

DANCING ON THE EDGE OF THE EARTH

Adventures in Indonesia

By the spirit of Elijah

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THE ELIJAH CHALLENGE

Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice....When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD-he is God! The LORD-he is God!" 1 Kings 18:38-39

The mission of The Elijah Challenge is to teach Christian believers how to *demonstrate visible evidence* that Jesus Christ is the Son of the only true God *through miraculous signs* as they share the gospel. The spirit of Elijah proclaims to the world, "My God is the true God, and by His grace I will demonstrate it to you in power."

Since 2000, thousands of evangelical believers have attended Elijah Challenge Healing Encounters both overseas and in the United States. In India (6 locations), Pakistan, Venezuela, Egypt (8 locations), and West Africa (3 locations), as well as in different states in the United States, believers have been taught from the Scriptures how to minister healing to the sick for the sake of the Gospel as Jesus and the early disciples did. In these Healing Encounters, especially overseas, the blind see and the deaf hear as believers lay hands on them in Jesus' name. Hundreds of people with diverse physical infirmities have publicly testified to being healed in the Encounters, to the glory of God.

More than ever, evangelicals need to learn to minister in public power encounters in order to reach the millions of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and idol-worshippers who have settled in the United States and erected mosques and idol temples in our very backyards. These precious souls are much more receptive to the Gospel when

presented with miraculous signs as evidence that Jesus is the only way to the Father.

Healing Encounters have been held in American Baptist, Southern Baptist, Episcopal, Christian & Missionary Alliance, United Methodist, Messianic, Presbyterian, as well as Assembly of God churches.

For more information about Healing Encounters, please contact The Elijah Challenge at info@TheElijahChallenge.org or write us at The Elijah Challenge, P. O. Box 168, Barker, Texas 77413-0168.

Dr. Charles J. Wisdom, Former Chairman of Trustees, Houston Baptist University:

“I am happy to commend to you the person and ministry of Pastor Bob. The Lord has gifted Bob with keen insight into biblical teachings on POWER ENCOUNTERS and he handles this exciting and potentially controversial subject with great wisdom. I have attended the seminar Bob teaches and this led me to invite him to present it in the First Baptist Church of Katy. Any pastor or lay leader will be greatly blessed who sits at the feet of this gifted and humble servant of the Lord.”

Ashraf Kamel, Director of *Campus Crusade for Christ* of Upper Egypt:

The largest evangelistic Campaign in the history of Egypt in August 2002

“When you came [on your first visit] last year and my family and I met to pray with you, I couldn't imagine at all what God would do in our country a year later [when you returned]. I spoke with you, I began to arrange [the Campaign] with other people but it never came to my mind that [we would witness such] great days....It's the first time to see about 20,000[-30,000] people [who] have very bad illnesses and circumstances in 4 days. We saw how much Satan had done; [it was a] great challenge to defeat him by healing people and casting out these illnesses and troubles....Can you see it was not only a matter of evangelistic meetings but also more than this?....It was [not only] **the first time** in El-Minia, but also **in Egypt** to have an event like this, ...these are **historical events** in Egypt....About miracles: to see a blind person, and God opened his eyes, and to see a lame [person] can walk, it did many things in our people in El-

Minia: some were encouraged by their healing, others take new steps in faith, others asking God to have this power....After you left many cases came to our office saying that we were healed but I couldn't stand [up] to give my testimony because of the crowd. Another came with her child, he was about 4 years old. He had a bad disease in his chest, now he is completely cured. An old man couldn't move, his son's wife came to our office to explain how God healed him in those days and other stories I have....Let me say I myself was changed in my life, faith, and attitude which makes me (as a Campus Crusade for Christ director) lead my staff in the office with a new power, new view, and new attitude....The last miracle is spite of all these new attitudes, new concepts, new healing, and many new [things], we didn't face any attack [criticism] from others [other believers] till now but instead people love us and appreciate us.”

Pastor Joel Biao, *World Vision* of Niger, West Africa

The first evangelistic mass Campaign in the history of Niger in November 2002

“I can't still help smiling as I am trying to figure the way that God led this Campaign. Of course (we) started talking about this without any conviction the first day. And we did a very short prayer that day. I couldn't imagine, Brother Bob, that this would end into an event so great in the history of the Church in Niger....My life as a pastor and leader is really affected: I have learned to be bold in ministering the healing. I have got much more in faith. Through that campaign I can say God added something more to my faith....I could through the campaign know the kind of message we [need to] give when we try to bring people to know the transforming power of God. I also concluded that without signs, wonders and miracles we only do very little in winning the souls....The first important thing the Campaign

has achieved for the churches is the unity. **That was the first time [in Niger] that really the churches worked together in real spirit of unity....**Also many barriers have been knocked down; indeed some of the churches that ministered healing [in the Campaign] didn't believe in it at first. They thought that [it] is for the pentecostal churches....Through your teaching and training they were convinced that anyone who is engaged in announcing the Good News in the name of Jesus can do so....Moreover, henceforth the churches are united and free to work together without any denominational discrimination....The Church in Niamey (the capital city of Niger) is confident in preaching the Gospel with signs and wonders.; the church knows how to handle the spiritual warfare; the church is really bold in preaching the Gospel....The Gospel will become effective in Niger as the Muslim people will themselves witness miracles in the name of Jesus. There will be much more fruit than what we had previously....The Church in Niger will become really bold and effective in reaching out to Muslim people. The harvest will be great.”

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(The real names of the two principal figures in this book have
been changed to protect their identities)

Chapter One

Following in Abraham's Footsteps

Chen Sookmay's eyes seemed ready to pop from her head as my wife, Laura, and I searched them deeply, hoping to find the trail of her tormentors. Her eyeballs were magnified by thick eyeglasses, but they were a symbol of the wide-eyed terror that would come when she would be hurled to the floor of her Borneo shanty in thrashing madness. Chen Sook, her anxious husband, sat with us. "My wife has had this severe epilepsy for over ten years now," he said. "Please pray for her."

