

**WESLEYAN HERITAGE Library**

*Autobiographies*

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

*F. A. Powell*

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without  
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

**Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World**

Wesleyan Heritage Publications  
© 1998

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By  
**F. A. Powell**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Chapter One  
My Home And Early Life

Chapter Two  
Early Schooling

Chapter Three  
A Perplexed Boy And A New Religion

Chapter Four  
Early Efforts To Get Saved

Chapter Five  
Further Efforts To Be Saved

Chapter Six  
On The Open Range Of New Mexico

Chapter Seven  
Tragedies On The Prairies

Chapter Eight  
I Find God

Chapter Nine  
Entire Sanctification

Chapter Ten  
A Glorious Camp Meeting

Chapter Eleven  
Pioneering In New Mexico

Chapter Twelve  
Circuit Riding In A Model-T

Chapter Thirteen  
A Blessed International Camp Meeting

Chapter Fourteen  
Marriage And Family Life

Chapter Fifteen  
It Pays To Obey God

Chapter Sixteen  
The Work Of The Ministry

Chapter Seventeen  
More Experiences In The Ministry

Chapter Eighteen  
Forgiveness Was The Key

Chapter Nineteen  
A New Community

Chapter Twenty  
Our Early Family Worship

Chapter Twenty-One  
Prayers Answered

Chapter Twenty-Two  
The Birth Of A New Church

Chapter Twenty-Three  
God Provides

Chapter Twenty-Four  
How An Old Cowboy Learned To Pray

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter One My Home And Early Life**

I was born into an old-fashioned, deep-southern family on September 21, 1885. My family background was indeed a mixture of nationalities. My maternal grandfather, whose name was McLemore, was Pennsylvania Dutch. My maternal grandmother bore the Irish name of Callahan. My paternal grandmother's name was Pate and my grandfather was a Welshman by the name of Powell. Indeed I am the proud product of the American melting pot, an American with differing nationalities in my background. My mother's people were quite well educated, having among them a number of school teachers.

My father was not well educated but did become an acceptable preacher of the gospel. His mother, although she could neither read nor write, had become well skilled in the craft of weaving and sewing. She was a staunch Democrat. During the Grover Cleveland presidential campaign, she wove suiting material from which she tailored two men's suits. One she sent to her favorite presidential candidate, Grover Cleveland, and the other she gave to my father, her preacher son. Both suits were worn for public services; Grover Cleveland wore his while giving campaign speeches and my father wore his while preaching the gospel.

My family was among the many whose fortunes had been affected adversely by the economic conditions which followed the Civil War. At the time of my birth they were living in a small log cabin on the Hollis plantation which was located in the swamps of the State of Mississippi, about a quarter of a mile from the Cypress Creek just near to where it emptied into the Yalabusha River. The center of the plantation, near to which our cabin was located, consisted of a large home of the owner, Mr. Mart. Hollis, a sorghum evaporator, a cotton gin, and a grist mill. The plantation commissary and the post office of Hollis were located about three quarters of a mile up the creek. Most of the work on the plantation was done by Negroes. They were tenants on the plantation with their cabins located along Cypress Creek. Each tenant was allowed a small plot of ground of from fifteen to twenty-five acres which he worked as a share cropper. He also was supplied with a mule with which he plowed. His wife and children did other field work with a hoe. These Negroes were dependent upon the plantation for their subsistence. Each obtained his corn for bread from the plantation barn, and always each man brought his mule to the plantation barn at the close of each day. My early life was influenced by these associations.

I remember seeing them lower my mother's casket into the grave. I could not understand just what it all meant, but after returning home, I remember becoming lonely and of missing my mother. I realized that as a boy my best friend was gone.

My family was very poor. I can never remember in those early days of my father ever being worth more than three hundred dollars at any one time. To add to the distress of poverty, further tragedy struck. During the winter my father was stricken with rheumatism and our only horse died. There

we were: a family without a mother, a sick father, six children (five of whom were at home) in poverty and want. To make matters worse, the children contracted whooping cough. It would not have been so bad if I alone had taken it for then my older sister could have given me care. But about the time I'd take a spell of coughing and vomiting, my sister would come to assist me, then she would start coughing. My, what a plight!

Finally spring came! I remember my father talking about what we could do in our dire straits - my father sick in bed, no horse, and my older brother, Lowry, not large enough to farm. But, despite his small size, Lowry said, "I can plow with old Rowdy." Rowdy was one of our oxen, for we all used ox wagons in those days. you may easily imagine what kind of crop we made. A small boy trying to plow with a homemade wooden plow pulled by an old ox, working a field with stumps and roots and grubs every few feet in the furrow. He did his best, dropping a little corn in the furrow and endeavoring to cover it with an old-fashioned A-harrow which didn't work so well. Often he would put me in between the handles on the frame of the harrow to hold it down. My! What farming!

Well, of course, with my father sick with rheumatism, a family with no finances, with six children to care for, none of us fared very well. But even amidst such circumstances, I was growing and developing. As a small boy I had my dreams. Hearing the mellow voices of the plantation Negroes of the deep South awoke strains of music in my breast. I wanted to grow up to be a big man, to sing like old Sam Shannon, our colored neighbor. I saw Mr. Hollis, the plantation owner, ride his pacing horse, and I dreamed of some day riding as he did. I longed to grow up to preach like old-fashioned, long-bearded, sweet-spirited Rev. Willis, who always wept as he read the Word and brought the gospel message.

Perhaps this is as good as any place in the book to give my reflections of the life of the Mississippi Negro of my childhood days. There were possibly more Negroes in that vicinity than there were whites. At the close of the Civil War the Negroes were scattered, but soon finding they had no place to go for nobody seemed to want them since they had lost them as slaves, they returned to the old plantation holders, desiring homes. The plantation holders took them back on this basis: They were now renters, sharecrop renters, and the plantation holders furnished a plow, a mule to plow with, corn for bread, and bacon and molasses. After the Negro made his first crop the plantation holder was to take the expense of the furnishing out of the proceeds of the crops in the fall.

So, the colored man would have his plot of ground laid out to him, he would come to the owner's barn, get his mules, go out and prepare his land, plant his seed under the direction of the land owner, work his crops, and then in the fall he would pick his cotton, bring it to the plantation gin to be ginned. He would prepare his sorghum, bring it to the plantation evaporator to make into molasses, his corn would be gathered and stored in the massa's barn, then would come the day of settlement. The plantation owner would bring out his books, (most of the Negroes could neither read nor write,) and he would say, "Sam, you've got so much corn for bread during the year, so much molasses from our barrel, so much meat from the commissary, so much clothing, and now your crop made so many bales of cotton, so many barrels of molasses, so many bushels of corn, now with what you've used during the year from the commissary, as we balance the books you just lack \$16.14 coming out even. But you can't leave in debt, so you can make another crop and I hope you come out better next year." So, on and on the poor Negro went, he was a slave but didn't know it.

These early impressions of the Negro made me his friend. Some of the old Negro Mammies, I think, were as good Christians as you could find any where, and my, how they could make the old-fashioned southern biscuits!

Most of the families with any means at all kept a Negro mammy around to do the housework and care for the children. Old Aunt Easter, one I remember so well, was so kind to me and as a lad I greatly adored her. What a hard time they had to make a living. Most of them lived in little log cabins along the bank of the creek and carried their house water from the creek. They prepared their scant meals and then went into the cotton fields to work right along with their husbands and children. God alone will be able to reward them at the consummation of all days.

This story covers the life of the Negro in my childhood, but a few years ago I was back in the same vicinity to preach holiness. I had still a picture in my mind of the old hitchrack where a few horsebackers would dismount and hitch their horses, make their way over to the cracker barrel store, and then a number of ox wagons around on the streets. I still imagined I would see them, you know. But to my surprise, at this time when I reached home again and began to walk the streets, almost every Negro who came into town would have his old wreck of an automobile and he spent most of his leisure time trying to get it to where it would run a little better. There were no oxen and only a few horses. What a change from my boyhood days to the day in which we are penning these lines!

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Two Early Schooling**

Schooling for me started much earlier than for most children. Since we were without a mother, I was under the care of the older children. So when they went to school, I went with them although I was then but four years old. Our school season was very short. Usually it consisted of three months in the winter and a month in the summer after the crops were laid by. Even then our brief opportunity for attending school was often interrupted because of the ever-present chills and fever associated with malaria.

My first teacher, Mrs. Sophie Avan, was a very kind, motherly lady. She had a son about my age whom she brought with her to school. Often she would excuse the two of us from the school room and we played while the others studies. I soon fell in love with her. No doubt this was because we had lost our mother and Mrs. Avan was so kind to me, also she was one of our near neighbors. Another close neighbor, Mrs. Mack Hollis, was very kind to me and I soon learned to appreciate her greatly. My older brother would laugh at me because I tried to use the same language which Mrs. Hollis and my teacher used. Such a pity that I did not learn more of their spirit and retain it in later years.

As I grew larger, I went about with the other boys. I remember so vividly the old swimming hole on the creek, the old hickory fishing poles we would cut or break off from the trees in the swamps, and those bamboo poles we cut when we grew larger.

The old church that stood on the hickory ridge stand out in my memory. Here is where I was first captivated by the worship of God. I can see now the old horseblock where the ladies, assisted by their gentlemen escorts, dismounted from their sidesaddles. They wore old-fashioned riding skirts and while the young men tied the horses to saplings they slipped out of these skirts and were ready to enter the church with their escorts. There were no musical instruments in the church. One of the fathers would "pitch" the hymn after the minister had "lined" it. I can still hear the singing; those deep baso voices as they would come out on the tonic chord, the mellow soprano, and then the part we called, a very high treble.

Sam Ellis was the leader of the singing in our country and he became my ideal. Always the four parts were carried by the singers, and sometimes possibly five parts, for there were some who sang between the keys. As a small boy I developed a great love for music and could hear well all four parts of a song. Often we children would sing. I would sing alto in the falsetto register like Sam Ellis and my brother, Oscar, would sing the soprano part. Soon, when the' neighbors had their gatherings, they would request us to sing for them. One of their choice of the ballads which we would try to sing was Jessie James. We also memorized most of the hymns which they sang at church. One of our favorites was The Old Ship of Zion, and of course we sang the Old Time Religion.

In time, my younger brother, Oscar, whom my mother left as a tiny babe when she passed on, became my charge and we were always together. When we were asked to sing I would say, "Oscar, you sing like Uncle Hal Hawkins and I'll sing like Sam Ellis." So we would carry the soprano and alto in the falsetto register. Our singing seemed to provide great entertainment for the neighbors. The hymn books had no music in them. They simply had the words with the initial letters of Long Meter, Short Meter, and Common Meter. Some were shaped differently to our present hymn books. One which was used regularly at the singing bees was called The Old Sacred Harp. When closed, it was a book about twelve inches long and seven or eight inches wide. When opened it was about twenty-four inches long. As a young and tender child, those old-fashioned songs fastened themselves upon my heart.

Clothing was always a problem in our family. With an invalid father and without a mother our clothes were very poor. It was not uncommon for me to have the knees out of my pants, and I was a "backslider" too, and often the elbows were out of my shirt. Besides this, my rusting knuckles running back on my wrists, made me quite a picture.

The old-fashioned "sings " were held in the school house of our community. Often I wanted to go but my clothing was not presentable. So I would make my way down through the woods, walk up the side of the spring branch until I was near to the school house which was built on the ridge. Then I would climb a dogwood sapling and perch myself on a limb and listen to the singing, for voices seemed to carry a long distance in those swamp lands. There are a number of early church memories which are not too clear in my mind. The older children told me that my father had taken great interest in services of El Bethel, the little Methodist Church of the community. This church gave father a license as an exhorter. In my very early childhood, this church burned down. The church, next in distance to us, was the Missionary Baptist Church at New Liberty. This was the most popular one of these special meetings with my father.

The service seemed to be all tied up. I can remember how my father looked for a little while. Then he jumped to his feet and began to exhort and great life came upon the congregation. It turned out to be quite a service. To my childish mind, my father became quite a hero that night.

The next night we went back to this church and that service provided considerable excitement for me. As the meeting was just getting started, I noticed some of the boys running into the church and in great earnestness telling something to some men. These men hurried out of the church. But all was quiet for a little while. Later, however, the men came back into the church bringing with them a Negro named Steve. Steve and his girl friend named Yudie had decided to run off and get married, so they were taking a couple of horses from the church grounds for their trip. The boys had seen them take the horses so had come to notify their fathers. They brought Steve into the church and tied him down as if they were going to punish him severely. I was very much excited. But one of the older men assured me what they were doing it more to scare him than for anything else. I was a boy of about four years of age, I attended his fine on my farm. What a night for a four-year-old boy!



# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Three**

### **A Perplexed Boy And A New Religion**

There was a period when my father left off going to church. Possibly our extreme poverty and his broken health was the chief cause for this failure. But whatever the cause, we did not attend church for some time. In time a Primitive Baptist elder from Texas, by the name of J. P. Pilkington, came into our community. What a preacher was he! I shall never forget how he swept the community with his preaching. Our nearest neighbor, Mr. Ben Watkins, came to see my father and insisted that he should attend the meetings, saying, "You must hear Pilkington preach". Finally my father agreed to attend the meeting just once. Although I was just a little lad, I caught every word of the discussion. The next day I saw father go with Mr. Watkins to church.

When once my father heard Mr. Pilkington preach, he was swept away and had to continue attending the meetings. There was quite a stir in the community. Many of those who had been Methodists and Missionary Baptists changed their membership to the Primitive Baptist Church. Among them was my father. I shall never forget it. We children were allowed to attend and father would not miss a service. When the meetings closed, all those joining the church had to be baptized for no one could enter the Primitive Baptist Church without first being immersed by a Primitive Baptist preacher. Among this group was my father. At once he was made an elder in the Primitive Baptist church and soon he began preaching.

This was all very frustrating to my boyish mind. I could not forget how my father had once exhorted in the Missionary Baptist Church and had stirred the entire congregation, and how for awhile he had left off attending church. Now he had changed to another church, had to be baptized over again and then ordained as a preacher. I could not get away from this confused thinking for it kept going over and over in my mind as I grew older. Finally one day, while my father and I were picking cotton, I decided to put the question straight to him, asking him what it was all about. When I had made up my mind to speak to him, I picked fast to catch up with him, for as a small lad I could pick much more cotton than my father. As I caught up to him, I said, "Paw, I want to ask you a question."

"All right, Son. What is it?" "You know, paw, a long time ago you went to the meetin' and the meetin' didn't seem to go well. You got up and cried and talked and everybody cried. Then, for awhile, you didn't go to church. When Mr. Pilkington came and preached you went to his meetin', was baptized over and joined his church. Now, what about that, paw?"

My father seemed to know the mind of a child and was quite apt in dealing with his problems. Just before our coming to the cotton field, he had seen me lying on the floor looking at the clowns and animals on a circus handbill. So, he said, "Suppose that the Ringling Brothers circus was going to be in Pittsboro, our county seat, tomorrow. I would tell you this evening that if you would rise very early in the morning, we would go to the circus. So we get up before day light and get ready to go.

When we get half way to Pittsboro, I would look at you and see that in the darkness you had put your breeches on wrong side out. Now, what would you do?"

"Oh," I said, "I'd ask you to stop the oxen and I'd run down in the gully by the side of the road, pull off my breeches, turn them around, and put them on right side to. " "That's the way it has been with me religiously," said father. "I started to go to heaven a -good many years ago. I had gotten thus far along the road when Mr. Pilkington came along, and through him I found out that I was in the shape I have just described you to be in. So, I stopped and turned my clothes. Now, I am still on the way."

This was a momentous period in my life. My father had not only changed his church membership, he had changed all of his fundamental Christian beliefs - changed from Methodist doctrine to the strong Calvinistic teachings of the Hardshell Baptists. Their doctrine was the foreordination and predestination of all things from the foundation of the world. Or, as we children used to say, "What is to be, will be, if it never comes to pass." It also meant that his preaching was changed. They did not preach to sinners. They preached that one was born either to be saved or to be a reprobate and that one could do nothing about it. I heard so much of that teaching that I almost came to believe it myself. What a tragedy!

