

The Testimony of Jesus (Part 16)

Let's pray:

Lord, we do rejoice of how You have brought us into so great a salvation. We rejoice how You have brought us into so much more, and the much more You bring us into creates within us a greater hunger for much more of You. Lord, we are even thankful as we look back at Your great faithfulness of how You brought ones into that much more. We pray that as we consider this today, it would give us a hunger and a thirst to seek You first, to seek that kingdom of God first, to put other things into perspective and allow us to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. In Thy wonderful name we pray. Amen.

It has been a while since we did the last message on church history, but now we are coming to part 16, and this is the last one. There will be one more that is a summery or conclusion summing up things, but from a historical point of view this is the last one.

We mentioned last time that we are looking at the 20th century, and we covered some of the things that took place with Azusa Street and the Charismatic movement.

We started looking at the precious recovery of the Lord's testimony of the fulness of His eternal purpose in the church that began in the thirties, and today we want to continue. We saw through Brother Sparks what the Lord revealed to him. We want to continue today with Brother Bakht Singh in India, Watchman Nee in China and others.

As I was thinking about these particular individuals it took me back to some verses in Paul's letter to the church at Philippi because in many ways ones have referred to the Philippian letter as Paul's personal testimony as it related with the Lord. He shared almost a biography of who Christ was to him. In Philippians 1:21 Paul's testimony is: "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." We are going to be applying these verses to the ones we are considering today because they are ones who are sold out for the Lord.

Philippians 3:12: "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus."

These dear one whom we see were laid hold of by Christ Jesus for a purpose, and we want to be those who are also pressing on toward that same purpose. We are thankful for all that we have. We are thankful for the much more we have seen, we are thankful for the blessing of His life, but we know that there is much more of Him that He wants us to enter into, and we are praying that we can be encouraged in that way.

Later on in that 3rd chapter that spirit of pressing on continues where he says, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." It is a pressing on to finish well all the way to the end, looking forward to that upward call whether it is in rapture or through passing into glory upon this earth.

We will see how these ones were really used of the Lord, and we will also see how they directly impact us. We are standing on the shoulders of everyone who has gone before us, but

the closer you get, you begin to identify a little more with how these ones have touched us. And we will see how some today have touched out lives very directly.

Bakht Singh

As we consider Brother Bakht Singh, I was actually in fear and trembling because we have the Indian Brethren among us, but they are not here so I am safe to touch on Bakht Singh and not get corrected too much. He was born in Punjab which is now Pakistan. He was in a Hindu family but they practiced the Sikh faith. He was a very devout Sikh and very proud of it. When he was a young man, he had a staunch belief in his Sikh religion and was very proud of it. It was one of the highest caste systems in India at that time, and he was born into it.

At the age of twelve he was married (I verified this a couple of times). It was an arranged marriage at the age of twelve to Rama Bai. I do not recommend that today. Then he graduated from the university in Punjab and went to England for studies. What he discovered in going to England was the world. He fell in love with the world and all of its pleasures, from clothing, the way he dressed, to all of the activities of the world, and he was caught up in all of those passing pleasures. After he graduated from there, he went to Canada to Manitoba to study for the studies. But praise God, there was a faithful couple there with the YMCA that befriended him, John and Betty Hayward. He would often go to their home and eat. That was one way they used to attract young students; they would invite them to their home to eat. That is one of the greatest ways of sharing the Gospel is to have people in your home. We talk about all these Gospel plans, but just invite somebody to your home to eat. That is a wonderful Gospel plan. They gave him a Bible, and he started to read it. In seeing Christ's life in this couple and reading the Word, he was saved. It is a tremendous testimony. Then he returned to India with a new purpose.

What is unique about the Bible with him was that he had been given one earlier in life when he was about sixteen years old, and he tore it up. He said, "I have torn the Bible up in the year 1919." He had been in a religious school, which was a better school from most of those countries at that time, and it was sponsored by missionaries. He graduated from that school and they presented him a Bible, and after he graduated he tore it up except for the cover because he thought the cover was so beautiful; it was a leather cover. In his own words he said, "I tore the Bible up in 1919 in my blindness, and for ten full years I was speaking words of blasphemy against the Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ in my stupidity." But praise God, the Lord met him and put a great call upon his life. The Lord called him into a life of service, simply speaking to him at that time, and it transformed his life. He said, "Do not join any organization; serve all equally. Do not make any of your own plans, but let Me guide and lead you every step of the way."

I appreciate the simplicity of the call that God had upon his life, and he said, "Do not make your needs known to any human being. Ask Me and I will provide for your needs."

