

CLIMBING:
MEMORIES
of
A MISSIONARY'S WIFE
by
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CHAPTER NINE
ANSWERED PRAYER, II

What would happen if we all believed GOD?

AS I write of answered prayer, there comes the remembrance of so many occasions when prayer was answered in connection with the addressing of meetings, that I simply cannot attempt to record them all. I shall give just two stories to illustrate how definitely the Lord helped, at such times, in direct answer to prayer.

The first of these occurred when on furlough. I had four small children. My husband was away when one of the children became seriously ill. I was due to address the presbyterial in Chalmers Church, Toronto. I was up with my sick child the night previous to this meeting and pressed to the utmost right up to the time I had to leave for the meeting. I was so worn out and sleepy I actually fell asleep in the street-car; and when on the platform, waiting my turn to speak, my head kept nodding. Try as I would, I could not get my brain to work and was utterly at a loss as to what to say. The church was packed. As I rose to address that great audience, I seemed to feel the Lord beside me. My mind then cleared, and for an hour the audience listened with great stillness. The Lord had heard my desperate cry and had given calmness and power. No one, I believe, knew what that meeting meant to me. He had, as often before and since, just *brought me through* (See Ezekiel 47:3-4).

The second incident that now comes to mind occurred in our station of Changte, North Honan. We missionary wives, including Dr. Jean Dow, were supposed to take turns in leading the Chinese women's Wednesday-afternoon prayer-meeting. Sometimes a note would come from a fellow-worker well after 2 o'clock, (the meeting began at 3 o'clock) asking me to take the meeting for her.

One afternoon, when I was especially busy, such a note reached me. What could I do? There was the baby to nurse, and some message must be thought out. Hastily taking up the baby, I opened the Bible and placed it on a chair near enough to see, but at a safe distance from little, grasping hands. (Every mother knows a baby fights against divided attention!) Just then my husband

opened the door. He exclaimed, "Well, Rose! It puzzles me how you can address a meeting with so little preparation."

I replied: "Jonathan, if I had time like you, I could not expect to get a message in so short a time, but the fact is the Lord suits His help to me as a mother!" And, oh, so often He did. (That afternoon the Lord gave a blessed message.)

I remember how when home in 1910 I addressed, during that furlough, over two hundred and fifty meetings. I had five children to care for then, and many times it was not till I was dressing to go to the meeting that, as I cast myself down on my knees for a moment, there came to me the clear-cut outline of the message I was to give. It was wonderful! It was D. L. Moody who once said, "The Christian on his knees sees more than the philosopher on tiptoe."

Sadly and humbly, I must confess that many, many times when I had cried to the Lord for power in speaking and evident power was given, I had not left the platform before the thought would come, "I have done well today." Then would come the cry for forgiveness.

In my little book of prayer testimonies, *How I Know GOD Answers Prayer*, a chapter is given to the Lord's gracious answers to prayer on the 1910-11 furlough.

The definiteness of the Divine leading in connection with the great famine of 1920-21 was remarkable. We give the story to the "**praise of the glory of His grace**," through which alone the work was attempted and accomplished.

Unable, because of illness to accompany my husband as he left our home on Kikungshan Mountain in the late summer of 1920, the news of the great famine reached me there in a letter from a coworker in Changte. The letter described vividly some of the awful conditions prevailing throughout our whole field, which was in the center of a vast area affecting, it was said, from thirty to forty millions of people. The picture given of what the writer himself saw was heart-rending.

Crushed at the thought of what hundreds of those who looked upon us as mother and father were passing through, I cried aloud in agony of soul, "O GOD, is there not something I can do? Oh, show me!"

Clearly came the answer, "Use your pen!"

Hastening to my desk, I prayed as I prepared to write, "Lord, use my pen!" Just one sheet was written, giving briefly the facts Mr. X. had given in his letter. At once this was taken to a neighbor who had a mimeograph. One hundred and fifty copies were quickly turned off and these distributed among the various nationalities then on the mountain, about ten in all. Within twenty-four hours of the writing of the appeal it was translated into several languages and on its way throughout the world!

Realizing that some donations might come to me, I took steps at once to get official permission for receiving and disbursing famine funds. Chapters could be written on the months that followed, but space permits of but a few facts. Before the famine of 1920-21 ended, I had

received over one hundred and twenty thousand dollars for famine relief. I kept closely in touch with several relief centers, and to these I sent checks as needed. Many were the thrills that came that winter as appeals reached me, and I was able to write checks off the Famine Relief Fund for amounts of \$5,000 or even \$10,000.