Oh, if only someone, in those days, had preached to me from John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life". How I do thank God for the "Whosoever " gospel.

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Four Early Efforts To Get Saved**

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near; Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isaiah 55:6,7 In the summer, when I was twelve, the Missionary Baptists had a protracted meeting - we call them revival meetings now. It was in these meetings that God first spoke strongly to my heart. I was awakened to the fact that I was accountable for my sins unto God. I would sit in the pew and weep for long periods while the preacher brought the message, for I wanted to be a Christian. However, being taught by my father that only grown-ups, not children, could be saved, I thought I could not become a Christian.

Later they had another revival in the Missionary Baptist Church and in this meeting God came so upon my heart that I could hardly remain in my seat. There were large windows in those old-fashioned churches, but there was no glass in them. The window where I was sitting was wide open. I was so convicted and broken up that I leaped out of the window, ran down the hill, and fell under some bushes to weep my heart out. Another young man, seeing me go, followed me. He was a Christian and he did his best to help me to get saved, but I didn't make it. At the close of that meeting, they begged me to go be baptized into the church and then I would be saved. But I couldn't get the consent of my mind to do that for I did not feel that I had been forgiven of my sins.

At about this time, I become very ill with malaria and lapsed into a state of unconsciousness for a long time. I had been working and living with a relative. I remember some of the neighbors coming in and remarking that they didn't think I could ever get well. No doubt I was somewhat delirious. After the chills would leave me and the burning fever would come, I would look up from my bed and it looked as if the old loft overhead - which was just a few boards on which stuff was stored - was full of watermelons that were about to roll off on me. I have never forgotten those experiences.

The doctor, thinking that I could never be well there in Mississippi, advised that if and when I got a little better I should go to Texas where they did not have malaria. The next September I, in company with a young friend, left the swamps of Mississippi bound for the state of Texas. My friend had some relatives named Scott, folk who had previously lived in our Mississippi community, who were now farming in the black land of Ellis County, Texas. I walked on to the Shaw farm with only fifteen cents in money, a few clothes, an old-fashioned valise pulled across my shoulders, and my shoes tied together with the strings hanging over a stick. They welcomed us and at once gave us a job picking cotton. We were being paid fifty cents per hundred pounds and our board. I could pick two hundred pounds of cotton a day. My! My! My! Making a dollar in one day! I thought I would be rich in just a little while. What a change for a fifteen year old boy! I could not help but contrast this to my experience in Mississippi. There my first wages were three dollars a month and board. Sometimes I think the man that boarded me came out at the worst end.

I remember that when Christmas time came I asked my employer for twenty-five cents for Christmas. I had worked for him for almost five months and was due the sum of fifteen dollars, but he said, "Son, I just can't spare the quarter." So I had not a penny for that Christmas. When the first of the year came I thought I would get the fifteen dollars, but he said, "your father ran an account here at the store when he was so sick, and I am applying the fifteen dollars on that old account." You may well imagine my disappointment. I was then a thirteen year old boy, but had never had a store-bought suit and had always attended church barefooted. I had planned to buy some clothing with my wages. I cried and told my brother Lowry, who was named for the old Methodist preacher, Robert Lowry. He was seventeen and was drawing ten dollars a month for his work. "Never mind," he said, "I'll take you to Pittsboro on Saturday and will get you a suit of clothes." My, how that healed my wounds.

Sure enough! On Saturday Lowry took me to Tom Gaines store. Mr. Gaines threw back the spreads which covered the old-fashioned counter where the clothes were stacked, pulled out a coat and slipped it on me. It came down over my hands, so he said, "That won't do." I hated for him to take it off me for I thought I would not get a suit. Finally they found one that fit and I had my first suit of clothes at thirteen years of age. You should have seen me strut when I went to church on Sunday.

My brother who has since entered the ministry as a Baptist preacher, became my ideal young man that day. He had given me my first suit of clothes. So now making one dollar a day and my board seemed like a fortune to me. Before the first week had passed by, I became so homesick that I would have gone back to Mississippi if I had had enough money to make the trip. What a tragedy that would have been. Especially was I homesick to see my brother Lowry. Soon, however, the homesickness wore off and I began to plan how by making a dollar a day I would be able to buy a farm and become a farmer back in Mississippi. I planned to become the leading farmer in my home community.

Well! Well! How a boy changes! Soon I became adjusted to the ways of the Texas people and took on the characteristics of the men around me.

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Five Further Efforts To Be Saved**

"A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36:26

Summer came and I visited an old-fashioned Methodist revival. Again the Spirit of God came in great convicting power upon my boyish heart. I had read Ezekiel 36:26. I was really sick of sin and wanted a new heart. I knew I needed a new spirit; something to cause me to walk in the ways of God. But how to find it I did not understand. I believe that I can say now that I sought God with all of my heart. But I didn't know how to take the step of faith, how to believe God. I am sure I repented of every sin, but since I did not take the step of faith I did not feel that I was saved.

Before long I began to associate with the other young people of that community and was having a good time with them. My plans also began to change. I purchased a horse and buggy and was able to keep company with the better people of the community. I thought that this would make me happy, but this did not satisfy. Again I attended a revival being held in our vicinity. Again deep conviction seized my heart. I went to church with the young people, with them I sat on the back seat, chewed gum and giggled. The others seemed to have a big time. But when the Spirit of God would come upon the minister, there was no good time for me any more. Conviction would come upon me and I would weep right there in the presence of the other young people.

This worried me. I could not have a good time like the other young folk were having. I finally made up my mind that if a young man could be saved, I was going to be saved. I would no longer take my girl friend to church in my buggy, rather I would saddle my horse and go alone. The meeting was held under an old-fashioned brush arbor and I would go right down to the front seats and listen to every word that the minister spoke, desiring to do whatever he might suggest.

One morning I was the first to rush to the altar when the invitation was given. I shall never forget that morning. I had said, "This is my day. Today I am going to settle it to go with God. " When I went to the altar a number of young people, possibly twelve or fifteen of them, followed me. Young people prayed through all about me, but I could not get victory. I stayed until around three o'clock in the afternoon. Finally almost everybody had gone and I was still not saved. I arose from the altar so exhausted that I staggered when I endeavored to walk. What a condition for a strong young man to be in! I was so near the kingdom, yet so far away.

That day I rode home alone. No, I was not alone, for the devil was with me. He said, "You have done everything that any young man could do to be saved and still you are not saved. Therefore, no one can be saved. If I were you, I would never go to church another time. You can't go to church and have a good time as the other young folk do. You should quit and never go again." I agreed with the devil to quit. But as the hour of service drew near in the evening, I wanted so badly to go to church.

Instead of going to church, I went to bed; but not to rest. I rolled and tossed until about two o'clock in the morning. Then I seemed to be in a trance. Whether I was awake or asleep I cannot say. It seemed to me that Jesus came and touched me and said: "You have repented of every known sin. "Yes ", I replied, "I have." Then He said: "I forgive your every sin. But when you sin again, you will again be a sinner."

I awoke with a start. "My God, is this real?" was all I could think. I felt my flesh to see if I were alive. Could this happen to me - an ignorant, homeless boy? Then and there I resolved to take Jesus as my Savior. I was then living with Mr. Brooks who was an infidel. I promised myself that when I arose in the morning I would tell Mr. Brooks that I had become a Christian. Then I dropped off to sleep.

Usually I awoke very early in the morning, but this morning the sun was shining when I jumped out of bed. The experience of the night was very vivid to me. The devil said, "If you tell this infidel that you got saved, he will say you are the biggest fool who ever lived. If I were you, I'd never mention it. " While I was dressing the devil continued to argue with me and finally I decided not to mention the experience of the preceding night to a soul.

Following this experience I went along for some time without any conviction or condemnation. I seemed to be right at the border of the Fountain of Salvation, but not in. Finally I joined with the other young people in their parties and was back into sin again. I tried to dismiss the whole matter and to believe that nobody could be saved. How the devil argues! But it cannot be settled that easily.

Later a revival was held in the little town of Alvarado and my girl friend was anxious for me to take her to the revival, which I did. Now I had no conviction whatsoever. In fact, I could dismiss myself at the edge of the tabernacle and turn aside with the other boys. She was a Christian and became very much concerned about my condition and talked religion to me a great deal. I would turn her aside with the statement that I had no conviction whatsoever any more. "Don't you have any conviction at all?" she asked. "Do you mean that you want to be lost?" "No, I'm already lost. The Holy Spirit never comes to me any more " I replied. With these words, we parted.

On our way to church the next evening, she begged me to go into the service with her. I said, "No, I'll go with the other boys." But she began to weep, saying, "I never thought you would treat me like this." Of course, I was too much of a man to stand that. So I said, "Sure, I'll go into the tabernacle with you tonight. " When we entered the tabernacle, I thought she would go just under the edge and find a seat. But, bless my life, she made for the front. I thought she would never stop! Finally, we slipped into a seat.

Have you ever gone to a church and have the preacher preach to you alone? It seemed he preached right at me. I never shall forget it. When he finished the message, he leaped from the platform and made for me. He took my hand and asked, "Are you a Christian?" I told him that I was not. "My Lord, young man, you should come right up to the altar now." He urged, "Give that voice to God. I heard you sing in the opening part of the service and I covet you for God and His cause." I was stunned but didn't move. The young lady with me urged me to go, but I didn't. I said within myself,

"There's no need to go. I have tried every way and I've failed. Now I am overboard, there is no hope for me."

I could not get away from the words of the minister, nor from the interest of other Christian workers, for the young lady had told them of my condition and had requested that they unite with her in prayer for me. I was again much awakened. I felt if there was a hell, I was bound for it. I said, "What if there is a heaven, and I miss it? But the Spirit does not strive with me as He did once. I'm not broken up." But the next day, as I hoed in the cotton field, I made a resolve that one more time I would seek God if the Spirit would come and break me up and convict me. All that day I pleaded for the Holy Spirit to come back and give me one more opportunity to be saved. Finally my heart was once more tendered, the Spirit was convicting, and I resolved to go to the altar at every invitation. Yet, I did not get it settled definitely. What an awful condition for a young man to be in!

I can see now as I reflect upon these disappointing experiences that very unconsciously I had been influenced greatly by the Hardshell Baptist teachings of my childhood. Especially did their teachings that only the elect could be saved, that some were predestined from birth to be saved while others were predestined to be lost seem to have some influence upon me. The devil had attacked me effectively at this point time and time again. This had contributed to my fruitless search for salvation. How damaging false doctrines can be!

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By  
**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Six On The Open Range Of New Mexico**

It was about this time, in the late summer of 1906, that a young man named Hugh Jeffries and I decided that we could never own a home in the fine cotton black land belt of Texas. We had heard that Uncle Sam had opened some range land in New Mexico for homesteading, so we decided to try our fortunes on the open range of this new territory. We replaced the shafts of my buggy with a pole and hitched both of our horses to the single buggy and started West. We drove from Alvarado out through Bronco, Texas, across the line into New Mexico. It was strictly open range country. There was not a fence for sixty miles to the west and fifty miles to the north. Not a tree was to be seen nor was there a running stream in the entire county. There were just windmills and watering tanks for the thousands of white-face cattle which roamed the range.

As we crossed the line, on our first day in New Mexico, my friend Hugh said: "They tell us that we can have a hundred and sixty acres of land here just for living on it. This looks fine to me. Why don't we stop here?" "Oh," I said, "let's look a little longer." We drove around for another day and that evening we settled on a little flat which is now called the Prairieview community. Since the land was not surveyed, the procedure followed for making a claim on land was for a person to choose the land he desired, plow a furrow around the one hundred and sixty acres, and driving stakes in the corners. This held the land for that person for six months. Such claims were called "squatters claims." Another requirement was that within six months a settler must put up a shack and break at least some portion of the land to show good faith as a farmer.

We chose our land, hired one of the settlers to plow off our claims, drove our stakes at the corners, and claimed the land as our own. What a day that was in each of our lives! We were now the proud claimants of fine New Mexico land. I remember well, neither of us had any money. I had been away during the summer studying vocal music and had spent all my ready cash. I do not know what Hugh had done with his I do know that we had less than five dollars between us. We decided that we must first find some way to make money to improve our claims. We decided to drive back into Texas where we could pick cotton that fall and obtain the needed cash. We drove to nine miles west of Snyder, in Scurry County, where we found Mr. Williamson, a farmer with a large acreage in cotton. His five sons, Hugh, and I picked sixty-five bales of cotton that fall. I look back to those days as among the most pleasant of my youth. Although we labored hard yet we had much fun.

I was determined to make something of myself so many nights I picked cotton by moonlight until ten o'clock so I could have money with which to improve my home in New Mexico. Bethel Schoolhouse was located in a community near to the Williamson farm. It was here that we attended Sunday School. Here Hughs romance began with one of the finest girls of the community a girl he later married. During that winter there was an epidemic of what was called "the big red measles" in the community. I contracted this disease while I was assisting other young people trim a Christmas tree. There were a number of young people who died during this epidemic. I was so seriously ill that



Brother Williamson and his family - the family for whom I was working and with whom I was living- just about gave me up. I grew so weak from infection of the bowels that when the disease broke, I had to learn to walk again by holding to the back of a chair and pushing it along the floor before me. When so many other young people had died from this disease, how fortunate I was that God spared my life for I was not prepared to die.

The next spring two other young men joined Hugh and me to go for their fortunes in New Mexico. One was John Williamson and the other was my younger brother, Oscar, who had come to me from Mississippi during the winter. I had not seen him for over six years, so we were very glad to be together again. I had bought a wagon and another horse, and since the other two boys had decided to join us, we hitched their horses on with mine - four in all - to the wagon which was loaded with camping equipment, such as beds, tin plates, frying pans and some food. There were no roads to speak of in those days, so we drove across the prairie out to New Mexico. where we had staked our claims. The two men who had come with us staked claims adjoining ours. Across the corner of the four claims we built a little shack so that any one of us could stand in a certain corner and say that he was at home on his own land.

These were covered wagon days on the prairie. Many of the settlers drove in with their wagons, and when finding the claim they desired, would set off their covered wagon on the ground and used that as their early residence. Others of the settlers built "half dugouts" - half of their building was in the ground and the other half on top - and in these they made their homes. I was to have some disappointing experiences during the year. John Williamson who had come with us from Snider, Texas, grew homesick and returned home.

My brother, Oscar, went to work on a dam at Carlsbad, New Mexico. Hugh hired out to a cowman for a short time and got so love-sick that he rode in to bid me goodbye. Since I was not in the shack at the time, he left a note and said: "It's all yours!" He had gone back to the Bethel community, for that boy was really love-sick. I was left on the claim to take care of it. I broke out a little field, planted a little corn in every third furrow and started my first farm on my own land.

How lonely I was living alone out on the wide open prairie of New Mexico. Many hours I shall never forget, both sad and joyous. Here I did some of the deepest thinking of all my early life. I read through the New Testament seeking God alone. I then read the little volume of Uncle Bud Robinson's life, "Sunshine and Smiles. I read The Pentecostal Advocate which was published at Peniel, Texas, by Charles A. McConnell and Uncle Bud Robinson. No doubt many of the stones of my Christian foundation were laid very deeply in those lonely days.

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Seven Tragedies On The Prairies**

There was no town in that country. It was eighty miles to the nearest railroad and thirty-five miles to a telephone. There was no cemetery in the community. I remember asking some of the old cowboys where they buried the dead. They answered that people didn't die in that country. That the only way to start a cemetery was to kill a man. I shall never forget how that moved my youthful heart.

Since the cattle men did not want us "nesters" as we were called, killings did take place. I recall an incident of a young man who took a claim near to a cowman's ranch. The cowman also claimed the land. Such circumstances were not unusual in those days. The young man started plowing the furrow around his claim and the cowman came out and tried to stop him. The cowman said, "This is my land. I am going to plow on it tomorrow morning." The next morning the cowman came out with his plow and his Winchester rifle and began plowing from the east. The young man also started plowing from the west. They met in the middle of the field and quarreled. A shooting resulted. The young man was too quick on the draw for the elder cowman, thus the old man lay dead on the spot. This brought a great division in the community. The stock men were on one side and the "nesters" on the other. A feud was carried on between these two groups for a long time.

