

70 Years in the Sanctuary

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She was old and frail. Many years of domicile in the United States had not in the slightest taken the tartan edge off her broad Scottish accent. No longer able to attend the meetings of the Lord's people, she was lovingly cared for by her daughter and son-in-law. She sat in a rocker in a corner of the living room, back and forth. However she was not idle. She was a woman of prayer. My colleague and I were engaged in a gospel series in the city where she lived and were considering bringing the series to an end on the next Lord's day, when we were invited for a meal and a visit with old Aunt Sarah.

She greeted us warmly with the comment, "I hope you boys are not going to stop these meetings yet" - well, we were planning to do just that on Lord's Day - "... and don't forget my brother Jimmy, I've prayed for him for seventy years".

Uncle Jimmy was eighty, and lived only a few blocks away, so we decided we would drop over and see him and invite him out to the meetings. We were warned that he was "a wee hard-headed Scot," and if you know anything about that breed, you'll know they are not easily persuaded.

We found his place and knocked on the door. A fresh-faced, handsome gentleman opened it. His shining white hair enhanced his rosy cheeks. Short of stature, but evidently sprightly, he invited us in. He indicated where we should sit and he took his place in a well-worn chair that was positioned so that he could watch two different baseball games going on at the same time on two televisions!. One in the bedroom and the other in the living room. He also had one going in the kitchen, in case he had to go to the fridge for a drink, he explained.

So there we were, trying to talk to this man about his never-dying soul, and all he could think about, it seemed, was baseball. At last, defeated, we left the old man to his preoccupation. Next day we thought we should try again. So in the morning (hopefully before baseball) we knocked on his door. Noises indicated someone was there - he lived alone - but our Scottish friend didn't answer. Again defeated, we left.

"What are we going to do about Uncle Jimmy?". Another day, so much to do, an unlikely prospect, and, we confessed, not much hope of a favourable response. Then we remembered the old prayer warrior. Rocking back and forth and pleading her case in the presence of God. We were ready to give up after a couple of days, and she had prayed for seventy years!.

Ashamed of our lack of heart, we made our way again to the wee Scotsman's home. Our knock was quickly answered this time. It was almost as though we were expected. "Come in boys," he greeted us, with his fresh-faced smile. The welcome was so warm and generous, I wondered if it was a trap!.

"Been thinking about you boys. I have a good story that you could use. Sit down." We sat. Then he regaled us with a long tale about a man getting on the wrong train.

"Uncle Jimmy," I said, when he finished, "Don't you see, you are the man in the story. You are the man on the wrong train!". He sat back in his chair, as though he had been hit.

"Uncle Jimmy," said my colleague, "Why don't you give up all your arguments and take Christ as your Saviour, and be saved?".

"You know boys, I think I'd better just do that," he said, and rising from his chair, he went over to an old sofa and got on his knees, we with him.

"O God," he cried out with emotion, "Forgive me of all my folly and save me from my sins." All the power of seventy years of praying landed on his head in five minutes and old Uncle Jimmy passed from death unto life. He lived for two more years to prove the reality of his salvation.

We bundled him into the car, drove him the six blocks to his old sister's house and shoved him in the door. What a sight! The old prayer warrior got out of her rocking chair and the two old-timers tottered across the room to embrace each other. "O Jimmy, Jimmy," Aunt Sarah wept, "Ye're saved at last, I've prayed for you for seventy years." We wept for joy with them and laughed aloud at the grace and mercy of our God and the wonderful love that follows the sinner to the very end.

Well, they are both in the glory now, Beholding the face of the One they love. Those long seventy years of prayer on earth must seem now but the briefest moment from eternity's point of view.

Have you prayed long for that loved one? Faint not! God is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us." (Eph 3:20)