

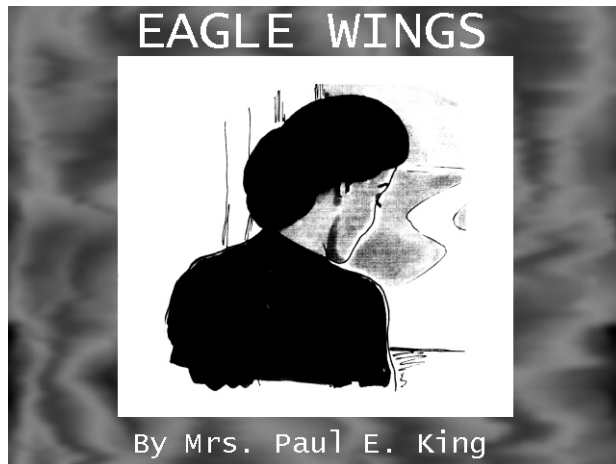
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Digital Edition 10/22/2001
By Holiness Data Ministry

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The Sunday School Beacon
February 6, 2000



EAGLE WINGS
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Charlotte Hayes glanced up from her reading in time to see her friends looking her way, shaking their heads in disbelief. With tears in her eyes, she continued reading marveling at the inflow of calming, comforting healing balm and peace in her soul. Two years ago she would have gone to pieces, literally, physically and emotionally, had she encountered then what she had so recently faced.

"Strengthen yourself in the Omnipotence of God," Andrew Murray had written in one of his books. "Do not say, Is God Able? Say, rather God is able."

The words, so poignant and truth-laden, were bulwarks of strength to the young heart. Holding both the Bible and the devotional book in her arms, she clasped them close to her heart, drawing strength from each with the mere gesture. What a refuge from the storms and the tempests of life she had found in Jesus, Who was now her best and truest and dearest Companion and Friend.

Charlotte thought back to her life before she knew the Lord. How dreary, lonely and hopeless it had been. Purposeless and meaningless, the days had slipped by one after another, as she got her college lessons and graduated, feeling a void and deep longing somewhere inside her, for which she had no reasonable or explainable answer.

"You have everything going for you, Char," her best friend, Bev, had said to her one day when she walked into the room they had shared on campus and found Charlotte crying for no apparent reason.

"Maybe so," she had replied. "But I wish I had the answer for this emptiness I feel in my heart. What is it, Beverly? Do you feel it? I mean, well, there must be more to life than this that we're doing and getting out of it. I feel like I'm in a rut. You know; spinning my wheels and getting nowhere."

"What do you mean?" Bev had asked, looking worried and concerned. "Were preparing ourselves for the future; what more can we do? I think you need help, Char. Why don't you talk to a counselor? A pro, I mean."

Charlotte remembered having made no reply: she hadn't told her closest and best friend that she had by then been to two different counselors and that each had advised her to "let her hair down" and have some fun. By that they had meant for her to party and take on the habits of many of her peers. But she couldn't do it; she found the lifestyle of most of the students to be ever so obnoxious and abhorrent to her. Furthermore, she knew that many of the party-makers and partygoers were every bit as dissatisfied as she was. They may have had what they considered fun, but it was short-lived, she knew.

Born into a small family where honesty and good moral principles were taught and practiced, Charlotte's parents felt they had done what was necessary for their two offspring. Her father's position as vice president of

Karl and Sanderson Company provided them with a comfortable living. Neither Bradley nor she had ever had to worry or be concerned about their college bills: all was paid for and taken care of by their father, who felt that being honest and keeping one's bills paid and being morally good and kind to one's neighbors was all that was necessary to gain entrance into Heaven.

Church attendance was a sporadic and seldom-ever thing. Their names were on the roster as members of one of the largest churches in the city, but attendance was given over mainly to Christmas and Easter Sunday and an occasional wedding. Seldom ever did Bradley go, even, to these.

Bradley had graduated from medical school and had established his practice in a suburban area of the city. Things were going well for him until, in his fourth year as Dr. Bradley Hayes, he called home one morning to say he wasn't feeling well, could someone please come over.

It seemed unreal to Charlotte, even yet, as she recalled that morning. Her father was at his place of business; her mother was on her way to visit her aging mother.

"I'll be over, Brad," she had answered quickly.

"Better hurry, Sis; I'm feeling really bad."

"As fast as I can make it, Brad," Charlotte had promised.

Taking the freeway, she had exceeded the speed limit and was stopped by a policeman, who, when he knew the reason for her excessive speed, escorted her with flashing lights and siren to her brother's home.

