

Asia Harvest



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

1903 60th Place, Suite M1204 - Bradenton, FL 34203 - USA
Tel: (877) 868-5025 Fax: (877) 868-5025
Email: office@asiaharvest.org Website: www.asiaharvest.org

June 2006 - Newsletter #84



Blind Chang
- CHINA MARTYR -

From the Frontlines

with Paul & Joy Hattaway

The following story is used, with permission, from "A Box of Delights," by John & Mark Stibbe, published by Monarch Books, 2001.

Now it came to pass that a group existed who called themselves fishermen. There were many fish in the waters all around. Week after week, month after month, and year after year, the fishermen met in meetings and talked about their call to fish, the abundance of fish and how they might go about fishing.

Year after year they carefully defined what fishing means, defended fishing as an occupation, declared that fishing is always to be a primary task of fishermen, in fact, that there should be a Decade of Fishing!

Continually they searched for new and better methods of fishing. Further they said, "The fishing industry exists by fishing as fire exists by burning." They loved slogans such as 'Fishing is the task of every fisherman,' and 'Every fisherman is a fisher.' They sponsored costly nationwide and worldwide congresses to discuss fishing issues such as the new fishing equipment, fish calls, and whether any new bait had been discovered.

Many who felt the call to be fishermen responded. They were commissioned and sent to fish. They engaged in all kinds of occupations. They built power plants to pump water for fish and tractors to plow new waterways. They made all kinds of equipment to travel here and there to look at fish hatcheries. Some also said that they wanted to be part of the fishing party, but they felt called to furnish fishing equipment. Others felt their job was to relate to the fish in a good way so the fish would know the difference between good and bad fishermen. Others felt that simply letting the fish know they were nice, land-loving neighbors and how loving and kind they were was enough.

These fishermen built large beautiful buildings called 'Fishing Headquarters'. The plea was that everyone should be a fisherman and every fisherman should fish. One thing they didn't do, however.... They didn't fish!

After one stirring meeting on 'The necessity of fishing,' one young man left the meeting and went fishing. The next day he reported that he had caught two fish. He was honored for his excellent catch and scheduled to visit all the big meetings possible to tell how he did it. So he left his fishing in order to have time to tell

other fishermen about the experience. He was also placed on the Fishermen's General Board as a person having considerable experience.

Now it's true that many of the fishermen sacrificed and put up with all kinds of difficulties. Some lived near the water and bore the smell of dead fish every day. They received the ridicule of some who made fun of their fishermen's clubs and the fact that they claimed to be fishermen yet never fished. They wondered about those who felt it was of little use to attend the weekly meetings to talk about fishing. After all, were they not following the Master who said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men"?

"Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.... For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him" 1 Corinthians 1:20-21, 25-29.

The Lord has constantly impressed the above verses on us as we have served Him in China and other parts of Asia over the years. Many of the finest Christian men and women we know do not come from highly-educated backgrounds, and are certainly not "wise by human standards." What they do have, however, are hearts fully devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ and eager to obey whatever He tells them to do. On the other hand we find many Western churches and organizations that place a strong emphasis on education, secular degrees, charismatic personalities, and human achievement. If these are all we possess then we are indeed poor in spirit and in no condition to become a useful worker in God's kingdom!

In this newsletter we look at the life and death of Blind Chang, a man who was a womanizer, gambler, gangster and alcoholic before he found Jesus Christ. Though blind, God used him in a remarkable way. We hope you enjoy his story and may we never fall into the trap of thinking God's kingdom advances through mere human effort! "It's not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6).

Blind Chang was an effective fisherman for God's kingdom, but only because he realized he was nothing in himself, and relied fully on Jesus' strength. This, dear friends, is the secret of successful fishing!

CHINA MARTYR: Blind Chang - 1900

The following article is taken from Paul Hattaway's upcoming book, *China's Christian Martyrs*, which will profile hundreds of inspirational testimonies of those who have died for Jesus Christ in China.

One of the greatest trophies of God's saving grace is found in the extraordinary life and death of Chang Shen, who came to be loved and known simply as 'Blind Chang.'

In April 1886 the missionaries in north-east China were feeling discouraged at their lack of progress when a 36-year-old "poor ragged blind man" found his way to the gate of the Mission Hospital at Shenyang, the capital of Liaoning Province. When he arrived at the gate his appearance was described as "destitute and desolate, with scarcely any clothes left upon him, and in the last stages of dysentery." The beds were all full, but so great was the compassion awakened in his behalf, that the native evangelist gave up his own couch, that Chang might be provided for. He received the best care and nursing, and before long his health was restored.

