

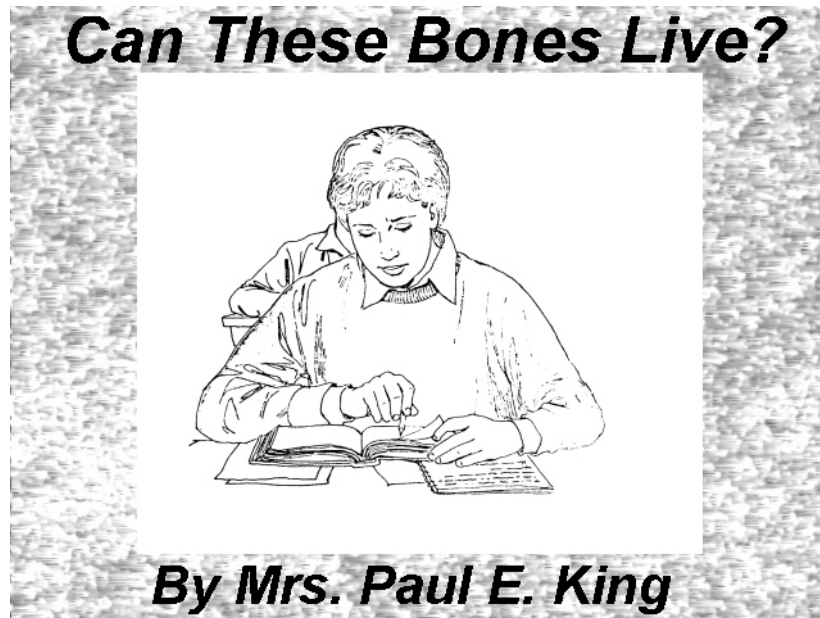
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CAN THESE BONES LIVE?
By Mrs. Paul E. King

"Hortense" was one of the most intriguing and captivating things in my high school biology class. On second thought, I guess she was the most intriguing and fascinating thing in the entire school. At least for me she was. She hung -- yes, I said hung -- from a stand at one side of the room and moved mysteriously when and if someone quickly opened the classroom door.

Hortense was a full-size model of a human skeleton. She was much discussed and often made fun of. Poor Hortense, she had all the plastic bones of a body but each of us knew that was not nearly enough to make a body work. No indeed.

I was thankful (some days especially) that Hortense didn't have a mind; she'd have been outraged and insulted repeatedly could she have heard some of the comments made about her. But she was brainless. "Hollow headed," one of the boys had declared in class one day to the accompaniment of loud laughter.

I sat in my seat now, watching her mysterious movements, admiring her "silence" but wondering what she'd say if indeed she had a brain and could think and talk.

"She needs a heart and lungs," I remarked to Mr. Billow, our biology teacher, who asked us to name some necessary body parts for Hortense, upon whose dangling skeletal form all eyes were now focused since she was the sole subject of discussion.

We discussed the function of both the heart and the lungs and how the body needs each organ to survive, when Blair Allen said quickly, "She needs muscles, Mr. Billow. Lots of muscles." And Blair flexed his muscles, if indeed one could call any part of Blair's body muscular.

Silence settled over the classroom. Everyone knew that Blair Allen desired greatly to be able to play a normal, ordinary game of baseball and football like every other normal and ordinary young man. But no one knew better than Blair himself that such would never be his lot, and that he would never ever have real he-man muscles.

"Can't you visualize Hortense with healthy muscles on those pitiful bones!" Blair added, with laughter in his voice.

That was the great thing about Blair Allen; he took life's blows in stride, saying simply and trustingly that God was too good and wonderful and all-wise to allow anything to befall His children but what was for their own good and His glory. Blair never once went into a mood swing that took him on a pity party and left his friends and fellow students down in the desolate slough

of despondency or in the mully grubs. No sir, not Blair. In spite of the effects of the accident, which kept him from doing ever so many things every physically able young man could and would do, Blair looked for the rainbows in life -- for the silver lining in the clouds and the sunshine in the storm -- and he always found something over which to rejoice and thank God and be happy.

For a long time after the accident at his uncle's mill, the accident which almost took Blair's life but which was the thing that got his attention and led him into an experience of salvation from sin and, subsequently, into entire sanctification, Blair was an enigma to many of his classmates. True, they respected him but some thought he had lost his mind and gone crazy. This in spite of his straight A average grades. Eventually, however, everyone saw how utterly genuine and real Blair's experience with God was and is and now they have nothing but the highest respect for him. This is why the classroom got silent when he made his comment about Hortense having a need for muscles. That he could be cheerful, and even humorous, in spite of the physical pain and losses, was in itself enigmatic to many of his fellow classmates.

Mr. Billow brought us quickly back to the discussion, however, with more questions and once again the class took on its normal sounds and its air of jollity.

It was while we were changing classes that Blair Allen caught up with me.