A very sad incident happened one day. A family had moved onto a claim about two miles west of mine. They had not been there long until one morning as I sat in my shack reading, I heard the sound of horse's hoofs approaching. I stepped to the door and this neighbor, Mr. Gentle, alighted from his horse. He was cordially received for we were glad to see neighbors in those days. He did not answer me so cordially. Rather he said: "My mission is a sad one today. We had a new baby at our house and early this morning it passed away. I have come to get you to make a coffin and bury our little babe."

What an hour that was for me! I had done some carpenter work and had watched my father make coffins in my childhood in Mississippi. Now it was my turn. There was a ranch house about four miles away where there were some fair tools. I went to this ranch house, found some boxing lumber, sawed out a little casket and nailed it together, all the while I had a sad and heavy heart. The ladies of the community gathered, some brought cotton batting, some cheese cloth, one gave some satin she had brought with her from the east, and there was also some velvet given. We padded the little box, wrapped it with the satin and trimmed it with the velvet. When we had finished it the good ladies and I felt a little proud of our job of making the little casket in which to lay the baby.

The cowboys had gone out to section number sixteen for the country had been surveyed by this time and dug a grave. Just as the sun was sinking in the west, we marched around the open grave without even the mother being present. Without a song, without a prayer, I said a few words to try to comfort the father, and laid to rest the remains of this little one to make the first grave in the new

cemetery. I went home to that lonely shack with deep thoughts of God and eternal issues. How sad it was for me to be called upon to bury a little one for as yet I had not settled it to go through with God. I was not a Christian myself.

Another tragedy occurred in our new community. Two young men had taken claims. They quarreled about the boundary line to their claims until finally one walked into the other man's shack and with a chop axe split his head wide open. So another body was added to the new cemetery. The first was an infant; the second a young man in the very bloom of youth. What sad days!

There were four young men who drove through from Curry County, Texas, in a wagon, and had taken claims near to ours. They were close friends of ours, in fact, they were no doubt influenced by us to come to this area. They all went to Pecos Valley, which was an irrigated valley, to work in the hay to make money with which to improve their claims. There was a lot of alkali in the Pecos Valley. One of the young men, Alvis Cox, got hot in the hayfield and drank the alkali water which made him very sick.

The doctor of the Valley advised him to return to the claim where I was, where he could breathe the fresh air of the plains, drink its good water, and possibly he would soon recover. He caught a freight wagon coming into our vicinity and came home with the freighter. He thought he was doing very well so he left the freight wagon about two miles from my claim and walked the distance to my home. I happened to look out of the shack and saw him coming. I recognized that he was not acting normally. When he came near enough, I asked, "What is the matter, Alvis?" He answered, "I'm sick."

I took him into the little shack, put him to bed and ministered to him with what little remedies I had. Hour by hour he grew worse. I knew not what to do. A day or so later a cowman rode by my shack and seeing the pitiable condition of the young man said, "Take him in your buggy and bring him to the ranch. My wife will help you care for him." We took him to the ranch but he rapidly grew worse. With no doctors in the vicinity and his mother one hundred fifty miles away, what could I do?

There was a retired physician who had taken a claim about five or six miles away. I went for the old doctor and he did the best he could for Alvis, saying that in a day or two he would be better. Since there was a telephone about thirty-five miles away, I rode there and phoned his parents at Snyder, Texas. I also phoned his older brother in the Pecos Valley. He saddled his horse at once and rode back to the plains, reaching the ranch just a few hours before Alvis passed on. There we were. A couple of young men with a corpse on our hands, with no undertaker, no casket, no preacher - what a lonely feeling! We made another coffin with our own hands, went out and dug a grave.

All of the claim holders and ranchmen came to the funeral. There were around one hundred fifty people present. But we had no preacher and we could find no one to offer prayer. I went among the crowd to every man whom I thought might pray and asked them to offer prayer but found none who were willing to pray at this funeral. Several were members of the church but said they had never prayed. We placed the casket on two chairs by the open grave. Walter, Alvis' brother, stood at the head of the casket, and taking hold of the back of the chair with as pitiful look as I have ever seen on a persons face, said a few words. I sang a hymn. So without prayer or a sermon, we placed him

in the dirt and left a little mound as a solemn reminder that "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. " (Hebrews 9:27). This, under the circumstances, was the best we could do.

A couple of days after the funeral, the mother and father of Alvis arrived. The mother said that when they got within sight of the ranch house and saw the bedding out on the line, she knew that Alvis was gone. Of all the sadness I have ever witnessed, it was the sorrow of that mother who had arrived too late to see her son alive in this world. Yes, I had many sad experiences in those pioneer days in eastern New Mexico.

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By  
**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Eight I Find God**

The first Sunday we were in the community, the folk wanted to have a little "get together". Word had gotten around about the two new young men who had settled a claim, particularly that one of them was a singer. So we were invited to a home which was a half-dugout. I have told of my love for music. I had now been studying voice for two years under some of the best voice teachers in the state of Texas, and had also taken some teacher training. At the close of this first day's singing, the people requested me to order some song books for them. We had a number of books but no two books were of the same kind, since we had all moved to this vicinity from different communities, bringing with us what song books we had. So at once, I found myself tied in with what worship we had in the new country.

There were very few religious people in our community. However, there was one cowman who had been studying for the ministry at Peniel College, but having become the victim of tuberculosis, he had to stop his studies and was ordered by his doctor to come to the dry atmosphere of New Mexico. We had one service with this invalid ministerial student bringing a short message.

Before long school houses were built on the plains. When the first one was built in our little community, the people wanted me to teach them to sing. So we opened a singing school for these people. Immediately upon the close of this school, a community some distance away requested me to conduct a singing school for them. About this time a holiness man by the name of T. E. Fisher moved from Fisher County, Texas, into New Mexico, just across the state line from Bronco, Texas. Murphy's schoolhouse had been erected and there Mr. Fisher started a Sunday School. I was invited by Mr. Fisher to conduct a singing school in the school house. The youngsters of that community did not often go to church but they surely did like to go to singing school. We opened the school. I, a young man just twenty-one and not a settled Christian, and Mr. Fisher a holiness man running a Sunday School. There were about sixty young people in attendance at the school.

At this time there came into the community from central Texas a Baptist preacher, the Reverend J. T. Lightfoot. He had had some difficulty with his denomination for his teachings were not in accord with the prevailing doctrines of the Baptists. He was a well educated man and a fine Bible scholar. He requested the privilege of preaching in the morning of each day during the singing school. So we planned for a preaching service at eleven o'clock each morning. This put me in a strange predicament. Here I was teaching sacred music but had never settled it in my heart to go through with God.

About the third day of school and the preaching of Reverend Lightfoot, after I had given the morning lesson, I said to the students and parents - for the parents had come for the special service that day - "I have gone as far as I can go. I am here in a Sunday School community teaching sacred

music, reading the Psalms of the joy of Israel to these students, but without a knowledge of God myself. It is more of a load than I can carry. I must find help or close the school."

Immediately Brother Fisher jumped to his feet and said "That's what I've been wanting you to say, Brother Powell. Let us go to prayer right now and settle it. " My heart was breaking. As Brother Fisher spoke I threw up my hands and fell to my knees. I had expected to stay there for hours seeking God, as I had done so many times and never gotten settled as a Christian. As I dropped to my knees, I said, "Lord, the case is Yours. If I am ever saved, You will have to do it. I have done all I can do and have failed."

As I threw up my hands and said these words my knees had no more than pressed the floor when God came putting His everlasting arms beneath me, lifting the heavy load from my soul. The burden which had crushed my heart for years was all taken away. God was so near to me that it seemed that I could reach out my hands and touch Him. What a day that was in my life! From that service the singing school was turned into a revival meeting and many of the pupils were saved.

My first burden for another soul came the afternoon that I was saved. My younger brother Oscar, who was batching with me in our shack, had never been saved and his need rested heavily upon my heart. So I began to pray for him. I was expecting him to come over for the weekend to visit with us at the school. I spent the night with an old friend who lived in the direction of our claims. Early the next morning as we were preparing to go to school - for we then had seven hours each day for singing schools just as they had in a literary school-one of the boys called my attention to a horseback rider coming from the south. I looked and recognized at once that it was my brother Oscar.

I had began praying for him the day before expecting him to come up on Saturday, but this was only Wednesday morning. We drove over to the school house. Instead of requesting one of the students to bring a bucket of fresh water from the windmill, which was some distance away, I picked up the bucket, dashed out the water and suggested to Oscar that he walk with me to the well. My desire was to speak to him about my being saved the day before.

"How did you happen to come up today, Oscar?" I asked. "I was not looking for you to come until Saturday." "I don't know" he replied. "I awoke in the night and became very restless and felt that I should come this morning. So I got up hurriedly, went to the pasture, got my horse, saddled it, and I am here." "I got saved yesterday" I told him, "and the Lord immediately put a burden on my heart for you. We want to see you get saved today." I had been expecting my brother to come Saturday, but I seemed to hear the Lord whisper, "I am answering your prayer earlier than you expected." Thank God for His wonderful grace. As I spoke to him about his soul he turned pale. I thought, "Maybe I have said the wrong thing and have made him mad. I seem to have made a mess of my first personal work to win a soul to Christ."

After I had given the morning lesson, I turned the service over to Reverend Lightfoot who preached at the eleven o'clock hour. Oscar sat on the back seat. I prayed all through the service that God might reach him. I thought the preacher did the poorest preaching that morning I had ever heard him do. But as the invitation was given, we had not sung half through the first verse of the invitation song, when Oscar jumped from the back seat and made a run to the altar. He literally fell on the altar

and began to scream and pray. I think he was not there more than two minutes when he jumped to his feet and began to shout. He ran down the aisle, knocked over a bench, ran out the door, ran around the building three times, all the while yelling like a Comanche Indian. Then coming back to the building he began to exhort. He had literally taken over the meeting. The young people began to run to the altar. There were seventeen young people saved in that morning service.

What a day that was for me! I felt that I had won my first soul to the Lord. My brother was asked to testify. He said that he had always wanted to be a Christian but didn't want to make a big fuss about it. How different our experiences are when God is in the service. I had always wanted to get saved and had required of the Lord that if He saved me he was to make me shout. But when I prayed through I made very little demonstration. I made all of my demonstration in seeking for seven long years. But my brother made all of his demonstration when he was saved. It is always best when God has His way.

Although there was little demonstration when I threw up my hands and surrendered to God, I did promise God that if He would save me I would make restitution. That afternoon I went home with Brother Fisher, and going into my room alone I began to write my first letter of confession and restitution. That paper was really soiled with my tears and before the letter was completed, I was putting on such a demonstration that the family and visitors had to join me. What a demonstration that I put on as I began to write confessions! I had plenty of feeling and for months I "topped the tall timber", religiously speaking. I can still see the spot in old Murphy school house where I fell to my knees, threw up my hands and abandoned my case to God and He brought the peace to my soul for which I had sought so long.

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Nine Entire Sanctification**

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." I Thessalonians 5:23

For about three months after my wonderful conversion, I really rejoiced in the Lord. The Lord used me to win many souls to Him. In fact, the first young man to be called to preach under my ministry was reached during the singing school at Murphy's school house. He was not a very promising prospect, in fact, he looked quite hopeless to me. There were about sixty young people in the school and numbers of them had good talents. If, I had been the one calling a preacher, he would have been the last one of that group I would have called. He was fourteen years of age; his hair looked as if it had never been combed; his knuckles were rusty and all but ran back on his wrists; his sleeves were too short for his long arms; his voice was changing; and he could scarcely keep his pitch when singing the scale. But, then, man looketh on the outward appearance, but God on the heart. Isn't it wonderful that such is the case?!

This lad said to me one day, "Brother Powell, I want to talk to you privately." We invited him in to the house but he refused, saying that he wanted to walk and talk with me. We walked down the road a ways and he began to cry. He said, "Brother Powell, I've something to tell you that I've never told another soul." He looked into my face. Then said, "God is calling me to preach."

I tried to encourage him all I could and told him that if he would be true to God that God would bless and use him. Well, as hopeless as he looked; he was true to God and I saw him develop into a good preacher. He has preached now for many years. If we furnish the man, God will furnish the grace. It is wonderful what God can do. Oh, the unsearchable riches of Christ!

More and more settlers were coming into the country and different communities were being established. I was kept busy for singers were scarce in that cow country and I was called to assist in revival meetings over all that part of the country.

When I was converted I thought that all my trials and disappointments would be over forever. I had been taught in the Calvinistic doctrine of the Hardshell Baptists that if a person was ever once saved, he could not be lost. For months I did not realize that the carnal mind was in my breast for God was blessing me and giving me souls in my ministry.

One day a young man claimed I had insulted him in my school. When we were outside of the building he made a lunge at me. Quicker than I can tell it, I went to pieces, for carnality raged in my breast. I was running to attack him, for he had already slapped me, when God checked me. He seemed to say to me, "Are you not a pretty Christian?"



Immediately I fell to my knees and began to beg my assailant to forgive me. I was fortunate to have a friend near by who came to my rescue, otherwise, I would have taken a good beating. He saved me from further attacks from my angry assailant. But, indeed, I did take a beating, an inward beating from a smitten conscience. I prayed and asked my attacker to forgive me. He did not, but God did. Back at the service that night I made a statement to the people about the awful happening asking them to forgive me. God came upon the scene and we had a great service.

Within one year after my conversion, I broke with God three times over carnal rages. Finally, I reached the place where I decided that if this was all God could do for me, I was really ruined. About one year after my conversion, I was singing in a camp meeting at Murphy's school house. A large tent had been pitched and the Reverend Solomon Irick and Virgil Couchran with old Brother Lovelady, a Methodist preacher from Texas, were my co-laborers.

The strong preaching on holiness done by these brethren caused me to want to be sanctified more than I wanted anything else in the world. I began to seek to be entirely sanctified. But as I began to seek, the devil told me that I must not go to the public altar for it would just ruin the meeting if one of the workers in the camp went to the altar. I agreed to go out into the corn field that afternoon and settle it. But the devil went right along with me. Then, I began to pray. But the heavens were like brass, and it seemed that my prayers went no higher than my head. I wallowed around in the corn field until it was almost time for the evening service. I looked around me and that corn field looked as if a horse had wallowed in the rows. I went back to the service without victory. I prepared myself for the service. Although I made myself clean on the outside, I did not feel clean on the inside. I did my best that evening but it seemed that all my singing was very flat. I had already decided that my case must be settled and the victory must be gained. Still, the devil insisted that I could not go to the public altar.

The next day I went back to the corn field. Still I found no victory. It seemed darker than ever to me. I went to the corn field for the third time. There I made up my mind that if it ruined the campmeeting, if it ruined my reputation, if I lost all popularity, I would go to the public altar. I must have the victory. In the morning service as we began to sing for the altar call, I turned the singing to one of the pupils and literally ran for the altar. I expected it would take hours for me to "die out," but as I threw up my hands and fell at the altar, I found that I had already died to everything but the public altar. I was not at the altar more than three minutes before the Holy Ghost fell upon me in purging and purifying power. God had sanctified me wholly. Oh, what a morning service!

Why did I have to go to the public altar? I think I know now, for seventeen other young people followed me and they said it was one of the most glorious services of all of that campmeeting. What a change God's work of holiness made in my life and in my Christian work! That campmeeting was held in 1909 and I have been a constant worker in the Church of the Nazarene from that date to this, which is 1957. I have seen many hundreds of souls find God up and down the land from that good day to this. Oh, how it pays to go with God!

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Ten A Glorious Camp Meeting**

No doubt we all think that the meeting in which we were sanctified wholly was the greatest of all meetings. But beyond my own personal victory God gave us a glorious camp meeting. The old ranchers and claim-holders came from far and near to attend the meetings. I have worked in camps for many years but this was one of the greatest I have ever witnessed. From the very first service, God came upon the scene.