One incident may be given as indicative of many others. While waiting for the train at an important junction, (we were visiting relief centers) two missionaries came up to us. One was leaving on our train; the other resided at the junction. Of the latter I inquired, "How about the relief work here?"

He replied, "All soup kitchens will have to be closed tomorrow, as our funds are exhausted: and it will be ten days before more funds can reach us."

"How much money would be sufficient to carry on for these ten days?" I asked.

"Five hundred dollars," was the answer. Signing for him to follow me, I led to where my satchel lay in the waiting-room. Opening my Famine Relief Check Book, a check for five hundred was quickly made out and handed to the missionary, who fairly gasped, "But you can't afford this much!"

Joyously I answered, "No, but though poor, I am making many rich!" Our train was in sight, so there was only time to tell briefly the story given.

As the famine was ending, the chairman of an important relief center stated publicly that "no one could ever tell how many hundreds of thousands of dollars had come in to the various relief centers as a result of Mrs. Goforth's timely appeal nor how many lives had thus been saved." On hearing this, I could but bow my head in wonder and praise, for truly it had been the Lord's doing, for all I had done was to receive and acknowledge the donations and forward the money to the relief workers.

Hudson Taylor once said, "How often do we attempt work for GOD to the limit of our incompetency rather than to the limit of GOD's omnipotency." When recalling the famine relief experience, it always seemed to me the one time in my life when I had attempted and carried out a ministry "to the limit of GOD's omnipotency."

The following should be recorded here as an outcome, or sequel, of the famine ministry.

The autumn following the great famine found us starting on a long campaign of tent evangelism for the whole of Changte field. Not a few details of that wonderful tour are given in *Goforth of China*. What I wish to record here briefly is something of what that winter meant to me personally. Little did I dream that it was to be my last, long itinerary in our old Changte field.

The weather was becoming very cold when we started off. Practically every place at which we stayed had paper windows, with many openings through which wind and rain could enter. The meetings were held in draughty, impromptu-made mat tents or, sheds through which the bitter wind swept; mercilessly. No place was heated. But, oh, the experience was wonderful to me, especially during the first months while I was able to enter into and, take part in the campaign. Everywhere hearts were opened to the Gospel message as a result of the splendidly organized

famine relief carried on all through the previous winter, often at the risk of their lives, by the band of faithful missionaries in Changte.

As the weeks passed, the increasingly bitter cold, the constant strain, the general hardness of the tour, began to tell on me. My dear husband, who never spared himself, never complained, was a wonderful, living example of love, patience, and fortitude that won all to himself and to his Saviour.

After about two months touring the hilly region to the west, we returned to Changte for presbytery in December, again starting off in January, this time to reach the main centers of the eastern section of the field.

While at Takwanchwang, the first place of our "tour," I caught a severe cold on my chest. The question was, Should I give up the trip and return to Changte? To do so would largely break up the women's part of the campaign. So I decided just to go on and pray for strength at least to play the organ and conduct the singing in the tent. Later it almost seemed I should have gone back, for, as we traveled southward a day's journey, I became worse with what seemed pleurisy. Our home at this second place was a damp, mud hut.

To go from place to place on that journey, where every moment was a prayer for help, would weary the reader. Sometimes, though very seldom, we found ourselves in a comparatively comfortable, heated room. Sometimes I was able to take part in the preaching to crowds of women, who literally clamored for the foreign women to address them.

At last we started for the farthest, most northern point of the field. The day was stormy, cold and raining. How I prayed we might get to a warm place, but alas, we were shown into a large, barnlike room! The paper windows had many holes, through which the wind and rain swept. Later these windows were papered over, but many holes in the roof remained.

As I recall the days spent in that room, it all seems one of the darkest, hardest physical experiences of my life. I had again caught a severe chill and was feverish and in pain. I forced myself to attend the first few meetings but finally had to give in. I tried to get warm with a hot water bottle and everything my husband could pile on me on the brick bed. But it was no use. I simply got colder and colder.

As my husband left for the meeting, I rose and I began to pace the rough earthen floor, crying aloud in agony, "O Lord, have You no pity? Oh, help me! Why should I suffer so?"

