

How I Know GOD Answers Prayer

The Personal Testimony of One Life-Time

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Chapter Eight -

OUR GOD OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

"Behold I am the Lord, . . . is there anything too hard for ME?" (Jeremiah 32:27).

"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).

THE following illustration of the truth, "**The things which are impossible with men are possible with God,**" occurred while we were attending the Keswick Convention in England, in 1910.

One evening my husband returned from an evening meeting, which I had not attended, and told me of a woman who had come to him in great distress. She had been an earnest Christian worker, but love for light, trashy fiction had so grown upon her as to work havoc in her Christian life. She had come to Keswick three years in succession, hoping to get victory, but had failed.

My whole soul went out to the poor woman; I longed to help her. But Mr. Goforth did not know her name, and the tent had been so dark he could not recognize her again; besides, there were about four thousand people attending the convention. That night I lay awake asking the Lord, if he knew I could help her, to bring us together, for I, too, had at one time been almost wrecked on the same rock.

Three evenings later the tent was so crowded that I found difficulty in getting a seat. Just as the meeting was about to begin, I noticed a woman change her seat twice, and then rise a third time and come to where I was, asking me to make room for her. I crowded the others in the seat and made room for her - I fear not too graciously.

While Mr. F. B. Meyer was speaking I noticed she was in great distress, her tears falling fast. I laid my hand on hers, and she grasped it convulsively. At the close of the meeting I said, "Can I help you?" "Oh, no," she replied, "there is no hope for me; it is those cursed novels that have been my ruin."

I looked at her in amazement, and almost gasped: "Are you the one who spoke to Mr. Goforth Saturday night?" "Yes; but who are you?"

Scarcely able to speak for emotion, I told her, and also of my prayer. For the next few moments we could only weep together. Then the Lord used me to lead the poor crushed and broken soul back to Himself. As we parted, a few days later, her face was beaming with the joy of the Lord.

While addressing a gathering of Christians in Glasgow I was giving a certain incident, the point of which depended upon a verse of a certain hymn. When I came to quote the verse, it had utterly slipped my memory. In some confusion I turned to the leader, hoping that he could help me out; but he said he had no idea what the hymn was. Turning again to the people, I had to acknowledge that my memory had failed me, and, feeling embarrassed, I closed my message somewhat hurriedly.

Sitting down, I lifted my heart in a cry to the Lord to lead me to the verse I wanted, if it was in the hymn-book used there. I took up a hymn-book and opened it, and the very first lines my eyes fell on were those of the verse I wanted, though it was the last verse of a long hymn. Rising again, I told the people of my prayer and the answer, and gave them the verse. The solemn stillness which prevailed indicated that a deep impression had been made. Some two years after, a newly arrived missionary in China told me he had been present at that meeting, and how this little incident had been a great blessing to him.

"They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded"
(Psalm 22:5).

Before leaving Canada we had written to the China Inland School at Chefoo, China, hoping to get our children admitted there; but, shortly before we left England for China, word reached us that both the boys' and girls' schools were overflowing, with long lists of waiting applicants. This was a great blow to me, for I had been looking forward to engaging once more in the aggressive outstation work.

But the children could not be left, and were too old to be taken away from their studies. It seemed necessary, therefore, that a good Christian governess should be found, who would teach the children and take charge of the home in my absence. All the way across the Siberian route this matter was before us. Earnestly did I pray that the Lord would direct the right one to us; for I knew that to get a young woman, who could fill the position we wanted her for, would be very difficult in China.

We had planned to go direct to our station, but illness forced us to break the journey at Peitaiho, where we met a young lady, the daughter of a missionary. Many difficulties appeared in the way of her coming on with us, but one by one these were removed; and when we continued our journey this young woman was one of our party.

Time proved her to be truly God-given. Not only was she all and more than I could have hoped for, but the Lord answered my prayers that her young life might be consecrated to the Lord's service in China. She later went through her training in England as a nurse, and is now in China as a missionary of the China Inland Mission.

The summer holidays at Peitaiho were drawing to a close. Heavy rains had fallen, making the roads to the station, six miles distant, almost impassable. Word had come that our two children, Ruth and Wallace, must leave by the Monday morning train in order to reach the steamer at Tientsin, which was to take them to Chefoo, where they were attending the China Inland Mission schools. All day Saturday and Sunday torrents of rain continued to fall, with a fierce wind from

the north.