Brother Couchran was one of the greatest prayers I have ever known. Our evening services would close from ten to eleven o'clock and I would go to bed thinking I would have a good night of rest. But before long I would hear Brother Couchran at prayer. His "secret" prayer could be heard one-half mile away. As he would begin to agonize with God and plead for the salvation of souls, I could not stay in bed. So I would crawl out and begin to pray also.

God honored the prayers of His servants in that camp. At times people were known to have driven home in their old horse wagons for a distance of three to four miles. They would start to get ready to retire for the night, but they would be under such awful conviction that they would drive back to the camp ground to pray. Then the service would run all night. Often they would go home in the early morning making as much noise with their singing and shouting as their old lumber wagon was making. The news spread for many miles around. Old cowboys came out of curiosity. Some would fuss and declare it was all a myth; some would get mad and declare they were going to run their saddle horses into the tent. We had a good choir and as we began to sing, these old cowboys would draw near to listen.

They claimed to enjoy the singing. But often they would be seized upon with deep conviction by the Holy Spirit and they would run under the tent to be saved. I have seen them fall in the straw when they had gotten only half way down the aisle. They would lie there and kick great holes with their old boots and spurs, at times they would be prostrated under the power of God for hours. Then they would come through, jump up and shout all over the place.

There was one cowboy, about a one hundred seventy-five pounder, who really loved to dance. I had opposed the dances and he was angry with me. He declared to the other boys that he was going to give me a beating the first time he caught me out. Well, he laid stretched out under the power of God for a long time. I was on the platform leading the singing when he finally prayed through. He jumped and made for me, ran on to the platform and grabbed Me, pitched me up and down, just like I was a little child. He said, "I have hated you, but now, Oh, how I love you!" Of course that caught fire and there were many shouting that night.

My brother, Oscar, was taking a great interest in the meetings. We were just boys then. Neither of us was married. One night there was a scrawny little lad who came to the altar. How he did pray!

Finally he prayed through. As he did, Oscar picked him up, put him up on his shoulders and ran all across the tabernacle on the tops or backs of the seats. The little boy was sitting on his shoulders clapping his hands and shouting. Many said that in all of their lives they had never seen anything like that. How Oscar could jump from one seat to another with that boy on his shoulders without having the boy fall off, they could not understand. One fellows answer was, "Why, God was in it." Isn't it wonderful what can happen when God is in a service?! This camp meeting was conducted about four miles from Bronco, Texas, across the line in New Mexico. At the close of the camp, we organized the first Church of the Nazarene in all that part of Eastern New Mexico and Western Texas. The date was July, 1909.

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By  
**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Eleven Pioneering In New Mexico**

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Isaiah 59:2

We marked off our claim in September, 1906. In the spring of 1907 as we started our improvements, many other covered wagons drove in searching for land. Soon we had a community started. Of course, as families moved in there were always children. So we bachelors flew in to help the fathers build a school building. We built our first little building forty feet wide but only twenty feet long. We made it so we could add to it. The first thing we did when the building was complete or sufficiently completed was to have a prayer service in it. Then we began to discuss what to call the community. One young man suggested that we call it Needmore and that started a discussion. Some said we needed more money, some said we needed more people, some said we needed more vision. This was to be our community center as well as school building.

Soon they asked me to teach a singing school. All of the younger people took part and we had a good school. Among young people was a young lady sixteen years of age, who had had a little music; therefore, she became our organist. I put in special time trying to teach her the keyboard as well as the rudiments of music. By this time the school was over and a Sunday School had been started.

The community grew very swiftly, the newcomers brought with them their religion and their creeds, so most denominations were represented. Very soon we outgrew the little school house. Since it seemed that the center of the community was about a mile from where we had placed the first unit, the building was moved to the new location and tripled in length. But soon it was outgrown and an "L" was added to it. Before long we had a school with four teachers, and buses to bring children from a distance, for our community was educationally minded.

The name of the community was changed to Prairieview. It grew to be quite prominent for a large section of the country. Here, I superintended my first Sunday School as well as taught music for the community. About eight years later, they desired me to again teach a singing school and also conduct a revival at night. The entire community and surrounding country cooperated. I had helped with revivals in this community all along out this was the first time I had been invited to be the preacher. There were visiting students from other communities who had come to take advanced studies in harmony and composition. We had quite a revival with large crowds attending each evening. Many times not all the people were able to get into the building. The Lord was there to bless our efforts and number of souls found God.

The devil was there also. One night while I was preaching, I saw a young man run in and take my brother by the shoulder. My brother at once went out of the room with him. I suspected that there

was trouble on the outside, which there was. Two young men had gotten in an argument; one had stabbed the other and he was now almost bleeding to death. We closed that service a little early and went down to the young man's home and did our best to minister to him and his family.

But more serious trouble had brewed. The young lady whom I mentioned earlier as being our organist had now grown up and had gone away and taught one term of school. She had married and trouble had now risen between her and her husband. She was now at her father's home which was about a quarter of a mile from the school building. The father was a great friend of mine. In the early part of the meeting, as God helped us preach in the morning service from the 35th chapter of Isaiah on the theme "The Way of holiness," this father, who was now in his seventies, rose to his feet as we closed the morning message and spoke about these words:

"Brother Powell, I've been a Christian for forty years, but I see this morning that I've lived far beneath my privileges. I used to think you were quite fanatical in your religion. I've known you these years, and have always loved you, but I couldn't go along with you on the subject of holiness. I see now how far beneath my privileges I've lived, and this morning I'm a seeker. You've convinced me that I need to be sanctified." He came to the altar and was beautifully sanctified. As opportunity presented itself, he wanted to talk with me about his children.

Among other things he stated that his overbearing disposition had caused him to lose his children. He said, "You know our daughter and her husband are about separated now. She is very bitter and unless she gets back to God in this meeting, I feel their home will be ruined. She will not come to service, but I want you to go with me to our home and talk to her and try to help her."

I gladly went with him, but she was not much interested in seeing me. We went into the room where she was sitting. I spoke to her very kindly, as I had many times when she was just a child. There she sat, a hard stubborn young woman. I said, "Clara, I'm here at the invitation of your father. He tells me you've had a lot of trouble and are on the verge of having your home broken. Your father is greatly burdened for you and we want to talk to you about getting back to God."

She didn't even want to hear us. But we talked to her a little while, and then went to prayer. The father wept and cried and prayed, as I began to pray, she did what no other one has ever done. She turned her chair so she was turned with her back to me. We did our best to pray but how dark it was. We never got her to church. The meeting closed on Sunday night and I left for Northern New Mexico to open another revival campaign.

I was just opening the next campaign when I received a letter from my wife, stating that Clara's husband had come into her father's home in the early morning while she was still in bed and had shot her with a high-powered rifle. She had gone out to meet God in that awful condition. "He that being often reprov'd and hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." Proverbs 29:1

In the closing night of the Prairieview revival, God came upon the scene and gave us a great service. My scripture lesson for the evening was Proverbs 1:24-30. I had emphasized these clauses: "I have called and you have refused, I have stretched out my hand no man regarded. You have set

at naught all of my counsel and would none of my reproof. I will also laugh at your calamity. I will mock at your fears. They shall they call upon me, but I'll not answer. They shall seek me but shall not find me, for that they hated my knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel, they despised my reproof." My text was "He that hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." At the close of the service, numbers of people came to the altar and found God. Among them were my two oldest sons, who up to this time had never seemed to have any conviction, but who beautifully prayed through that night. This was a great blessing to me.

A sad incident occurred in that service. There was a young man in the community visiting with relatives. He was hungry for God and I had dealt with him during the week. He failed to yield before, and this closing service caused deep conviction to seize his heart. I felt led to speak to him; therefore, leaving the pulpit, I ran back and invited him to the altar. He started to come but the young lady he was with had no conviction and laughed in his face. When he started to pass out from between the seats, she hindered his coming. The meeting closed and he and the young lady started to walk home. He said to the young lady, "I feel that I am the young man the preacher meant tonight when he said, 'I feel that there is someone getting this message, and if they do not yield, they will never have another opportunity to get to God.'" I had emphasized, "He that being often reproved and hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy."

The next morning this young man with a couple of others went to the mountains to work in a logging camp. As they felled their first tree, it struck another tree, jumped back from the stump, caught the young man and crushed him suddenly to death. Many, many times from that day to this, I have wished I would have pleaded a little longer and a little more earnestly with that young man, for sure enough this was his last public service he was ever able to attend.

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Twelve Circuit Riding In A Model-T**

In 1919 we accepted the pastorate of LaLande Circuit which had at least four churches. LaLande was the home base. Bethany was another church about thirty miles out in the country and about twenty-five miles out in farming district was a church called Rancho. Our last Church was Abbot, which was about fifty-five miles away. The roads were very poor then—the trail went up the Pecos River in the foothills.

We left for this point one Saturday morning quite early. Our conveyance was an old Model-T Ford. The top had already worn down and I had thrown it away. The tires were badly worn. In fact, it looked like it would have been better afoot. This was my first trip to Abbot Church. I did not go alone on that trip, for the devil took the seat beside me before I had gone very far up the river and began a conversation. Said he, "You are the biggest fool I ever saw. Before you began preaching you had a good section of land, around a hundred head of cattle, looked like you had about everything a fellow might need to make him happy," and I agreed with the old boy. He had told me the truth so far, but he went on to say, "You ought to be ashamed going into a new community where you know not a soul in this rattle trap, and before you get there you'll have a flat tire."

Sure enough, about that time the right rear wheel went down. You remember how hard those old 3 1/2-inch tires were to remove. I managed to get it jacked up, pulled the tire off, and patched the tube. I was really perspiring by this time. I started to replace it, began with my pump, stopped to get my breath a minute and psssssssst, I knew I had pinched the tube putting it back on. So, I removed the casing again. The devil said to me, "I told you that you were the biggest fool in the world. Look at your hands! Look at your clothes! You wouldn't even be presentable at home, much less in a new community."

By this time, I had about all I could take. I shall never forget it. The devil had suggested when I reached the community of my destination that I try to find a poor looking shack and drive up and ask them if I might wash and clean up a little before meeting my people. At this time I looked up and said, "Mr. Devil, if you don't leave me alone, when I reach Abbot community, I am going to look for the best looking ranch I can see near by and drive in as a gentleman and let them know I am the new preacher that has come as pastor." I won victory right there.

Finally, I saw a little school house. Sure enough, the sign over the door told me I was at Abbot. I looked a little down to the southeast and saw a beautiful ranch home so to spite the old boy, I turned the old Model-T in that direction, drove up, took my brief case in hand, stepped to the door, knocked and stepped back as any gentleman should. A fine looking lady came to the door to greet me. I introduced myself as the new pastor. She said, "Why, you are Brother Powell, are you?" I replied, "Yes." She then said to come in, "Grandpa had been looking for you all day." I stepped into the home and was ushered into a beautiful front room. I at once apologized for the trouble I had on

the road and asked that I might have a room to clean up. Soon I was scrubbed and had a clean change of clothes.

It was now past four o'clock in the afternoon. Remember, I started early in the morning and had had no dinner. I had only 55 miles to go but sometimes without roads and with a worn out Model-T that is a long distance. The lady excused herself and was soon in the kitchen. To a preacher without dinner, how that pumpkin pie aroma did penetrate the room where I was seated. Grandpa came in in a few minutes. He was a real Father of Israel. What a beautiful visit we had! In a little while the men began to come in and make preparation for the evening meal. Soon we were invited out to the large kitchen with a big long heavy- laden ranch home table, with fresh pork sausage, turnips, pumpkin pie, just about anything a hungry preacher might want. The men were seated about and I was introduced and asked to express thanks. After thanks was returned and plates were all loaded, the Lord seemed to whisper to me these words: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head."

Having gone without dinner and now being already past sundown, of course, I was hungry. But when I thought of being there in a beautiful ranch home with all the luxuries of life and the Master had not where to lay His head, I completely lost my appetite. I wanted to be courteous as I surely had been hungry, but now I could not eat a bite. I sat there for a minute and bawled like a child and then said, "You will have to excuse me." I jumped from the table, ran back into the front room and fell by a stuffed chair and wept my heart out.

Earlier the devil told me that I was a fool to go among strangers, none would want me, and here I was in a beautiful home with anything the heart might desire and yet my Lord, when He was here on earth, had no where to lay His head. On my knees there I told the Lord that it would be an honor to me to walk the fifty-five miles to have the privilege of preaching His everlasting gospel, to tell of His loving fellowship. His mighty power to save, His power to redeem from sin. If ever I gained a victory, it was that night. If I ever felt it a privilege to preach His gospel, it was that same night.

The Lord came to the service in the little school house the next day and God gave us many friends in The Abbot community. For a couple of years, we were there at least once a month and some of the families became my most choice friends. Grandpa Smith made trips back to LaLande with me once in a while spending some time in our home. While there he knitted our small baby David some very beautiful booties and my wife has never forgotten his kindness to her and the children. When our local physician at LaLande saw what Brother Smith had done he had to purchase nice stockings to match the booties. God bless the memories of these Fathers in Israel.

Another family in this community was the family where the mother and daughter were members of the Church. The father was a pretty rough old cowman. He had never made any profession, never did get along too well with his neighbors, but he seemed to fall in love with me and my style of preaching. He insisted that I spend some time in their home when in this community. The older daughter was a school teacher. She taught away the year before in the panhandle of Texas, but now was teaching in her own community.



I always make friends with young people and still enjoy a good joke with them. I said to this young lady one day, "Carey, I am just looking into the future now. I guess all you will ever be is just an old maid school teacher, growing a little more crabby with the youngsters." She replied, "No, Brother Powell, I will surprise you one of these days." "Oh, Carey," I said, "you will never fool these old cowboys, you're hopeless." "I will see if you can remember that," she replied, "I will fool you." I then said, "Carey, if you ever get married, I will drive clear up here to perform the ceremony free of charge." She shook her finger in my face and said, "I will see if you remember that."

Not too many months later I went to the Church for a service on Friday evening - we usually went up Friday and held services over the weekend. I preached in another school house on Sunday afternoon so to reach more of the vicinity. This Friday night, Carey walked in to the service with a fine looking young man. You should have seen me wondering where she had picked up such a prize as that! After the service she said to me, "Brother Powell, I want to get married next Tuesday at five o'clock in the evening. We are planning a big home wedding, with the wedding supper and all the trimmings." I said, "Oh, Carey, don't try to fool me now." "Sure, we're getting married," she replied.

She stepped back and brought the young man to introduce him to me. He was a fine fellow, a fine specimen of humanity. She at once had him verify the fact that they were getting married and I was their choice for the ceremony. I returned home and broke the news to my wife. She said, "Oh, papa, you know you can't make trips to Abbot all the time." I then went up town to see W. P. Hart - who was my secretary-treasurer of the Church and the druggist of the town. He was also district secretary of the New Mexico district and carried quite a burden for all the world. When I broke the news to him that I had to go back next week, he commented he didn't think I could make the trip. This was just after World War I and there was no money in the country; therefore, he thought it would be unwise to make the trip. But I said, "Brother Hart, don't you know when our young people, who are the cream of all the young people of this country, want to get married that I am not going to send them off to some ungodly justice of the peace. I would marry them if I had to walk up there."

Of course, Brother Hart had no more to say, you cannot beat an argument like that. Monday it rained and rained and rained. It can do that once in a while in that awful drought stricken country. When it does, it really pours. My wife started the argument again, but I said I had to go. On Tuesday morning the old Model-T was started and it was very muddy out. I dreaded the trip, but there was more sand along the river in places so I made it better than I had some other days. I got within a mile and a half of the place of the wedding, stopped with friends and took all the mud of the day's journey from the side of the old car - as well as from myself - and was on time for the wedding.

