

CLIMBING:

MEMORIES

of

A MISSIONARY'S WIFE

by

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CHAPTER EIGHT

ANSWERED PRAYER, I

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of the eye,
When none but GOD is near.

- Montgomery

HOW far from this conception of prayer is the too general thought of GOD's plan and purpose in providing a way of access to Himself! How hard prayer has been made by man-made rules! Oh, that we could catch a glimpse of the wonders, the power, and the easiness, yes, the absolute necessity of this God-planned provision, that it might have free course in our lives! Let us, dear fellow climbers, learn to use GOD's wireless. The following is the most beautiful illustration of the simplicity of GOD's plan for the prayer life I have ever come across.

We were having a brief rest at Larges, Scotland, when a visitor told us the story, which I took down at the time: Near her lived a poor woman with a large family. Her husband was a laborer. They lived in a tiny house consisting of a "butt and ben." Unable to leave her family, the poor woman took in washing. A vivid picture was given of the woman, day by day, at the tub or ironing board, with children and chickens about her. Then came the remarkable part of the story. The spiritual life of this woman was so deep and true that her influence for good was felt in a remarkable way throughout the whole region. Even the minister would often tether his horse by her door when passing and take a seat by her as she went on with her work for the inspiration and help she was to him.

One day he said: "My good friend, you always seem so near the Lord. How is it possible when you can never get alone with Him for quiet prayer?"

The woman, with a look of surprise, laid down her iron, seated herself, and said: "A, Meenister, that's whar ye mak' the mistake. Whan I wint tae shut a' oot I jist sit me doon in ma chair, an'

throw ma apron ovr ma heed, an' I'm in ma tabernacle alone wi' me Lord in a moment."

How beautiful, how wonderful to think that the secret of the overflowing spiritual power apprehended by that poor, hard-working, uneducated Scottish woman was the same that empowered and upheld the French saint, Madam Guyon, who wrote:

To me remains nor place nor time,
My country is in every clime;
I can be calm and free from care,
On any shore, since GOD is there.

Repeatedly people who have read the little book of testimonies to GOD's faithfulness in hearing and answering the cry of a mother when in need of help, have asked me the question: "Has GOD continued to answer?" (For many years have passed since the little book mentioned was written.) (*How I Know GOD Answers Prayer*, Zondervan Publishing House) The best answer to this, I believe, will be to give a few stories in which the facts speak for themselves. They are but a few, culled from many, all having taken place since the prayer testimonies referred to were published.

Financial Help in Time of Need

One winter, when in Toronto with the children (Mr. Goforth was in China), I was finding it very hard to make ends meet. About the middle of December, one of my sons came to me and said, "Mother, just look at this, my best suit. The pants are above the ankles; and look at my sleeves— inches above my wrists! I have just been made secretary of the Club of the University. How can I face these men, many of them important leaders? I'm the worst dressed man in the University."

As I looked at the dear boy, I realized something of his humiliation at being forced to go about in such a suit, not only long outgrown but badly worn. I said, "My boy, there is no doubt it is a case of NEED. Let us stand on your father's great promise, '**My GOD shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus**'" (Philippians 4:19). I have not the money, but I believe GOD will give the money for a suit if we trust Him."

He started off to the University saying, "I wish I had your faith."

That day I went down to look for a suit, though I had no money to buy it. I found a beautiful, blue serge suit, but the price was \$50. The words came, "**According to His riches**," and I said in my heart, "GOD is able to do this also." I returned home, of course without the suit, but sure that the money would come and I would be able to buy it.

The following day a letter came from a woman in far Wisconsin, U. S. A., whom I had met many years before at a convention. The letter enclosed a check for fifty dollars and read: "I am greatly interested in what you tell me of your children, particularly . . . (naming the boy needing the suit.) Please buy something for him with the enclosed fifty dollars!" How my heart thrilled at this evidence of the Lord's compassionate understanding! And my boy got his suit!

The following occurred some months after the incident just related. I had been six weeks in the Toronto General Hospital, during which time all mail had been brought to me by the children

from home. One evening, a few days before I was to leave the hospital, my daughter came to me in evident distress. She said, "Mother, I hope you have plenty of money, for the bills have been mounting up terribly." When she left, I went over my accounts and found I had only twenty dollars to carry us over two weeks till the monthly check from the Board came. Several moments of intense worrying caused such faintness I became afraid. Putting the accounts away, I just committed all into the Lord's hands and fell asleep.

