

How I Know GOD Answers Prayer

The Personal Testimony of One Life-Time

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Chapter Five -

OUR DELIVERANCE FROM THE BOXERS (1900)

"He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord belong the issues from death" (Psalm 68:20).

"Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us" (II Corinthians 1:10).

MANY times we were asked in the homeland to tell the story of our escape during the Boxer uprising, and often the question was put, "If it was really GOD's power that saved you and others on that journey, then why did He not save those of His children who were so cruelly done to death?"

For a time this question troubled me. Why indeed? One day when seeking for light on the matter I was directed to the twelfth chapter of Acts. There I found the only answer that can be given. We are told in the second verse that James was put to death by the sword; then the rest of the chapter is given to the detailed record of Peter's wonderful deliverance in answer to prayer (verses 5, 12). In that day when all things shall be revealed I am convinced we shall see that prayer had much to do in the working out of our deliverance. When the first cable was received in Canada informing the home church of our party starting on that perilous journey, we are told a great wave of prayer went up for us from Christians of all denominations. The Presbyterian Assembly of Canada was meeting at the time, and one session was given up entirely to prayer on behalf of the missionaries in China. Never had that body witnessed such a season of intense, united intercession.

Later when giving the story of our escape in the homeland, repeatedly we have had people come to us telling how, during the weeks which elapsed between the first cable informing the home church of our danger, and the second cable, which told of our safe arrival at the coast, they had never ceased to cry to GOD to save us. Then, too, after all is said, we must believe GOD was glorified and GOD's purposes were fulfilled in the death of some as in the saved lives of others. The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the Church.

It was in the month of June, 1895, that an incident occurred which has ever been linked in my mind with the events of 1900. I was about to leave Toronto with my four children to join my husband in China, when a cable was received telling of the cruel massacre of Mr. and Mrs. Stewart and others. Deep and widespread sympathy was expressed and much anxiety felt for missionaries generally in China. Many urged me to delay our return; but I felt it best to keep to

our original plans, and a few days later found us bidding farewell to friends at the Union Station, Toronto.

Just as the train was leaving a lady stepped forward quickly to the window and said, "You do not know me, but I have prayed the Lord to give me a promise for you; it is this, take it as from Him," and handed me a slip of paper. I opened the paper and read, "**No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper**" (Isaiah 54:17). Then and there I raised my heart to GOD in prayer that He would fulfil this promise to me and those dear to me; and as I prayed there came the clear assurance that the Lord heard.

Never can we forget that winter of 1899-1900. The clouds had begun to gather, and the mutterings of the coming storm were heard on all sides of us. Repeatedly we were as a mission in gravest danger, and at such times were literally "shut up to GOD." The temper of the people was such that any little thing angering them would have been as a spark to gunpowder.

From the time of the government crisis of the autumn of 1899, we, in company with all other foreigners in China, realized that conditions were becoming serious, yet never did we expect or prepare for such a cataclysm as took place when the storm clouds suddenly burst in the early summer of 1900.

The first indication we had of coming danger was when our mail carriers running to and from Tientsin were stopped and our mails returned. Thus, cut off from the outside world, we had to depend solely upon the wild rumors afloat among the Chinese for information. The country around us became daily more disturbed; day by day we could hear the beating of drums and the cries of the people for rain. The darkness and horror of those days, in the midst of which sickness and death entered our home, can never be forgotten. On the nineteenth of June our eldest daughter, Florence, after a week of intense suffering, was released from pain. It was while her life was still hanging in the balance that we received the first communication from the American Consul in Chefoo urging us to flee. This message was quickly followed by another still more urgent.

The question was, where could we flee? Our usual route was by river boat two weeks to Tientsin, but this way was blocked, the whole region being infested with Boxers, and Tientsin even then in a state of siege. The only possible route left open to us was southward by cart, - fourteen days to Fancheng, - then ten or more days by houseboat to Hankow.

We faced such a journey at that time of the year with fear and trembling because of the children, the danger from heat and sun being very great. Gladly would we have stayed, but the Chinese Christians urged us to go, saying they could escape more easily were we not there.