I glanced over to where she sat across the bare homemade table from us and saw little response. "How are you doing, Chen Sookmay?" asked Laura, hoping to reassure her. She grinned weakly from behind her thick eyeglasses. But I had the feeling the daily attacks of *grand mal* epilepsy had left her dazed, barely aware of her surroundings.

"When it comes," continued her husband, "she's thrown to the floor suddenly, her body curls up like a shrimp and convulses violently. Then everyone in the house rushes over to her to keep her from hurting herself. After about a half hour or so the seizure stops. She'll be unconscious and totally drained of strength. We pick her up off the floor and lay her on her bed. In a few hours she'll wake up, exhausted, not knowing what happened to her."

To Laura and me it sounded like the epileptic boy whose father took him to Jesus' disciples in Mark 9. The people attributed the affliction to a powerful unclean spirit which the disciples could not drive out.

"The strange thing," added Chen Sook, "is that before each

attack occurs, we all feel an uneasiness spreading through the whole house."

We sensed a powerful evil had Chen Sookmay in its grip, but had not dealt before with such strong forces. It would have seemed hopeless had we not innocently trusted in the name of Jesus before whom every knee *must* bow.

Along with our new co-worker, Elias, we began to minister to Chen Sookmay. Though in her condition she could not understand the gospel, her husband was at that time a believer. In 1 Corinthians 7:14, Paul writes that the unbelieving wife is sanctified by her believing husband--and vice-versa. Immediate benefits of the believing mate's salvation are available even to the unbelieving spouse--though not ultimate deliverance from judgment. So, because of her husband's faith and request we began to command the unclean spirit to leave her in the name of Jesus Christ. For five minutes nothing happened. She just sat there, unimpressed by our efforts. We inquired of the Lord what we should do.

Since Chen Sook was a new believer, I asked if there might be something in his house abominable to the Lord. Perhaps before he became a believer he had been given a charm or fetish as treatment for his wife's condition. Local witch doctors so commonly dispense such prescriptions for their patients that eventually quite a collection accumulates. The fetishes can be found hanging here and there on the walls or forgotten in nooks and crannies of rooms and desk drawers.

Chen Sook disappeared into the back of the shanty and reappeared moments later with some fetishes. He gave them to us and we burned them. Then we continued the ministry to Chen Sookmay. The front door, usually left open in the sweltering midday heat of the squalid sawmill settlement, was closed.

"In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to manifest

yourself, demon!"

Suddenly Chen Sookmay's head dropped. Her eyes, previously open, closed. "This usually happens before it comes," commented Chen Sook. Laura placed her hands on her head and with her eyes closed prayed softly. I also closed my eyes.

"Bob!" Laura's cry pierced the momentary lull. "My hands, my hands! I had them on her head. But look! Something spread them apart!" Laura had placed her hands on Chen Sookmay's head, one hand on each side. But when she reopened her eyes she saw her hands no longer on Chen Sookmay's head but instead spread far apart on each side. It was as if some unseen force had radiated outward from her head and shoved Laura's hands apart. We had come in the name of Jesus Christ, and Chen Sookmay's tormentors were challenging us. I took up the gauntlet.

"I bind you, demon! Come out of her right now in the name of Jesus Christ! Come out ... *now!*" I commanded.

Looking down at this frail, innocent woman, I felt sorry for her. "Are you all right?" I asked, peering tenderly into her face. What I then saw and heard cannot be adequately described.

Her head was raised toward me. Her eyes were now wide open, bulging in their sockets and fixating on me with hate and fury. A guttural growl emanated from her throat, no longer just challenging, but now threatening. Fear rose within me; my confidence vanished. Elias looked once at the terrifying face of the adversary and wanted to run for the front door and safety. Terror gripped me as well. My soul was screaming, *Run! This thing is going to attack you!*

But something else inside did not allow me to flee. Mixed with the fear, I suddenly bristled with indignation toward this demon who dared to stand against the name of Jesus Christ. I stood my ground, strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Deliberately resisting the

fear, I drew my face close until we were staring eye to eye and that horrifying face loomed in my sight.

"In the name of Jesus Christ, come out!" I screamed, refusing to show my fear, and summoning every last reserve of boldness.

"Come out!"

The evil countenance lifted. Chen Sookmay shrank perceptibly. After a brief moment she reopened her eyes. She was herself. Never again did she suffer from those violent convulsions. The strong man had finally been driven out of his long-time dwelling in the name of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

I looked at the peace on the woman who had been so troubled. I had seen the strength of the beast that tormented her. But I had also seen how quickly that strong man had to yield in the presence of Jesus.

In fact, the reason Laura and I sat in the hot, sticky jungle hut in West Borneo that day was because we had been propelled by the mighty touch of Jesus, an energizing motivation so strong, we were willing to lay aside all other dreams and plans. I understood why the demons had to move at Jesus' command. I also had heard His voice, and could not remain where I was.

My formal education had brought me to within nearly a year of a Ph.D. in experimental psychology at the University of California. But when the Holy Spirit touched me, I gave up my academic dreams to pursue a calling that would take me up into the rarified realms of God. I was determined to see for myself the same awesome wonders which enthralled the eyewitnesses of the first century outpouring.

I transferred to theological school, and during my first semester of seminary in California, a powerful urgency gripped me.

Whenever we had the opportunity, usually on weekends, my

classmate and dear friend Steve Shepard and I, along with other seminarians, engaged in "radical evangelism." A bullhorn and gospel tracts were standard equipment. We made our pulpit street corners and sidewalks. Squawking through the bullhorn, we urged our congregation---those who happened to pass by at that moment---to repent and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Sometimes, I would place my bullhorn on the roof or hood of my car and, with microphone in one hand and steering wheel in the other, evangelize fellow motorists. Unwary people driving along would find themselves accosted by this spiritual road warrior who slowed or sped up his little green Fiat to track alongside, urging them to repent. Once I took my bullhorn to a Spanish-speaking area in Santa Ana, near Anaheim. I didn't speak the language, but was armed with a Spanish translation of the *Four Spiritual Laws*. Staking out a patch of sidewalk directly in front of a small apartment building, I set the bullhorn on high volume, aimed it at the building, and began reading the tract, pronouncing each Spanish word as I imagined it should sound. The blast from my audio bazooka hit the apartments, doors opened and heads craned to look. Most soon withdrew once they knew it was just a Chinese religious fanatic.

