

# PRAYER, FAITH, & PATIENCE

by J. O. Fraser

(Edited by Mary Eleanor Allbutt)

## FORWARD

BECAUSE a mother said, "I could not pour the ointment on Jesus' blessed feet, as Mary did—but I gave Him my boy"—

Because she kept on pouring out the ointment of devoted prayer through the years—

Because an engineer caught the vision of "prayer, faith, and patience"—

Because that same vision was laid upon many receptive, unflagging hearts in the homelands—

So PRAYER was the alchemy in God's hand that shaped the Lisu church in West China—20,000 strong when the communist curtain fell.

Because that same undaunted prayer penetrates any curtain, God's dealings in and through His church in the Salween Valley go on and on to eternal ages.

All glory to the One who has ordained that His own work shall be accomplished through prayer!

From the hinterland of China, where the earth's surface is crumpled into deep chasm and canyon wall, come these excerpts from J. O. Fraser's letters and journal—God's advance man in the Salween River area

## PRAYER DETERMINATION

The first missionary to the Lisu people of the Upper Salween was going through a deep testing. It was not the privation, nor the loneliness of this isolated outpost, nor the rigors of scaling the steep mountain walls to find tribal settlements, nor even the difficulty of making himself at home with these utterly primitive folk—no, none of these things troubled him. But the lack of abiding fruit in the hearts of the Lisu people—this was his constant burden. "Give me Lisu converts," he cried from the

heart, "and I can truly say I will be happy even in a pigsty."

From Fraser's journal:

January 1, 1916. Must watch against getting up too late these intensely cold mornings. The indwelling Christ is my successful weapon against all sin these days—praise Him!

Sunday, Jan. 2. An earnest desire to save souls is on me, but prayer is rather unstable. I must regain my equilibrium in the prayer life. I must maintain, also, my abiding in Christ, by prayer without ceasing (silent), which I am now finding blessedly possible. Romans 6 is not now my weapon so much as John 15.

Tuesday, Jan. 4. Finished Finney's autobiography; much help received from it. Finney's strong point is the using of means to an end. My own leading is not a little along that line also. I do not intend to be one of those who bemoan little results, while "resting in the faithfulness of God." My cue is to take hold of the faithfulness of God and use the means necessary to secure big results.

Sunday, Jan. 16. Not a single person at service in the morning .... The walls of Jericho fell down "by faith." Of all the instances of faith in Hebrews 11, this corresponds most nearly to my case. But not faith only was necessary; the wall fell down after it had been compassed about for seven days. Seven days' patience was required, and diligent compassing of the city every day—which seems to typify encompassing the situation by regular, systematic prayer. Here then we see God's way of success in our work, whatever it may be—a trinity of prayer, faith and patience.

Jan. 18. Prayer, today, rather on general than particular lines; patience the chief thought. Abraham was called out by God and went in blind faith. When he got to the land of promise, he found nothing but a famine—much like me with the Lisu, these two years. But Abraham, or his seed, later on possessed the milk and honey of the whole land. God's time had come

for Abraham but not for the Amorites. God's time has come for me, but not perhaps, just this month or this year, for the Lisu.

Am impressed, too, that I do not yet know the channels which the grace of God is going to cut out among the people here. Hence general prayer has its place, until God's plan is revealed a little more fully.

*There have been a few souls who had professed Christ, but in temptation they had fallen back into the ways of their old life. Fraser was brought more and more to a keen realization of the forces arrayed against him, and also of his need for believers in the homeland who would co-operate with him in prayer.*

Feb. 4. No meal till 2 p.m. Thoroughly depressed about state of work at Tantsah. Feel much inclined to "let Ephraim alone," but I am torn between two alternatives, for I seem to have no leading to leave Tantsah. My prayer is not so much, "Lord lead me somewhere else," as "Lord, give me a solid church here at Tantsah."

Feb. 5. I am not taking the black, despondent view I took yesterday. The opposition will not be overcome by reasoning or by pleading, but (chiefly) by steady, persistent prayer. The men need not be dealt with (it is a heart-breaking job, trying to deal with a Lisu possessed by a spirit of fear) but the powers of darkness need to be fought. I am now setting my face like a flint: if the work seems to fail, then pray; if services, etc., fall flat, then pray still more; if months slip by with little or no result, then pray still more and get others to help you.

Mar. 13. Cloud seems to have lifted considerably—perhaps because prayer burden fought right through .... After much pressure, even agony, in prayer for Lisu souls, enabled to break through into liberty, and to pray the definite prayer of faith for signal blessing among the Lisu during the next few months .... Real, prevailing prayer, for the first time for a week or more, and well worth the travail that led up to it .... Much peace and rest of soul after making that

definite prayer, and almost ecstatic joy to think of the Lisu Christian families I am going to get.

Aug. 27. The Cross is going to hurt - let it hurt! I am going to work hard and pray hard too, by God's grace.

### **PRAYER CO-OPERATION**

Can it be that a great work for God involving thousands of souls devolves upon our prayer life - half a world away?

