"PUT IN THE SICKLE, FOR THE HARVEST HAS COME!" MARK 4:29

Asia Harvest

JULY 2025 NEWSLETTER #203

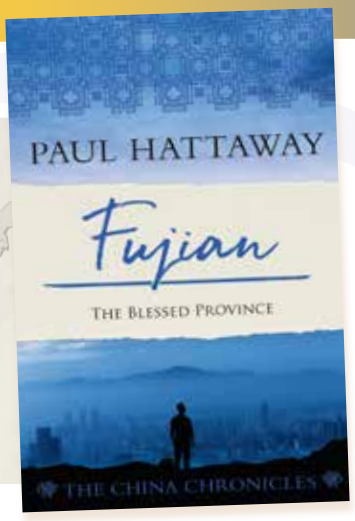


JOHN SUNG

China's Greatest Evangelist

An excerpt from our new book 'FUJIAN'

ASIAHARVEST.ORG • OFFICE@ASIAHARVEST.ORG



Book 9 of The China Chronicles

FUJIAN

THE BLESSED PROVINCE

by Paul Hattaway



IN OUR PREVIOUS NEWSLETTER, we introduced our new China book: *FUJIAN: The Blessed Province* and shared an excerpt from the book about John Sung, whom we consider to be the greatest Chinese Christian in history.

Part one of his story told how his zeal for the Lord resulted in him being locked up in a mental asylum in the United States.

After God delivered him, Sung threw his coveted doctoral degrees into the ocean as his ship neared the Fujian coast. He only wanted to live for the kingdom of God and counted his worldly achievements as worthless.

This month we conclude our look into the life of John Sung, whose impact was so great that Chinese believers gave him the nickname "China's Greatest Evangelist."

The remainder of this newsletter has excerpts from FUJIAN: The Blessed Province.

To order a copy of the book, please fill out and return the enclosed form or visit *AsiaHarvest.org* for details. A Kindle/ e-book version is also available online.

Alternatively, if you send a donation to any Asia Harvest project, please indicate that you would like a complimentary copy of the book and we will gladly send you one.

FRONT COVER: A packed church full of fervent worshippers in Fujian Province. Due to the witness of men like John Sung, Fujian today is home to more than five million Christians.

BACK COVER: Friends and family at the funeral of John Sung, who died at the age of just 43.

UNRELENTING ATTACKS



After returning to China a changed man, John Sung decided to wear the simple clothes of a Chinese peasant for the rest of his life. He traveled widely across China and Southeast Asia, leading tens of thousands of sinners to repentance and faith while establishing churches everywhere he went.

Sung's life was intense—full of great victories and slumps—and he entered a new realm of spiritual warfare, the type of which few Christians have ever experienced.

Opposition to his preaching was overwhelming, and attacks came from every quarter, including from the government, religious leaders, academics, church leaders, and missionaries. All found some part of John Sung's ministry to be a threat or offensive to them, and they didn't hold back their vitriol.

The ruling Nationalist government was furious with Sung after he refused to allow his students to bow down before a picture of "the father of modern China," Sun Yat-sen. They initiated a smear campaign of lies, slanders, and threats against him, the effects of which lasted for the rest of his life.

The rabid opposition and death threats did not thwart the Gospel, however, and Sung continued to see the Lord do great things and transform thousands of broken lives.

In the southern Fujian city of Xiamen, the local newspaper accused John Sung of "deceiving the crowds with hypnosis and magic," and the Xiamen police ordered his meetings to stop due to the unprecedented traffic congestion caused by the large

crowds of people trying to attend. The meetings were cancelled, but not before God had performed many mighty miracles.

As the opposition to his ministry intensified, Sung spent more time in prayer and communion with God. At each meeting, he invited people to fill out prayer cards with their names and details, and to list special prayer needs they had. Although some ministers might use such cards as gimmicks, Sung took the responsibility seriously and carried two suitcases of the cards with him wherever he traveled, daily interceding for each person by name. A missionary remembered: "In Nanjing I heard him weeping and praying for these people in places where he had held meetings previously. This is one secret of his success and of the lasting results of his ministry."



John Sung (back left) and the Bethel Band in 1931. These young men saw many thousands come to faith across China, laying a firm foundation for the Church in China that helped it survive the harsh persecutions of Communist rule and pave the way for the great revival of the past 40 years.

