

## **How I Know GOD Answers Prayer**

The Personal Testimony of One Life-Time

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ZONDERVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE Grand Rapids, Michigan

### **Chapter Two -**

#### **EARLY LESSONS IN THE LIFE OF FAITH**

**"I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications"** (Psalm 116:1).

WHEN a very little child, so young I can remember nothing earlier, a severe thunderstorm passed over our home. Terrified, I ran to my mother, who placed my hands together, and pointing upward repeated over and over again the one word "JESUS."

More than fifty years have passed since that day, but the impression left upon my child-mind, of a Being invisible but able to hear and help, has never been effaced.

The most precious recollections of early childhood are associated with stories told us by our mother, many of which illustrated the power of prayer.

One that made a specially deep impression upon me was about our grandfather, who as a little boy went to visit cousins in the south of England, their home being situated close to a dense forest. One day the children, lured by the beautiful wild flowers, became hopelessly lost in the woods. After trying in vain to find a way out, the eldest, a young girl, called the frightened, crying little ones around her and said: "When mother died she told us to always tell JESUS if we were in any trouble. Let us kneel down, and ask Him to take us home."

They knelt, and as she prayed one of the little ones opened his eyes, to find a bird so close to his hand that he reached out for it. The bird hopped away, but kept so close to the child as to lead him on. Soon all were joining in the chase after the bird, which flew or hopped in front or just above, and sometimes on the ground almost within reach. Then suddenly it flew into the air and away. The children looked up to find themselves on the edge of the woods and in sight of home.

With such influences bearing upon one at an impressionable age, it is not surprising that I came even as a very little child to just "tell JESUS" when in trouble.

Through the mists of memory one incident comes out clearly, which occurred when I was six or seven years of age. While playing one day in the garden, I was seized with what we then called "jumping" toothache. I ran to my mother for comfort, but nothing she could do seemed to ease the pain.

The nerve must have become exposed, for the pain was acute. Suddenly I thought, "JESUS can help me," and just as I was, with my face pressed against my mother's breast, I said in my heart:

"Lord JESUS, if you will take away this toothache right now, now, I will be your little girl for three years."

Before the prayer was well uttered the pain was entirely gone. I believed that JESUS had taken it away; and the result was that for years, when tempted to be naughty, I was afraid to do what I knew was wrong lest, if I broke my side of what I felt to be a compact, the toothache would return. This little incident had a real influence over my early life, gave me a constant sense of the reality of a divine presence, and so helped to prepare me for the public confession of CHRIST as my Saviour a few years later, at the age of eleven.

About a year after my confession of CHRIST an incident occurred which greatly strengthened my faith, and led me to look to GOD as a Father in a new way.

When Resurrection Sunday morning came it was so warm only spring clothes could be worn. My sister and I decided at breakfast that we would not go to church, as we had only our old winter dresses. Going to my room, I turned to my Bible to study it, when it opened at the sixth chapter of Matthew, and my eye rested on these words: "**Why take ye thought for raiment . . . seek ye first the kingdom of God... and all these things shall be added unto you.**" It was as if GOD spoke the words directly to me. I determined to go to church, even if I had to humiliate myself by going in my old winter dress. The Lord was true to His promise; I can still feel the power the resurrection messages had upon my heart that day so long ago. And further, on the following day a box came from a distant aunt, containing not only new dresses but much else that might well be included in the "**all these things.**"

An unforgettable proof of GOD's loving care came to us as a family about this time, when my parents were face to face with a serious financial crisis. Isaiah 65:24 was literally fulfilled: "**Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.**"

At that time, it is necessary to state, we depended on a quarterly income, which came through my mother's lawyer in England. Unusual circumstances had so drained our resources that we found ourselves, in the middle of the quarter, with barely sufficient to meet a week's needs. My dear mother assured us that the Lord would provide; that He would not forsake those who put their trust in Him. That very day a letter came from the lawyer in England, enclosing a draft for a sum ample to meet our needs till the regular remittance should arrive. This unexpected and timely draft proved to be a bonus, which did not occur again.

Some years later, having moved to a strange city, a great longing came to do some definite service for my Master. One day there came to the Bible class I attended a call for teachers, to aid in a Sunday-school near by. When I presented myself before the superintendent of this Sunday-school the following Sunday, and offered my services, it is not much wonder I received a rebuff, for I was young and quite unknown. I was told that if I wished a class, it would be well for me to find my own scholars. I can remember how a lump seemed choking me all the way home that day.

At last, determining not to be baffled, I prayed the Lord to help me get some scholars. I went forth praying every step of the way, the following Saturday afternoon; and canvassing just one

short street near our home, I received the promise of nineteen children for Sunday-school. The next day a rather victorious young woman walked up to the Sunday-school superintendent with seventeen children following. Needless to say I was given a class.

In the autumn of 1885 the Toronto Mission Union, a faith mission, decided to establish a branch mission in the East End slums of that city. Three others with myself were deputed to open this work. Everything connected with it was entirely new to me; but most helpful and inspiring I found it. For in face of tremendous difficulties, that seemed to my inexperienced eyes insurmountable, I learned that prayer was the secret which overcame every obstacle, the key that unlocked every closed door.

I felt like a child learning a new and wonderful lesson - as I saw benches, tables, chairs, stove, fuel, lamps, oil, even an organ, coming in answer to definite prayer for these things. But best sight of all was when men and women, deep in sin, were converted and changed into workers for GOD, in answer to prayer. Praise GOD for the lessons then learned, which were invaluable later when facing the heathen.

The time came when two diverse paths lay before me - one to England, as an artist; one to China, as a missionary. Circumstances made a definite decision most difficult. I thought I had tried every means to find out GOD's will for me, and no light had come.

But in a day of great trouble, when my precious mother's very life seemed to hang in the balance, I shut myself up with GOD's Word, praying definitely for Him to guide me to some passage by which I might know His will for my life. My Bible opening at the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel, the sixteenth verse seemed to come as a message to me; "**Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit.**" Going to my dear mother and telling her of the message GOD had given me, she said: "I dare not fight against GOD."

From that time the last hindrance from going to China was removed. Surely the wonderful way GOD has kept His child for more than thirty years in China is proof that this "call" was not a mistaken one. "**In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths**" (Proverbs 3:6), or, "make plain" as it says in the margin.

During the summer of 1887 a book written by Dr. Hudson Taylor came into my hands. In "*China's Spiritual Needs and Claims*" the writer told many instances of GOD's gracious provision in answer to prayer. The incidents related impressed me deeply. A little later, a few weeks before my marriage, when I found I was short fifty dollars of what I would need to be married free of debt, I resolved not to let others know of my need, but to just trust GOD to send it to me. The thought came - if you cannot trust GOD for this, when Hudson Taylor could trust for so much more, are you worthy to be a missionary?

It was my first experience of trusting quite alone for money. I was sorely tempted to give others just a hint of my need. But I was kept back from doing so; and though I had a week or more of severe testing, peace of mind and the assurance that GOD would supply my need, came at length. The answer, however, did not come till the very last night before the wedding.

That evening a number of my fellow-workers from the East End Mission called, and presented me with a beautifully illuminated address and a purse. After these friends had left I returned to my home circle assembled in the back parlor, and showed them the address and the purse unopened! Not for a moment did I think there was anything in the purse till my brother said: "You foolish girl, why don't you open it?" I opened the purse, and found it contained a check for fifty dollars!

This incident has ever remained peculiarly precious; for it seemed to us a seal of GOD upon the new life opening before us.

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