



“You will know them by their fruits.” Mt. 7:16

FAIRY CHISM

Her Protracted Struggle To Be Sanctified Wholly

The Chism family moved to Moscow, Idaho, in 1917 to be near the state university. Naturally they moved their membership to the Methodist church of that little city. There, Fairy and her sisters enjoyed the fellowship of a large group of young people who befriended them immediately. In fact, a short time after their arrival, Fairy was elected president of the Epworth League. Happy in her church, which she loved deeply, Fairy did not dream that God had other plans for her life. But more of that later.

During that summer God sent several ministers of the Church of the Nazarene to Moscow for home mission campaigns. The First to come was the Reverend C. A. Gibson and wife, who found rooms in the Chism home during their stay in Moscow. Fairy was intrigued at once by their radiant smiles. They seemed different from others she had known. She was deeply interested in Brother Gibson’s description of the contrast in his life before and after he was sanctified. She became a constant seeker for this blessing, in spite of her pastor’s urgent request that she not go to the altar at the tent meeting.

Fairy failed to find her heart’s desire during the Gibson meeting; but shortly after it closed, the Reverend J. T. Little came to town for another campaign. She continued to seek holiness through this meeting and also in the next campaign, held that fall by S. L. Flowers.

During this meeting Fairy became so desperate for the experience of holiness that the enemy was able to take advantage of her earnestness. One Saturday morning while she was working in the variety store where she had part-time employment, the question came to her bewildered mind: “Are you willing to be a fool for Christ’s sake? If so, will you prove it by getting on your knees and praying in the store?” So distraught and earnest was she after months of fruitless seeking that Fairy decided to become a fool if God required it. All day she waited like a condemned criminal facing execution. She felt that she must wait till the store was full of customers for best results.

After supper the shoppers began to arrive in greater numbers. When she felt that a sufficient number had gathered to prove to her satisfaction that she was a fool, Fairy knelt behind the counter and began to pray in loud desperation.

As she prayed she sensed that the store had become very quiet. Everyone was whispering but Fairy. As if drawn by a magnet the people gathered around the kneeling girl. Then she heard someone whisper, “I think you’d better get a glass of water.” Almost immediately the shock of cold water nearly took away her breath; but Fairy prayed on as if oblivious to her surroundings. Then another whispered, “You’d better go get her mother.” Still Fairy prayed.

When her mother came she knelt beside Fairy and began to talk quietly to her. Fairy was praying too hard to be diverted at first, but finally she heard her mother saying, “If the Lord had intended to sanctify you here tonight, He would have given you the blessing by now. Let’s go home and pray.” The mother’s quiet reasoning prevailed.

Together mother and daughter rose from their knees and walked through the wondering crowd out of the store. Fairy felt their eyes upon her almost as if in physical contact as she retreated. All the way home a new suggestion kept coming to her mind: “You didn’t get through tonight, but you will if you’ll pray in the big high school auditorium when all the school is assembled.” (Fairy was a senior that year.)

The news of the prayer meeting in the store soon reached the ears of the Nazarene evangelist. (As well as everyone else's!) Early the next morning Brother Flowers called at the Chism home and explained a number of things to the confused girl. Fairy, in her characteristic way, went all out in an effort to correct her mistake. She told the people not to blame her actions on God, nor on the Church of the Nazarene – but just on herself. Nevertheless it was rumored about that Fairy Chism had lost her mind. She had gone crazy over religion!

The following summer, in 1918, the Reverend Mr. Beebe came to hold a meeting for the struggling Nazarene congregation. For months preceding the meeting, Fairy had been haunted by the fear that God wanted her to join the Church of the Nazarene, but she earnestly hoped she was mistaken.

During this campaign Fairy went to the altar one night about nine o'clock determined to settle it forever. Five hours later she came to the end of her struggle. Looking up through her tears she said, "O Lord, if You want me to go to heaven with this crowd – if I never see another young person – all right, I will go with them!" ("This crowd" was composed of old people, mostly poor, no university people, and not one young person!)

