

MANKIND NEEDS A SAVIOR



I, Elijah Phuntstok, come from a Buddhist family. My father was one of the chief lay disciples of the famous Ridzong Monastery. I was taught the Buddhist philosophy of rebirth and Karma. I used to fast, prostrate myself before the idols a hundred times daily and recite the prayers a thousand times.

Despite these devotions I had no satisfaction of mind. I yearned for peace of mind. I failed in my ideal of subduing unworthy desires and could not do away with the consciousness of the sinful nature in me.

Suddenly my father died when he was only in his fortieth year. It was a great shock to me. I was so impressed with the uncertainty of life and the vanity of the world that I wanted to become a monk and renounce the world. But my relatives stopped me since I was the only son of my father. For me not to marry would mean the end of my old family line, so I had to accept their protestations and the responsibility of carrying on my father's position and the care of the family estates.

I decided that at least I could study further as a layman. I began to pursue Buddhist mysticism of the Vajrayana sect, called the Guru Yoga. The supreme teacher, whom one chooses as one's soul director, is believed to be the embodiment of Buddha, his doctrine, and the brotherhood. I practiced it for some time, but this did not satisfy me as I found it more fanciful than real.

Now I had some acquaintance with Christianity at this time. I had read the Urdu Bible out of curiosity. Then, by quoting from the Bible, I used to mock the Christian evangelists I met. I did not understand the meaning of the verses I was quoting.

One day the Rev. Yoseb Gergan, the translator of the Tibetan Bible, gave me an English booklet full of stories telling of the most remarkable transformations, as sinners were saved by believing in Jesus Christ. It showed me so simply the redeeming love of Jesus that I received great conviction of sin and my need for a Savior. I became restless again. I read these wonderful stories about the redeeming power of Jesus Christ over and over.

As I thought it over, I became convinced that a superior lama could not be my savior because he had the same sinful nature as myself. At last the love of Jesus laid its powerful grasp on my soul. I accepted Jesus as my Savior. I believed in the forgiveness of my sins and put my signature and the date on the back page of the booklet, underlining what I had written in red.

In spite of believing in Jesus, I was weak in faith and could not be a witness of Him openly. I was afraid of my position and possible loss of property, and I was afraid of being persecuted for my faith. I told Yoseb Gergan all about it. We had prayer together, but he did not force me to an open confession. At last, after a struggle of six years I threw all my life, fortune, and fame at the feet of Him who had died for me.

Trouble began for me from that very day, which led to my imprisonment by the authorities. The case collapsed from lack of evidence. Some tried to poison me on several occasions. On many occasions I had such a wonderful experience of consolation and joy from the Lord that I blessed my persecutors.

Reflecting on my conversion experience, I have hope for my fellow Tibetans in spite of their blindness to God's truth. I know what God's Spirit has done for me, and what He has done for other Tibetans who have discovered Jesus as their Redeemer. For over 30 years I have proclaimed the Gospel to my people. I am not discouraged by failure. I am not elated by success. Failure or success is not my concern so much as God's. God helping me, I will continue to help my brothers and sisters to have faith in Him. Do they reject my help? Or do they welcome my message? What then? It shall make no difference to my work. They and I alike are in God's hands. I trust the Holy Spirit, in their thought life, to illuminate their sin as well as their opportunity to be forgiven. I pray constantly that they will make the right decision for Jesus and receive eternal life.

Tibetan Buddhists will often claim that all religions are fundamentally the same. Such comparisons equating Christianity with Buddhism do not impress me. Christianity cannot be compared. It can only be contrasted. All other faiths were headed by seekers after truth, and some of them saw glimpses of the truth. Christianity is not like this at all. It is a revelation from God Himself, preached by God Himself in Christ. ♦

Sonam lived with her husband in a busy center high in the Himalayan mountains. It was a hard place for Tibetan refugees to live, and it became harder as this couple had two little children to care for. But then her husband deserted her and the two children just when a third child was about to be born. He went off with another Tibetan woman.

