

Evil Spirits Defeated and Cast Out in Honan

by Jonathan Goforth

The sermon recounts powerful instances of confession and deliverance that led to a significant movement of the Holy Spirit in Kaifeng and Kwangchow, resulting in many lives transformed and a growing church community.

Scripture: Matthew 18:15, Mark 16:17, Acts 3:19, James 5:16, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Revival Ministry"

Description

Jonathan Goforth shares powerful testimonies of how God's work was hindered by unresolved conflicts and sins among believers in Kaifeng, leading to a lack of spiritual movement. However, when these hindrances were confessed and removed, the Holy Spirit broke through with convicting power, resulting in many conversions and a deep impact on both Christians and non-Christians. Goforth also recounts the inspiring story of Mr. Argento's sacrificial ministry in Kwangchow, where despite facing severe persecution, he prayed fervently for the salvation of his people, leading to the growth of a vibrant church. Additionally, Goforth describes the remarkable transformation of individuals, including a former prize-fighter turned preacher and a demon-possessed man who found freedom through the power of Jesus' name.

Transcript

I was asked to hold meetings at Kaifeng on two different occasions. The first time I was faced with some unaccountable hindrance right up till the last day of the services. Different ones were brought under conviction, but there was nothing like the free movement of the Spirit which I had seen in Manchuria and at Changteh. During the final meeting, though, one of the medical assistants, a Mr. Kao, cried out to a colleague, "God is being held up here because of us. We are at enmity with each other and every one knows it. Let us get rid of this hindrance." The other immediately stood up and confessed his part in the quarrel. Whereupon the whole audience broke down. There were a large number of outsiders present that evening, and they especially seemed to be affected. I went around amongst them and heard many yielding outright and crying for mercy.

On the occasion of my second visit to Kaifeng the meetings were conducted especially for the students of Mr. Salee's school. There were about 140 students in the school, of whom perhaps 20 per cent were Christians. During the eight days that I was with the boys no real movement became evident. As a matter of fact, they did not have a fair chance. Japan had just brought in her "Twentyone Demands," and naturally every one was wrought up to the highest pitch. The day on which our meetings opened a big

public gathering was held in the city, the students, as usual, being very much in evidence. Speakers were chosen, who denounced the Japanese in the most violent terms and insisted that steps should be taken to wipe out this national disgrace. A number of students from the Government schools, both male and female, let out their own blood and inscribed vows of undying hatred against Japan.

On the fourth day of the meetings a note was sent to Mr. Salee's students from the girls of one of the Government schools in the city. The note ran something like this: "We thought you were men, and that you would naturally take the lead in the defence of your country. But we see now that we were mistaken. You're just a bunch of 'sissies'. We're so disgusted with you that we've decided to send you some girls' clothes to put on." The boys were so aroused that they stationed guards at the gate to ward off any who would approach with suspicious looking bundles. One can understand, therefore, how the boys were not exactly in a receptive mood for the message which I had come to deliver to them. In fact, Mr. Salee had the greatest difficulty in even keeping the school together at all.

I had to leave Kaifeng directly the meetings were over. Mr. Salee accompanied me to the station. Just before saying goodbye I strongly urged him to continue the meetings, and he promised that he would. He told me afterwards that on his way back to the school he was very much depressed. He kept thinking, he said, "If that man, who has had so much experience, can't do anything, what can I do?" Still, he had promised to go on with the meetings, and he had no intention of going back on his word.

On arriving back at the school, he called the boys together and gave a short address. When he had finished, the head Chinese teacher came up on the platform. For several minutes the man could do nothing but weep. When he was finally able to control himself, he said: "I was smoking cigarettes with some of the students. Mrs. Salee, on hearing about it, called me in and charged me with it. I protested my innocence. 'You know, Mrs. Salee,' I said to her, 'before I became a Christian I was a smoker; but since my conversion I've given it up. And surely, you don't suppose that I, a Christian and a teacher, would go and smoke cigarettes with the students?' Mrs. Salee seemed to be satisfied with my explanation; but I wasn't. That was a year ago, and since then every time I've tried to pray that lie has come back and stopped me."

A powerful effect, it seems, was produced by this confession. Conviction swept over the students, the non-Christians as well as the Christians. One of the non-Christian students, a boy who had been the ringleader in every insubordination and devilry, was terribly broken up and was the first to confess his sins. Many of the boys followed his example. By the following afternoon as many as fifty-five of the non-Christian students had gone to Mr. Salee's study and professed Christ as their Savior.

Here are two clear instances, in one city, of how God was held up by the sins of His own professed followers. In both cases, as soon as the sin had been brought to light and the stone of hindrance removed, the Holy Spirit broke through in all the fulness of His convicting power. May we not say that this is a law of God's kingdom? Without the 120 first being filled with the Holy Spirit it would have been impossible for those three thousand, on the day of Pentecost, to have been brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The work at Kwangchow had been started in the nineties by Mr. Argento, an Italian. Upon becoming a Christian, Mr. Argento had been turned out of his home. He joined the China Inland Mission, and was sent to Kwangchow, where, in a few years, he had gathered a little band of Christians around him. Their practice was to get up before daylight to study the Scriptures together. In 1900 the Boxers bound Mr.