We had with us our four remaining children: Paul, nine; Helen, six; Ruth, under three; and baby Wallace, eight months. Their faithful Chinese nurse, though weeping bitterly at parting from her old mother of almost eighty, decided to come with us. There were altogether in the party five men, six women, and five children, besides the servants and carters.

Many were the difficulties in the way of getting carts and other necessary things for the journey, but one by one all things needed were provided as we besought the Lord to open the way. There

were many indications on that journey that GOD's purpose was to save us; one of the most striking of these happened just as we were about to leave.

The day previous to our departure a message passed through the city of Chang Te Ho, the messenger riding at breakneck speed. This messenger, we learned later, was enroute for the Provincial Capital with the sealed message from the Empress Dowager commanding the death of all foreigners. We had planned first to take the direct route south, which would, as far as we can now see, have led us to our death, for this route would have taken us through the capital. Almost at the last moment, and quite unaware of the danger on the direct route, we were led to change our plans and take a route farther west, though it made a considerably longer journey.

We left Chang Te, June 28, 1900, at day break. At Wei Hwei Fu, the first large city to which we came, an attempt was made to break into our inn, but as we prayed the mob dispersed and we were left in peace. On July first we reached the north bank of the Yellow River, and there for a short time (it was Sunday afternoon) we rested under the trees. Little did we dream that even then many, very many, of our fellow-missionaries and personal friends were being done to death by the merciless Boxers. At sunset the ferry which carried us across the river reached the south bank, and here we found several missionaries and a party of engineers waiting for us.

These latter were fully armed and had a fair escort. After some difficulty it was decided that we should all keep together, but in reality this party kept by themselves, except that we stayed in the same towns at night. Each day that passed seemed harder than the last, the heat was intense, and the ten or twelve hours of bumping over rough roads in springless carts made even a bed spread on the ground a welcome resting-place.

Once, when Mr. Goforth had jumped off our cart to get fresh water for our head cloths, a crowd gathered round him and became very threatening, raising the cry, "Kill, kill." All the other carts were ahead, and the carter would not wait for Mr. Goforth, as he was afraid. During the few moments that elapsed before my husband was allowed to join us even the carter turned pale with suspense,- and oh, how I prayed!

Except for a few similar passing dangers, nothing special occurred until the evening of July seventh, when we reached the small town of Hsintien. We had heard during the day that the whole country ahead of us was in a state of ferment against the Roman Catholics. Scarcely had we reached the inn when the engineers and the missionaries with them who had become increasingly alarmed at the condition of the country, informed us that they were going on to the large city of Nan Yang Fu that night, but would leave us two soldiers and two of their carts. Mr. Goforth did not wish them to go, for he felt it would greatly increase our danger.

Shortly after they left us the mob began to gather outside our inn. The gate was barricaded with carts. For hours stones were thrown against the gate and demand was made for our money. A messenger was at once sent after the engineers' party, asking them to return. All that night was spent in sleepless suspense.

Early in the morning the messenger returned with the reply that they had failed to get help from the Nan Yang Fu official and were obliged to push on. As soon as the carters heard we were thus left helpless a panic seized them, and it was with great difficulty they could be persuaded to harness their animals. All this time the crowd had been becoming more dense, as we could see

through the cracks of the gate, and were ominously quiet. Hints had been given us of coming danger, but that was all; none spoke of what all felt, - that we were probably going to our death.

Suddenly, without the slightest warning, I was seized with an overwhelming fear of what might be awaiting us. It was not the fear of after death, but of probable torture, that took such awful hold of me. I thought, "Can this be the Christian courage I have looked for?" I went by myself and prayed for victory, but no help came. Just then some one called us to a room for prayer before getting into our carts. Scarcely able to walk for trembling, and utterly ashamed that others should see my state of panic, for such it undoubtedly was, - I managed to reach a bench beside which my husband stood. He drew from his pocket a little book, "*Clarke's Scripture Promises*," and read the verses his eye first fell upon.

They were the following:

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them."

"The God of Jacob is our refuge."

"Thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God."

"I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness . . . the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee."

"If God be for us, who can be against us?"

