

## "BY FAITH"

Henry W. Frost and  
the China Inland Mission

by Dr. & Mrs. Howard Taylor

By THE CHINA INLAND MISSION, PHILADELPHIA

### Chapter Five -

### SOUL-WINNING

ONE outcome of Mr. Frost's devotion to Bible study was that while he "was musing, the fire burned." GOD's estimate of the value of a soul began to lay hold upon him. Reformation, at which he had been aiming, was seen to fall far short of human need. "**Ye must be born again,**" took on new meaning. Life can only come from life, whether natural or spiritual; thus CHRIST received into the heart by faith is the only possible way of regeneration. "**He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.**" And what facts can be more practical and compelling?

To be used of GOD to bring others to CHRIST now became the young man's ambition. But how to go about it he did not know. The more he tried to witness for his Master, the more difficult he found it. Speaking on other subjects was easy enough, but to introduce spiritual matters, helpfully, seemed almost impossible. In spite of a growing sense of responsibility, his lips were too often sealed.

All this came home to him one Sunday evening, not long after his marriage.

Constrained, at last, by a sense of need, I went to my room, turned the key in the door, and fell on my knees to ask for divine illumination and power. With much earnestness I told the Lord that I wanted to be wholly His and to be used by Him; that I did not know where to begin nor how to proceed; that I had failed in my past efforts and was discouraged. If ever I was to be used, I pleaded, He would have to bring it to pass. All I could do was to put myself at His disposal, and this I did unreservedly.

I then asked Him to point out the way, and give me work which would result in souls being brought to CHRIST, promising to undertake whatever He might set before me. I felt relieved in spirit after this prayer, though how it would be answered I could not imagine.

Little expecting to meet the answer to that prayer on his way to business, Mr. Frost set out next morning as usual.

Passing the post office, he stopped to open his mail box, and stood for a moment on the sidewalk with a number of letters in his hand.

"Is this Mr. Frost?" questioned a voice he did not recognize. Turning, he saw an elderly man,

who went on to say that his name was Emerson, and that he came from the village of Attica Center. There was a church, he said, at the Center, but for some years it had been out of use. There were people there who wanted a Sunday service. "I could get the folk together," he added, "and we wondered whether you would come and speak to us."

"No, Mr. Emerson," was the prompt reply. "I could not do that. I never preached a sermon in my life."

"We are not asking for sermons. Just come and talk to us."

"But that would be just as impossible. I should not know what to say."

Again Mr. Emerson pressed his request. It was a critical moment. For again Mr. Frost was about to refuse, when his prayer of the previous evening came vividly before him. Was this the answer? But he could never speak in public like a minister. Surely GOD was not asking that of him! But the conviction came that He was. The struggle was indeed death to self before the young man could answer:

"Thank you, Mr. Emerson. I will be there next Sunday." So the victory was gained, once for all.

There was much to do before the Sunday came. The little church had been long disused, and Mr. Frost, pressing "Nellie" into service, drove out several times to give it a thorough cleaning.

"When we got through" (he said) "I knew how to dust, sweep, mop, and scrub. All this I found to my advantage, for the farmers were more ready to listen when they knew that "the rich young man from Attica" was not above working with his hands."

But the biggest task was the preparation of the address. Arming himself with sermon paper of regulation size, the preacher-to-be withdrew to seek a text. It was springtime, and Nature had flung her treasures abroad with a lavish hand. His heart was stirred with delight by all he saw, and his discourse took the form of an exhortation to return gratitude and worship to the heavenly Giver of all good.

The sermon was written out and carefully rehearsed. But, even so, reading it to his audience was a terrible ordeal. The little church on the hill was well filled with people, and Mr. Frost's mother, who had driven over with him, was bright and encouraging, but he came home wondering sadly whether GOD could make any use of such a poor instrument.

Happily, after that, the young preacher abandoned the set sermon. With a written manuscript before him, he felt like David in Saul's armor, but when he trusted the Lord to bless His own Word, and just gave it simply to the people, the effect was very different. Week by week the congregation increased. The Sunday School flourished, and Mr. Frost felt his heart more and more drawn out to these worthy people. But one thing troubled him. Summer would soon be at an end; cold weather, bad roads, and a chilly meeting house meant that the services could not go on through the winter; it had come almost to the last Sunday, and he had never attempted to draw in the net. Might there not be some halting between two opinions? Ought he not to press the question of immediate acceptance of salvation? And yet, suppose there should be no response!

The last Sunday came and his decision had been reached. He would begin with the children.