When he headed back to India from Canada, he arrived in 1933, and his parents met him. He told his parents that he was a believer, that he had come to know the Lord. His parents did not like it because obviously they were Sikhs and very devout within it. They told him, "Okay, if you want to keep your faith, that is fine but keep it a secret, and you can come home."

His little quote was: "Can I live without breathing? I have given my life to Christ; I cannot follow Him secretly."

They replied, "If you cannot keep this a secret, you cannot come home." His parents rejected him, and he is homeless in Bombay. He begins preaching the Gospel on the streets of Bombay which is now Mumbai. You will notice in India that there are old names and new names. Now that the Hindus have taken over more and more control of the government in India, a lot of the old names which were more associated with the U.K. and the Commonwealth are now being put in the past. They now have a Woke group over there, and they are putting in the new names which fit more into the Hindu religions. So that is why when you look throughout India you see these different names.

But praise God, he was faithful and the Lord met him. From 1937 to 1940 he ministered as an itinerant evangelist and preacher all throughout India, and there was a great impact with thousands coming to the Lord. He would preach in any group that would ask him. It did not matter whether it was Presbyterian, Methodist, Pentecostal, whatever. He was out preaching Christ and sharing the Lord.

There is a famous British historian named Edwin Orr. If you get any of his history books they are valuable to have. He wrote: "Brother Bakht Singh is an Indian equivalent of the greater western evangelists, as skillful as Finney and as direct as Moody. He is a first class Bible teacher on the order of Campbell Moran or Graham Scroggie. That is a pretty good company to be put into. So he was really used of the Lord.

Finally, he became so popular among many of the denominations and churches where he was preaching that the ministers got jealous, and they said, "No more place for you here." Their objection was that he was not ordained and therefore he could not be baptized. They could not see that all these people were coming to Christ. They were protecting their own little flocks when they said, "No more." They shut the door to Bakht Singh but that was fine with him because he was serving the Lord and he just went on.

In 1941 he and some other brethren established the first local assembly in Madras which is now Chennai. In that assembly there was a group of brothers that were co-workers with him including A. J. Flack and Raymond Goldsworthy from Honor Oak, and we have know Brother Flack who has been here in Richmond. They called the meeting place "Jehovah Shema." Now I had planned this slide before the talk about the sign last night, so this is not in anyway to influence anybody about a sign. This is just a historical picture of the assembly there, and they do have a sign. When they established the assembly, it was based on a four-fold purpose for the church. They wanted to show forth Christ' fulness, Christ' unity and the unity of all believers, and His wisdom and glory. That was the simplicity of what they gathered in, and they continued to spread all throughout India.

In 1946 Bakht Singh was becoming popular so he was getting invited to many different places. He began traveling through Europe, other parts of Asia, the U. K., and Canada. He established his fellowship with Sparks and the brethren at Honor Oak.

In the 1950's he went to the Philippines, and he was with Brother Lucas Wu who is Hosea Wu's father. There is a picture of Bakht Singh with Brother Sparks, Brother Flack, John Paul from India, Goldsworthy, and a young Stephen Kaung.

In 1950 he and his co-workers moved to Hyderabad, and the Lord provided facilities there both to house the local assembly and an extra-local church ministry, and they also trained workers there. There were ones who would come and live there and be trained of the Lord, and they called the new place Hebron. That is an overall picture of the meeting place there. Their normal typical Sunday was because they loved to gather together, so they would begin at 9:00 A.M., and usually it would go until about 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon. It always started with the Lord's table and open worship. There were no partitions or asking for anything but just a remembering of the Lord and honoring Him for His death, burial and resurrection. And because of the length of that time at some point there was a provision for the children to go out while others would continue to worship.

Following the table they would have a time of intercessory prayer for the church, not only the church local but the church universal. Then the Word of the Lord was shared, and finally a public offering was taken. And whenever they took a public offering they would made an announcement. They did not want any unbelievers, giving anything at all. They did not want to receive anything from the world. They said, "If you do not know the Lord, do not give anything. This is just for believers." This is how holy this offering was. You do not hear many people saying today, "We do not want your money." They were very clear on that because there was usually a lot of unbelievers there in the meetings. Then it would be followed by a love feast of rice and sandbar (curry, lentils and vegetables). Because it was opened to everybody, he was really used to help break down the caste system. There would be ones from the highest caste to the lowest caste in those meetings. It was a beautiful picture of the unity, the oneness of the body of Christ because after that love feast, young brothers and sisters and some not so young went out to share the Gospel, and they would bring ones back in because they had an evening meeting also in which they shared the Gospel. So it was a very precious work that they did throughout India, and out of that work there was over 8,000 local assemblies established all throughout India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

In 1947 India became independent of the Commonwealth of England. They had what is called the Great India Partition, and that is where India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh were set up, and it was based on your religious leanings—India being Hindu, Pakistan being more Muslim. In the past they had been together, but they ended up being separate. At first everything was fine, but we know today that it is not going so well. We also see today that the Hindus are trying to put more and more restrictions on believers throughout India. They do not have the freedom they used to have.

