

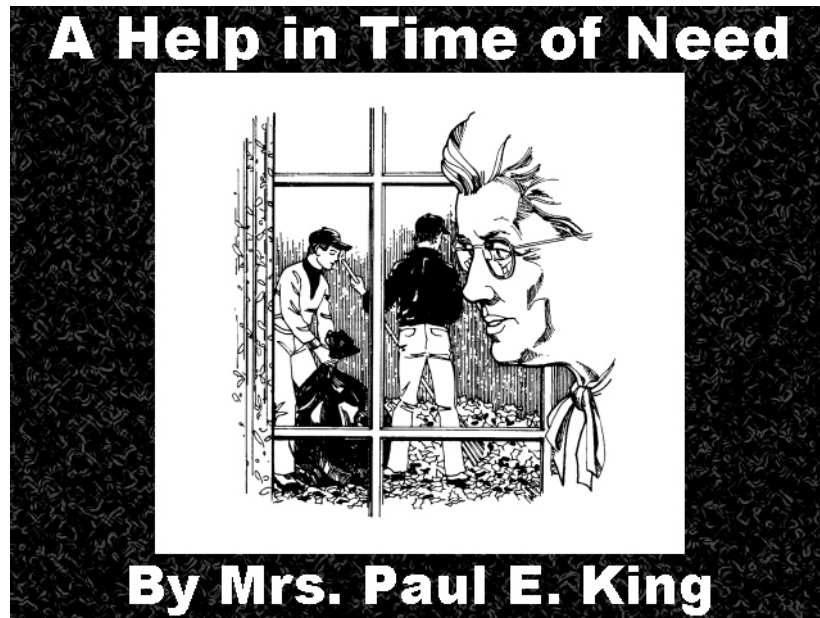
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**A HELP IN TIME OF NEED**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

Mrs. Bricker finished her second cup of hot peppermint tea, then took the cup and saucer to the sink, her eyes searching the yard. Leaves, from the many trees in the yard, were scattered all over the ground. She felt tears form in her pale blue eyes. What could she do? she wondered, as she surveyed the thick carpet of fallen leaves through the kitchen window. How exalted and happy Len and she had been when they planted the sugar

maples in the yard better than forty years ago. They had watched them grow from mere saplings into the stout and sturdy trees they now were and, with excitement and sheer delight, they waited eagerly each and every fall for the grand display of color the trees put on for them. It was as if the yard were transformed into a canvas-portrait of the most flamboyant colors one could ever desire to see.

Tears fell from the woman's eyes. How she missed Len! It was as if time had stopped for her when he died, as if there was little left to live for. Even the magnificent display of the colored leaves this year failed to excite or thrill her like when Len lived and they shared the grandeur and splendor of the spectacle together.

"Oh, Len!" Matilda Bricker cried aloud. "I miss you so."

Brushing the tears away, Matilda washed and dried her few breakfast dishes, wondering what she should do about the leaves. Her heart condition made it impossible for her to rake them together and pile them, like Len and she used to do before he wheeled them to the composter behind the garage. Len couldn't stand the thought of burning the leaves, like most of their neighbors did.

"Such a waste of God's natural fertilizer!" her husband exclaimed sadly, as he saw the smoke of leaves spiral upward.

Matilda enjoyed the time she spent working in the yard with Len. He was a companion of companions: fun to be with and a joy and blessing to be around. He had more patience than anyone she had ever known. He was a true Biblical example of one who was long-suffering and possessed with great forbearance. Her greatest joy was working with him in the garden and the yard when he returned home from work.

She picked up the Bible from the table and settled down in a chair in the living room to read. Since Len's death and burial, she felt like she was reading mere words, so deeply in shock was her body. It seemed like her mind was incapable of remembering what she was reading, so dulled was it by the shock of his sudden passing away. She purposed within her heart, however, that, remember what she was reading or not remember, she would continue having her daily family altar even though she was all that remained of the family. He who had promised, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and

the smoking flax shall he not quench: . . ." (Isaiah 42:3) would bless her for her faithfulness to Him and, in time, would heal the shock and the pain and would again help her to remember the precious things from His Word.

