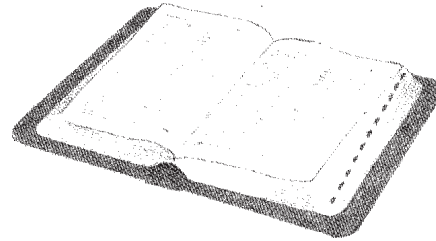


# SUNSHINE COUNTRY

By Kristina Roy



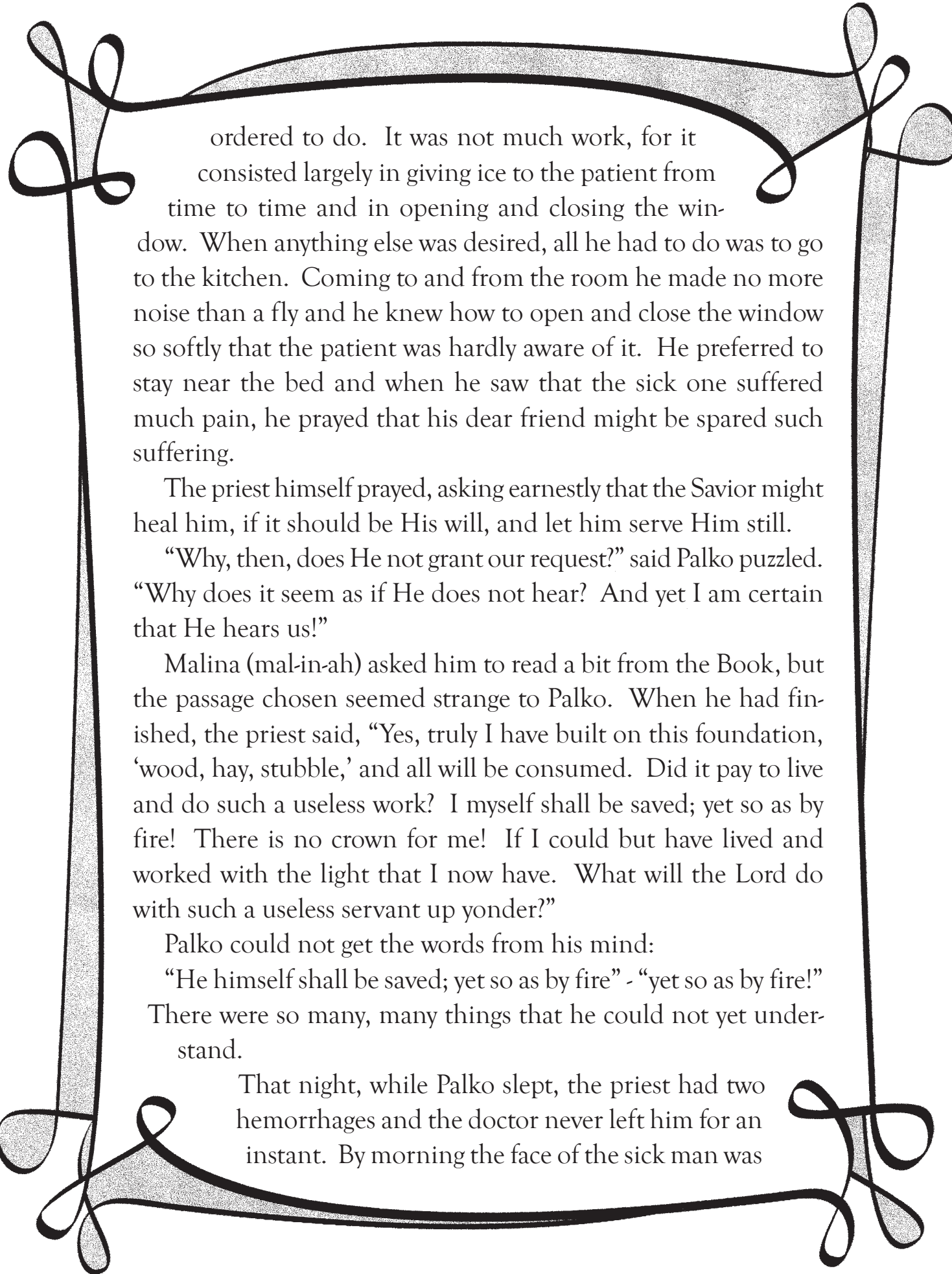
## Chapter 17 The Crown of Righteousness

Palko's wish had been fulfilled for once again he found himself with his dear friend. But how different now their friendship from the days on the mountainside - no more happy excursions through the green carpeted valleys; no more the long hard climb to the rocky summit to reach the Sunshine Valley; not even a moment's chat with him through two long days. Yet the boy felt an exquisite joy and profound gratitude to the Lord and to his grandfather that he should be allowed the privilege of even being near his friend upon his bed of pain.