In the mid-1970's, I never could find an exact date, but our Brother Bakht Singh came to Richmond two times. If my memory is right he shared one time at the Garden Club and one time at Pope Avenue. Both times he encouraged us and showed us the significance of kneeling and praying.

In 1986 he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, and the last ten years of his life he was bedridden. There was a dear Indian couple, one of them being a medical doctor who cared for him. In 2000 he passed on into glory.

One of the quotes that I appreciated about him: "The only thing that God is building in this world is His church."

That's it! Let's keep it clear, simple and straight. "The only thing that God is building in this world is his church."

Then he speaks to those of us in the U. S: "You feel sorry for us in India because of our great poverty in material things. We who know the Lord in India feel sorry for you in America because of your spiritual poverty. We are praying for you also that there might come a church with a hunger for God, not merely a hunger to see some form of amusement."

They were praying for us, and how often we pray for them. But they were seeing the spiritual condition of the people of God in the U. S. and were really praying for the Lord to create a great hunger for Him.

We see these dear one like a Bakht Singh who had no knowledge of the Lord at all, and by a dear couple who were nobody in the world reached out and shared with him, they befriended him, had him for dinner, and he kept coming over. They gave him a New Testament and he read it and God moved in a wonderful way. And he responded. Thank the Lord how God worked throughout India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and many other places. Bakht Singh had an influence in many places in this world, and we are thankful for him. I do not have a biography of him. If anyone ever runs across a biography I would appreciate knowing about it. I have one, but it is not the best biography.

Watchman Nee

Watchman Nee was born in 1903. What we see was that God had been laying ground work in China with Pastor Shea in the 1800's, and the China Inland Mission with Hudson Taylor. And during the 1900's and the 20th century, we had what is called China's three mighty men. There was Watchman Nee, Wong Ming Dow, and John Sung. John Sung was a powerful evangelist throughout China. He was as animated as Billy Sunday. He would be hopping around, very dynamic in the sharing of the Gospel. He came from a part of China where his dialect was hard to understand, and he went to another part of China, Pauken, and he was going to share there but nobody could translate for him. There was a principal at the local school who was not a believer, but he understood the language, and they asked him to come and share. That principal was Lucas Wu. He first shared with John Sung as an unbeliever, but after hearing him he got saved. It is wonderful the marvelous ways that the Lord works. Sometimes we limit Him, which is amazing. But here he takes this one who does not even know the Lord and uses him, and he was very faithful throughout his time in the Philippines. Some of us who went over to those conferences in the Far East had the privilege of meeting him and being with him before he went home to be with the Lord. We are thankful how the Lord works. These were China's three mighty men, and you can read the biographies of any of them. If I remember right John Sung abandoned

his education, all of his great PHDs, and he just threw it away as nothing to follow the Lord. It became as rubbish to him, as Paul would say. Each of them had a tremendous ministry.

So the Lord apprehended Watchman Nee and Bakht Singh about the same time He apprehended Brother Sparks. So we see how the Lord is working throughout the world at this marvelous time to reveal His heart, His purpose, the church, and that great mystery that had been hidden.

Brother Nee was born in Shantou, and it was really an answer to his mother's prayer. Now she was not a believer at that time, but she had two girls, and her sister-in-law had six girls. You had to have a son in China at that time. So she was praying very selfishly for a son, and praise God the Lord answered her, and his name was Nee T'o-Sheng, glorifying the ancestors. He was enrolled in the Missionary Society School in Fuzhou and later at the St. Marks School which is affiliated with Trinity College in Dublin. While he was in the St. Marks School he kept all the Christian rituals the whole time even though he was not saved. They had a baptismal ceremony, and he was baptized, he had communion every time, Sunday School, everything, but he was not saved. He was just going through all the outward motions. But thank the Lord, the Lord worked in his mother's life first.

In 1920 his mother got saved through the ministry of Dora Yu. Now Dora Yu was a great evangelist throughout China. You can read about the precious testimony of this dear sister, who was sold out for the Lord. She had just given her life to be poured out for the Gospel and encouraging ones to meet the Lord.