She rushed to the door and, thankful that it was unlocked, hurried inside, where she found Bradley lying on the floor. Between the policeman and herself, they got him up on the sofa and, minutes later, an ambulance rushed him to a nearby hospital.

It was while she paced back and forth in the corridor of the hospital, waiting for her father and mother to arrive -- her father, from an impromptu and not-previously-scheduled out-of-town business meeting, and her mother to be located along the highway en route to her mother -- that a nurse

touched her arm and asked softly, "May I pray for you, please? You look so distressed and troubled, and I know Someone who can help you."

Without thinking even Charlotte cried, "Please do! Oh, will you, please? I'm nearly beside myself with worry. My brother's sick. Real sick, and we don't know what's wrong with him. He's a doctor, but I don't believe even he knows what his problem is."

"A doctor? Maybe I know him."

"Dr. Bradley Hayes."

"A very good doctor. Are you alone?"

"We're trying to locate Father and Mother. . . ."

"Let me pray for you," came the quick reply.

"Then I must see your brother and pray with him too."

"Oh, do! Please! Please!" Charlotte remembered having implored.

Never in all her life had she heard anything so beautiful and comforting as the little nurse's prayer. She clung to her for support when the "Amen" was uttered, begging, pleading and crying, saying, "You have what I need. What I want! What I've been searching for for years. Help me, please!"

There in the long, shiny-clean corridor of the hospital, while tears flowed copiously and freely down her cheeks, Charlotte, prayed for and guided by the little nurse's scriptural counsel and knowledge, was born again. For the first time ever in her life, she had inner peace. Her deep longing was fully satisfied and the empty void was completely filled. Her soul found its rest; her heart overflowed with joy and praises to God.

"I must go to see your brother now," the nurse explained before leaving Charlotte. "I want to pray for him too."

Rushing after the disappearing, white-clad figure, Charlotte said, "He needs God too. Tell him that Jesus just now came into my heart and that He wants to do the same for Him. He's in the emergency room." Turning and

smiling, the nurse nodded assent. Less than an hour later, as she sat alone in the waiting room outside the emergency room, a doctor approached her. "Your brother wishes to see you," he said, placing a steadying hand beneath her arm and guiding her to a curtain-enclosed bed.

"Brad, I'm here. How are you feeling? Have they located your problem?" How pale he had looked!

"Char," came a weak, feeble-sounding voice. Again, "Char, I'm not . . . going . . . to make it."

Too shocked to speak or make a reply, she had stood beside the bed, holding his hand, emitting nothing other than a gasp.

Bradley opened his eyes. "I'm dying," he whispered weakly. "Heart, Char."

"No, Brad. No! You're too young to die! Did she tell you? I mean. . . ."

Smiling, and squeezing her hand weakly, Bradley whispered, "It's all right, Char. My soul made its peace with God, too. Miss Ann's an angel. She got here . . . just . . . in time. I love . . . you. I'll see you . . . in . . . Heaven."

Still smiling, Bradley's spirit departed for its eternal abode.

Sobbing, Charlotte walked out of the room -- into the arms of the little nurse.

"He's with the Lord!" the nurse exclaimed joyously.

"You . . . know then?" Charlotte asked, haltingly.

"I came in just as he made the crossing, dear. Now come, let me get you a piece of toast and something hot to drink. Dr. Hayes is rapturously happy and he's free from all pain. Let us rejoice that he is safely Home."

"How can I ever thank you for what you did for Bradley and me?" Charlotte had asked, realizing that had God not sent the nurse when He did, her brother would have died without being born again.

"Not what I did, my dear, but what God did! I was His little, insignificant but available instrument -- His mouthpiece and spokeswoman. Jesus alone can save the soul and cleanse it until one is made perfect in love: Divine Love."

Over toast and hot chocolate, Charlotte and Ann Gilcrist became bosom friends. It was Ann who gave her the first and only Bible she had ever had, up to that time. It was Ann who instructed and taught her in things spiritual, Ann who took her to the church where she was a member, and Ann who walked with her down the aisle to the altar the night she felt her need for heart cleansing -- sanctification -- and was fully and wholly sanctified.

In spite of all Ann's kindness and concern and her love to and for Bradley's and her father and mother, the parents' hearts seemed like stone since Bradley's sudden, untimely death. Not even the knowledge that Bradley had repented of his sins and was converted before his death and was now living with the Lord in Heaven, seemed to move them; nor, even, the fact that Charlotte's heart was made new in Christ and that she was a joyously victorious Christian.

