

James O. Frasier

by David Smithers

James O. Frasier's life was a testament to the power of prayer and the importance of humility and courageous faith in spiritual warfare and revival.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 1:15, Psalm 51:17, Isaiah 59:16, Matthew 11:12, Luke 14:28, Romans 8:26, Ephesians 6:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, James 4:7

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Spiritual Revival"

Description

David Smithers preaches about the life of James O. Frasier, a humble servant of God who thrived in obscurity and solitude, laboring in almost total obscurity in China's Yunnan Province to reach the Lisu tribal people. Frasier's success was attributed to his deep prayer life, where he learned to touch God through fervent and continuous prayer, often spending hours in prayer and traveling before the Lord. He practiced the spiritual discipline of 'praying through,' fighting spiritual battles through prayer and resisting demonic attacks through the power of the Cross. Frasier's life exemplified the need for true revival, emphasizing the importance of humility, faith, and boldness in prayer to overcome the powers of darkness and experience victory.

Transcript

Some of God's most precious servants have gone through life hidden and unnoticed. Forgotten and ignored by the religious masses, they thrive in obscurity and solitude. Their humble lives seem to sweetly sing those neglected lines of Charles Wesley's hymn, "Keep us little and unknown, Prized and loved by God alone." William Jay, the English preacher wrote, "Many who are great in the sight of the Lord are living in cottages and hovels, and are scarcely known..."

James O. Frasier, of the China Inland Mission, was one of those choice servants of God who was content to labor in almost total obscurity. This gifted man was a preacher, linguist, musical genius and engineer. He came to the Yunnan Province of China in 1910 with a heart longing for the souls of the forgotten Lisu tribal people. As Frasier gave himself to the work of reaching the Lisu, he became somewhat forgotten. For years he lived alone, hidden behind the great mountain ranges of China's far west. Few people really knew James Frasier. There was an air of mystery about this talented man who had chosen a primitive pioneers life over the applause of a English concert hall. Some said that it was absolutely wrong for Frasier to waste and bury his gifts on the mission field. Yet, Mr. Frasier was greatly used of God through prayer and loving labor to turn multitudes of Lisu from their slavery of demon-worship to Jesus Christ. After

mastering the difficult Lisu language, he developed his own "Fraser Script" and translated the Scriptures into the tribal dialect. By 1916 there was a real move of the Spirit among the Lisu, resulting in sixty thousand baptisms within only two years. The Lisu church continued to grow and eventually became one of the largest tribal Christian bodies in the world.

J. O. Fraser's success was not the result of his impressive talents or giant intellect. Mr. Fraser succeeded where others often fail, because he had learned how to touch God through prayer. Isolated and hidden away behind the mountains, he was compelled to seek God for his every need. "To know the real Fraser one needed to hear him in prayer. Prayer was the very breath of life to him, and in prayer he seemed to slip from time into eternity." For many of us prayer is not a first choice, but a last resort. Fraser had learned out of sheer necessity to pray fervently and continuously. "Frequently the mountainside would witness the piercing, importunate pleadings of this man who counted his prayer-time not by minutes but by hours." Fraser was not a man who merely said prayers, he TRAVAILED in prayer. He knew the spiritual necessity of wrestling and agonizing in prayer. He writes, "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 compared with hers. We have spent much time upon our knees, it may be, without our hearts going out in 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 in prayer for these poor heathen aborigines."

To our shame, some of the most basic spiritual disciplines of our godly forefathers have become strange and unfamiliar to many of us. One of the most effective weapons of the praying saints of old was the discipline of, "praying through." J. O. Fraser both encouraged and practiced this powerful reality. Upon this subject Mr. Fraser writes, "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. You know the name they give to places in England when the building (or whatever it is) is abandoned, when only half of it is completed - So and so's 'Folly'. I wonder whether some of our prayers do not deserve the same stigma. Luke 14: 28-30 applies to prayers as well as towers. 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, 'In all perseverance')." Wrestling with demonic spirits is a daily reality of spiritual survival. Spiritual warfare is not learned in our leisure time, but is thrust upon us as we begin to threaten the kingdom of darkness. In 1913-1914, James Fraser went through a time of deep spiritual oppression that forced him to deal with issues many would rather ignore. As Fraser reached out to the spiritually blinded Lisu, he became the object of an intense demonic attack. He found himself slipping into a paralyzing depression and despair. He soon began to question even the very foundations of his faith in God. "Deeply were the foundations shaken in those days and nights of conflict, until Fraser realized that behind it all were 'powers of darkness', seeking to overwhelm him. He had dared to invade Satan's kingdom, undisputed for ages. At first, vengeance had fallen on the Lisu inquirers, an easy prey. Now, he was himself attacked, and it was war to the death, spiritually."

