

The Jesus Family in Communist China - Part 5

by Dr. D. Vaughan Rees

The speaker shares his experiences of medical work in Communist China, highlighting the challenges and triumphs of sharing the Gospel and living the Gospel in a hostile environment.

Scripture: Psalm 147:3, Proverbs 3:5, Matthew 19:26, Philippians 4:6, James 5:14

Topics: "Medical Missions", "Faith Healing"

Description

Dr. D. Vaughan Rees preaches about the challenges and triumphs of medical missionary work in MaChuang, highlighting instances of malpractice, struggles with Communist authorities, and the importance of faith in healing. The sermon delves into the impact of Christianity on patients and medical practices, showcasing the power of prayer in transforming lives and communities amidst adversity and danger.

Transcript

Medical Work in MaChuang As I mentioned earlier, it was the invitation of the Ye-Su Chia-ting to go and see the wounded that had been left with them after the fighting that first brought me to MaChuang. The first case I saw was a Communist soldier, who had had his foot shattered some time before. It had been amputated by a Communist army doctor. The bone was sticking through, covered only by a pinch skin-graft placed directly on the granulating bone. Such a thing should never have been done.

A stump so formed is so tender that it cannot be used. We would call it malpractice. I had to reoperate to give him a usable stump. This was one of the cases which was blindfolded in order that my presence might not be known to the Communists. Later the soldier said he knew all the time that a foreigner was operating on him. We wondered why he had not reported to his authorities. The reason was that he had given his heart to Christ. Later he applied for a pension. The officer who was sent to interview him reviled him for "eatng" a foreign religion.

He answered, much to our Surprise, "But isn't what you have eaten a foreign religion, p90 belonging to Marx and Lenin?" Apparently nonplussed by his reply, all the officer said was, "You can't beat these Christians in argument." The surgeon who had performed the operation was entirely without principle, although quite up to standard in his technique. Western medicine will never last among the Communists, for the sufficient reason that it needs to rest on a firmer basis than simple technique.

Dr. Bessie Chen was taken by the Communists and was held by them for over a year. Her chief duty was to teach the ward attendants to operate on hernia. Let me explain that simply to diagnose a hernia, apart altogether from the operation, is a difficult matter, fraught with all sorts of pitfalls even to an experienced surgeon. For an untrained man to attempt it spells disaster, and such Dr. Bessie found to be the case. The wounds of many of the cases were still unhealed after a year.

She struggled month after month to get away, and only succeeded when she stated that she was suffering from appendicitis. She wanted me to operate on her. The wards in the Communist hospital, Dr. Bessie said, were so dirty that she herself took a broom to sweep them. The superintendent came in at that moment and stopped her, saying that the servants would not respect her, if they saw her sweeping. "Quite simply I said to him, 'But I thought we were all equal!'" Dr. Bessie told me.

During the summer of 1949 a measles epidemic raged throughout the MaChuang area, and the mortality, so the Communists said, was up to 80 per cent. Our children were involved through a Communist child inadvertently admitted to the clinic. Sixty-three of our little p91 ones took measles. Two died, one with the dreaded broncho-pneumonia. A mortality of 3 per cent was astounding news to the Reds. So impressed were they that they held a meeting in the chapel, and several hundred of them came with pencil and paper to find out how it was done.

The chairman was a Communist. The questions asked were most revealing, for example, "How do you make the nurses take an interest in their work and love the children?", "How do you stop the nurses from stealing the drugs?" To questions like these practically the same answer was given, "If they have the Lord Jesus in their hearts, then all these questions are solved." There were medical questions also but it was easy to see that the chairman had sensed something deeper. At the end of the meeting, which lasted about three hours, he summed up by saying, "Comrades, I see that unless we believe this religious superstition, we will not be able to manage a children's creche."

We felt that the Communists, or some of them, were making shipwreck on a totally unsuspected rock. Morality, integrity and God they had ignored or denied, and they were being destroyed. This is a true interpretation of the passage, "Evil shall slay the wicked." How pointed and exact the Bible is! Such things are recognised, when experience has proved that it is so, and it is then too late to change. How many young people are travelling this irrevocable road! If what I saw and heard in Shantung is any criterion, Communist public services are breaking down, not because there is any lack of brains, but simply for lack of integrity.

