

XII. MY TESTIMONY

~Other Speakers S-Z: John Sung:

Let me relate my testimony in the context of Genesis. My name, according to the flesh, is Sung Siong-ceh, according to the spirit, John. My life may be divided into seven stages according to the order of the creation:

1. Light and darkness.
2. Water, air, sky.
3. Earth and vegetation.
4. Sun, moon and stars.
5. Sea and fish, Air and birds.
6. Lower order of animals; higher order of animals.
7. Rest.

The key to my life, John, may be found in the seven stages above.

Period I

Light and darkness. This was the period of superstitions. My father was a devout pastor. He served in the ministry for forty-four years. I thank God for such a father who loved me, taught me and fed me with spiritual food. What I am today is all from my father. There were six boys and four girls in our family. How could a pastor with so many children survive? My father was a good writer and speaker. When he first became pastor of Hingwa city, he had a church capable of admitting 3,000. However, his congregation in the first year numbered two hundred odd. This increased to five to six hundred in the second year, and to over a thousand in the third. I have never seen such a prosperous church.

When my father was twenty years old, he was rather anxious about his livelihood. One evening he heard the Lord speaking to him quite suddenly, "But seek My kingdom and righteousness, and all these things I shall add to you." After this my father related his new-birth and its happy experience to me. Sad to say, I did not know what was meant by sin and re-birth at that time.

My father kept a diary. It is from him that I have acquired this habit of keeping a diary. Every Saturday he would climb a hill to pray for his Sunday sermon and congregation. He was not a strong man. He was often plagued with coughs. Once he coughed so badly that my mother and I got together to pray for him. Thanks be to God, He heard our prayer and healed him.

My father loved most to preach in the villages. He taught me how to preach the Gospel. In my first attempt, I could speak but a few words. The second time I could speak several hundred words. This was in 1909 when I was nine years old.

There was a revival in the city. Several thousand were filled with the Holy Spirit, after they confessed their sins in tears --- drunkenness, smoking, theft. People came from Foochow and Amoy. Chinese pastors and foreign missionaries, one and all, were deeply moved.

I loved to study during school days. I was more gifted than my school-mates. I was against their anti-Japanese demonstrations and found excuse to take leave, and of course I was dubbed "Slave without a country". But I retorted, "I am a son of God. Go on sneering."

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We had family worship. The youngest child at home could pray. When I got promoted to senior middle, I used to help my father preach. I led thirty to forty to the Lord. I taught the young children the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. Thanks be to God, I had all the good seed sown into my heart while I was so young. Though I was darkness, I received light from my father. He was a lamp unto my feet.

Period II

Water, Air, Sky. This was the period of a struggle within me between science and faith. At 18, I said to my father, "I want to go to America!" My father said, "Can you go without any money?" I said, "By faith. Prayer can succeed!"

God heard my prayer. I received a letter from a Methodist College in U.S. granting me a tuition scholarship. But I had no money for the passage. It happened that World War I was on. The U.S. dollar was low. My father borrowed \$500 from his students for me. I said, "I will return this sum to them within a year after reaching America!" But I suffered from sore eyes and my father said, "You can't go now!" I said, "I'll be alright in a week!" God again heard my prayer.

When I got to Shanghai, there were seven of us. The others went to the restaurants and cinemas, but I remained behind reading my Bible. Although they laughed at me, I had this reply, "I am a son of God. Go on!"

When we got on the boat, no sooner had the vessel put out to sea than all of my companions became sea-sick. I was the only one unaffected. We were twenty days on board. When we arrived in San Francisco, I was grown quite stout on the food left by the seven.

But when I arrived in U.S.A. I gave up my original intention of studying theology. I became a science student. I had six dollars left in my pocket. No one helped me, as my English was poor. I could only look up to God, pray. Later I got a job that gave me one dollar for four hours of work. This barely kept my body and soul together, but was better than nothing. Then I found another job at a factory. Everyday I worked eleven hours. This job gave me \$100 per month. After paying \$50 for food, I could little save up to repay within a year the sum I borrowed to come to U.S. I could only look up to God in prayer.

I love to sing. I sang loudly in my work. My fellows-at-work liked the singing. So they gave me a treat.

One day a foreman took me to lunch. I told him the reason why I came to U.S.A. He gave me a job that paid a dollar an hour. However, this rise could not help much after deducting food and vacation. I prayed again, and I got another job. I worked three hours a day and my monthly pay was \$30. Because I worked very hard like two men, when school re-opened, I was the first in earned income among a thousand students. I had saved up \$500. At this time the U.S. dollar shot up. An American dollar was worth more than two Chinese dollars. So, with over US\$200 I cleared my debt.

Now the normal college course takes four years. I requested my principal to let me do it in three. My principal said my English was too little, and on top of that, I had chosen Science. He replied, "You couldn't graduate in five!" But I replied "Two!" Nevertheless my principal agreed that if my results were good, I could graduate in three. I prayed earnestly to God. I was first in astronomy in a class of 300. I could complete my study not only in three years but also have the choice of subjects from chemistry, physics, maths, psychology to sociology.

