

## 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 endeavored 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.

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