

THE HEAVENLY MAN

CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE

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Proverbs 31:8 "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves."

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The Heavenly Man

The Remarkable True Story of
Chinese Christian Brother Yun

WITH PAUL HATTAWAY

MONARCH
BOOKS

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Christian Solidarity Worldwide

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PREFACE

For more than one thousand years the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has spread its influence across China, through many ups and downs, victories and trials.

In 1949 persecution of God's people commenced and the churches have suffered from all kinds of attacks since. By 1958 the government had closed all visible churches. Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, told foreign visitors, "Christianity in China has been confined to the history section of the museum. It is dead and buried." In the 1970s a visiting Christian delegation from the United States reported, "There is not a single Christian left in China."

At the start of the Book of Genesis we read that the earth *"was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters"*. Genesis 1:2. This was also the state of the Chinese church at this time. The church in China, at least on the visible surface, was dead. In those days nobody dared to proclaim, "Jesus is Lord." The church was stripped from top to bottom, and for all intents and purposes, had died.

"And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness." Genesis 1:3. Thankfully we serve a God who knows

how to raise the dead! I believe God allowed the atheist government to destroy the old structure of the Chinese church so that he could rebuild it according to his own purposes. He started with little and has made it much!

The simple fact that the Chinese church has grown into a force tens of millions strong today is a sign not only of God's existence but also of his matchless power.

In the 1970s the Chinese church, like a rosebud that has been closed for a long time, started to open up and reveal its beauty and life to the world again. At that time a young man in southern Henan Province met the Lord Jesus Christ and committed his life to follow him as Lord and Master. God took hold of his life in a remarkable way.

Through nearly thirty years of testing, Brother Yun has seen the grace of the Lord poured out on his life, overflowing as a blessing to many. He is one of God's chosen leaders to this generation, a great fighter and faithful worker. Many signs, wonders and miracles have followed his ministry, attesting that he is an apostle of the faith (2 Corinthians 12:12). He is a man of impeccable integrity and character, a noble man, a good husband and father. The joy of the Lord is always Brother Yun's strength. His infectious smile can light up a whole room.

After I read Brother Yun's book my heart was deeply moved. I felt regret at not knowing this dear brother longer than the twenty years we have worked hand-in-hand in China.

I testify that every story in this book is true. I have personally witnessed many of the events described in these pages. I feel so honoured to be Brother Yun's closest friend and co-worker. Although he has always honoured me as a spiritual elder and respected me as his pastor, I feel a mutual respect. When I was married I asked Brother Yun to conduct the wedding service and offer the blessing.

I have read this book with a heart of gratitude to God and sincerely recommend it as a true testimony of the great things God has done in China's church.

Xu Yongze

Chairman of the Sinim Fellowship of House Church Leaders in China

FOREWORD

I joyfully read Brother Yun's entire book in one breath, feeling great excitement in my heart and soul. It seemed to take me back to those fervent times, and recalled many precious memories.

Brother Yun and I were born in the same region, went to the same church, and laboured together in the harvest. We cried, rejoiced and preached together, and were rejected together. We ate in the wind and slept in the open air, stuck together through thick and thin. We loved each other as blood brothers.

Yun and I worked together for many years until we were arrested in Nanyang. In the prison we were put in separate cells, but we cried out along the prison corridors, hoping our voices would be heard as a source of encouragement to each other. We tried to slip notes to strengthen each other in the faith.

Yun's testimony is written with blood and tears; his journey has been one that encountered many bitter struggles. Instead of complaining and grumbling, he learned to tackle all obstacles prayerfully, on his knees with God.

Chinese believers remember Yun as a brave man who often prays on bended knee, raising his hands in thankfulness to

the Lord while tears stream down his cheeks. After many unbearable situations, God not only opened the iron gate of the prison for Yun, but is also using him as a blessing to both the Chinese and Western churches in this new century.

Brother Yun is gifted at making contact with believers from different church backgrounds, gently bringing them together in unity. Like a thread, God has used him to combine different coloured patches into a beautiful cloth. In recent years Brother Yun and I drifted apart as our paths took us in different directions, and I sometimes even reprimanded him from afar. Yet when I heard the reports of how God was using him and learned about the path he has faithfully followed, I could only admire him and blush with shame and self-reprimand.