However, a small group of Mexican children congregated in front of me, listening attentively. Encouraged, I read the tract to the last line. I then asked who wanted to believe on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. To my delight every little hand went up. Indeed the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Unfortunately, since I did not speak Spanish, I could not counsel these new converts how to grow in Christ. I dismissed the service.

Such evangelism, though intriguing, was not satisfying to me. It was not as fruitful as I had wished. Not that such evangelism cannot be fruitful, for the Kingdom of God is clearly blessed through those who are called to ministries like street preaching. In my case,

however, I came to desire something more substantial than the weekend witnessing I had been doing. I longed to preach the gospel full-time and to see God's glory and wonders in confirmation of His Word.

So, when I found myself frustrated by papers, exams and books (though now of the theological variety), I thought of veering off the seminary path. A Master of Divinity Degree was still over two years away. I couldn't wait. Should I by faith just launch out into full-time ministry?

Over time this idea gained momentum even though there were many arguments against it. My mind argued, "You've been a Christian for less than two years. You haven't even read certain parts of the Old Testament! And what can you do without a seminary degree? You have no experience in church ministry, either as an elder, deacon, Sunday School teacher, Bible study leader or youth worker. For sure no church would take you seriously as you are now."

But the voice in my heart would not be silenced. "Drop whatever you are doing," it said, "and go, proclaim the riches of Christ Jesus to the nations." I praised God as I realized the Holy Spirit had finally dispelled the swarm of human arguments swirling in my mind. His urging would finally push me over the brink into the adventure of my life. I *had* to go. But where?

Not having formal credentials would close doors for us. Perhaps if I went to a place where the people did not know about credentials, I could minister. Where was there such a place? Of course. The foreign mission field. If we went to a country where there are no Christians, only pagans, who would care about ministerial credentials? The logic was inspired.

The Lord had given me a beautiful wife who had been born in the country of Indonesia. Laura spoke Indonesian and Chinese

perfectly and her parents, Christians, lived in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. The logical choice for our missionary work would be Indonesia.

Missionaries, of course, need churches to send them out and support them financially. They usually join a missionary organization which provides training and doors for ministry in the target country. But these were precisely what we lacked. What church or missionary organization receives and sends out someone lacking the proper qualifications? It was a Catch-22 situation! And not even did we have money for airfare. But I did not worry. I had already come to believe that nothing is impossible with God.

In Luke 6:38 the Bible says, "Give and it shall be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap."

We needed that good measure to carry out the commission the Lord had given us. Our most pressing need was airfare, about \$2,000 for two people. Other needs, such as monthly living expenses on the mission field, did not concern us. We felt the Lord would surely provide it after we began His work. But first we had to get there.

According to the verse from Luke, we had to give first and God would then provide. Another way would have us saving and skimping until there was enough to buy the plane tickets. But we decided against this, because we wanted the thrill of launching out by faith in the Lord's promises. Besides, it might have taken us years to save up the required amount. I was not earning money as a full-time seminary student and Laura supported us by working in a department store as a salesperson. At the end of each month after bills were paid, practically nothing remained. A much more exciting and speedy way to raise the money would be to give away what little we had in order to receive back much.

If our plan to go to Indonesia was of God, He would certainly pay our way. For this reason we did not actively seek to raise support. If the funds came in, it would confirm to us that we were in the Lord's will.

One day in the spring we received our income tax refund, amounting to a few hundred dollars. It was far short of what we needed for the fare to Indonesia, but it was a beginning. Happily we deposited the check into our bank account. But one evening not long afterwards, a classmate called. He, his wife and children faced eviction from their apartment because they were unable to pay their rent. The dear brother pleaded for help.

"How much do you need?" I asked. It was a little over one hundred dollars, far less than the amount we had just received back from the IRS.

"We can give you the money, brother," I replied without hesitation. Then he went on to mention other financial difficulties he had. Sensing that this was an unspoken appeal for more help, I became impatient. Hadn't I already been very generous? Yet, strangely enough, during a pause in our conversation I heard myself asking, "How much more do you need, brother?"

The amount he needed totaled just shy of our tax refund. If I gave him the entire amount, our savings for airfare to Indonesia would be gone. But it seemed I was no longer in control of my own tongue.

"We, uh, yeah, we can help you." The words seemed to tumble out of my mouth by themselves. Later that evening I wrote a check to cover his needs and sent it to him. Our tax refund was gone. But a sense of joy and relief comforted me, for that evening the Lord had freed me from selfishness and enabled me to give generously. Hallelujah! Through obedience to the Word on that and other occasions, I set into motion the inexorable principles of giving

and receiving through which God would provide airfare for us to Indonesia.

Then a letter arrived from New York City. It was from my older sister, Amy. As I opened the envelope a check for \$1,000 fell into my hands. Never before had anyone sent us such a large sum. According to her accompanying note, the money was for our needs. But what needs? Did she find out about our plans to go to Indonesia and feel obligated to help out? I phoned her to find out whether the \$1,000 was from her or from God.

"Amy, did you know that we wanted to go to Indonesia?" I asked after greeting her and thanking her for the check.

"No, Bob. I just felt led of the Lord to send it to you."

I knew God was confirming to me through a miraculous sign that He wanted us to go. He gave this sign to us because we were willing to give up everything and obey the Scriptures. "Give and it shall be given unto you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap."