The doctor had at first tried to shut Palko out as a troublesome and useless intruder, but the priest would not agree.

"Let me have Palko here. He is my young companion. Show him what you want done for me and he will do whatever you wish. The other people make too much noise, but you can hardly hear him when he moves."

So they let him stay and later the doctor had to confess he had been mistaken in his first judgment. Palko did, and did well, whatever he was



ordered to do. It was not much work, for it consisted largely in giving ice to the patient from time to time and in opening and closing the window. When anything else was desired, all he had to do was to go to the kitchen. Coming to and from the room he made no more noise than a fly and he knew how to open and close the window so softly that the patient was hardly aware of it. He preferred to stay near the bed and when he saw that the sick one suffered much pain, he prayed that his dear friend might be spared such suffering.

The priest himself prayed, asking earnestly that the Savior might heal him, if it should be His will, and let him serve Him still.

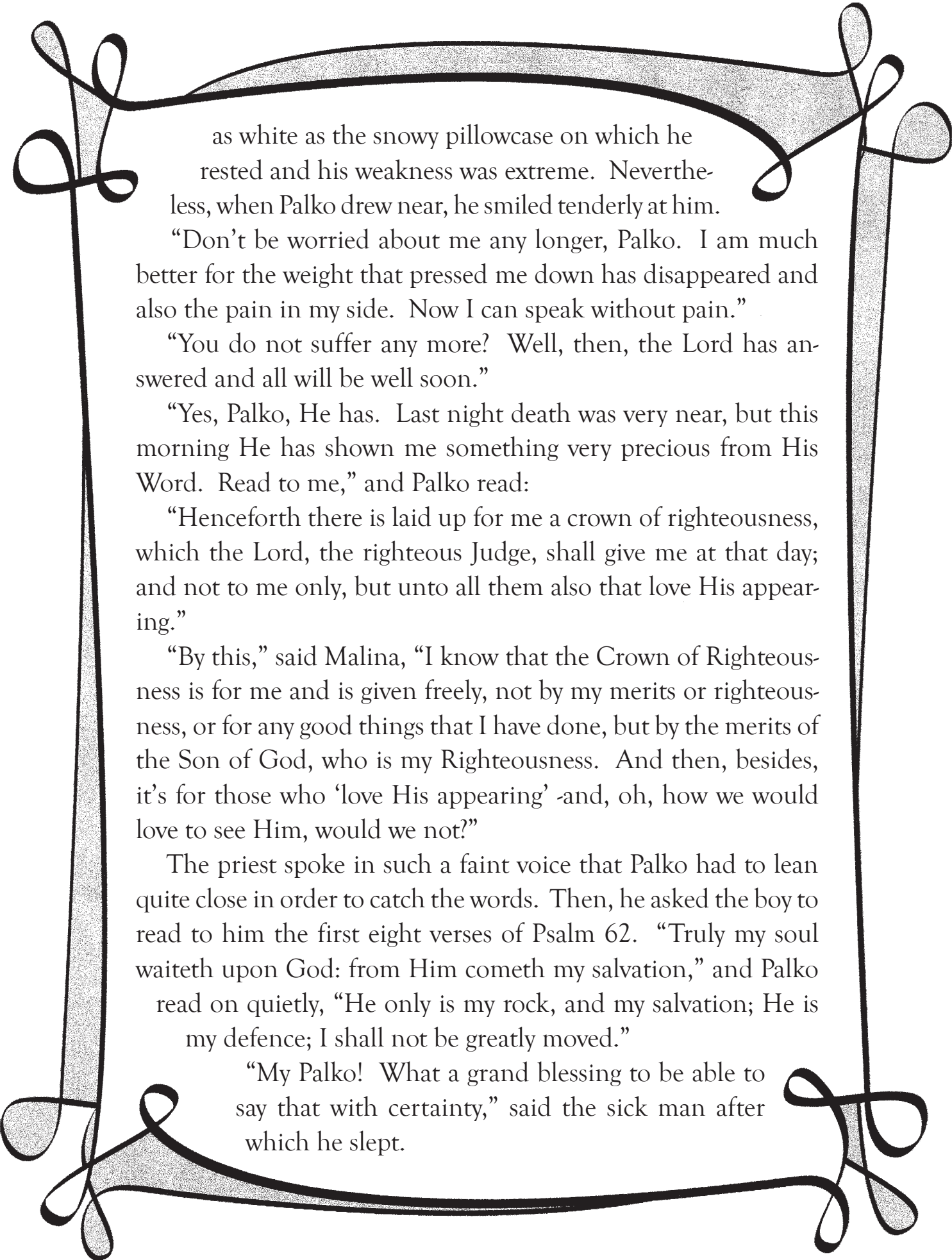
“Why, then, does He not grant our request?” said Palko puzzled. “Why does it seem as if He does not hear? And yet I am certain that He hears us!”

