

Asia Harvest



Swing the Sickle for the Harvest is Ripe! (Joel 3:13)

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Heilongjiang -

Revival in Northeast China (PART TWO)

From the Front Lines

with Paul & Joy Hattaway

In the past few months news of the deadly SARS virus has made headlines around the world. Many people have written to us, asking how we are doing here in Asia and whether or not it has affected our work. We are thankful for your concerns.

In response, we would like to give the perspective of the SARS virus from the Chinese house church. We have found they always have a fresh and “Kingdom view” of things. The house churches have continued to meet together, and are not bound by fear at all. After decades of living in a country where the government is out to destroy them, they have learned much about the complete sovereignty of God, as they have seen Him work through every situation that arises.

The believers say they have been asking God’s protection from SARS and praying Psalm 91:

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty
I will say of the Lord,
“He is my refuge, and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”*

*Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare
and from the deadly pestilence....*

*You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday...*

The Chinese Church says there are actually two epidemics raging in China today...

EPIDEMIC #1: Many Christians believe the whole SARS epidemic is a judgment from God on China. The place where the epidemic started was the city of Foshan in Guangdong Province. Foshan happens to be one of the most famous Buddhist strongholds in southern China. In fact, the name means Fo (“Buddha”) and Shan (“Mountain”). Every year hundreds of thousands of people, from inside China and from places like Taiwan and Hong Kong, travel there to worship Buddha and visit ancient temples and monasteries. Secondly, the church leaders say that the new Chinese leader, Hu Jintao, is sympathetic to Buddhism. He served as the top Communist leader in Tibet from 1988 to 1992, and soon after his rise to national leadership he used his

influence to start rebuilding ancient Buddhist sites in Anhui Province.

EPIDEMIC #2: The Chinese Church is more focused on another kind of epidemic that has been sweeping China for much longer than SARS. Several years ago the government, frustrated by their inability to stop the growth of Christianity, issued a document in which they described the problem as *jidujiao-re*, or “Christianity fever.” This second kind of epidemic has continued to spread at an alarming rate. It does not distinguish between poor and rich, rural families or urban, educated or uneducated. All people are susceptible to infection by this highly contagious fever. The more the authorities try to clamp down on it and confine those identified as the main spreaders of the fever, the more it multiplies. Scientists have said that SARS has spread through ‘super carriers’ - people so infectious that they have spread the virus to hundreds of others before they were identified. God is looking for Christians everywhere to be ‘super carriers’ of the Gospel, people who are willing to go anywhere and spread the Good News to thousands. There are plenty of Christian ‘super carriers’ in China!

Chinese church leaders report the SARS virus has made people much more open to the Gospel than ever before. Tens of thousands of people are being born-again in China every day since SARS broke out. The house churches have already produced Gospel literature to help point fearful people to the Great Physician. Please pray God would be glorified at the present time in China, and many millions will peace and salvation through Jesus Christ.

This month we conclude our look at the Church in Heilongjiang Province in northeast China, with more excerpts from interviews with Chinese house church leaders who have experienced the powerful revival in this part of China in the last ten years. We at Asia Harvest continue to act as a link between the Church in Asia and the Church around the world. For several years now we have been blessed to help fuel the revival in Heilongjiang by printing thousands of Bibles and teaching books, supporting dozens of fruitful evangelists in the area, and being involved in several other projects that have helped the Church grow there.

We are very conscious that all help we are able to give is not our own, but comes from Christians all around the world like you! It is our privilege and joy just to be able to hand it on and see the tremendous growth that results.

These days we know that most Christians have tremendous pressures on their time and finances. For this reason we are really thankful for all those who feel led by the Lord to participate in this ministry, whether it be through prayer, participation, or financial giving. We appreciate that you take the time to read these newsletters, and we hope hearing about what God is doing in China today is a blessing to you and an encouragement to believe that if God can do it in China than he can do it right in your life and your community as well!



Chinese women burning incense and praying to Buddha. It is for millions like these that house church Christians are willing to die so that they might hear the Gospel.

Heilongjiang - a Hub of Revival

PART TWO

In our April newsletter we looked at the Church in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, home to 45 million people. Heilongjiang is the coldest part of China, but God has been warming the hearts of people there sending a revival that has swept through the house churches over the past decade, with church leaders estimating there to be between 2.5 to three million believers in the province today. In this issue of Asia Harvest we conclude our look at the church in Heilongjiang, with testimonies told to us by pastors and church leaders. We start with an interview of Sister Wei, a 55-year old woman whose remarkable testimony has been verified by many others. You may find parts of her story difficult to believe, but her testimony is just one of thousands of similar stories of how God is changing lives throughout China today.