**Work on Our Knees.** I am feeling more and more that it is, after all, just the prayers of God's people that call down blessing upon the work, whether they are directly engaged in it or not. Paul may plant and Apollos water, but it is God who gives the increase; and this increase can be brought down from heaven by believing prayer, whether offered in China or in England. We are, as it were, God's agents-used by Him to do His work, not ours. We do our part, and then can only look to Him, with others, for His blessing. If this is so, then Christians at home can do as much for foreign missions as those actually on the field. I believe it will only be known on the Last Day how much has been accomplished in missionary work by the prayers of earnest believers at home. And this, surely, is the heart of the problem. Such work does not consist in curio exhibitions, lantern lectures, interesting reports, and so on. Good as they may be, these are only the fringe, not the root of the matter. Solid, lasting missionary work is done on our knees. What I covet more than anything else, is earnest, believing prayer, and I write to ask you to continue in prayer for me and the work here.

**When the Tide Comes In.** I cannot insist too strongly on my own helplessness among these people apart from the grace of God. Although I have been now ten years in China and have had considerable experience with both Chinese and Lisu, I find myself able to do little or nothing apart from God's going before me and working among men. Without this I feel like a man who has his boat

grounded in shallow water. Pull or push as he may, he will not be able to make his boat move more than a few inches. But let the tide come in and lift his boat off the bottom-then he will be able to move it as far as he pleases, quite easily and without friction. It is indeed necessary for me to go around among our Lisu, preaching, teaching, exhorting, rebuking, but the amount of progress made thereby depends almost entirely on the state of the Spiritual Tide in the village-a condition which you can control upon your knees as well as I can.

**A Volume of Faith.** Praying without faith is like trying to cut with a blunt knife-much labour expended to little purpose. For the work accomplished by labour in prayer depends on our faith: "According to your faith [not labour] be it unto you." [*Matthew 9:29 - healing two blind men*]

I have been impressed lately with the thought that people fail in praying the prayer of faith because they do not believe that God has already answered, but only that He will some time or other answer their petitions. This is not the faith that makes prayer effective. True faith glories in the present tense, and does not trouble itself about the future. God's promises are in the present tense and are quite secure enough to set our hearts at rest. Their full outworking is often in the future, but God's word is as good as His bond and we need have no anxiety. Sometimes He gives at once what we ask, but more often He just gives His promise (Mark 11:24). Perhaps He is more glorified in this latter case, for it means that our faith is tried and strengthened. I do earnestly covet a volume of prayer for my Lisu work-but oh! for a volume of faith too. Will you give this?

### **PRAYER SOLIDARITY**

"I am an engineer and believe in things working. I want to see them work," Fraser used to say. And because he believed that prayer works-"If ye shall ask ... I will do" (John 14:14), and that God means it when

He guarantees results from energy spent in prayer (James 5:16-18)-Fraser determined to provide prayer material for more prayer supporters so that the volume of prayer rising for the Lisu work would constantly increase.

I know you will never fail me in the matter of intercession [he wrote to his mother], but will you think and pray about getting a group of like-minded friends, whether few or many, whether in one place or scattered, to join in the same petitions? If you could form a small prayer circle I would write regularly to the members.

What a number of earnest, spiritually-minded Christians there are at home [Fraser wrote on his return to Tengyueh after an arduous survey trip] and how correspondingly rich are the prayer forces of the church! How I long for some of this wealth for myself and the Lisu here. I have had it in measure already, but I should very, very much like a wider circle of intercessors. Our work among the Lisu is not going to be a bed of roses, spiritually. I know enough about Satan to realise that he will have all his weapons ready for determined opposition. He would be a missionary simpleton who expected plain sailing in any work of God. I will not, by God's grace, let anything deter me from going straight ahead in the path to which He leads, but I shall feel greatly strengthened if I know of a definite company of pray-ers holding me up. I am confident that the Lord is going to do a work, sooner or later, among the Lisu here.

[About three years later]: Knowing as I do the conditions of the work, its magnitude (potentially), its difficulties and the opposition it meets with, I have definitely resolved, with God's help, to enlarge the place of my tent, to lengthen my prayer cords and strengthen my intercessory stakes, to make a forward movement with regard to the Prayer Circle. I am persuaded that the homeland is rich in godly, quiet, praying people, in every denomination. They

may not be a great multitude as far as numbers are concerned, but they are "rich in faith," even if many of them be poor and of humble station. It is the prayers of such that I covet more than gold of Ophir—those good men and women who know what it is to have power with God and prevail. Will you help me, prayerfully and judiciously, to get some of these to join the circle? The work for which I am asking prayer is preaching and teaching the Word of God, pure and simple. I have no confidence in anything but the gospel of Calvary to uplift these needy people.