I rose before daybreak Monday morning, to find the rain still pouring down in torrents. I roused the servant, and sent him off to make sure about the chair, cart, and donkeys. A little later he returned to say that the chair had been blown over, and the chair-bearers had refused to come. The carters also refused, saying the roads were impassable; and even the donkey boys said they would not go.

I was truly at "wit's end corner." I went alone, and did not take time even to kneel down, but just lifted up my heart to my Father to stop the rain and open a way for the children to get to the station. I felt a sudden, strong confidence that the Lord would help, and going out again I ordered the servant to run fast to the village near by and get fresh donkeys. He was unwilling, saying it was useless, no one would venture; but I said: "Go at once, I know they will come."

While he was gone the children had their breakfast, boxes were closed and taken out, and the children put on their wraps. Then the rain stopped! Just then the servant returned with several donkeys. Within five minutes, children and baggage were on donkeys, and started for the station. A few hours later one of the donkey boys returned with a hastily written note from Ruth, saying they had reached the station without any mishap, and quite dry; for it had not rained on the way over, but had started to pour again just after they had got on the train. The rain continued for days after.

At the close of our four months of meetings in Great Britain, in 1910, I felt a strong desire to send a gift of five dollars to five different objects in Britain, to show in a practical way our sympathy with the workers in these various branches of the Lord's work.

My husband was in the midst of his accounts when I asked him to give me five pounds for this purpose. He told me it was impossible, as we had barely enough for the journey to China. As I left him I wondered why I seemed to have these gifts so definitely laid upon me to send away, when there was no money. Reasoning that if the thing were really of the Lord He could Himself give me what He wished me to send, I put the matter from my mind.

That evening's mail brought a letter from a stranger living some distance away, judging from the postmark; for the letter had no address, and was not signed. The letter said:

"I do not know you, nor have I met you, but the Lord seems to have laid it on my heart to send you this five-pound note as a farewell gift, to do what you think best with."

It was with a joyful heart I sent off the gifts to the five Christian workers in Britain. Had the giver said it was "for work in China," as was usually the case, I could not have used it for any other purpose.

How to get the sewing done for my family and yet meet the pressing calls made upon me as the wife of a pioneer missionary, for almost thirty years has been perhaps the most difficult and constant problem of my missionary life. In connection with the solving of this problem, I have seen some of the most precious evidences of GOD's willingness to undertake in the daily details of life.

The following story must be given in detail to be really understood, as one of the striking instances of how GOD, in His own wonderful way, can work out the seemingly impossible.

Returning home to our station from an unusually strenuous autumn's touring, I planned as usual to give the month of December to the children's sewing, so as to leave January largely free for a Biblewomen's training class. But my health broke down, and I could make scarcely any headway with the thirty-five or forty garments which had to be made or fixed over, before the children returned to their school in Chefoo. By the eighteenth of December we decided to cancel the class on account of my ill-health; and to all the women, except one whom I entirely forgot, I sent word not to come.

As the days passed, the burden of the almost untouched sewing became very great. At last I cried to the Lord to undertake for me. And how wonderfully He did! On December twenty-eighth, when I was conducting the Chinese women's prayer-meeting, I noticed in the audience Mrs. Lu, the very woman to whom I had forgotten to send word. She had come a long distance, with her little child, over rough mountainous roads, so I felt very sorry for my thoughtlessness. Mrs. Lu accompanied me home, and I gave her money for a barrow on which to return the next day. I then sat down to the sewing machine. The woman stood beside me for a little, and then said:

"You are looking very tired, Mrs. Goforth; let me run the machine for you."

"You!" I exclaimed, astonished, "why, you don't know how."

"Yes, I do," she replied.

She was so insistent that at last, in fear and trembling, I ventured to let her try - for I had only one needle.

It took but a few moments to convince me she was a real expert at the machine. When I urged her to stay and help me, she replied that, since the class was given up, she would return home on the morrow.

That night I was puzzled. Why should the Lord lead this woman to me - the only one, so far as we knew, who could do the machine work - and then permit her to leave? I could only lay the whole matter before the Lord, and trust Him to undertake. And again He answered. That night a fierce storm came on, lasting several days and making the roads quite impassable. Mrs. Lu, finding herself storm-tied, gladly gave all her time to me. The roads remained impassable for a whole month, during which time I did not once need to sit down at the machine.

