

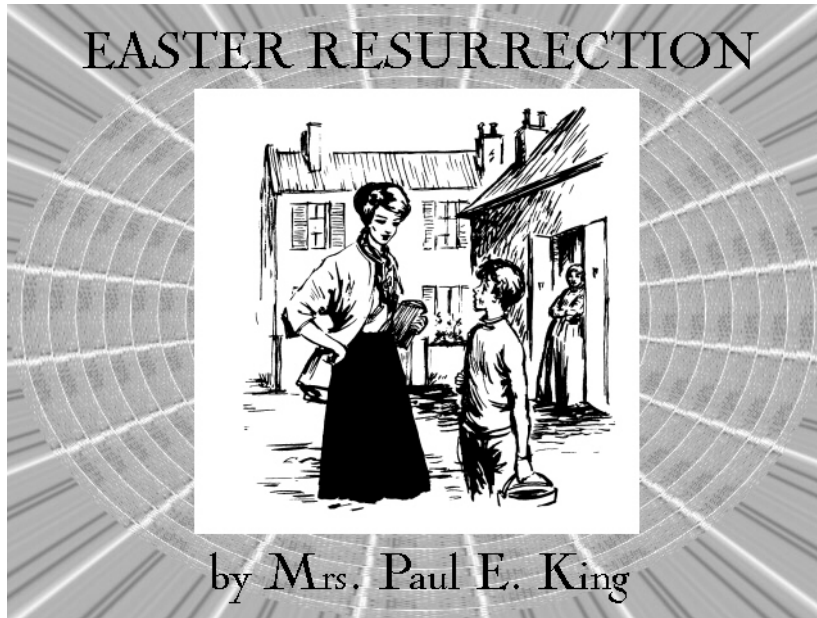
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Digital Edition 10/22/2001
By Holiness Data Ministry

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The Sunday School Beacon
April 15, 2001



EASTER RESURRECTION
By Mrs. Paul E. King

The sun topped King's Castle and hung over the towering rock formation to the east of the mesa in a blazing ball of fire. Its brilliance and glory dispersed the deep darkness of night, dazzling the eyes. Esther Lavender had long since turned the wick down in her kerosene lamp and blown the light out and emerged from her small cottage to greet the day. She loved the early part of dawn particularly well.

Esther was young (21) and healthy and attractive; but more than any of these, she was Spirit-filled and spiritual. When she said a final "yes" to God the night she got sanctified wholly, she had no idea that her deep and sincere consecration would lead her to a remote Indian tribe, where she would be totally and completely isolated from all she loved and held dear. But this was God's will and His choice for her life, and with no hesitation whatever she had joyfully and willingly answered His call to service.

Moonglow, the German shepherd her parents insisted she must have, was her nearest earthly companion (if one dare call a dog a companion) in this place of cold stares, exceeding wickedness, heathen customs and strange beliefs.

Esther was a mere slip of a girl" (as her grandparents described her to some friends), standing barely five feet tall, with long dark hair, greenish-blue eyes that seemed always to be laughing, and a complexion that was flawlessly beautiful. She was an only child of Harry and Mary Lavender and her going to the dangerous, faraway place left the parents all but frantic. "It's preposterous!" her father had exclaimed when Esther broke the news of God's definite call -- His plan for her life -- to her unsanctified but church-going parent.

"You're beside yourself" Mary Lavender stated kindly but meaningfully. "I'm afraid the church people down there are putting ideas in your head, my dear."

"Down there" was Mrs. Lavender's allusion and referral to the fundamentally sound, second-blessing preaching-teaching Holiness church to which Esther had begun going after meeting and observing the beautiful life of Jennifer Stone.

Her parents had neither chided nor remonstrated with her in her desire to change churches, rationalizing that teenagers now did things differently than their parents did and that, sooner or later, she would again be a part of the family and their church attendance in the imposing-looking high-steepled fashionable church uptown.

But such was not to be. Never again. The girl's beautiful conversion brought with it a drastic separation from the world and all things worldly and

her glorious experience of heart purity -- sanctification -- served to be a second, fast-holding anchor to the first.

"Someday they're going to get saved!" Esther stated emphatically to Moonglow now, as the two stood on a small mound outside the cottage and watched the sun top King's Caste rock and begin its consistently faithful daily journey across the sky. "Yes, someday my dear father and mother will get saved, and so will some of these!" the young woman reemphasized, swinging her arm abroad in the direction of the Indian sediment. "God hasten the day!" she implored tearfully, watching the village come to life.

She walked around the cottage to look at the few tulips that were up. She'd planted the bulbs herself and though water was of great concern, she'd nurtured and cared for the precious bulbs until six of them had broken through the packed earth and were up and looking healthy and spring-like. How she loved the plants with their dark green leaves! They linked her to home, and to the glory and splendor and beauty of those springs where water was abundant and life showed in every tree and bush and plant.

She walked quickly into the cottage and prepared the gospel tracts, Bibles and medications for her daily rounds to the miserable hovels of the people she loved, her devotions long ago having been finished. If only she could see one sign of spiritual life in these people! she thought, her heart feeling like it would break and burst from the heavy burden it carried for the tribe. Oh, if only --

"But let patience have her perfect work. . . ." God's voice seemed to speak as clearly and distinctly to her heart as though her father or mother had uttered the Scripture.

"Amen, Lord!" she said aloud, recalling Jesus' words, where he quoted, "And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth" St. John 4:37. God had called her here. This she knew as surly as she knew her name. Her duty now was faithfulness to that call. She must give her utmost for His highest and fulfill to the fullest the mission of His call. With a burning heart, Esther started out for the day.