Although I had made progress in studies, my faith began to waver. I forgot to pray and read the Bible. Before I was like water, becoming air. Now I was backslided. God chastised me and sent me sickness. Because of over-study, I became ill. The doctor said, "This sickness needs an operation, or life will be in danger." Alas! What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? I could only have recourse to prayer that the Lord would forgive my sins. "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." Before operation, I was obliged to write a last letter informing my parents. I told them I had repented and I wasn't afraid of death at all. After two weeks in hospital, I recovered. With neither kith or kin, where could I find the means of paying my hospital bill, costing several tens of dollars? Again I prayed, "O Lord give me

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parents that can look after me.” The Lord heard my cry. The pastor of the Church where I used to worship, hearing of my sickness, reported to the congregation. Yes, they all came to see me, and paid my fees! My faith shot up once more. But in no time it was lost to science. I backslided. After three years, I graduated among four of the best. I was the only Chinese. My photo was splashed far and wide. As I became known abroad and began to strut around, my coughs returned. I repented and prayed. The Lord sent me out to mow grass. After one week I recovered, and I soon became ruddy again. I recovered completely in three weeks. At this time as I studied more science, my spiritual life dropped further. I got sick again, and again I turned to the Lord. This was my period of change, from water to air.

Period III

Earth and Vegetation. This was a period of struggle between social service and faith. This was the period during which I got my bachelor, master and doctor's degrees. In only five years and two months, I earned three degrees. In taking the doctor's, I needed German and French. Praying earnestly, and shutting myself up in the room for two months of relentless study, I could translate chemistry German and French. The professor, seeing my work, asked, “Have you had seven or eight years of German and French?”

During this period I was very humble. I also found opportunity to assist in teaching. I got a high-paying job according to the hour. With scholarship and money, I became more active. I started an international students society and became the president. Members came from not less than 13 countries. From here we organised a concert. We invited the principal and professors, and charged each person five dollars. We sold over \$1,000 tickets. This sum of money we loaned to needy foreign students free of interest, after the charitable deeds of our Lord. Though I believed in God at this time I took Jesus to be a perfect, moral, and self-denying man.

After this I organised an international society for peace, to unite all races and nations to abolish super-nationalism. I put Jesus alongside Confucius, Mencius, Laotse and Chuangtse. I was applauded. I got many invitations.

When I wanted to return home in 1927 I received a lucrative offer. While I was trying to make up my mind, a voice said to me, “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” At that moment I could clearly see my father praying for me. He said to me, “Did I not send you to America to study theology?” Then I saw a cross, and I heard a voice, “Without the Cross you can't save any people or country!” Overwhelmed as it were by a flood, I found a safe place inside the ark of the cross. I was greatly relieved. So I decided to give myself to the Lord. I entered a seminary in New York.

Period IV and V

It was a pity to hear renowned scholars when lecturing on Matthew Chapter I to put a question mark over Jesus' virgin birth by Mary. These same professors dismissed as unscientific and unbelievable the Genesis account, and the doctrine of the resurrection. They said prayer was hypnosis. These teachings stirred up the doubts within my heart. As I began to doubt the reliability of the Bible, I thought of founding a new religion. I regarded Confucianism and Buddhism superior to the Bible. Since I thought the Bible to be unscientific, I gave up prayer. I turned against Christianity. But He who is not willing any should perish had helped and saved me through these five or six years. He saved me from the road of destruction. He turned me around.

Poisoned by modernism, I gave up the desire to preach. This was 1927 when I decided to return to China. I regarded the answers to my past prayers to be no more than happy coincidences. On the point of going home, I suddenly heard a voice, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.” (I Cor. 1:29). I said, “O God, What is the meaning? What must I do?” God showed my sins. In Jan. 1927, I deeply repented. From this time forth, I read my Bible and prayed everyday. I disregarded the word of man. I obeyed only the Word of God. On Feb. 10th, I saw myself so polluted with sin. I prayed, “Lord, You who love me, I have left You. I have said with my mouth, there is no God. You heard my prayers before and saved me. Can my sins be forgiven now? I shall not return. Only You must bless me!”

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I saw the Lord standing before me: "Your sins are forgiven! Your name is changed to John." I said, "Lord Jesus, don't leave me! I am sorrowing terribly because of your death for me."

Since the Lord changed me over, I saw the devil in certain pastors and professors. With the eyesight God had now given me I read my Bible. God saved me from the road of destruction as He led Abraham out of a road leading nowhere. I was like a fish in the sea becoming a bird in the air. I was filled with the Holy Spirit. I knew the Bible was God's Word, every jot and tittle, unchangeable. I refused to study the theology of devils. I went out to preach. Many thought I had gone crazy, but the power of God was with me.