Malina (mal-in-ah) asked him to read a bit from the Book, but the passage chosen seemed strange to Palko. When he had finished, the priest said, “Yes, truly I have built on this foundation, ‘wood, hay, stubble,’ and all will be consumed. Did it pay to live and do such a useless work? I myself shall be saved; yet so as by fire! There is no crown for me! If I could but have lived and worked with the light that I now have. What will the Lord do with such a useless servant up yonder?”

Palko could not get the words from his mind:

“He himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire” - “yet so as by fire!” There were so many, many things that he could not yet understand.

That night, while Palko slept, the priest had two hemorrhages and the doctor never left him for an instant. By morning the face of the sick man was



as white as the snowy pillowcase on which he rested and his weakness was extreme. Nevertheless, when Palko drew near, he smiled tenderly at him.

“Don’t be worried about me any longer, Palko. I am much better for the weight that pressed me down has disappeared and also the pain in my side. Now I can speak without pain.”

“You do not suffer any more? Well, then, the Lord has answered and all will be well soon.”

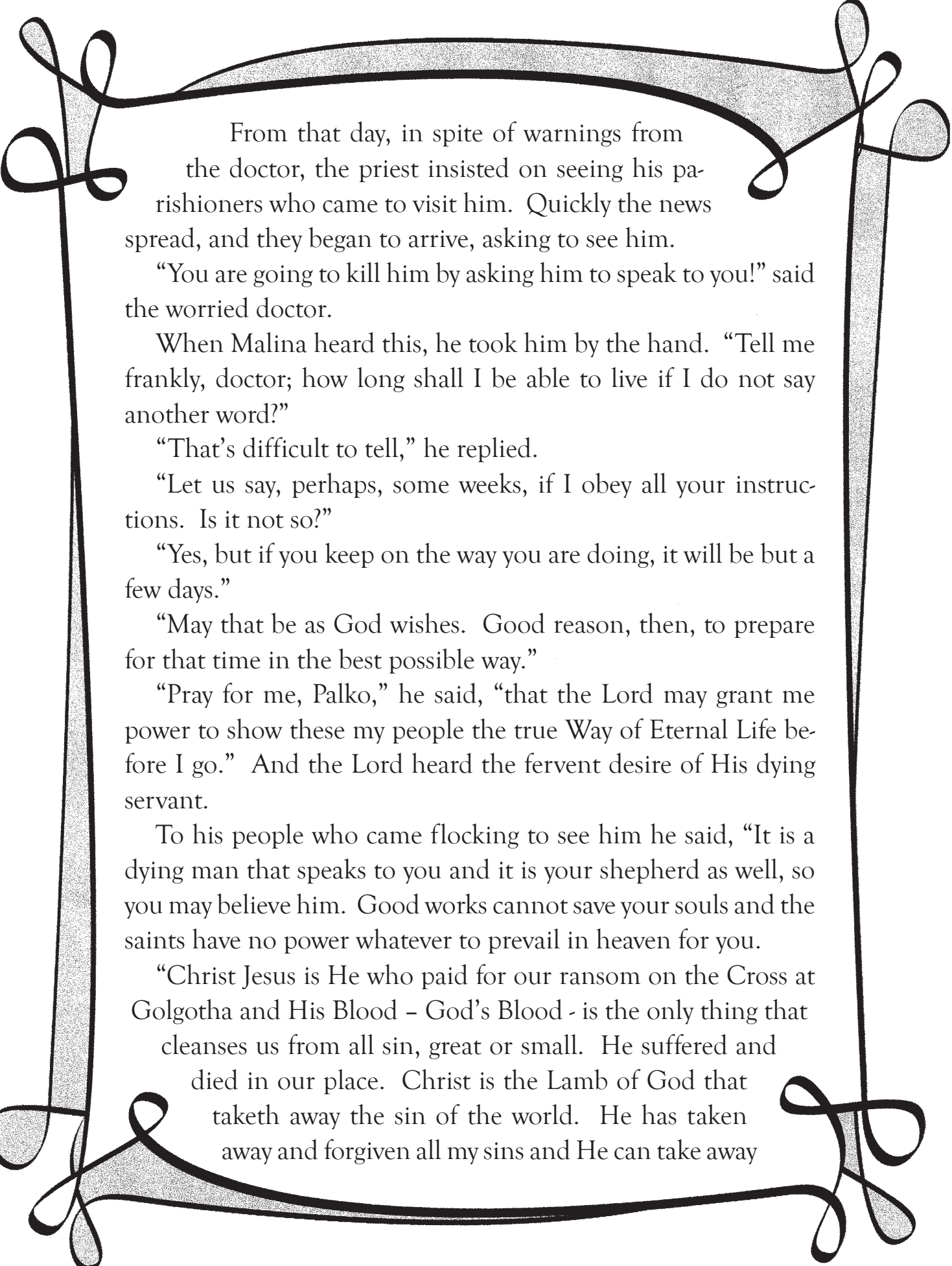
“Yes, Palko, He has. Last night death was very near, but this morning He has shown me something very precious from His Word. Read to me,” and Palko read:

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.”

“By this,” said Malina, “I know that the Crown of Righteousness is for me and is given freely, not by my merits or righteousness, or for any good things that I have done, but by the merits of the Son of God, who is my Righteousness. And then, besides, it’s for those who ‘love His appearing’ -and, oh, how we would love to see Him, would we not?”

The priest spoke in such a faint voice that Palko had to lean quite close in order to catch the words. Then, he asked the boy to read to him the first eight verses of Psalm 62. “Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from Him cometh my salvation,” and Palko read on quietly, “He only is my rock, and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.”

“My Palko! What a grand blessing to be able to say that with certainty,” said the sick man after which he slept.



From that day, in spite of warnings from the doctor, the priest insisted on seeing his parishioners who came to visit him. Quickly the news spread, and they began to arrive, asking to see him.

“You are going to kill him by asking him to speak to you!” said the worried doctor.

When Malina heard this, he took him by the hand. “Tell me frankly, doctor; how long shall I be able to live if I do not say another word?”

“That’s difficult to tell,” he replied.

“Let us say, perhaps, some weeks, if I obey all your instructions. Is it not so?”

“Yes, but if you keep on the way you are doing, it will be but a few days.”

“May that be as God wishes. Good reason, then, to prepare for that time in the best possible way.”

“Pray for me, Palko,” he said, “that the Lord may grant me power to show these my people the true Way of Eternal Life before I go.” And the Lord heard the fervent desire of His dying servant.

To his people who came flocking to see him he said, “It is a dying man that speaks to you and it is your shepherd as well, so you may believe him. Good works cannot save your souls and the saints have no power whatever to prevail in heaven for you.

“Christ Jesus is He who paid for our ransom on the Cross at Golgotha and His Blood - God’s Blood - is the only thing that cleanses us from all sin, great or small. He suffered and died in our place. Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He has taken away and forgiven all my sins and He can take away

and forgive your sins also.

“All you have to do is repent, turn from your sins to God and believe the good news that ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’”

During the second week another lot of Bibles arrived, which Malina ordered to be distributed to his congregation. “Never allow,” said he to everyone who received a copy of the Holy Book, “anyone to take this Book away from you, no matter who he may be, for,” he added with anxiety, “it is the Eternal Word of the living God. Read it line after line with faith and prayer and put into practice what it says, and it will show you the way of eternal life, the life with God forevermore, as it has shown it to me.”

“Palko!” he said once. “I find it hard to realize that the hour is so near when I shall see that One ‘Whom having not seen ye love; in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.’”

“Oh,” sighed Palko, “if I could only go with you!”

“No, Palko mine, content yourself with serving Him faithfully here on earth with all your heart. What would I not give to have served Him all my life? One happy day in the future we shall be reunited in the Father’s house up yonder and you shall then tell me if my people have read God’s Book and have found the way to the Sunshine Country. Be thou faithful unto death and He shall give thee the Crown of Life!”

To be continued...

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