

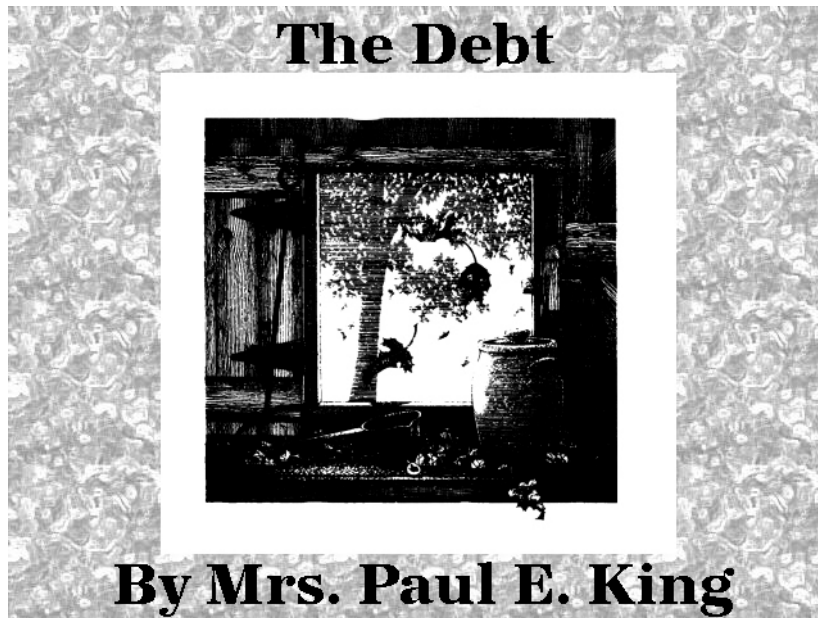
Copyright 2001 By Lucille King
All Rights Reserved and Duplication
Of This Publication Is Forbidden,
Except For Personal Use

* * * * *

Digital Edition 10/22/2001
By Holiness Data Ministry

* * * * *

The Sunday School Beacon
October 30, 1994



THE DEBT
By Mrs. Paul E. King

The sun drifted upward from its mooring in the east and sailed across the azure-blue heavens, bright and brilliant as only an October sun can be. Here and there, looking like ships a-sail, small, puffy-white clouds scudded playfully adrift, now darting saliently in front of the glistening-bright orb, now around it. All was still and silent except for the chit-chattering of myriad birds, joyous remnants of the summer just past and bright tokens of numerous

winter-hardy species that would remain to brighten our world and weather out the soon to arrive snow and ice and cold.

I took off my jacket and vest and sat down with my back against an old hickory. The October sun felt good; a bit too warm, perhaps, with all the trappings of a Woolrich jacket and vest; but good, nonetheless. The heavy Woolrich jacket and vest felt especially good when I first entered the woods in the early pre-dawn: the brittle-cold feel of winter stalked the land at that early hour.

I decided to rest awhile; to drink in the color on the hills and listen to the breeze sighing in the pines behind me. Besides, I wanted time to think; time to recollect and reminisce. I needed it; desperately so. The past summer had brought a drastic change into my life; a change which was neither anticipated nor, even, given so much as a single thought. Yet it had come unbidden and, to my thinking, untimely so. After all, sixty-eight wasn't old. Not really. Why, he hadn't gotten to fulfill his allotted three score and ten. It had been so sudden. So unexpected. So shocking. I felt devastated: I had lost my closest earthly friend.

I leaned my head against the stout old hickory's trunk now and closed my eyes. The tears squeezed out beneath my eyelashes and tumbled down my copper-tan, sun-bronzed cheeks. "Grandpa! Grandpa," I cried aloud. Then, in what was more of a moan than words, I sobbed, "Oh, Grandpa, Grandpa, I miss you more than ever. I do! I do!"

For a long time, I sobbed. The tears were warm; salt-tanged. My mind drifted back to other years; other Octobers and Novembers when he and I were together in this same woods, hunting. Actually, for all of my life, we were pretty much always together. We savored each other's company and fellowship and companionship.

Tall, angular, and anything but macho looking, Grandpa bore himself like a prince or a knight. He was a man of few words, but when he spoke his words were weighty and powerful; they had punch and meaning. His diction was flawlessly beautiful, much like a well-rehearsed sonnet; his voice was soft, kind, and soothing. Something about the way he spoke to me always made obedience to him an easy and immediate thing. And to God, too: Grandpa always reminded me of God.

Like I said, we were almost always together, for my father and grandpa farmed together on what was once my great-grandfather's and great-grandmother's farm. Grandpa and Grandma lived in the big, beautiful old original farm house across the road from our newer three-bedroom ranch style house. From my earliest days, I was "accused" of being Grandpa's shadow, a thing I most certainly could not deny. Nor did I want to.

My earliest recollections of him center around his prayer life. Time and again, he and I prayed together in the hayloft, out in the fields, down in the cow barn -everywhere. Grandpa lived in a continual atmosphere of prayer. More than once I fell asleep (as his "little shadow") with my head pillowed in the curve of his arm while he wrestled with God in earnest, fervent prayer over someone who was lost in sin or who had gone astray or who was not yet sanctified wholly.

It was this holy atmosphere, this unswerving devotion and unchanging commitment to God and to the winning of the lost, that sent daggers of conviction to my heart as a little boy of eight until Grandpa, sensing my condition, asked me if I wanted to pray and ask Jesus to save me. Needless to say, I was soundly converted and, shortly thereafter, the Lord again used my grandfather to lead me into the blessedly-wonderful experience of entire sanctification: I was cleansed and made pure and holy, filled with the Holy Spirit.

