Asia Harvest



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

www.asiaharvest.org office@asiaharvest.org

December 2008 - Newsletter #97



Forgiveness

The Path to Freedom

From the Front Lines

with Paul & Joy Hattaway

The last few months have seen fear and alarm spread around the globe as the economies of most countries have experienced a severe shaking. Stock markets have plummeted, banks and companies have failed, and millions of jobs have been lost.

Several years ago a colleague and I visited the headquarters of Overseas Missionary Fellowship in Singapore. OMF was founded as the China Inland Mission by Hudson Taylor in 1865. For decades they were the only Christian organization forging ahead with the Gospel in interior areas of China, and many Chinese church leaders to this day consider the current revival sweeping their nation owes much to the efforts of those faithful missionaries and their Chinese coworkers.

The staff at OMF kindly allowed us to spend as much time as we needed going through their library and archive room, copying old books and magazines, which we have since used to produce several books on Christianity in China. As I read through these rare documents, I realized there were several times when the economic climate of the day deeply affected the mission's work. Donations dropped dramatically during World War I, and the missionaries in China had to adjust their lives and budgets accordingly. Some returned home. The same happened during World War II. In between, the Great Depression of the 1930s ravaged the world's economy, and the mission's income fell to just a fraction of what it had been previously.

During all these times, the leaders of the China Inland Mission didn't complain. They weren't running a business, but were serving the Lord in a ministry that He had established. During times of plenty, they served as the Lord provided. During times of difficulty, they continued to serve faithfully, even if it meant personal hardship.

A number of people have contacted us and asked how the present economic developments will affect the work of Asia Harvest, and whether we are taking any preventative actions.

To begin with, we are thankful that 2008 has been a record year for giving to our projects, and we have been able, by God's grace, to print more Bibles than ever before, support more evangelists, etc. We thank the Lord Jesus Christ for every person who has helped His work through their prayers, participation and giving. Secondly, from the very start of Asia Harvest more than 20 years ago we have been acutely aware that it is God who must be the motivator, empowerer and leader of this organization. We have never gone out to actively fund-raise or anything like that — our goal has always been to simply serve as a link between the Church in Asia (especially those unreached and more difficult areas), and Christians around the world.

We present certain strategic projects in our newsletter which we feel the Lord would like us to help with, and people give as they sense the Holy Spirit prompting them to get involved.

For these reasons we hope people who support our work do so because they want to be involved with a great ***opportunity*** to help expand the kingdom of God in the unreached areas of Asia, and not from any sense of ***obligation***. For the Apostle Paul wrote, ***"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work"*** (2 Cor. 9:7-8).

Our philosophy is really simple: If the Lord provides, then we pass it on to the front lines in Asia where resources make a great difference. If the funds dry up in the future, we will continue to serve to the best of our ability. We believe this kind of outlook helps us not to worry about what tomorrow may bring, and enables us to serve with peace and joy in our hearts now.

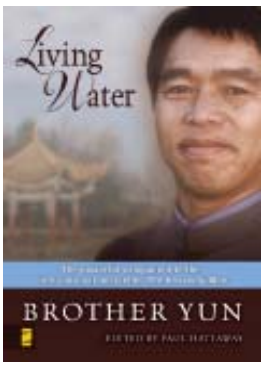
We don't know what the world's economy will do in the future, but we do know that Jesus is in control of everything! As Christians we should not fear, but should trust in His unfailing love. Don't be depressed by what you hear on the news! Our attitude should be the same as that of Jesus, who said, ***"As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work"*** (John 9:4). Paul taught that our attitude should be like, ***"those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away"*** (1 Cor. 7:30-31).

In the meantime let's not focus on the world's economies, but let us heed the words of Jesus: ***"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own"*** (Matthew 6:32-34).

SEASON'S GREETINGS FROM ASIA HARVEST



As this is our final newsletter for 2008, we want to thank you for your prayers, encouragement and support throughout the year. We pray the risen Jesus Christ will truly be part of the Christmas and New Year period for you and your family. In 2009 we hope, with God's help, to continue serving the Church in Asia and we invite you to partner with us to help see this happen. God bless you!



LIVING WATER

by Brother Yun

Chapter 3: Forgiveness

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord;
O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.
If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared. (Psalm 130:1-4)

Have you ever been treated unjustly? Has someone hurt you without cause?

Unless you have been living in an isolated cave all your life, the answer to these questions will surely be yes.

The world is full of bitterness and unforgiveness. It could be said that whole spiritual and political structures are founded and based on bitterness.