Argento, poured kerosene over him and set him on fire. Some of his friends, however, came to the rescue and managed to save his life; but his sight was lost and other parts of his body were badly burnt. The Mission urged him to go back to Europe, but he would not think of it. "If I can't see," he said, "I can at least stay here and pray for the salvation of my people."

But, after a few years, his health became so wretched that he was obliged to leave China for good. He made his home with his wife's people in Norway. A neighbour of Mr. Argento's in Norway told me how the spirit of prayer was constantly upon him. Often he would be up till long after midnight interceding for the people of Kwangchow. Sometimes his wife would say: "You can't stand this; you're too weak. You must go to bed." To this he would reply: "How can I sleep, when so many thousands off there in Kwangchow are dying without Jesus?"

When I arrived at Kwangchow in December, 1915, I saw the last tile being put in its place on the roof of a fine church. The church was pointed out to me as an example of the fruit of Mr. Argento's sacrificial ministry. It possessed seating capacity for 1,400 people, and had been built entirely out of funds contributed by Chinese Christians. At that time there were two thousand Christians in the city of Kwangchow and throughout the surrounding country. There were, besides, twentyone outstations, and of all the workers only two were being paid out of foreign funds.

Shortly after my arrival, I was introduced to Elder Wen. In accordance with Chinese custom, I asked the elder how old he was. With a twinkle in his eye he replied, "I'm just eighteen years old." He had grey hair, and I had guessed that he must be at least sixty. "It is true," he went on to explain, "I am eighteen years old. Before that I was dead in trespasses and sins. I was an opium sot, a drunkard, and a gambler. I had become so weakened by my debauchery that one day a friend of mine, meeting me on the street, looked absolutely aghast at my appearance. 'Look here, Wen,' he said, 'you can't last much longer at the rate you're going. You had better go right over to that Jesus church and have the missionary pray for you.' In alarm I decided to follow his advice. I went straight to Mr. Argento and told him of my plight. He prayed for me, and that day the craving for opium and drink left me. I became literally a new man in Christ. And I've been living for Him now for eighteen years."

On the Sunday morning that the meetings began, it was found that the new church was not large enough to hold the crowd. Many hung around the doors and windows all through the service. It was evident from the very first meeting that the Holy Spirit had come in unusual power. Sometimes there would be hundreds of people weeping at the same time. As I remember, the sin confessed appeared to be mainly along the line of neglected duty in prayer and Bible study and care for souls.

I came in contact with two demonpossessed people during the Kwangchow meetings. One was the wife of a prominent evangelist. The evangelist was asked one day to take charge of the early morning prayermeeting. Just after he had got the meeting nicely started his wife cried out: "You're a pretty one to be leading a prayermeeting after the way you've sinned." She then proceeded to rake up all his past sins, including those which he had committed before his conversion, and, in fact, before he had even met her. "Yes," replied the evangelist, addressing the evil spirit, "while I was your slave I did these things. But I am your slave no longer. The Lord Jesus has changed my heart."

On another occasion, right in the middle of a meeting, this woman began to shout all manner of blasphemous things and generally to make a great ado. A Biblewoman, who was sitting behind her, pulled her down and told her to stop. With that she turned around and spat all over the Biblewoman. A

ladymissionary, sitting nearby, took out her handkerchief and wiped the saliva off the Biblewoman's clothes. This so affected the demonpossessed that she put her head on the missionary's shoulder and wept bitterly.

The other demonpossessed person was a heathen, who had been brought into the meetings by his Christian friends in the hope that he might be cured. While nothing out of the ordinary was going on in a meeting this man was silent, save for a slight whimpering. But whenever the Spirit of God began to move in convicting power and people started to weep and confess their sins, he was roused into a great fury. The filth that then proceeded from his lips was frightful. After one meeting, in which he had been more than usually disturbing, the demonpossessed man was led into a room, where another missionary and myself together with most of the Chinese leaders had gathered.

Mr. M-- led in prayer. For some time the demonpossessed man merely went on whimpering. Then the missionary happened to use the expression, "Jesus of Nazareth," and immediately the man seemed to fall into the most excruciating agony. The same was true when Elder Wen prayed for him. Whenever the words "Jesus of Nazareth" were used he seemed to pass beyond all control. Finally, Elder Chang, putting his hand on the man's head, cried: "Foul fiend, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, come out of him." With that, the man flung himself on the floor and wallowed there, foaming at the mouth. There was a circle around him, and on account of the long Chinese clothes I could not see him closely; but suddenly I distinctly heard a sound as if he had vomited. Later on I looked carefully but there was no evidence that he had done so. Yet something, apparently, had gone out of him. He got up from the floor, assisted by several of the evangelists. He was limp, pale and trembling - but he was in his right mind. There was no doubt about that. The evangelist's wife was also prayed for in the same way, and the demon cast out of her. The report, a year later, was that both of these people were living as ordinary Christians.

