

Roses by Christmas

"Frank, you don't have to do this!" Harriett called out to her husband. It was early afternoon of Christmas Eve in the 1920s, and the arctic winds were beginning to howl across the Kansas plains. "A promise is a promise!" Frank called back to his newlywed wife. "And God has promised me that I would have roses especially for you by Christmas!"

The young couple had wed last summer under financial duress and had gone without roses, Harriett's favorite flowers, at their wedding. On their wedding night Frank had vowed to his new bride that God would allow him to make it up to her, with the gift of beautiful roses by Christmas.

So on what looked to be the worst weather day of the year, with a major wind and snowstorm settling in, Frank was off like a mule, headed toward town with the goal of finding flowers for his Harriett, to make good his promise of roses by Christmas.

Four hours had now passed since Frank disappeared into the winter storm on his way to town. Harriett wiped the frosted front window and surveyed the empty lot in front of their farmhouse. From the sheets of white frost moving sideways across their yard, it was all too obvious that blankets of snow would soon cover the land and barns and all of life. *Where was Frank?*

To busy herself in an attempt to allay her worst fears that her husband was trapped in a snowstorm, Harriett piled on her coat and stepped onto the porch to gather stacks of wood for the cast-iron stove that would need stoking throughout the night. Life was hard on the Kansas plains that winter—and *roses by Christmas*, no matter how great a promise her loving husband had made before God to her, seemed a bit far-fetched.

Suddenly through the glare of the white crystals of snow emerged an image—of a perfect line of red roses. *Was this a mirage?* thought Harriett. This perfect line of roses was slowly moving toward her—as if floating through the air. Then Harriett saw the hands holding this image—those of her husband Frank.

In his hands was a neatly rolled swatch of the finest linen cloth Harriett had ever seen! Etched across it were crimson roses fit for a queen.

Frank's eyes met hers with the pride of a proud papa who had just presented the latest addition to the family. Before Harriett could scold her husband for risking his life in the blizzard, she was met with the sound of his loving voice—"Merry Christmas!"

How do I know the story of this farm couple? These were my grandparents—a young husband who believed God had promised he would have roses for his newlywed wife by Christmas, and roses she got ... in only a way that God could have miraculously orchestrated.

In the same way, God promised He would send a Redeemer as His gift to us. Centuries came and went, but “when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son” (Gal. 4:4, NKJV). His greatest gift of love was and is His own Son, and He came just at the right time.

This Christmas reflect on His unconditional love for all people and make it a point to be His ambassador in a world that desperately needs to know His love through Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:20). Praise God in the highest and thank Him for His indescribable gift because His promise of love to us came that one night when heaven touched earth and the miracle of a babe born in a manger changed things forever (see 2 Cor. 9:15).

PRAYER POWER WEEK OF 12/20/2010

This week even as the busyness accelerates, take time to meditate on the profound meaning of His simple birth, and how God always keeps His promises, no matter how long it's been or how impossible it seems. Thank Him that just as He kept His promise of salvation through His Son, Jesus, He will make good on everything He's promised you from His Word. Thank Him for the gift of life and ask Him to help you make the most of each day. Reflect on His awesome love and expect Him to use you as His ambassador to those who have suffered losses and face an uncertain future. Remember our president, our military, and all those serving in authority over us. Continue to pray for Israel and the Middle East. Gal. 4:4; 2 Cor. 5:20