

## **THE FOUR MAIN REVIVALS AMONG US**

Now I would like to share something concerning the four main revivals among us. We have seen that the revelations plus the sufferings produce the ministry. By the ministry we have the work, and out of the work comes the churches. In addition to this, even in the Lord's recovery, we need periodic revivals. In the Lord's recovery in China, there were clearly and definitely four big revivals.

### **The Revival concerning the Assurance of Salvation**

The first revival in China was related to the recovery of the truth concerning the assurance of salvation. Robert Morrison was the first Protestant missionary to China in the early 1800s. From that time until Brother Nee was caught by the Lord in 1920, the assurance of salvation had not been made clear. The Lord gave Brother Nee a clear vision of the assurance of salvation. Brother Nee told people that as long as they believed in the Lord Jesus according to the teaching and revelation of the Bible, they could have the assurance that they were saved. Many were revived by his messages on the assurance of salvation. Brother Nee's preaching issued in a revival in 1923 in his hometown, Foochow.

In those early days of the Lord's move in China, Brother Nee fasted and prayed every Saturday for the entire day. He told me personally that he would abstain from eating the whole day and pray for the entire day in preparation for his speaking the next day. For about a year, he fasted and prayed on Saturday and preached on the Lord's Day. During that time nearly all his classmates were saved. The entire atmosphere of his school changed. Everywhere at the school, students could be seen reading the Bible, praying together, or fellowshiping together.

During this time of revival, Brother Nee and some other young brothers with him heard that in Nanking, far away from their hometown, a young Christian had been raised up by the Lord named Ruth Lee. She was the editor of a very famous and prevailing Christian paper called *The Spiritual Light*. Brother Nee and the brothers invited her to come to their hometown to hold some meetings. She agreed to come and would make the trip by boat. Brother Nee realized that as a sister, she should not be put to the forefront too much, even though he and the other brothers were much younger than she was. He thought that he would let the others go to the pier to meet her and that he would not go.

That night Brother Nee had a dream. In Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, Peter indicated that when the Spirit is poured out upon people, they will dream dreams (v. 17). Brother Nee personally told me about his dream, just as he related all the history from 1920 to 1932 to me. In this dream he and others were going to welcome Sister Lee, and the boat came. While he was standing there at a distance, he saw a young lady walking from the boat toward the people welcoming her. Then the Lord told him, "This is the co-worker I have prepared for you."

When he awoke in the morning, he considered that this could have been a dream from the Lord, so he had better go to meet her. He went with a hesitant attitude, wondering whether or not his dream was of the Lord. Instead of going to the front, he stood at the rear. He saw the young people running to the boat to welcome Sister Lee. He had no idea what she looked like before that time, but she was the exact person he had seen in his dream. When they brought Miss Lee to him, he said, "I saw her already." But the others did not know that he meant that he had seen her already in a dream the previous night. He did not relate his dream to Miss Lee until about four years later in 1927. The Lord arranged an environment in which she was forced to give up her work in Nanking. Then she came to Shanghai, and from that time she worked with Brother Nee.

The meetings which Brother Nee held in Foochow when Miss Lee came brought in a big revival. Because the saints there did not have a big hall, they eventually met in an open field. Everyone in the congregation brought a chair with him. If someone did not bring a chair, he had to stand. Many were saved during this time, and that was the first revival among us. The news of this revival spread to many places, and many were helped to become clear about the assurance of salvation.

### **The Revival Concerning the Overcoming Life of Christ**

The second revival among us happened twelve years later in 1935. By that time many churches had been raised up, but we had become somewhat cold. Brother Nee himself also had the feeling that he needed some burning. Thus, he made the decision in the spring of 1935 to go to England. He also decided that before going, he would come to my hometown of Chefoo.

Brother Nee and his wife stayed in my home. While he was staying there, we had a conference for one week. In that conference he ministered day after day on the overcoming life of Christ. Through this prevailing conference, we were all revived. We were all on fire again. He canceled his trip to Europe and returned to Shanghai to hold another conference. The fire of that revival burned the church in Shanghai in 1935.