[After the work had begun to show the shape of things to come]: The Lisu and Kachin converts would be easily able to support their own pastors, teachers and evangelists by well-advised cultivation of their own ample hillsides, and it is fitting that the mountains should bring forth supplies for the needs of those whose feet are beautiful upon them. But spiritually they are babes, and as dependent upon us as a child upon his mother. They are dependent on us out here for instruction, guidance, organisation; but they are dependent on the home churches in England and America in a deeper sense, for spiritual life and power. I really believe that if every particle of prayer put up by the home churches on behalf of the infant churches of the mission field were removed, the latter would be swamped by an incoming flood of the powers of darkness. This seems actually to have happened in church history—churches losing all their power and life, becoming a mere empty name, or else flickering out altogether. Just as a plant may die for lack of watering, so may a genuine work of God die and rot for lack of prayer.

One might compare heathenism with a great mountain threatening to crush the infant church, or a great pool of stagnant water always threatening to quench the flames of Holy Ghost life and power in the native churches, and only kept dammed up by the power of God. God is able to do this and much more, but He will not do it, if all of us out here and

you at home sit in our easy chairs with arms folded. Why prayer is so indispensable we cannot say, but we had better recognize the fact even if we cannot explain it. Do you believe that the church of God would be alive today but for the high priestly intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Throne? I do not: I believe it would have been dead and buried long ago. Viewing the Bible as a record of God's work on this earth, I believe that it gives a clear, ringing message to His people—from Genesis to Revelation—you must do your part.

The church of Protestant countries is well able to nourish the infant church of the Orient by a steady and powerful volume of intercessory prayer. Applying this to the work among the Tengyueh tribespeople, I feel I can say that you, and those God will yet call to join you in this prayer work, are well able to sustain the spiritual life of the Lisu and Kachin converts, as well as to increase their number many fold. It may be He has been preparing you for the unseen and spiritual parenthood of these infant Lisu converts here, however many thousand miles separate you from them. **[For such a time as this!]**

I am not asking you just to give "help" in prayer as a sort of sideline, but I am trying to roll the main responsibility of this prayer warfare on you. I want you to take the burden of these people upon your shoulders. I want you to wrestle with God for them. I do not want so much to be a regimental commander in this matter as an intelligence officer. I shall feel more and more that a big responsibility rests upon me to keep you well informed. The Lord Jesus looks down from heaven and sees these poor, degraded, neglected tribespeople. "The travail of His soul" was for them, too. He has waited long. Will you not do your part to bring in the day when He shall "be satisfied"? Anything must be done rather than let this prayer-service be dropped or even allowed to stagnate. We often speak of intercessory work as being of vital importance. I want to prove that I

believe this in actual fact by giving my first and best energies to it, as God may lead. I feel like a businessman who perceives that a certain line of goods pays better than any other in his store, and who purposes making it his chief investment; who, in fact sees an inexhaustible supply and an almost unlimited demand for a profitable article and intends to go in for it more than for anything else. The demand is the lost state of these tens of thousands of Lisu and Kachin - their ignorance, their superstition, their sinfulness; their bodies, their minds, their souls; the supply is the grace of God to meet this need—to be brought down to them by the persevering prayers of a considerable company of God's people. All I want to do is, as a kind of middleman, to bring the supply and the demand together.

#### **PRAYER PROCEDURE**

*It was his own daily contact with the "darkness that can be felt" in the battle for souls that led Fraser to share with his prayer constituency some thoughts on the heart attitude which leads to effective prayer.*

**Prepare For Prayer.** "If two of you shall agree..." I felt, even when praying alone, that there are two concerned in the prayer, God and myself .... I do not think that a petition which misses the mind of God will ever be answered (1 John 5:14). Personally, I feel the need of trusting Him to lead me in prayer as well as in other matters. I find it well to preface prayer not only by meditation but by the definite request that I may be directed into the channels of prayer to which the Holy Spirit is beckoning me. I also find it helpful to make a short list, like notes prepared for a sermon, before every season of prayer. The mind needs to be guided as well as the spirit attuned. I can thus get my thoughts in order, and having prepared my prayer can put the notes on the table or chair before me, kneel down and get to business.

**With the Understanding Also.** Always remember, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also" (1 Cor. 14:15). Let the spirit and the understanding work in about equal proportions. First, think over the needs, taking into account any consciousness of spirit-burden. Pray, tentatively, along that line, asking God continually to focus your prayers. If, after covering such ground in prayer, no "grip" comes anywhere, it is probably best to close down at once. Do not be in a hurry to do this, but don't press on in the energy of the flesh.

**Hannah's Prayer.** I was very severely disappointed about the attitude of the Lisu of that district [near Tantsah] to the gospel. They received the Word with joy at first, as they so often do. Several announced that they were going to turn Christian, and one old man and his son seemed specially earnest. Then the spirit of fear seemed to possess them, and one by one they dropped off, until no one would take a stand at all. We had to leave them as heathen as I first found them. It was a very painful experience and seemed almost to stun me for a while. How much of our prayer is of the quality we find in Hannah's "bitterness of soul," when she "prayed unto the Lord"? How many times have we ever "wept sore" before the Lord? We have prayed much, perhaps, but our longings have not been deep as compared with hers. We have spent much time upon our knees, it may be, without our hearts going out in an agony of desire. But real supplication is the child of heartfelt desire, and cannot prevail without it; a desire not of earth nor issuing from our own sinful hearts, but wrought into us by God Himself. Oh, for such desires! Oh, for Hannah's earnestness, not in myself only but in all who are joining me in prayer for these poor heathen aborigines!