With this gift from my sister, we were still another \$1,000 short. But we did not doubt that the Lord would soon provide it. With glad anticipation we began making plans to leave for Indonesia in the summer after the end of the spring term courses I was auditing. For "everything is possible for him who believes." (Mark 9:23) When one truly believes, one acts without waiting for favorable circumstances. Just a couple of months remained of the spring semester, when one day the president of the Student Council of the seminary called us. He spoke of a certain fund which had been designated for summer missions. Each summer the money in this fund was to be divided up and allocated to students who wanted to be involved in foreign missions. That spring as the Student Council surveyed the various candidates for this support they decided to offer the entire amount in the fund to us. We had not

known this fund existed nor had we ever asked the Student Council for support. And the amount? Just under \$1,000. God was at work for us who believed and yearned to serve Him!

So, on July 10, 1978, Laura and I left the United States to pursue our dream. We longed to see the glory of the Lord. Long ago God challenged a man named Abraham to leave his country for the sake of greatness in the Kingdom. In the same way, we felt God daring us to step off the flatlands of timid humdrum existence onto the waters of faith. We accepted the challenge and leapt into a hair-raising adventure in the Spirit, which included Sookmay's marvelous deliverance.

Chapter Two

Giving up the American Dream

In 1970, Laura had zoomed heavenward on the wings of a dream--in the precisely opposite direction we were now traveling. She had actually been raised in Indonesia. At 17, fired by youthful ambition to impact the world, she journeyed to America. With her keen intellect, she gained admittance to New York's Columbia University, where we met.

Now, Laura had heaved her lively, squirming dream up on an altar of tears, as Abraham had once placed Isaac. Her trembling hand was poised above the thriving body of hope that was hers in America, ready to plunge in the dagger that would kill it forever. Among her dearest wishes was to live in America forever and become an American citizen. But the call of God she shared with me overwhelmed her human desires, and now she was jetting back out across the Pacific--an ocean she had previously thought not wide enough to separate her from the land of her birth.

Only minutes after lift-off from Los Angeles International Airport, as the passengers settled down for the long flight into Hong Kong, the first leg of our trip to Jakarta, the realization of what we had done began to dawn on me. We were leaving behind all we knew and loved. Back down there somewhere was our family and brethren in Christ in the Anaheim area who had so lovingly encouraged us in our vision. We had given up our earthly possessions. Most acute to us was the sense of leaving our country. The United States to us was comfort, security and familiarity. It was our home. Now I had left and was headed for a strange, alien land. Our father Abraham left his country by faith to go to a land which would be shown to him only after he arrived. In the same way, we

left all we knew and cherished for an eventual destination known only to God.

A surge of emotion swept through my heart. I covered my face from the passengers around me. Tears dripped onto my cupped hands as the realization struck home with impact. I was now fully, unconditionally, irrevocably about my Father's business, totally in His hands, my future completely dependent upon Him. No one in Indonesia, including Laura's parents, was expecting us. In my heart there was a sense that, at long last, the Lord was my God. I began sobbing uncontrollably before Him.

According to the natural mind, Laura and I were foolish. What could we possibly accomplish? Witnessing on the streets of Jakarta? But this we had already done on the streets of Southern California without great impact. If not street-witnessing, then what? At best, we could give a word of encouragement in an Indonesian church when invited. The prospects of a fruitful ministry were dim. Over our heads loomed the possibility of closed doors and returning to the States in failure.

However, we had chosen to be adventurers for God. We would gain nothing if we risked nothing. In God there is so much to gain and nothing of true import to lose for those who boldly follow Him with the light they have.

If the LORD delights in a man's way, he
makes his steps firm; though he stumble,
he will not fall, for the LORD upholds
him with his hand. (Psalm 37:23-24)

But what did we hope to accomplish? We hoped to win souls for the Kingdom of God. Maybe the Lord would take us to where there were no Christians. There we could minister without

ministerial papers. But this would have to be close to Laura's parents in Jakarta. If I were arrested for preaching the gospel to people of other religions, my father-in-law could bail me out of jail. Or, if we ministered in outlying villages, we could return to the city on weekends to be pampered. In short, we wanted a haven of comfort and security not far from our place of ministry. If needs came up, help would be nearby.

Already we had showed the Lord our faith by leaving for Indonesia without relying on man. Surely He would not mind if upon arriving in a foreign land with its strange language, customs and gods, I looked to man for security.

We spent the night in Hong Kong, resumed our trip the next day, heading south for Indonesia, a 3,000-mile-long tropical archipelago inhabited by the fourth largest population on earth. When we landed in Jakarta, twilight was being swallowed up by the night. As the plane taxied on the runway to its gate, the jaundice-yellow floodlights of the airport glared hostilely at me through my window, a warning that we had arrived in a land of darkness. We picked up our bags and slowly filed toward the exit. As I stepped out of the air-conditioned cabin to go down the stairs to the tarmac, a curtain of oppressive heat enveloped me. This was Indonesia, the sweltering oven. We had arrived.

As we stepped into the house, unannounced, from halfway around the world, Laura's father stared at us as if not believing that we were standing before him in his living room. "Something terrible has happened," he thought. "And where did they get the money to come here?"

When he recovered from his shock, he asked, "What on earth are you two doing here?!"

"Tell your Dad we've come to preach the gospel in Indonesia," I said, turning to Laura. She translated my answer to

him in Chinese. His amazement then turned to dire concern. Laura's father was an active Christian. He knew well the morass of obstacles and frustrations ready to engulf those who would proclaim Christ in his country, the land of idol-worship and sorcery. This son-in-law was out of his mind. After all, he was an American, unaccustomed with the language, laws, culture, climate, food, way of life, inexperienced in ministry. What could he possibly do here in Indonesia except become a burden?

On that day, however, my parents-in-law just happened to have in their home a pastor from Hong Kong, Dr. Philip Teng, as their guest. Dr. Teng had just completed about six months of short-term missionary work in a region called West Kalimantan, and had come to Jakarta for a brief rest. When I found an opportunity I approached him and told him why I had come to Indonesia.

"What do you think I could do here in Indonesia? Where could I minister?"

"Young man," he answered without a moment's hesitation, "if you want to serve the Lord here in Indonesia, you must go to Kalimantan."