This was the second revival among us which helped us to experience the overcoming life of Christ. Before that time we came to know the life of Christ, and we had some experience of the death of Christ, but what we had come to know and experience was not that prevailing. Through that revival we were brought into a full realization and a rich experience of the overcoming life of Christ.

### **The Revival concerning the Practicality of the Church Life**

The third revival among us was in 1942 and 1943. First, we were revived with the truth concerning the assurance of salvation. Second, we were set on fire with the overcoming life of Christ. The third revival was with the practicality of the church life. That revival transpired again in my hometown of Chefoo.

Before that revival, Brother Nee had a big turn in 1939. In that year he saw the Body of Christ and the practicality of the local church. I went in 1939 to attend his conference on the Body of Christ. Then I went to his training in 1940. At that time I received much help from him, mainly from the private talks he had with me. Through those talks I saw what he called the blueprint of the practicality of the local church.

Later I returned to Chefoo in northern China. Once I returned, I did not have the liberty to move anymore because of the war. I realized that it was the Lord's will for me not to travel but to stay in Chefoo to practice the church life in a practical way. From January 1941 we practiced everything that I had seen in Shanghai from Brother Nee. We had the proper eldership, the deacons, the service office, and the service groups. We practiced the church life for two years according to the blueprint Brother Nee had seen. At the end of 1942 the church in Chefoo experienced a great revival. This revival came through the practicality of the church life with all the service groups. The practicality of the church life brought all the saints into the building. The church in Chefoo had about eight hundred saints at that time.

By January 1, 1943 the revival in Chefoo was at its peak. No announcements were made beforehand to have a meeting on that day, but the saints came and met. From morning to evening, everyone met together without eating or drinking. There was no schedule or program, but many things were carried out by the Lord that day. After a couple of weeks, our meetings were similar to those recorded in Acts 2 and 4. We

met day after day for over one hundred days. That was a one-hundred-day conference beginning on January 1, 1943. Every meeting was different and new.

It would take many messages for me to relate all the wonderful things that happened during that period of time. I would like to relate a few things to give us some idea of what was taking place. During one afternoon, a young man, who was a student of about nineteen or twenty years of age, was reading the Bible. He read Isaiah 1:3-4, which says, "The ox knows his owner, / And the donkey, his master's manger; / But Israel does not know, / My people do not much consider. / Alas, sinful nation, / A people heavy with iniquity, / Seed of evildoers, / Children acting corruptly! / They have forsaken Jehovah; / They have despised the Holy One of Israel; / They have become estranged and have gone backward." He also read Jeremiah 8:7, which says, "Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtledove and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the law of Jehovah" (ASV). He was very inspired by these verses.

The Lord impressed him within that he should stand up that evening in the meeting to give a testimony concerning these two portions of the Word. He was very fearful of doing this since he was very timid. He told the Lord, "If you want me to give a testimony tonight, you have to do one thing. You have to ask Brother Lee to stand up to read these two portions of the Word to all the people." I had never talked to him before, and I did not even know his name. He thought it would be impossible for me to do this, but he told the Lord that he would not give a testimony unless this happened. At a certain point in the meeting, we all knelt down to pray. While we were praying, the Lord told me within to ask the saints to rise up and read Isaiah 1:3-4. He was amazed. Then I said, "Turn to Jeremiah 8:7." He was trembling. After we read this verse, he gave a testimony, sharing with us about how the Lord had dealt with him concerning these verses. This is one illustration of the prevailing move of the Spirit at that time.

The move of the Spirit was also prevailing in all the homes of the saints. The saints offered all of their possessions to the church. Every evening all kinds of offerings were given to the church. Just to keep an account of those offerings took much time. Everyone came to the meeting with something to offer, so we had to have different groups to keep an account of the different kinds of offerings. One group, for example, kept a record of all the title deeds to property that were offered. All those who owned any kind of property brought their title deeds and offered them to the church. By the last day of this revival, everyone literally offered all the things they had. Even things such as typewriters and sewing machines were offered.