And is there not sufficient reason for such earnestness? We have our Peninnahs as surely as ever Hannah had and as God's saints have had all down the ages. David's eyes ran down with rivers of

water, because the ungodly observed not God's law (Ps. 119:136). Jeremiah wept with bitter lamentation, because of the destruction of the holy city. Nehemiah fasted, mourned, and wept when he heard of the fresh calamities which had befallen Jerusalem. Our Lord wept before it, because of its hardness of heart. The Apostle Paul had "great sorrow and unceasing pain" in his heart on account of his brethren according to the flesh (Romans 9:2).

Yes, and we have our "sore provocations," or should have. How else ought we to feel when we see all the ungodliness and unbelief round us on every hand? Would a light-hearted apathy become us under such circumstances? No, indeed! And I want you, please, to join me - or, rather, share with me-in the "provocation" which is daily with me in my work among the Lisu. Let the terrible power of evil spirits among them be a provocation to you. Let their sinfulness, their fears, their pitiful weakness and instability be a provocation to you. Ask God to lay the burden upon you, and that heavily - that it may press you down upon your knees. My prayer for you is that God will work such sorrow within you that you will have no alternative but to pray. I want you to be "sore provoked" as I am.

Such a state of mind and heart is only of avail, however, as it is turned into prayer. Desire, however deep, does nothing in itself, any more than steam pressure in a boiler is of use unless it is allowed to drive machinery. There is a spiritual law here. A strong spiritual desire does harm rather than good, if it is neglected. An earnest desire in spiritual things is a bell ringing for prayer. Not that we should wait for such desires. We should pray at all seasons, whether we are prayer-hungry or not. If we have a healthy prayer-appetite, so much the better. But if this appetite be unnoticed or unappeased, a dullness will come over us and we shall be weakened in spirit, just as lack of sufficient food weakens us in body. See, in 1 Sam. 1:15, the way in which Hannah dealt with her

God-given desire. Her soul was bitter, and she "poured it out" before the Lord. Blessed bitterness! but it must be poured out.

## THE PRAYER OF FAITH

The Scriptures speak of several kinds of prayer. There is intercession and there is supplication, there is labour in prayer and there is the prayer of faith; all perhaps the same fundamentally, but they present various aspects of this great and wonderful theme. It would not be unprofitable to study the differences between these various scriptural terms.

There is a distinction between general prayer and definite prayer. By definite prayer I mean prayer after the pattern of Matthew 21:21, 22 and John 15:7, where a definite petition is offered up and definite faith exercised for its fulfilment. Now faith must be in exercise in the other kinds of prayer also, when we pray for many and varied things without knowing the will of God in every case.

In general prayer I am limited by my ignorance. But this kind of prayer is the duty of us all (1 Tim. 2:1, 2), however vague it has to be. I may know very little, in detail, about the object of my prayer, but I can at any rate commend it to God and leave it with Him. It is good and right to pray, vaguely, for all people, all lands, all things, at all times.

But definite prayer is a very different matter. It is in a special sense "the prayer of faith." A definite request is made in definite faith for a definite answer.

Take the case of a Canadian immigrant as an illustration of the prayer of faith. Allured by the prospect of "golden grain" he leaves home for the Canadian West. He has a definite object in view. He knows very well what he is going for, and that is wheat. He thinks of the good crops he will reap and of the money they will bring him-much like the child of God who sets out to pray the prayer of faith and who has his definite object too. It may be the

conversion of a son or daughter; it may be power in Christian service; it may be guidance in a perplexing situation, or a hundred and one other things-but it is definite.

Consider the points of resemblance between the cases of the prospective Canadian farmer and the believing Christian.

**1. The Breadth of the Territory.** Think of the unlimited scope for the farmer in Canada. There are literally millions of acres waiting to be cultivated. No need, there, to tread on other people's toes! Room for all-vast tracts of unoccupied land just going to waste, and good land too. And so it is with us, surely. There is a vast, vast field for us to go up and claim in faith. There is enough sin, enough sorrow, enough of the blighting influence of Satan in the world to absorb all our prayer of faith, and a hundred times as many more. "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." *[Joshua 13:1]*

**2. Government Encourages Immigration.** Think also of the efforts the Canadian Government is making to encourage immigration. All the unoccupied land belongs to it, but settlers are so badly needed that they are offered every inducement - immigration offices established, sea passages and railway fares reduced, and grants of land made free! God is no less urgently inviting His people to pray the prayer of faith: "Ask-ask-ask," He is continually saying to us. He offers His inducement too: "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." All the unoccupied territory of faith belongs to Him. And He bids us to come and occupy freely. "How long are ye slack to go in to possess the land?" *[Joshua 18:3]*

**3. Fixed Limits.** Yet this aspect of the truth must not be over-emphasised. Blessed fact though it be that the land is so broad, it can easily be magnified out of due proportion. The important thing is, not the vastness of the territory, but how much of it is actually assigned to us. The Canadian Government will make a grant of 160 acres to the farmer-

immigrant, and no more. Why no more? Because they know very well he cannot work any more. If they were to give him 160 square miles instead of 160 acres he would not know what to do with it all. So they wisely limit him to an amount of land equal to his resources.

