

The Heavenly Man | Brother Yun and Paul Hattaway

Reviewed by Sharon Hinz in the August 2012 Philogian

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In a sense he named himself The Heavenly Man. Brother Yun was being interrogated by the Public Security Bureau (PSB) and refused to tell them who he was or where he lived. As the authorities tried to bully and beat the information from him, Brother Yun shouted out, "I am a heavenly man! My home is in heaven!" The local believers, gathered in a nearby house, heard his shouting, as he intended, and fled to safety avoiding their own arrest. From that time, as an indication of respect for his courage and love for the body of Christ, house church believers in China have referred to Brother Yun as "the Heavenly Man".

The reading of the book, *The Heavenly Man*, was a pivotal point in my life. I knew, before I was half done with the reading of it, that I'd never be the same. The title, *The Heavenly Man* was enough to attract my attention, "A bit pretentious" I thought; after all this is an autobiography (assisted by Paul Hattaway, an expert on the Chinese church and author of *Operation China*). But, from the first I was impressed by the story's simplicity, authenticity and compelling nature.

In 1949 China became a communist country and all missionaries were expelled. Communist Chairman Mao launched an experiment called the "Great Leap Forward" which led to a massive famine all over China. The resultant famine in Brother Yun's Henan Province alone caused the death by starvation of an estimated 8 million people. The little church in Yun's village emptied as the flock scattered, including Yun's mother. Her fledgling relationship with the Lord ebbed.

Later, married to a poor farmer who was dying of cancer, with five children to provide for, Yun's mother heard God speak to her, "Jesus loves you". She knelt and prayed, repented and rededicated herself to the Lord Jesus Christ. She then gathered her children, "Jesus is the only hope for your father." They all committed themselves to God and prayed throughout the night for their father's healing. In the morning he was much improved, and within a week there was no sign of the cancer.

Yun, at age 16, hungered deeply for more of God's Word, an illegal commodity at that time. For months Yun fasted, and prayed to have a Bible; then in a vision he learned he would receive a Bible from two particular men. Late in the night there was a soft knock at the door. The two men in Yun's vision had come with a Bible for him. Saturated in The Word of God, that first year as a new believer, while still in his teens, Brother Yun led more than 2000 people to Jesus.

In a nearby village, a young woman was also called by God. Deling was one of seven children in another poor Christian family. Like Yun's father, Deling's mother was gradually healed of mental illness as God's peace came upon her as she trusted the Lord as Savior. Deling herself suffered from the terrible affliction of hemophilia. At age 18, Deling committed her life to Jesus Christ. Soon after that she was healed of her hemophilia along with all the scars and wounds she'd accumulated from the disease.

"Not only did God give me wonderful parents but a virtuous wife" said Yun after he'd married Deling. She chose to marry Yun because of her love and obedience to the Lord. It was their Christian mothers who were the matchmakers. "The first time I met Deling I told her, 'God has chosen me to be his witness and to follow Him through great hardships. I have no money and I'm always being pursued by the authorities. Do you really want to marry me?' Deling responded, 'Yun, I'll never let you down. I will join with you and together we'll serve the Lord.'"

Yun was imprisoned three times; each time he was tortured in various ways. In addition to the harsh ordeal of imprisonment, Yun fasted and prayed extensively. At times his fasts were such that he should have starved to death but God preserved him. In prison Yun witnessed to fellow prisoners and guards alike. Deling too spent time in prison. While their parents were both imprisoned, their two children were hidden to prevent them being taken by the authorities for their protection.

In May of 1997 during his third imprisonment, Yun was at a very low point. During torture his legs had been crushed so that he must be carried everywhere he went. God then spoke to Yun, "This is the hour of your salvation." Yun called the guard to be taken to the lavatory. Brother Xu, a fellow believer and house church leader, always carried Yun wherever he went after Yun's legs were crushed, was brought to Yun's cell. As soon as he saw Yun, Xu told him, "You must escape now." Without Xu's aid, Yun walked through iron door after iron door. At last Yun walked out the main gate of the prison, which was ajar and found himself standing on the street outside the Zhengzhou Number One Maximum Security Prison! In moments a small yellow taxi-van pulled up next to Yun and the driver opened the passenger door and asked, "Where are you heading?"

The Heavenly Man doesn't end here. How this family is reunited and eventually escapes China is arduous and, like the rest of Yun's story, valorous. There are victories and spiritual riches to be mined from the pages of this book. Dare to be changed by the reading of The Heavenly Man!