Sung joined the Bethel Evangelist Band, and in their first year together the young men traveled 55,000 miles across 13 provinces of China, preached the Gospel to more than 400,000 people in 1,200 meetings, and recorded 18,000 decisions for Christ. Moreover, at least 700 new evangelistic teams were formed as a result of the meetings, shining the light of the Gospel across the nation.

SMELLY FEET AND BIG SHOTS

Some Christians have the type of personality that makes it very difficult for them to be part of a team. John Sung was one of those who were probably better suited to working independently. Two stories from his ministry reveal the utter disdain he felt for formality and pretense. He cared nothing for a man's reputation, and did not hesitate to openly rebuke people whenever it was necessary.

Once, while traveling in Henan Province, Sung and his co-worker reached a town late at night. Feeling exhausted, they sought out the local mission headquarters to see if they could stay the night before traveling on the next morning. Sung spoke with a security guard through the locked gate and told him that two evangelists were passing through and would appreciate lodging for the night.

The guard went inside and informed the missionary of the unexpected visitors. Even though they had spare rooms in the house, the guard was ordered to tell Sung and his friend they could stay the night in an outdoor barn.

Sung was unable to sleep all night due to the cold and because his face was right next to the smelly feet of another man. Before leaving in the morning, Sung wrote a note in English to the missionary, rebuking him for his lack of loving hospitality toward two servants of the Lord, and strongly advising him to examine his heart and repent.

The missionary and his wife were enjoying their breakfast when the note was handed to them. Their faces dropped when they realized one of the guests they had treated so poorly was none other than the famous Dr. John Sung, "China's greatest evangelist"!

They quickly rode their bicycles along the road and caught up with the evangelists some way out of town. They apologized profusely for mistreating them, saying they had no idea it was him, and begged them to return and eat breakfast with them. Sung refused their offer, saying, "No, we are not going back. You are showing your hospitality to a Ph.D. rather than an evangelist. You must thoroughly repent of your behavior!"

On Christmas Day, 1937, Sung was in the city of Xuchang, where the Chinese pastor had prepared a banquet to welcome the famous evangelist. Sung was asked to sit at the main table with leading dignitaries and officials, while his 18-year-old traveling companion was placed at a second table with church elders and deacons.

When the pastor introduced all the guests, Sung discovered that he was seated between the mayor and the chief justice of the city. Across from him were the police commissioner and the editor of the local newspaper. Sung stood up immediately and commanded his co-worker to switch seats with him. He said, "I am a servant of the Lord. I came to lead evangelistic meetings. I should be seated with brothers and sisters from the church, not with these big shots."

After severing his ties to the Bethel Band, Sung continued in the work God had called him to do, and for the remainder of his life he served as an independent evangelist, accepting invitations to preach all over China and Southeast Asia. Miraculous healings continued to be a feature of his ministry.

Once, John was traveling on a ship to a different part of China when he had a vivid dream in which his father stood by him and said, "Son, I have gone to heaven. But you have seven more years in which to work. So labor hard for the Lord!"

Several days later, the news arrived from Fujian that Sung's father had died. John took the message in the dream to heart and served Jesus Christ with even greater determination and zeal.

The dream proved wholly accurate, and seven short years later John's window of opportunity to proclaim the Gospel closed.

Between 1935 and 1940, Sung's influence expanded into Southeast Asia. He made earth-shaking trips there, including at least one visit to each of the countries of Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, and the Philippines.

Sung promised to return to Singapore in 1940, but his health deteriorated to such an extent that he was never able to visit again. The multitude of well-wishers waved goodbye to him at the wharf, not realizing it was the last time they would ever see the beloved revivalist. Many churches in Singapore today were founded or impacted by his precious visits more than 80 years ago.

THE GIFT OF HEALING

John Sung remained a Methodist minister, and although he was not Pentecostal or Charismatic by today's usual Western definitions, John Sung exercised a gift of healing that astounded audiences and resulted in countless people surrendering their lives to Christ. He was always quick to emphasize that each person had to repent of their sins lest they end up in hell. Sung carefully explained that he possessed no healing ability whatsoever, but it was the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ who performed the miracles.