In the Chinese church I have seen many of God's servants come with great power and authority, but with brother Yun I saw a servant of Jesus who always came in humility and meekness, reflecting the heart of the Son of Man, who did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life.

I pray you will enjoy and be challenged by this book as much as I was.

Zhang Rongliang
Fangcheng House Church, China

INTRODUCTION

On a warm September evening a small group of Christians gathered at Bangkok International Airport to welcome back Brother Yun. It had been more than eight months since we had seen his smiling face. In January 2001 he had been arrested. During the first few days of his incarceration the prison authorities almost beat him to death. Later he was sentenced to seven years in prison.

Occasional messages were carried out of the prison to his concerned friends around the world. One said, "God has sent me to be his witness in this place. There are many people here who need Jesus. I will be in this prison for exactly the length of time God has determined. I won't leave one moment early and I won't stay one moment too long. When God determines my ministry in prison is complete, I will come out."

Miraculously, in God's perfect timing, Yun was released after spending just seven months and seven days of his seven-year sentence.

Now we were gathered at the airport, hoping to see him arrive. Would he be sick, tired and quiet after his harrowing ordeal?

Suddenly Yun appeared in the arrival hall. He was none

of these things! His face was full of light and a wide smile stretched from ear to ear. "Praise God! Hallelujah!" were his first words. "Glory to God!" We held hands and bowed our heads in a prayer of thanksgiving, as bemused passengers hurried past us to their check-in counters.

Brother Yun is known throughout China as "the Heavenly Man". This nickname stemmed from an incident in 1984 when he refused to tell his real name to the authorities. Divulging his true identity would have endangered local Christians. In reply to the threats and beatings of the Public Security Bureau to reveal his name and home address, Yun shouted, "I am a heavenly man! My home is in heaven!" The local believers, who were still gathered in a nearby house, heard his shouting and knew he was warning them of danger. They all fled and avoided arrest.

As a mark of respect for his courage and love for the body of Christ, house church believers in China have called Yun "the Heavenly Man" to this day.

Yun is the first to admit that there are parts of him that are not heavenly! Like all of us, he struggles against temptation and weakness, and deeply realizes that, apart from the grace of Jesus Christ in his life, he amounts to nothing. He once told his wife Deling, "We are absolutely nothing. We have nothing to be proud about. We have no abilities and nothing to offer God. The fact that he chooses to use us is only due to his grace. It has nothing to do with us. If God should choose to raise up others for his purpose and never to use us again we would have nothing to complain about."

Oswald Chambers once wrote, "If you give God the right to yourself, he will make a holy experiment out of you. God's experiments always succeed." This is certainly true of Brother Yun. From the time he first met Jesus Christ, he has endeavoured to serve him wholeheartedly.

There are lessons and experiences from Yun's life that can greatly encourage Christians around the world as they seek to follow the Lord Jesus.

Brother Yun's testimony is one that reflects the faithfulness and goodness of God in his life. His is a story of how God took a young, half-starved boy from a poor village in Henan Province, China, and used him to shake the world. Instead of focusing on the many miracles or experiences of suffering he has gone through, he prefers to focus on the character and beauty of Jesus Christ. He wishes the whole world to know Jesus as he does, not as an historical, distant figure, but as an ever-present, love-filled, all-powerful Almighty God.

In researching this book I interviewed dozens of Christians in China who were eyewitnesses of, and completely verified, the events contained in the pages that follow. Interspersed throughout the book are short contributions from Deling (Yun's wife) and a few Chinese house church leaders. These insights will help the reader gain a different perspective – and a more complete picture – of some of the key incidents in Yun's life. Most of Deling's reflections were made while her husband was in prison for the sake of the gospel.

It has been said, "It is not great men who change the world, but weak men in the hands of a great God." Those who know Brother Yun can vouch that he is a humble servant of God who does not want any part of his life to bring glory to himself or man.

Brother Yun desires that his story would focus all attention and glory on the only true Heavenly Man – the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul Hattaway