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How the Spirit Came to Pyeng Yang

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In August, 1906, we Pyeng Yang missionaries had a Bible conference which lasted one week, and the object of which was the deepening of our own spiritual life. Dr. Hardie of Won San came and helped us greatly. At that meeting was born the desire in our hearts that God's Spirit would take complete control of our lives and use us mightily in His service. Immediately after our conference we went to Seoul to attend our Annual Meeting, and there met Dr. Howard Agnew Johnston, from whom the Seoul missionaries had received a great blessing. Dr. Johnston came to Pyeng Yang and while here spoke to our Korean Christians, telling of the wonderful manifestations of the Spirit in India, and his telling of it gave some of our people a great desire to have the same blessing. From that time until the blessing came Koreans and missionaries have been praying that it might come.

We returned from Annual Meeting and held some special services, praying for an outpouring of God's Spirit, but at that time did not receive the answer. The Koreans enjoyed the meetings, but the Spirit was not with us in power. We kept on praying however, and at Christmas time there was born in the hearts of us missionaries a desire to have a special week of prayer. This we had with great benefit to us all. Before these meetings closed our Winter Training Class for men had begun and about seven hundred men spent two weeks here in Bible study. God gave us a great desire in our hearts to have a special blessing on this class, so we Presbyterian missionaries agreed to meet every day at noon and pray for the class. This we did with great profit to ourselves, for those noon prayer meetings were a very Bethel to us.

On January 6th, we began evening meetings for the class and the people of the city in the Central Church, the four Presbyterian churches uniting. Knowing the building would be too small if we had a mixed audience, we arranged the meeting for men only, asking the women to meet separately in four different places and the school boys to meet in the Academy chapel. The Central Church will hold about fifteen hundred people and it was full every night. The meetings grew in power each evening until Saturday evening, and that meeting was the best of all the week. On Sunday we had the regular services in all the churches, and then Sunday evening we gathered again at the Central Church in a continuation of the union meetings. We expected great things from that Sunday evening meeting, but instead of receiving a great blessing we had a most peculiar experience. The meeting seemed dead and God's Spirit seemed to have departed from us. After an address

and a few perfunctory testimonies, which testified to nothing, we went home with heavy hearts, wondering where the trouble lay. During the meetings before there had been testimonies which had life in them and confessions of sin which were real and earnest, but Sunday night everything seemed blocked and the meeting a dead formal thing. The Korean brethren felt just the same as we missionaries, and Sunday night was a night of gloom. At our noon meeting on Monday we cried to God for help, and God heard us, for on Monday evening the blessing came.

We went to that Monday evening service, not knowing what would happen, but praying all the time that God would hear and answer. When we reached the building I think we all felt that something was coming. After a short address we had audible prayer together, all the audience joining in, and this audible prayer, by the way, has been one of the features of these meetings. After the prayer there were a few testimonies, and then the leader announced a song, asking the audience to rise and stating that all those who wished to go home could do so, as we intended to stay until morning, if there were men who wished to remain that long and confess their sins. A great many went, but between five and six hundred remained. These we gathered into one ell of the building, and then began a meeting the like of which none of us had ever seen. After prayer, confessions were called for, and immediately the Spirit of God seemed to descend on that audience. Man after man would rise, confess his sins, break down and weep, and then throw himself to the floor and beat the floor with his fists in a perfect agony of conviction. My own cook tried to make a confession, broke down in the midst of it, and cried to me across the room "Pastor tell me, is there any hope for me, can I be forgiven?" and then he threw himself to the floor and wept and wept, and almost screamed in agony. Sometimes after a confession the whole audience would break out in audible prayer, and the effect of that audience of hundreds of men praying together in audible prayer was something indescribable. Again after another confession they would break out in uncontrollable weeping, and we would all weep, we couldn't help it. And so the meeting went on until two o'clock A. M. with confessions and weeping and praying. A few of us knew that there had been hatred in the hearts of some of the prominent men of the church, especially between a Mr. Kang and Mr. Kim, and we hoped that it would all come out and be confessed during these meetings. Monday night Mr. Kang got the strength and told how he had hated Mr. Kim and asked to be forgiven. It was wonderful to see that proud, strong man break down and then control himself and then break down again as he tried to tell how he had hated Mr. Kim. When two o'clock came there were still men who wished to confess, but as the building was growing cold, and as we had still another evening, we thought it best to close.

