



The Arousing Question

It happened in the United Kingdom, in India, in Jamaica, in the USA, and Australia! What happened? What was the connection between all these places? It was not a world traveller, indeed it was a man who on earth was scarcely known, Frank Jenner! While Frank was the central person, it was what he did which had such a world wide effect?

Lets start in Lansdowne Baptist Church, Bournemouth England, the year was 1953. It was a glorious time for the UK. There had been the “Festival of Britain” in 1951, and in June 1953 Elizabeth, the new Queen of England, was crowned. But something more astounding was happening in that church. Something which would lead to a little man with an amazing story twelve thousand miles away in Sydney, Australia.

One night after Dr. Francis Dixon, the pastor of Lansdowne Baptist Church had spoken, a man called Peter asked if he could share his testimony. Having been given permission Peter said: “I was in the Royal Navy. I was walking down George Street in Sydney, Australia, and out of nowhere stepped a gentleman and he said to me, ‘Excuse me sir, but could I ask you a question? I hope that it won’t offend you, but if you were to die today, where would you spend eternity? The Bible says that it will either be in heaven or in hell. Would you think about that please? Thank you. God bless you!’ Then the man left. I had never been confronted with that question. I couldn’t get it out of my mind. I got back to England and met someone who took me to a mission and that’s where I became a Christian”.

Some while later they had a youth meeting in the same church in Bournemouth, and Noel, one of the visiting team, shared his testimony. “This is how I came to know Jesus Christ. I was in the Royal Navy and my ship was stationed in Sydney. One evening I was walking down George Street when out of nowhere stepped a man. He said to me: “Young man, I have a question to ask you. If you should die tonight where would you go? Would it be heaven or hell? Now don’t try to evade the question, it must be one or the other.” What he said bothered me for many months. I sought out a Christian, he helped me, and I gave my life to Christ.” This was astounding to Dr. Dixon.

The Worldwide Outreach

Not only did Dr. Dixon care for his own flock but was also an international speaker, and as he travelled he heard:

- a) In India - an Indian man had come to Sydney and been confronted by Frank’s question. He said: “On one trip of the diplomatic service I was in Sydney. Rushing and doing some last minute shopping, laden with toys and clothes for my children, I was walking down George Street when a courteous white haired little man stepped out in front of me and offered me a pamphlet and said: ‘Excuse me sir, are you saved, if you die tonight are you going to heaven?’”
- b) In Jamaica - at a missionary conference where a couple of missionaries had come to Jesus years before because of Frank Jenner’s witness.
- c) In the United States – at a naval chaplains’ conference Dr. Dixon shared about the man of George Street and his witness. A chaplain stood and shared that he too had come to Christ as a result of Frank Jenner. One of the chaplains took Dr. Dixon out for a meal and he asked the chaplain how he became a Christian. “It was miraculous. When I was young, and despite the discipline of the armed forces, I lived a reprobate life. We were doing exercises in the South Pacific and we docked at Sydney harbor for replenishments. We hit King’s Cross with a vengeance. I was blind drunk, got on the wrong bus and got off in George Street. As I got off the bus I thought I saw a ghost as this man jumped out in front of me, pushed a pamphlet in my hand and said: ‘Sailor, are you saved, if you die tonight are you going to heaven?’”

- d) In England - at a convention our elderly pastors came up and explained that they too had been saved between 25 and 30 years earlier through that same little man on George Street.
- e) In Australia - when in Perth Mount Pleasant Church in Perth. When his teaching series was over the senior elder of that Church took him out for a meal and he asked the elder how he got saved. "I grew up in this church from the age of 15. I never made a commitment to Jesus, just hopped on the bandwagon like everyone else. Because of my business ability I grew up to a place of influence. I was on a business trip to Sydney just three years ago. A little man stepped out of a shop doorway, offered me a religious pamphlet, and accosted me with a question. Frank asked a simple question:
"Excuse me sir, are you saved, if you die tonight are you going to heaven or hell?"