After one meeting in the city of Xiamen, Sung wrote in his diary:

"Altogether I prayed for 1,710 patients today. Before I prayed for them, I told them the principles of divine healing and helped them confess their sins. A crippled and blind man could instantly see and walk. Another person was carried in on a bed and walked home. A hunchbacked woman instantly straightened up.... Just before I left Xiamen, I prayed for 400 patients. One woman, who had been crippled for many years, cried aloud when she came to see me. I commanded her to walk by faith, and she immediately obeyed. She walked all the way home, testifying to many people along the way."

One summary of Sung's ministry noted:

"He exercised a truly stunning ministry of physical healing through prayer. Tens of thousands of people were delivered from all sorts of illnesses, infirmities, and addictions after he prayed for them.... Most of these miracles were witnessed by countless people, many of them originally skeptical of this aspect of John Sung's ministry. Opium addicts received instant deliverance. Those possessed by evil spirits were delivered. Blind people received their sight, the lame walked, disabled limbs were healed, and leprosy was cured instantly."

A THORN IN THE FLESH

Curiously, throughout church history many servants of God who have been greatly endowed with a gift of healing have themselves been afflicted with serious diseases and infirmities from which they were not healed. John Sung was one such preacher,

and he saw the irony, once calling himself a "wounded healer." The anal fistulas that first plagued him in the United States flared up whenever he was exhausted or under intense stress. Conflict with other Christians seemed particularly harmful to his health, as his rough exterior concealed a soft heart that was crushed by any disunity he had with other members of the Body of Christ.

For years Sung maintained a gruelling travel schedule, sometimes holding as many as eight meetings a day. For much of that time he was in terrible physical pain, which sometimes necessitated that he preach while sitting down or lying on a cot on the platform. Although still a young man in his thirties, he often suffered debilitating fatigue, and his entire body ached from head to toe.

Instead of complaining, the evangelist tried to keep his condition hidden from the public. When he was hosted in a believer's home, he always insisted on washing his own clothes, for his underwear was often full of blood and pus from his horrible affliction. He described it as his "thorn in the flesh," designed by God to humble him.

When his condition flared, people in close proximity to Sung were often aware of an awful, offensive odor. John was aware of people's reactions, but there was little he could do about it, so he concentrated on preaching God's Word with all his heart, and he thanked the Lord for humbling his flesh to keep him from being conceited.

Few people among the thousands who came to hear John Sung preach had any idea of the excruciating pain and sacrifice he was enduring both during and between services. When he visited the Malaysian island of Penang, he wrote:

"The doctor found that five serious anal fistulas had developed, and one was very bad. He gave me seven injections. I did not feel anything, but the subsequent pain almost blew me apart. I pleaded with the Lord to take pity on the people of Penang by taking pity on me, and so preached at the pulpit through His blessings. On December 6, a brother helped me put on my clothes and carried me up and down the stairs, and in and out of the vehicle. A sleeping cot was placed near the pulpit.

The power of God was still with me as I spoke, and people came forward to confess their sins. Brother Yan helped me disrobe after the service. The agony went on all night when the fistulas erupted, resulting in massive discharges of blood and pus. I still carried on with afternoon and evening services although I had hardly slept."

As his condition deteriorated, six surgeries were performed at different hospitals, but none was able to fix the problem, possibly because Sung never stayed in one place long enough to recover completely from the operations.

As the sun began to set on his whirlwind life, Sung expressed regret that he had spent so little time with his children, and he tried to make up for it by reading them Bible stories and sharing testimonies of God's goodness during the final months of his life.

After he awoke from one operation, Sung spoke with the surgeons and wrote in his diary: "I tearfully prayed to God, telling Him I would like to do more work for Him after I am healed, and asking that my brothers and children would join me in the work for the Lord. I prayed that the Lord's will be done in my body. When the incisions were made, two large bowls of blood exuded from my wounds, filling the operation room with a putrid odor."

Although John Sung was forced to remain in bed due to his illness, many Christians traveled from all over China to see him. He counseled and prayed with them, often conducting three meetings per day from his bed. After weeks of attempted recovery—which left John feeling increasingly frustrated because he wasn't out preaching—he continued to suffer intense pain. Some of his final diary entries in 1944 reveal his journey through the valley of the shadow of death:

July 25: "I have turned myself over several times. The pain has been so searing that my wounds feel like they're on fire. I pleaded with God to take me home to heaven soon."

