

Students of Conviction - Is God Real to You?

by Gladys Aylward

Gladys Aylward challenges listeners to prove the reality of God through their convictions and actions, inspired by the bravery of Chinese students facing persecution.

Duration: 20:14

Scripture: Psalm 119:105, Matthew 10:32-33, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Romans 1:16, Ephesians 6:10-11, Philippians 1:27, 2 Timothy 1:7, Hebrews 11:1, 1 Peter 3:15

Topics: "Conviction", "Faith"

Description

Gladys Aylward emphasizes the reality of God and the truth of the Bible through the story of students in China facing persecution. She recounts how 500 students were pressured to conform to the government, yet 200 stood firm in their faith, demonstrating courage and conviction. Aylward highlights the testimony of a young girl who, despite intimidation, boldly declared her faith in Jesus Christ, affirming that she knows God is real and the Bible is true. The sermon challenges listeners to reflect on their own convictions and the necessity of proving their faith in a world that often opposes it. Ultimately, Aylward calls for courage to stand for God and share the truth of His word.

Transcript

For some of us, there have been given great joys, but also great heartaches. And there was a time when some of us wondered how we would be able to stand on some of the testings and the trials that God was putting us through. But I wonder how many of us have really come down to rock bottom with Jesus Christ, and been able to prove that he and he alone can hold and does hold.

When the Red authorities came in to take over China, some of us were in a very large university city in the west, and in that particular city there were quite a number of universities, but in one section of one of those universities there were 500 students. And to each one of those students, the life in the university represented learning, a future, a hope. They were there for the same purpose as our young people go to our universities here in these lands of yours.

And to each one of those students, there were handed out by the authorities a large form, much larger than this piece of paper. On it there were rows and rows of questions. I could tell you those questions if I wanted to, I know them.

But the student has to sit down and answer them all. Now they're very confusing, some of them are embarrassing, and many of them the student does not know the answer. But he's got to find an answer, that's what he's there for.

And so as you go down and down and down, perspiring and worrying, you can almost miss a little row of words right along the bottom of the form. So small, looking so unimportant, but the most important question of all. And as near as I can give it to you back from Chinese into English, this is what it says.

And at this moment, right now, what position are you in? If for, put a circle. If against, put a cross. Now you're not asked, are you a Christian, the most clever of that, or a stupid maybe.

No, what position means just what manner are your thoughts and your heart is. If for, is for the government. And to you who have had no indoctrination, this may need just a little explaining.

I suppose to you it would be quite easy, oh put your little dot. Why, I didn't put that government into power, and I may not agree with it, but I can't help it being there. And after all, God who is God must have allowed them to get that power.

So I suppose I'd better just put my little dot and be full. Now friends, be very careful with your thoughts. Do you really believe it's as easy as that? Do you believe in men who deny God? You're gonna stand for men who say Christ never lived.

You're gonna stand for men who everything they touch flows with blood, cruel and horrible. Are you? Gonna put a dot? You're not courageous enough to put your cross, go outside them and defy them. Friend, it takes an awful lot of courage.

They're only students, remember. Of all those 500 students, every single one had begun their educational life in a Christian school. In the old days there were no options.

If they had ever been sick, then they had been attended to in a Christian hospital, because in the same way in the old days there were no other kind of hospitals, only those opened and kept by the missionary. But that doesn't mean to say they were all Christian. When the authorities took in the papers and counted them, there were 300 circles or little dots.

There were 200 crosses. 200 boys and girls in their late teens or early twenties had dared to defy the government. Well, we'll see.

And so the authorities, they called their circleites, as we call them together, and in a large place on the university campus they gave them a talk. They gave to those students all the power necessary except take life. That means they weren't to kill anyone.

But they had got within the next six weeks to pull those Christians over onto their front. And so for the next six weeks, the people outside watched. Nasty little teasing, horrid little tricks, all those things that do happen when young people are filled with fear.

And then the forms were handed out again. And this time when they were taken and counted, the authorities, from whom we know all this, discovered there were fewer circles, there were more crosses. And so they said, well, now how on earth did they manage that? Here we gave them all the power possible.

They could do exactly what they liked except kill them. But they hadn't managed to pull one over into our circle. But those on the side of the cross have managed to pull some of our people into their plan and purpose.