During the eight days that the meetings lasted, 154 people were baptised; and some hundreds had already been baptised that year. One day some prominent business men from the city, who had been attending the church for years but had not had sufficient courage to take a definite stand, came to the missionary and asked that the rules of the church, which provided that a man should have made public confession for at least six months before being allowed to receive baptism, should be set aside in their case. "We've been a little uncertain about the Gospel up till now," they said, "but these days all our doubts have been removed. We truly believe that we have been baptised with the Holy Ghost; and we can't bear to have to wait six months before being received into the Church. Won't you receive us now?" They were accepted and baptised. Four years later, the two thousand Christians had increased to eight thousand.

During the meetings my attention was repeatedly drawn to a splendid looking specimen of manhood, a Mr. Yang. I inquired about him and learned that he had been a prizefighter in his unconverted days. It had been his proud and undisputed boast that no man in all the surrounding counties could knock him out. He had naturally had many enemies; who, however, had taken good care to keep out of his way. Then he became a Christian, and his enemies decided that the time had come to wipe out old scores. One day, while Yang was at market, a group of them surrounded him, beat him almost to death and left him. He was found by some of his friends and carried back to his home. The missionaries wished to have the perpetrators of the outrage arrested and brought before the magistrate, but Mr. Yang refused to bring any charge against them. What he did was to pray for them.

In a few months he was well enough to go around again. His enemies were furious. They thought that had done for him. This time they decided that they would go right to his home and finish him off. The poor

fellow was so terribly beaten up this second time that for months his family despaired of his life. Yet he was firmly insistent that no action should be taken against his assailants. As soon as he had recovered, he went around the country preaching the Gospel. He died a few years after I met him. But it was not before he had led many of his old enemies to Christ. He left a Church of six hundred members in his own village, and ten other churches scattered throughout the surrounding country.

I was asked to lead a series of meetings at Sinyangchou, extending over twelve days. In a few days the Holy Spirit seemed to be deeply convicting the schoolgirls and adult church members. On the sixth day an unusually intense movement took place among the girls. From their confessions it seemed as if they felt that they were indeed before the judge.

The schoolboys, however, remained as cold as stone. There were about a hundred of them in the High School, the majority of whom were from heathen families. They keenly resented, I was informed, my talking about their own peculiar sins and shortcomings, as if there were no others to be mentioned. As a matter of fact, I had really no idea what their sins were. I just spoke, day by day, along whatever line I felt prompted by the Holy Spirit, without referring to any one sin in particular. Still, whatever I said seemed to rub the boys the wrong way; and as the days went by it became evident that they had determined, as far as possible, not to listen to me.

As soon as I would start to speak they would look at each other with the most bored expressions on their faces, or close their eyes as if in sleep, or gaze up at the ceiling as if to say, "Well, no matter what he says, he can't make us listen to him." It usually happened, though, that presently a boy here and there would come under conviction, much to the annoyance needless to say, of the more hardened. After every service the boys would return to their dormitory and hold an indignation meeting. "The impudence!" they would say, "of this man to come here and publish our sins abroad." Some, I learned, expressed a most intense desire to knife me. Each of these conclaves, of course, ended with a unanimous decision not to listen to me, and with the passing of resolutions inflicting all manner of penalties upon any who should yield.

I was sorry for the boys. I knew it was simply a contest between the Lord and the devil. And though I was hearing about the indignation meetings I thought it best not to make any reference to them. I had confidence in the power of [the] Holy Spirit to make these boys yield, no matter how firmly they had resolved to oppose Him. One thing that gave me hope was that each succeeding day a larger number of the boys seemed to become uneasy. This naturally maddened the boys who were as yet unmoved, and after each service these would do their utmost to bring the wavering ones back to their senses.

The break came suddenly and unexpectedly. On the tenth afternoon, after the boys had gone back to their dormitory, the Holy Spirit came down amongst them with resistless power. Teachers and pupils alike were broken as by judgment. Boys in agony would plead with their teachers to pray for them. Teachers, weeping, would reply, "We're too full of sin ourselves to open our mouths before God." Fortunately, my evangelist, Mr. Su, was living right in the same dormitory, and knew just how to handle such a situation. He went from boy to boy doing what he could to help and comfort. The movement lasted for six hours. Mr. Su told me afterwards that he had never witnessed such a mighty manifestation of the controlling power of God over men.

It was a pretty subdued lot of boys that I came before on the eleventh forenoon. After I had finished my address, the boys vied with each other in their eagerness to give their testimonies. One after another

confessed, in tears, how I had so cut them to the quick that they had wished they could only get close enough to me to stab me to death. For well over an hour the stream of testimony and confession continued. Truly had the Lord triumphed gloriously. During those last few days the students clung to me as to a father. They repeatedly declared their willingness to give their lives for Mr. Su or myself.

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