A Christian brother noticed Sonam huddled on a step, holding her second child, Bema, and realized that she was destitute. "Come with me to my church," he said, and she followed him. There she was welcomed, helped, and told about the love of Jesus. Soon she accepted Jesus as her Savior.

Later she faced disaster when the carpet factory in which she was working closed abruptly. She prayed with her children to their heavenly Father as they scrounged around for stinging nettles to cook with the small amount of corn meal she had been able to buy. Slowly the Lord provided for this family's need (Sonam with Bema, Drashi, and the youngest, Tupten). The other Christians found Sonam amidst all this with a sweet and trusting spirit.

Then one day Sonam went to the Patan Hospital on behalf of a friend. To her surprise at the hospital she saw the new young wife of her former husband, bending over her newborn baby. The baby was so malnourished that it could not cry, and the doctor had little hope for this infant since the mother had no help. What was the problem? This woman had been deserted by the same man who had deserted Sonam. She and her baby had been thrown out and left to starve.

Sonam scooped up both the mother and child and took them home with her. Then she shared what little she had in order to nurse both mother and child back to life. Other Christian women came to the small darkened room where all six lived, in order to pray and encourage them. The mother had accepted Christ, and her little baby had been named Joseph. Now the other children - Bema, Drashi, and Tupten - all took turns chewing bits of bread and feeding this to little Joseph, like a mother bird would feed her young.

Their Bibles told these women the words of Jesus, "do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" (Matthew 6:25,26 NIV) ♦

I am Wangden and come from a poor family in Batang in eastern Tibet. My father died when I was young, but to my joy a Christian there saw to it that I was enrolled in elementary school. Books fascinated me, and I found myself at the top of my class every year.

In my last year I came out the school gate and saw a Christian woman named Hannah teaching a group of children. I tossed some pebbles in their direction and broke up the meeting. I saw my teacher smiling at what I had done, so I continued to repeat this again and again.

I gained a scholarship to junior high school in a larger city, then also high school. Someone gave me a New Testament, and in it I read what Jesus said, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (John 12:24 NASB) I thought to myself, "That's good! I like that! If I die and fall in the ground for my Tibetan people, many other Tibetans will be willing to risk their lives, too."

Next, I had a scholarship to a Chinese university in Chungqing, and on my way to that campus I passed a Christian school where I knew some of my fellow Batang people were studying. I stopped to see them and found them in a prayer meeting. I sat beside them with my eyes open. Students and teachers there, as they became aware of my presence, began to pray for me. I was uncomfortable and then amazed at the sincerity they showed. After the meeting, I had the Gospel of salvation explained to me, and on the spot I accepted Christ as my Savior. Then, looking up and across the prayer room, I saw a woman I recognized. It was Hannah whose meetings in Batang I had disrupted. I went across to apologize, and she greeted me with a broad smile. "Ah, so you are Wangden," she said, "I have been praying for your salvation ever since those days you threw little stones at me." My heart was so touched that I stayed at that school and received my training as a Christian minister to my own people. How wonderful it is that God loves me so much.

(Some years later Wangden did lay down his life in the course of his ministry.) ♦

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.
Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.
He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Savior.

-- Psalms 24:1-5

The Dalai Lama has himself said, "I am not perfect." And yet there is a perfect Master who came to earth "who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth. And being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him (God the Father) who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." (1 Peter 2:23-24)

Unlike the Bodhisattva, who still struggles for perfection, Christ Jesus is the greatest power; and through His power we have been made free from all the chains of sin. He is the Lawgiver and unlike Buddha, who never taught that he had all the answers, Jesus Christ is the Perfect One, our greatest friend who came from eternity and

"made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the

name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

-- Philippians 2:7

Jesus willfully and intentionally gave His life as a ransom for our evil deeds, that we might be found righteous through Him and live forever with Him.

"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

"Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We're going to drown!' He replied, 'You of little faith, why are you so afraid?' Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, 'What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!'"

-- Matthew 8:23-27

Jesus has the ultimate authority in heaven and on earth, from eternity to eternity. All spirits, powers, and gods are subject to Him. He has the Power to transform our spiritual darkness into spiritual light, and conquers death. "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:13-14)