There is just one solution to the threat of terrorism in the world today. Military power will never solve the problem, for you can not overcome a spiritual disease with guns and bombs. The only hope is for a genuine God-sent revival to sweep millions of people into the kingdom of God, changing individuals from the inside out, and replacing hate with love, and bitterness with forgiveness. The living water of Jesus can enter communities where terrorism is fostered, bringing new life and hope through the cross of Jesus Christ.

As I have traveled around the world meeting numerous Christians, I have become aware that many have long struggled to forgivene other people who have wronged them. I believe it is only through relationship with Jesus Christ that we can start to walk in the freedom that comes from a life of forgiveness.

Unforgiveness soon becomes bitterness, and nothing will choke the streams of living water that are meant to flow from your life than a root of bitterness. The root can grow so large that a person's whole personality is twisted and deformed by it.

The first step for anyone to become whole in Christ is to accept responsibility for their own sins and failures. There is no point blaming anyone else, regardless of what terrible things have happened to you. When someone hurts us, our natural response is to pull back and withdraw. We are created in such a way that we want to avoid pain. But then, something takes place that requires us to make a vital decision. When we pull back from a person who has caused us pain, we must decide whether or not to let bitterness into our heart.

Bitterness is what happens to you when you will not forgive. Bitterness is to hold on to an injustice that has been done to you. The Bible indicates that when a Christian is destroyed by bitterness it not only ruins them, but other people as well: ***"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many"*** (Heb. 12:15). A bitter person tends to spread the poison in their hearts to others around them. Friendships often break up through bitterness, and then mutual friends are forced to choose sides, which leads to more trouble and pain.

Bitterness is a toxic root that grows in the garden of your heart if left unchecked. Usually we do not see the root, just the surface problem. Many people spend a lot of time and effort trying to beautify the outside of their lives, pulling up the surface weeds, when in actual fact they need to go below the surface and dig up the root.

The verse in Hebrews about a root of bitterness starts by saying, ***"See to it that no one misses the grace of God"*** (12:15). Another translation talks about "pulling back" from the grace of God. Bitterness does exactly this. It causes a person to pull back from the grace of God.

The first time I was arrested for the Gospel in China was very difficult. Somehow in my heart I thought that as a servant of God I was entitled to special treatment in prison. I did receive special treatment, but not the kind I was hoping for! I was severely beaten until my whole body was covered in blood and bruises, and much of my hair was torn from my scalp.

For a time I harbored bitterness against the men who had done this to me, but the gracious Lord Jesus taught me that there is absolutely no point in holding unforgiveness against anyone, regardless of what they have done. Unforgiveness would only achieve two things. Firstly, it would harden my heart and cause a root of bitterness to take hold, and secondly my relationship with Jesus Christ would be damaged. I came to realize that self-righteousness had risen up in my heart. In effect, I was saying to God, "Everybody else should get what they deserve, but don't we have a special relationship with grace for me?"

It doesn't work like that.

Jesus taught ***"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy"*** (Matt. 5:7). God wants us to forgive others of their offences as he has forgiven us of our sins and offences. In fact, Jesus tied our forgiveness to whether or not we are willing to forgive others. He said, ***"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins"*** (Matt. 6:14-15).

There is only one way to dig out the stubborn root of bitterness from our hearts.

It is to forgive.

Too many of God's children have lost their way and live in spiritual captivity because of unforgiveness. They can't hear God's voice and their lives are directionless and joyless.

How are we to forgive others? The Apostle Paul told us, ***"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you"*** (Eph. 4:32), and ***"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you"*** (Col. 3:13).

We are to forgive others the same way that the Lord Jesus forgave us. How did He forgive us?

Unconditionally.

Freely.

Generously.

And without keeping a record of past wrongs.

Don't think that the person who has wronged you must first ask for forgiveness before you can give it. This is a dangerous way of thinking. Even at the very moment that the angry crowd were baying for His blood, Jesus prayed, ***"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"*** (Luke 23:34).

I know many disciples in China who have spent decades of their lives in prison for the sake of the Gospel. Despite unmentionable cruelties being done to them, these men and women are free! Long ago they forgave their persecutors, even though the prison guards and police officers never came to them and asked. Dear friend, even if somebody has committed the most heinous sin against you, and has never admitted it or shown the slightest inclination to do so, you still must forgive them. If you can forgive them from your heart, you will be free and the prison doors that have kept you confined will be opened.

Reconciliation requires two parties to come together and sort out their differences. Forgiveness requires only one. We forgive not to set the other person free, but to set

ourselves free. If that person wants to be free, they will have to go to the Lord. We don't have to carry the burden of bitterness any more!