"Kalimantan?" I wondered. Turning to Laura, I asked, "Where's Kalimantan?"

"Bob," she replied, "Kalimantan is the Indonesian name for the island of *Borneo*!"

In the minds of most Westerners, the name conjures images of head-hunting cannibals, man-swallowing pythons, orangutans, crocodiles and steaming, mosquito-infested jungles. No, I couldn't see myself brandishing a machete, hacking my way through the jungles in search of loincloth-clad natives to evangelize. I wasn't at all an outdoorsman. Besides, Laura was a delicate, city-bred girl, hardly ever let out of her house when she was growing up in Jakarta. Just the thought of going out of the house, let alone going to

Borneo, gave her anxiety.

Borneo? An island several hundred miles across the ocean from civilization in Jakarta....so very far away. And we didn't know anyone there. Without contacts, how could we ever get started? Laura had never been there. The thought of going there terrified her more than it did me. We had already been daring enough to leave everything in America and go to Jakarta by faith. Certainly God would not tax our faith beyond its limit and send us to the remote jungles of Borneo!

I began to fast and seek the Lord about the ministry He had for us. Hopefully, He would open a door for us in the general vicinity of Jakarta. We knocked on doors, visiting churches and ministers in the city. But no doors seemed to open for us. Moreover, we were told that the authorities in Jakarta would take an extremely dim view of the kind of open-air "radical evangelism" that we had practiced in Southern California. As time passed, Borneo began to look better and better. We met with experienced missionaries and ministers in Jakarta, seeking their counsel about ministering in Borneo.

"So you want to go to Borneo and preach the gospel?" Tom and his wife, serving with an American missionary organization headquartered locally in Jakarta, had received Laura and me quite kindly. Over dinner at their home we had told them of our leading to go to Borneo, but were frank about our lack of training and support from organizations. Nevertheless, we exuded confidence in the Lord of the impossible.

Tom was candid with us, wanting to spare us from certain failure and disillusionment.

"I've been over there, and it's not easy. Living conditions can be bad. Transportation is very poor. And you don't know anything

about the people and their ways. You won't know how to deal with them. I would advise you not to go."

Again and again we heard the same counsel: "Do not go." And if we did go, it would certainly be only to learn and observe. Someone without formal training could not expect to accomplish any serious work in Borneo. Even experienced missionaries had difficulty. We should return home to America to receive training and then after a few years try again. After all, how could two naive people, even though brimming with faith and vision, succeed in Borneo? Impossible! Once they face the harsh rigors of ministering in those primitive areas, they'll wake up to reality. They'll give up and run home.

The counsel was wise. But when God so desires, He can choose "the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; ...the weak things of the world to shame the strong." (1 Corinthians 1:27)

After two months of waiting, we felt it was time to come to a decision. Because we had no peace about staying in Jakarta, it was reduced to two choices. Either we would press on in faith to Borneo or go home to the States in failure. If we chose Borneo, we would have to draw on our last reserves of faith and boldness. To forge ahead to this forgotten, almost mythical land whose prehistoric images are etched on the imagination of every westerner, we would have to grit our teeth, close our eyes and leap blindly. But to give up and go home was even less palatable. God does not call us to be quitters. And so a certain determination grew in us until we would not take no for an answer. If the door to Borneo would not open, we would keep knocking, keep pounding, keep pressing on that door until it fell off its hinges at our feet.

What are you, O mighty mountain?
Before Zerubbabel you will become

level ground!" (Zechariah 4:7)

Laura and I decided to press forward to the land of Borneo. We had to see the glory of God no matter what.

Preparations were made, plane tickets picked up, supplies purchased: back-packs, water canteens, a good knife, sleeping mats, mosquito net, high boots, anti-malaria pills. A small tent was patched together. With all the preparations to be taken care of, the days ticked by quickly. Finally came the time for us to leave.

On the day before our departure, everything was loaded. While we were still busy packing, all our attention was given to the details of what we needed to bring. But now with our bags ready to go, our thoughts drifted back to the purpose behind all the preparations.

In several hours we were to embark into the unknown. Our destination was Pontianak, the capital of West Borneo. Who will pick us up at the airport? As far as we knew, no one. Where are we going to stay? We had no idea. How much money do we have with us? About three hundred dollars. When will we be returning to Jakarta? Only the Lord knew. We only had one-way tickets. The Great Commission only commands us to "go." It says nothing about coming back. What are we going to do when we get there? We didn't know. These stark facts rose to the surface in our minds. A dark cloud of apprehension formed in our hearts. What are we about to do? Have we lost our minds?

As that last evening in Jakarta wore on, we stopped speaking to one another. Talking about Borneo would only heighten our common anxiety. We felt as if a death sentence was hanging over our heads. That night sleep completely eluded us.

Chapter Three

Stepping out of the Boat

The little Fokker F-28 sped down the runway and lifted off quickly. Through my window I gazed longingly at Jakarta. The plane climbed rapidly, piercing the cloud cover. I turned back to myself and the anxiety brewing within my heart. Several moments later I glanced out the window. I saw displayed in every direction the shimmering splendor of the heavens. The awesome glory before me shook me out of my gloom and I finally remembered my God.

"Lord, I've really done it this time. We're heading for Borneo without knowing a soul there. We've jumped off a sheer cliff with nothing visible below to catch us. Help us, Lord! If you don't, we're done for...."

Throughout the flight I clung to the Lord for His reassurance. My imagination was running wild, stirring up fearful scenarios of having no place to go or stay after arriving in Borneo. The plane flew on relentlessly, bringing us closer and closer to our rendezvous with the unknown. With each passing minute, I could feel my heart beating faster and faster.

Suddenly the loudspeakers came to life.

