and friends who, "felt you could use this" (their words). Others from the farmer for whom we were working.

"You're worth more than I've been paying you," he told Steve and me one late, Saturday night as he drew the checkbook from his pocket and wrote out an additional two hundred fifty dollar check for each of us.

I hugged him and cried on his broad shoulder as I stammered my thanks and appreciation. Steve got blest and praised the Lord, exclaiming, "God will bless you, Mr. Barbrey! God will bless you! See if He doesn't! Thank you! Thank you!"

Mr. Barbrey's lips trembled. He broke down and sobbed, saying, "Fellows, ever since you began working for me as young teenagers, God has blessed me. The milk production's up and the crops have peaked numerous times. I've been known as a skeptic, but that's all changed too. I'm a new man -- in Christ. You fellows made a believer out of me. Today, out by the barn, I settled the question to go with God. My soul -for the first time in my life has found its rest and is at peace with God. . . ."

You should have been there! Instead of Steve's happy-sounding solo fog-horn, there was a duet! What a glorious shout. All I could do was laugh and cry and wave my big, square, red work handkerchief and say, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Bless the Lord!"