And it is much the same with us when praying the prayer of definite faith. The very word "definite" means "with fixed limits." We are often exhorted, and with reason, to ask great things of God. Yet there is a balance in all things, and we may go too far in this direction. It is possible "to bite off," even in prayer, "more than we can chew." There is a principle underlying 2 Corinthians 10:13\* which may apply to this very matter. Faith is like muscle which grows stronger and stronger with use, rather than rubber, which weakens when it is stretched. Overstrained faith is not pure faith; there is a mixture of the carnal element in it. There is no strain in the "rest of faith." It asks for definite blessings as God may lead. It does not hold back through carnal timidity, nor press ahead too far through carnal eagerness.

I have definitely asked the Lord for several hundred families of Lisu believers. There are upwards of two thousand Lisu families in the Tantsah district. It might be said, "Why do you not ask for a thousand?" I answer quite frankly, "Because I have not faith for a thousand." I believe the Lord has given me faith for more than one hundred families, but not for a thousand. So I accept the limits the Lord has, I believe, given me. Perhaps God will give me a thousand; perhaps He will lead me to commit myself to this definite prayer of faith later on. This is in accordance with Ephesians 3:20, "above all we ask or think." But we must not overload faith; we must be sane and practical. Let us not claim too little in faith, but let us not claim too much either. Remember the Canadian immigrant's 160 acres. Consider, too, how the Dominion Government exercises authority in the matter of location. The Government has a say as to

the where as well as the how much of the immigrant's claim. He may not wander all over the prairie at his own sweet will, and elect to settle down in any place he chooses. Even in regard to the position of his farm he must consult the Government.

Do we always do this in our prayers and claims? Do we consult the Heavenly Government at the outset, or do we pray the first thing that comes to mind? Do we spend time waiting upon God to know His will before attempting to embark on His promises? That this is a principle upon which God works He has informed us very plainly in 1 John 5:14, 15. ("And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: and if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.")

I cannot but feel that this is one cause for many unanswered prayers. James 4:3 ("Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.") has a broad application, and we need to search our hearts in its light. Unanswered prayers have taught me to seek the Lord's will instead of my own. I suppose we have most of us had such experiences. We have prayed and prayed and prayed, and no answer has come. The heavens above us have been as brass. Yea, blessed brass, if it has taught us to sink a little more of this ever-present self of ours into the Cross of Christ. Sometimes our petition has been such a good one, to all appearances, but that does not ensure its being of God. Many "good desires" proceed from our uncrucified selves. Scripture and experience certainly agree that those who live nearest to God are the most likely to know His will. We are called to be "filled with the knowledge of His will" (Col. 1:9). We need to know more of the fellowship of Christ's death. We need to feed on the Word of God more than we do. We need more holiness, more prayer.

We shall not, then, be in such danger of mistaking His will.

It does not follow that because a thing is the will of God, He will necessarily lead you to pray for it. He may have other burdens for you. We must get our prayers from God, and pray to know His will. It may take time. God was dealing with Hudson Taylor for fifteen years before He laid upon him the burden of definite prayer for the foundation of the China Inland Mission. God is not in a hurry. He cannot do things with us until we are trained and ready for them. We may be certain He has further service, further burdens of faith and prayer to give us when we are ready for them.

**4. The Claim Endorsed.** Turn to the immigrant again. He has come to an agreement with the Canadian Government. He falls in with their terms, he accepts their conditions, he agrees to take over the land allotted to him. So he presents his claim at the proper quarter, and it is at once endorsed. Could anything be simpler? Nor need our claim in the presence of God be any less simple. When we once have the deep, calm assurance of His will in the matter, we put in our claim, just as a child before his father. A simple request and nothing more. No cringing, no beseeching, no tears, no wrestling. No second asking either.

In my case I prayed continually for the Tengyueh Lisu for over four years, asking many times that several hundreds of families might be turned to God. This was only general prayer, however. God was dealing with me in the meantime. You know how a child is sometimes rebuked by his parents for asking something in a wrong way—perhaps in the case of a child, for asking rudely. The parent will say, "Ask me properly." That is just what God seemed to be saying to me then: "Ask Me properly. You have been asking Me to do this for the last four years without ever really believing that I would do it—now ask in faith.

