

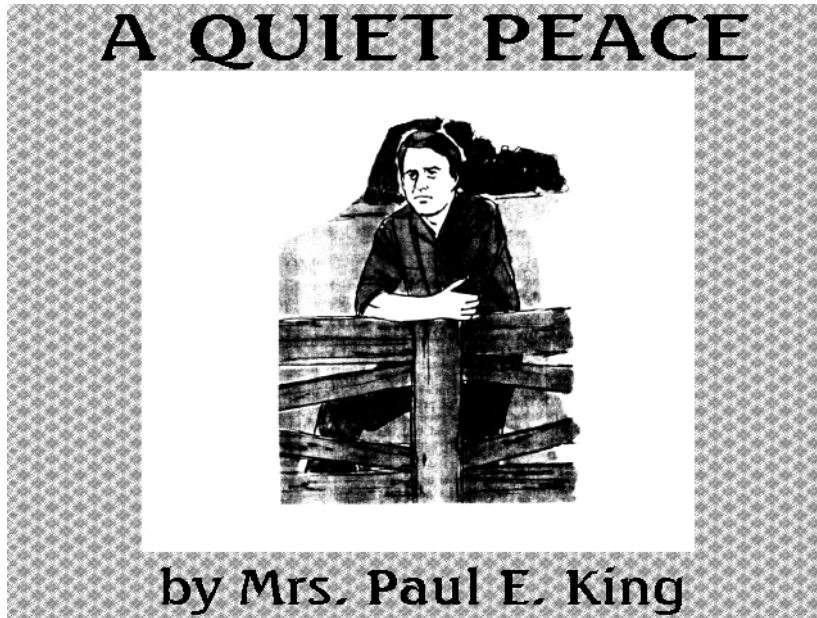
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**A QUIET PEACE**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

Ronald paced back and forth across Myra's freshly scrubbed kitchen floor, his mind a whirlwind of questions without answers. It didn't make sense to him, Ira's way of thinking and his manner of life and careful living. The man was a puzzle to him; an enigma. Take this latest happening, for instance. . . .

"Ron! Oh, Ronald," Myra cried, coming up from the basement with a pan of apples and another of potatoes. "My floor, Ron! I just scrubbed and waxed it. Look at the mud you tracked in!" Tears swam in Myra's pretty eyes.

"I'm sorry, Myra. I guess I didn't notice. Here, give me the mop, I'll mop it. I dirtied it, I should have to clean it up, not you."

"I'll take care of it," Myra said sweetly. "Just go into the living room, please, and stay there till the wax dries, honey," and Myra Bridges set about the job of redoing what she had done earlier.

Ron stood in front of the big window and stared through the shiny-clean glass, his brow furrowed in a perplexed manner. He liked Ira Framer; liked him a lot. Truth of the matter was, that, of all the neighbors in the valley, Ira was his favorite. Honest to the core and as conscientious and kind as anybody he'd ever known, Ron admired the man in a way he'd never admired anyone. He guessed esteemed would have fit better even than the word admired, for he looked up to Ira in ever so many ways. Maybe both words fit, where the neighbor entered the picture of his thoughts, as well as his association and contact with the man, Ron reflected silently.

He walked to the big wrap-around porch and sat down in the swing on what they called the front porch. From there he could see Ira's barn and house and the four silos as well as some of the gently rolling pasture land where beef cattle grazed contentedly. Beyond one of the small hills, a large, modern chicken house had stood less than two months before, housing two thousand laying hens. The lightning that struck it the night of the big storm had totally destroyed the house and the chickens. Everything. What the fire didn't get the wind did, carrying everything left, with it to whatever.

"I'm sorry, Ira," Ron recalled having said to his neighbor as he rushed over to see how he could help out.

Looking a bit pale and tired, Ira had thanked him for coming. Then he replied, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. All that I have belongs to the Lord, Ron. For reasons unknown to me, He allowed this to happen. He knows what's best for Jenny and the boys and me. I love and serve Him for His own wonderful self, not for what He gives me nor for what I feel I can get from Him."

"But Ira," Ron remembered having said, "aren't you upset? After all, this is quite a loss. It's your first one, too. Will you go ahead with your plans and build those other two chicken houses? Those for the broilers, I mean?"

Ira had pushed his cap back on his head and looked at the charred remains of the floor, then he spoke softly. "I haven't had time to pray about it, Ron; I don't know what I'll do. I want to know God's will before I do anything. Like I said, everything I have belongs to God. I try to keep pace with His will and His orders. Maybe He's trying to tell me something."

"Like what?"

"Like I've been too busy and too wrapped up in earthly things: things that will all be destroyed someday."

"But a fellow's got to live, Ira, and it's not a secret that the farmer's wages are far beneath those of the big car factory worker's wages, to name but one. Surely, God doesn't begrudge a man a decent living nor a good paycheck, and this broiler business is big business. Surely God wouldn't begrudge a man these honest things."

"Begrudge? Indeed not. Why, Ron, if it wasn't for God's goodness and kindness, none of us would have a thing. It's because of Him that we have what we have. No, there's no 'begrudging' with God; only goodness, kindness and love, and knowing what is best for mankind."

"Well, don't let this get you down and discourage you from moving ahead with your plans, Ira. I can't see how He could be displeased with your plan."