My, my, the whole hill seemed to be full of people. She was a popular teacher and the patrons and their friends all came. The old man whom I said had become my friend had killed a large beef and barbecued a quarter. Of all the wedding suppers I have ever eaten - this was the best. We had the ceremony and God was there. I shall never forget how the old father wept. It was in June, the evenings were long but soon after, we had a few songs and a little service, I had to hurry home. The ladies said, "Brother Powell, your wife and the little ones never get to come and we are determined she shall have a bit of every part of this wedding supper. They packed a large cardboard box full of all the goodies from the table and the father carried it out and put it between the seats of the old Model-T. As I left the house for the car, the bride and groom joined me. They must have thanked me

a dozen times for making the long trip and after the heavy rain. They said, "In fact, we were in fear that you could not make it, and then what would we do?"

I said, "I would have made it if I would have had to walk." At that time the father appeared with a quarter of beef that he dropped over in the car which he said he wanted me to take home to the kiddies. By now my heart was almost too full to speak for this was hard times and we really needed the meat. Remember, my wife and treasurer thought we could not make the trip. But as I said good-bye, the groom reached over and stuck a bill in my vest pocket. Of course, I thought it was \$5. I drove on none the wiser. It was past midnight when I reached home, pushed the door open with the large cardboard box, which was loaded with wedding supper. My wife at once jumped up in bed and wanted to know what I had. I said just go on to sleep, but you couldn't have held her in bed. She had her eyes and her hands in that box almost by the time I got it set down. How she surprised at those cakes and pies and goodies: I said that that wasn't all and reached into my vest pocket, pulled out the bill and what do you think. To my surprise, instead of a five dollar bill, it was a twenty. Don't you think twenty dollars wasn't big money in those days. In fact, it was the most money I had received for one ceremony.

Hundreds of times I have thought of this beautiful young couple and of their kindness. Each Christmas for many years, we received a letter from them and some encouragement. Young preacher, learn first of all to love God with all your heart, next learn to love your people and they will care for you. I look back now for almost fifty years and how thankful I am that God never let us suffer. Even though we have seen two depressions and served mighty small congregations, God has always seen us through, and He always will. Amen

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By  
**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Thirteen** **A Blessed International Camp Meeting**

In the early 1920, we had our New Mexico district assembly at the town of Demming, New Mexico. Demming is near the southwest corner of New Mexico. It came about this way. Mr. J. H. Kerns had felt his call to minister to the Mexicans and had gotten a good work started in the mining camp out near Demming.

He also had come into possession of some valuable property in Demming. He invited the district to meet with them at Demming and make it not only a district assembly but a camp meeting. Dr. J. W. Goodwin, general superintendent of the church, was the preacher for the camp and I was the singer.

Brother H. C. Cagle was district superintendent Brother S. D. Athens was stationed at El Paso, Texas, as our missionary there. Sister Elazando was then running our orphanage in Juarez, Mexico, which is just across the line from El Paso. What a saint of God she was! We stretched a large tent and one side was for the Spanish and the other for the English speaking people.

I would give the song in English, Brother Athens would give it in Spanish and we would all sing together It turned out to be a gracious camp meeting.

I remember the Mexicans would come to the altar as well as the Americans and the marvel to me was that as a young man, I could the when a Mexican was about to pray through just about as we as I could an American, I had about as much joy seeing the Mexicans pray through to victory as I would the Americans It was such a gracious encampment that it the close of the meeting the Mexicans were organized into the southwest Mexican district and Brother J. H. Kerns was elected as their superintendent.

I still have a picture of that assembly hanging in our bedroom and often look up at it and think of how God placed two nationalities of people together in one meeting. Yes, many more than two nationalities. We had English and Mexican, but there was Brother Athen, a full-blooded Greek, Brother Cagle claimed he was real Irish; and I was a cross of Dutch and Irish; and there were many Scandinavians. So many nationalities were worshipping God together. It is a blessed memory.

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Fourteen Marriage And Family Life**

From the time we marked off our claims in New Mexico in September, 1906, this was our home base. We lived as bachelors until 1911, and then I decided that "man should not live alone"—Genesis 2:18. In February, 1911, I was married to Dillie Elizabeth Hight of Bronco, Texas, and we began life together, endeavoring to build our home. Our home on the claim was adobe with mud floor, so you can see we began very humbly. We had about forty acres in cultivation and Providence was on our side. Our first crops were good, and we also increased in family for the children came thick and fast. There were Mary, Milton, Fred, Christine, Veoleta, David, Louis, and Eunice (named after Timothy's mother and grandmother). Our youngest son, Daniel, made altogether twenty-two shoes, all circled around the stove, think of it! But, my, what fun we had!

When I was baching, sometimes tongue and buckle would hardly meet. What could I do when I had a family? Well, the first one came, still tongue and buckle did about as well as when I had been baching. Soon another came and still we made it just about as well. I was somewhat like the Reverend J. T. Little. When asked how he made it with a large family as pastor of a little church in a little town on a small salary, answered, "Every little helps."

When our first children were quite small, I saw great possibilities in them. Mary was soon following me as I went about the place, taking interest in almost everything I endeavored to do, and I thought, my, what a great preachers wife she will make some day! But soon Milton was crawling around on that dirt floor and pulling up in the door and learning antics.

Our nearest neighbor, Dr. Smith, had burro in the pasture which ran down to our gate. This burro would come braying and Milton would pull up in the door and bray just as the donkey did. He was soon outside and following me at whatever task I undertook. How he loved to help his father. He didn't help just as Uncle Buddies little Sally did. Uncle Bud was hoeing his beans and when he got down about the middle of the patch, he looked back and there was little Sally pulling up the beans which he had just hoed around. She said, "Daddy, I'm helping you, " and Uncle Buddie said, "She's been a great help ever since."

Milton always endeavored to help one almost from infancy. I would look upon him as he romped about me and I could see no reason in the world why he shouldn't become the president of the United States. It is great to have hopes for our children. Most all of them have done very well and most of them were saved at my own altars under my own ministry. All are now married and have families of their own.

When the older ones were quite small, I entered the ministry as pastor or evangelist and soon my evangelistic work took me away from home a great deal of the time. My wife was left to carry on the home and to bring up the children without a father much of the time. She is now quite feeble but I

often think how many hundreds of times she had to braid pigtails, scrub faces, lace shoes, iron blouses, and get the children off to school. On top of all that, she had to keep her husband presentable for the pulpit. Yes, a mother who cares for her family of children and cares for her homework, when her husband is away so much, does a worthy piece of work. As David said, "He who tarrieth by the stuff shall be rewarded alike with those who go to battle." No doubt their reward will be great at the end of the way.

This was in Model-T Ford days, as well as of the horse and buggy. I would go away for revival campaigns and sometimes get very homesick for those little ones to prattle about my knees. They were not very large until they knew exactly when to expect me home and would keep an eye in that direction. There was a gate about half a mile from the house. When I would get out of the Model-T to open the gate some of them would spy me and there they would come to meet me. First, there would be Milton, a little behind would be Fred, next would be Christine, then Veoleta, and maybe Louis, and next away behind would be Mary Alice, the oldest. Why was she behind? She had the baby on her hip and was trudging along as best she could. I would pick up one, then another, and another, until finally all were in the old Model-T. Three or four in the front seat, the remainder standing between the seats, two or three sets of arms around my neck, and so would we drive up to the little adobe home which was a haven to me after a hard battle with the devil in some new field opening a new Church of the Nazarene.

We had a great time at home. As we started our family devotions, we nearly always sang, and everyone had to have a song book - even the baby. Sometimes my wife would try to give the baby one of the old well-worn song books for fear of getting one torn—but no, they each had to have one just like papa and the rest, so we had to have enough to go around. We sang the songs of Zion, worshipped God, and had a great time about our family altar. How glad I am now that we made a practice of family devotion all down through the years, even when Oscar and I were baching!

With a family of our size, it was never too quiet about the home. One day while away in a revival, I got a feeling so sorry for my wife and children, staying home alone so much while I was busy in the field that I resolved when I reached home from that campaign, I was going to hitch the team to the old hack and have my wife and children drive to her parents and take a vacation while I stayed home to do the chores.

They loaded up and I bade them good-bye and tried my best to do the chores around the place. There were cows to milk, chickens to feed, pigs to slop, and dozens of other little things to do. I started a little early for I did not have the help of the children. When I finished I went in and sat down for a rest. There was not a child on the place. No one to say Daddy this, nor Papa that, I thought I had never heard a clock tick so loudly as that old Seth Thomas did that evening. As the sun sank in the west and the shadows of the evening crept up, the old family dog went out the back gate from whence the hack had gone and sat down and began to howl.

I wondered which one missed the children the more—myself or the old dog. We were both so lonely, he cried out loud and long before that night was over, I determined never to be left at home alone as long as we had nine children. One of them could surely stay home and keep Dad company. How lonely you can get,, when your family is large and there are little ones constantly about your

knees, to have them suddenly all gone and to be left all alone. Be it ever so humble there is no place like home.

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Fifteen It Pays To Obey God**

If you live near enough to God, He will often talk with you. Oh, not audibly, but He can speak until you understand Him if you are near enough. J. T. Upchurch was a great man for divine healing. One day a friend asked him if he didn't believe in doctors. "Oh, yes", was his reply, "You need some help. If you live nearer the doctor than you do the Lord, you had better get the doctor quickly; but if you live near enough to the Lord, He can get to you before the doctor can get his pillbag open. So it pays to live close to God."

I was doing evangelistic work, but was home for a little rest and to spend a little time with my family. In a day or so I was planning to pack my grips and leave for another revival away across the state. As I walked in the pasture and communed with God, He spoke to me and reminded me of the man who ran a little store and post office, and told me that he needed God, and that before I left home, I was to go up and talk to him about his soul. I didn't think he appreciated me very much and I made a number of excuses, but God would not let me off.

So I finally promised him that when I was ready to leave home to make the trip to the revival, I would go by his store, have him fill my gas tank, and then I would talk to him about his soul. God finally let me off with that promise. I did go by, and I got the gas and visited with him and did my best to get to the subject, but it looked as if I couldn't approach him as I wanted to. I thought that I wanted to use tact, and I didn't want to offend him; therefore, I finally reasoned that when I came back from the trip, perhaps I would have a better opportunity. I drove away but I drove away restless.

In a couple of days, I received a letter from my wife, stating that the postmaster had suddenly been taken very ill and was rushed away to the hospital. About three days later I received another letter stating that his funeral would be the next day. My opportunity to help a soul was forever gone. That incident never comes to my mind but what it brings a very heavy heart to me. I really failed God in that mission. Maybe there was no other man around there near enough to God to speak to him and try to reach him with the message of salvation. I failed God and the postmaster.

In the meetings that I was then holding, God strove with souls. We were in a little town called Capulan, New Mexico, conducting a revival for a Methodist Church. The pastor came to me one day and told me that a young lady who attended his church was in serious trouble. He asked me to covenant with him to pray for her. We began both to concentrate upon her case, but she seemed to become harder and harder in each service. Finally we were invited into her home for a meal. We tried to deal with her while there but did not make much progress. The meeting closed on a Sunday night. As I brought the closing message that soul seemed to stand out before me as no other one. But she did not move toward God.

After the close of the meeting we moved on about fifteen miles to old Cywall Springs to conduct a revival. About the second morning of this meeting, when I was having my early morning private devotions, a young man ran in and asked if I had heard the sad news. Mary had taken strychnine at four that morning, had died at six, and that they were going to bury her here and wanted me to take part in the funeral. Little did she or we think as we gave that last message that it would be her last message ever to hear. What a sad funeral it was!

It pays to obey God and to speak His word without fear or favor, and it also pays souls to obey Him. In my ministry, God has many times put a special burden upon my heart for certain souls where they have not yielded to Him and it proved to be the last call they ever had. What a responsibility rests upon the preacher's shoulder, to stand between the dead and the living as God's messenger. Oh, may we ever keep it upon our minds and hearts, as pictured in the thirty-third chapter of Ezekiel, so we may not have men's blood upon our hands when we stand before God, to give an account of our stewardship as His ambassadors.



# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Sixteen The Work Of The Ministry**

"How then shall we call on him in who they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:14-15.

We believe that men are called, divinely called by God to the ministry. Also we believe that preachers are born before they are called. That is, we believe that all men are born with talents and capacities which, if properly developed, will make them to become happy and useful citizens. Otherwise, they would become misfits in life, a square peg in a round hole.

When was I called into the ministry? That would be hard to say, because I've preached from my earliest memory. But the night that I said "yes" to the call to the ministry was one of the definite nights of my life. I had fought the call for many, many years. Feeling my illiteracy, my unfitness for such a task, looking at the sacredness of the ministry, I do not wonder that Moses was slow to answer the call of God.

My earliest memories of church made me want to have church. Didn't you ever play church when you were a child? Oh yes, as children we would all mount our stick horses and ride away to church as fast as we could go. The children would sit upon a log or crumple down beside a tree while I'd mount a stump, if one was near by, and begin to preach. I felt it was never complete until we had sung a hymn and I had called the mourners. One of those early choruses we loved to sing was "Oh turn sinner turn, may the Lord help you turn. Why will ye die?" Yes, we played church until we thought we were too large and felt ashamed.

Often as I'd work in the field, I'd preach over and over to myself as I worked. So that is how long I've been preaching. Soon I was growing out of those childhood antics and then I found myself a poor lost soul in need of God. As I would seek God, the ministry would always loom up before me—this I dreaded. I loved to sing and I didn't feel it to be such a sacred and holy calling. Therefore, I would try to take it out in singing. Even before I found God in full salvation, I was often called upon to lead community sings. I had studied the rudiments of music, also harmony and composition.

Soon after arriving in New Mexico, I was pushed into leading the singing for the community and also for the preachers in that vicinity whenever they needed a singer. After I was saved, I gave all my time to teaching, singing, and exhorting while assisting evangelists and pastors. I seemed to get along very well in regard to the ministry as long as I was active in leading the music and exhorting in the first part of the meetings.

I finally married and felt I would retire from the active field of evangelism so that I could build a ranch. Then the call came so heavy on my heart. I tried superintending the home Sunday School, but carrying on in that line grew more miserable day by day. I could hardly sleep at night for seeing the lost slipping to Hell, but I would never tell a living soul—not even my own companion. Other ministers would question me in regard to the call but I would always say no. Oh, that awful battle in my breast.

I decided it must be settled. It looked to me that if I entered the ministry, my whole life would be broken up, my children would starve. The devil told me that no one would come to hear me preach and I had myself pictured as being in a schoolhouse filled with empty benches. Of course, I couldn't blame them for not coming for I thought probably I should have to pay them to come to hear me preach rather than they pay to hear me preach! What a battle I had!

One night after our regular family devotions, I told my wife and the children to go ahead and retire for I wanted to read for awhile. I determined to take my Bible and wait and pray before God until the matter was settled. Finally I glanced up and it was eleven o'clock, soon the old-fashioned clock struck twelve. I waited and prayed and before long it struck one, then two, and I decided that I was not making any progress and I might as well retire. That I did, but not to rest, my pillow had thorns, my bed was no place for rest. I rolled and tossed and knew that I was even disturbing my wife's rest, so turning to her, I told her that if it meant poverty and want for her and the children, I had made up my mind that I'd have to preach to go with God even if I had to live on corn bread and drink branch water. As I spoke those words the glory fell. For months I basked in the sunlight of a new-found joy and made my efforts to get established in the ministry. God blessed, but of course, the devil fought every inch of the ground.

At this time I was living some distance from where I had first begun my Christian work as a singer and voice teacher. The very next day after I had said yes to the call, I felt that I must write my friends and loved ones to tell them of my decision. At once I received a return letter from the community where we had a small church of the Nazarene, calling me for a revival meeting. It was not all easy going, but we continued from month to month to become more active in the ministry. In a few months we had a call for the pastorate of the Church of the Nazarene at Plainview, New Mexico. This was in the spring of 1917 and three happy years were spent here in the pastorate going out to the new community for seventy miles around preaching on Sunday afternoons, Friday nights and just any time the way might be opened. We had a local preacher in this church who we had started in the ministry. I would go out in the field of evangelism to assist in a camp meeting or revival, she would fill the pulpit at home. This developed her into a very, very useful minister and gave us experience in the evangelistic field.