I felt the burden clearly. I went to my room alone one afternoon and knelt in prayer. I knew that the time had come for the prayer of faith. And then, fully knowing what I was doing and what it might cost me, I definitely committed myself to this petition in faith. I cast my burden upon the Lord and rose from my knees with the deep, restful conviction that I had already received the answer. The transaction was done. And since then (nearly a year ago now) I have never had anything but peace and joy (when in touch with God) in holding to the ground already claimed and taken. I have never repeated the request and never will: there is no need. The asking, the taking, and the receiving occupy but a few moments (Mark 11:24). It is a solemn thing to enter into a faith covenant with God. It is binding on both parties. You lift up your hand to God, you definitely ask for and receive His proffered gift—then do not go back on your faith, even if you live to be a hundred.

**5. Get to Work.** To return once more to the Canadian farmer. He has put in his claim, the land has been granted, the deed made out and sealed with the official seal. Is that the end then? No! only the beginning!

He has not attained his object yet. His object is a harvest of wheat, not a patch of waste land; and there is a vast difference between the two. The Government never promised him sacks of flour all ready for export—only the land which could be made to yield them. Now is the time for him to roll up his sleeves and get to work. He must build his homestead, get his livestock, call in labourers, clear the ground, plough it and sow his seed. The Government says to him in effect, "We have granted your claim—now go and work it."

And this distinction is no less clear in the spiritual realm. God gives us the ground in answer to the prayer of faith, but not the harvest. That must be worked for in cooperation with Him. Faith must be followed up by works, prayer-works. Salvation is of

grace, but it must be worked out (Phil. 2:12) if it is to become ours. And the prayer of faith is just the same. It is given to us by free grace, but it will never be ours till we follow it up, work it out. Faith and works must never be divorced, for indolence will reap no harvest in the spiritual world. I think the principle will be found to hold in any case where the prayer of faith is offered, but there is no doubt that it always holds good in cases where the strongholds of Satan are attacked, where the prey is to be wrested from the strong.

Think of the children of Israel under Joshua. God had given them the land of Canaan—given it to them, notice, by free grace—but see how they had to fight when once they commenced actually to take possession!

Satan's tactics seem to be as follows. He will first of all oppose our breaking through to the place of real, living faith, by all means in his power. He detests the prayer of faith, for it is an authoritative "notice to quit." He does not so much mind rambling, carnal prayers, for they do not hurt him much. This is why it is so difficult to attain to a definite faith in God for a definite object. We often have to strive and wrestle in prayer (Eph. 6:10-12) before we attain this quiet, restful faith. And until we break right through and join hands with God we have not attained to real faith at all. Faith is a gift of God—if we stop short of it we are using mere fleshly energy or willpower, weapons of no value in this warfare. Once we attain to a real faith, however, all the forces of hell are impotent to annul it. What then? They retire and muster their forces on this plot of ground which God has pledged Himself to give us, and contest every inch of it. The real battle begins when the prayer of faith has been offered. But, praise the Lord! we are on the winning side. Let us read and re-read the tenth chapter of Joshua, and never talk about defeat again. Defeat, indeed! No. Victory! Victory! Victory!

Please read 2 Samuel 23:8-23. All I have been saying is found in a nutshell in verses 11 and 12. Let Shammah represent the Christian warrior. Let David represent the crucified and risen Christ—and note that Shammah was one of the “mighty men whom David had.” Let the “plot of ground” represent the prayer of faith. Let the lentils, if you will, represent the poor lost souls of men. Let the Philistines represent the hosts of wickedness. Let “the people” represent Christians afflicted with spiritual anemia.

I can imagine what these people were saying as they saw the Philistines approaching and ran away! “Perhaps it was not the Lord’s will to grant us that plot of ground. We must submit to the will of God.”

Yes, we must indeed submit ourselves to God, but we must also “resist the devil” (Jas. 4:7). The fact that the enemy comes upon us in force is no proof that we are out of the line of God’s will. The constant prefixing of “if it be Thy will” to our prayers is often a mere subterfuge of unbelief. True submission to God is not inconsistent with virility and boldness. Notice what Shammah did—simply held his ground. He was not seeking more worlds to conquer at that moment! He just stood where he was and hit out, right and left. Notice also the result of his action and to whom the glory is ascribed!

**6. Praying Through to Victory.** I repeat that this does not necessarily apply to every kind of prayer. A young Lisu Christian here is fond of telling an experience of his a few months ago. He was walking through the fields in the evening when his insides began unaccountably to pain him. He dropped on his knees and, bowing his head down to the ground, asked Jesus to cure him. At once the stomach ache left him. Praise the Lord! And there are, no doubt, multitudes of such cases—simple faith and simple answers. But we must not rest content with such prayer. We must get beyond stomach ache or any other ache, and enter into the deeper fellowship of

God’s purposes. “That ye be no longer children” (Eph. 4:14). We must press on to maturity.

We must attain to “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” and not remain in God’s kindergarten indefinitely. If we grow into manhood in the spiritual life we shall not escape conflict. As long as Ephesians 6:10-18 remains in the Bible, we must be prepared for serious warfare—“and having done all, to stand.” We must fight through, and then stand victorious on the battlefield.

