

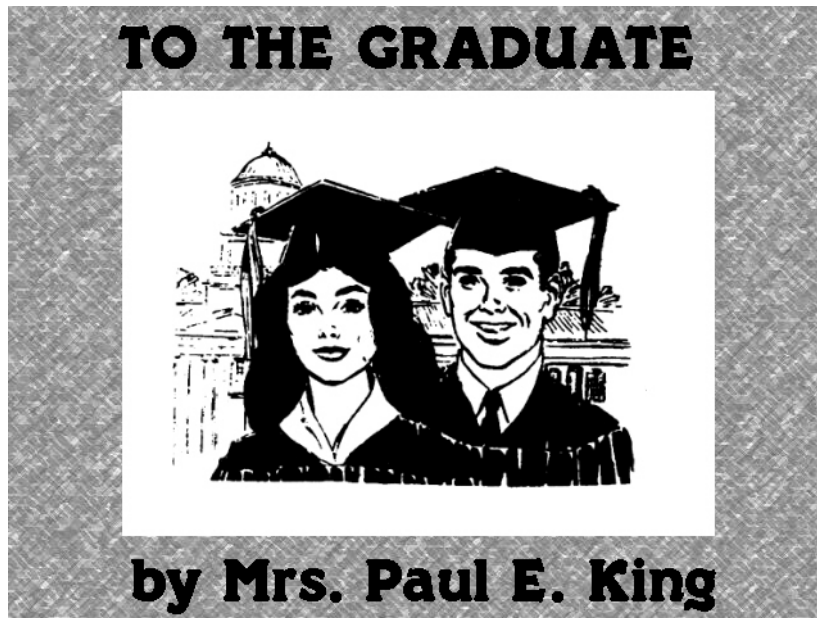
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The Sunday School Beacon
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TO THE GRADUATE
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Dearest Ann, save these hastily-written lines as my special graduation thoughts of you.

I saw you as you came slowly through the doors of the school, and though you didn't see me nor know, even, that I was anywhere near you (I finally managed to get off duty long enough to see you graduate, Sis), I

watched you carefully, trying to imagine how you felt in knowing that this would be the last and final day when you would enter and exit the doors of Melbourne Christian High as a student. Tonight you will be a graduate.

I saw you pause outside those heavy doors and look back, longingly. Then I saw you draw a kleenex or two -- or was it three or four? -- from the rectangular clutch you carried, and dab at your eyes. It was then that I suddenly wanted to cry with you. Oh Ann, I felt my heart melt like butter on a hot stove, and then it broke. You looked so diminutive, so vulnerable and fragile.

I could hardly bear the thought of you -- my baby sister -graduating and then going away to college in the fall, God willing. Something inside of me longed to reach out and protect you; to throw a sheet of impenetrable steel -- or whatever' -- around you until no one would be able to hurt you or soil your pure, angelic innocence. I guess you might say it was that godly part coming out from me which your own -- and my -- saintly, deceased father would have sensed and felt were he living today and seeing you as I saw you when you came through those doors of the dear, familiar school.

Oh, Ann, how I wish I could tell you that you will have smooth, easy sailing from here on out. But I cannot do this; first of all, it would be untrue and false and, secondly, life doesn't give us only smooth, calm seas to plow through. It is the turbulence and the storms that best fit us for our Master's supreme plan for our life. These hard things -- the hidden-from-view, I-can't-understand-why things -- have a subtle, silent and most effective way of molding us and making us conformable to His image and His likeness. Painful? Extremely so. Bitter? Very. But most blessed and rewarding in the process and the ultimate end.

I watched as you walked around the building, pausing and looking through the windows from the outside. You reminded me of the little sister whom I fondly recall doing the same thing at our house while we were growing up, enjoying the view from the outside in as much, I believe, as you enjoyed looking from the inside out. I still recall your childish voice declaring so excitedly and positively that, "We have the beautifulest house anywhere! And it's beautifulest of all looking from the outside in!"

Today, however, your trip around the building and your "outside-in" viewing were for more serious reasons than your once-childish "game" was.

Today (if I know my sister like I think I do -- and I have no doubts that I do!), your trip, and the window viewing episode, were a farewell salute (dare I call it this?) to four years of pleasant and painfully-sweet memories: Memories of friendships made which nothing but death can ever break and sever; memories of bonding to teachers whose philosophies and beliefs were like your own -- beliefs planted and rooted well in and upon the Word of God and everything It stands for and/or against; memories of lessons learned which will project you from the halls of Melbourne High on to the threshold of college.