Ruthless dictatorship seems to hold things together for a time, but the descent to the pit is sure, even if slow as p92 measured by our life span. Eventually savagery supervenes. Science has yet to prove that savage races were not at one time more cultured than they are now and have "devolved." Communist soldiers and officers, who visited MaChuang clinic while I was there, were different from the rank and file of Chinese patients. So many of their troubles took on a nervous trend.

One could see there was strain in their lives. This was admitted by many to whom I put the question directly. Hatred and malice are prime causes of digestive upsets. Physiologists are emphasizing this in their search for the causes of peptic ulcer of the stomach and duodenum. Twenty or thirty years ago the cause was sought in infection, the so-called "septic focus"; the search is now shifting to the emotions. This was our experience in MaChuang. These Communist patients were mostly living lives of fear and hatred due to the constant spying on one another.

Among them there was a very high percentage of symptoms of gastric and duodenal ulcer. I saw and operated on many cases of ruptured acute ulcer, a dangerous procedure which was later abandoned. At any time a death might be laid at our door by these unstable people, not only unstable but ultra-suspicious. Doing medical work among them is a dangerous occupation. Suicide was terribly common, and little was thought of it. They quite openly admitted how hopeless and meaningless life was to them.

What they called "brain washing" had mystified and confused them, and changed all life's values. What a devilish thing is being done to the young life of China! It is so difficult to get at the back of it all. A private conversation leaves one confused, groping and uncomprehending, p93 and further interviews only make the gloom deeper. There is a true Light that "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." One cannot help feeling that this is what is at stake. All the terms we use they use also, but with a different value and interpretation.

But this is not all; the perversion and subversion go much deeper. They value truth, or say they do, but it is impossible to tell them the truth. Some Russians asked a friend of mine how many Republicans Truman killed, when he became President. Surprised, my friend answered, "None." "What's the use of further talk?" said the Russians. "This man can't tell the truth." What an awful nemesis it is that makes a mind believe a lie! The gold of words is extracted, and base metal put into circulation as gold.

It seems that they are treating modern science, including medicine, in the same way. I operated on a case, who told me his appendix had been removed, but the appendix was still there, and I am convinced that nothing had been done but the skin incision. Another case had a large scar, and in it a very painful hernia. On operating I found the bowel in among the abdominal muscles. No apparent effort had been made to restore the tissues to their normal relationships. Chiang-kai-shek's government may have been corrupt, but it had made surprising progress in putting its medical services straight, and eliminating such malpractices as these.

Communism seems to encourage them. A cleaner in the operating theatre, after seeing one or two Operations, became a "doctor" in the army on the strength of this. Looking for bullets he twice cut through the main p94 artery of the thigh, and the victims bled to death. Words are inadequate to describe the callousness and carelessness of the men who take this work upon them, and their outrageous confidence and colossal vanity. Peculiarly they trusted us, and Communist soldiers and officers flocked to us and submitted to the most serious surgical procedures at our hands.

A few successful cases at the beginning and I had their entire confidence. As always, an extreme in one direction soon has its resultant extreme in the other; their confidence and reverence became embarrassing. We had of course to deal with the blind and did many cataracts. A blind old lady appeared, a cataract in each eye. The Communist doctor said that he had prepared the theatre for a demonstration. When I went in I found that a stage had been set up, occupied by what appeared to be a very partisan football crowd.

There was to be a kind of village trial, and it was I who was to be tried! For the Communist said that he would do one eye and I would do the other. He had already told the crowd that he had 90 per cent success with his cataract operations. He was obviously out to show me up. As was always the case in a Communist setting, the situation could become dangerous. I could not withdraw and so I began the operation. I was nervous, and it was not before long I was in difficulties. The unfriendly anti-foreign

onlookers sniggered and nudged one another.