Sister Wei, a Radically Changed Life

Before I became a Christian my husband was a factory worker and I worked for the government in the northern part of Heilongjiang. My job was to find those families who had two or more babies, and to report them to the authorities. These families were fined, and on many occasions the extra child was taken away and killed, or else the pregnant mother was forced to have an abortion. Because of my job, my hands

were covered with guilt and the blood of hundreds of murdered babies.

In the year of 1984 I was struck with numerous serious diseases, one after the other, including cancer. For almost the entire year I was confined to bed, unable to work and in great pain. The doctors could never figure out what my problems were. Throughout the year they diagnosed 22 different diseases afflicting me!

My illnesses worsened and the doctor told my family to prepare for my death. One night as I lay in my bed I had a vivid dream. In my dream I saw the cross that used to be worn by my aunt, who was a Catholic believer.

We were told she was ignorant and believed in foolish superstition, so for many years I had not thought about her again. On this night, however, remembering the cross she used to wear had a strange appeal to me in my sin-bound and sick state. I knew that there was a power in the Cross that could help me from my despair.

I realized later that there is great power in the cross of Jesus Christ – not the physical crosses worn by people around their necks, but the power of Jesus actual death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead!

That night as I lay on my deathbed I heard a voice clearly saying to me, "You will be salt to the world. You will be light to the world. You will be a witness to the Lord."

The next morning I called my Aunt and asked her about the cross. She responded, "It is only the cross of Jesus that can save you!" I cried and cried for hours as I poured out my heart and soul before the Lord and repented for all my wicked acts. Through His Name I was healed from all my sickness!

A friend took me to a house church meeting where I learned more about God's

Word and enjoyed rich fellowship with many other brothers and sisters who had been snatched from hell's doorstep like myself.

After becoming a Christian I quit my government job and took a job working in a local factory. Every night after work the Holy Spirit kept me awake and told me to read His Word. I stayed up reading God's precious Word, which was life and nourishment to my bones. The hours of darkness seemed so short as the Holy Spirit saturated me with His love, peace and knowledge.

Oh, the sweetness of Jesus Christ!

Time would pass quickly until I noticed the sun coming up for the new day. Even though I would then need to prepare for the day's work in the factory, I found I was not tired at all, even though I hadn't managed to sleep all night. The Word of God invigorated my body and spirit!

Every evening after work I led meetings in our village. My life therefore became an exciting cycle of work in the daytime, leading meetings in the evenings, and reading God's Word in the nighttime.

Every night I would try to memorize 15 chapters from the Bible.

You might find this difficult to believe, as naturally-speaking it is impossible, but before the Lord I testify that for a period of about five years I didn't sleep at all, not even once! Yet I rarely felt tired because the Lord was giving me inner peace and rest that nourished my body as well as my spirit.

During these five years God allowed me to memorize large sections of the Bible, so that I was able to preach and testify directly from God's Word. This was amazing to my relatives and neighbors because they knew that I had only received two year's formal

education. Before being touched by the Lord I could not read very well at all.

When I became a full-time evangelist I wasn't worried about being arrested. Numerous times I stood and preached the Gospel on the bus to the other passengers. The Holy Spirit always moved with great power and conviction so that many, or all, of the other passengers would break down in tears, confess their sins and commit their



lives to Jesus Christ. Sometimes the bus driver would even pull his bus off to the side of the road while I prayed with the passengers to receive the Lord.

On one occasion God moved so powerfully in people's hearts that they wanted to be baptized immediately, even the bus driver and ticket collector! There was no water at that place however, so I didn't know what to do. The passengers all took out their bottles of drinking water and offered them to me to use to baptize people!

I even visited the head Public Security office where I asked the chief of police for permission to visit the three women's prisons in the area so I could preach the Gospel. Permission was granted because I

had led the chief to faith in Christ a few months earlier.

After singing songs and preaching many of the prisoners believed upon the Lord for salvation. All I could do was pray for them and encourage them with God's Word. I wasn't allowed to interact closely with them. One day I asked the new believers to put their heads through the prison bars as far as they were able. I then poured water on their heads and baptized them! By God's grace I was able to lead 180 women prisoners to Jesus, as well as some of the prison guards!