The hearts of the hospital staff melted when they heard his story. Chang had walked almost 120 miles (194 km) to visit them. Along the way the blind man had been attacked and robbed of all his money and warm clothing. The missionaries allowed Chang to stay at the mission for free. While he was there he attended the chapel services and heard the gospel for the first time. Immediately and without reservation he gave his life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

One missionary said at the time, "Never

had we a patient who received the Gospel with such joy, and the rapidity with which he grasped the leading truths of Christianity was remarkable."

Another missionary, Rev. Inglis, later described Blind Chang as "A remarkable man, with a soft voice and mellow beyond any Chinese I have ever met. He speaks with great rapidity, his words seeming to flow from his lips like the ceaseless murmur of a brook."

Before embracing Christ as Lord and Savior, Chang had belonged to a notorious Buddhist sect known as the Vegetarians, due to their abstinence from eating meat. This zealous sect had caused much trouble in China, and was not afraid to use violence to achieve their goals. In 1895 the Vegetarians were behind the massacre of 11 foreign missionaries at Gutian in Fujian Province.

After staying in the mission a month, Chang decided to return to his remote home village, and asked to be baptized before he left Shenyang. The missionaries, however, refused to baptize him as they wanted to test the sincerity of his faith over time. Chang was well-known throughout the whole region as a drunkard, womanizer, and gambler. One account describes him as "an inveterate gambler, and a man of such immoral life

as to be a byword, and that in a land where such lives are not uncommon. He made his living by acting as a sort of official and using his self-assumed power to prey upon the people who feared him. His only child, a daughter, he turned out of doors, to be forced into beggary and a life of shame. Not long after he drove his wife from home. Seventeen days after the wife had gone he became totally blind."

Locals even called Chang "Wu so pu wei te," meaning "One without a particle of good in him." When he was struck blind his neighbors said it was the judgment of the gods for all his evil-doing.

Chang was upset at the missionaries' unwillingness to baptize him, but he decided he must return home anyway. He explained, "None of my people have ever heard even the Name of Jesus, or of His offer of the gift of eternal life; do you think that I can keep that to myself any longer? I do wish for baptism, but I cannot delay my return." When Blind Chang first reached his home village and started proclaiming the Gospel the people laughed at him. They mocked his new profession of faith, saying, "It is all very well for him to reform, for he cannot gamble without his eyes."

Despite this opposition Blind Chang remained steadfast in his commitment. Initially without a church or any other Christian fellowship, God stepped in and provided direct comfort. On one occasion "he dreamed he saw the Savior coming toward him in glowing white. He had a book in His hand, and a crown was upon his brow. As He handed him the book he smiled down upon him."

As the weeks and months rolled by it became obvious to the villagers that a dra-

matic transformation had taken place in Chang's heart, and his character had been radically changed. In the summer months people often sat under a large spreading elm tree near the village to enjoy the shade on a hot day. Chang sat under the tree every day, as it afforded him the best opportunity to interact with people and share the Gospel. The elm tree, along with the house beside it, was later purchased by the mission and became the site of the first church and school in that area.

In October 1886 the missionary James Webster visited Chang's home to check on him and see if he had remained true to the faith. Instead of finding one poor blind man to baptize, "there were quite a company of believers and inquirers; and the visible church in that neighborhood was founded by the baptism of nine. There have been great advances since then, and the church in Blind Chang's village and the villages round, now numbers two hundred." Webster learned that Chang had "gone forth in his daily occupation, itinerating from village to village, unhindered by the muddy swamps, rugged hills, and crooked paths, which even to those who has sight proved so wearisome and difficult, to tell the people about his Savior and Lord. Public opinion was divided, some blessing and some cursing, but still he kept on in his blessed work, living for God and walking in His fellowship, praying in faith for help from above, and singing the one hymn that he had learned in the hospital:

Jesus love me, He who died
Heaven's gate to open wide;
He will wash away my sin,
Let His little child come in.

Jesus loves me, He will stay,
Close beside me all the way;
If I love Him when I die,
He will take me home on high.

After baptizing Chang and the eight other new converts, Webster was overjoyed and wrote, "I have seldom had more satisfaction with baptism candidates than with these men. I have never witnessed a more interesting scene, nor joined in a more solemn and joyful sacramental service. The nine men were headed by their blind guide, who had to be led by the hand to receive the sacred rite. Professing to come to Christ and to believe in Him, and to venture their all in thus believing, they declared their

intention to forsake the idolatry of their fathers, casting it forth root and branch; expressing their desire through grace to turn from evil and serve the Living God; and all this with a warmth of purpose impossible to describe."