College! Ah, Sis, my prayer, which is a constant thing for you, is that God will guide you along this line in a very special and tender way. There are wolves out there: wolves that are "cloaked" in sheep's "clothing." Yes, dear Ann; you read the words right the first time, even though you may wonder what made your big brother go so far as to use such a fierce and beastly word in conjunction with the word college. However, it is a truly fitting word in more ways than one. You see, little sis, there are worldly-wise fellows on campus; young men whose chief delight is in dating a little Miss Innocent -- Miss Naive; Miss Morally Pure -- then breaking her down with "sweet talk" and flatteries and robbing her of her virtue and purity, only to treat her with utter disdain and loathing and contempt ever afterwards. And to even brag about his wicked "accomplishment" to fellow students of the same kind!

There are "wolves" of other kinds also, not the least of which may show up in a college professor or college teacher. Ann, be on your guard! You have a soul to preserve; a charge to keep; a God to glorify. These "textbook wolves" can be so suave; so "politically correct"; so persuasive and pervasive. They have learned their "lessons" well, and with subtlety and guile they will seek to destroy your beliefs of morality and uprightness and righteousness. More precisely and honestly, they will go to any and all ends and means to destroy your faith in God and God's Word, and your belief in Heaven and hell and in sin and wickedness. They will castigate you and harass you and make fun of you for believing in these Biblical things. They have but one objective and one motive -- to make a skeptic out of you; a skeptic and an unbeliever, like they are. Be on your guard, Ann. Our adversary -- the devil -- goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, so states God's Word.

John Mays just crossed the street. I remember the battle you fought -- the struggle you had -- when you sensed that all was not well with John's

soul a year ago and you felt you had to confront him with what you sensed. (Jane and I still have those letters you wrote us, Ann. I feel honored that you look up to me the way you always did to Dad when he lived! This is a compliment of the greatest kind! Thank you.)

Jane and I really held on to God for you during those days, Sis. (You really loved John, didn't you?) He's such a fine looking fellow. This makes me even more proud of you, Ann; not carnally proud but "brotherly proud." Most girls would have made excuses, and "bargained" with God -- to keep John. I knew without any doubt whatever that your sanctification was genuine and real when you wrote Jane and me that you told John you could no longer go out with him until he got his life back on course with God. That took courage, Ann; courage and a genuinely-real experience of death to self and aliveness unto God! As Mother has told us, however, the Lord has blessed you in myriad other ways since taking your stand.

Poor John! I pray that he will turn from his easily-led-astray ways and will come back to God in true and full repentance and will then go on to holiness of heart and life in a total and complete surrender of self to God. So many know nothing whatever about dying out to self and to people and people's opinions and becoming wholly and thoroughly and thoroughly cleansed and purged from all inbred sin. Their pride pulls them back, and down, which is what I feel happened in John's case. But God is able to bring him back into the fold. We must continue to pray for him: it isn't God's will for anyone to perish and lose his soul.

Tonight, as Mother and I sit and hear you give your well-prepared, Christ-honoring valedictory address, a part of us will be crying too -- Mother will be "losing" the last of her "brood" of six, and I will be recalling the many cherished memories of my own years in Melbourne Christian High -- principles that were forged and formed at home by Dad and Mother were "nailed" soundly intact by my godly teachers; lessons that were taught and learned at home were soundly and solidly reinforced at school; meeting Jane and falling in love with her and finally marrying her!

Oh Ann, my prayers -- and Jane's -- will follow you constantly, and down across the years. (Jane sends you all her deepest love. If Holly Ann had come when she was expected two weeks ago instead of day before yesterday, we'd have come as a foursome -Jane, Aaron, Holly and I). I know the Lord is going to give you His guidance; my faith rests in Him. And I have

the utmost confidence in you; I know you will seek His will and His way for your future.

Having implicit faith in God and in you, I will attend your graduation with a sense of pride and an unwavering confidence, knowing that He who cares for the sparrows will surely look out for my sister. And who knows but that God may part the clouds 'twixt earth and Heaven and Daddy may see and hear you tonight, Ann! Hebrews tells us that we are ". . . compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses . . ." (Hebrews 12:1).

God bless you, Sis, and keep you, now and forever.

I love you, Graduate!
Your brother, Philip