

# Shantung Revival

by Bertha Smith

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*The Shantung Revival was a powerful movement of God that transformed churches in China, resulting in a multiplication of church membership and a deeper understanding of the importance of dying to self and exalting Christ.*

**Duration:** 25:48

**Scripture:** Exodus 2:2-3, Matthew 6:33, Acts 7:17-19, Acts 7:23-25, Acts 7:54-56, Acts 7:59-60

**Topics:** "Gods Will", "Surrender"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Stephen from the Bible. Stephen, at the age of forty, felt compelled to visit his brother and the children of Israel. He witnessed an injustice and defended the oppressed, smiting the Egyptians. However, his brethren did not understand that God would use him to deliver them. Despite his own learning and preparation, Stephen realized that the only thing that mattered was God sending him. The preacher emphasizes that it is important to seek God's will and surrender our lives to Him, regardless of our chosen profession. The sermon encourages listeners to ask God where He wants them to serve and to trust in His guidance.

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## Transcript

It is true that I have seen God work in China, but before I saw God work, I saw missionaries work. Missionaries work, calling on the Lord to help them. And friends, there's a difference.

From the seventh chapter of Acts, I read a few verses. You will recall that this is Stephen's only sermon, and he didn't get to finish it. But his sermon, this one unfinished sermon, the only one that we have on record that Stephen ever preached, so pricked the heart of Paul that Paul became the great missionary.

Verses 17 through 19. But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till another king arose which knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtly with the kindred and evil, and treated our fathers so that they cast out their young children to the end that they might not live.

In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months. And you remember, then he left. When he was 40 years old, he made a marvelous surrender to the Lord.

He consecrated himself to God, knowing that God had called him to deliver Israel, to send them back to the land that God had promised their forefathers, in order that they might be the blessing to the whole world. But you remember, Moses went out to work in his own strength with God's help. I'm sure he called on the Lord to help him.

Verse 23. When he was full 40 years old, it came to his heart to visit his brother and the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer long, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptians.

For he supposed his brethren should have understood that God by his hand would deliver them. But they understood not. And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren, why do you so wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Withal, kill me, as thou didst the Egyptians yesterday.

And Moses fled at that seeing, and was a stranger in the land of Midian. When Moses went out consecrated self to do a job for God, and a job that God had called him to do. You remember the record in Exodus states that he looked this way, and he looked that way, and he saw no one.

And when he was just consecrated self, that's the way he looked, this way and that way. He didn't look up. And he thought by the strength of his own right arm, he was to deliver the children of Israel from the Egyptians.

And then he had to flee. He'd ruined himself with the Israelites, with Egypt. He wouldn't do in Egypt anymore.

And the Israelites had not accepted him. And he had to go away to Bible school. And he went away in the desert where there was just one faculty member.

And it took him 40 years to graduate. But after 40 years, when God's call came to him, the Lord said to him, I have seen the affliction of my people, which is in Egypt. I have heard their groaning.

I am come down to deliver them. And the Lord wanted to deliver them 40 years before then. But God has to have some human personality to work through.

It's not that person's work. It's God working through that human personality. And another generation of Israelites had to go on suffering under the Egyptians.

Living in agony of soul. Because Moses was not the man whom God could use. The Lord said, I am come down to deliver them.

Now come and I will send you into Egypt. But Moses had, in 40 years time, completely come to the end of himself. And we read in the history that he was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians.

And Egypt was one of the most civilized nations at that time. He spoke Hebrew that he'd learned at his mother's knee. He spoke Egyptian, certainly.

And after 40 years over in the wilderness, following sheep, perhaps using a hundred words of the local dialect of the desert, he'd lost all of his fluency of speech in the Egyptian language and in the Hebrew language. And he'd lived so completely away from people, a shepherd's life, he just thought he wouldn't

do it all. All of his own learning and preparation he felt were no good now.

But God said, I will send you. And that was the only thing that mattered. God sending him.

And you remember the glorious results of God sending him. When I went out to China 49 years ago, I worked in northeast China, where at that time we had about 50 Southern Baptist missionaries. We had work in eight cities.

We had 60 churches. But do you know, most of us were just consecrated self doing jobs for the Lord and we were doing good jobs. We were working hard.