Tuesday noon at our prayer meeting we missionaries met with hearts full of thanksgiving for the wonderful meeting of the evening before, and again we asked God for

greater blessings on the Tuesday evening meeting. We conducted the service in the same way as on Monday. After an address by Mr. Kil, our most gifted Korean preacher, we dismissed all those who wished to go home, and again nearly six hundred remained. The meeting was much the same as the Monday evening meeting, but the manifestation was greater. Some of us were praying for two men especially, Mr. Kim and Mr. Chu, for we felt that these two men had things in their lives that needed to be confessed. The climax came when Mr. Kim gained the needed strength. He was sitting on the platform and suddenly he arose and came forward and was immediately given an opportunity. He confessed to hatred in his heart for the other brethren especially for Mr. Blair, and then he went all to pieces. It was terrible beyond description, the agony that man went through. He fell to the floor and acted like a man in a fit. When he broke down the whole audience broke out in a perfect storm of weeping and they wept and wept and wept. We missionaries were weeping like the rest, and we simply couldn't keep from it. While they were weeping Mr. Kang got up to pray, and that poor man agonized in prayer, and then he broke down completely and wept as if his heart would break. The brethren gathered around, put their arms about him, and soon he became quiet, then it was beautiful to see him go out to Mr. Kim, put his arms lovingly about him, and weep with him, When Mr. Kim broke he turned to Mr. Blair and said "Pastor Blair, can you forgive me, can you forgive me?" Mr. Blair got up to pray, said the word "Father" twice and he could go no further, he was beyond words. The audience kept on weeping and it seemed as if they would not stop. At last we had to sing a hymn to quiet them, for we feared that some might lose control of themselves. During the singing they quieted down and then the confessions began again and so it went on until two o'clock.

One of the most striking things of the evening was a prayer by one of the college students. He asked that he might be allowed to make a public confession to God and was given the opportunity. In a broken voice he began to pray, and such a prayer I never heard before. We had a vision of a human heart laid bare before its God. He confessed to adultery, hatred, lack of love for his wife, and several other sins that I do not remember. As he prayed he wept, in fact he could hardly control himself, and as he wept the audience wept with him. We all felt as if we were in the presence of the living God.

With that meeting the class closed, and we wondered if these manifestations would now cease. What a joy it was to find that in our four prayer meetings Wednesday evening was manifested the same mighty power. I had announced that two elders would be elected at the Central Church on Wednesday evening, and on the way to the service I was wondering if it would be best to try and have an election that evening. As soon as I entered the building I felt that there would be no elders elected that night. One could feel that God's Spirit was present.

After a short address all who wished to go home were dismissed. As soon as the audience was quiet we had audible prayer together, and immediately after a number of men jumped to their feet, signifying an intense desire to confess their sins. After a few confessions the climax came when Elder Chu got the strength to make his confession. All through that wonderful Tuesday evening meeting he sat and looked like a man who has received his death sentence. We felt sure he had some terrible sin to confess, and we prayed that God would give him strength. He had been sitting on the platform, and suddenly I found him standing beside me, and then my heart gave a bound of joy, for I knew he had surrendered and that God's Spirit was now able to cleanse him. He began in a broken voice and could hardly articulate, so moved was he. As he went on his words grew clearer, and then it all came out. He confessed to adultery and misuse of funds, and as he told of it he was in the most fearful agony I have ever seen expressed by any mortal being. He was trembling from head to foot and I was afraid he would fall, so I put my arm about him to hold him up. In fearful distress of mind he cried out "Was there ever such a terrible sinner as I am?" and then he beat the pulpit with his hands with all his strength. At last he sank to the floor and writhed and writhed in agony, crying for forgiveness. He looked as though he would die if he did not get relief. It was terrible to witness, but oh ! it was so beautiful to see the Korean brethren gather about him, put their arms around him, and comfort him in his time of anguish. As soon as Mr. Chu broke down the whole audience broke out in weeping, and they wept and wailed and wailed and it seemed as if they couldn't stop. I had to begin a song to quiet them. We held the meeting a little longer and then dismissed the audience, thankful that God's Spirit was still manifest among us, and more than thankful that Elder Chu had obtained the strength to make his confession.