Watchman Nee's mother had known her previously in Shanghai when they were in school together. So when Dora Yu came to town, she went to hear her, and she got saved. Thank the Lord for that! She invited Watchman to go to the Gospel meeting with her, but he refused to go because he was mad at her. He was really upset because she had accused him of breaking a precious vase in their house. Actually, she accused him of everything. If you are in a family with a bunch of sisters and you are the brother, who gets blamed for everything? So he got blamed for everything, but most of the time he had not done anything. He was innocent of breaking the vase.

As she was before the Lord praying for him, the Lord convicted her that she needed to go and apologize to him. Now most of us probably do not recognize the magnitude of that step. But back in the 1920's for a Chinese mother to go and humble herself on her knees before her son and apologize and say, "I was wrong," can only be the grace of God because it was so abnormal. We cannot picture the abnormality of that. But it touched Nee in such a way that he said, "Wow, if this Gospel did so much for my mother, I am going to go to that meeting." So he agreed to go, and when he heard the Gospel, he began wrestling; he struggled with the Lord. And one of the reasons he was struggling is because from his teaching and the things he had known, he knew that to become a Christian was far more than knowing Jesus just as Savior. It is knowing Him as Lord of your life, and he knew he would have to fully surrender himself. The Gospel then was not watered down like it is today of just coming to know the Savior. You had to know Him as Savior and Lord. So as the full Gospel was going out, he wrestled with this: was he really ready? In the past he had actually vowed never to become a preacher, never to be a Christian or anything

connected with Christianity because he saw how through the foreign missionaries they used local people to be their preachers, and they treated them terribly. He saw how they were abused, and he said, "I am never going to do that." But as he struggled with the Lord, he ended up writing his own personal testimony.

"I was alone in my room struggling to decide whether or not to believe in the Lord. Then I was shown the blackness of my sins and the redness of His blood. I was constrained by the love of Christ, and it was as if the Lord's hand was reaching out to me saying, "I am waiting here to receive you." Realizing the effectiveness of Christ's blood in cleansing my sins and being overwhelmed by such love I accepted Him there as my Savior and Lord. Previously I had laughed at people who had accepted Jesus, but that evening I wept and confessed my sins, seeking the Lord's forgiveness. I knew joy and peace such as I had never known before. Light seemed to flood the room, and I said to the Lord, 'Oh Lord, You have indeed been gracious to me.' Praise the Lord for that touch of the Lord.

As a zealous young Christian he started going out and sharing the Gospel with all of his friends, and then he met a missionary, Mrs. Groves, and she challenged him about his evangelistic style. She said, "How many have you led to the Lord since you have been a Christian?" He said, "None, I have not led anybody, but I have done my part; I shared the Gospel with them; I made them know they were sinners." She said, "Why don't you first just make a list of people and pray for them?" He had such a concept that he was going to convert them. She said, "No, you need to go out and be praying for these people. Don't do anything at this point in time. Just stop and pray for them." So he made this list of about seventy people and began praying for them, and all but one were saved within a few months. He had zeal without knowledge to begin with, and praise God for that zeal. He had a zeal for the Gospel, but it was a matter of coming into the Lord's way, and the Lord used him in a wonderful way.

Then in 1921 he was searching the Scripture and he wanted to do everything in it. So he got baptized on March 27th in the White Teeth Rapids. I always wondered how rapid the Rapids were that day. I do not know if he picked the Rapids because he wanted to show his dedication: "Anybody can get baptized in the Dead Sea or the Jordan River; I am going to get baptized in the Rapids because it is going to be tougher, and I am more dedicated that way."

Then he felt impressed to remember the Lord in simplicity. So he spoke with another brother whom he knew, Leland Wang, who had the same conviction. So Wang, his wife, his mother, and himself met together to break bread that first time in Foochow.

Margaret Barber

Then the Lord brought across his path somebody who changed his life, a wonderful sister, Margaret Barber.

Margaret Barber was from England, and she went to China with the Church Missionary Society. She had taught girls at their school in Foochow, and all the kids loved her. However, because of her popularity the other teachers became jealous and falsely accused her of various issues. She did not defend herself, and she was sent back to England. She learned the lesson of the cross through this. She knew that she had not done any of these things she had been accused

of. She did not get into a fight over it, she did not try to defend herself, but she humbled herself before the Lord and was willing to be misunderstood. Thank the Lord, as she laid her life down, later on she was fully vindicated. The truth came out. Letters were published publicly of her vindication and all of that, but she had paid a high price because her reputation was severely tarnished. You know how it is when somebody gets accused of something and it looks like they are guilty. Even though later on they are released, everybody has this little doubt: "Maybe there was something to it." Even after she was vindicated, she never made a big deal out of it. She never said, "I told you so." The cross had worked in her in a marvelous way.