While in Tientsin with my children during the revolution in 1912, I had occasion to go into the Chinese city with my servant. We visited three stores. On our way home by the tramway I discovered I had lost a five-dollar bill and one of my gloves. I had foolishly put the bill inside the glove. Ashamed to let the Chinese servant know of my carelessness, I sent him home when we reached the end of the tram line. As soon as he was out of sight I took the tram back to the city. On the way I confessed to the Lord my carelessness, and asked Him to keep the glove and money, and lead me to where they were. I retraced my steps back to two of the stores where we had been. As I entered the second, which was a shoe store, a number of men were in the shop; but there, right in sight of all, on the floor lay my glove, and I knew of course with the five

dollars inside. It was with a heart full of gratitude to my loving Heavenly Father, and an enlarged vision of His love, that I picked up the glove and returned home that day.

On one occasion when on furlough with several little children, and my husband in China, I had no settled home. When the time came to do the sewing for the long journey back to China, I had simply no way to get it done. I just had to look to the Lord; and, as so often before, He was again faithful, and opened the way. When shopping down town, one day, I met a minister's wife from a distant country charge, who said: "I want you to come with all your children, and get your sewing done with me. A number of the ladies of our congregation sew well, and will be delighted to help you."

I gratefully accepted her invitation, and while staying with her a sewing-bee was held in the church. In one week the sewing was finished, which would have taken me many weeks of hard, constant labor to accomplish alone.

The winter of our return from China, after the Boxer tragedies, I felt keenly the need of a good sewing machine, as I could not possibly do the children's sewing by hand and still get time for meetings. One day, as my husband was leaving on a deputation tour, I asked him for money for a machine. He assured me it was impossible; that we had only sufficient for bare necessities. I knew well he would gladly give me money for the machine if he had it.

So I laid my need before my Father, confident that He knew it was a real need, and that according to His promise He could and would supply it.

I was so sure that somehow the money would come, that I went down town especially to choose a suitable machine. I found it would cost thirty-six dollars.

A few days later I received a letter from a band of ladies in Mount Forest, Ontario, enclosing twenty-three dollars and some odd cents, and saying: "Please accept the enclosed to buy something you have lost as our substitute in China." Only a day or two later another letter came, from quite another part of Ontario, enclosing twelve dollars and some cents. The two amounts came to exactly the sum I needed to purchase the machine.

The second letter stated that the money was sent to help me buy a sewing machine. It has always been a puzzle to me how they came to send the money in that way, for I had not spoken to anyone but my husband about wanting a machine. When Mr. Goforth returned I was able to show him what the Lord could give me, though he could not.

I had been holding a class for women at an out-station, staying in the home of the elder, Dr. Fan. The day before I was to return home, Mrs. Fan asked me to go with her to visit a very sick boy whom the missionary doctor had sent home from the boys' school, Wei Hwei, because of his having tuberculosis of the lungs. Mrs. Fan told me the mother was in great distress, and begged me to come and pray with her.

I found the lad in a truly pitiable condition. His mouth was swollen, his face a ghastly hue, and every moment a cough racked his frame. He seemed to me quite beyond hope, and looked as if he could not live long.

On our way home to Mrs. Fan's, the message of James 5:14, 15, kept coming persistently to me, as if spoken by a voice: **"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, . . . and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up."**

I simply could not get away from those words. On reaching Dr. Fan's home, I sent for him, and asked if he and the other elders would be willing to pray with me over the lad. He consented, though at first he seemed rather dubious. There were quite a number of Christians gathered around as we placed the boy in our midst. All knelt down, and I read the words from James. I told them plainly that I could not say that it was indeed the Lord's will to heal the boy; all that was clear to me was that we must obey as far as we had light, and leave the rest in GOD's hands for life or death. Several prayed, and we then dispersed.

Early the following morning I left for home. Circumstances prevented my return to that place, and in time we moved to another field. More than two years later, while visiting Wei Hwei, I met Mrs. Fan, who told me that the lad had completely recovered and was then working with his Father. Still a year later I met Dr. Fan, and upon inquiring about the lad, the doctor told me he was perfectly well, and was in business in Wei Hwei City.

The power of intercession is shown in the following two incidents:

In the winter of 1905 a call came for my husband to hold special meetings in Manchuria. On reaching Liao Yang for these meetings, one of the missionaries showed him a letter from Mr. Moffat, of Korea, which said: "I have a thousand Christians here who have promised to pray for Mr. Goforth, and I know their prayers will prevail with GOD." Can we doubt that their prayers had something to do with the marvelous revival movement which followed?