Wednesday morning there was the same manifestation at the Advanced School for Girls and Women. Miss Snook went as usual, and the first classes were held, and then chapel began at ten o'clock, but there was no regulation chapel exercises that morning. After a few remarks and prayer the girls broke down and began to weep and confess their sins, and until after twelve o'clock the meeting went on with nothing but prayer, tears, and confession of sin. Thursday morning was a repetition of Wednesday, and chapel lasted until noon. On Friday all recitations were laid aside, and the whole morning was spent as the two previous days. On Wednesday morning at the Central Church boy's school the same manifestation was present. The school was opened as usual, but no lessons were heard, and until one o'clock they remained weeping and confessing their sins. Three boys lost control of themselves and became unconscious from the strain of the meeting. Evidently the Korean in charge did not know how to relieve the strain when necessary.

On Thursday morning the Spirit fell on the primary school for girls. As some of us were going by the school room we heard the sound of wailing and knew the same power was

there. Miss Best went down immediately to look after them. Hearing of what was going on at this school, Mrs. Bernheisel went down to the girls' school in the city to see how matters were there. She said a few words to the girls, and immediately they began to weep and confess their sins. At our own prayermeeting on Wednesday noon was manifested this same power. Instead of a half hour prayermeeting, we stayed until two o'clock, weeping and making confession of our sins. I never attended a prayermeeting like that before. The Spirit of God literally fell upon us, and we couldn't help but weep and confess our sins. It seemed as if God was trying to cleanse from our community everything that would hinder or cause offence.

All through the class the women of the church had been meeting separately, but there had been no special manifestation among them. We determined to hold meetings for them in the Central Church on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings. Thursday and Friday evenings there was no special manifestation, for the women were not ready; there were a few confessions and a few rambling talks by some self-righteous old women, but the Spirit was not there in power. Saturday night the power came, and then the women confessed and agonized just as the men had. We all rejoiced in the confession of one young girl, who has been a cause of grief and sorrow to us. We wished to help her, but could find no way to do so. Saturday night she broke down, made a confession, and wept as if her heart would break.

Sunday morning at the Central Church we had our usual classes for Bible study, and then in the afternoon service was another manifestation of great power. Mr. Kil preached, and ended his sermon with a most graphic illustration. He had a band attached to a rope, and the band he fastened about his waist, asking one of the Leaders to hold the rope while Mr. McCune stood at the pulpit beckoning him to come. Mr. Kil explained how it was to represent a sinner bound by sin, trying to break away and get to God ; then he began to pull and writhe just as some of the men had done whilst under conviction, and at last the band broke, and then he rushed across the platform and he and Mr. McCune threw their arms around each other. I was not at the service, was in the country holding a country class with Mr. Blair. Mr. McCune said that while Mr. Kil was trying to break away the audience was breathless, but when the band broke and he and Mr. Kil threw their arms about each other the effect was indescribable. A number of men were on their feet at once, crying out with a desire to confess their sins, while others threw themselves to the floor in a perfect agony of weeping. Mr. Kil told them to go home, confess their sins to men, and come back to the evening meeting.

On Monday and Tuesday evenings were held meetings for women only, and again was manifested God's mighty power. So great was the strain that one woman became unconscious and others nearly lost control of themselves.

The meetings have closed, and the people are rejoicing with a great joy, but out in the country districts the work goes on. Mr. Blair and I have just returned from a country class and at that class the manifestations were exactly the same, terrible agony on account of sin and great joy and peace resulting from confession of it.

And thus has begun in our city a work of grace for which we give to God our most grateful thanks, praying that what we have seen may simply be the earnest of the greater blessing that God has yet in store for us, and not for us only but for this whole land. To God be all the praise, to whose name be glory for ever and for ever.