And of course we knew we had to have a little help from the Lord. So we were calling on the Lord daily to help us. But we were working for the Lord.

But friends, we were not satisfied with the results of our labors. And we were laboring. There was nobody lazy.

We were putting in 15 hours a day and saving every dollar we could from our small salaries to help this boy go to school or to help that woman go to a hospital for an operation. We were consecrated, nothing wrong with our consecration. And we'd given up a good deal to go to China.

But we were just not seeing the results that we thought we ought to see. Those 60 churches had a little handful of church members who were just on fire for the Lord. Everywhere they went they were just bragging on Jesus.

But the most of our church members were there on Sunday, teaching Sunday school classes, doing what they were assigned to do. And the rest of the time they were just interested in making their own living and carrying on their own affairs. And when it was very convenient and they were perfectly sure that no one would think it too strange, they would witness for the Lord.

Well, we wanted every church to be like that little handful of men and women that were just on fire, talking about the Lord every time, everywhere they went. We wanted every city in China to hear of our Savior, every village, every street, and every home. And we knew we would have to depend on the church members to do that kind of witnessing.

And they were not doing it. We began to pray for the Lord to send a revival. And we prayed, and we prayed, and we prayed.

And we had very special meetings. And in the city where I work, once a month we had an all-day prayer meeting, first day of every month, to pray for the Lord to revive those churches. After we'd been praying about seven years, four years we'd been praying the first day of every month.

Instead of seeing that glorious revival come, as we had really expected, we were suddenly torn away from our work by one of the wars when the American consul sent a telegram asking all Americans to proceed to the coast at once. Those who were nearest the port of Chifu went there. Those who were nearest the port of Qingdao went down to Qingdao.

And there we were, packed up in cities where the anti-communist feeling was so strong we didn't get--I mean the anti-American feeling, which was nothing but communism at that time, though they didn't call it that. That anti-American feeling was so strong we couldn't get out in the cities where we were not known.

And we were just shut up with each other and the Lord.

And we began to meet every morning after breakfast at eight o'clock to pray for the Lord to be strength to our Chinese Christians so they would stand if persecution should come to them. And it wasn't long till we were praying, not for an hour, but till 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock, and even 12 o'clock, and no one was remembering to pray for the Chinese whom we'd left behind. We were all praying for ourselves.

We were asking the Lord to teach us what he had in mind, to teach us in permitting us to be torn from the work that we loved more than we loved our own lives and packed up down in the port of Chifu. Now, friends, it's kind of dangerous to ask the Lord to do something for you if you aren't ready for him to do it. You might find him doing it, and that's just what we found.

He began to show us a lot of wrong attitudes that we had, a lot of pride in our work, and in some cases a lack of appreciation for the other missionary, and a lack of appreciation for some of the Chinese workers. And the Lord just brought us down low before him, just getting our hearts cleaned out, getting our sins forgiven up to date. The first day, we stayed five months down in Chifu, and when we went back, we just went back teaching and preaching the tragedy of sin in the life of a Christian.

Our Chinese pastors began to see all kinds of attitudes they had that didn't please the Lord, and they began to make confessions to church members. And then from the pastors, it spread to church leaders, preachers, and Sunday school teachers, and then to lay members. And friends, for two years, churches all over Shandong province were just getting sin out of their hearts.

Some of them had to go back and straighten up all kinds of old debts. Some of them had to go back and pay back tithe. They'd been taking a little money to the church, but keeping part of the Lord's tithe back to use themselves.

And they had to go sell land, some of them, pay it up. They were just getting sin out of their hearts because it was two years just teaching and preaching God's holy standard for human beings and man's sin. And then, you know, after about two years of dealing with S-I-N-S, sins, we got down to the root of S-I-N, and that's us ourselves.

Friends, that's what we are. And the Lord was ready to send that glory surviving, but people had to realize the exceeding sinfulness of what they were themselves. And we had to come to realize what Paul meant when he said, I am, present tense, crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live. Now, Paul had been saved over 20 years when he wrote that. I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live. But I'm not the one who's living. It's not I. Christ is living in me.