The following morning, a letter lay on my breakfast tray. I expressed surprise to the nurse, and she said, "This letter came to the office last night as you were going to sleep, so we kept it till this morning." I found the letter to be from a close friend of my husband's, Mr. R. H. It enclosed a check for one hundred dollars and read, "Please accept the enclosed as a personal gift. It may help a little in view of the near return of your husband." Truly at this moment the sense of the Lord's presence was very real. In acknowledging the gift, I wrote in part, "You have been just GOD's open channel: the gift is direct through you from my heavenly Father."

My failing sight was the chief reason for our return to Canada from Manchuria in 1930. I had become almost blind through cataracts in both eyes. Dr. Clarence Hill, of Toronto, operated on the left eye in July. The operation itself was an entire success. Some days later, when the eye was being dressed, the nurse failed to put a dark glass over the right eye, which for the first time was left uncovered. All through the bright, sunny day I used the eye constantly as visitor after visitor called. Then about sundown, I realized inflammation had set in. The inflammation increased so rapidly that by eight o'clock it had spread to the left eye. By 8:30, the whole left side of my face had become inflamed and swollen. The pain was becoming unbearable. Sharp pains were darting through the eye. I begged the supervisor to send for the doctor, but he was out of town. At last she agreed if I were no better by nine o'clock she would try to get help.

As she left, it came to me that the doctor could do nothing, as the mischief was already done. Then, in my distress, I turned to the Lord with the conviction that He alone could meet the case. I confessed every sin and failure I could recall and promised obedience to GOD in all things. A great sense of peace came, though the distress and pain were getting more intense each moment. Then I cried, "O Lord, for blindness or sight, I put myself in Thy hands!" Instantly, as in a flash, all pain and swelling were gone! The cheek, which a moment before I dared not touch, I could and did rub as perfectly normal. Oh, the relief! I turned over and was nearly asleep when a young nurse came to inquire how I was. Sleepily, I said: "Tell the supervisor the Lord JESUS has touched my eye, and I'm all right."

When Dr. Hill later redressed the eye, he did not discover any sign of recent inflammation, nor did he learn of it till nine years later when I told him the experience.

We are told that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.

Witness No. I. Six weeks after the operation, Dr. Hill tested me for glasses. When asked to read the testing card, I read easily down to within two lines of the bottom. The doctor stopped me, saying, "Wonderful! The lower lines are for abnormal sight!"

Witness No. II. Nine months later, Mr. Petrie, an old and well known oculist, tested me for duplicate glasses in view of my leaving for China. When through with the testing, he turned to my husband and said, "Your wife has remarkable sight in that eye. I have been in the business

for over thirty years and have never come across an eye that has been operated on for cataracts that could see like hers."

Witness No. III. Two years later, feeling the need of freshening my reading glasses, I went with my husband to a young Chinese oculist in Dairen, Manchuria, who had been trained by a foreign doctor in Shanghai. When we came from the testing-room, this young man, in somewhat broken English, said to my husband, "She has velly good sight. She all same see like girl of twenty!"

Before writing this, I called on Dr. Clarence Hill to get his final, or rather up-to-date, record regarding my sight. After careful examination, he said, "Your sight in that left eye has not failed in the slightest in these eight years."

A word further: during these eight years, my work has been almost constant eye strain. As my husband's secretary and secretary of the evangelistic fund - the latter requiring at one time the writing of six to eight hundred letters yearly - then reading to my husband after he became blind; also mission accounts, etc., and later the writing of my husband's biography; yet, through it all, I can recall having but one short period of slight inflammation in the operated eye, upon which I had wholly to depend.

Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee" (Jeremiah 32:17).

We were stationed temporarily at Weihufu, in the southern part of the Honan Field. When holding a women's study class at a distant outstation, I stayed in the home of Dr. Fan, the chief elder of the church there.

Just as the class was closing, Mrs. Fan asked me to visit a very sick boy, who had been sent home from the Weihufu Mission Boys' School, far gone with tuberculosis of the lungs. It was late afternoon when we reached the boy's home. We found the lad on a stool outside the door. My heart sank as I watched how he almost doubled up with every effort to get breath. Foam fell from his mouth, and his face had an ashen, deathly look. His mother and others gathered around as I prayed. But it seemed hypocrisy for me to pray that he might be healed, for I simply had not the faith for such a miracle. So I prayed for the mother and finally ended by praying that the boy might be given *dying grace!*

Then, as we started back across the fields, these words kept ringing in my ears, "**call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him**" (James 5:14). Over and over again these words came, till on reaching the Fans' home I determined just to obey, though I could not work up any faith that the boy would live. I would *blindly obey*.

But when I told Dr. Fan what I wanted to do, he at first refused to join me, saying, "Why, the boy is dying!" But I persisted, and he gave way as I said, "Dr. Fan, I honestly have not the faith to believe for the boy's healing, but if I return home without at least obeying what seems like GOD's voice, I will be utterly miserable and conscience stricken."