The floor beneath the altar was wet with her tears when Fairy rose to her feet. "Brother Beebe," she announced, "if you will take me into the Nazarene church, I want to join Sunday." Little did she or anyone else present that night (actually it was morning!) realize what a momentous step Fairy Chism had taken. Walking home by herself two hours past midnight, Fairy felt that she was indeed alone; but God had made the way clear and she would follow Him.

Slipping quietly into her room, hoping not to awaken the household, Fairy turned on the light and her eyes fell instantly on her precious Daily Light which she had received for her bouquet of wild flowers in Sunday school several years before. Opening the book to the readings for that day, her heart lifted as she read: "By faith Abraham.... called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed." This was the key verse for the day – in bold, black type.

Fairy read on: "He shall choose our inheritance for us. He led him about.... As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him.... I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.... We walk by faith.... Arise ye and depart; for this is not your rest...."

These words burned themselves into Fairy's heart as if God had spoken to her aloud. There could be no doubt in her mind now that He was guiding. She glanced at the second page for the day and found God's reason for leading her to the Church of the Nazarene: "Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness," also in bold type. "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy...."

It was clear as sunlight to Fairy as she read. God was leading her out of her church – where she had enjoyed such pleasant relationships – for the cause of holiness. For it was this path that was to lead her to Africa. Exactly ten years later she was to meet Louise Robinson (later Mrs. J. B. Chapman) in Johannesburg, Africa. Oh, the wonder of God's leadings in a life that is His!

While Fairy was reading these verses from Daily Light, her mother, wondering at the lateness of her arrival, came into the room from her adjoining bedroom. "Why are you so late, Fairy?" she asked.

"O Mother, I'm going to join the Nazarenes Sunday. God has told me to. Just see here in my Daily Light for today."

Mrs. Chism was not surprised at this decision, for she had been facing the same issue and struggling against it for months herself. Instantly she made her decision. "I will join with you," was like music to Fairy's ears.

The next morning the younger sisters, after some discussion, decided to cast their lot with Fairy and

their mother.

That Saturday afternoon Fairy went to the Methodist parsonage and asked her pastor, a fine, imposing doctor of divinity, for their church letters. He was kind but firm in his refusal. He could never grant his member's letters to that church. He assured Fairy that she and her family were making a serious mistake. Appealing to her earnest desire to be of service in God's kingdom, he warned her that she would be casting away her chance for future usefulness by this move. He insisted that she remain in his church until she graduated from the university, promising to assist her in further study in Chicago after graduation. He further assured her that she would make a name for herself someday if she would follow his advice.

Fairy was loath to go against the wishes of her pastor, whom she revered and loved, but she knew that God had spoken. This was the first time in her life that she had rebelled against the authority of her church, and now it was because she was convinced that her pastor was in conflict with higher authority which she must obey at any cost. As for having a name on earth Fairy has never been tempted to seek position or fame.

The next day Fairy was scheduled to speak at Epworth League. At the close of the service she resigned the presidency, telling that host of loyal young friends, with whom she had been unbelievably happy, that she felt that God wanted her to join the Church of the Nazarene. Almost in a body her Methodist friends followed her to the little tent, where they witnessed one of the most important steps of her life – joining the Church of the Nazarene on July 28, 1918, on profession of faith, along with her mother and two sisters.

03 – COLLEGE DAYS

The next step in God's plan for Fairy's life came soon. A dear friend, Mrs. Fred Samm, a devout, cultured charter member of the Church of the Nazarene in Moscow, told her about Northwest Nazarene College at Nampa, Idaho. This small church school had been started in a sagebrush clearing a few years before by Mr. Eugene Emerson, a Christian businessman who had dreamed of a Christian college for the training of young people in an atmosphere conducive to the development of the Christian virtues. At the time of this writing the college is flourishing beyond Mr. Emerson's wildest dreams. Through the past thirty-five years N.N.C. has sent forth a constant stream of noble Christian young men and women who have made the world better by their lives.