Several homes refused her proffered tracts and Bibles but she continued on, going from one abode and shack to another, praying with those

who gave her entrance into their home and telling them of the great love of God for their souls and of the great price that was paid for their salvation.

All day the young missionary called and prayed with "her" people, with not a single outward, viable sign that anyone cared about his or her soul and where they were going after death. The faces that looked back into Esther's wore vacant stares and stoic expressions. Weary, worn and footsore, the girl ate a hasty supper then took a leisurely walk to the burial ground where, two months earlier, she had read Scripture and spoken words of comfort to the sorrowing mother of Morningstar, a beautiful little Indian lass of two summers whose life expired from double pneumonia.

The child had taken instant liking to Esther and a strong bond of love developed between them. With Morningstar's passing, Esther's hopes of reaching the family for God were shattered. How she missed the small arms that entwined themselves so readily and quickly around her neck each time she entered the house! But God knew why the little gift was taken. Ah, yes, He did. At least one soul was safe in Heaven, she soliloquized as she entered the site of the burial ground. Morningstar's grave was easily distinguished from the countless others: Gentle Dove, her young mother, wove beaded flowers on coarse cloth and decorated the small mound colorfully with her artistry.

Esther seated herself on the ground at the foot of Morningstar's grave and as she sat she wept. The sinfulness and exceeding great wickedness of the tribe crushed her to the ground in an agony of soul. Oh, that God would give her just one soul this month! One soul! she felt certain others would follow suit if only one of the people made a start toward God. Doubled over in anguish of soul for the people to whom God had called her, she became aware of another presence.

A hand touched her shoulder lightly. Raising her head, Esther saw Gentle Dove standing over her. Tears shimmered and glistened in the lovely woman's eyes. "You love Morningstar much!" she exclaimed in a tone of voice Esther had never heard before. It was packed with emotion and pity.

Reaching out, the missionary took the young mother's hand in hers and while tears poured down her cheeks she began to speak, but Gentle Dove interrupted.

"Two big moons ago you say Morningstar with Great Spirit."

"She's safe in God's arms and His keeping," Esther said softly.

"Then why you cry? Morningstar happy! Very much happy."

Rising to her feet, Esther put a loving hand on the young Indian mothers shoulders. "I weep for you . . . and for your people." The words tumbled out passionately. Brokenly. "Your people are my people and I love you all very, very much. I want you -- your people -- to know my God and to love Him like I do. I feel I'll die if you don't turn to the true God, Gentle Dove!" Esther finished, dropping her face in her hands and sobbing brokenly.

Once again Gentle Dove's hand touched the missionary's shoulder; this time it tightened perceptibly. There was a feeling of urgency in the grip. "Your love real!" the woman said simply. "Gentle Dove feel it in here." She slapped a hand over her heart. "And she want to know Great Spirit God like missionary do. Now!" Dropping to her knees beside the colorfully woven flowers, the mother wept.

It was the first show of emotion Esther had seen and she knew it came from the very deep of Gentle Dove's heart. It was not mere sentimentality and grief over the loss of her beautiful child but true sorrow of heart for sin and a great humbling and deep repentance for the same.

In her own way, the woman cried to God for mercy and pardon, and when the load and guilt was removed -- forgiven -- a great light illuminated Gentle Doves entire countenance. Prostrating herself over Morningstar's grave she exclaimed joyously, "I see you again, lovely Morningstar. I see you again. Great Spirit-God clean all my heart and wash sins away with His blood! Mama much happy, baby dear! Much happy . . .!"

Night-time had long since drawn her deep purple curtain around the mesa, allowing only the twinkly, glittering stars to make faint light for the pair when they finally took leave of the burial ground and resorted to their places of abode.

Lying in bed, too overjoyed for sleep, Esther's mind went quickly to Hebrews 11. "By faith" or "through faith," was mentioned at least twenty-one times, she knew. Mentally she rehearsed the entire chapter, meditating

sweetly upon each seeming impossible fear that was accompanied by faith or through faith.

Faith was a wonderful thing, she realized again. It knew no difficulty too great to be conquered, no obstacle too large for hurdling and no mountain too high for scaling. Faith in God knew no limits. It posted no boundaries. It was unbelief that made one grow dizzy on the heights and peaks where God led; but faith, never!

God's obedient, holy heroes of the faith chapter had varied and sundry distinguishing features, Esther recalled, but faith was the chief characteristic that set them apart from ordinary men. Faith had enabled them to walk. Walking was not a spasmodic thing, she knew. This walking by faith meant that faith was the general trend and attitude and tendency of one's life. Ecstasy enabled one to "fly" -- almost. Enthusiasm caused one to run, but faith alone gave endurance to walk in constant acceptance of the will of God for the life, the young woman thought happily.

"By faith," she quoted softly aloud. "Yes, by faith Gentle Dove was converted and made new in Christ and by faith the gates of hell shall no longer prevail against this people. My people! By faith there will be a resurrection. A spiritual resurrection!"

As Esther claimed God's promises on behalf of the tribe, a great peace enfolded her. Tonight God had allowed her to see the results of a life resurrected in Christ and through Christ. By faith, there would be many, many more!

Before going to sleep, a sudden smile of victory parted her lips. Contrary to the date on the calendar in her small kitchen, Easter had come a bit early this year -- to Gentle Dove's heart.

THE END