"Ladies and gentlemen, in a few minutes we will be landing at Supadio Airport in Pontianak. Please fasten your seatbelt and return your seatback to its upright, locked position." The announcement jolted me and sent my heart racing. I peered nervously out the window. The ocean which had monotonously passed by underneath was now receding as we came over land. The land looked different from any I had ever seen before. As the plane circled the airport before approaching for landing I was able to look all around. In every direction, as far as I could see, I saw what

looked like a thick green carpet.

"O God," I cried, "it's just as bad as I thought it would be. *"It's all jungle!"* I resigned myself to my fate and threw myself on the mercy of God, the One who had called us to follow in the steps of Abraham.

It is one thing to read about the faith of Abraham, but an entirely different matter to try to do what he did. Abraham in his time was the only man called by God to become a new kind of human being, one who would live by faith. He was first called to demonstrate this faith by leaving his home country and migrating to an alien land where there would be no others who had his special calling or knew his God. Truly he would be alone in the new land, forced to rely on no one but his God. In contemporary America, with space-age communication and transportation along with widespread Christianity, it may be difficult to experience Abraham's circumstances. God, of course, does not demand that we should deliberately place ourselves in Abraham's physical situation. But in order to understand better the quality of his faith---which God encourages us to have---we might in our imagination step into his shoes. Laura and I had the privilege of experiencing an adventure of faith which allowed us to taste what Abraham might have felt.

The plane came to a stop after putting down on the single runway of the airport. We waited in our seats, watching workers outside push a staircase toward us until it rested against the door of the plane. The door opened; passengers already long queued up in the aisle with bags in hand bustled out the door and down the stairway to the tarmac. Laura and I, still in our seats, watched with resignation as the last passenger disappeared out the exit. There was nothing left for us to do but to follow.

Once on the ground, we trudged helplessly toward the

terminal building, at that time, a colorless, small-town affair suitable for the slow pace of Bornean life. We stepped through the entrance.

A tall middle-aged Chinese man stood right at the door as if to welcome an arriving guest. He smiled at me, almost warmly, as I walked by. Hope flickered momentarily in me, then died. I returned the smile but continued walking. God couldn't possibly have sent this man to pick us up; it would have been too good to be true. Suddenly he called out behind us.

"*Po Lan*." He did not shout, but the words were clear enough to be understood. Po Lan? Didn't that sound familiar? Po Lan? Oh, no. Po Lan is Laura's name in Chinese! Hallelujah!! Praise the Lord who will never put to shame those who trust in Him!

The God of Abraham was faithful to us. The man who came to pick us up was an elder in a local Pontianak church. He had heard from his brother, a member of my father-in-law's church in Jakarta, that we were coming. Though he did not know what flight we were taking, he came to the airport that day and met us. We were chauffeured into town where his church hosted us for a week. The Lord is faithful.

During that week the Lord opened the door for us to meet with the head of a regional church denomination. One of his churches in the interior had recently lost its pastor. When he heard that we were available to minister, he invited us to visit that church. If we liked it there, he said, we could stay on as pastor of the church.

Knowing God was opening a door for us, we happily accepted his offer. Early one morning we boarded a bus in Pontianak for an eight-hour trip into the interior of West Borneo. The church was located in a town known as Sanggau-Kapuas.

Sanggau had grown up along the banks of West Borneo's Kapuas River. The mighty Kapuas was the lifeline for the myriad towns and villages which dotted its course for hundreds of miles

from its mouth in coastal Pontianak to the deep interior of West Borneo. The Kapuas, to those who lived along it, was as the Nile to the ancient Egyptians. So important was the Nile that the Egyptians worshiped it as one of their gods. In the same way, to those along the Kapuas, nearly everything depended upon it. Transportation, drinking and bath water, food supply and even sewage disposal were all provided through it.

After we arrived in town in the middle of the afternoon, we went to the church where we were going to minister. We found it, a white cement building neatly situated at the top of a high mound. Overlooking it from behind and higher up the hill was a cemetery. A brother from the congregation welcomed us and prepared a simple meal. After eating, we settled down into a small room prepared for us.

The accommodations were spartan--a drab cement floor, cement walls of fading bluish-green paint, a single twenty-watt fluorescent lamp attached over the solitary window. The window had no screen but parallel horizontal glass slats which could be opened or closed. The heat and humidity of equatorial Borneo even at night forced us to keep the window slats open after going to bed. This gave free access to hordes of mosquitoes into our room. Some of them would usually find their way inside our mosquito net. Even during the day, the mosquitoes did not rest. To keep our feet from their bites, we wore thick woolen socks in our thongs.

The church also hosted an innumerable army of small red ants. These ants would crawl unseen onto the body from the floor, a table or chair, and explore quietly. Suddenly, without warning, they would sink tiny--but powerful--pincers into the flesh. It felt like being jabbed by a fine needle. At times a large company would invade our bed at night.

The bathrooms had no western toilet. Instead, there was an

Asian variety, faintly resembling a miniature bathtub with a large hole near one end for disposal. Each long side of the "squat pot," as they came to be known, was flanked by a foot-shaped support on which one rested one's feet while squatting over the hole. There was no bathtub or shower, but rather a cement vat of unheated water. With a dipper one scooped up water from the vat and poured it over the body.

There was no telephone. Electricity was supplied by the local power company only from dusk to bedtime.

Strangely enough, we settled into our new home with much joyful anticipation. Why? The powerful urgency in our hearts was now about to be released. We were going to begin, for the very first time, full-time ministry for the Kingdom of God. I was to become the shepherd of a flock numbering over one hundred souls!

With great gusto we began ministry in Sanggau. For the first time, the Lord had entrusted a flock for us to shepherd. During the first few Sundays I preached with urgency. My topic was faith, which I understood more than any other subject. It was, after all, by grace *through faith* that we had come all the way from the United States to the interior of West Borneo.

On the second Sunday I again preached about faith, but this time from a different perspective. On succeeding Sundays the flock heard about faith for God's provision, faith for tithing, faith to receive answers to prayer, faith to move mountains, faith to receive God's healing touch. Around the middle of our second month, I had nothing more to preach. I knew faith, but little else! It was quite embarrassing for a preacher to have nothing to say, so I began to pray desperately for God to teach me His word in order that I could teach the flock. The Lord gave me supernatural grace to seek Him.