"We may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

The effect of these words at such a time was remarkable. All realized that GOD was speaking to us. Never was there a message more directly given to mortal man from his GOD than that message to us. From almost the first verse my whole soul seemed flooded with a great peace; all trace of panic vanished; and I felt GOD's presence was with us. Indeed, His presence was so real it could scarcely have been more so had we seen a visible form.

After prayer we all got on our carts, and one by one passed out into the densely crowded street. As we approached the city gate we could see that the road was black with crowds awaiting us. I had just remarked to my husband on how well we were getting through the crowds, when our carts passed through the gates. My husband turned pale as he pointed to a group of several hundred men, fully armed, awaiting us. They waited till all the carts had passed through the gate, then hurled down upon us a shower of stones, at the same time rushing forward and maiming or killing some of the animals. Mr. Goforth jumped down from our cart and cried to them, "Take everything, but don't kill." His only answer was a blow.

The confusion that followed was so great it would be impossible to describe the escape of each one in detail. Each one later had his or her own testimony of that mighty and merciful

deliverance. But I must give the details of Mr. Goforth's experience.

One man struck him a blow on the neck with a great sword wielded with two hands. "Somehow" the blunt edge of the sword struck his neck; the blow left a wide mark almost around his neck, but did no further harm. Had the sharp edge struck his neck he would certainly have been beheaded!

His thick helmet was cut almost to pieces, one blow cutting through the leather lining just over the temple, but without even scratching the skin!

Again he was felled to the ground, with a fearful sword cut, which entered the bone of the skull behind and almost cleft it in two. As he fell he seemed to hear distinctly a voice saying, "Fear not, they are praying for you."

Rising from this blow, he was again struck down by a club. As he was falling almost unconscious to the ground he saw a horse coming at full speed toward him; when he became conscious again he found the horse had tripped and fallen (on level ground) so near that its tail almost touched him. The animal, kicking furiously, had served as a barrier between him and his assailants. While dazed and not knowing what to do a man came up as if to strike, but whispered, "Leave the carts." By that time the onlookers began to rush forward to get the loot, but the attacking party felt the things were theirs, so desisted in their attack upon us in order to secure their booty.

A word as to myself and the children. Several fierce men with swords jumped on my cart. One struck at the baby, but I parried the blow with a pillow, and the little fellow only received a slight scratch on the forehead. Then they dropped their swords and began tearing at our goods at the back of the cart. Heavy boxes were dragged over us, and everything was taken.

Just then a dreadful looking man tried to reach us from the back of the cart with his sword, missing by an inch. I thought he would come to the front and continue his attack, but he did not. I had seen Mr. Goforth sink to the ground covered with blood twice, and had given him up for dead. Just then Paul, who had been in the last cart, jumped in, wild with delight at what he seemed to think was great fun, for he had run through the thick of the fight, dodging sword thrusts from all sides, and had succeeded in reaching me without a scratch.

A moment later my husband came to the edge of the cart scarcely able to stand, saying, "Get down quickly; we must not delay in getting away." As I was getting down one man snatched away my hat, another my shoes; but we were allowed to go.

Ruth was nowhere to be seen, and we hoped she was with the missionaries who had charge of her at the time of attack. I saw that Mr. Goforth's strength was failing fast, for he could scarcely walk, and as men began to follow I urged him forward with the baby and the other two children, and turning faced the men, begging them to have mercy on my children, for they had begun to stone us. Some of us were black for days from the blows received then. They stopped and listened, then the leader said, "We've killed her husband, let her go." With this they ran back to the carts.

I knew Mr. Goforth could not go far. We could see a small village not far distant, and to this we hastened, praying as we went that the Lord would open the hearts of the people to receive us. Here again Paul seemed to feel no fear, but said, "Mother, what does this put you in mind of? It puts me in mind of the Henty books!"

As we neared the village men came out to drive us away, but I begged them to help us. By this time Mr. Goforth had sunk to the ground. Putting the baby in an old woman's arms, I knelt down beside my husband. The children were crying bitterly. Mr. Goforth looked as if he were dying. The women standing round us were weeping now. This was too much for the men, who came forward saying, "We will save you." One ran and got some stuff to put in the wounds, assuring us it would stop the flow of blood, and it did. This man helped me to bandage up the wounds with bandages made from garments taken from myself and the children.