After closing this pastorate we accepted the pastorate at LaLande, New Mexico, a sure enough holiness town where in 1908 they had endeavored to build a holiness school. Much money had been spent there in erecting a large concrete building for a college. We had a beautiful little concrete block Church of the Nazarene. This pulpit had been graced by characters such as Uncle Bud, Dr. Ellyson, John W. Goodwin and many other leaders of the holiness movement. We spent two years here in the pastorate, then returned to our old ranch home at Lovington, New Mexico, and again I entered the evangelistic field.

We traveled the first summer with H. C. and Mary Lee Cagle. God gave us many souls. A good deal of the next year was spent with Reverend C. W. and Florence Davis, who were superintendents of the New Mexico district. During this time we spent a good deal of time as a trouble shooter for the district as district evangelists. Churches would lose pastors, trouble would arise in the church and we would go and try to help them over the hump and bring them back to a useful place in the community.

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By  
**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Seventeen More Experiences In The Ministry**

In 1925, we went to Capitan, New Mexico, where a church had been started. We took over the task of finishing it and that year entertained the assembly at Capitan. The next year, 1926, we took over the work at Clovis, New Mexico, and served there and at Hollene, New Mexico, until they were better on their feet and well established.

In 1927, we felt definitely impressed to leave the New Mexico district, so we went to the Colorado district to do evangelistic work and we used the district tent. That summer we spent time at Fort Collins and at Salida, right on the continental divide, helping to dig out a church there. In January of 1928, we accepted a call to Weldona and Goodrich, Colorado, where we served as pastor for the next year.

We felt definitely impressed to leave the work and move to Nampa, Idaho, where we served as an evangelist for three years. Then we accepted a call to our church at Payette, Idaho, where we served two years. In 1934, we accepted a call to Homedale, Idaho, where we served for two more years. After that period, I again gave what time spent in the ministry to evangelistic work on the Northwest, the Idaho-Oregon, the Colorado, the Iowa districts and a good deal of time in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas in revival work, which brings up to this good hour.

The last few years have been spent principally in Nampa, Idaho. First, we were elected to the office of supervisor to erect the camp meeting tabernacle in Nampa; next, I was elected by the board as chairman of the building committee to plan and erect the College Church of the Nazarene. It has a seating capacity of almost 2,000, and the building is valued at close to \$300,000. When we reflect for a moment, we feel that we have done little in the kingdom of God compared to what we should have done and we might have done had we been better qualified in those early days.

How God has blessed the frail efforts to preach His everlasting gospel still remains a mystery. I have preached in meetings where the people would pray, the power of God would come upon the services, the people would be disturbed in their spiritual condition. Many could not rest, then they would turn to God and what a revival would follow.

I remember one such instance at Tokyo, Texas. Dear Brother B. M. and Sister Alice Wade had moved into the community and felt to begin a Sunday School in a little schoolhouse called Turner. They sent for us to come and conduct a revival which we did. Different churches in the community, or the church people, did not appreciate the doctrine of holiness; therefore, at the opening they opposed the meeting. My precious Brother Wade went to prayer. He was trying to farm at the same time we were conducting the revival. He would arise at four o'clock in the morning to go to the pasture for a team and many times had awakened me as I would hear him praying out in the brush at the very top of his voice. Much of the time he lived on his knees during those days and how could

I lie in bed those early morning hours and know he was out in prayer to Almighty God? So we bombarded the skies until God came in mighty power in which such a revival followed!

Many of the people who had opposed the meeting began to be mightily moved upon by God. They would come to the service and get up in meeting to testify and state that they had been opposing us but now saw their error and would pledge their support. Some began to confess to other neighbors of their ill wills and evil schemes, this brought on great conviction among the people.

I remember that one young lady who had lost her mother and was the oldest child in the home and was trying to help her father carry on. She got under desperate conviction and came to the altar from night to night without getting victory until finally one night she failed to come. But she came to me at the close of the service and stated that she believed she was a damned soul, and had already crossed the dead line and there would never be victory for her. She was a beautiful young lady but seemed to me the most real picture of despair that night I have ever seen. We dealt with her as best we could and my friends, the Wades, and myself went !o prayer. There wasn't any sleep for us that night.

The next day was Sunday and God made it a great day. In the Sunday afternoon service—we had three services on Sunday with dinner served on the grounds to the large crowd as we began to preach, God came mightily on the scene. We were out beyond the human, the Divine was there. This young lady had taken her seat in the very back of the building and she looked despondent. At once she arose and with a mighty scream ran toward the altar and fell about half way down the aisle. At this moment the power of God was beyond description. Two other girls, twins, jumped up and ran to the altar, as they fell wailing, their father jumped and ran to the altar. He had been opposing the meeting. They began to pray at the top of their voices and all over the building it seemed that pandemonium had broken lose. People jumped and ran to confess to their neighbors; others fell from their seats; others ran to the altar until it was an altar scene from the back of the building to the front. You could not tell who was seeking God or who was praying for seekers; some were wailing and others were shouting.

Many said it was the most gracious service they had ever seen. The power of God struck one old fellow who had been opposing the meeting. He had a can of Prince Albert in his shirt pocket; when God struck him, he jumped up and began to yell and shout. The can of tobacco flew out of his pocket and to his chagrin went everywhere. But God was there and a few years ago, he told me that from that day he had never touched tobacco again. From this gracious revival a church was soon organized and as we travel in different parts of the country, we find many souls who point back to this revival as the place where they found God.

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By  
**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Eighteen** **Forgiveness Was The Key**

One year I was called to Lynn Chapel Church near Tahoka, Texas, for a camp meeting. My good friend, Reverend C. C. Montanden, was the pastor and my co-laborer in this meeting was Reverend George Brandon, a student at Bethany Peniel College. We at once became fast friends and roomed together during this camp meeting. He was blessed with many graces and gifts of God. For many years he had been one of our leading evangelists.

There was an elderly lady that had come from Belton, Texas out to this community to visit her daughter. It was a bad situation. Fifteen years before when the daughter and her husband were a young married couple some trouble arose in the community from which quite hard feelings developed. Finally, some statements were made to this mother in regard to a situation that she feared if she made known to her son-in-law there might be very serious trouble. Therefore, she would not give him the particulars and he grew so out of humor that he said if she did not tell him, he would never speak to her again in life. He had left that home in central Texas with his young bride. For fifteen years they had lived near Lynn Chapel.

In the early part of the meeting they made known to me their troubles and wanted me to unite in prayer that all might be settled. The young woman said their troubles had developed to where their home was in a manner broken, and she informed me that if it could not be settled some way in that meeting they were separating. I noticed the man pretty regularly at the service, though he never sat with his family. The wife and her mother were both very religious and good Christian women but he had never made any profession. From night to night he would raise his hand for prayer but I could never get him to take a further step than just raising his hand.

They finally insisted that I come to the home, take a meal and visit the man personally, which we endeavored to do. But every time it looked I might be able to go, he would have some other plans and we could not get together. Finally, the wife came on Saturday night and said, "Now, Brother Powell, the meeting closes tomorrow and my husband will be home. Some of the relatives are coming and we want you to come to dinner with us and to deal with him before we go back to service, for I fear it might be the last in a critical situation."

We did go with them to dinner and sure enough a number of others were there. I wondered how I would ever get to see this man privately and deal with the problem. I finally suggested after dinner that he take me out and show me his swine, for I understood he had fine hogs. I thought I would get to talk to him then. He was glad to take me out, but, low and behold, two other men followed along as usual, and it looked that I could not get a private conversation.

Soon it was nearing time for the afternoon service and I decided what we do must be done quickly, so I suggested that it was getting near service time and I wanted us to have family devotions

before we returned for the service. I turned to a scripture in Matthew and read about forgiveness. Then, before we went to prayer I stated that I had been invited into the home by the wife to deal with a particular problem. I said the companion here had not been on speaking terms with his mother-in-law for fifteen years. I turned to him and asked if this was a fact. He nodded his head in the affirmative.

I stated his mother-in-law had told me that she had done everything that she knew to try to make amends in this condition, but that he would not hear her, and I understood it had grown now to where his home was, in a manner of being broken up. This was really serious. I said, "Your mother-in-law tells me that she would rather lose her right arm than have this condition exist as it is. She would rather lose half of her black land farm back down at Hill country than go on in this condition."

I then said, "Now you have been raising your hand for prayer and never taken any further step and I felt I must talk to you to try to help in this matter." I did not like to talk like this before the entire family and relatives but it seemed nothing else could be done. I said, "Now we are going to prayer and I want you to get down on your knees by your chair and I want your wife to come over here, bow right by your side, I want your mother-in-law to bow just back of you here. I am going to bow right on this side of you and we are going to pray. But I want to say to you as we go to prayer that there is never any use for you to raise your hand for prayer or to think of becoming a Christian unless you are willing to forgive, as your Father which is in heaven, forgave you your trespasses."

I then called on the wife to pray the first prayer. Of course she was much broken up and the mother-in-law was weeping at the top of her voice all the time. The people were bowed all over the room. There was about 20 or 25 of us—the family, relatives and friends. I think if God ever helped me to pray, He did in this critical moment. I said, "Man, you had better forgive now or hell will open for you mighty soon." I said to the mother-in-law, "Let me hear you ask him for forgiveness," and in the midst of great weeping she did.

At once he wheeled around from his chair and threw his arm around his mother-in-law's neck and said about these words, "Mother, I have been the meanest man that ever lived to my family, to you and to everyone." Yes, he forgave and what a service we had! There must have been almost a dozen friends and relatives that got to God right there in the home. We finally made it back to camp but Brother Brandon and Brother Montanden had gone ahead with the afternoon service and it was almost over.

In the evening service I was to take the first part and Brother Brandon was to bring the closing message. We opened with a couple of rousing songs, the Spirit of God came upon the scene. We asked for testimonies and our new convert of that afternoon who had forgiven his mother-in-law at once jumped to his feet, and stated that he had been the meanest man in the community both to his family and neighbors, but God had graciously forgiven him in the afternoon. He was glad for this opportunity to testify and ask his neighbors to forgive him. He then started toward a neighbor with his hand outstretched saying, " Especially I want you to forgive me."

The neighbor jumped to his feet and said, "I also want you to forgive me, for I was as much to blame for the trouble as you was." Pandemonium then broke out in the congregation. It is

indescribable. People began all over the building to jump to their feet. Some began shouting, some were testifying, others went to their neighbors to ask forgiveness and make up with them. This mother-in-law went all up and down the aisle shouting and shaking hands with everyone. This mother and her neighbors were having a great time of victory together.

Of course, we had no place for preaching in a service like this. Possibly fifty people found God in that closing service of the camp. My friend, Brother Montanden, was so joyed at seeing the community people make up and become friends again that he thought he could never get over it. Well, I shall always remember the closing out of this great camp myself. What a blessing it was to me!



# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By  
**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Nineteen A New Community**

As settlers drove in from the East, many new communities were started. About five miles to the northwest of our claim was a village consisting of a store, post office, school building, blacksmith shop and, of course, a few residences. They chose the name of King for this community. When the school house was erected, they began public worship from time to time, and soon we were requested to hold a revival campaign. It was summer time and we built a makeshift tabernacle by the side of the school building. We secured Reverend George H. Nickolson as preacher and I did the singing. He was a rugged west Texas cowboy who had gotten to God and he preached a rugged gospel. Soon the ruffians of the community were stirred. The devil also began to do his work in the hearts of men, as he often does when the power of God is being manifested.

One night deep conviction seemed to grip the congregation and a number of penitents were at the altar. Among others was the wife of an old cowboy who was supposed to be the bad man of the community. In fact he had killed two men. His wife was very broken up and desperately seeking God. He was outside of the tabernacle with the other ruffians, very much disturbed. He had threatened both Reverend Nickolson and myself, and finally came in under the tabernacle and dragged his wife from the altar with her screaming. Of course, this made a stir in the community. One man rode along behind their buggy as they went home and told us how he raged all the way home and declared that he would kill me the next day. But God protected us.

In a day or so he took seriously ill and was taken to a nearby town where there was a physician. They took him to the hotel and he was in such a rage that he tore up a quilt and tried to set fire to the hotel. He grew worse and the doctor advised them to take him to a specialist. On the way he turned blind, but he raged on and in a few days he died.

What a pitiable case! How awful to be hardened against God and every thing which is pure and holy and lovely! Sometime later we saw his wife and children get to God and they lived Christian lives.

A little later I moved about one hundred fifty miles east to Bordon County, Texas. I was just beginning to enter the active ministry myself, for, in those early meetings, I did the singing and had some other preacher to the preaching. While down in Texas the call was so heavy upon my heart that I had to enter the active ministry. We wrote back home to this community as well as to others and the little church at King at once called me to come back and conduct a singing school and revival, doing the preaching myself. Well, we saddled an old cow pony and I rode back one hundred fifty miles to begin our first revival as preacher.

When it was noised about that I would be doing the preaching many of the old settlers and cowmen who had known me as a bachelor boy and singer, came out to hear me preach. I didn't have

much "soap," ministerially speaking, but on the way while riding out, I had studied a great deal about David and his experience with the lion and the bear. The theme in the beginning of the revival was how David took care of his fathers flocks and when the lion and the bear came to destroy them, how David slew both the lion and the bear. Then I made my application that the lion and the bear of sin had crept into our communities and though I was just a stripling, I was going out to meet this lion and bear of sin in the name of God of Israel. The power of God came on the service and people were weeping all over the building.

We dismissed the service and I started walking back to my father-in-law's home across the pasture some half a mile distance. I thought I was alone, but the devil went with me and He said, "My, that was a great service, didn't you see how the power of God was present, didn't you see how the people wept? You are going to make a great preacher." I went in much elated.

The report went out of our good service, and I had announced that night that I would preach the next night on my call to the ministry. As that announcement went over the community, it looked like the whole country side had turned out for the service. When the building was filled and more people coming, they brought in spring seats from the wagons and chairs were placed about the front and around the after. Even then all of the people didn't get in, some were looking through the windows.

As I rose to give the message I read from Luke, "The Spirit the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

What a beautiful scripture to bring a gospel message from! But do you know as I endeavored to speak the devil seemed to get me by the throat, and all but choked me. I forgot everything that I ever knew, in fact, I couldn't think of a thing to say. The building was so crowded that I had only a little space by the side of the organ in which to stand. You know how we preachers do when we get in the brush, I started stomping, trying to tramp the brush, swinging my arms and my first swing struck an elderly baldheaded man on the head, which made matters worse. I thought what on earth can I do? I finally raised my hands and gave the benediction. But, how was I to get out of there? I felt like if they would drill a little hole in the floor it wouldn't have taken a very large one for me to have gotten through that night. I slipped among the people making for the side door and dodged out into the night.

As I made my way back toward my father-in-law's home, I think I was in about the worse shape that I was ever in my life. It seemed like I would burn up from within. I ran up to the windmill and tried to take cold water, thinking that might help me. But, no, it was no help. I then ran off over north into the orchard among the fruit trees and there I fell. If ever a young preacher died out to being popular or preaching great sermons, I did that night. If I could have felt that God would relieve me from my call to preach, I never would have endeavored to preach another sermon. But to me I felt it was preach or hell. So I had to take up my cross and make further efforts.

There was another sad incident which occurred in this meeting. On Friday night, the crowds were large, and many young couples were there whom I had known from their childhood. One young

couple came to me at the close of the service and seemed very glad to see me and said, "We'll not see you tomorrow night but well be here Sunday."

Saturday night they went to a big dance. He danced with other girls, and she danced with other young men. In the early hours of Sunday morning they came home, but not to rest for they were having jealous fussings. It went on all during the day. Sunday, instead of going to church, they stayed at home and fussed. Monday, just as I was getting ready to open the school, I saw an old neighbor riding up. I knew him from a distance for he was a neighbor and I wondered why he came, for he would not be coming to singing school. He dismounted from his horse and came walking toward me. I greeted him kindly but he didn't return the usual greeting, but said to me, "I've sad news for you. Rosy took strychnine at four o'clock this morning, died about six, and they want you to conduct the funeral tomorrow afternoon. What a tragedy! I dismissed the school for that day, mounted a horse, and rode down and tried to comfort the family.