Forgiveness does not mean that people who have committed heinous crimes will get away with it. Not at all. Rather, forgiveness is the act of releasing our own desire for vengeance, and leaving it in God's hands. Listen to what the Bible says:

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head'" (Romans 12:18-20).

The Gospel is about restoring our relationship to God, and also about restoring our relationships with other people. When we fail to show this in our lives, our witness is rendered powerless. In effect, our mouths would be claiming that God can forgive our sins, but our actions would be showing that we are unwilling to extend that forgiveness to others.

Jesus taught, ***"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that.... But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful"*** (Luke 6:32-33, 35-36).

You may be reading this book and thinking, "You don't understand. I have a right to feel the way I do. All this forgiveness talk is easy, but I have tried it and it didn't change me much." Other people have told me, "You can't ask people who have been through the most horrific situations to forgive those who did these acts against them! You can't put this extra burden on the victims."

People who think like this have never understood what forgiveness is all about.

Forgiveness is not a burden. It is an offer.

I have also had some difficult experiences in my life. I have had sharp metal needles jabbed under my fingernails until I passed out from the pain. My legs have been smashed by prison guards. On one occasion my body was so destroyed that when my family members came to the prison they did not recognize me. They told the guards they had brought out the wrong man, and only when my mother noticed my birthmark did they realize it was me. I have been lied about and denounced by other Christian leaders so many times I can't recall. Yet by the grace of God I have freely forgiven all of those who brought pain into my life.

Joseph was another man who could easily have become bitter. Did you ever think about what he faced? As a 17-year-old boy, Joseph was betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery to a foreign land. In Egypt he was falsely accused of attempted rape and spent years rotting in prison for a crime he didn't commit.

All of this happened to Joseph after God had given him a vision.

I'm sure Joseph struggled with bitterness. I'm sure he often thought, "How could my brothers do this to me?" There were countless ways that Joseph could have justified it if he felt bitterness in his heart, but he didn't. Faced with all these temptations, Joseph was able to realize that he belonged first and foremost to God, and he chose to live according to the laws and principles of His kingdom.

During those years of struggle, God was forming a message in Joseph. He was learning about forgiveness. Later, Joseph would not just be able to speak about forgiveness. He would be a living testimony to it.

You may have heard a hundred sermons on forgiveness before, but the only way those messages will become a reality in your life is when you receive an opportunity to forgive someone.

Joseph had a choice. He could either become bitter and hard at his experiences, or he could become like soft clay in the hands of the Potter. He chose the latter. We know that Joseph did not become bitter, because he was well-liked in the prison. Bitter people are never well-liked.

God eventually turned Joseph's situation around and he was miraculously promoted from the prison to being the second in command in all of Egypt. The Bible says that ***"Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt"*** (Gen. 41:46). It had been 13 long years since Joseph's brothers had mistreated him.

We cannot find a trace of bitterness when Joseph finally came face to face with his brothers. He could easily have used his new powerful position to get revenge, but we read of nothing but love for those who had wronged him. Joseph's brothers were afraid and on one occasion even asked, ***"What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?"*** (50:15). They need not have worried, for such was the change God had brought about in Joseph's character that he struggled to hold back the tears of joy when his brothers stood before him.

Joseph had become a broken man with a deep trust in God. He was able to tell his family, ***"'Don't be afraid.... You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.' And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them"*** (50:19-21).

Whatever painful experiences you have had in your life, I also encourage you to freely forgive, because Jesus has forgiven all of your sins and offences.

Jesus invites you to walk with Him on the path of forgiveness—the path of freedom. Forgiveness is a great gift that God has given us so we can survive in an evil world where people hurt us, betray us, and do terrible things to us. When we have learned to live in a flow of forgiveness we will be living in freedom.

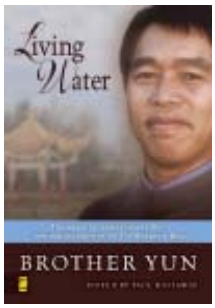
Dear friend, I encourage you to put this book down and spend some time in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to show you if there is anyone you hold unforgiveness against in your heart. You might consider getting a pen and piece of paper, and write down the names of those who have wronged you in the past, whom you have yet to fully release to the Lord.

Then ask God to forgive them by name, and ask Him to help you release those people into His hands, and to set you free. A heart of bitterness and unforgiveness is like a prison. It not only binds others, but it also destroys you. Jesus is the great gardener, and He is able to uproot even the deepest root of bitterness in your heart.

I exhort you in the name for Jesus Christ to get rid of all bitterness and learn to forgive, before it develops a deep root that is difficult to weed out of your life. The Bible says, ***"If you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice"*** (James 3:14-16). Praise the Lord! He can set you free.