The boy was brought. Elders and friends gathered about, and the boy was placed in the midst. We all knelt on the earthen floor. The elders prayed. Then I closed, praying much as I had

before. The boy was taken home, and the following morning I left for Changte.

A year later, when attending presbytery at Weihufu, I met Mrs. Fan and inquired, "*Did that boy die!*" (Oh, the sadness of no faith!)

The reply came, "Why, no, the lad is quite well and helping his father!"

Two years passed, and I was again at Weihufu helping Miss McI. with special meetings for women. One day, as we sat at dinner and I was telling her this story, a knock came on the door, and in walked a tall, strong, fine looking young man, the photographer who had taken several pictures for us the previous day. He handed Miss McI. the photos with a few words; then, turning to me, he said (of course in Chinese), "I see you do not know me, Mrs. Goforth."

I replied, "No, I have no remembrance of having seen you before."

At this he smiled and, coming forward, gave me a bow, saying, "I am the boy you prayed for almost three years ago. I have never forgotten you."

Words could never describe my feelings at this moment. Glad, yes, but oh, so sad and humbled! Then came a glimpse of GOD's infinite love and patience in using such a faithless channel to work His miracle. Truly as the heavens are high above the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways! (Isaiah 55:9).

The Great War was over. Word had reached us in China of our son, who had given several year's service, now being at "loose ends." My heart longed for my boy with such passionate longing I went to my husband and begged him to let me go to him, for I believed the boy needed me in what seemed a crisis in his life. But my husband made it quite plain finances alone would make it impossible for me to take the journey to Canada.

The burden, the longing for the child, continued. I determined to say no more but just pray. I began at last to pray definitely that if I could not go to my boy he might find some way of coming to us.

We were on the Kuling mountain a few weeks later, in July, holding meetings for missionaries. One Sunday evening while at supper a special delivery letter was handed to me. It had a Japanese stamp and was addressed in my son's hand-writing. My heart seemed to stand still as I whispered to my husband, "Our boy is in Japan."

The letter stated he was working his way across the Pacific on a freighter and would be in a Manchurian port only a week before returning to Canada. He ended by saying, "Mother, make for Newchwang as quickly as possible. You may reach there before I do."

A chapter could well be given to that long journey of well nigh two thousand miles in the intense heat of midsummer, and to the unique experience of arriving in the strange city of Newchwang in a drenching rain. I could but follow the crowd in semi-darkness from railway station to ferry. On reaching the Newchwang side of the river, darkness had set in. With great difficulty, two *rickshaws* were secured and directed to the office of the steamship company. But on arriving there, all was in darkness and locked up. I then ordered the *rickshaw* men to take me to the one

good hotel.

As I alighted from my *rickshaw* and was about to enter the hotel door, a flood of water came pouring down from the roof, drenching me from head to foot. In this condition, I entered the lobby and faced an immaculate Chinese hotel "boy" (waiter). In response to my request for a room came the answer, with a provoking smile of amusement, "Velly solly, Missis. No room, can have place two days come!"

The *rickshaw* man, who had followed me in, stepped forward, and said, "You come with me, Missis; I take you Mission."

I hesitated, for it was risky, but the man had a kind look. So, committing myself to the Lord, I went once more out into darkness, drenching rain, and slush. After what seemed an endless ride, the mission gate was reached about ten o'clock.

After several minutes pounding on the gate, it opened a few inches; but the gate-keeper utterly refused to admit us, saying the missionaries were away. I had put my foot in just far enough so the door could not close. An inspiration born of desperation came to me. I said, "Old gentleman, were you here when Dr. Goforth led the revival meetings?"

"Yes, I was," came the answer.

"Then you will let me in. I am Mrs. Goforth." At once the door flew wide open!

Then followed one of the strangest experiences of my life. The gatekeeper led me into the house, which I literally took by storm. First I was shown into a bedroom, evidently made ready for someone, for even the bedclothes were turned back. When told this was "for Master expected at midnight," I fled. In the next room, the bedstead had been taken down. There was no time to lose, for I was shivering in my wet clothes, so we set to and managed at last to get the heavy, very large iron bedstead set up. Mattresses had evidently been put in the storeroom for summer, for none could be found. At last, locking the door, I spread what dry clothes I had on the bed springs and slept soundly till nine o'clock the following morning. When I realized, what I had done, I dreaded facing the strange master of the house. I stood fearfully several minutes before summoning up courage to open the door. When I did so, I found the "Master" in the hall awaiting my appearance and looking as scared as I felt, but only for a moment. Then came, "Why, Mrs. Goforth!" My host, with evident relief, then told of meeting Dr. Goforth and myself at a convention in Moyallon, Ireland, in 1910.