Before I reached the house a couple of the women came out to meet me. Of all the wailing I had ever heard, I heard from these two women as they tried to tell of the tragedy. They were weeping much, but their weeping was too late for this friend and chum. She was gone. I believe it was one of the saddest funerals of my ministry. Shall we drop the curtain here? May God have mercy upon us all.

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By  
**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Twenty Our Early Family Worship**

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."-Psalm 119:105

When I was first saved, my brother and myself were baching together. We at once began family devotions. Neither one of us knew too much about the Bible, but it looked like every chapter we would read just had great food for our souls. So, we would start in to read a chapter for family devotion, then have prayers. But often we would get so interested in the reading when we would get up from prayer we would start reading again. My brother would read, then I would comment, sometimes we would read a dozen chapters and then we would go to the field to work. We would talk about the new things we had read in the Bible, and how our souls would be blessed. It was not uncommon for us to stop in the midst of our work and get down and pray.

Everyone who came around the place would hear us talk religion to them. We were surrounded by old time cowmen and we seemed very peculiar to them. They got to talking among themselves and decided that those Powell boys were going crazy over religion. Then one would tell the other one something they had heard us say and they would in turn tell another and soon it would come back to us.

We had no reapers or harvesting machines in those days and we cut our corn and cane with a knife. One morning we were out in the field cutting cane and shocking it. Finally about noon time, I said, "Oscar, you can stay and work awhile, and I'll go up and get us a lunch." I went back to the shack to prepare lunch, and stepped outside a time or two but couldn't see Oscar. I said to myself, "That Oscar is not cutting cane." Instead of cutting, he was behind the shock praying.

About this time a cowman came riding along by the side of the field. He looked over and saw my brother down praying and wondered what he was doing, but he had not ridden much farther till Oscar prayed through and leaping up from behind the shock, began to jump up and down and shout, "Glory! Glory! Glory!" Then he ran around the shock shouting "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!"

The old cowman stopped and listened and looked and finally rode away. When he got back to the ranch, he told his wife and children, "I've been telling you I believe those Powell boys have been losing their minds. Well, I was riding by the field a while ago and that youngest one was down by the side of the shock, and directly he jumped up, kicked dirt, hollered 'Glory, Hallelujah!' shouted, and ran around and around the shock. He's just as crazy as a bat, I knew all the time he was losing his mind."

Soon that went from mouth to mouth until it was all over the community that the Powell boys were sure crazy. Well, of course, people want to go to see about a crazy man. One would ride over to see about us and maybe he would come when the Spirit was not blessing us particularly, and he

would go back and say, "Well, I was over and I didn't see a thing wrong with them." Then another would say, "Yes, but they just have certain days off. You just watch them, for they have certainly lost their minds." Our report would be, "We hope we have lost the carnal mind."

Then we would go to service and get blessed and have another spell—a religious spell you know—and then the talk would begin again. Well, in spite of it all, God was glorified, and His cause certainly did flourish in that community. I wish a few more Christians would get blessed until people would think they were besides themselves. What a sight that might be!

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Twenty-One Prayers Answered**

This first year of my ministry, God answered many prayers for me. Of course I made many blunders, but God was always there with mercy.

One incident which I would like to call to your attention was how He answered one of my prayers. It was a pretty dry year and we depended on a creek in our lower pasture for water for our stock. But the creek dried up. (You remember about Elijah's creek drying up, don't you?) We had over a hundred head of cattle and no water. A man may have grass knee high but if he has no water, what can he do?

I fell on this plan—I would scrape in the sand in the creek and many times could find water seeping in under the sand. I hitched my team to the hack one morning, told my wife I was going to the lower pasture to scrape for water and maybe would not be back until late in the afternoon. I found a short bend in the creek where there was a large rock which hung out over the creek and decided that it looked like a good place to scrape for water. I took my mules from the hack, hooked them to the scraper and began to scrape. It was really hot for it was in July and both the teams and myself were soon hot. I had not gotten any water, so I stopped to give the team a little rest and then God spoke to me. He seemed to say, "Young man, you might make time a little better on your knees than scraping. Have you prayed yet?"

I was troubled by this so wrapping the lines around the scraper handle, I ran back under this rock and began to pray. God seemed to say, "Elijah got rain when there was no clouds." I said, "Yes, Lord, and if you desire you can give rain at once." I seemed all at once to be hid away with God. How near God seemed to me that day down in the creek under a big ledge of rock. While I was still praying I heard a keen clap of thunder and God seemed to say, "If you don't want to get wet and lose your scraper you had better get out of here." I ran out from under the rock and looked up. There was a little cloud just off a short distance and it seemed to be twisting and whirling in the air. I obeyed God and literally ran to the team, threw the scraper back in the hack, hurriedly hitched the team to the hack, jumped in the hack and started out of the creek bed.

As I started up the creek banks I saw the cloud had spread and was striking. First it was dust and then rain. Just literally sheets of rain! Before I reached the top of the little hill, the water was rushing down the hill. The cows who had been standing around bawling and suffering for lack of water were now trying to find a spot where they could drink. What joy filled my soul as God had answered my prayer!

I drove home, reaching there just past the noon hour. My wife came out to see what could possibly have happened that I was back so soon. Why, I said, "We had rain in the lower pasture." She could hardly believe me. The next day I rode back to see how things looked. I had to ride up and look at

the old rock where God had heard my cry and where I dared to believe Him and prove that the God of Elijah still lived. The hole that I had scraped the day before was full of water and the creek was running a little. As Abraham bowed his head and worshipped in reverence to the Great Jehovah, I did that day as I stood on the creek bank and looked at the cows standing around in the shade of the little mesquites, perfectly satisfied both with grass and water. What a day it was to my soul. He giveth power to the faint; and To them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint. Praise God from all blessings flow! Amen.

A little later I was preaching in a revival particularly on the theme of prayer and mentioned the incident that God gave rain when my stock was famishing for water. At the close of the message an old school teacher came to me and spoke these words: "Young man, I admire your zeal and your interest in religion, but in regard to God answering your prayer and sending rain, rain doesn't come that way at all. You see rain comes only as certain laws work in the elements. Atmospheric conditions have to change the rain is the result of these changing conditions." I heard him kindly and here is my reply: "Sir, you didn't understand me at all. I said the cattle were famishing and God impressed me to get under the rock and pray instead of scraping and I obeyed God and the rain came. Now my point was that I needed water, prayed, and God answered by sending rain. Can't you understand that God answered my prayer?"

Thank God Elijah's God still lives. Yes, He hears our prayers if we only pray in faith and He can get glory out of hearing and answering. For a time in the 1920's I was acting as district evangelist for the New Mexico district. Also, where problems arose in churches, they usually called on me to try to help them get back on their feet and to a place of usefulness in the community.

One such instance was at Clovis, New Mexico. We were just getting a church started when troubles arose and divisions came to the extent that the pastor left. We had- no building, just renting a hall. I went to try to help them over the hump and back to better standing in the community. At the same time I also cared for the church at Hollene, New Mexico. This was in the time of the depression in 1922 I believe. Money was hard to get. Many of us were behind.

I did not move my family to Clovis for I thought I was going to stay only a few months to help them on their feet, then to return to my evangelistic work. But it took longer than we had expected and I was running hard financially. Had borrowed some money at my home bank of Lovington, New Mexico. At a certain date it was coming due and where the money was coming from we did not know. My wife had written me that my friends knew the situation, and I thanked God for friends for we had many of them.

Rev. C. W. Davis, the district superintendent, had just visited me in Clovis. As I walked down the streets, the matter came strongly to my attention that the preacher who did not meet his obligations was not worthy of the name preacher. I stopped on the street and looked up to heaven and said, "Lord, you know that I am doing my best for this church here. It's your cause. I am your man and this matter of finance I am going to leave fully in your hand," and I did.

Brother Davis was riding along on the train, at about the same time God had spoken to me, he spoke to Brother Davis also, and said He, "You know you have money in the bank that you are not using right now and Brother Powell needs that money. You write him a check." Brother Davis picked up his typewriter, placed it on his lap on the train, typing out a letter to me making the statements that I have just written. He wrote the check, put it in the letter and mailed it to me. How I rejoiced when I received the letter with the check. I at once mailed it to the bank.

But, my friends at home did not know of this matter as they were more than a hundred miles away. I had one very dear friend, Dr. R. W. Smith by name, who had been a next door neighbor to us for many years. He had in some way learned of the matter and the day the note was due, told his wife he was going to Lovington and take care of the note. I had another very dear friend living near us by the name of William Tease. He also had learned of the matter and he made up his mind to take care of the note. He hitched his horses to the hack and drove by our old home to speak to my wife about it. Then he turned toward Lovington. In a few minutes Dr. Smith drove up to our place on his way to pay the note and my wife told him Mr. Tease had already gone on his way and the doctor said, "Oh, well. I will pass him in the car." But the check had beat them all. How my heart was blessed and how my faith did rise in Almighty God to think that at a time of stress like that, that God would move upon my friends, at least three of them, to take care of my financial burden. What a joy to have a friend in need. How wonderfully God answers prayer.



# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By  
**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Twenty-Two The Birth Of A New Church**

A great deal of my early ministry was spent in pioneering in a wide open field where there were few churches of any denomination. We would go out to a schoolhouse, invited by some friend, and began revival services. God would come on the scene, the revival would break out and it would be consummated in the birth of another new church. In those days we went out without any backing as far as churches or finances were concerned.

At one time the superintendent, Reverend C. W. Davis, said: "Brother Powell, I want you to go to Haggerman, New Mexico, and stay until a church is dug out." We went without one dollar of backing, with only God to stand by us. We were assisted in this campaign by Mr. and Mrs. J. B. O'Dell—Mrs. O'Dell is a sister of Dr. T. E. Mangum, Sr. At first it looked as though we could not find a place for services.

There were seven churches in the town, five of them were not functioning at all, and as for the other two—one had a Sunday School and the other had a pastor. As we would inform the people we had come to conduct a revival they would at once state that people in that town did not go to church any more. Five of the churches were now locked and the other two were barely existing, one of them without a minister. They begged us not to start another to be closed up. My only answer was: "But we're different, give God a chance."

Finally we located a little concrete church and inquired about it and found it had not had services in it for seven years. It was a Christian Campbellite Church. We inquired with regard to the trustees and found that the head man was one of the trustees, a Mr. Bowen, and whatever he said would go. So after following the best line up we could get for hours, we finally located Mr. Bowen. I introduced myself and came abruptly to the question. I told him that I would like to rent the church for a revival campaign. He was a fine business man and if ever a man looked me over from head to heels, Mr. Bowen did. Finally he said, "Man, that church has been locked up for seven years: I don't believe you can do anything there."

I informed him that I would like to try and asked him to set a price for rent. After thinking a little while he looked at me in the eye and said: "Man, it's just going to wreck as it is, but if you feel you can do anything there, help yourself—no charge. I could hardly keep from shouting in his presence for I only had about three dollars left in my possession and was afraid he might ask for rent in advance. I left him, oh, so happy!

I went back to inform Brother O'Dell that we would begin work to clean up the grounds and the building. The weeds had grown almost up to the eaves of the building. We worked hard to beat down those old-fashioned sunflowers and all the rubbish and cleaned up the place. I believe it was the dirtiest, dustiest place we have ever worked in. I remember the old organ would not sound at all. I

had to pull every reed and clean out the action completely. Finally all the work was done and I spent the last three dollars I had left striking hand bills.

Then Brother and Sister O'Dell and myself went down on the streets. I knew that I would have to do something radical to ever get a hearing. We unfolded the little folding organ and a few stragglers stepped out of the pool halls and begin to eye the strangers who had come to town. Sister O'Dell sat down at the little organ and began to pump and we started singing, "This is like heaven to me." How they eyed us! I threw open my testament and read Matthew 3:11, "I indeed baptize you with water but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire." I yelled at the top of my voice: "Two baptisms for one crowd!" An old fellow walked up and I ran toward him and pointed my finger at him, saying: "I baptize you with water, He shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire." He began to dodge and back up and the other fellows near by laughed. We had a short service, then announced meeting for the evening in the little Christian Church.

There were about ten of questionable characters who came out to the evening service. Among others was one very rude character, who they said was the meanest man in town. He had gambled and drank until all that he could get his hands on was gone. He had no more credit; he could not even get groceries; he had debts at the saloon, had debts at the pool hall, at the cafe and at the grocery stores. He had drifted so low that he had no credit at all. He was one of the men who stood out in front of the store and heard the afternoon service and had said to some of the other roughnecks, "I've never seen a preacher like him before—I'm going to hear what he has to say tonight." He, with several of his friends, and a widow woman or so made up our congregation the first night.

We sang some hymns, I brought a simple gospel message, dismissed the service and sent them home. This man, instead of going home at two or three in the morning, went directly from church to his little shack out at the edge of town. He had a wife and five children. When he came in early, his wife asked him: "What has happened that you're home so early?" He said, "I've been to church." She said, "You know better than that. We've been married for fifteen years and we've never been to church." "Yes," he said, "But I went to church tonight and heard the best singing and preaching I have ever heard and if you don't believe it I'll take you and the children tomorrow night."

The next evening, as I walked down early to the service, I saw an old wagon with the tires almost off the wheels and the poorest team I know I have ever seen attached to a wagon, old chain harness with cotton cloth backbands. As I looked at this picture, I thought that another meeting would be disgraced. How little faith I had, for it entered my mind that we couldn't start a holiness meeting unless something like this had to disgrace it.

I went in and found that we had about the same crowd as the night before with this family added and one well-dressed gentleman came in and sat on the back seat. We again did our best to bring a gospel message; it did not seem that there was too much of the blessing of God on the service but I felt impressed to give an altar call. This little woman came at once to the altar and after praying for some time, prayed through to victory. The service was closed and they went home.

The next evening this same crowd, with a few more, had gathered in that evening God came on the scene. At the close of the service this "meanest man in town" deliberately walked out and came

to the altar. I did not have too much faith but we gathered about the altar and prayed earnestly. In a little while cold sweat began to gather on his brow; he began to rub his hands and try to pray. I noticed the well-dressed gentleman in the back of the building moved down two or three seats toward the front. He was very restless, twisted in his seat and then moved down a few more seats toward the front. We continued to pray with the seeking soul. In a little while this gentleman walked down, struck the seeker on the shoulder and said, "Go on, Olive, I'll see you out of that trouble."

I wondered what it all meant for I had not been a real slum worker. Soon he seemed to take courage and prayed more earnestly; his wife was by his side weeping her heart out and crying to God and encouraging him to pray. Pretty soon he threw up his hands, raised his head toward heaven and said, "Lord, can't you save a wretch like me?" Then, suddenly victory came. When he received victory and had so stated, his wife leaped up from his side, began to run up and down the aisle and shout.

The neighbors living near by the church and a few passersby, heard her screaming and shouting and came running to the big double doors, which were already open for it was a warm night in July. Those in front looked on and seemed to say that the holiness outfit was murdering a woman. She continued to shout and rejoice. Those in the back of the onlookers seemed to say, "Give me some room, I'm going to see too." Those in front seemed to set their feet but they from behind began to shove and soon they were shoving in and all were looking very amazed.

After a little while she was quiet and we had testimonies. This man testified that he had lived an awful wicked life but when he heard the message on the street his heart was made hungry and he could but attend the meetings. He told the story of his wife disbelieving that he had been to church, how they had been married for fifteen years and he had taken his family to everything questionable, but this was the first time he had ever taken them to a revival and that God had met her soul and then met his.

His wife then testified that for fifteen years her life had been nothing except misery, she had never been about church very much but she had been raised to go to church and Sunday School and found the Lord as a little girl in Sunday School. She had married at fifteen years of age and had never been to church since. Now had come the happiest day of her life; she had gotten back to God and her husband had been saved. There was much of Gods blessing in it and we saw that the spectators were impressed.