Is not this another secret of many unanswered prayers—that they are not fought through? If the result is not seen as soon as expected, Christians are apt to lose heart, and if it is still longer delayed to abandon it altogether.

We must count the cost before praying the prayer of faith. We must be willing to pay the price. We must mean business. We must set ourselves to “see things through” (Eph. 6:18, “with all perseverance”). Our natural strength will fail: and herein lies the necessity for a divinely given faith. We can then rest back in the Everlasting Arms and renew our strength continually. We can then rest as well as wrestle. In this conflict-prayer, after the definite exercise of faith, there is no need to ask the same thing again and again. It seems to me inconsistent to do so. Under these circumstances, I would say let prayer take the following forms:

(a) A firm standing on God-given ground, and a constant assertion of faith and claiming of victory. It is helpful, I find, to repeat passages of Scripture applicable to the subject. Let faith be continually strengthened and fed from its proper source—the Word of God.

(b) A definite fighting and resisting of Satan’s host in the Name of Christ. I like to read passages of Scripture such as 1 John 3:8\* or Rev. 12:11\*\* in prayer, as direct weapons against Satan. I often find it a means of much added strength and liberty in

prayer to fight in this way. Nothing cuts like the Word of the living God (Heb. 4:12).

(c) Praying through every aspect of the matter in detail. In the case of my Lisu work here I continually pray to God to give me fresh knowledge of His will, more wisdom in dealing with the people, knowledge of how to pray, how to maintain victory, how to instruct the people in the gospel, or in singing or in prayer, help in studying the language, help in ordinary conversation, help in preaching, guidance as to settling down somewhere as a center, guidance about building a house (if necessary), guidance in my personal affairs (money, food, clothes, etc.), help and blessing in my correspondence, openings for the Word and blessing in other villages, for leaders and helpers to be raised up for me, for each of the Christians by name, also for every one of my prayer helpers by name. Such detailed prayer is exhausting, but I believe effectual in regard to ascertaining the will of God and obtaining His highest blessing.

## PRAYER DIVIDENDS

*Ten years had passed. The groundwork of prayer, faith, and patience was well laid in Lisuland. The steady plodding round and round that Jericho wall continued year after laborious year not only by Fraser himself but also by his faithful prayer forces at home. When would God’s time come and the prayer of faith be fulfilled? Should Fraser stay on, waiting and praying, while other more responsive fields lay idle because of lack of harvesters?*

*The day came when Fraser felt that a time must be set. One more journey around the district from village to village where he was well known; then if the Lord did not indicate otherwise, he would offer for another field for a time—until the time for harvest came among the Lisu. He started out on that “last” journey. The response was the same dull apathy—or was it? As he set out early the second morning his host, who had been wholly non-committal the night*

*before, declared that as a family they wanted to turn from their demon worship to God's way. Fraser could scarcely believe his ears. Others followed after this first family had made the break. All during that journey calls came from villages high up on the mountain side, or deep down in the ravine, or across the valley. Not only family after family but village after village made a public decision to turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God. Was it too good to be true? No! The movement of God so long prayed for was gradually spreading throughout the area. God's time had come.*

I BELIEVE it was January 12, 1915, that I was definitely led to ask God for "several hundreds of families" from the Lisu. Some may say, "Your prayer has at last been answered." No! I took the answer then. I believed then that I had it. The realization has only now come, it is true, but God does not keep us waiting for answers. He gives them at once. (Daniel 9:23)

I wish you could have been with me as I went from village to village, to have seen the royal reception they gave me! And you would have shared in it too. What with the playing of their bagpipes, the firing off of guns, the lining up of all the villagers, men and women, young and old, to shake hands with you (they use both hands, thinking it more respectful) you have a feeling of being overwhelmed—an "overweight of joy."

Imagine what it is to have between five and six hundred families (representing some three thousand people) looking to you as father, mother, teacher, shepherd, and adviser! It is a big responsibility.

I went in for big things when I took up tribes work and I do not regret it. I believe that to a large extent we get what we go in for with God—only sometimes we have mistaken ideas as to how it will come about. Rejoice with me and pray on for them all, in every phase of need you can think of.

The people are perhaps shivering through their rags. They are poor, dirty, ignorant and superstitious, but they are God's gift to us. You ask God for spiritual children, and He chooses them out for you. You shake hands with the brothers and sisters and mothers He has found for you, and sit down with the boys and girls all around you. For I would rather teach Lisu children to sing "Jesus loves me, this I know" than teach integral calculus to the most intelligent student who has no interest in China.

Two things stand out clearly in my mind: first, how "foolish" and "weak" our new converts are; and second, that God has really chosen them. 1 Corinthians 1:27-28 is fulfilled before my very eyes! If you could come out here and see how useless mere preaching and persuasion is among these people, you would understand this better. One feels so helpless in face of their ignorance and need! But the Lisu work in our present district, with over two hundred families on either side of the Salween River (four hundred and more families in all) has been spontaneous from the beginning.