A smile parted Ira's lips. "when one tends the Master's garden and works His land, he doesn't get discouraged, Ron; his greatest delight is to carry out and fulfill the Master's orders and His plans. I'm not discouraged nor am I dismayed: God controls not only my life but also the everyday affairs of my life."

After the conversation, Ira had slapped him gently on his shoulder and said softly, "My heart has a quiet peace, Ron, knowing that what just happened didn't come as a surprise to God. The Bible says, ' . . . the Lord

hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

"He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and driveth up all the rivers: . . .

"The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

"Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

"The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him' (Nahum 1:3-7).

"Think of it, Ron; a God so powerful and mighty knowing one such as I! And being my strong hold, or strength, in the day of trouble! It humbles me, dear friend, to think He cares about me and for me."

Ron sighed, trying to figure out Ira. In spite of adversity, the man's attitude, disposition and deportment displayed nothing other than that of which he had spoken and called, "A quiet peace."

The most recent tragedy however, shook Ron to the very core of his being. It still seemed like a horrible nightmare to him; like it was something he hadn't heard right over the early morning news when he flipped the dial on in the milking parlor of the barn.

At first, the report had skimmed across his mind much like a pebble skimming or skipping across the pond. Then the names grabbed his attention. It was like he was hit with a baseball bat. He dropped the milking pail in disbelief and shock and fear. Framer, the announcer had said! Ted and Thomas Framer, why, that would be Ira's two oldest sons! And yes, they worked at Stoneacres Plant in town. But. . . .

"Again I repeat," the announcer stated a second time, "Ted and Thomas Framer were killed this morning. Ted was going home from his night-time job and Thomas was leaving for his daytime job. Thomas' car hit a rock lying on the road at what we locals call Death Curve. His car crossed over

into the lane of the oncoming car, which was that of his older brother. Both boys were killed instantly. Our little community is in a state of shock. Anyone wanting to. . . ."

Ron had shut the radio off without waiting to hear more. The boys had been dead for several hours and he hadn't known about it. why hadn't he turned the radio on early, like he usually always did? He chided himself for his failure to do so, then he got into the pickup truck and raced down the road toward the Framers' farm.

He felt utterly helpless as he stood before Ira and Jenny and their younger offspring, offering his sympathy and condolence, as well as his willingness to help out in any way possible.

Ira, with tears in his eyes and holding Jenny's hand lovingly and gently, had thanked him, then said, "We are a blest family, Ron; our boys were ready to meet their Maker. They were converted years ago, and were sanctified wholly shortly afterwards. They cannot come to us, but we can go to them. Oh, it is good to know the Lord! So very good. In spite of the pain we have now, over the loss of our two precious sons, my heart has a quiet peace; a deep inner calm.

God knows the why of this, even though we don't. He does all things for our good -- our best -- and for His glory. Not now, nor here, but someday He will make everything plain to us. Then we will fully understand the reason for this . . . this tragedy. I mean, for what now appears to us a tragedy. God has His way in the storm; remember how I quoted those words from the Bible to you one other time? I have proven Him to be faithful, Ron; a strong hold in the time of trouble."

He had left then; driven home to finish his milking and to turn the cows out to the shady meadow for grazing. He was left with his thoughts; thoughts that troubled him; thoughts and questions that clamored for attention and answers. And now, here he was, sitting on his front porch with the same troublesome thoughts and questions but no answer to them.

"I'm sorry, honey," Myra said, interrupting Ron's thinking. "I didn't mean to chase you out of your own home. The wax is almost dry; you'll soon be able to come back into the kitchen."

Ron gave his wife a quick and hasty glance but made no reply.

"Something's bothering you," Myra stated gently. "I know we're all shaken up over Ted's and Tom's deaths, but all our pining and grieving over them can never bring them back, Ron."

"I'm in shock, Myra. Real shock. Not only over the death of these two who were the finest specimens of real manhood -- noble manhood! -- but also over Ira."

"And why should you be in shock over their father, Ron? From all appearances, he and Jenny are bearing up under this dreadful happening like, well, dare I say, like rocks. I know they must be hurting," Myra stated as she wiped tears from her eyes. "They couldn't help but be hurt; death is a cruel thing. Yet Jenny told me that the Lord's constant presence gives them a constant peace. Imagine it! Peace in tragedy! It doesn't seem real, now does it? Nor possible, even."

Turning and facing his wife, Ron said, "that's why I said I was shocked over Ira. Awed, I guess I should say. I tell you, Myra, lately I can't think of much else except what Ira told me when the new hen house was destroyed a few months ago. And now, with their losing Ted and Tom, he said the same thing to me again. He said, 'My heart has a quiet peace, Ron.' How can this be, Myra? How? Why doesn't Ira act -- or react -- like ordinary men do?" Ron was pacing the porch now.

Mulling the words over and over in her mind, Myra crossed over to where her husband had stopped along the porch railing and, then, tapping him lightly on the shoulder, she said sensibly, "Why not ask Ira, honey?"

Patting Myra on the hand, Ron crossed the porch to the steps. Walking briskly, he crossed the lawn and was soon out at the horse pasture. Leaning hard on the board fence, he gazed for a long while across the fields to where Ira's house and barn stood. Then, mustering up courage, he said, "Why not? Yes, why not? Ira has the answer to what's bothering me. I'll go! I'll ask him! I will!"

Almost running, he jumped into the pickup truck and raced toward the neighbor's farm, knowing that, soon, he would find answers to his questioning mind. And his heart, too, would know "a quiet peace."