While she was back in England, she went to the Surry Chapel where D. M. Panton was ministering. That was the chapel in Norwich, England where Govett had been and Panton was after him. They were attracted to each other and actually planned on getting married. But then she felt the Lord calling her back to China without support of any mission. The first time she went had been with a mission, but this time she felt the Lord was just calling her to go back and trust in Him. She shared that with Panton and he said, "If the Lord is calling you to go, then go." So they broke off their relationship, and she went back to China. One of the things about Margret Barber was that she wrote beautiful poems and hymns, and we have many of them in the hymn book. And there are a couple of biographies about Margret Barber among the books here. At this point in time when she had to give up the love of her life in this world and follow the Lord, she wrote this hymn, "If the Path I travel."

"If the path I travel lead me to the cross,
If the way Thou choosest lead to pain and loss,
Let the compensation daily, hourly be
Shadowless communion, blessed Lord with Thee."

That is what she was after. What a place of fellowship and how the Lord had touched her.

So she returned to China with her niece Miss Ballord. When she went back she said, "I desire nothing for myself; I want everything for the Lord. There was an absoluteness in these dear brethren we are sharing here today. This was not some theoretical, high-faulting statement. This was a testimony of life that came out of them, and you can see it in their lives. This is what they desired.

When they got to China, they rented a house near Foochow, and they were burdened so much for the Lord's work there. She had been cleared of all of her accusations. She could have lived in Foochow, but she chose to live outside in a little rural place that was isolated. They prayed daily for God to raise up young men for the Gospel. They prayed and prayed for many years for the Lord to raise up ones who knew the Gospel and could share the Gospel, and the Lord would do a great work.

During their time of prayer while they were there, the landlord who they were renting from said that they had to get out. You cannot rent here anymore, but she felt in her heart that this was the place the Lord had given them. She said, "If the Lord has given us this place we cannot leave it. So they started praying. She stayed there until after her death and then Mrs. Ballord

stayed until 1950 before she went back. Out of that standing in faith in what God had given them, and believing this was His provision, she wrote the song, "Keep up the song of faith." Again it is in our hymn book.

"Keep up the song of faith, however dark the night.

And as you praise, the Lord will work to change your faith to sight."

She saw the reality of it and prayed it through, and praise God for that. They could have looked at the circumstances and said, "Maybe we missed God, and this was not our place. Maybe we were supposed to go somewhere else, for we can rent somewhere else. But she knew that was where God had them, and they really stood in faith for that wonderful provision.

They continued praying for another ten to fourteen years, and they were be in contact with different ones. They were hidden away unnoticed by man, but God heard their prayers.

In 1922 a revival broke out near White Teeth Rock near the Foochow area, and God raised up a young generation at that point in time, including Brother Watchman Nee. She provided constant counsel, correction and encouragement to him. One of his quotes said, "Through Dora Yu I was saved, but through Miss Barber I was edified. I was built up and strengthened through that."

One of the characteristics of Miss Barber was that she had a great heart for the Lord's second coming. It so much upon her heart, and one of her prayers was recorded. As I read this prayer, notice the simplicity of it. Sometimes our prayers are so high faulting, we get grandiose and eloquent and use all these words. But this is her pouring out her heart. It sounds to me just like a conversation between two friends or between a father and a daughter, ones who know each other. They are not having to put up any pretense or anything. It is just an honest sharing of the heart. One New Year's Eve she prayed:

"Lord, Do You really want to let this year slip by? Are You sure You want to wait until the New Year for Your coming? Even though today is the last day of the year, Oh Lord, I pray that You would come today, the last day of the year."

That is the pouring out of a genuine heart who has a relationship with One that can honestly open up the heart in fellowship. Praise God! She always had that yearning for the Lord's second coming, and Watchman Nee tells the story of how one day as they were walking down the street she said to him: "Dear brother, we wish we could meet Him on the next street corner. Maybe as we go around that corner, He is going to be there. The Lord is coming back." And this whole burden for His second coming is reflected in her hymn: "There is a Whisper from the Glory." Beautiful hymn! "There is a Whisper from the Glory of the coming of the Lord." Praise God!