"We must keep praying, Charlotte," Ann had said one day. "We know it's not God's will that anyone should be lost and go to the lake of fire to burn forever and ever. Satan knows this, too. There's a battle going on for your parents' souls: we must continue holding on to God for their salvation until this becomes a reality in their lives. Each and every prayer we have prayed for them, in and through the Holy Spirit, is going to be answered one of these days."

"They seem so . . . so hardened in their hearts, Ann," Charlotte had said sadly. "I've never seen either of them like this before. Always, Daddy was optimistic and upbeat, feeling certain and sure that Heaven was his and Mother's because of their honesty and integrity, their good moral principles and standards, and being kind to everybody, even those who were sometimes a sore trial to them."

"This is, no doubt, a big part of their problem," Ann had replied. "It can be quite upsetting and unsettling to find out that one is wrong; that what we have thought and maybe, even, been taught was right is, in fact, all wrong. We must continue praying."

The loud jangle of the phone jarred Charlotte out of the deep sleep into which she had fallen after a long busy day of teaching in Maplewood Christian School. The apartment complex she shared with three other unmated teachers was an ideal set up. Each had her own private bedroom and bath while a large, cheerfully furnished living room, kitchen and dining room served them all.

They had popped corn and, over lessons for the following day, had discussed their classes' humorous and serious sides, laughing over some instances, praying over others. To bed early, for a change, and falling asleep almost immediately the phone's loud and persistent ring had startled Charlotte.

"Hello. Hello," she said into the mouthpiece. "Maplewood Christian School. Charlotte Hayes speaking."

"This is City Hospital calling. There was an accident. Both of your parents are here. . . ."

Charlotte was now wide awake. Getting all information possible she was soon dressed and on her way to the beautiful, tall building in the city leaving a note for her teacher friends when they awakened and got up.

Her parents, it seemed, were returning home from a social dinner for one of the Company executives when they were hit by a semi truck. The car was totaled, she learned. Her parents, both in the Intensive Care Unit by the time she arrived, were beyond recognition. And, by all standards, beyond hearing.

"Mother! Mother! Father! Father!" Charlotte cried, taking a hand and caressing it lovingly and gently.

Nothing but the sound of a respirator attached to each could be heard. Doctors and nurses, hustling about the two beds on silent feet, worked feverishly and diligently trying to save the lives of the battered, bruised and blood-stained victims in their care. Watching anxiously and weeping softly, all Charlotte could do was pray, and pray some more. How she longed to see Ann's dainty form come through the door!

By two o'clock in the morning it was over.

"Mother! Father!" she cried, wondering if they had had time to repent and get right with God before unconsciousness swallowed them up. She would never know, she realized as, turning away from the beds, she walked across to the nurses station, where her tears fell copiously onto the shoulder of a nurse who held her open arms out to her.

The funerals were a blur to Charlotte; her shock was great and intense. Ann's kind words of condolence were a bulwark of strength; much like a giant, unmovable, ever-stable rock. "We must leave them to God," Ann had stated.

"We were faithful to them and to their souls, Charlotte. What they did with what they knew, and that about which they had heard, is theirs to answer for."

Tears could never more avail for her parents, Charlotte knew. Their destiny was settled. It was final. If only she could have had the assurance that they were ready for Heaven. Yes, if only!

And now, sitting and reading from her Bible and the devotional book, Charlotte felt new strength surge up within her soul.

"They shall mount up with wings as eagles" (Isaiah 40:31).

Eagle wings! How wonderful and wondrous! she thought, as she read from Springs in the Valley (by Mrs. Charles C. Cowman).

"Those who wait upon the Lord shall obtain a marvelous addition to their resources: they shall obtain wings! They become endowed with power to rise above things. Men who do not soar always have small views of things. Wings are required for breadth of view. The wing-life is characterized by a sense of proportion. To see things aright we must get away from them. . . ."

Tears fell onto the opened pages as the words of consolation and truth bathed the young woman's soul in wave after wave of God's glory. Some things -- many things, in fact -- would never be understood or made plain to the pilgrim journeying to his eternal Home, she realized; but God had provided a way of endurance and power for those hard-to-understand things: it was by living the wing-life. Just as the eagle was meant to soar, so God's

children, through waiting upon the Lord, were guaranteed and assured of renewed strength and of mounting wings.

Blessed beyond any describing, Charlotte again pulled the Bible and the devotional book closely to her bosom. Eagle wings! she mused in silent meditation. How wonderful! How glorious! What Heavenly vistas were viewed from the height!

THE END