

They Paid the Price!

by Charlie Searle

The sermon tells the story of a remarkable revival in the Belgian Congo, sparked by the prayer and sacrifice of two missionaries, Lily and Ivy Roberts.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 51:10, Zechariah 4:6, Matthew 18:20, Luke 15:7, Acts 2:1, Acts 3:19, Romans 12:2, James 5:16, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Prayer And Revival", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Charlie Searle shares a remarkable account of God's work in the Belgian Congo in 1935, where missionaries faced challenges due to government restrictions but turned to prayer and seeking God's guidance. Lily and Ivy Roberts, devoted missionaries, sought a revival and experienced a deep spiritual transformation, leading to confession, reconciliation, and a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The revival spread, drawing many to God, including backsliders, showcasing the transformative power of prayer and surrendering all to God.

Transcript

A remarkable account of God's working in the Belgian Congo in 1935, as reported in Worldwide Magazine, former publication of WEC International.

What a shock it was when news of the Belgian Government's edict reached us! It looked as though we would not only have to close some of our existing stations, but also be unable to reach the totally unevangelized areas that were so heavy on our hearts. Twelve stations manned by whites was to be the limit permitted to any mission society, and we were already over that quota.

After much prayer and consideration, the mission decided to move workers from two stations. One was in the Mubutu tribe at Imbai, where Jack Roberts and his two sisters, Lily and Ivy were working, and one in the Belita tribe, for which my wife and I were responsible.

Jack Roberts was asked to pioneer in a new area, five days march through dense forest, while his sisters were to stay six months at Imbai to make final preparations for leaving.

Faced with the tremendous responsibility of preparing the native Christians to be left alone, the sister decided to cancel all station activity and spend the time waiting upon God for guidance. Sometimes they prayed together, while at other times they met the Lord separately, but they spent the whole of the three

days with Him.

At the end of this time, Lily said to her younger sister, "I feel that God has spoken to me. I prayed, 'Lord, if Thou wouldst only send a revival, a second Pentecost, we would not need to fear that these babes in Christ would go back into heathenism. They would be established in Thee.'

"To this He replied, 'You have asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if you can pay the price, you may have what you asked.'" Her response was, "Lord, my life for Revival!"

Then God began to prepare them for the blessing He was going to send. He showed them many things in their lives that were not pleasing to Him: criticism, impatience, careless gossip and unkind things they had said and thought about people.

He had them write letters of confession, humbling letters, asked forgiveness for thought or word that was not worthy of the Lord. Remember, these were devoted, consecrated women, but they were seeking a mighty outpouring of God's Spirit.

They started regular meetings with those Christians who were prepared to go all the way with God, and to walk in all the light that He would give. Those who were not willing to accept these conditions in waiting upon God for the outpouring of His Spirit, were asked to stay away.

It was usual for the sisters to rise at five-thirty each morning to meet the Lord; but as time went on the burden increased, He got them up earlier and earlier until they were rising at two forty-five.

They would read the Word and pray together and then separately and individually wait upon God until six-thirty. At that time they would meet with the Christians and share what had been revealed to them through the Word earlier.

Giving Up All Time To God In Prayer

One morning it was laid on Lily's heart to give up their schools and to spend all of the time in prayer. One was in charge of the girls' school and the other of the boys'. However, she did not feel that they could send the children back to their heathen homes and the sinful influences there.

But just at that time the two assistant principals came and said that God had spoken to each individually but with the same word, that they should take full responsibility for the schools and release the sisters to pray.

Now I must mention how I came into contact with all this. Our station was only 26 miles from Imbai, and my wife and I were very close friends of the Roberts. As we were the nearest workers to the post office, all mail for the area was cleared through us. I first noticed that something unusual was happening at Imbai when the mail began to dwindle until just once in every two weeks a letter went to their mother, that was all.

One day a runner came from Imbai for the mail, and I greeted him with the question, "What is the news, Batabombi?"

He looked at me rather peculiarly, I thought, and replied, "Bwana, it is the news of prayer."

"News of prayer? What is that?"

"I mean we pray in a new way at our station."

I said, "What do you mean? I don't understand you."

"Well, Bwana, if you visited our station when the sun was beginning to rise, you would see all the people outside their huts, reading the Word of God and praying. When the sun comes there (pointing to 6:30), the drum sounds and the people pour into the church. And there they remain until the sun is there (noon) or there (six p.m.), or there (midnight).

"What! You stay all day in the church praying, and sometimes until midnight?"

"That is so."

"Oh," I thought, "this man is dreaming. He is talking through the back of his head. It can't be true. We would have heard something about it."

I spoke to other missionaries on the station and they said, "Just exaggeration." So although we thought about it, we said very little.

A few days later the rumor came from a different source; so, when I was at our head station, I mentioned it. It was suggested that, as it was only ten miles farther around, I should call in at Imbai on my way home. A fellow missionary, Herman Meyer, from America, offered to drive me in his car, so we decided to make the visit.

When we arrived at Imbai, we made our way to the house and began firing questions. They smiled a little wearily, I thought, and said, "We will try to tell you what we can."

Very quietly Lily told us of God's dealing with them and with the natives in much more detail than I have given. The Lord appeared to her in a vision, she told us. It seemed as though Heaven opened, and she saw Him looking down at her. Opposite her was the wife of the leading Christian in the village, but between them was a barrier.

Pointing to the native woman, the Lord said, "This woman is as precious to Me as you are. She is redeemed and cleansed by My Blood, the same as you. But you look upon her as just a native woman, while you are a white lady. This is hidden pride, which I have not been able to show you until now. This stands between you and Revival."