And friends, when we came to the point of dying to self, the Holy Spirit had been in our hearts since the day we were saved and been so grieved because most of the time we were on the throne of our hearts instead of Christ being on the throne. High moments, we got ourselves down and Christ up, but most of the time it was this big I serving the Lord. We didn't realize that, of course.

We didn't know any better. That was the reason the Lord was so patient with us. And he had blessed us.

He didn't have anybody else there to bless. We had established those 60 churches. He didn't have anybody else to work through, and he had to do the best he could through us.

But we were not satisfied with those churches, and certainly the Lord was not. We couldn't call them New Testament churches. And we had a few New Testament church members in those churches.

But friends, you know, when we got to the point where we found that we are to live dead to self and so completely dethrone self and enthrone Christ in our hearts that the Holy Spirit can just take over. And when he does, he'll control this old self, and he'll so magnify Christ and that it will not be us living. It will not be our working for the Lord.

It'll be Christ just expressing himself through our personalities, and it'll all be his work. And friends, when we were brought down low enough before the Lord to really agree with the Lord that when we were saved, God saw it that we died, and we just assented to that death. And in the name of the Lord just refused ourselves and took death for self by faith and exalted Christ, the Holy Spirit was no longer grieved in our hearts, and he couldn't take over.

And then those experiences were shared with Chinese. And friends, we saw one of the greatest revivings in church history. We saw whole church members on fire, church after church and church after church.

We discovered a great many of those church members had never been born of the Spirit. They'd been convinced of the truth of Christianity in their minds, and they'd accepted it. They'd never had a miracle take place in their hearts.

The living Lord had never come into their hearts. And when many of them saw their state, they came to the Lord and came to the foot of the cross and entered into Christ's death and let the living Lord come into their hearts, and they were born of the Spirit. But we had a great many others who didn't want to be saved if it meant straighten up your past as those other people were doing.

If it was going to cost that much to be saved, they just wouldn't be Christians, and they just left the church. And then we had another group who would neither repent, neither would they leave. What are you going to do with people like that? Well, we'd never been able to do anything with them up to that time.

But after people got themselves dethroned and Christ enthroned in their hearts, they had more sympathy for Christ, the head of the church, than they did for their own friends and neighbors. And at one business session of our big city church up in Huangshan, which had over a thousand members, and somewhere up in the teens of hundreds, they opened the back door and let out 300 at one business session. Did you ever hear of a Baptist church doing anything like that? Well, did you ever hear of a Christian church doing anything like that? Or a Methodist? Big city church down the port of Qingdao let out 350 at one business session.

And friends, we then had churches composed of born-again people. It was the exceeding abundance beyond anything that we had ever known to ask those years back there when we were meeting the first day of every month, laying down all of our work and waiting before the Lord, asking him to send reviving. We didn't know to ask him to do anything like that.

Prayer meetings were the most glorious experiences. For one thing, everybody just automatically began to get on their knees and pray. In churches where you have brick floors, and all out through the country, churches didn't have brick floors.

They had kind of churches and floors that people lived in. If well-to-do people had brick houses, they had a brick church which made floors like their home. If they had mud houses, they had mud churches and had dirt floors.

Well, hard dirt doesn't give a bit more than brick when you kneel on it. But you know, those people just went down on their knees before the Lord, and nobody told them to. And now in the Bible, people either stand or kneel when they pray.

We stand in reverence for God. We're not worthy to sit in His presence. We stand.

We kneel in humility before God. Now, I just don't know what this Baptist and Presbyterian sitting on the bench means. I don't know how to sing, folks.

When I was a child, I went to the Methodist church one Sunday, and the Baptist's ex, because we didn't have a full-time pastor, and all those Methodist people got on their knees to pray. I was in the Methodist church some time ago, and they all sat on the bench and bowed their heads, neither showing reverence for God nor humility on their part. And I said, evidently, these people have fallen to Baptists.

Well, you know, those people out there, just without asking anybody, everybody just went down on their knees to pray. And they prayed for hours sometimes, and they prayed. And friends, the whole church membership was just going out after people, just going after people.

And our church membership within a period of just a few years, two or three years, multiplied ten times. Now, tell you, it wasn't so easy to get in either. All they always had had a study period before that.