They helped my husband, and we followed them into a little hut, where they laid him on a straw bed and locked us in. Hot water for bathing our bruises, food and drink were handed us through a small window, and we could hear them planning how they would save us. We told them how anxious we were to hear of our friends and little Ruth, so they sent a man to inquire.

We found that these people - the whole village - were Mohammedans, and had taken no part in the attack. We felt that GOD had wonderfully directed our steps to that village.

All that day Mr. Goforth lay still, but looked at times so very white that I feared the worst. Never for one moment, I believe, during that day did I cease to pray for his life. And when Mr.-, one of our party, arrived about four o'clock looking for us, Mr. Goforth at once got up as if perfectly well, insisting on walking to the cart. To me, knowing how he had looked that day, it seemed only a miracle. His only answer to my protest was, "Only pray; the Lord will give me strength, as long as He has work for me to do."

As we were leaving, the kind friends of the village gathered round insisting on my taking some old clothes to put round the children, who were almost naked, saying, "It will be chilly at night." As we went forward to join the others, Mr.- told us how one by one all had escaped. Dr.- was the only one beside Mr. Goforth seriously injured, the poor fellow having had his kneecap severed and the tendons of his right wrist badly cut, besides many other wounds.

All that day our friends had been waiting by the roadside, unable to proceed without carts, owing to the doctor's condition. They had joined in one petition, that GOD would move the carters to come. Those who know China and heathen carters will readily acknowledge that it was nothing short of a miracle - the miracle of answered prayer - that made these heathen carters come, after all they had already gone through. For come they did, five of them, all that were needed, now that our luggage was gone.

We learned too, that our faithful Chinese nurse, who had charge of Ruth, had saved the child at the risk of her own life, lying upon the child and taking many cruel blows, till greed for loot drew the men off.

We soon joined the rest of the party, and by six o'clock that evening we reached the large city of Nang Yang Fu. The city wall was black with people, and as we entered the gate the wild crowds crushed against our carts. Sometimes the animals staggered, and it seemed as if nothing could

save the carts from being overturned. Every moment or two a brick or stone would be hurled against the carts, and that cry, "Kill, kill," which can never be forgotten when once heard, was shouted by perhaps hundreds of voices. Yet the Lord brought us through, and "no weapon prospered."

When we reached the inn a wild mob of over a thousand men filled the inn yard; and as we alighted from the cart these men literally drove us before them into one room, which in a few moments was packed to suffocation. For probably an hour the crowd kept crushing us into one corner; then those outside became impatient at not being able to get in, and demanded that we be brought out.

We managed to keep some of the ladies from going out; but the rest of us - men, women, and children - stood facing that seething multitude until relief came in the darkness. Why did they not kill us then? Why, indeed? None but an Almighty GOD kept that crowd back.

As soon as we had reached the city a servant was sent to the official demanding protection. It was dark when this man returned, in a state of great agitation; his story was that as he was waiting for an answer from the official he overheard a conversation between two soldiers, and gathered from what they said that the official had sent a party of fifty soldiers along the road that we would have to take, with the order that everyone of us must be put to death.

The official was afraid to have us killed in the city lest he should afterward be blamed; but by this plan he could say brigands had done the deed. So sure was this servant that we were all to be massacred that he would remain with us no longer, but returned that night to Honan with the report that we were all killed.

A consultation was held, and the question was, should we stay in the city and again demand protection, or should we go on and trust GOD to open our way? The latter course was decided upon. But for a long time the carters utterly refused to go farther with us. Again prayer opened up our way, and by two o'clock in the morning all were ready to start.

The official had sent a few foot-soldiers to guide us to the right road! (to the waylaying party). The night was very dark, and as we were passing through the gate of the city we noticed what seemed to be signal lights put out and drawn in. We all felt these to be signals to the waylaying party ahead. A short distance from the city, probably about one hundred yards, our carts suddenly stopped. Some one ran up and whispered to Mr. Goforth, "Paul and Mr.- are missing." Search was made for them, but without success.

