

“PAY-DAY—SOME DAY”

With Other Sketches From Life and Messages From The Word

by

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CHAPTER EIGHT

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU PRAY?

We know what prayer is, but to define it or explain its strange power is more difficult than for an Edison to explain electricity. The great inventor said it was impossible to explain what electricity was—that it was best understood by observing its power and what it was able to accomplish. The same can be said about prayer. Somehow heaven’s machinery begins to move when we get in contact with heaven, but the “how” will always remain a mystery.

But He that “**seeth in secret**” rewards openly in answer to His children’s cry. We see the effects of these prayers, often answered in mysterious and miraculous ways, but what really takes place we shall understand only when we enter the pearly gates of the holy city.

However, it is mighty interesting, occasionally, to recall some of the unusual answers to prayer, which are faith-strengthening. Let me give you one that I consider extraordinary.

Just a few years back I received a letter from across the water from a mother who lived near my childhood home. Although a stranger to me, she wrote asking me to try to find her son, who had left home about five years before. For three years she had not had a word from him. The only information she could give was that his name was Eric and that he was living on West Madison Street in Chicago the last time he had written. She added, “I’ll be praying continually until you find my darling boy, and when you have found him, send him home to me. I’m sending you money for his ticket home.”

To look for a man among the “bums” on West Madison Street was like looking for a needle in a haystack. She had not even given me a description of her lost son, so I didn’t know if he was tall or short, dark or light, heavy-set or thin. But I wanted to help this brokenhearted mother.

About two months passed by when, early one morning, the phone rang and the person on the other end excused himself for calling so early and then told of picking up a young fellow the night before on Seventy-ninth Street who had begged for money for lodging. Taking him to his home and feeding him, he was asked if he had a home here, or any friends, to which he replied that his home was in Rattvik, Dalarne, Sweden, and that he had no friends in the city. After airing out his filthy clothes and giving him a bath and a comfortable bed, these friends prayed for God’s guidance and blessing in behalf of this unfortunate fellow.

“Whom do we know in Chicago from that place in Sweden?” they asked each other. Then one of them remembered reading in the paper only the other day of a man who had just celebrated his silver wedding. They quickly located the paper, and found my name and that I had come from this community in Sweden.

“Hold him! Don’t let him get away!” I excitedly called to them. “I’ve been looking for him.”

Reaching the home, after a long hurried drive, I told my story, and together we praised God for answered prayer. They awakened him and I told him the story. He broke down and wept bitterly. I told him of One who loved him even more than his own mother, and had the joy of leading him to Christ.

“How would you like to go home to mother?” I asked.

“Oh, if I only could, but here I am, broke and a bum.”

“Well, son, I have good news for you. Mother sent money for a ticket, and you will leave Thursday—just in time to get home for Christmas.”

Hurriedly, together with these godly people who had picked him up, we helped get him ready—the ticket, necessary papers, etc., and after a visit to a barber shop we fixed him up from head to foot with new wearing apparel, all that was needed to make this “prodigal son” presentable on his homecoming. In less than two weeks the “Welcome home” would be a precious reality to him.

Standing in the LaSalle Street station on Thursday, we were hoping to find some friends among the hundreds leaving on this special Christmas excursion train bound for the steamer that was to leave for Sweden on Saturday. We dared not leave this prodigal son with strangers. This young plant could not stand the wintry winds of sinful companionship; we had already telegraphed to his mother that the best Christmas gift she had ever received was on the way—her long lost son.

The excursion agent could not assume any responsibility, and, bewildered, we eagerly scanned every face as the people passed through the gate. We recognized many but none who was a Christian. Presently I noticed an elderly, happy, and plump lady coming toward me, and as she extended her hand, she said, “You are Bernhard Hedstrom, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” I smilingly remarked, “but who are you, madam?”

“Well, Mr. Hedstrom, you would hardly know me, but I know you and your mother well. In fact, I went to school with your mother, and I met you a few years ago in Minneapolis when you and Pastor Lindblom were conducting services in Gust Johnson’s tabernacle. My name is Mrs. C— from Grandy, Minn., and I’m on my way to visit my homeland for Christmas.”

“Are you happy in the Lord?” I asked her.

“Yes, indeed, but oh, how happy I would be if I could be a blessing to someone on this trip, and the trip would be so much more enjoyable if I had some good Christian company. Are you going, too?”

“No,” I replied, “but you can start right here to be a blessing by taking care of this young man and taking him safely to his home and mother. It won’t be much work for you, as you take the same train, the same boat and get off at the same station, and your home is only a short walk from his.”

After telling her the story, I introduced the young fellow, who stood near by, and with tears of gladness she assumed the responsibility as from God and said, “I’ll be a good mother to you on this trip,” and he replied, “And I’ll try my best to be a good son.”

I need not picture to you the welcome that awaited that boy, and the unusual Christmas joy in that home in the North, not to mention the thrill that came to Mrs. C__ as she delivered that precious Christmas present to father and mother.

My friends, something happens when you pray! When this brokenhearted mother reached heaven with her prayers, heaven’s machinery began to move earthward. The result I have tried to picture to you.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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