A fresh flow of tears gushed from my eyes now. The soughing pines behind me seemed to be sharing my sorrow; crying with me. I was very much alive but I was also very much numb with shock. Almost three months, I thought, and still my heart felt numb. Worse still, I'd lost my zest for doing the many things Grandpa and I had done together. Like hunting. And fishing. And hiking in the woods.

"Mind if I join you?"

I jerked my head away from the hickory trunk and opened my eyes. I hadn't heard a sound, other than the birds and the shuffling of leaves as a squirrel searched for food.

"Do you think he'd want you grieving over him this way, Jordan?"

I recognized the voice now. The man, too.

"It hurts," I cried, trying to stop the tears that refused to be stopped. Unashamedly, I sobbed. My heart felt like it was smashed to pieces.

"I know it does. But he's lived for this Homegoing, Jordan. And, knowing him the way I did, he'd certainly not want you to grieve any more over him. Rather, he'd want you to be praising the Lord that he made it Home. That the gun he gave you?" Mr. Lenhome asked quickly as he picked up the gun and stroked the shiny-smooth barrel. He and Grandpa were close friends. Grandpa had won him to the Lord years ago.

"Yes sir. But without him . . . well . . . the joy's gone out of hunting," I blurted truthfully.

"It'll come back again. That's a promise," the slightly bald man declared. "Meanwhile, why don't you take up where he left off?."

I jerked my head around so fast that my neck got a kink in it. "What . . . what do you mean by that, Brother Lenhome?" I asked quickly. "No one can take Grandpa's place. No one."

Still stroking the shiny-clean barrel of the lever-action 30-30 and raising it up as if for sighting, he said softly, "You have a debt to pay, Jordan; a commission to fulfill. Each of us is debtor to give in the same measure we received. Your grandfather was quite a soul winner. . . ."

He left the words dangle as if in mid-air right above my head. They jolted me out of the grief I was going through. A debt to pay? Me? I was still in high school; my junior year, to be exact.

"The greatest feeling in the world, besides getting converted and sanctified wholly, is to lead a soul to the Lord," Joshua Lenhome said quietly as he continued to stroke the barrel of the gun.

I was silent; Brother Lenhome's words were like a shaft -- a shaft that went straight to my heart: "You have a debt to pay. . . . Why don't you take up where he left off, Jordan?"

"I remember the year your grandfather found that little 20-bore for you," Joshua said softly. "He was as excited as a little boy is over a favorite toy. He

bought it on a hot day in late May. Said he'd keep it till your birthday came around in October. And, of course, that's when you got it."

"I'll never forget it; it was my first gun, ever," I declared soberly. "I felt richer than I believe any millionaire ever felt. And then the learning began. Talk about learning! Grandpa was a teacher of all teachers. We walked the woods, and we talked. Lesson after lesson after lesson I learned, on what to do when hunting and what not to do, always carrying the gun but no shells. I climbed fences and crawled under them, but not before I'd broken the 20, checked the bore, and pushed the gun under the wire.

"I changed my carry dozens of times on every outing, for it seemed Grandpa had nothing better to do than to come up first on one side of me then on the other, saying, 'I never want to look down the bore of that 20, Jordan. Never!' Oh, I learned all right; learned well: Grandpa was a great teacher, Brother Lenhome. Said one couldn't be too careful when it came to handling a gun."

Joshua Lenhome lowered the 30-30 and sat down beside me, there by the hickory tree in the October sun, saying nothing for a long while. He was deep in thought; I could tell by the look in his eyes and the expression on his face. I wondered what he was thinking about. I hadn't long to wonder, though.

"Jordan," he said abruptly, "your grandfather was an equally great teacher in soul-winning. Surely, being with him almost constantly like you were, you could not have helped but to have become an excellent scholar along this line too. It's true, he taught you well on the how-to of gun handling, shooting, et cetera; but I know he taught you equally as well, or better, in the spiritual realm -- the area of soul-maintenance and soul-winning. It's one thing to know what to do but it's another thing to do it."

"Oh, I've been praying and reading the Bible regularly," I said quickly. "In fact, I've been praying more now than when Grandpa was living. It seems that the only real solace I find is in praying and Bible reading."

"I'm thankful to hear you say this, Jordan. Anything that drives us to our knees is good: it's for our good. Now, what about your witnessing?"

I gulped. Since Grandpa's passing, I didn't especially enjoy being among too many people. I had even cut down on passing out tracts, a thing Grandpa and I did consistently and readily.

Getting quickly to his feet and standing directly in front of me, Brother Lenhome said softly, "Quite a few souls have died without God since the Homegoing of your grandfather, Jordan. You have a debt to pay, dear boy; a debt to the lost. . . ."

He turned quickly then and vanished among the trees of the forest. I sat in mute silence, not turning my head even to see which way he was going. I was in shock. Real shock. But I needed it. The Lord knew I needed it. He sent the meek and quiet Joshua Lenhome to get my attention; to pull my thoughts away from the grief and sorrow I was feeling and to get me to thinking about the lost -- about things that had eternal value.

I sat for a long while, staring into space, realizing that I had wasted precious time and lost many golden opportunities to witness for the Lord. I felt tears smart my eyes. Silently but sincerely I made a solemn vow to God: I would, to the best of my God-given ability, endeavor to take up where my beloved grandparent had left off.

Feeling much of the grief vanish with the sacred promise-commitment, I stood to my feet and, like a soldier giving a salute to an officer, I raised my right hand toward my forehead and looked heavenward. The Lord understood: I had just enlisted in His army for life as a soul winner.