Blind Chang proved to be an evangelist without parallel. Everywhere he went he testified to the power of a changed life through Christ, and such was the notoriety of his past life that nobody could question that his testimony was true. As a young man Chang had been able to see, but while he was swindling people of their money as a fortune-teller he lost his sight. After his visit, Webster wrote the following report, "One thing of which I am well



Today there is a thriving house church movement in northeast China, full of passionate Christians following in the footsteps of Blind Chang and many others who laid their lives down for the Gospel.

assured, is this: Blind Chang, with little knowledge, but with a heart thrilled to the core with the truth which he knew, had in these months done more work and better work for the Kingdom of Heaven than half-a-dozen foreign missionaries could have done in as many years. And this is one of many proofs that China must be evangelized by the Chinese."

Some time later Chang was led to visit a valley about 100 miles (162 km) east of his home village. There 30 people believed the message and were saved. In many ways Blind Chang's methods were a forerunner of the house church evangelists in China today. He received no salary, but the new believers supported him. He lived in each house in turn, and when he needed new clothes the Christian women made them for him.

With the use of a staff, Chang made his way around dozens of villages. His preaching was always with great power and authority. The spectacle of a blind man giving his testimony and exhorting people to repent and believe in Christ never failed to attract a crowd.

After a while the missionaries told Chang about a school for the blind that was operating in Beijing. Amazed by news that he could learn to read God's Word by braille, Chang set off for the nation's capital, where he received a warm welcome from missionary W.H. Murray. Within three months Chang had mastered the art of reading and writing. Murray wanted him to stay longer, but Chang was anxious to return home and share the blessings he had received. He recommenced his daily preaching, reading the Word of God to crowds of his countrymen, who were surprised to see a blind man read with his finger tips.

Within a few years the blind evangelist had memorized the whole New Testament, the Psalms, and several other Old Testament books. It was said of Blind Chang: "Missionaries followed after him, baptizing converts and organizing churches." By 1892 Chang had led more than 300 people to the Cross, and more than 500 by 1895. He became their pastor, instructing them in the Word of God. Many of those converted through Chang's preaching were the worst of society, among them bandits, opium addicts, and prostitutes.

Chang had a stubborn streak, which could on one hand be a character flaw, but on the other hand proved to be an asset for God's kingdom. On one occasion, burdened by the state of his sister's unsaved soul, he went to her house, sat down, and went thirty days without food, stating that "no food will cross my lips until you become a believer." And a believer she did become, afraid that if she didn't she would be responsible for her brother's death by starvation!

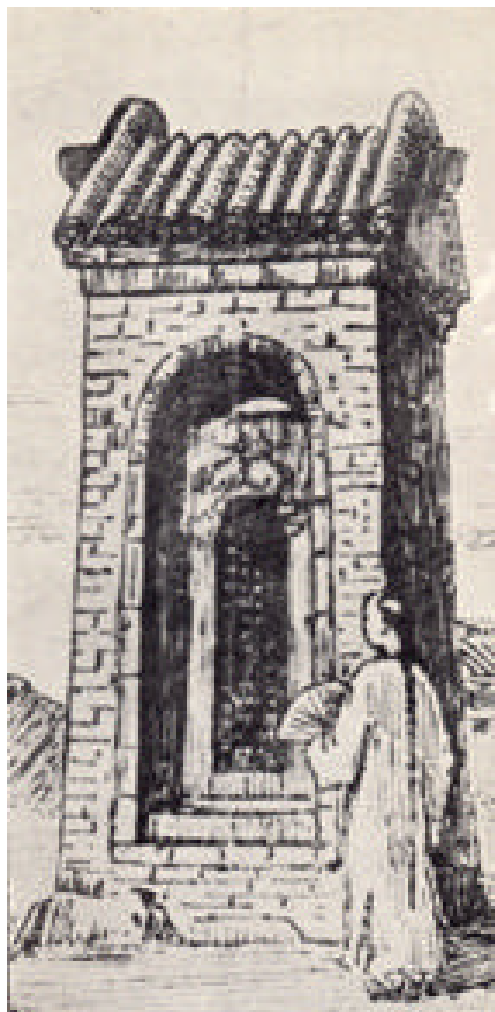
The summer of 1900 rolled around, and the dreadful Boxer Rebellion broke throughout northern China. More than 30,000 Christians were slaughtered in a few months. When the trouble started Chang was away visiting the Christians at a village called Deshengguo. The believers there knew Blind Chang would be a prime target for the Boxers, so they hid him in a cave, hoping the threat would soon pass. At the same time a group of Boxers arrived in another village where Chang had established a church. They rounded up about 50 Christians for execution, when a local man told them, "You are fools to kill all these. For every one you kill, ten will spring up while that man Chang lives. Kill

him and you will crush the foreign religion.”