Fairy had fully expected to enter the university that fall, but her desire for the experience of perfect love had by now eclipsed the desire for a university education. Where better could she expect to find this coveted experience than in a holiness college?

So Fairy went to N.N.C. In September of 1918. Like the man who sold everything in order to buy the pearl of great price, she made everything else secondary as she began to seek the baptism with the Holy Spirit and Fire. She went to the altar on the first Sunday morning of the school year and again that night. From then on whenever an altar call was made, whether at church or chapel service, there would be at least one seeker if Fairy was at the service – and she always was.

It was in October of 1918 that the "flu" epidemic struck N.N.C. Louise Robinson was head. Nurse, and Fairy was delighted to be on her staff. Although almost all of the school was down at one time or another, not one death occurred as a result of the epidemic that fall. The first semester was shortened because of the epidemic, but school opened again at the second semester.

During the entire school year Fairy made it her first concern to get sanctified. She took only part of the regular college course in order to have more time to pray. She sometimes sought out people known for prayer and had them pray with her, hoping each time that it might be her time for victory.

Fairy prayed so constantly that when she went home for the Christmas holidays her mother gently remonstrated with her over the condition of her shoes. The toes were worn through! "Fairy," she said, "can't you pray in some way so as not to wear out the toes of your shoes?" But her father came

immediately to her rescue, although he himself was not a Christian. “Now, Mother, you just let Fairy alone. I’ll buy her all the shoes she can pray through!”

Feeling that she was such a hard case, Fairy had given God a year in which to sanctify her; yet the college year was drawing to a close and still she was not sanctified. In desperation she vowed never to eat or sleep again until she had prayed through. For three days and nights she prayed, being joined the second day by another hungry seeker.

Dr. H. O. Wiley, president of N.N.C., became concerned over the girls and sent Mrs. Anna Steer, the wonderful matron of the girls’ dormitory, Louise Robinson, Fairy’s dearest friend, and others to help them pray. In only a little while such glory came down that Fairy could not remain on her knees. Walking around the room with hands raised in her characteristic way, she kept saying: “Is this the Holy Ghost?” Even though in a short while she was again in darkness because of doubt, she now realizes that God did sanctify her at that time. That night at prayer meeting her fellow seeker was happy and victorious, but doubt had blacked out Fairy’s victory.

On the last Sunday night of the school year Fairy knelt at her familiar place at the altar. That night, however, was different; for Louise Robinson knelt by her side and Brother J. T. Little just across the altar from her. Fairy was encouraged. She felt that surely she would find victory tonight, for Louise Robinson and Brother Little were the greatest pray-ers she had ever known. How good God was to let them both pray for her at the same time! But in vain. After two hours Fairy went home – the school year was ending and she had not been sanctified.

As Fairy walked slowly home that night she talked to the Lord: “If they can’t pray me through I guess no one can. I’m sorry; I’ve done my best. I didn’t want to be lost, but here I am.”

The pungent odor of sagebrush, which she loved, came through the open window that night as Fairy knelt by her bed. “Lord Jesus, I’ve done all I know to get sanctified. Everybody’s prayed for me and it doesn’t seem to do any good. It seems I can’t get the experience. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. I’ll have to go to hell; but when I meet You, I’ll tell You that I really did my best to find heart holiness. However, I do love You with all my heart and will serve You as long as I live. Simply to know Your will, will be to do it.”

Just there the prayer was interrupted. Into Fairy’s heart there came a sweet rest and peace – a sense of cleansing and complete fulfillment. Later she described her experience: “I was so bent on struggling to die out to self and sin. I wanted to be so sure. And it took all of that struggling for me to get to the end of trusting in struggling and in the prayers of people. Doing, doing was ended. The merits of His doing – the precious shed Blood – dawned on my unworthy heart. Ah, the work was done! Because of Calvary and that alone, the Holy Ghost had come, June 2, 1919.”

Source: “Touched By The Divine – The Story Of Fairy Chism” (hdm2626), By Carol Gish

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