

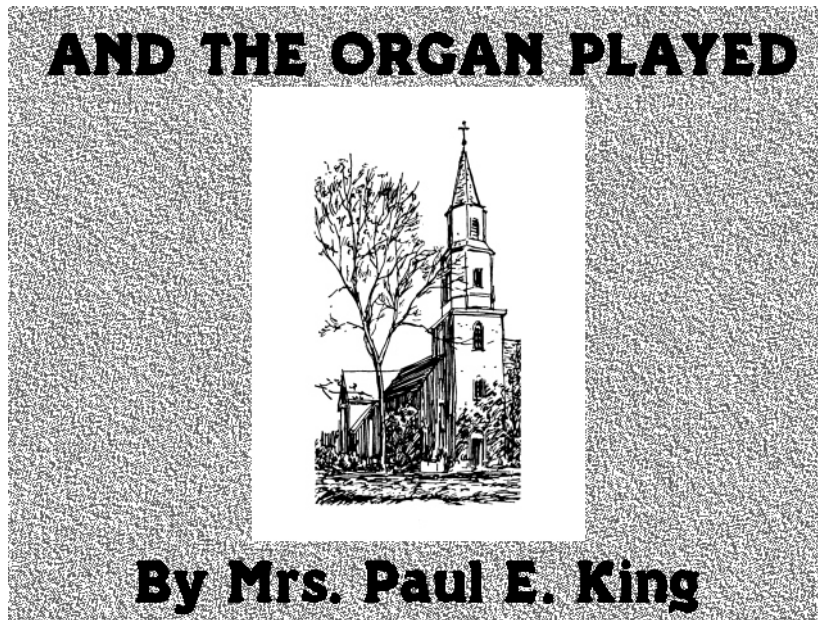
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Digital Edition 10/22/2001
By Holiness Data Ministry

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The Sunday School Beacon
July 9, 2000



AND THE ORGAN PLAYED
By Mrs. Paul E. King

The organ was playing when she entered the church. Soft sweet music it was. Not at all like the choppy, bouncy, rocking, rolling kind she was accustomed to hearing. This was different. Reverent. It made her feel almost worshipful. Rosalie Wood worshipful! Imagine. Well, it just couldn't be! It mustn't be!

A quick faint smile played across her face. She checked the dainty watch on her wrist again.

Almost ten-thirty its hands told her. Where was Cheryl, she wondered.

Quite suddenly and noiselessly her friend slipped into the pew beside her.

"Thought you were never coming!" Rosalie said in a whisper. "Remember, this was all your idea," she reminded, tittering nervously. "The organist's great, I must admit."

"Wait till you hear the great 'Bible man!" Cheryl jested, referring to the minister. "Always, it's 'Thus saith the Lord,' and 'The Bible says this' . . . ugh! I get so fed up! Seems as if the Bible's against every single thing I enjoy doing."

But Rosalie hadn't heard. Her ears were hearing the music like she hadn't heard since she was a little girl. The organist's face held her, too. Not that she was a woman of unusual beauty: far from it. Quite the opposite was true. She was a small-framed, petite, shriveled-up-looking woman with extremely homely outward features but whose inner peace and soul-rest reflected like a bright beacon all over her face -- her entire being, to be exact.

Sudden unexpected tears, so long dormant and unshed, sprang to her eyes. It took her completely by surprise. A gloved hand reached up quickly and brushed them roughly away.

"What's the matter with you?" Cheryl asked harshly. "Are you getting soft?"

"I . . . was . . . just remembering . . ." Rosalie answered.

"Thinking's not good. Especially not that kind." Cheryl was vexed with her friend. "I didn't invite you here to have you get suddenly all sentimental and . . . and . . . emotional. Pull yourself together, Rosalie."

Rosalie Wood sat suddenly very erect and straight in the pew. "I am, Cheryl," she said. "Finally, I am. I am going to pull myself together and head in the right way . . . down the right road!"