When in England, in 1909, my husband was the guest of a lady in London who was noted for her power in intercession. He was telling her of the great revival movements he had been through, which took place in different provinces of China; and she asked him to look at her diary, in which were notes of times when she had been led out in special intercession for Mr. Goforth. These dates exactly corresponded to the times of greatest revival power.

A few months after we returned to China from a furlough, I invited a certain missionary and his wife and children to pay us a visit. Peculiarly touching circumstances had led me to give this invitation. Both husband and wife were in ill health, and greatly needed a change. They resided in a far inland station, quite cut off from other missionaries. They were not connected with any Society, and were looking only to the Lord for their support.

Just as these friends had started toward us, on their five-days' journey, smallpox broke out at our station, and one of the missionaries died. A telegram was sent, hoping to catch them before they left, but it did not reach them until they were a short distance from our station. Then the whole family had to turn around, and once more take the long, trying journey, homeward.

As the weather was very cold at the time, one could imagine what a terrible trial to faith the whole experience meant to them. I felt so deeply for them that I planned to send sufficient to cover at least the expense of the journey. But, on getting out of quarantine, I found I could not

draw on our treasurer for the fifty dollars needed, as Mr. Goforth was not at home. However, the Lord had seen the need long before I felt it, and had the exact amount ready. Three days after I got out of quarantine I received a letter from Mr. Horace Goven, of the Faith Mission, Glasgow, enclosing a draft for five pounds which, at the rate of exchange at that time, came to fifty dollars Mexican. The gift came from the workers of the mission, and he stated that they wished me to accept it as a personal gift. Needless to say, the draft was sent off that same day to the needy friends in the far-off station.

On one occasion, while we were temporarily stationed at Wei Hwei, Honan, I was called to nurse a fellow missionary who had contracted black smallpox. This missionary died; and it was while shut away from every one during the time of quarantine that I had the following experience:

I awoke suddenly one night feeling greatly troubled for one in Canada. So strong was the impression that this friend needed my prayers, that I felt compelled to rise and spend a long time wrestling with GOD on this one's behalf; then peace came, and I again slept.

As soon as I was out of quarantine I wrote to my friend and told of this experience, giving the date. In time the answer came, which said that - though no date could be given, as no note had been made of it - as far as could be judged, it was about the same time that I had had the burden of prayer that my friend was passing through a time of such temptation as seemed almost overwhelming. But the letter said: "I was brought through victoriously; I know that it was your prayers that helped me."

The following incident may seem trifling to some; but to me no answer in my life ever brought more intense relief. For this reason, I have reserved it, as the final testimony of the original prayer record.

My husband had gone to hold revival meetings in a distant province, and while he was away I went with my Bible-woman to a certain out-station at the urgent request of the Christians, to preach at a four-days' "theatrical," which brought great crowds. The four days there were enough to wear out the strongest; for many hours daily we had to face unruly crowds coming and going; and at the end of our stay I turned my face homeward utterly worn out. My one thought was to get to Wei Hwei, our next station, for a few days' rest with my youngest children, who were attending school there. A sight of them, I knew, would recover my energies better than anything else.

But in getting home I in some way lost the key of the money-drawer. It was Friday, and the train for Wei Hwei left on Saturday at ten o'clock. Different persons came for money, but I had to put them off with some excuse. There was too much money in the drawer for me to leave with the key lying around somewhere; besides, I myself could not go without money.

As soon as I had my supper I started searching everywhere. Drawers, pigeon-holes, shelves, were all searched in vain.

After hunting for two hours, until I was too exhausted to hunt any more, I suddenly thought, "I have never prayed about it." Stopping still just where I stood by the dining-table, I lifted my heart to the Lord. "O Lord, you know how much I need a rest; you know how much I long to see the children; pity me, and lead me to the key."

Then, without wasting a step, I walked through the dining-room, hall, and women's guest room into Mr. Goforth's study, to the book-case (which covers one side of the room), opened the door, slipped two books aside, and there was the key. So near did the Lord seem at that moment that I could almost feel His bodily presence. It was not that I remembered putting the key there, but He led me there.

Yes, I know GOD answers prayer.

~ end of chapter 8 ~