We said that she was very gifted in writing hymns and poems, and she helped Brother Nee write some of his precious hymns. And the way she would help him was one night he hastily went back and drafted up a few hymns and poems and took them back to her. He was so excited that he had written these hymns, and he went back to her, and she shares with him. She did a lot of correcting of Brother Nee, but it was always in love, and he always treasured that. He did not understand it all the time; he would fight with her in a reverential way of debating of why this

and why that, but she was steadfast in pointing him to the Lord, of taking the cross and humbling himself. She said, "Hymns and poems are like producing milk and honey. They are the fruit of long hard experiences that come from dealings with the Lord. They are not just a concoction of words thrown together, but a sweet result of the outflow of the inner life. They come from experiences. That is why I appreciate "Christ in Song" and some of the reference books we have here. You see the story behind the hymn. Once you see the story behind the hymn, it gives it a whole different meaning. It is the same way of the story behind the choruses. There is a story behind many of the choruses, and it is beautiful the way the Lord works in that.

When Miss Barber passed away in 1930, one of the last letters that she had written to Panton in 1929 she was unconscious of her soon return to the Lord.

"Just a few more miles, beloved, and our feet shall ache no more." (Amen for that one.) No more sin, no more sorrow, hush thee Jesus went before. And I hear Him sweetly whispering, 'faint not, fear not, still press on for it may be tomorrow the long journey will be done.'

After she passed away, Brother Nee spoke of Miss Barber: "She was one who was deeply rooted in the Lord. I consider the degree of her devotion and faithfulness to the Lord the most rare in the world. The greatest fortune in my life was to have met her."

He was not trying to put together flowery words; he was sharing his heart of the impact she had upon him. He also said, "She wasted her life on the Lord." She was one who poured out. Ones asked in the Scripture, "Why this waste?" It was not a waste at all. She never thought a second that it was wasting her life. To the world it looked wasted; it would look like Bakht Singh's life was wasted, it would look like John Sung's life was wasted, it would look like Watchman Nee's life was wasted, but no, it was precious gold, precious treasure in the Lord. Are we willing to be wasted for the Lord in this day and time, to be misunderstood by the world, to be misunderstood by brothers and sisters, to be wasted for the Lord? She impacted Brother Nee in a great way.

As Miss Barber was influencing him, in 1922 he was touched by Psalm 73:25. He was always searching the Scriptures to see how real it applied in his life. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee."

Brother Nee said, "I can answer the first part, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? There is no one but He." But to the second part he was not able to answer because he was in love with a young girl. They were teenagers, the families knew each other, and they had known each other for a while. They were really in love, and her name was Charity Chang. When Brother Nee came to know the Lord, he would share the Lord with her, and she would laugh at him. She did not receive the Lord, and he knew that he had to separate himself. He had to leave the love of his life to follow the Lord and to serve Him. Through that devotion the Lord continued to work among his school mates as revival spread. In 1923 he testified that was when God really revealed His purpose to him. He said, "As I was studying the book of Acts I saw God's wish to establish a local church in each city. It was as if a light shone within me clearly, and I understood His purpose." Praise God for that!

In 1925 he actually changed his name to Watchman which is easier for us to say. But in 1926 our brother became sick with tuberculous and was really only given a few months to live. During

this time he was bedridden, and this is when he wrote “The Spiritual Man.” After the book was completed the Lord miraculously healed him, and I would encourage you to read his biography “Against the Tide.” Read the story of how the Lord spoke to him about being healed, and in faith he stood up and left the bed he had been in for months and went down to see his friends who were at the next house. They were shocked because it was like the dead man walking as he entered in. It was a glorious reviving and encouragement.

The Lord had a call upon his life—a four-fold call. Assist God’s children to live their spiritual life in the new and living way. (There is a life to live in.) to conduct what they called overcoming conferences. (I always appreciated how Christian Chen calls an overcomer as one who is overcome by the love of Christ. That is who these conferences were for—ones who were overcome by the love of Christ.) To build up local assemblies and to train young people. (He always had that burden for training young people.) We are very thankful for that because we see how through that burden many young people were trained to serve and to go forth.

In 1928 God began sovereignly moving throughout China, and many assemblies sprang up all over the coast independent of Brother Nee. He was being used in one area, others were being used in other areas, and many assemblies were coming together. For several years they met and recognized the great work that God had done. It was amazing how God was doing something here, doing something there. It was a similar way with the Brethren that we shared earlier throughout England and Ireland. The Lord was moving hearts in many different places, doing one work, and then He brought them together in fellowship.

Finally in 1934 Charity Chang got saved and really gave her life to the Lord, and they ended up getting married. He called her, “My true helpmate.” She was actually the only one who was able to visit him in prison while he was there those many years.