My troubles were over. Every possible kindness and courtesy was extended to me and to my son, who arrived the following day. Our host than left us for his holiday at Peitaiho, giving us the full run of his house and a servant to attend us.

How fully GOD has answered prayer!

When the separation time came a week later, my boy left me with new hope and courage for the future.

My train left an hour or two before his boat sailed. Try to imagine my feeling when, just as the

train began to move, my boy came racing across the platform and thrust into my hand a small parcel, saying, "Mother dear, it is all I have. The steward says you'll enjoy it, for it's the best Canadian butter. I turned with my pound of "best Canadian butter" to force my way into a packed car with the thermometer well up to the one hundred mark. The only place for the butter was my hand bag. After placing it there, intending to throw it out of the window, if necessary, I promptly forgot it. Many hours later, on reaching my destination at midnight, toilet articles and other things were found to be soaking in a bed of butter oil!

We were on furlough. Spring had come in with sudden warmth. A great heap of children's clothes lay before me, each needing some attention, some alteration to keep pace with the growing children. A burden of worry seized me. Turning to my husband near by, deep, as usual, in his beloved Bible, I cried: "Jonathan, I simply must cancel my speaking engagements. It is utterly impossible for me to do all this sewing and take meetings, too."

He replied, "My dear, you will do no such thing. GOD has given you a message to deliver, and you must deliver it. Just go downtown and buy some ready-made garments."

"But," I replied, "think of the money that would cost. We cannot afford it."

Quietly came the answer, "Then trust the Lord to send the money!" Feeling the hopelessness of making him understand, I went into the adjoining room and, sinking on my knees, cried out my need. Then there came the conviction that my husband was right. Rising, I determined to TRUST and not worry.

The following afternoon I addressed a Presbyterial gathering in western Ontario. The meeting closed too late to catch the train back to Toronto. That evening Dr. R. P. McKay, our Foreign mission secretary, addressed a packed church. An elderly man and myself occupied seats immediately in front of the pulpit. He evidently took a deep interest in the address, judging by his all too audible and frequent "Amen's." Turning to me, he whispered, "Did you hear Mrs. Goforth this afternoon?" "Yes," I replied with a sign for him to be quiet. "Wasn't she," he began, but I interrupted, fearing he might say something I should not hear.

"I am Mrs. Goforth," I said; with which he seemed quite to forget where he was. Grasping both my hands with great delight, he began to talk as if we were alone. I whispered back to him to be still, as we were disturbing the meeting. For a brief spell, he did keep still. Then, as I watched out of the corner of my eye, to my horror I saw him take out his purse with the evident intention of giving me money before the eyes watching us from the gallery.

This was too much. In a panic, I sought for some way to escape. At that very instant, Dr. McKay gave out a hymn, saying all who needed to catch the local train could leave. With a sense of utter relief, I took advantage of this and went to a seat by the door. At the close of the meeting, many shook hands when passing out, among them my elderly man. On reaching me, he pressed into my hand some money in bills. As he bent forward, he whispered, "This is for your children. They must need things!" Oh, the wonder of it! But it was not simply the answer to prayer that made it difficult to hide my emotion; even more, the simple, kind, understanding look with which it was given.

On reaching my room I was amazed at the amount of the gift. I need not describe the scene

when, on reaching Toronto, I related all to my husband. I felt very, very humbled, and well do I remember the happy, shining look of victory in his face as he said, "Yes, dear, it is but one more proof of GOD's faithfulness."

The above would not be complete without the following:

My husband and I were to speak at S-, an important center in Ontario. On arriving at the station, we were met by the minister and, to my great surprise and delight, my elderly man of the Presbyterial, Mr. S-. My husband walked with the minister, while a place was made for me in a buggy beside Mr. S-. We had not gone far when the old saint turned to me with tears in his eyes and said, "Mrs. Goforth, I would give all I have, anything, if I could know certainly that I am really born again. I feel so unworthy of being a child of GOD."

We talked for a few brief moments, while I prayed in my heart for wisdom. Then I said, "Dear friend, do you love GOD's children?"

"Oh, yes," he answered, "I love anyone and everyone whom I know loves the Lord."

"Then," I said "I know you are born again, for John, the Lord's beloved disciple, said, We know we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren. A few moments of silence passed. Then dear Mr. S.- turned to me with a bright smile, saying, "I never realized the truth of that word before."

Soon after reaching China, sometime later, word came of this saint having passed through the veil. Some day I expect to see him again and have time then to tell him of all the wonderful things bought with GOD's gift sent through him, His humble channel.

~ end of chapter 8 ~