A little more of this and I would have panicked. But at this juncture I paused, dropped everything, prayed and regained my composure. The operation then proceeded smoothly to a satisfactory conclusion; so satisfactory was it that the Communist was in p95 a quandary. I could imagine what was passing in his mind; weighing up the chances, he decided not to take the risk. "Please go on and do the other eye," he said. There were Christians in the crowd and they told me how they had been praying for me.

We had a great victory and the fickle Communist onlookers were now all on my side. I was operating on a cancer of the lip in an old man. The operation was being done under local anaesthesia and there was much to be done; the patient was suffering some pain. Helen Tso took the old man's hand. "Remember," she said, "it is the Lord who suffers too. He bore our sickness and carried our infirmities." The old man was immediately silent, and bore all the rest of the operation without a murmur.

Mr. Ching preached about this old man that night, and the sermon touched the patient very closely for he was there on a stretcher. Mr. Ching said, "The further one travels on the way of life, and the nearer one approaches Him who is Life, the more one knows that miracles and outward manifestations are dangerous. Enter into the heart of our Lord's suffering. The way there is not the way of freedom from bodily infirmity and pain." The local stationmaster brought his little girl, who had bone disease of the leg.

An operation was necessary. I was surprised therefore, when he said he could not wait for the operation, but made immediate preparations to return to his work. This is not at all like a Chinese parent. "I cannot stay," he said, "we now have twenty-four-hour shifts, and I am doing the work that three men formerly did." "Why don't you go on strike?" I said facetiously. p96 He changed colour, drew me aside and glancing over his shoulder said, "We dare not mention that word now."

The practice of midwifery is an ever-present source of care, thought, and work to a doctor in China. Both Dr. Bessie and Helen are most efficient obstetricians. I was only called in when the situation was beyond their strength. They constantly had hair-raising cases, for China's most degrading superstitions are concerned with childbirth. Is it possible to make it more agonizing than it is to the mother? Just before I left MaChuang, Dr. Bessie came to me for advice. An old lady was accused by the whole countryside of being with child by a demon and she believed it herself.

How was she to convince her that it was not so? I said to her, "That should be easy, surely." "Not so easy as you think. Helen and I have spent hours trying to convince her. We have already been to her home three times and are now going again." This is a black picture, and but one superstition in many. Can legislation deal with-this? It took Wesley's preaching to shift witchcraft out of Cornwall; that is an easily proved historic fact. Two of our children died of measles during the great measles epidemic which struck North China.

I was standing beside the cot of one of these little ones, while it was in extremis. We had done all we could. Mr. Ching came and stood beside me and began to pray for the child. "Now," I thought, "we will see a miracle." For Mr. Ching's early ministry had been born in miracle. But as he was praying the little one died. When he heard that its breathing had ceased, he put his hand on my shoulder, and said, "Dear brother, three or p97 four years ago that wouldn't have happened to me.

If I had prayed for that child then, it would have lived. But things have changed since then, and I would not have it otherwise. Do you know that power can be a dangerous thing, even power from God? It can fill one

with spiritual pride. It is not power that I choose but a deeper death. Oh, that the power of Calvary might be seen in me!" That night he preached to about a thousand Christian Chinese on such Biblical characters as Balaam, Samson, and Saul, the king of Israel. "Were their lives in keeping with the power they had?"

TWO ASPECTS OF MEDICAL MISSIONARY WORK To be a Medical Missionary is not the easiest form of service on the mission field, and sometimes great determination is needed not only to win people's confidence but sometimes also to escape disaster. To do a cataract operation in a Tibetan tent is not easy, but it has been done. So also goitres were removed in an adapted Tibetan hay-loft, and eye operations were done on a flat roof. In this latter place we were shot at, while operating, as there was a blood feud on -- so much for those who would have us believe in "the peace-loving Buddhists of Tibet!"

We found as we travelled that there was a blood feud on in nearly every encampment and village -- thirty-two lives had already been lost in the one mentioned. We all, including the patient, tumbled down the notched treetrunk, which served as a stairway. Having accomplished this much, I thought that as there was an abdominal operation necessary in another village, we might do it without undue risk. The advantages were p98 impressive; it meant an introduction into the village and an opportunity to preach and live the Gospel, for we would be there for several days.