Fraser was greatly helped in this spiritual struggle by the timely arrival of a magazine produced by Jessie Penn-Lewis called The Overcomer. "What it showed me," Fraser writes, "was that deliverance from the

power of the evil one comes through definite resistance on the ground of The Cross. I am an engineer and believe in things working. I want to see them work. I had found that much of the spiritual teaching one hears does not seem to work. My apprehension at any rate of other aspects of truth had broken down. The passive side of leaving everything to the Lord Jesus as our life, while blessedly true, was not all that was needed just then. Definite resistance on the ground of The Cross was what brought me light. For I found that it worked. I felt like a man perishing of thirst, to whom some beautiful, clear, cold water had begun to flow. People will tell you, after a helpful meeting perhaps, that such and such a truth is the secret of victory. No: we need different truth at different times. 'Look to the Lord,' some will say. 'Resist the devil,' is also Scripture (James 4:7) and I found it worked! That cloud of depression dispersed. I found that I could have victory in the spiritual realm whenever I wanted it. The Lord Himself resisted the devil vocally: 'Get thee behind me, Satan!' I, in humble dependence on Him, did the same. I talked to Satan at that time, using the promises of Scripture as weapons. And they worked. Right then, the terrible oppression began to pass away."

Toward the end of James Fraser's life, he found himself in another kind of spiritual conflict. He began to feel increasingly dissatisfied with what many considered successful ministry. He recognized like never before the tremendous need for true revival on the field and at home. His heart now longed for a powerful visitation of the glory of God. When God creates a fresh desire within us, we can always be confident that He is getting ready to move. While on furlough, Fraser's longings were confirmed through the opportunity to hear the missionary-revivalist Jonathan Goforth. Mrs. J. O. Fraser describes this important event in Fraser's life. "As the old man of God stood up to preach, an overwhelming sense of the presence of God filled the room, and as he spoke we were all but melted under the power of his words, for Goforth had been endued with a divine unction from God Himself and it was unmistakable. Fraser had heard before of the great revivals Goforth had witnessed in his work in China, but to hear him speak was unforgettable and left a deep burden on his soul. The big question on his mind was whether we were working with the power God had promised us."

Again Mrs. Fraser writes of her husband's new burden, "He saw the teeming millions of unreached Chinese and the tiny handful of missionaries, but great as was the need for more missionaries there was an even greater need, that those of us who were out there should be endued with far greater power. Somehow Fraser was burdened because the Church both at home and abroad seemed to be making so little real impact on the world. He spent hours in prayer wondering whether we need to turn again to the apostles for our examples and Pentecost for our power." It was now the early 1930's, and Fraser was not alone in his desire for revival. The cry for revival was now rising from the hearts of many missionaries and Chinese Christians alike. Suddenly God broke forth, raising up His hidden vessels to usher in a powerful revival in northern China. It was here Fraser found some kindred spirits in the revival laborers, Andrew Gih and John Sung of the Bethel Band. They enjoyed powerful times of prayer together that often lasted into the early hours of the morning. Mr. Fraser described this time as his happiest experience in China. These were the glory days of the Shantung revival with Bertha Smith and Marie Monsen. Anna Christiansen of C. I. M. and Watchmen Nee of "The Little Flock" were also reaping revival fruit at this time. Regardless who the minister was, the message was essentially the same: the exposing of secret sin, a call to thorough repentance, the need for restitution and the hope of total victory through the Blood and the power of the Holy Spirit.

"The Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the VIOLENT take it by force." Matthew 11:12. James Fraser's life was a living example of this verse. Like Fraser, we must cloth ourselves in humility as we run

to wage war in the fight of faith. Our prayers must go beyond mere sentimental and religious rhetoric. What we need is the violent groans and cries of travailing prayer! We must learn how to be violent in prayer with both Satan and our own sinful PRIDE. King Jesus is searching for a people who will be subject to Him in all holiness and humility, and yet stand in bold faith against the powers of darkness. (James 4:7). Humility apart from courageous faith becomes despair, and faith apart from broken humility becomes presumption. True revival VICTORY will finally come when the poor in spirit learn how to walk in the authority and power of the Spirit.

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