They will take you to a village you have never set foot in or even heard of before, and you will find several families of converts there, some of whom can now read and write after a fashion, and a chapel already put up! They just teach one another—inviting converts over from neighboring villages for that purpose. They just want to be Christians, when they hear all about it, and turn Christian, missionary or no missionary. Who put that "want-to" in their hearts? If they are not God's chosen, God's elect, what are they?

I used to think that prayer should have the first place and teaching the second. I now feel it would be truer to give prayer the first, second, and third places, and teaching the fourth.

These people out here are not only ignorant and superstitious—they have a heathen atmosphere about them. One can actually feel it. We are not

dealing with an enemy that fires at the head only—that keeps the mind only in ignorance—but with an enemy who uses poison gas attacks which wrap the people round with deadly effect, and yet are impalpable, elusive. What would you think of the folly of the soldier who fired a gun into the gas, to kill it or drive it back? Nor would it be of any more avail to teach or preach to the Lisu here, while they are held back by these invisible forces. Poisonous gas cannot be dispersed, I suppose, in any other way than by the wind springing up and dispersing it. Man is powerless.

But the breath of God can blow away all those miasmatic vapors from the atmosphere of a village, in answer to your prayers. We are not fighting against flesh and blood. You deal with the fundamental issues of this Lisu work when you pray against the principalities, the powers, the world rulers of this darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12).

I believe that a work of God sometimes goes on behind a particular man or family, village or district before the knowledge of the truth ever reaches them. It is a silent, unsuspected work, not in mind or heart, but in the unseen realm behind these. Then, when the light of the gospel is brought, there is no difficulty, no conflict. It is, then, simply a case of "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord."

This should give us confidence in praying intelligently for those who are far from the gospel light. The longer the preparation, the deeper the work. The deeper the root, the firmer the plant when once it springs above ground. I do not believe that any deep work of God takes root without long preparation somewhere.

On the human side, evangelistic work on the mission field is like a man going about in a dark, damp valley with a lighted match in his hand, seeking to ignite anything ignitable. But things are damp through and through and will not burn, however



much he tries. In other cases, God's wind and sunshine have prepared beforehand. The valley is dry in places, and when the lighted match is applied— here a shrub, there a tree, here a few sticks, there a heap of leaves take fire and give light and warmth long after the kindling match and its bearer have passed on. And this is what God wants to see, and what He will be inquired of us for: little patches of fire burning all over the world.

## PRAYER TODAY

### [This section is as found on the website.]

The church to which J.O. Fraser was pioneer has been cut off from missionary help for over forty years now, though many of its members have made new homes in Myanmar where it continues to flourish. The China Inland Mission to which Fraser belonged transferred its work to the adjacent countries of Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand, and changed its name to OMF International.

In these countries many of its missionaries face the same pioneer situations as Fraser did back in 1912. In North Thailand many villages of Lisu and other tribes are still wholly unreached with the gospel. From the vast urban sprawl of Japan to the sun-baked plains of Central Thailand or the hidden peoples of the Philippines, there is the same need of Christ, and the same spiritual, mental and even physical hardships to be borne by the messenger.

The battle with the powers of darkness still rages, and those in the thick of the fight still need the same concentration of prayer support as Fraser did. Both individual prayer partners and groups large and small have a vital part to play. Is God calling you to join their ranks?

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### [This section is taken directly from the book.]

AN ERA has passed. The church in which J. O. Fraser was pioneer is behind the red curtain in China, though its branches run over the wall into Burma. The work of Fraser's missionary successors in the China Inland Mission has been transferred to adjacent lands: Thailand, Laos, Malaya, Indonesia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan.

Here they face, in most cases, the same type of pioneering endeavor as Fraser did back in 1912, with all its physical, mental, and spiritual hardship. The battle sways backward and forward, with surges of hope and recessions of disappointment.

This doing battle with the powers of darkness demands today the same concentration of prayer support as then – individual prayer partners and called-out prayer groups who will take up the work of prayer as their God-given calling.

In North Thailand and Laos, enclaves of Lisu and other tribal groups present the same wholly unreached heathen aspect as Fraser faced early in the century, while the aborigines of the Philippines are even more primitive. A completely virgin Buddhist field in Central Thailand and unworked areas in other lands await the consummation of the "prayer, faith, and patience" stratagem.

But there is one difference. The Day of the Lord is nearer now than it was then. Communism presses in on every side, cults and false sects increase and set their nets for inquiring souls, ancient religions are revived with modern appeal – these, added to the superstition and ignorance of undisguised demon-worship surely declare that the last days are upon us. Time is running out. The day of Satan's power is drawing to a close as is our day of grace for the ministry of prayer.

Dear reader, are you in your place at the footstool of the King of Kings?

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*J.O. Frazer was a part of the original China Inland Mission, founded by Hudson Tayler, which later became Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF) in 1964. Parts of this were updated from the OMF web site:*

*<https://omf.org/us/the-prayer-of-faith/>.*

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