In 1935 he feels a dryness in his spirit, so he wanted to go to England to talk to Brother Sparks. However, before going he met a sister, Elizabeth Fischbacher. As she fellowshipped with him, he really found himself refreshed in his spirit because she taught him a vital lesson of “the cross precedes Pentecost.” He was looking for power, and he was looking for the Holy Spirit and that anointing and enabling. She was saying, “First there has to be the dying to self. There has to be the cross working in you, and as the cross works within us, as we give ourselves to the Lord, the power of His resurrection comes out.” The cross precedes Pentecost, and that is such a vital thing because so often we see ones who are so occupied with the Pentecostal experience or the Charismatic experience that they have neglected the cross, and it really creates a great mixture. But out of the cross working in us, the power of Pentecost brings a balance of the fullness of His life going forth.

It was in 1935 when Brother Stephen Kaung began working with our Brother Nee. Brother Kaung was twenty years old then.

In 1937 the Sino Japanese War broke out from 1937 to 1945. But finally Brother Nee was able to go visit Sparks in London, and they had fellowship together. During that trip while he was in Denmark, he shared the messages that we know today as “The Normal Christian Life” and “Sit, Walk, and Stand.” He was able to visit Brother Sparks in 1938,

and in 1939 he returned to Shanghai. But because of the Sino Japanese War many workers there were suffering financially. So to help the workers he started a pharmaceutical business. It had a lot of problems and did not go well. It became a stain on his testimony, and the brothers actually asked him to stop speaking in the assembly in 1942. He did and then withdrew to Cooling Hill, where he quietly suffered in isolation. That work of the cross was going deeper and deeper in his life. He was there alone with the Lord, but the Lord was meeting him and revealing himself. But praise God, in 1948 the war had ended, and the brethren in Shanghai asked him to return. The spirit of unity was really manifested, and there was a great healing. A restoration was done, and he continued to be a help there.

In 1948-49 he had training sessions for workers, for young people. They would gather for four months at a time to really be set apart for the Lord. But also in 1949 was when the Communists took over. They established a People's Republic of China. In 1949 Brother Nee at that point was in Hong Cong, and Brother Kaung was there also. Brother Nee felt compelled to go back to China, but many were warning him: "Do not go back. You know what is going to happen to you. You are going to get arrested." But he knew what he had to do, and he went back. He said, "For the first year and a half there was no interference at all by the government. They were able to freely meet and share in the church, and it really flourished. But then in 1951 the Communists announced their new religious policy: you had to be progovernment and support the revolution in everything you did. If not you were considered an Imperialist which was a horrible thing to be, an enemy of the Republic.

They saw the writing on the wall at that point in time, and they knew that trouble was coming. They started various assemblies, and ones began to make various plans. In 1952 he was arrested and put into prison while the government was waiting to try his case. In 1956 he was tried and sentenced to prison, and the main accusation was that he was a master spy of the spy ring. There were a lot accusations against him, but this was the key one. If you were accused of that, there was no escape. He died in prison in 1972 still refusing to write a confession. He was faithful to the very end. He made a choice in 1949 to go back to China. He could have stayed out of China, and with his popularity he could have traveled the world being a great teacher and encouragement to many, but he knew the call that God had upon him, and he went back. He was in prison for about twenty years. He was a translator, and had translated many technical manuals and things like that, but only his wife Charity was able to visit him. Thank the Lord from every indication and all the things that everyone heard, he was faithful to the very end. It would have been easy for him to confess and get out, but he knew he could not; he had to be a faithful witness all the way. So we are grateful for that.

Here are just a few of his quotes:.

"Keep our hand on the plow while wiping away our tears; that is Christianity." Through the sufferings and tears of life, keeping our hand on the plow and going forward. That is Christianity!

"We may be weak but looking at our weakness will never make us strong." I appreciated that. When we come to the table, are our eyes upon our weakness or our eyes upon the One who loved us and delivered from that?"

“Just as the right relationship with Christ generates a Christian, so the proper relationship with the Holy Spirit breathes a spiritual man.” The working of the Holy Spirit in our lives—that is the spiritual man. There was a value in the relationship that Nee had with the Holy Spirit that was very precious.

“The cross grants us our position; the Holy Spirit gives us experience.” It is by that life of the Spirit within that we experience the fulness of Christ.

“God is not seeking a display of my Christ-likeness but a manifestation of His Christ.” In each one of us He is not seeking the display of my Christ-likeness but a manifestation of His Christ. Think about that. So often we just want to be like Christ, and I know how we say that. I do not want to get too hung up on words, but what the Lord is really after is Christ’s life being manifest in us so that Christ is seen.

One of his prayers; “Lord, I am willing to break my heart that I may satisfy Thy heart. “To live is Christ, to die is gain.” Praise God!