But you know, you don't study yourself into the kingdom of God. You study it in lightening mind, but you got to die to yourself and enter into Christ's death and let the Holy Spirit come in. That's the miracle.

After that, they knew the evidences of a live person. And those church deacons and church committees that listened to people's testimonies and presented them to the church to testify if they thought they were ready to be baptized, knew the difference in a live person spiritually and a dead person spiritually, because the Holy Spirit was filling them. Our pastors were just made over.

Sometimes our seminary missionary professors, with all of their degrees and their doctorates, when they did get a chance to hear a Chinese preach, which wasn't often, they were always out preaching themselves. But when they did hear one of those uneducated Chinese pastors preach, they said they just sat in amazement at the rich truth those pastors are brought out from God's Word. They were taught by the Holy Spirit.

Revived churches produced Christian workers. Our young people, educated young people, just didn't want to preach. They said, we can't afford to preach for eight dollars a month.

We want to get married. We want to have families and we want our children properly fed and educated. We'll make our own living at something else, but we'll preach on Sunday.

We'll give all of our spare time to preaching. Well, of course, every saved person ought to do that. But we had to have full-time preachers to pastor those churches and to go from village to village and preach the gospel and gather up the saved and organize them into churches and teach them.

And our seminary from 60 churches had come down to three and a half students, as nearly as our churches over here are now. We had one man half-time and we called it three and a half students. Didn't have a half man.

Now, we didn't actually open classes with three and a half students, but we had a class go out the first week in July. Not one new applicant for the three and a half students for the autumn. But you know, before time for the seminary to open in the autumn, the Holy Spirit had begun to work in the hearts of church members.

And it began to work in the hearts of those young people. And those dear young people who knew they were saved began to realize that it would be never any of their business or concern in the future what they did in life. Whether they preached, whether they were lawyers, doctors, teachers, farmers, preachers, that was none of their concern if they were saved.

If they were saved, they belonged to the Lord. Mine got in soon. And all they had to do with it is just to find out, Lord, what do you want me to do in life? Where do you want to put this little temple or this little tree that you live in? Well, that's all the Lord's affair.

And then whatever happens to us, that's none of our concern. That's all the Lord's affair. We don't have to live.

Stephen didn't have to live very long. But look what he did while he did live. And those young people began to see that.

And friends, when they saw it, they began to see their own blindness in choosing what they would do for the Lord. This and that and the other. And they began to say, oh, let me go to the seminary.

Let me go to the seminary. I must learn the Word of God. I must preach His Word.

Well, before that next autumn opened, we had maybe 15 or 20 that first autumn. I was on federal that year. I don't remember the exact number.

Two or three, I think. We had a seminary. But after that, as many people were over at the seminary, everybody at the seminary would choose from those 60 churches, the waiting list, those who'd been waiting the longest and who were the best equipped for preparation and who seemed the clearest in their call to preach.

After the Communists took over, there were still young people wanting to go to the seminary. Without churches produced Christian workers. I'm sure you'll agree with me when I say there's never been a time in history when it was so necessary for a regarding to come to churches as it is today in our own land.

The world is going on lost. All these churches over here going to church, going home. Maybe a lot of them are consecrated self and a lot of them haven't even reached that point.

And the world going on lost. Are you consecrated self? Or can you say that you're dead self? Now God has seen you dead since you entered into his death when you were saved. That's the only reason he could ever have anything to do with you.

He couldn't have anything to do with that old sinful human nature. But he's counted you dead in his son since the day you were born of his spirit. Have you counted yourself dead? Have you agreed to the Lord

that you're dead? Can you say to him it's not my working for you.

It's my taking that place in death to self. So completely dethroning self and enthroning Christ that the Holy Spirit who's grieved in my heart can just take over ungrieved. And he can just so magnify Christ in my heart that he'll be my guide.

He'll send me just where he wants me. He'll be my strength for any task that he wants me to do. He'll be my patience to live in any kind of situation.

He'll be my long suffering. We can't even take short suffering. He'll be my faith.

He'll be faith in me for anything that he wants me to do. He'll produce faith in me. Now I ask again, are you consecrated self? Or are you dead self through whom the Lord can do his work as he chooses?

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