"Some message our preacher preached last night, wasn't it, Joel?" he asked, catching me completely off guard. "I felt like I could scarcely stay in my seat. He's quite a preacher. And what I appreciate most of all is that everything he preaches comes from the Bible. He gives us book, chapter and verse for what he says. Why Joel, you wouldn't believe how different things are from where we used to go. Our pastor at the other church gave us 20 to 30 minute essays, usually taken out of some secular book or current publication or magazine. It's a fact. And frankly, I was bored stiff with his material. Did you ever sit under a 'sermon' that was read off word for word in a monotone for twenty or thirty minutes?" Blair asked.

I laughed, then I said, "As a matter of fact, I haven't, Blair. And truthfully, I can't say that I have a desire to go through what you've just told

me about. I like the way our pastor preaches; one can't very easily go to sleep on him. For one thing, he has unction and. . ."

"And power!" Blair added quickly, before I could finish my sentence.

"That's for sure," I commented, feeling as uncomfortable now as I had felt during the previous night's sermon on, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

True, it was and is a prophetic chapter from the Book of Ezekiel (Chapter 37, to be a bit more explicit) and it very definitely has reference to the Israelites being "resurrected" in the latter days, but God used it as an arrow to smite my own heart.

"I'm afraid the professing Christians are, in many cases, as dead as those dry bones were in that valley," Blair said quite suddenly as we entered our next classroom.

I agreed with him, knowing only too well that such was the case of my own heart. I was dead. Dead! I added nothing whatever to the young people's service nor to the services held out in the main auditorium. I didn't fight nor oppose anything that was being done or undertaken for the upbuilding of God's kingdom, but neither did I contribute anything. Not a single thing! But how can one contribute when he has nothing inside to contribute -- no testimony, no joy, no peace, no witness of the Spirit that he has passed from death unto life?

I sighed as I took my seat. I realized with a sudden aching awareness that in many respects I was a lot like poor Hortense, who swung mysteriously with the slightest puff of breeze, but who was as "dead" as she could ever be.

I had a choice, I realized; she had none. I could have life -- eternal life - - she never could, or would. In these respects we differed.

I now knew I was facing a crisis time in my life, and what I did with the "Dry Bones" sermon would affect me for the rest of my days. Bowing my head, I made a solemn vow to God.

I could hardly wait until school was dismissed for the day. Immediately upon hearing the dismissal bell I made a beeline for my locker, in which my

light weight windbreaker jacket was. Then, gathering all my books together, I hurried outside to my bicycle and pedaled home as quickly as those wheels could make it.

I did my after-school assigned chores with record speed and carefulness; then I left a note on the kitchen table for Mother, (who told me at the breakfast table that she would have to run into town after Dad, whose car was still in the garage having work done on it). I told her I had gone to the church to pray and asked her not to worry if I was not home by suppertime.

It was cool inside the church sanctuary as I made my way toward the front and the altar. I sensed God's unseen presence waiting to meet me there. Tearfully, I knelt at the altar and began to pray. I told God everything I could think of about myself that was bad and wicked and vile. He helped me wondrously as I confessed my known and remembered sins and repented thoroughly and genuinely of them. And true to His Word, He wrote the pardon on my heart and changed me marvelously. I was saved -- born again; converted -- and I knew it. My joy overflowed; I couldn't contain it, so overjoyed and happy I was. I now had life!

I walked up and down the aisles of the church, waving my arms and crying for joy, knowing my sins were all taken away and were forgiven. Then I made my way to the altar again. I wanted a holy heart; a sanctified wholly and cleansed heart. I had life -- new life in Christ -- now I wanted "life more abundant." I wanted Christ to be King of my life; to have full and complete control of each and every part of me.

The enemy of my soul put up quite a battle, but I was determined that God was going to have complete and total supremacy in my heart and life.

I prayed, and I confessed the carnal traits that came before me in rapid succession, telling the Lord that I wanted them extirpated and eradicated. I knew that unless the Lord burned out the old carnal nature within my heart and filled me with His Holy Spirit and Divine Love, I'd never make it, since the carnal mind is not subject to the laws of God and is at enmity with God.

I prayed on and on, having purposed within my heart that I would not leave the altar until I knew that the blood of Jesus had cleansed and purged my heart of every root of carnality, and all praise to God, I persevered until the victory came. The fire from Heaven fell and I was sanctified wholly. I was,

indeed, free in Christ; I had glorious freedom. And suddenly I remembered Hortense and our pastor's sermon and I had another Hallelujah march around the inside of the church.

God had loosed my say-nothing, do-nothing tongue and heart and now I knew -- yes, I knew! -- my spiritual "bones" were alive. The fire of Pentecost and the breath of God's Holy Spirit, filling each and every part of me, had given life to my once-dry and dead spiritual bones and I was alive. Alive! With Holy Ghost fervor and fire surging through me and burning in my soul, I felt like an army with banners, moving forward for God and with God, going from victory to victory.

"Son of man, can these bones live?" Yes. Yes! A thousand times yes. But only as God the Holy Spirit gives them life. Do you have it? Do you want it?

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" Rev. 22:17.