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The Call



By Mrs. Paul E. King

THE CALL **By Mrs. Paul E. King**

Ross awoke with a start and sat up in bed. Inside his chest his heart was pounding like a sledge hammer. He felt almost breathless from the rapidity of the accelerated heartbeat. Gasping for air, he jumped out of bed and rushed over to the open window, trying to breathe more normally. Fear gripped his heart in a vise-like grasp, rendering him almost powerless. A sense of urgency lingered with him; he couldn't shake it.

He looked through the window to the sky, blue-black and moonless. Save for the myriad twinkling, blinking stars the sky looked like a shroud. Momentarily, Ross shuddered. Outer darkness! Yes, outer darkness!

He turned away quickly, trying to rid himself of the gripping, startling fear and the thought of outer darkness. But try as he may, it seemed to grip him all the more and fasten itself upon his heart with a fiercer and greater intensity.

Trembling, he slumped into the nearest chair and dropped his face into his hands. Sweat was thick and heavy on his forehead. The dream! Yes, the dream! If he could only forget the dream. But he couldn't. It was too real. It demanded action on his part; a call for obedience.

He sucked air into his lungs, feeling like a drowning, dying man. Maybe he was dying. Yes, maybe his time was up; maybe his minutes were no longer minutes but, instead, were mere seconds!

He brushed a hand across his dripping-wet forehead; perspiration dropped to the floor as the dream replayed itself across the strings of his heart and on his brain. It was a warning, he knew. An urgent warning! He had been driving the family truck across the rough, rugged land to one of the irrigation ditches miles away. Seeing a herd of antelope on a distant hill, he looked in their direction and crashed head-on into a huge rock. In his dream, he had been killed, crushed inside the truck's cab. And he was unsaved. Lost!

He had heard a gentle voice say sadly, "What more could I have done! I gave My life for his salvation and his sanctification. It wasn't My will for him to perish: I paid the price for his sins."

"And I called him," another voice replied gently. "For months I have visited his heart, pleading tenderly and softly, 'Son, give me thine heart.' But he has gone on, unmindful of My entreaties and of My gentle inner strivings."

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die." . . . "Bind him hand and foot and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Ezekiel 18:4 and 20; Matt. 22:13).

Ross trembled violently now. The latter voice was the voice of God. He knew it immediately. It was the voice of authority; the sentence was final!

He shuddered now, recalling the feeling of total and utter helplessness as he was being bound. And just before being tossed into the lake of fire, he awoke, shaking and trembling like the aspen leaves in the fall wind. He was facing a crisis and he knew it.

He sat motionless, realizing that he'd be lost if he died in his present condition. He was a sinner; a vile sinner. A backslider, really. Yes, he had known the joy of the Lord during his boyhood days. But as young manhood took over and he developed physically, he decided he would put away the things of childhood and "taste" of the more manly things. Just taste, mind you, not indulge to any length or to any great extent. After all, his friends at school were considered good young men and they were "tasting" of the things of the world. Not of drugs and alcohol and tobacco; no, not at all: he and his friends were teetotalers. But there were other things. . . .

Ross felt shame and guilt fill his being as he recalled the filthy videos he had looked at and seen in the home of one of the newer school students. And the trashy, morally filthy magazines which had bound him with fetters to them, and which he had stored in plastic bags and hidden in a corner of a cluttered, seldom-used out building on the ranch. He knew he was as hooked on them as the drug addict was on his chemicals and the drunkard on his alcohol and the smoker was on his nicotine. Yes, he was hooked.

A great terror and horror came over him. Sweat dropped from his brow. The dream was real: too real to take lightly and to push aside. The call was urgent. The decision was up to him. What was he going to do with Jesus? The day was coming when he must reckon with God for his sins. This was a for-sure thing; something from which he could never escape.

Ross felt tingles of fear race up and down his spine. He had thought his sins were hidden and concealed. True, his boyfriends knew what was going on; they were all in it together. Secretly, of course. That is, the parents weren't aware of any wrongdoing; their sons were known as "good boys." Every one of them.

Like a peal of thunder, Ross heard the Voice again . . . "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

Instinctively, he covered his face with his hands and cowered beneath the sentence Nothing was hidden or concealed from the All-seeing eye of God. Nothing! The Bible said the day was coming when all the hidden things would be revealed and made known (Matt. 10:26; Luke 8:17 and 12:2). This meant his sins would be uncovered and revealed and made known unless he repented of them and was born again.

Suddenly, Ross loathed the day he took his first "taste" -- it was a hasty, shame-filled peek in a drugstore at the magazine counter where there was a literal "smorgasbord" of trash. When he was sure no one was looking, he casually picked up one of the magazines and gave it a quick flip-through. His baser instinct and appetite was tantalized and whetted and in no time at all he was buying the magazines and hiding them, never stopping to think that the price tag for sin and deceit was forthcoming. Oh, he had known it, to be sure; but sin had an extremely blinding effect upon one when he chose to "taste"; to "try"; to experiment -- just a little!

Scripture after scripture tumbled from his memory now -- "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

"I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways; and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

"He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul . . ." (Isaiah 44:20).

Cannot deliver his soul! He Cannot deliver his soul!

The impact of the Divine declaration was revelatory; Ross saw with complete clarity that, in himself, he would never be free from the binding chains of the porn magazines and the demoralizing videos on which he was hooked. Yes, his friends and he had prided themselves on not being chemically bound -- drugs, alcohol and nicotine -- but in God's sight they were every bit as lost and hell bound as were their chemically dependent counterparts. Sin was sin; God made no distinction in it. The mandate was crystal clear -- "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

The moment had arrived: the decision must be made; the call to repentance must be heeded and obeyed or the judgment of God would fall. He was as sure of it as he was that he had had the dream. It meant a total and complete severance from sin and with sin; a bonfire to consume to the last filthy page, the stacks of magazines in the old building. It meant restitution and confession. Which one would it be, Christ or the devil, and his destructive, demoralizing wares? Which? Which? Whom?

Ross knew there was no middle ground; there was no compromise with God. And no bargaining either. God's mandates were final: "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89).

Sobs suddenly shook his muscular frame. In an instant's time he was on his knees imploring God for mercy on his sinful soul. He left no stone unturned; no sin that he did not confess, repent of, and ask forgiveness for. The magazines would be burned the first thing in the morning. . . .

It was late when he finally crawled between the sheets on the bed, forgiven, born again and at peace with his God. How wonderful, and how clean his heart felt with his sins washed away through the blood of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Praising the Lord, he fell into a restful sleep.