I awoke suddenly in the middle of the night. Laura lay at my

side in deep slumber. In the distance I could hear the sounds of darkness: the rhythmic beating of drums by those who worship in the dead of night, calling on the name of beneficent spirits or perhaps hoping to appease vengeful ones. Eerie chants, shrieks and howls, like the tormented moanings of disembodied spirits, distantly filled the air. I shivered. But in my heart I felt the tugging of the Spirit urging me to get up to seek God. I rose quietly and slipped through the opening of the mosquito net. In the dark---the town's electric generator was shut down every night before midnight---I put on my thick athletic socks, a pair of heavy trousers and a windbreaker over a long-sleeve shirt. Over my head and neck I draped a large kitchen towel. Experience with mosquitoes had taught me to dress properly before going out. Finally I slipped my hands into a pair of thick white socks. After I was sure that every inch of exposed flesh was covered, I left our bedroom. It opened up into the center room which was the focal point of the parsonage, functioning as a dining room, sitting room and general purpose room. The other bedrooms, kitchen, closet and two exit doors all radiated out from this center room. With flashlight in hand I walked through this center room toward the exit door. Before opening the door I paused, looking up at the lintel. The flashlight revealed none of the giant spiders which were known to come out at night. The sudden movement of a door opening could confuse a spider crouching near the lintel to jump onto the person passing underneath. Holding my breath I stepped quickly out into the night.

Outside the door I paused. The strange noises and incidents which had taken place in our church had already made us uneasy. As I stood outside the door that night, that uneasiness intensified into near terror. I scanned my eyes in every direction, even turning toward the door behind me. Revulsion seized me as I saw a black

spider nearly the size of my fist crawling up the doorpost in slow motion. As if sensing my stare, it stopped and turned toward me. The eyes glowed red like embers in the glare of my flashlight. I backed away.

Following the side of the building toward the front, I came to the front entrance of the church. There, an outdoor cement patio nearly the same width as the building welcomed worshipers on Sunday mornings after they walked to the top of the hill where the church stood. But at night, exposed to every direction below, it seemed so vulnerable to whatever lurked down below in the dark. But at that moment I knew *this* was the place where I had to seek God.

I fell to my knees on the cold hard cement. In the fearful darkness I bent over with my face to the ground before my God. I asked Him to keep me from the evil presence which seemed to envelop me. Reminding Him that I had nothing left to teach His children, I begged Him to give me deeper understanding of His word. Every few moments I raised my head to look around, afraid of what I might find standing over me.

A swarm of mosquitoes attacked, hungry and unrelenting.

I knelt there outside in the dark for over an hour crying out to the Lord. In my kneeling position, with face to the ground, eyes closed and not raising a hand against the mosquitoes, I felt so exposed and defenseless. But in this I have come to see the wisdom of God.

O Lord, how many are my foes! How
many rise up against me! Many are
saying of me, "God will not deliver
him." But you are a shield around me, O
Lord; you bestow glory on me and lift up

my head. To the Lord I cry aloud, and
he answers me from his holy hill ... I will
not fear the tens of thousands drawn up
against me on every side. (Psalm 3:1-4,
6)

When does the Lord answer from his holy hill? He answers when our foes are many, when tens of thousands are drawn up against us on every side, when we are defenseless and vulnerable. He answers when we trust in Him and Him alone as our shield and cry aloud to Him.

In such a place God put me when He led me to that exposed hilltop position to cry out to Him. And, in accordance with His promise, He answered me from His holy hill.

Morning by morning, at five o'clock, four o'clock, sometimes even half-past three, the Holy Spirit continued to wake me up. By nature I am a late riser. But five or six days each week, over a period of a few months, He gently nudged me out of sleep. Each time I rose obediently and put on my thick clothing. Each time I left the security of my bedroom, marched outside to kneel on the concrete in the darkness. Through this regimen I grew in boldness until the Lord was able to take me up to the graveyard overlooking the church. People in the congregation wondered about their pastor who in the dark morning hours dared to go up among the tombs to pray. Day by day the Lord continued to wake me up hours before dawn. I would go outside and cry out with all my heart, beseeching Him to teach me His Word. I was grasping the deep meaning of Psalm 119:145-147: "I call with all my heart; answer me, O Lord, and I will obey your decrees. I call out to you; save me and I will keep your statutes. I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put

my hope in your word.”

At six each morning, we would join with a small group of prayer warriors for another hour of prayer in the sanctuary.

During the day, hours were spent in studying the Bible. At seminary in the States, my concentration while studying the Word had been limited. But now, fully involved in my Father's work, my heart came to rest. Finally I was able truly to feed on the pure Word of God without distraction. It was so tasty and satisfying that for hours I could partake of it without feeling weary. I understood the Psalmist's request:

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful
things in your law. I am a stranger on
earth; do not hide your commands from
me. (Psalm 119:18-19)

Through the many hours spent in prayer and immersed in the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Spirit revealed to me deep and beautiful things which I had never seen before. Whatever the Lord gave me I passed on to His flock. In this way I grew in the knowledge of the Scriptures as never before.

Chapter Four

The Deaf Hear

On a particular night, though, it wasn't the sweet voice of the Holy Spirit calling to me, but a grating sound. The noise yanked me from a peaceful sleep in the deep cradle of night. Laura slept on, as I tried to zero in on the troubling clamor. My ear suggested the pawing and scratching came from a four-footed, clawed creature, perhaps the size of a dog.

Just then, I could hear the prickly paws scampering on top of the furniture. Now it seemed to tear at our belongings, scratching and ripping. In my daze, I wondered how such a large animal could have gotten into our bedroom--which I had made sure was locked tight before retiring hours before.

I rose, reached for my flashlight and looked around the room. There was no sign of the animal and no evidence that anything in the room had been disturbed. I returned to bed, a bit apprehensive. It was not the first time such things had happened. Within moments the noise began anew. I jumped up quickly and searched every nook and cranny of the room, above and below. Nothing.