I have used the phrase "live the Gospel"; that is if all went well. But what does one do, if things go wrong, and this operation did go wrong -- the patient died suddenly under the anaesthetic. The village was at an altitude of over ten thousand feet and I used chloroform. The advantage of chloroform is that it is less bulky than ether or any other anaesthetic, but we reckoned without the altitude and paucity of oxygen supply. Under ordinary circumstances there is four times less margin of error than with ether, so we took all the precautions possible.

I did not have a trained anaesthetist of course, so Edwin Carlson of the Christian and Missionary Alliance volunteered. When I was last in the United States, Edwin, Carol his wife and I recapitulated that dreadful experience of more than twenty years ago in the fastnesses of Tibet. Like the broken soldier and the village preacher we, "Wept o'er our wounds and tales of sorrow done." Edwin was the anaesthetist, my wife was my assistant at the operation. All went well, and I was preparing to finish, when Edwin gasped.

"The patient has stopped breathing." All I could do was of no avail; the patient was dead. We were plunged into the situation we most dreaded, the worst we could have anticipated in our most pessimistic and fearful moments. There were many aspects to the danger we were in. We had broken several Tibetan superstitions, for the least of which only death could atone. Now twenty years after I asked Edwin what had given him strength, so that for hours he held off that crowd of p99 avenging Tibetans.

It was not only me they wanted; they were intent on murdering us all, including little Bobbie of six summers, Carlson's son. The leaden hours passed, and eventually so did the danger. How we lived those hours again, and I could see the strain of it all still written on Edwin's face as we talked. Only in Heaven will we know what preaching the Gospel in heathen lands has cost in "blood, sweat and tears." Praise God there is another side to this grim picture and so now I would like to mention some of the compensations: I want to point out how prayer changes things in a clinic.

Formerly, when I was in China, with extreme fatigue and distaste I would see clinics of over a hundred patients in a morning. How I longed to give up medical work. Fruitless toil it seemed to be, with all the valuable and lasting work left to the hospital evangelist and all the grind to me! I had neither the time nor inclination to see the good, if any, I was doing. Then for about four years in Hong Kong I restricted the

number of patients at a clinic to about fifty, never more.

So the work of dealing with spiritual problems was not left to the hospital evangelist. A revolution had taken place not only in the patient's attitude but also in mine; I no longer wanted to give up; discouragement became a thing of the past. Let me go into further detail as to the way in which it works. Among the patients I saw one day was a countryman who lives in a village very near the Chinese border. When one prays with patients they will become interesting and lovable human beings, each with problems, which they do not hide, when they find the doctor looks upon them as p100 something more than a test-tube with a chemical problem to solve.

I particularly noted this countryman because of the vivid description he gave of his agony (he had peptic ulcer) and his certainty that death was only just round the corner. He had lost much weight, and life was a burden. Everything had been tried, including necromancers,witch-doctors and all the Government hospitals, including the Queen Mary Hospital in which he had been an in-patient (this impressed me, because of the place the Queen Mary holds in the affection and confidence of the Hong Kong Chinese).

What could I do for him that had not already been done, for he had been through some of the most august medical hands in the Colony? But I prayed with and for him. He said he did not understand what prayer signified. I explained what it meant and to whom we were praying. (I usually stress, "If ye ask anything in My Name . . .") In two days my countryman came back and said he was well. This is a commonplace in the remissions of peptic ulceration and so I comforted him and gave him further medicine with prayer and advice, not at all believing that it was as he said.

Toward the end of the week he was back again and this time he was adamant -- he would take no more medicine. This incident happened three years ago and only once has he come back for medical advice; not infrequently I have seen him casually and on one occasion I have preached in the chapel he has set up in his village. For he went home to his village, and his enthusiastic testimony was sufficient to make all his friends and relatives burn their idols. They all turned to the Lord and believed. p101 The continuation of the story is that there is now a well-attended church in the village, and Lutheran World Service is building a clinic there right next to the Chinese border, which is the Bamboo Curtain.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/dr-d-vaughan-rees/the-jesus-family-in-communist-china-part-5/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net