"What are you talking about? What do you mean?" Cheryl asked scornfully. "I thought we came here to laugh, jest and deride."

"Maybe you did," Rosalie answered. "I didn't. I came at your request -- to hear the pastor preach; not to mock. I may be a wretchedly miserable sinner, but I have never been guilty of making fun of God's Word or of His ministers. That's a very serious offense, Cheryl: one I shall never need to answer to God for."

"What are you trying to say?" Cheryl demanded angrily.

"That it's sinful -- awfully sinful -- and extremely dangerous to mock and make light of God's Word and His ministers. Sooner or later the judgments of God will fall upon all who do this."

"You and your stuffy old-fashioned ideas!" Cheryl retorted angrily. "Stay here and get religious then. I'm leaving. The way is too narrow for me." Thus saying, she rose and stormed out of the church.

"O happy day that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Savior and my God."

The congregation was singing the beloved old hymn reverently and worshipfully. Rosalie forgot about everything Cheryl had said. These people sang from within their heart. The words tugged and pulled at her heart. They gripped her.

"Happy day! Happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away"

"Oh, dear God, if only I knew mine were gone!" she cried into her handkerchief.

Without knowing exactly how it happened, she found herself running down the aisle to the altar. Still the congregation continued singing:

"Happy day! Happy day!
When Jesus washed my sins away"

Unmindful of her surroundings and of who was in the church, Rosalie raised her head. Next, her arms reached upward, outward, searching for Him Whom she had long ago left and forsaken. "Come back! Oh, come back!" she implored tearfully. "Come into my heart, blessed Jesus. Gladly will I take up my cross and follow Thee . . .!"

The plea for mercy was heard. Her cry was answered. She shouted joyfully as the congregation continued singing, with intermingled sobs, shouts, and praises:

"Tis done, the great transaction's done.
I am my Lord's and He is mine.
He drew me and I followed on
Charmed to confess the Voice Divine."

"I came here this morning at the invitation of a friend," she said as she testified. "Oh, I am so happy I came. I have found again what I one time experienced and possessed as a very small girl. I was thoroughly converted but the way of the world lured me as I grew into young adulthood. I succumbed to it and answered its call by laying my cross aside and taking up the ways of the world. All these years I have been without Him and the guidance of His hand. Tonight I found my way back. My heart is so happy! My sins are all forgiven and washed away. Bless His name!"

That was a memorable morning for Rosalie Wood, but she didn't stop there. She went on into heart Holiness and became a power for God: an influence for good and righteousness.

Nearly a year passed after Cheryl's open rebellion in the church that Sunday morning. Each month that came and went found her becoming more and more bound by sin and chained by its habits. Nothing could stop her and no one could reach her. As Rosalie had set her face like a flint to go through with God, Cheryl had set hers in the opposite direction, to live in sins pleasures and indulge therein to the fullest, forgetting that "the wages of sin is death."

One beautiful spring Sunday afternoon, she and a male friend were out driving, and drinking. The curve was nether sharp nor extremely bad. The car careened off the road and came to rest at the bosom of a small but deep lake. Both were found . . . dead! Drowned!

Rosalie filed down the aisle and seated herself in the pew by the mother of her one-time friend. She reached over and caressed the trembling hand reassuringly. There were no words of consolation. What could she say?

"The way is too narrow for me!" she heard again, as on that Sunday morning when, in the same church and in front of which altar her still form was now lying in a casket, Cheryl Springman settled her soul's eternal destiny.

Two girls -- friends, they had been -- each with the power of choice, and today, yes, today one was on the shining path to glory; the other was feeling, enduring, and bearing the pains of eternal punishment and eternal woe!

Softly so very, very softly -- music filled the humble church building. There were tears in the organist's faded blue eyes. Not tears of joy. Tears of sadness, or sorrow. Tears that would never reach across the gulf of the damned nor penetrate through the wall of the doomed to help the lost girl.

Rosalie shuddered. Tears fell. And the organ played . . . on unhearing ears!

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THE END