She opened the Bible to where she had left off reading and glanced over at Len's favorite chair, now empty. The loneliness overwhelmed her; tears ran copiously down her cheeks. She felt so alone. If only she could have had a family! How they had prayed for children, she and Len. But God in His Sovereign wisdom had not fulfilled their requests, having had other plans for them: plans which neither Len nor she would know until they saw Him face to face and then, if He so desired, He would reveal it to them. Even the two adoptions they had thought were a reality had failed at the last minute. It was then they felt the Lord's wisdom was beyond man's planning and his designs, and became fully resigned to being childless.

The thought and longings for a daughter and son made Matilda sit suddenly straight and erect. Years ago, that had become a sealed issue in her heart: she was totally and completely resigned to God's will. She dare not allow Satan to bring it back to torment her now, no matter how pleasant the thought of having a son's shoulder to cry on and a daughter's loving arms to hold her. God's way was always best. Always! He did nothing but what was best for His children. Only the best. Quickly she began to read.

A quick glance at the clock on the wall, some time later, revealed the fact to Matilda that she had been reading for well over an hour. How refreshed and revived was her soul and her spirit and how far away had been her feeling of loneliness and aloneness. Truth of the matter was, that, not once had she thought of the empty chair nor of her widowhood: the Word was God; all through her reading, His sacred and hallowed presence had been unusually near to her, wrapping and enfolding her in the healing warmth of the Comforter. She was conscious of the oil of His healing. In time, she realized, the pain of Len's passing away would be less acute, though he would never be forgotten.

Drawing the Bible close to her heart, she knelt for prayer. In the secret of His presence she offered, first of all, a prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God for the many wonderful years He had given Len and her together, naming the blessings and the sacred memories one by one, and by the time she had finished she felt there was no place for anything else. A prayer of

praise and thanksgiving was well-pleasing to the Lord, she realized as she placed the Bible on the end table beside the sofa.

It was good for one's soul, too, she thought, suddenly aware of the fact that her sorrowing heart felt an overwhelming inflow of heavenly joy and peace. Praise and thanksgiving were like spiritual antennas that reached from earth to heaven and with lightning speed brought victory and blessing to the one offering the sacrifice of praise. God had just proven it to her soul and to her entire being, too.

For the first time since her husband's death, Matilda was able to sing. It was one of her favorites. Softly and reverently she sang,

I will praise Him; I will praise Him;  
Praise the Lamb for sinners slain:  
Give Him glory, all ye people,  
For His blood can wash away each stain.

She marveled at the calmness in her soul and at the wonderful rest. Truly, and without a doubt, the Lord had wrought a work of healing in her heart. He who was tested in all points like she, knew what to do and when to do it, and how. Oh, what a never-failing true and loving Friend was the Lord Jesus Christ. Never had she felt Him closer or more ready to help. Suddenly Isaiah 54:5 came to mind; "For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called."

Looking upward, Matilda wept tears of joy. Her God was her husband! Just as she had leaned upon and depended on Len, so God wanted her to lean upon Him and trust Him for whatever she needed and what was bothering or troubling her. She wasn't alone! No, not at all. Her Maker was wanting to care for her and look out for her. How wonderful and consoling! He knew about the thick carpet of leaves all over her yard: He would help her, she was confident.

The consciousness of her Heavenly and Divine Helper made her every household task a delightful one. The morning passed quickly and by mid-afternoon Matilda decided to finish the afghan she had begun before Len's death. It was a lovely design. She was impressed by its lack of simplicity and uncomplicated stitches when she saw it in one of her many afghan patterns.

books. She had worked on it in the evenings, mainly, while Len worked on his books. Each was content in the presence of the other, though few words were spoken as they worked, she, on the afghan; Len on the books.

Going to the closet to bring it out of its "consigned banishment," where she had put it upon her husband's Homegoing, Matilda saw movement in the yard. Moving over to the window, she caught her breath in glad surprise. Her leaves were being raked up! Her Maker had sent several of the neighbor boys to take care of what she was unable to do. Already, they had many of the leaves in big piles and some in bags.

Praising the Lord, Matilda turned and hurried after a scarf and sweater. She must thank the boys, and pay them; and the leaves must go into the composter behind the garage. As many as would go in, that is. The others would remain in bags until the composter could handle them. Len would be so pleased.

Feeling suddenly very blessed and happy, Matilda slipped her arms into the sweater. Truly, truly, the Lord -- her Maker-husband -- was an ever-present help in time of need as well as in the time of trouble.

Smiling, and feeling more alive than she had felt in weeks, she tied the scarf around her head, then started for the yard.

THE END