Meeting Frank

When in Sydney Dr. Dixon asked the local Baptist Minister if he knew of a little elderly white haired man who handed out tracts on George Street. He replied: "Yes I do, his name is Mr. Jenner, although I don't think he does it any more because he is so frail and elderly." Two nights later they went to meet him in his little apartment. They knocked on the door and this tiny frail old man greeted them. He sat them down and made them tea. He was so frail and his hands shook. As they sat there the story unfolded of how Frank got saved. This little man sat with tears running down his cheeks. He told them his story.

"Before I knew Jesus I lived the wild life of a sailor to the full and had become addicted to gambling. Then, in 1937, I met my Saviour for the first time and my life was transformed – the addiction to gambling gone forever. In a crisis I really hit the wall. One of my colleagues, to whom I gave literal hell, was there to help me. He led me to Jesus and the change in my life was night to day in 24 hours. I was so grateful to God, I promised God that I would share Jesus in a simple witness with at least 10 people a day. As God gave me strength I did that. Sometimes I was ill and couldn't do it, but I made up for the days I missed at other times. I wasn't paranoid about it. I have done this for over 40 years. In my retirement years, the best place was on St. George Street where I saw hundreds of people a day. I got lots of rejections, but a lot of people courteously took the tract. In 40 years of doing this, I have never heard of one single person coming to Jesus until today." In gratitude for his second chance at life, he pledged to serve God to the best of his ability. "In wartime and in peace, good times and bad, I continued with the work that I had promised to do".

Not that this came easily, Jenner struggled to overcome a gambling habit acquired as a sailor, and he suffered persistent health problems throughout his life. It has been estimated that over the years Frank talked to more than one hundred thousand people using the phrase he first thought of in 1937. He was so aware of his weakness that before each encounter on George Street he silently prayed: "I can do all things through Him who gives me strength".

Francis Dixon told the four stories of the men who had responded to the evangelist's simple question. Frank Jenner, with tears in his eyes, fell to his knees and prayed: "O Lord, thank you for tolerating me". After a time of prayer, Jenner confessed that after speaking to ten people a day for the previous 16 years, this was the first time he had heard of lasting results. "You know, I never heard that anyone I ever spoke to had gone on for the Lord. Some made professions of salvation when I spoke to them, but I never ever knew any more than that", he said to his guests.

In later years Frank's health deteriorated, and during his last days he prayed: "Lord, please take me home on a Sunday night". His last request was granted. He died at a quarter to midnight, just at the end of a Sunday night. The next morning a ray of sunlight shone through the open window. It fell upon his beloved well-worn bible and the solitary rose resting on it.

"The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:37-38)

Postscript

The Indian man what happened next?

“Having received the tract I thanked him very much but his question disturbed me. I got back to my town, sought out our Hindu priest. He couldn’t help me, but he advised me that to satisfy my curious mind, I should go and talk to the missionary in the mission home at the end of road. That was good advice because that day the missionary led me to Christ. I quit Hinduism immediately and began to prepare for ministry. I left the diplomatic service and here I am today, by God’s grace in charge of all these missionaries who have together led 100,000 people to Christ.”

The Chaplain

“When that question was asked the fear of God hit me immediately. I was shocked sober, ran back to the ship and sought out the Chaplain. He led me to Christ. I soon began to prepare for the ministry under his guidance. I am now in charge of 1000 chaplains who are bent on soul winning today.”

Jesus said: “If you confess me before men I’ll confess you before my Father in heaven”. Personally, I think Jesus confessed Frank’s name very often to His Father in Heaven. There can be no doubt but there was to Frank Jenner an abundant entrance into glory.

Compiled from the writings of Dr. Raymond Wilson and Word of Life Ministries

Editor’s Note

Fidelity in obscurity: It is remarkable how often people were brought into contact with God or Christ, whose names are never mentioned. For instance: what was the name of Naaman’s little maid, who were the four that carried the paralytic to Christ? Their names are known to God alone. Across the world there are thousands of saints who are doing a work in obscurity. They never stand on a platform, they never give out a hymn, thousands of ladies who work for the glory of God behind the scenes. I describe them as “fidelity in obscurity”. This is the story of one such man.