On another occasion I felt led by the Lord to visit the three top leaders of the Religious Affairs Bureau. I rebuked them because of the persecution they were bringing to the house churches throughout the province. I told them that Saul had also been persecuting Christians in the Bible, but when Jesus stopped Saul on the Road to Damascus Jesus didn't ask him why he had been persecuting the Christians, but told Saul that he had been persecuting Him. In the same way, I showed these religious leaders that if they continued to persecute and beat the house church believers, they were actually persecuting Jesus, and He would extract vengeance in due time.

Two of the three leaders showed sorrow for their actions. The other man, however, was very stubborn and strongly opposed me and promised he would continue to persecute the house churches. A short time later that officer's son had a car accident and died. The man took it as a sign of judgement from God and repented.

During one meeting there was a 36-year old sister who could not speak. She had been deaf and dumb since birth. We prayed for her and the Lord healed her wonderfully, so that she began to talk for the first time. Once

she was healed she could suddenly read and write more than 300 words! This was truly a sign and wonder from God that many unbelievers heard about.

Another woman in my church had been insane for 27 years. She was crazy and always said dirty and disgusting things to people. I went to her and cast the demon out of her in the Name of Jesus. After praying for her something strange and unexpected happened. This woman could not speak at all for one year! Her mouth had been so dirty that perhaps the Lord decided to give it a rest! After one year the Lord fully restored her and she could talk again. This sister came to have such a humble and sweet spirit, and is now a servant of Jesus.

By God's grace in a few years He enabled me to introduce many thousands of people to the Lord. Even among the factory workers I used to work with, more than 100 came to believe in Jesus and met together for worship and Bible study in the factory.

Later on I joined up with evangelists who came from Henan Province. These precious brothers and sisters were wonderful testimonies of God's grace and held back nothing from the Lord's service. Together, the Henan and Heilongjiang believers have seen the start of a great harvest in Heilongjiang. When I was a little girl there were almost no Chinese Christians in Heilongjiang but now there are thousands and thousands of churches spread throughout every part of the province.

I believe countless millions of people here will believe in Jesus soon!

Praise be to the Lord of Lords!"

The Salvation of a Communist Party Leader

In one part of Heilongjiang province there lives a man in his fifties who was a well-known Communist Party leader. Due to his unhealthy stressful life-style, drinking and smoking, he suffered a stroke and was paralyzed.

His unloving wife, who viewed herself as a leading socialite, was embarrassed by her disabled husband and immediately divorced him. He was retired, but the local government allowed him to keep his driver and vehicle, and a personal doctor.

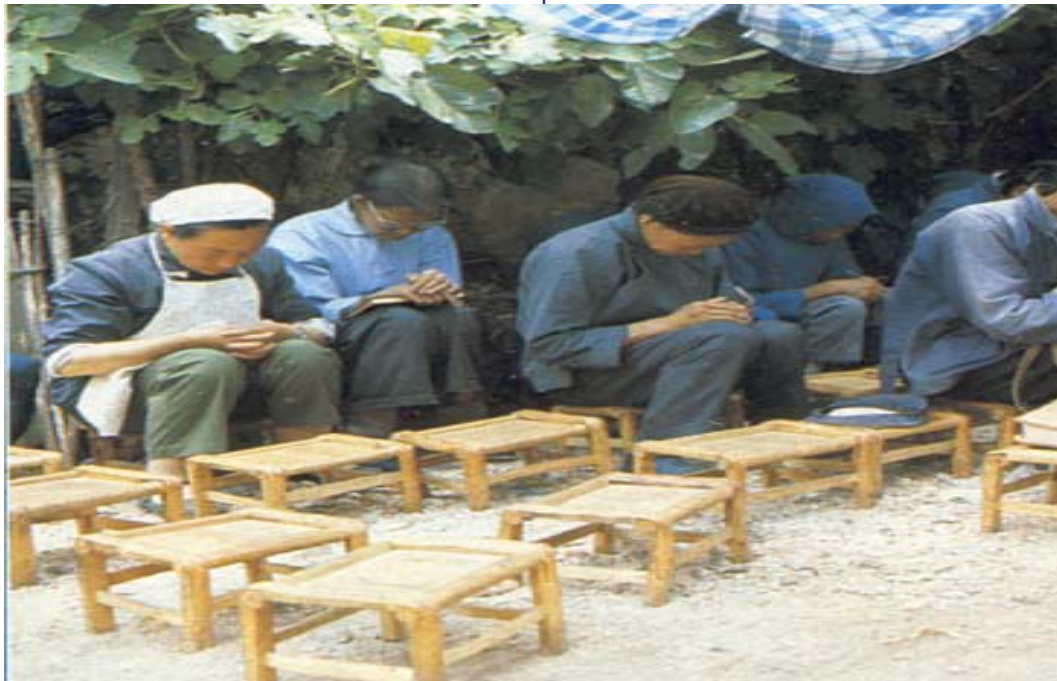
In his desperation the man told his driver, "I have heard that those illegal Christians pray and anything can happen. Please take me to them."