Eventually, seventy saints traveled by boat from Chefoo to inner Mongolia, migrating there for the spread of the church life. They offered all that they had to the church, and the church assigned a certain amount of money and material things to each of them, which was enough for them to travel and live on for three months. Our experience in those days was just like the beginning of the church life when "those who believed were together and had all things common; and they sold their possessions and properties and divided them among all according as anyone had need" (Acts 2:44-45).

In my whole Christian life, I have never seen a revival like that. In all the homes, there was not any loose talk or gossip. All that the saints spoke was Christ, the church, and the Lord's migration. Every home—old and young, fathers, mothers, and children—was stirred up without one exception. At that time we called ourselves "the host, the army, of Jehovah." Such a situation was the result of our being in the practicality of the church life. The saints entered into the service groups in the church life, and this caused them to be burned. Then the revival came in. During that revival many young people were raised up who later became leading ones in the churches.

#### **The Biggest, Most Powerful, and Most Prevailing Revival among Us through the Recovery of Brother Nee's Ministry**

After the war I was invited to come to Shanghai. I was still on the peak of the revival in Chefoo, so that revival was brought to Shanghai. This was the fourth main revival among us.

We have seen how Brother Nee was unable to minister for six years, from 1942 to 1948, because of the rebellious turmoil in Shanghai. Through the revival there in 1947 and the first few months of 1948, the rebellious and dissenting ones were brought back. Nearly all of them repented and confessed to Brother Nee. That brought Brother Nee back to the ministry. Some said that Brother Nee had no time to minister from 1942 to 1948 because of his business, but this was not true. He had the time, but he did not minister because of the saints' rebellion against him. He told me this in a definite way. In 1947 I begged him to minister in Shanghai, but he said that he could not minister because of the rebellious ones there.

Thank the Lord that through the revival in 1947 the whole church in Shanghai was brought back, and eventually Brother Nee's ministry was recovered. The recovery of his ministry confirmed and enlarged the revival in the church. Later, about eighty seeking ones from different parts of China who had come to Shanghai to participate in that revival were with Brother Nee for a six-month training. After that training from April to October in 1948, the trainees returned to their localities, and their localities were set on fire. That became the biggest, most powerful, and most prevailing revival among us. This revival spread throughout all of China. In one locality, over seven hundred people were baptized in one day. Eventually, however, the Communists came to take over all of China.

The revival among us in Chefoo in 1943 spread to Shanghai in 1947. After I was sent to the island of Taiwan, this kind of revival was brought there. This was one of the reasons why the work in Taiwan went so fast in the first few years. Within six years we increased from about five hundred saints to about twenty thousand. This was due to the spreading of the flow of that big revival in China.

The main spiritual aspect of the fourth revival was that all the saints consecrated all that they were and all that they had to the church. That was not only a revival with the practicality of the church life but also a revival with the full surrender of the saints to the Lord for the church. Whatever they were, whatever they did, and whatever they possessed were handed over to the church. This uprooted all the worldly things and built all the saints together. The saints became a prevailing expression of the Body of Christ with the power and impact of the one accord. That was the practicality of the saints being built up.

Even today we are still inheriting all the good points of those four revivals. We are inheriting the experience of the assurance of salvation, the overcoming life of Christ, the practicality of the church life, and the practice of fully surrendering ourselves to the Lord for the church. I hope that we would be so clear about these four aspects: the assurance of salvation, the overcoming life of Christ, the practicality of the church life, and the full surrender of whatever we are, whatever we have, and whatever we can do, to the church. (Witness Lee, *The History of the Church and the Local Churches*, Chapter 9, Living Stream Ministry: Anaheim, CA, 1991, pp. 114-121)