And so they set out to find out how this had been done. And they discovered that if you had gone at, we'll say, eight o'clock in the morning across that very lovely university campus, you would have found groups of boys and girls, these students with their Bibles under their arms and perhaps a packet of books in the other hand, making their way to someplace where behind a lecture hall door, or down a passage, or in some corridor, of a little group, met. They read from this the word of God, and they prayed, and they poured out their hearts to the great God whom they worshipped.

Another awful day was going to begin, and they would fail this God whom they loved, and whom they knew loved them, unless he poured out help and strength and courage to them. Well, all went well for two or three days, and then the other side found us, and they appeared behind the lecture hall door and down the corridor. And so there was only pandemonium.

There could be no Bible reading and no prayer. And so the Christian students decided to go at six. And again, all went well for a little while until the other side went, and so the Christian students decided to go at six.

And again, two days went by, and the other side went and broke up their little groups and prayer meetings, and so they went at five. And by the end of that sixth week, the authorities themselves discovered that many of those boys and girls were spending two, two and a half, three, and at the most four hours a night for sleep. That at all costs, they had an hour with God before the day began.

So the authorities said, oh well, that soon settles. Well, if it's this Bible reading and praying business, we'll soon settle that. Divide them up.

Separate them. And so out into that very lovely university campus, there were sent one Christian student accompanied by ten communist students. And for the next three months, all contact with the outside world from that one little Christian had got to be made with those ten of us who were against him or her in every way and on every point.

And to those of us who watched, we nearly broke our hearts. It was so unfair. It was so cruel that ten, they could take it in turns to eat, to sleep, and to study.

And the little Christian was only one. And we pleaded with the Lord to let them free, or to some way comfort and help. We were not allowed to speak to them or even to see them.

And then there came a day when the authorities did not again hand out forms. But when some of us found ourselves lining the city streets, and a few of us found that we had very important places, and we were stood all along what was once a market square, which had now been turned into an execution ground. And our hearts just failed us.

And we said, oh Lord, oh but perhaps it isn't what we think. And then we awoke to discover that standing in a long line, all down the middle of the market square, were these 200-odd boys and girls. And they're there not to put a name, a sign, or a name on a piece of paper.

They're to answer in person. Over on the other side of the market square was a man with a paper, the list of their names. Why the first name on that list happened to be the name of a girl I do not know.

A pretty shy little thing, or I could tell you all about it if I wanted to, born in one of those lovely courtyards up in Peking, come at the end of Five Big Bronx, who'd all of course gone to school. And little Cestra wanted to go to school too. And the only school around was a Christian school.

And so in the Christian school she had found Jesus Christ, and drawn in one by one the Five Big Bronx, and then mother, and then father, and then the servant, even to the tradesman who'd come to the back door. A lovely, shy little thing, always away in the back somewhere, never quarrelling or arguing. One of those rather dividend, pretty little things.

Seventeen years old. Zhang Huaiyong said, folks, answer in person. What position are you now in? She was aware long down, almost at the end of that line.

And as we watched, we could see this rather slim little thing coming very calmly and quietly up past all of her fellow students. And we said, oh Lord, it's so unfair. She's so small and so weak.

Why didn't you choose someone bigger, and better, and more capable? But he evidently hadn't. And before long here she was, standing up all alone, facing thousands of people. Because for these sorts of things in China, a household has to send at least one representative.

And for the moment, it looked as if she was swayed. Perhaps she's going to cry. Perhaps she's going to faint, or give in.

It's just too much for her simple little hat. But oh no, in just two minutes, with a little toss of her head, she had absolutely command of the situation. And this is exactly what she said.

Sir, when I went for my three-month indoctrination, I thought Jesus Christ was real. I thought this book was true. Sir, I returned from my three-month indoctrination.

I know Jesus Christ is real. I know this book is true. And calmly putting the Bible under her arm, down she got, and walked slowly, calmly back into her place in the Lord.

One by one by one, each in their own separate and different way, they took their sins, and friends, they died. Right there. Tonight, that they died doesn't matter to you.

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How they died is besides the point to you. The challenge is, do you believe your God is real? Do you believe this Bible is true? Then friend, you've got to prove it to someone. Away with all your nonsense, all your nervous ideas, all your little plans and organising to keep you tied up, all the conventions that you're afraid to break, all the habits that you've got eaten.

I believe my God is real. I believe this book is true. And dear friend, I pray that to every single one of you tonight, that little girl will not have died in vain, that the testimony from a Chinese student in the Sichuan University might ring over this earth for truth and freedom.

That you might have courage to stand where God puts you for the purpose that he asks. That somebody might know that God is real, and the word of God is true.

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