The next morning Olive went down town, began to enter into the places where he had bills and told them he had started to live for God, that he was ashamed of the life that he had lived and promised them that he would do his best to pay every dollar. Finally he came to the grocery store, and told the grocer how low he had been and how kind the grocer had been to him and his family. The grocer broke down and wept and said, "Olive, your family is starving. Take home some groceries." He laid in a supply of groceries and went home the happiest man on earth.

It went over town like wild fire for it was a small town and everyone knew everyone else. The next evening as I drew near the little church I saw vehicles standing all about the church. I went in and found the church was fast filling up. By service time the church was packed and every available

space was taken. Of course, the back seats were taken first but they kept coming until they were clear up to the front and my good trustee brother, with a few other men took the Amen corner.

I prayed God, if He ever helped a boy to preach, to help me now. I preached from the story of the prodigal son and how to find God. I emphasized, "I'll arise and go to my father and will say, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

At the invitation, numbers began to come to the altar, others went to speak to souls and the revival broke out. We had one of the most gracious revivals I had seen for a long while. From day to day it grew until the whole town and countryside were stirred. As the old backsliders and formal church people began to come, God would get a hook in their jaw and my, what praying and confessing! Our "meanest man in town" would go over the community from day to day and tell what great things God had done for him and his family, for three of the five children were large enough to be saved. One boy, fourteen, was beautifully saved and called to the ministry. As the town was stirred more and more people began to give to the Olive family because of their poverty stricken condition.

Many, many souls found God and our superintendent came and organized a good church. I went back at the end of a year and a half for a weekend meeting. Brother W. A. Huffman was then the pastor of this church and I began to see the gracious results of the campaign. Not only did the revival bring into being a Church of the Nazarene, but five of the other churches now had their own pastor and congregations and we had a beautiful church still worshipping in the Christian Church.

As I was talking Sunday morning I notice a well-dressed family walk in. They began to nod and smile, recognizing me. I wondered who this fine-looking family was. About that time the man started forward and said, "Thank God", and called me by name. I recognized his voice as my "bad man", Olive. Now his wife was well-dressed, his children were well-dressed and clean. He looked like a gentleman. I say I didn't know them until he spoke; it is wonderful what God and salvation can do for a home! They insisted that I go with them for dinner but I had already promised another family, so he said, "Were first for tonight." I could still see the old shack where they lived when I first met them, with filth all about the place. They literally lived in a hog pen. She had been heavily addicted to snuff and he to tobacco in all forms. Now, God had wonderfully cleaned them up.

When the evening service was over, the larger boy grabbed my brief case and Brother Olive said, "Come on, Brother Powell, lets go." We went out the door and I looked for the old wagon and poor team, but he led me around one car and then past another and around to the side of a nice Ford. Quickly opening the door, he invited me to get in. I said, "What do you mean, to get in here?" for I was looking for a team. "This is not your car?" He answered that it surely was, so we stepped in; he stepped on the starter, backed out from the church, went around the corner, and back across another road. I said, "Where are you going, Brother Olive? Where do you live?"

He informed me that they had moved and soon he drove up to a nice looking residence painted white and announced that this was home. We walked in and she offered me a chair. I sat down but said that I had preached hard that night and wondered if I could have a drink of water. As I started to rise, she said, "Keep your seat, keep your seat," and she went into the other room and soon returned with a pitcher and a glass of sparkling clear water.

My mind ran back to the old shack and the conditions before. I said, "Sister Olive, excuse me but you've changed so much in these one and one-half years that I didn't know you when you walked into the church this morning." "Brother Powell," she said, "I'm not the same woman. I'm a new creature in Christ Jesus. Thank God He has cleaned me up body and soul. The first three months after I threw away snuff and began to take proper nourishment I gained seventeen pounds. Now we have this beautiful home and I'm the happiest woman on earth." With that she began to shout, and what a gracious time we had! Inside of two years, Haggerman Church was the second largest church on the district. My soul could but cry, "Behold what God hath wrought!"

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Twenty-Three God Provides**

One of the things that blesses me now as I glance back over my early ministry is the friends that God has given me. I mentioned in another place Mr. Tease. He was a nearby neighbor that attended our Church at Plainview, New Mexico, while I was pastor there and we became very good friends. In later years when I had entered the evangelistic field, Mr. Tease seemed to feel that he was one of our parishioners. When I would go away for meetings, Mr. Tease would inform me he would look after the family while I was away. Of course, my wife had her hands full with a large family of little ones so as Mr. Tease would go to town, he would come by to see if all was well and what shopping he might do for us. We always kept in debt to him—a debt of love you see.

He planted some cotton one year and it did pretty well. But, he had come from the north and didn't know how to pick cotton so he was really worried how to get his cotton out. I said, "This is our time to get even with Mr. Tease," so I hitched a team to the wagon, getting up all the cotton sacks, loaded in my wife and children and set off for the cotton field. We came to the field before we reached the house. I got out and started the children on picking cotton, took my wife to the house to help Mrs. Tease, then came back to join the children. Mr. Tease had gone to town. We were down in the field poach picking when he arrived. He came up through the field and said, "Brother Powell, what do you mean?"

"Well, I mean to get this cotton picked," I retorted. "Thought you wanted it picked." "Oh, yes," he said, "but I didn't want a preacher to have to pick it." "Oh, it is a privilege to pick cotton for you. You have been so kind to us." He began then to weep. As the tears ran down over his face I shall never forget his looks as I said you are so kind. I felt like we were getting even with him now for all of his kindness, but that year we didn't have a meat hog in the swine pen. He had two beautiful hogs, which weighed about four hundred pounds each. One day I saw his hack coming and I met him and greeted him as usual. To my surprise, he butchered his two fine hogs, loaded one of them in the hack and brought it to us. Not the tithe or tenth, you see, but fifty percent—one for him and one for us. What a big heart! Well, we lived door neighbors for many years but I could never get even with Brother Tease. He always did more for us than we felt we did for anyone.

Another little incident that I remember. I went to Trinidad, Colorado, for a revival campaign, which was a gracious meeting. God came on the scene and gave us many souls. One in the early part of the meeting happened to be the wife of the city fire chief. They were well-to-do, had only one girl. One night in preaching I mentioned the fact of the largeness of our family—nine children—and I pictured all of us about the living room in the evening with twenty-two shoes strung out around the stove. What a picture! This lady got to thinking about it, said how in the world does he ever buy clothes for nine children and she mentioned to the pastor's wife that their one girl grew so fast that she had hardly soiled her clothes till she out grew them. She said she would love to give them to me for my children if she did not fear of offending me. The Pastor's wife mentioned the incident, telling

her she was sure it would be of no offense. I got up that night to preach and mentioned in the opening of the service that one lady had mighty nice clothes she would love to give us if she wasn't afraid it would offend us to use used clothes. So, I said, "Offend? How glad I would be to get them and I know they will fit, for you see, we have every size."

So, the congregation gave a great laugh and some said what a blessing it was to have every size. Well, that started things buzzing at Trinidad. What a load of clothes we had when the meeting was over. It saved my wife many an hour of work and, of course, our pocketbook too. But, I mention it for the fact that God and his people have always been so kind. Another incident that often comes to mind occurred when I was about ten years of age. Price Easley, Archie Easley, my brother Oscar and myself used to play on a branch bank. Price had climbed up in an old Dogwood sapling, but Archie and Oscar were playing in the branch. Now there were quite a few small fish in the particular branch and they decided to make them a plan to catch fish. The water had poured over some roots and poured down to where it had cut a deep hole, let us say about ten feet wide and fifteen feet in length, and the water must have been six or eight feet deep in this particular hole.

Archie went around on the steeper part of the bank, took with him a long branch and told Oscar to get down where the water ran out of the deep hole and he was to scare the fish out and Oscar would catch them. He got a little too close to the bank and off it came with him. Splash, he went into that deep water. Price gave a big scream and jumped down from the sapling, made a run for the house screaming for his mother. I ran up to the waters edge and saw Archie rise again for he had already gone down twice. I plunged in and was able to pull him ashore. I dragged him up the bank that caused the water to gush from his lungs. He began to struggle and I was wobbling him around and by the time the ladies got there he was about able to get up.

Well, I thought nothing of the fact except it was my duty to save him. Time went on for, let's say, twenty-five years, and my father became very ill back in Mississippi. I was now in my first pastorate in new Mexico. One day I received a letter from Archie Easley informing me of the serious illness of my father and said, "I an sitting up with him night after night with the assistance of the other neighbors. We are going to give him good care." And then he used about these words, "You see, Fred, when we were small boys you saved my life and now it is a privilege for me to be able to minister to your failing father." Cast your bread upon the waters. Oh, yes, they were returned one hundred fold.

# **THE SINGING PIONEER**

By

**F. A. Powell**

## **Chapter Twenty-Four How An Old Cowboy Learned To Pray**

It came about this way. We were in the frontier open range country of New Mexico and as the covered wagon trains came in, different communities were formed and a little town by the name of Knowles sprung up. Soon a small Methodist Church sprung up and Reverend L. W. Self was sent as pastor. He also preached in our community and soon we were friends. He desired to put on a revival campaign in Knowles and invited me to come and assist him. As the meeting opened he gave me instructions something like this: "Brother Powell, I do not like to be in the first part of the service. I like to remain alone in meditation and prayer, so I want you to take the first hour of the service with songs, testimonies, and prayers."

It would have been O.K. if he had furnished me someone to help do the praying. But, it was a young church in a new community, and not a member prayed in public. The people seemed to enjoy the old-fashioned singings more than they did the preaching services in that frontier country, So many of them came to me and stated that they enjoyed very much the first part of the service. I would thank them, but say: "You must help me. I must have somebody to pray."

I was entertained in an old sheep man's home who had retired from the sheep business and opened a little mercantile business in the town. They had been married for thirty years, and he and his wife both united with this new Methodist Church. They had never before entertained a minister, therefore had never had prayers in their homes. At first, I did my secret praying in my own room, but prayed that the home might be open for prayer.

I approached Mr. Russell and said: "You say you enjoy the meetings very much, and now you are a member of this church and I must have somebody to pray, so I am going to call on you tonight to lead us in prayer." He answered, "Oh, no, no, Brother Powell! I have never prayed in public. I could not." But I said, "I am going to call on you." The hero of this particular incident was Frank Tieg. He was the blacksmith in the little town. I then went over to the blacksmith's shop and he spoke of how he was enjoying the meetings, and I answered by stating: "Frank, I am counting on you to help me in this first part of the service. I want you to pray." But he gave the same reply: "Oh, no, no! I could never pray in public." And we left it at that.

When the time came for the evening service, we sang a couple of hymns, and I said: "Shall we go to prayer. Brother Russell will lead us in prayer." He asked to be excused as I dropped to my knees, but I remained on my knees for possibly two minutes. I believe you could have heard a pin fall. Not a word was spoken. Some said they thought it was a half hour. I said amen, arose, and selected another song. We sang and then I called for testimonies. One or two were given, and I said: "We are going to pray again and Brother Tieg will lead us."



He cried for me to excuse him, but we went to our knees and remained possibly for two or three minutes, and I said, amen, again and selected another song. The next day both the men had quite a round of discussion with me declaring they could not pray, but I declared all Christians must pray and I was going to call them again.

Now let me give you a picture of Mr. Tieg. His family was headed by one of the early frontier cow men in that section. When Frank was about eighteen years of age, while riding the range his horse fell with him and broke his leg just below the knee. It was eighty miles to the nearest town or doctor and you know, that was in the old covered wagon days, and before they could reach medical service, gangrene had set up and his limb had to be amputated just below the knee. When he was finally well again they made him a peg leg. You know what a peg leg is, don't you? Well, in those early days they sawed a notch in a board right where the height of the knee would come, then ran a strip of the board up the limb to the waist and there belted it on to the body, and you double the limb at the knee and walk on that peg leg.

Well, we called Frank the "peg leg". Not being able to ride any more, he learned to do blacksmith work around the ranch headquarters. But when the little town of Knowles sprung up, he moved into the little town and opened his own business, a little blacksmith shop, and was now taking an interest in religion.

The next evening when we went back for service, we had a couple of songs and I said: "We must go to prayer, and Brother Tieg will lead us." I went to my knees, and pretty soon I heard his peg leg thump, thump, on the floor, and I knew he was trying to kneel. He then prayed. Here is his prayer—in a long drawn out voice he said: "OH, LORD, I CAN'T PRAY."

That is all he said. I said, amen, and arose, but it soon went all over the little town that the young crippled blacksmith had tried to pray in public and failed, and that the young preacher would just get on his knees and remain there with no one praying, and the whole village got excited about it. The next evening when we returned, to my surprise, the entire little building was filled with people. They had all come to see what we would do next, for they had heard of what kind of prayers we had been having.

Well, the first part of the service went off fine, and at the close of the message, Brother Self gave an altar call and a number came forward for prayer. Among them was an elderly lady with white hair. She had no sooner dropped on her knees than she began to scream and pray, and Frank jumped up from his seat, ran down the aisle—peg, peg, peg—and fell at her back. I think if I ever heard a fellow pray, Frank did that night. Soon the altar was cleared and it was time for testimonies. The first one to her feet to testify was this elderly mother, and she began something like this: "When I was a young girl I married Mr. Tieg and we came to this open range country and went into the stock business. I always wanted to be a Christian, but there were no churches, no Sunday School, no minister, but last night when I heard my poor crippled son make his first prayer, I resolved I would never go another day without finding God. And so He sweetly pardoned my sins tonight, and I am happy in Jesus."

It isn't always a fluent prayer that brings results, but it is the heart cry of a soul. All that Frank had said in his first public prayer was, "Lord, I can't pray," but it reached his own mother's heart, and she

could not rest until she found God, and possibly no fluent minister could have reached her as did the feeble prayer of her crippled son. But I must follow this character a little further.

Frank became one of my strongest friends, and for many, many years has been known as one of the leading Christians in all that part of the plains country. I was back a few years ago to conduct a revival in Lovington, New Mexico, which is now the county seat. The little town of Knowles has long since disappeared. A few of the buildings were moved in to Lovington, others scattered out among the settlers.

But when I was back for this meeting in Lovington, Frank Tieg had moved to Lovington also with his blacksmith shop, and he was now a feeble old man. When I arrived at my brother's home near Lovington, he said to me, "Frank is very anxious to see you," and one day soon after I arrived, drove me down to Lovington about the noon hour. Frank had a stuffed chair up in the front of his blacksmith shop, and as we drove up he was curled up in this chair, sound asleep.

But Oscar, my brother, stepped over and touched Frank on the shoulder, and as he awakened he said, "Fred is here," and he bounced from that chair and made for me. I had not seen him for some twenty years, and what a meeting we had! Yes, if I was ever hugged, it was by this little, dried up peg legged blacksmith, Frank Tieg. What a blessing it is to meet someone that you have helped in the Christian way back many years before. But, let's go back to Mr. Russell.

About the third night after I had called him to pray and he had failed, when we got back to the home and were seated in the front room, he at once arose and went into his bedroom, and I could hear him walking back and forth over the floor, then in a minute he walked back into the front room, paced back and forth, and then walked over where I was sitting, and spoke about like this: "Brother Powell, we have been married thirty years and we have never asked a minister to pray in our home. My wife tells me she has heard you praying in your room. Now couldn't we have family prayer tonight?"

You may know that my heart greatly rejoiced at those words. We were seated in the front room and I read a short scripture lesson and we went to prayer. As I closed, the mother was weeping out loud. I said to her: "Pray your heart out." They had a son that was away from home riding on the range, who was a wicked cowboy, so she began to cry and pray for her wayward son. As she closed, Mr. Russell broke out in prayer with the same burden of heart. From that day forward we always had family devotions, and they continued on all down through the years.

But wait a minute. This wayward son rode on home the next afternoon and came out to the revival and got to God, and these parents' first heart cry around their own family altar was answered in the salvation of their own son. How it pays to be true to God, and carry on as best you can, both in public and in private! If we do, God will honor our efforts, and answer our prayers. Lord, teach us to pray!