Just then the two-leaf door was flung open and a coolie entered. On his shoulder was balanced a bamboo pole with a fully laden basket on each end. He handed me a letter. It was from some American missionaries living quite a distance from where we were. These missionaries had spent a few hours with us the day before to see something of my husband's methods of work. They had stayed for dinner and had left us with practically an empty larder. They must have sensed this, as the two laden baskets indicated. These contained all sorts of good things, as jam, pickles, bread, cake, butter, and other things.

But the most timely and precious evidence of GOD's love and care came, when tearing paper off a bottle of grape juice, I noticed a portion of the torn paper lying on the floor on which, in large

print, were the words, "IS THIS THE RIGHT ROAD HOME?"

Picking up the bit of paper, I read the following lines:

Is THIS the right road home, O Lord?
The clouds are dark and still,
The stony path is sharp and hard,
Each step brings some fresh hill!
I thought the way would brighter grow
And that the sun with warmth would glow
And joyous songs from free hearts flow.
Is THIS the right road home?
Yes, child! this very path I trod,
The clouds were dark for Me,
The stony path was hard to tread,
Not sight but faith can see
That at the end the sun shines bright,
Forever where there is no night,
And glad hearts rest from earth's fierce fight,
It IS the Right Road Home!

On carefully examining the scrap of paper, I found it to be a portion of an English paper, "The Life of Faith," printed four years before in 1914 at the time of the Great War. How strange! How wonderful! GOD surely, in this case, moved in a mysterious way. An English newspaper four years old, coming through American missionaries and reaching me, as it did, just when I needed the message desperately!

Again and again, I read those lines, which seemed to speak to me a message from the Lord direct to my soul. At last I cried out, "O Lord, if THIS I am now going through is the RIGHT ROAD HOME, then I will not murmur!"

Two days later, our way took us near the railway. Leaving the others to continue the remaining ten days of the tour, I returned to Changte. Miss McI - opened the door of the single women's home in response to my knock. As she looked at me, she fairly gasped, "It surely is not Mrs. Goforth!" Later she told me I looked simply a ghost of myself.

Oh, the blessedness of the week that followed.

All three women - Miss McI-, Dr. D-, and Miss P- vied with each other in caring for me as I lay at last in a warm, clean, lovely bedroom.

The effects of what I had gone through those months remained with me for years. *BUT He brought me through!* And so will He you, dear fellow-climber.

The following two incidents illustrate the truth of the words:

*Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Unuttered or EXPRESSED.*

My husband and I were in New York holding meetings. I was writing a brief story of Miss Cornelia Bonnell, "*The Angel of Shanghai (Miracle Lives of China, Chapter 13)*." One morning, as we sat together in our room, I was finishing the story as far as I could go, but entirely lacking in any reference to her early life as I had failed to contact anyone who could give me any data of that period. At last I laid down my pen and said to my husband, "Oh, how I wish I could find someone who knew Miss Bonnell in those early years and could give me what I need to finish this story."

A few moments later, I started for the office down-stairs for some stamps. As I entered the, small elevator, I said to the elevator girl (quite a stranger to me), "I am writing the story of a wonderful missionary, but I don't know anything of her early life; and the sketch will be incomplete as it is."

The girl asked: "Who is it you are writing about?"

I replied: "Miss Cornelia Bonnell, of the 'Door of Hope,' Shanghai."

The girl exclaimed: "Why, Mrs. Goforth; how strange! I have known Cornelia Bonnell and her family since we were girls together at school. I can give you all the facts you want."

This she did a few hours later, and before we left New York, the sketch was finished.

The second incident along this line occurred in inland China as we were traveling by train to a certain station. I had my writing pad on my lap and was writing the sketch, "*From Servant to Superintendent*," (*Miracle Lives of China, Chapter 5*) the story of Yang Yu-ming, one of our early school boys who had "made good." I was entirely familiar with his life up to the time he was sent by the Chinese postal authorities on a long and hazardous journey to the province of Sinkiang. It was a pioneer mission of the utmost importance - the opening up of post-offices in the farthest north-west of China.

We lost sight of him after he left on this mission until, many months later, word came of his death. I was nearing the end of the story and wished greatly I could know something of Yang Yu-ming's life in that far distant region.

Just then a China Inland missionary came aboard, a stranger to us. As he and my husband talked together, I excused myself, saying: "I am writing the story of Yang Yu-ming, one of our early school boys."

With a look of surprise, the missionary said: "How strange! Not the Mr. Yang who came to my station in Sinkiang?"

Then he told of his being the only missionary in that far distant province and how Yang Yu-ming made his headquarters in the same city near his mission and had lived there till the time of his death.

