

# STARS FOR SYLVIA

by

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## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### A NEED OF CONTINUED PRAYER

ONE AFTERNOON when Sylvia was sitting by herself under a large tree on the school grounds, Sarah came over to her. She flung herself on the grass and asked, "What's come over Marguerite these days? She even speaks to me when we're alone."

Sylvia was delighted that Marguerite had truly changed and she happily explained, "After her mother died, she found that she needed the Lord and became a Christian."

"Instead of a Gentile?" Sarah looked at her with a quizzical expression; then abruptly demanded, "Who killed Jesus?"

Sylvia frowned. She knew that if she said the Jews killed Jesus that Sarah would be angry; and yet it had been the Jews who had said, "**His blood be upon us and our children.**" But then it had been the Roman soldiers who had actually nailed Him to the cross and the Gentile Pontius Pilate who had condemned Him to death. She could say the Gentiles, but even that was not the whole truth. She decided, "It was those who didn't believe in Him who killed Him."

"Well, maybe." The Jewish girl relaxed. She pulled up a blade of grass and chewed on it thoughtfully for several minutes; then she frowned and accused, "Then why do people call the Jews Christ-killers and treat us mean?"

Patently Sylvia explained, "Probably because the religious leaders of Jerusalem were Jews and they hated Jesus and brought about His death; but even so, people should not condemn all Jews because of what some of them did. After all, some Jews are nice people, and all of His disciples were Jews."

"All of them? Weren't some of them Gentiles?"

"No. The disciples were Jewish. The first Gentile that I know of who believed was an Ethiopian eunuch,"

"But people are mean to the Jews on account of Him, aren't they?" Sarah set her chin and stared at Sylvia with a defiant look on her face.

"But Sarah," Sylvia pleaded, "even if some are, you mustn't judge Christ by the Christians."

"Why not?"

“It isn’t fair. No Christian claims to have the perfection of Christ; and you wouldn’t want all the Jews to be judged by the actions of some of them, now would you? I like you, but the things that some of the Jews do, bother me. For instance, if I go into a Jewish store the owner is so determined to sell me something, whether it is what I want or not.”

Sarah chuckled. “I know what you mean. Some Jews won’t even hire another Jew to work for them.”

“Why not?”

“Because after they work there for a few months they try to become partners in the business. You know how a Jew is!” She shrugged her shoulders. “But still, it isn’t right to persecute them.”

“No, it isn’t,” Sylvia agreed wholeheartedly.

Sarah drew her heavy brows together and her black eyes gleamed. “Why does God allow it?”

“Because they don’t obey Him. The Old Testament tells what was to happen to them if they turned against God; and they did, in many ways. For instance, in Exodus 22 it says that the Jews are not to charge usury; but in many parts of the world, the Jews are the money lenders.”

“So would you be if you had to fight for everything you ate,” Sarah hotly defended. “My grandparents came to this country in the steerage. They slaved long hours in a sweatshop in New York. They ate black bread and drank only water so they could give their boys an education. My uncles are all prosperous businessmen because of the sacrifices of my grandparents.

“And my aunts are all good housekeepers. They were taught not to waste a scrap. Besides, you seem to think it is only the Jews who haggle over prices, but that isn’t strictly a Jewish custom. It’s oriental. The Arabs do it, too.”

“I have heard that they do. But there are other reasons why God permits suffering to come to the Jews.”

“Why?”

“Most of them refuse to even listen when anyone tries to talk to them about Christ. When, after all, it was to them He came. He was their Messiah.”

Sarah tossed her dark hair. “Mama says if God wants her to change, He’ll change her.”

Sylvia remembered what Sarah had told her about her mother and reminded, “Did you tell me that your mother was an Orthodox Jewess and your father a Reformed Jew?”

“Yes.”

“How many brothers and sisters have you?”

“There are five girls, four boys, and the one who died.”

“Are they younger or older than you?”

“I’m the youngest. But what are you driving at?”

“I wondered how many followed your mother’s ways and are Orthodox?”

“None.”

“There,” Sylvia pressed home her point; “Don’t you think God is showing your mother that you should change? He is leading all of her children away from the old narrow ways.”

“That doesn’t give the Gentiles a right to persecute the Jews.”

“No, of course, it doesn’t.” Sylvia prayed quietly for patience and then went on, “But isn’t there dislike on both sides? Does your mother like the Gentiles?”

“I should say not.” Sarah laughed at the idea.

“I remember when my sister Rosie wanted to marry a Gentile, Mamma had a fit. So Rosie never married. Another time my brother Saul and I had some Gentile neighbors who believed in Santa Claus. We thought it would be fun to hang up our stockings like they did, and we asked Mama if we could. She wouldn’t answer us so we did it anyway and the next morning we found an old rotten potato in each stocking. My brother Herman had put them in.”

Sylvia was sad to hear this side of the prejudice between the Jews and Gentiles. She pointed out, “Then, don’t you think that shows there is hard feeling on both sides? Some Gentiles are unkind to the Jews but also, some Jews dislike the Gentiles.”

“Why not? They’re mean to us.”

Sylvia realized that Sarah wouldn’t give an inch but she continued, “As I see it, the Jews hated the Gentiles even back in the Old Testament times. There must be a breaking down of prejudice on both sides. But here we go again, avoiding the main question.”

“What do you mean, the main question?”

“It is always, ‘What think ye of Jesus?’”

“I know more than you think I do about Him. After you said the New Testament was written mostly by the Jews, I got hold of a copy and read parts of it. Matthew mostly.”

“Doesn’t your mother object to your reading it?”

“She would be mad if she saw me, but I’m smart. I hide it when I’m not reading it. And once or twice, I’ve listened to a preacher over the radio. But this gets me. Isn’t there only one God?”

“Certainly, but Christ was God manifested in the flesh.”

“How could that be?”

“In the Old Testament times didn’t God appear to Abraham when he camped by the plains of Mamre? And didn’t God appear to different people at different times? They put three men in the fiery furnace, but suddenly, there were four men in there. That was Jesus, every time. Why is it odd that God, who created us, should appear in the flesh?”

“It’s too deep for me. As I see it, Jesus was a good man, like Moses.”

Sylvia became disturbed at the idea of her Saviour being compared to Moses. “Christ is more than Moses. He is the Messiah, the Redeemer of the world.”

Sarah was thoughtful for a moment and then, in almost a whisper, she admitted, “I think Christ is the Messiah, or else why would there be so much talk about Him for so many hundreds of years?”

“Then,” Sylvia asked excitedly, “why don’t you become a Christian?”

“And quit being a Jew? I couldn’t do that.”

“No, you wouldn’t quit being a Jew. You were born that as I was born a Gentile. But there are Jewish Christians as well as there are Gentile Christians.”

“No, I can’t.” Sarah stood up and stared across the grounds as if she were seeing something in the distance. “You don’t understand. I believe Christ is the Messiah all right, and no one can say anything against Him to me. But my people need me. Everyone is against the Jews and I’ve got to stick with them and help.” And she trudged slowly across the school grounds.

Sylvia watched her and remembered that Israel is blinded in part for a season. Then, from the depth of her heart she repeated Paul’s prayer, “**My heart’s desire and prayer for Israel is that they might be saved; for I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.**”

~ end of chapter 17 ~

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