When speaking of this, Lily was absolutely overawed, and her voice dropped to a whisper. The Lord's rebuke had smitten her down, and she wept for hours before Him. Then He came and touched her and brought peace to her heart. With it came such a consciousness of His presence that as she walked from room to room, she felt that He was literally walking by her side.

Each Wednesday the Christians from the area round about came to the station to join in seeking the Lord. "The day of the vision was Wednesday, and she didn't know how to face the Christians when they came for the meeting. When it was time to start, she went to the platform without looking at the people.

She announced no hymn, she prayed no prayer, but she confessed to them the hidden pride which the Lord had shown her, how she had felt that she was better than they even though they were souls for whom Jesus had died.

In the group of perhaps one hundred before her, were men who had been cannibals, and women who had been the Jezebels of heathendom before their conversion. But as she looked down, she saw that they were all melted to tears.

Then things began to happen! One man stood up and confessed to robbing another man's trap ten years before. He said that he was going to confess to the man and pay for the gazelle he had stolen. People began confessing all kinds of sins, from the grosser ones--to criticism, lack of reading the Word and prayer, coldness, hard thoughts and gossip.

They went to one another to ask forgiveness and to put things right. Finally they became just like one person, cemented together by absolute love--nothing between.

As on the day of Pentecost, "They were all with one accord" (Acts 2:1). Two days later the Spirit came down upon these people in a mighty Baptism. That is why the man said to me, "We pray in a new way on our station."

A great burden of prayer came upon them also, so that sometimes after praying all day, they would go out into the forest and pray all night. If you could hear the roaring of the leopards and the howling of the hyenas and jackals in that forest, you would not to be keen to spend the night there. But when the power of God came upon these people, fear fled to the wind!

When her story was finished, Lily asked, "With the permission of you gentlemen I would like to invite some of the natives to join us in prayer. Do you mind?" (This was one time in the day when whites and blacks had their prayer meeting separate.) Of course we did not mind.

Turning to one of her boys, she said, "Go down to the village and tell Lapuno to invite twenty or twenty-five--not more than twenty-five--to join us in prayer here. Mind, not more than that."

I haven't usually found people falling over themselves to get to prayer meeting. You seldom have to look the door to keep them out. But here they had to keep the invitation quiet as the room would be crowded with twenty-five.

That prayer meeting will always live in my memory. I had never heard praying quite like that before. It seemed as if a mighty rushing wind had come into our midst. I was mystified, trying to understand. "What is it? What is it?" I felt as if my Christian experience had suddenly become nothing, and my heart had turned to stone. I was in the midst of people who were in the presence of God!

Herman managed to stop the prayer meeting at midnight. I don't think I would ever have been able to stop it. The people with beaming faces shook our hands and left. I was very quiet and sober, almost in a dream.

Lily turned to me and said, "We are starting evangelistic meetings tomorrow morning at nine o'clock. When I saw you get out of the car, I thanked the Lord for sending the first speaker."

"Oh, excuse me," I said, "I must get back to my station. I will have to get away early. I must get back." I thought, "I am not going to try to preach to these fold. They should be preaching to me."

She replied, "I am very disappointed. You see, we are very tired. We felt that God had been so gracious in sending someone to help us."

I felt so mean that I consented to stay. In the morning there was a knock at the door and a voice said, "The food is ready and the hour is past." I looked at my watch; it was eight-thirty. Breakfast was at eight and the meeting at nine. So I picked up my Bible and went into the house. Just Ivy was there, so I asked, "Where is Lily?"

"Oh, she has been in the meeting for three hours with the natives. They are having a prayer meeting," she replied.

At five to nine I went into the church, and there was Lily kneeling on the mud floor, translating out of her English Bible some of the promises she had received early that morning. She had been up as usual at 2:45 praying.

Now at nine in the morning, the drum was beating, and the people were pouring into the church until it was crowded with over a thousand. It was a huge place.

We sang a few hymns. Then I began to preach. When I had finished I started to sit down. But Lily said, "Don't sit down. Make an appeal."

I looked at her in amazement "Make an appeal after a message like that!"

I walked to the edge of the platform and began to make an appeal, but before I was through, a man sprang to his feet. His face was set, his eyes closed, and he just flung his hands up and cried, "I must get right with God today!"

The effect was electric. All over the church people stood up, not one here and there, but in groups--literally in groups. There were hundreds of people standing, with tears flowing down their faces, not only men and women but also boys and girls. They all wanted to get right with God! I stood there not knowing what to do. "What has happened! What has happened!"

Then God spoke to me: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Host" (Zech. 4:6). He showed me that this was not the result of my poor preaching, but that the price of this harvest had been paid before I arrived.

From that day until they had to leave the station, those two missionaries spent all of their time leading souls to the Saviour and building them up in the Word. They didn't need to preach. The Christians went everywhere in that area testifying to the mighty power of God, and every road led to Imbai! Not only the unsaved came, but the backsliders who had grown cold and no longer had any desire for the things of the Lord.

Cost Of The Revival

Lily Roberts said, "Lord, my life for Revival." That is what happened. It cost her her life. A little later, Lily went to her reward, and I know this, my dear friends, there was an abundant entrance into the Presence of God.

"I once knew a minister," said Charles Finney, "who had a revival fourteen years in succession. I didn't know how to account for it until I saw one of his members get up in a prayer meeting.

" 'Brethren,' said he, 'I have long been in the habit of praying every Saturday night till after midnight for the revival of the Holy Ghost upon us...' The secret was out! That minister had a praying church."

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