On Feb. 17, when I went outdoors, I saw a child write the word "Rest" on the road. I saw another child writing the same word. I saw yet another writing that the same word. When I returned to seminary, the door was shut to me. I was not permitted to enter. This made me feel uneasy. I asked the people, "What is this?" They said, "You are sick. We'll send you to rest at the hospital." Though I tried to get out of this sudden situation, God said, "Rest! Rest!" I brought my Bible and pen along, and lo and behold! I was sent to a lunatic asylum. Pity me I now was turned into a fish in the deep sea. Though they tried to take away my Bible, could they forbid theological professors and students from reading the Bible? Now, since I had no diary or paper, I could write only on the margin of my Bible what the Holy Spirit taught me.

On the second day, a panel of scientists gathered to study the root of my sickness. They asked, "Are your father and mother affected by mental sickness? Are your mother's parents also affected?" I said, "Do you think me mad? Please examine my brain and see who is more lucid." Though they discarded me, God was with me. He taught me the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit led me to write down notes. I saw in the creation a revelation. I saw God as my loving Father. He gave me spiritual eyes. He taught me things of the Spirit. At this time ... Satan came to tempt me. After the devil of conceit left the devil of jealousy came. Every day, a devil came. Thanks be to God, I won against the Devil through prayer. Though I was like a fish in the sea, I could rise like a bird in the sky.

At this time I was in the company of an inmate of 13 years. How could I stand it? I waited for a chance to escape. But they caught me within half a mile. Now they really regarded me a madman. I was bound hand and foot. I was put into an inner ward. My companions wailed day and night. How could I get any consolation? From sanity to insanity! I could only pray. God came to comfort me, "Fear not, I am with you. This is your cross!" I stayed in this wilderness for 193 days. This reminded me of the Lord Jesus who had borne our sins for 1930 years. So, I must bear this sin-load for 193 days. After 193 days, God said to me, "Today is your day of release." True enough, a friend just returned from Europe to America became my guarantor. It fulfilled what God revealed to me.

Period VI

Lower form of animals and higher form of animals. God said to me during this period, "When you return to China, go to the villages and preach the Gospel where others loathe to preach." When I came back, many regarded me a scientist as the world would see me. My parents suspected I was crazy. When I returned home I did not write in advance of my coming. So, when I entered the house, my sad and kind-looking father said to me, "Who are you? Are you returned home a crazy fellow?" I replied, "When I went away I was dead. As I come home now, I am alive." My parents observed me a full month to see if I really was crazy.

At that time I got a job as a science teacher in a school. To start out I taught them the big lesson on chemistry -- the feeding of five thousand with five loaves and two fishes! Then they thought I was mad. But as I preached, many repented and believed the Lord. Is this what a crazy fellow can do? Before, these boys and girls who never read the Bible and were against the Bible became born again now. They began to love reading the Bible and pray. Because I found rapport with the students, my colleagues began to eye me with fear. They concocted rumours against me. Those of the Kuomintang, seeing I was often out preaching, called me a Communist. No doubt there were also Judases among my students who sold me away which grieved me the more. Nevertheless, when they chased me out and beat me, I prayed for them that the Lord might forgive their sins. On another occasion when they were about to assault me, I prayed. Suddenly it thundered with lightning. This scared them helter-skelter instead to quickly shut the windows. Praise the Lord, He guided and helped me Himself. Though I was like a lower form of animal, the Lord made me a higher form of animal. For when I went

out to preach in the villages, my zealous students went along with me.

Period VII

At this time, I went out with my students everyday to preach. The Spirit of God was with me. I knew the vanity of the social gospel, and the futility of movements, science and organisations. Only the precious blood of the Crucified Jesus can save a man's soul. I was engaged in much evangelism for two to three years. I preached eight to nine times a day, until I became hoarse and almost speechless. Last year I almost died through illness.

Many prayed for me and I recovered. God still wants me to lead many souls to Christ, so He gave me back my life. In my teaching job or in my preaching job, I never considered the question of pay. I needed only six or seven dollars to live per month. Many thought I had overworked but I did this in the light of Jesus' Coming. Why shouldn't I hasten with the work? I spend ten months away from home every year, but my heart is filled with joy. Last year I was sick almost to death. But I was very happy when I thought of my work. Lord, this body of mine is Yours. The learning of this world, name, riches, are all empty. Only the merits of the Cross remain forever. Thanks be to God, that I am able to work for You, to be crucified for You. I was a great sinner but, Lord, You saved me, changed me, and use me. What work is grander than rural evangelism? I saw many lost sheep repent. Wasn't I thrilled in my heart more than the angels? Wherever I go people constrain me to stay. I say, "I'll come again." Because God is with me, my mouth is His mouth. My feet, ears, eyes, heart are also His. With these can only do His will. You are all God's children. May you think as He thinks. God is not willing that any should perish. How many are there in Shanghai who have not believed? Whose responsibility is it? God has chosen you to be shepherds. How can you take it lightly? How can the world take advantage of you? (1930).

THEME SONG

Only a sinner saved by grace!

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This is my story, to God be the glory ---

I'm only a sinner saved by grace!