So, his address, with its earnest appeal over, he asked whether any of the boys and girls had accepted CHRIST that summer, or would then do so. To his surprise, twelve young people stood up. Then he turned to the adults. What reply would they give to his Master? Had any received Him during the meetings as their own personal Saviour? It was not easy for those steady-going country people - but to his joy and wonder, young men and others rose to their feet, until six or eight were confessing CHRIST for the first time. It was a never-to-be-forgotten scene in that little church on the hill. The young preacher was profoundly moved. Indeed, it was a crisis in his own life, as well as for the eighteen or twenty who stood before him.

I drank at that moment the sweet nectar of soul-winning . . . The Lord had fulfilled my longings and answered my prayers. I returned to Attica solemnized in heart and with an unspoken resolution. Henceforth, I would give myself to GOD, as I might find it possible, to bring precious souls and lives to Him.

Back in Attica, that resolution was put to the test. The large majority of people in the town did not attend any place of worship, and were as needy, spiritually, as could well be imagined. But this was a very different proposition from the friendly, country group of the summer. There was no Mr. Emerson to open the way, and "church people" were all engaged in their own work. If anything were to be attempted for outsiders, it must be a new departure. But how and where to begin!

True, there was a roller-skating rink that could be hired for use on Sundays. It was centrally located and, though roughly built, was familiar to the very people Mr. Frost desired to reach. Could not the Lord give blessing there, as He had in the little church on the hill? So the rink was rented, thoroughly cleaned, provided with chairs, stoves, and hymn books, and the first service was announced for Sunday afternoon.

The speaker was there in fear and trembling, but he was not alone. At his side was the true "helpmeet" who never failed him. Her music and her brightness were invaluable in such work, and still more so her faith. For Mrs. Frost could write "tried and proved" over many a precious promise, and thus had much to give to those who gathered about them.

And as to the audience, if Mr. Frost had been surprised that first Sunday at Attica Center, he was more so now.

"There before me in the rink were fully two hundred people, and I knew that very few of them ever went inside a church except for marriages or funerals. A few weeks later we were obliged to leave the rink on account of the cold. But we went into Lemon's Hall, which was even more of a common meeting ground for all classes, and the change turned out to our advantage. Here my wife organized a boy and girl "Gospel Choir," and as it was composed of the children of laborers and some from the families of saloon-keepers, we soon had in our services the people we desired to reach . . .

Being well known in town, I found it easy to go from house to house, inviting people to the meetings, and even to visit the saloons, to extend a welcome to proprietors and their patrons,

which service the Lord much blessed. Thus the work went on all through the winter, the attendance remaining good throughout, and the interest increasing in depth and sincerity. To our joy, not a few of the boys and girls of the choir came out brightly for CHRIST, including the son and daughter of the most notorious saloon-keeper in the place. Several grown-up people also confessed the holy Name, and showed in their lives that a great inner change had taken place."

More than this - during that same winter, invitations began to come to Mr. Frost to speak in other places. One of these brought him into contact with Mr. George H. Hall, General Secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association for the State of New York. This new friend was evidently impressed with the way in which the Lord was using the young business man from Attica, for he spoke of him to others, and openings increased in number until Mr. Frost was faced with a perplexing situation.

What did these frequent requests for outside service mean? And especially, what answer must be given to three different proposals that had been made to him? The first was from the pastor of a Presbyterian Church in Rochester, Dr. William R. Taylor, who wanted Mr. Frost to act as his assistant; the second was from Dr. Lyman Abbott of Cornwall-on-the-Hudson, who asked him to undertake his midweek meetings and pastoral work; and the third was from Dr. Merrill E. Gates, President of Rutgers College, New Brunswick, who suggested home missionary work in that New Jersey city, specially for the factory people.

"It was with astonishment that I received these invitations, not only because I felt unworthy of the opportunities presented, but also because the idea had not so much as once crossed my mind that the Lord would ask me to leave my business and home. I was willing enough now to serve Him, but unconsciously I had taken it for granted that He had established me in Attica for the rest of my days."

To add to the perplexity of the young people, their hearts were touched by an unexpected happening. News had got abroad that Mr. and Mrs. Frost might be leaving town, and a group of business men who attended the Lemon Hall meetings determined that this must not happen. Thinking that a financial inducement might help to decide the matter, they privately raised a fund for carrying on the Sunday meetings. Armed with a long subscription list, they waited upon Mr. and Mrs. Frost, begging them to remain in Attica.

The document contained the names of some two hundred people, few of whom were church members. Most of those who had subscribed were working-folk, many were children, and several Mr. Frost knew to be saloon-keepers. Not a few of the gifts and promises were small, down to a few cents, but this unexpected token of appreciation amounted in all to nine hundred dollars. And it was an offering of love!

Prayer had indeed been answered, and doors of service were opening, beyond all they had asked or thought.

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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