A veil must be drawn over those terrible hours of suspense; my faith seemed to fail me, and I could only cry in my agony, "If Paul is gone, can I ever trust GOD again?" Then I remembered how marvelously GOD had given me back my dear husband's life, and I just committed Paul into His hands and waited to see what He would do.

When all hope was given up of finding the missing ones, a cart was left behind with a trusted servant, and we went on. Then we saw GOD's wonderful plan for us. While we were waiting the soldiers had fallen asleep in the carts, and were not aware that the carters were taking a side road until we had gotten miles from the city and beyond the reach of our would-be murderers! The soldiers were infuriated at this discovery; but after some threatening they left us and returned to

the city.

Thus again we saw that GOD was indeed unto us a "God of deliverances."

Again and again that day we were surrounded by mobs. Many times I held up the poor, dirty clothes which the Mohammedans had given us, and the story of how these had been given quieted the people perhaps more than anything. Once the cry was raised to drag our children's nurse out of the cart; but as we cried to GOD for her the people let us alone, and we passed on. At another time a man snatched the remains of Mr. Goforth's helmet away from us, and tore it to pieces. I had hoped to keep it as a trophy should we ever get out safely.

We were at this time in a pitiable condition. Most of the men had head or arms bandaged; Dr.-- was unable to raise his head. What we suffered in those carts with nothing but the boards under us cannot be told. Nine persons were packed in our cart, which under ordinary circumstances would have held four or five. At noon we reached a large city, where the animals had to rest and feed. Then again we saw an evidence of the Lord's loving kindness over us.

Just as we were getting down from our carts the crowd became very threatening, and it looked now as if our hour had indeed come; but at this critical juncture two well-dressed young men of official class came through the crowd, greeting Mr. Goforth in great surprise. They had been received by him in our home at Chang Te Ho. A few words of explanation were spoken, then they turned quickly to the crowd and told them who we were and of the work at Chang Te Ho. The attitude of the people changed instantly, and they made way for us, giving us good rooms, and food was brought which was greatly needed.

That noon, as one after another came up to express their sympathy at Paul's loss, I could say nothing - I was waiting to see what GOD would do. When Mr. Goforth told the young officials about Paul and Mr.--, they were greatly concerned, and promised to send men at once to search for them. These friends in need sent with us a man of the district to guide and help us, and also wrote an urgent letter to the official of the city we were to stay in that night, asking him to give us an escort and help us in every way he could.

About four o'clock that afternoon a man came running after us with the joyful news that Paul and Mr. - were safe, and would reach us that night. As I heard this news my unbelief and faithlessness in the hour of testing came over me with overwhelming force, and I could only bow my head and weep. Oh, the goodness and mercy of GOD! Never had the love of GOD seemed so wonderful as in that hour.

"Could we with ink the ocean fill,
Were the whole sky of parchment made,
Were every blade of grass a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of GOD above
Would drain that ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Though stretched from sky to sky."

That night we reached our destination about nine o'clock, having traveled seventeen hours over

those roads, with but a short break at noon. It was marvelous how Mr. Goforth was sustained, for he was obliged to start at once for the official's residence with the note I have already referred to. On the way through the street the mob about succeeded, several times, in getting him down under their feet; but GOD was with him, and he reached the Yamen in safety, being courteously received by the official, who promised us protection, and sent him back to the inn under escort.

When Paul and Mr.-- arrived that night, they tried in vain to wake me, but nature had to have her way. I knew nothing till I wakened with a start at about two A.M. Jumping up, I started to look for Paul, and never can I forget the scene! The whole party was lying on the bare earthen floor, practically without bedding or mattresses.

A word concerning the experiences of Mr.-- and Paul. The two had got down from their cart and were walking behind. In some way they missed the road in the dark, and became separated from us. During that day they were repeatedly in the gravest danger.