Stephen Kaung

Our Brother Sparks and Brother Nee were two brothers who were greatly influenced by him as was Brother Stephen Kaung. I just want to do a basic timeline of his life just for our help. You have heard testimonies of him for the last few weeks.

In 1915 our brother was born in Shanghai to a Christian family, and his father was a Methodist pastor there. At the age of fifteen in 1930 he became a Christian, then he graduated from Suzhou University. In 1935 he started working with Watchman Nee in Shanghai. In 1949 he was in Hong Kong, and then he left China. He went to Manila, but his desire was to go to England. However he had to wait in Manila for some paper work, and in 1952 he arrived in the U. S. Again, he was desiring to go to England, but he never made it there on that trip, and he settled in New York City. In 1968 he first shared in Richmond at a gathering on Waveny Road. In 1971 he moved to Washington, and in 1978 he came to Richmond. In 2022 he passed into glory, and we are thankful for the testimony that he had.

Lance Lambert

In a similar way our Brother Lance Lambert was a great influence upon us here as that line came down through Sparks and Nee. We see the impact of ones who came to share with us and passed on to us what they had received of the Lord. Lance was born in Richmond, England, and at the age of twelve he became a Christian. He began his studies at the London University at the School of Oriental Studies in 1948. He wanted to go to China to be a missionary, but obviously the revolution in 1949 cut that out. So he went to Egypt and served in the Royal Air Force three years.

He went back to the Richmond area, and then some young people were beginning to pray together. They wanted to gather in the simplicity of the Lord, and they began to meet at Halford House with some other young people in 1954. There is a book here on the history of Halford House. When he first shared in Richmond, VA, he always made it clear that this is Richmond, VA and not Richmond, Surry. He always had to differentiate that. He first shared in Richmond, VA at

the second Christian Family Conference at Roslyn. In 1980 he discovered his Jewish heritage and moved to Jerusalem, and in 2015 he passed on to glory.

We are thankful for so great a heritage and the great cloud of witnesses that have gone before us that we now have. And may we be encouraged even though these ones were rejected by man, rejected by the religious establishment, they pressed on. There was no obstacles that they just gave into. They continued pressing on because they were captured. Someone had captured their hearts, that One our Lord Jesus Christ. And we pray that we could enter in that same way. May we see as they saw. New wine needs fresh wine skins. The wine skins have to stay fresh. They have to have that livingness within the wineskins for that life to be expressed. Too often the wineskins dry up, but we need that freshness of the Lord to continue.

As we see ones who are willing to forsake all for Christ, may that same Spirit capture us in these days. There is the hymn: “Jesus Lord, I’m captured by Thy beauty; all my heart to Thee I’ve open wide. Now set free from all religious duty, only let me in Thyself abide.”

May we be captured by Him. There was a serving of Him by these ones, and they were totally sold out for Him. May it be that we will press on to lay hold of that for which we have been laid hold of by Jesus Christ. Our Lord laid hold of each one of us for a purpose, and we pray that the ones we have considered, especially today, as they pressed on to be faithful unto Him all the way to the end, we too will be inspired to lay hold of Christ faithful to the end. The days we are living in are becoming more and more challenging, not only challenging from the world, but we are being challenged by the religious institutions, we are challenged by other believers: “Why do you meet this way? Why do you gather this way? Why don’t you have a name?” All these questions—are we willing to be misunderstood when we give them the answer? Do we have them settled in our hearts as to who we are? Do we know who we are? Do we know why we gather? These are basic questions we need to have settled. We need to ask the Lord to reveal these things to us that we may know the reality of the solid and sure foundation that is ours in Him. We have a great heritage, but if I can say this in a right way, Watchman Nee is not our foundation. Brother Kaung is not our foundation. Lance Lamber is not our foundation. They have only built upon that one solid and sure foundation, and they are desiring that we would continue to be found faithful to the end on that one foundation of Christ and the calling He has upon us.

Let’s pray:

Lord, we are thankful and very humbled by the great way that You work in so many. Lord, we see what You have done, how You have taken these lives who were so much against You. Some knew about You from Christian families, but many did not know about You at all. And Lord, You were able to do a great transforming work. Lord, as we are here in this room together, each one of us is so unique. Each one of us is so fearfully and wonderfully made by You. Lord, we are thankful how You are building us together, and we want to guard it and cherish it, and in the same way we want to be pressing on for that much more because we know there is a greater and greater work that You are desiring to do, and we have a desire to be faithful to the end, to know the call that You have upon us. Would we really know who we are, would we know why we are here, that we could be a light in the midst of the darkness in these last days. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