July 28: "I begged God to give me some proof that He still loves me. My wife Jean is too weak to turn me over, so a man is needed. Dr. Lee examined my wounds and said I need to take opium to stop the pain, which I refused."

July 30: "I confessed my sins to God. I feel utterly drained of strength."

July 31: "The pain is the worst ever. If this continues, I don't know how I could take it anymore."

August 11: "Now I can't hold anything with my hands. I feel a little discouraged. I asked God to open a way out for me."

Finally, on the morning of August 16, 1944, John's limbs began to swell. He told his wife that God had shown him he was going to die soon.

He fell into a coma that night but rallied again and sang three hymns while vomiting continually into a bucket. Jean was overcome with grief as she saw her husband fade away before her eyes. At about midnight his last words to her were: ***"Don't be afraid! The Lord Jesus is at the door. What is there to fear?"***

Jean later shared the holy moment when her beloved husband began his journey to God at the age of 43:

> *"At the time the room was very dark, but his face suddenly shone with a brilliant radiance. When I saw this strange light, my heart was greatly comforted. At five in the morning on August 18 his pulse weakened, and at 7:07 that morning, the Lord's servant was peacefully taken away. He had a smile on his face."*

After John Sung's death, numerous tributes and memorials flowed in. Some estimated that at least 100,000 people had been directly and solidly converted through his preaching, which was about one-tenth of all Evangelical Christians in China at the time.

The quality of John Sung's ministry can be seen eight decades later by the lasting fruit of his life. Tens of thousands of Christians throughout Asia still call him blessed and are the direct or indirect result of his preaching.

Perhaps the greatest impact he had was his example in preparing the Chinese Church for the onslaught that was to come against them during decades of Communist persecution.

On a number of occasions before he died, Sung prophesied that God would soon remove all foreign missionaries from China, and the Church would have to learn to trust Him alone for their spiritual sustenance. After that, a mighty revival would take place that would sweep millions into the Kingdom of God.

ECFA ACCREDITED

LMF LIVING MARTYRS' FUND



BECAUSE OF YOUR PARTNERSHIP WE ARE CURRENTLY SUPPORTING 784 LIVING MARTYRS





ASIA BIBLE FUND ABF

CURRENT TOTAL: 20,709,364 BIBLES PRINTED IN 169 LANGUAGES

TCF THE CHILDREN'S FUND



YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT HAS REACHED 238,090 CHILDREN THROUGHOUT ASIA (FOR CHRIST) SO FAR



ASIAN WORKERS' FUND AWF

WE CURRENTLY SUPPORT 1,798 ASIAN EVANGELISTS AMONG 1,292 UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS

They have reportedly led 1,819,630 people to faith in Jesus Christ.

PRF PERSECUTION & RELIEF FUND



TRANSFORMING LIVES FROM ASHES TO BEAUTY WITH GOD'S LOVE



MINISTRY TRAINING FUND MTF

THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT WE HAVE HELPED TRAIN AND EQUIP 72,912 ASIAN BELIEVERS TO EFFECTIVELY SERVE GOD



Asia Harvest

ASIAHARVEST.ORG • OFFICE@ASIAHARVEST.ORG

NORTH AMERICA	*PO Box 621150, Charlotte, NC 28262-0119, USA*
AUSTRALIA	*Ground Floor, Suite 80, 97-99 Bathurst St, Sydney NSW 2000* *Bank details:* **CBA 06-4410-10255537** *(Asia Harvest)*
NEW ZEALAND	*PO Box 1757, Queenstown 9348* *Bank details:* **ASB 12-3154-0092327-00** *(Asia Harvest)*
UNITED KINGDOM	*AsiaLink 31A Main St, Ballyclare, Co. Antrim BT39 9AA* *Bank details:* **NatWest Bank 01-07-65**, *Account No.* **07018797**
SWITZERLAND	*Verein SALZ International* *IBAN:* **CH63 0900 0000 8909 3101 4** / *BIC:* **POFICHBEXXX**
EUROPE	*Stiftung SALZ, Moehringer Landstr. 98, 70563 Stuttgart, Germany* *IBAN:* **DE93 6426 1853 0060 0080 08** / *BIC:* **GENODES1PGW**