As he talked just the facts I had been wanting were given - and what a story it was of Yang Yu-ming's loving, faithful service for his divine Master, whom he served with the utmost

faithfulness and also human masters, even unto death.

I never had a shadow of doubt that GOD led that missionary to our train. He was the only one who could have given me the personal touches and facts I needed. Some may say, "Just a coincidence." but I would rather trace GOD's hand in it all.

More than once in my life have I experienced the blessing and reward that come as a result of obedience to what seems to be the Inner Voice.

The following two stories illustrate the importance of obedience to this prompting and also the tragic consequences of disobedience:

One morning (in Toronto) I was busy sewing, in view of an early return to China. The thought of two dear friends of the China Inland Mission kept coming persistently. They were also on furlough. At last I thought, "Perhaps this means that I should send them a gift." Looking into my purse, I found I had less than a dollar to do till my husband returned the following morning. Just then the mail came with a letter from a distant country village where I had spoken when visiting a friend more than a year before, not, of course, expecting to receive money. The letter enclosed five dollars and said, "By some mistake this was not sent you before." At once I decided this so unexpected gift should be sent Miss L. and Mrs. T., but waited till my husband returned. He gladly added ten dollars to my five, which was sent off at once to my friends.

Three days later came a letter from Mrs. T. saying she and Miss L. had for some days been praying for money to meet a certain need. The morning my letter reached them they had said to one another, "Assuredly this need will be met." The morning mail brought my letter and the afternoon mail brought a letter from another friend, also enclosing a gift. The two amounts came to just the sum required to meet their need.

But, oh, the tragedy of not obeying! A dear friend had gone to England on a visit. When word of this reached me in central China, there came a distinct urge to write to a family friend in England, Mr. B., giving him her address. Each time this urge came to me, I said: "Yes, yes, I will write to him. But I'm too busy just now." This lasted a whole month, and the letter was never written, for the urge ceased and the matter was forgotten. Six years later, on returning to Canada, I learned that Mr. B. had written his home people in Canada in vain, asking for my friend's address. It seemed the two had had a difference that had brought about a separation. Mr. B. hoped for a reconciliation could he see her. My friend was wondering in the meantime why he did not come. Had I but obeyed the definite urge, I believe of the HOLY SPIRIT, all would have been well. But my friend returned to Canada without their meeting, and three years later Mr. B. died.

Quite recently I felt urged to visit an old bedridden woman who, I was told, wished to see me, but again I put off going. Then word came of her sudden passing! How sorry I was, but too late!

"And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone" (I Kings 20:40).

Early in 1923, my health was such that I was forced to return to our home on Kikungshan Mountain, leaving my husband to continue a marvelous ministry then progressing in Marshal

Feng's camp near Peking.

Unfit, at least temporarily, for active mission work, I began to pray the Lord to undertake for me in providing the funds, if it was His will I should go to my children in Canada. I had written to a friend in Hongkong telling of my circumstances and wish to return to Canada.

A few weeks later, I received a letter from this friend. She wrote of how the night following the arrival of my letter she could not sleep, and she gave herself to praying for me. She asked the Lord to show her if there was anything she could do. The impression came strongly to write to a friend of her husband's who had influence in the Canadian Pacific at Hongkong. This she did the following morning. A few hours later came the answer to the effect that word had been sent to the Shanghai office to honor my order up to \$1,000. My friend closed with: "A first-class cabin and passage have been secured and instructions given that you are to receive special attention. So all you have to do is *float gently home!*"

When in the homeland, we sometimes told stories that our good Christian, but skeptical, home people would not believe. Here is one:

One of my Bible women, Mrs. Li, had a little grandchild whose right arm had become paralyzed. The father was a doctor trained by our Dr. Leslie. Everything had been done for the child, but the arm remained limp and useless. Mrs. Li had accompanied us to Linching for a week's revival-meetings among the Christians. One morning when a wonderful spiritual movement was on, Mrs. Li became deeply convicted of certain things in her life. Humbly and quietly, not aloud, she confessed all to the Lord. Then there came the remembrance of her beloved grandchild's condition. She pleaded earnestly that the Lord might heal the child. A few days later, at the close of the meetings, Mrs. Li returned home and was welcomed by her daughter-in-law holding the child, whose both arms were outstretched! On enquiring when the healing came, Mrs. Li found it was at the time of the revival-meeting, While she prayed.

"Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: Is there anything too hard for me?"
(Jeremiah 32:27).

~ end of chapter 9 ~