A few weeks later the leader was told that a group of house church believers would be meeting in a forest outside the city that

night. He told his driver to get ready and they headed up into the mountains. After about an hour they stopped alongside a forest. The driver hesitated because he thought his boss was planning to commit suicide in his desperate state.

The paralyzed man instructed his driver to pull off the road as he wanted to go into the forest. The driver had to carry him in through the trees. They walked for a few miles until suddenly through the darkness he heard noise of Christians singing and praying.

It was so dark that none of the Christians could see the men arrive in the forest clearing. The driver stood at a distant and observed, while the paralyzed leader sat on the ground. He told his driver to return to the car and wait for him. In his heart the Communist leader knew that he was a sinful man and that it had come time to confront his Maker face to face. He asked forgiveness



for his sins and humbly asked God to receive him into his family.

When one of the believers said, “Let us stand up,” a great miracle took place. Immediately the Communist Party Secretary stood up without thinking about it and realized he was completely healed!

He shouted and jumped around for three hours in complete joy. Finally the driver came back to see what had happened and was amazed to see his boss was completely healed. The driver also accepted the Lord.

To this day, the former government leader continues to love and serve Jesus, and is known by his sweet and humble spirit. He is a leading testimony in the Heilongjiang churches of the change Jesus can bring into any person's life.

Blessed are the Peacemakers

One of the leaders of the house church in Yi'an County is Brother Wu.

Before he experienced salvation from the Lord, Wu was renown as a smart man who always topped his class at school, and was invariably elected as the class chairman. He had a knack of always getting involved with quarrels between people, skillfully showing them the solution to problems. He also had a reputation as the dirtiest mouth in the whole county. He could always out-argue people, using his ability with words to cover over his own sins and shame. Nobody could beat him in an argument or dispute.

Brother Wu's wife came to faith in Christ first. She lovingly shared the Gospel by word and deed with her husband, but he, being a Communist Party member at the time, strongly opposed her and beat her.

During this difficult time for Wu's wife, the church was constantly praying the Lord would make a way for her husband to be humbled and saved.

The opportunity for his involvement with house church believers came when he heard of a disagreement between two brothers. Unable to help himself, he got involved in the dispute, freely giving advice to both parties. His own worldly wisdom and pride in his own ability had become his god.

When he first went to a house church meeting, the conviction of the Holy Spirit came upon Brother Wu in a powerful manner. He clearly saw his own desperate state, and repented by humbling himself under God's mighty hand.

Over time, the Lord started to use Brother Wu's zeal to be a peacemaker in a way that brought glory to God. He mediated between believers with problems, giving sound Scriptural advice and counsel.

God also has greatly worked through Brother Wu's unique personality and gifts to help the local churches avoid the many cults that are present in the area. There are more than 100 house churches in the county who were corrected and taught how to avoid heretical extreme teaching by Brother Wu.

His salvation shocked many people in the community, as Wu was considered the least likely person to ever believe the Gospel. Because he was already well known, his ministry for the Lord came under close inspection, which landed him a time in prison where he suffered for Jesus.

Brother Wu is a living example of how God can use to renew a person who submits his or her life to Him, and still use the gifts and unique personality that God has made each one of us to be.

Miracles in Heilongjiang

Many miracles and signs and wonders have accompanied the preaching of the Gospel in Heilongjiang. Healings and deliverance of demons is quite commonplace among the ministry of the house churches.

In China the believers have a very different opinion on miracles than most Christians in the West. In China they never look for miracles, or seek after the supernatural. They simply preach the Gospel, and find that miracles and signs and wonders follow the preaching of the Word, as Jesus said would happen.

To those believers in the West who rarely see any miracles, or don't believe they are for today, the Chinese church have a simple answer: You must not be preaching the Good News to the lost! They say, "Miracles are not for inside the church, they are to serve as confirmation of the message to unbelievers who hear about Jesus. When you preach that Jesus is alive, and then the Holy Spirit proves it by doing a miracle, unbelievers will put their trust in God. If you see no miracles in your church and life, realize it is because first you must proclaim the Good News to people living in darkness, and the Lord will confirm your message with miracles. Get out of your comfortable pews and go and reach out to the lost!"