The Boxers promised to spare the lives of their 50 captives if they could capture Chang. When no one offered to disclose Chang's whereabouts the Boxers prepared to massacre the believers when one man slipped away and alerted Chang what was happening. When the man arrived and told his story to Chang, the blind evangelist listened silently, and then a sober look came upon his face. Without any doubt as to what he should do, Chang stood to his feet and declared, “I will gladly die for them. Take me to them for it is better that it be so.”

The duo travelled along the stony paths towards Chaoyang, praying the Boxers would not lose patience and slaughter the captive believers before they arrived. The blazing summer sun beat down on them, but Chang continued towards his destination, knowing he would be killed once he arrived. When they reached the town on July 19, Blind Chang was immediately seized and bound. Three days later he was taken to the temple of the god of war. Blind Chang had glorified Christ through his life, and now he was called to glorify Him through death. The Boxers shouted at Chang, accusing him of following the foreigners and helping bring their poison into the minds of Chinese people everywhere. Chang replied, “I do not follow a foreigner. I am a loyal subject of the Chinese Emperor.” The Boxers angrily responded, “But you worship Jesus, the God of the English.” Chang calmly yet firmly explained his position in the following account recorded between the blind disciple and the Boxers,

“I worship Jesus, the Savior of the whole world. I refuse to deny Him. If you kill my body, today my soul will be with Him in Paradise.”



A sketch of the stone monument erected in honor of Blind Chang.

“Unless you renounce Jesus and burn incense to Buddha, you must die.”

“I am quite willing to die,” answered Blind Chang. “I do not believe in Buddha.”

“Kneel down then,” commanded the Boxer judge.

While the executioner's blunt sword was making three cuts at his neck, Chang kept on praying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

Then a strange thing happened. When Blind Chang's head rolled on the ground the Boxers suddenly threw their weapons to the ground and fled in terror! "We have killed a good man," they cried. They ran away struck in their conscience, and the fifty Christians escaped unhurt.

The Boxers later refused to let the local Christians bury Chang's body. They had heard a rumor that he would rise from the dead, so they brought oil and forced the believers to incinerate the remains.

Due to the loving sacrifice of 50-year-old Blind Chang, the lives of the fifty Christians were spared. After his death many people who had heard his message now understood what Christ had suffered on the Cross. Also after his death the full scale of daily hardship Chang had endured became known. A teenage boy, who had served as the evangelist's guide on several journeys, recounted how Chang had often met with bitter persecution, especially when going to a new region. He said, "Children were encouraged to pelt him with clods of mud or bricks, curses were hurled after him as the people drove him from their doors. Worst of all the dogs were set upon him; great mongrel, half-starved Chinese dogs. What such attacks must have meant to one blind and unable to defend their onslaughts who can describe! Yet none of these things moved him, nor did he count his life dear to him, for again he would return to the same places hoping to share his wonderful soul-saving, life-giving message, until public opinion turned in his favor and victory came. He had just one message. He preached Jesus to the people for he knew nothing but Christ and Him crucified."

After the Boxer Rebellion ended the Government of Manchuria realized they had al-

lowed the murder of a unique and holy man of God to occur. They erected a stone monument in honor of the courageous evangelist, whose sight had now been fully restored in the presence of Jesus Christ.



Bibliography

- Dugald Christie, *Ten Years in Manchuria: A Story of Medical Mission Work in Moukden* (Edinburgh: J. & R. Parlane, 1894).
- Arthur T. Pierson, *The Miracles of Missions: Modern Marvels in the History of Missionary Enterprise* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1899).
- Rosalind Goforth, *Blind Chang: Missionary Martyr of Manchuria* (Toronto: Evangelical Publishers, n.d., [c.1906]).
- W. P. Bentley, *Illustrious Chinese Christians: Biographical Sketches* (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1906).
- James & Marti Hefley, *China! Christian Martyrs of the 20th Century: an Excerpt from 'By Their Blood'* (Michigan: Mott Media, 1978).
- F. W. S. O'Neill, *The Call of the East: Sketches from the History of the Irish Mission to Manchuria 1869-1919* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1919).

CHINA CHILDREN'S PROJECT

Current Total: 1,240 Sunday School Teachers Trained and Equipped.

Thank you for the generous response to this strategic project to reach China's children for Christ. Each teacher, on average, is expected to teach 100 children and establish them in the Word of God. Teachers attending the training have their travel costs covered, and a set of materials given to them for free. These materials include a children's Bible, teacher's manual, 18 teaching books with visual aids, 15 hours of VCD (video cassette disc) teaching, and 6 CDs of 'Children's Heavenly Songs'. The total cost of \$47 per set includes printing and production, and training expenses.