Jesus wants your life to have living water flowing from it, bringing blessing and refreshing to others around you. Forgiveness is an essential step in the process of becoming a vessel of blessing. As you head into the future with your past wiped clean, ask Jesus to teach you how to walk in forgiveness, so that future offenses will be quickly put aside and handed to God.

Then you will truly be free!



LIVING WATER by Brother Yun

We believe this book will bless and inspire people so much that we want to get it into the hands of as many as possible.

If you send a donation of any amount to any Asia Harvest project, please note that you would like a copy of *Living Water* and we will send you one. If you can not afford to send a gift, please let us know and we will send you a complimentary copy anyway. Otherwise, information on how to order *Living Water* can be found in our October newsletter or at our website. *Living Water* is also available as an audio book.

CHINA BIBLE PRINTING



Current Total: 1,468,256 Bibles printed and delivered.

We are partnering with house churches in China in a long-term goal to print Bibles for Christians. We receive countless requests from house church leaders throughout the country, requesting God's Word for their flocks. These Bibles are distributed free of charge to all parts of China, equipping the believers and helping add fuel to the fires of revival that are burning brightly. **Each full Bible costs just $1.80 to print and deliver.**

ASIAN WORKERS' FUND

Thanks to your gifts we are currently able to support 381 Asian evangelists working among 107 unreached tribes and ethnic groups.



The **Asian Workers Fund** assists church-planting evangelists who are involved in strategic ministry in Asia. These servants of the Lord have committed their whole lives to the Gospel but are hindered by lack of finances. We only support evangelists/missionaries and not pastors, as we believe pastors should be supported by the flocks they shepherd. Please pray about whether you or your church could help in the support of these dedicated workers, at **$25 per month** each. A prayer card will be sent to all regular donors.

SOUTHEAST ASIA BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 132,387 Bibles Printed in 21 Languages

The Communist nations of Laos and Vietnam contain more than 250 different tribes, dozens of which had full Bibles or New Testaments translated into their languages prior to the arrival of Communism in 1975. In some cases, missionaries labored for years translating the Word of God for a tribe, only to have their work cut short by the change of government. Since then, these believers have been deprived of Bibles by the authorities. **Each Bible costs an average of $2.70 to print and deliver.**

CHINA LIVING MARTYRS' FUND

Because of your partnership we are supporting 1,181 living martyrs.



"A martyr is a Christian who chooses to suffer death rather than deny Christ or His work... One who sacrifices something very important to further the Kingdom of God and endures great suffering for Christian witness."
(The Voice of the Martyrs)

The **China Living Martyrs Fund** assists pastors and evangelists who are unable to work because of their injuries or illness, They and their families face extreme poverty and hardship. Through an occasional or monthly gift of $25 you can help support one or more of these living martyrs. A prayer card is sent to every regular supporter.

PROJECT SMILE



Your generous gifts have so far helped bring a smile to the faces of 6,267 children in Vietnam.

Project Smile helps children from poor families in Vietnam who were born with disabilities such as cleft palates, cleft lips and club feet, as well as others who need operations for burns, cancerous growths and other conditions. The cost of helping a child varies depending on the kind of surgery required, but each gift received of **$60 will help a child have a better life**. A laminated prayer card of a child helped through Project Smile is sent to all donors.

ASIA DISASTER RELIEF FUND



Transforming lives from ashes to beauty with God's love.

Over the years Asia Harvest has provided relief assistance to the victims of natural disasters such as the 2008 earthquake in China and cyclone in Myanmar (Burma); the 2004 Tsunami, and a host of other disasters in India, Afghanistan, Vietnam, and elsewhere. At the same time as providing aid through medicine, tents, blankets, food and water, rebuilding homes etc., the Christians we partner with take every opportunity to share the Gospel, and thousands of people have come to know Jesus Christ. This long-term fund helps us respond immediately whenever a disaster strikes.



Asia Harvest Addresses

www.asiaharvest.org office@asiaharvest.org

NORTH AMERICA
1903 60th Place, Suite M1204, Bradenton, FL 34203, USA

AUSTRALIA
36 Nelson Street, Stepney, SA 5069, Australia

NEW ZEALAND
P.O.Box 181, Te Anau 9640, New Zealand

EUROPE
SALZ, Postfach 1144, D-72206 Altensteig, Germany

MALAYSIA
STAMP Bhd., P.O.Box 8036, Pejabat Pos Kelana Jaya,
46780 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

SINGAPORE
Clementi Central P.O.Box 119, Sinagpore 911204

UNITED KINGDOM & IRELAND
AsiaLink, Mill Farm, Fleetwood Road, Wesham PR4 3HD, England