In Qing'an ('Celebrate Peace') County on one occasion in 1992 hundreds of onlookers witnessed the Lord completely heal a man who had been crippled and unable to walk for 15 years. During the same meeting several people who were possessed with evil spirits were completely set free.

When God does these powerful miracles in full public view the people are immediately attracted to the Gospel and the

message finds a receptive audience. We do not need to rely on arguing or trying to convince people of the truths of the Gospel, because they have already seen the reality of Christ's victory over demons and sickness with their own eyes.

And when people first come to Jesus because of an encounter with his power, the results are almost always long-lasting. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote, *"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on man's wisdom, but on God's power."* (1 Corinthians 2:4)



An Entire Village Surrenders to Christ

As the revival fires of the Gospel began to sweep across Heilongjiang Province in the 1990s, in many places whole villages of people believed the Gospel and submitted their lives to Jesus Christ.

Let's hear the words of one bold evangelist as he explains how the Lord glorified Himself in one village in Lalin County (in the extreme south of the province) in 1997....

"I was sent by the Lord to Xiaoshan Village and after hearing the Gospel almost every household believed and put their trust in God. They smashed their idols and ancestral altars and became new creations in Christ. Five families refused to believe however, despite the prayers and earnest pleadings of their fellow villagers.

After holding some more evangelistic meetings four of the five families also believed in Christ, leaving just one family holding out against the Word of Life. The whole village prayed earnestly for that family's salvation, as the new Christians believed God wanted to be honored among the entire village, and to have one family of unbelievers would simply not be good enough!

Finally the one family realized that if everyone else in his village was a believer and experiencing God's protection, then their family was vulnerable to attack from the devil! They also committed his life to the Lord and his family followed him into the family of faith.

To this day every family in the village continues to serve God. They actively share their faith with neighboring unreached people and are known as an honest people who are blessed by the Lord. It is because of the clear

testimony of changed lives in villages such as Xiaoshan and in hundreds more like it throughout the province that the Gospel has spread so rapidly in Heilongjiang."

An Elderly 'Uncle' Persists and Overcomes Hostility

When evangelists go out from the house churches in Heilongjiang they are supported with tremendous prayer backing from the numerous old 'aunties' who have such simple and sweet spirits. These old women live for prayer and worship. They often prostrate themselves on the floor during prayer meetings, with hot tears streaming down their cheeks, they intercede for the lost and wrestle in the spirit on behalf of those who are venturing out with the Good News.

With that background, an elderly 'uncle', known as Uncle Liu, went to preach the Gospel in an unreached village near Acheng City, 41 km (25 miles) southeast of Harbin, with a warm heart. When he knocked on one door, asking to share the Gospel with the inhabitants of the house, the people angrily drove him out of the village.

Undeterred, Uncle Liu withdrew to a quiet place and earnestly prayed for the family who had rejected him. He then went back to the same house. The second time, the family threw water on him, drenching him to the bone, and with furious words and threats they again drove him from the area.

Uncle Liu didn't give up however, and again he prayed for this family, believing it is not the Lord's will for anyone to perish, but for all, including this one family, to come to faith in Christ.



For the third time he visited the family and told them they must repent and believe in God's Son. This time the family members got large sticks and violently beat Uncle Liu. They swore at him and cursed him for his stubbornness, and again drove him from the village, this time soaked in blood and suffering from wounds to his body.

This old brother however would not be deterred. After recovering from his blows for seven days, he went back again. This time the owner of the house did not oppose him. Amazed that he would come back again, the father of the family agreed they should all sit down and listen to what the old man had to tell them.

As Uncle Liu preached the Gospel to the whole extended family, great conviction seized their hearts. Every single family member received the Lord into their lives.

Here at Asia Harvest we simply see our ministry is to **serve** the Chinese Church, not to get in the way of what God is doing, and not to control or lead anything, but simply to **come alongside** the house church leaders to encourage them and help them to be more effective if possible.

All of the projects we operate have sprung from this desire to serve. The Bible printing project, anti-cult book, Asian Worker's fund, Living martyr's fund, etc. are all projects that the Chinese churches themselves indicated would be a blessing to their work.

By your partnership through praying, encouraging, or giving, we are able to simply pass on the blessing and help in some small way. We appreciate you and thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. We hope you were blessed and encouraged by it.