On one occasion, when surrounded by a violent mob, and one man had raised a club above Paul's head to strike him down, Mr.-- felt impelled by some unseen power to shout out, "We are not Roman Catholics, but Protestants." At this the man lowered his club, exclaiming, "Why, these are not the bad foreign devils, but the good foreign devils, like those missionaries at Chow Chia K'eo" (China Inland Mission). At this same place the hearts of the people seemed turned toward them in a wonderful way. One man gave Paul one hundred cash (five cents) to buy some food; another man carried the lad on his back for miles to give his feet a rest, they were so sore. This same man, when he could carry Paul no longer, ran ahead to try and find us. When they reached the inn where we had been so helped by the two Chinese gentlemen, they found that these friends had food prepared and a barrow waiting, also a guide ready to lead them to us!

Less than an hour from the time I awakened we were on the road again. The official was true to his promise, and a large mounted escort accompanied us. That day we were on the road twenty hours, reaching Fan Cheng at midnight. Here we found the engineers' party waiting for us with boats hired, but we were obliged to remain twenty-four hours in the most loathsome inn we ever had the misfortune to be in in China. It was an unspeakable relief to get into the houseboats, even though we only had bare boards to lie on, and the boat people's food to eat.

We were ten days going down stream to Hankow. One after the other became ill. When still a day from Hankow, a steam tug met us with provisions. Our children cried at the sight of bread and milk! We were not allowed to stop long enough at Hankow, as we had hoped, to get clothes and other necessities, but were obliged to hasten on by the first steamer, which left the following morning. I was obliged to borrow garments for myself and the children from our fellow-passengers.

At Shanghai the streets were being paraded, and every preparation was being made for an attack. We learned with deep sorrow of the death of many dear friends at the hands of the Boxers.

Ordered home by the first steamer, without anything left to us but the old clothes we had on at the time of the attack, how could we get ready in such a short time for the long home voyage? There was no lack of money, for our Board had cabled all we needed. The question that faced us was how could I get clothes made for six of us in such a short time, with Chinese tailors too busy to help, no machine to be had, and no ready-made clothes to be bought except for Mr. Goforth

and Paul.

Again I found that man's extremity was but GOD's opportunity. He was true to His promise, **"God shall supply all your need."** Even as I knelt in an agony of prayer, beseeching GOD's help, and asking definitely that some one should be sent to me to help with the sewing, two ladies were at the door asking for me! These were perfect strangers, but had seen our names among the recent refugees, and GOD had moved them to come and offer their assistance! They worked for me night and day until we had to get on board the steamer. Never shall I forget their Christian fellowship and practical help at that time.

But in the rush to get the older children ready, baby Wallace's clothes were neglected. There was nothing for it but to take materials and make things for him on the voyage. In this connection came a most wonderful and precious evidence of GOD's power to answer prayer. For the first few days of the journey I worked early and late trying to make something for the little one, who had scarcely anything to wear; but as we were nearing Yokohama I realized I had almost reached the end of my strength. My needle refused to work; try as I would I could not even see where to put the needle.

Folding up my work I went down to the stateroom, and kneeling down I spread the work before the Lord. Too far gone to agonize in prayer, I could only quietly, almost mutely, just tell Him how the poor child had no clothes. Rising with a great sense of the burden having been lifted, I put the work away, locking it in a trunk, then went up on deck and lay down almost insensible from exhaustion. How long a time passed I do not know, but it could not have been more than half an hour when some one came and touched me, saying, "We have dropped anchor in Yokohama Bay, and a large bundle has been thrown up on deck from the lighter for you."

"For me!" I cried. "Surely not; I know no one in Japan." Then I thought, "It is the answer come!"

Going down I found a letter from Mrs. O. E., of the China Inland Mission. She said that her little son, the same age as baby Wallace, had died four months before, and the Lord had pressed her to send his complete outfit to me for my child! Opening the parcel, I found not only everything the child could possibly need for a year or more, but much else. Had some one stood beside that dear sister and told her what I most needed, she could not have done differently. Yes, surely Some One did direct her loving hands, and Some One just used her as one of His channels; for she lived near to Him, and was an open channel.

Three days later my own collapse came; but praise His great name, He was with me in the darkness and brought me through.

~ end of chapter 5 ~