By then I realized it was another manifestation of some evil spirit, but that understanding did nothing to alleviate my escalating fear. I could do nothing but climb back into bed. The noise returned again. Then I heard a loud banging on our bedroom door. Who could that possibly be? The banging continued briefly. Next, I heard the exit door in the center room, just a few yards from our bedroom door, open with its customary creaking and then slam shut.

So whoever was trying to frighten us had fled. By this time Laura had awakened. Within seconds I dashed out to the center room to the exit door. I found it securely locked *from the inside*, just as we

had left it before we went to bed. It had not been a human prankster.

I believe God allowed the evil one to test us in this way to prepare us for the warfare to come. To fight the enemy one needs to recognize the various guises in which he operates. Over the years, beginning with the one I have just described, we have seen many guises used by Satan to come against us. Because of this experience, we are no longer in awe or afraid of him. At times he may come appearing as a roaring lion, but in reality for us he has already been destroyed by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. We need not fear him no matter how frightening his guise.

"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; *nothing will harm you.*"¹

The long history of sorcery and spiritism embedded within Indonesian culture has left its mark on the Christian church in that country. While evangelical churches understand the Lord's command concerning such practices, some other churches actually tolerate, if not incorporate, occultic beliefs within their overall religious practices. It is said that within certain denominations ministers are known to use charms or fetishes in hopes of increasing their effectiveness behind the pulpit.

Such a lack of understanding of the truth for some has left Christianity little more than a mask of respectability over that in which they actually put their trust: their sorcerers and spirit-gods. While it is certainly true that there are vibrant and Spirit-filled churches in Indonesia, many are dead. Other churches, even though

¹Luke 10:18-19

evangelical, have been seriously weakened by the spiritually dark climate in which they must function. Such was the condition of the evangelical church which we were given to pastor in Sanggau-Kapuas when we arrived there in 1978.

The previous pastor of the church Laura and I were now serving, a single lady, had left under great stress. The various pressures of ministering as a single woman and biting criticism she had endured from some in the flock made it unbearable for her. Apparently, this particular congregation ever since its founding in the early 1970's had suffered much from internal strife. Accusations, slander, threats and counter-accusations concerning misuse of finances, immorality and even political beliefs were not unusual. Church members had even accused one another as communist sympathizers before police---a serious crime in post-Sukarno Indonesia. Within such a church it was not surprising to discover the presence of evil spirits.

Battling the enemy face to face moves one from the theoretical to the operational. Listening to the teaching of the Word by God's servants is essential. But for it to become substance in us there is no substitute for *doing* the Word. As long as I sat in a classroom listening to someone else expound the meaning of Scriptures, the Bible remained theoretical understanding in my mind. But when I went to Borneo to live out the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit gave me empirical understanding in my heart to complete that which I had understood in theory. Only when I had to confront head-on the powers of darkness, or impart the Word to others did I seek it with all my heart, and only then did it become part of me.

And no one ministering in such a situation could cling to the belief that Acts-type works were not for today. In fact, a particular passage had lodged in my mind ever since I had learned that Jesus is

the same "yesterday, today and forever."² The persistent Scripture in my brain was Acts 3:1-8:

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer---at three in the afternoon. Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts walking and jumping, and praising God.

I was energized by the realization that if He had done such a thing through Peter in Jerusalem some 1900 years ago, He could do the same through me today in Sanggau-Kapuas. I waited for the

²Hebrews 13:8

opportunity.

One day we were told of a woman who had not come to church for a long time. She was sick and poor and had no one to take her to church. We went to visit her.

On that day it had rained steadily. To get to her house we had to wade through dirty water several inches deep. A brother from the church led us into her dilapidated house. She was seated when we came in, and could not rise to greet us. The story we heard from her lips was truly a pitiable one. Looking at her, we could believe everything she related. Her skin, browned by the years of working under an equatorial sun, was peeling, exposing underneath pink patches of diseased skin all over her body. It appeared to be some kind of pellagra caused by vitamin deficiency. Malnutrition had done its work on her mind, her conversation at times slow and unsure. She had very little strength in her legs and for a long time had not been able to get up and walk by herself.

We sat down to get acquainted with her. It became clear that her physical problems were but a mirror reflecting much misery and bitterness in her heart. Her life had been filled with unbearable hardship for which she blamed her husband and which she vented on her children with foul language in front of us. Her house, now longed neglected, could not even keep her family dry. The rain fell unimpeded into the house through large sections missing from the thatched roof. The wooden plank floor below was rotten from the continual drenching. All was in disarray and neglect.....her house, her family, her body and her soul. How much misery can a person endure?

We comforted her with the word of the Lord, hoping to bring light into her soul. Streaks of hope began to dawn in her heart. But what about her body? Would the Lord not touch her body in the way He touched so many as I had read in the Gospels and the Book

of Acts? I remembered Peter and the lame beggar in the third chapter of Acts. Could it be possible that God would.....? I decided to try it for myself.

"Would you like us to pray for the healing of your skin condition and for your legs so that you'll be able to walk again? With God nothing is impossible!"

She consented.

"Father, we ask you to heal your daughter from this cursed skin disease and to give strength to her legs so that she'll be able to get up and walk. Through Jesus You have forgiven her of her sins. Now, Father through Jesus heal her of these infirmities! Therefore, in the name of Jesus Christ, I command your legs to be made strong right now. In the name of Jesus Christ, get up and walk!"

With that I took her by her hand, just as I imagined Peter had done to the lame beggar, and helped her to her feet. I led her down the steps to the front yard. Then I let go.

She walked. At first, quite gingerly, as if confused that she was doing something that she was not supposed to be able to do. Moreover she had not used her sense of balance to walk for such a long time that she feared falling. She extended her arms out to her sides to balance herself and kept walking. After circling a few times in the yard she climbed back up to the front porch and sat down again. We looked at her in suspense, awaiting her verdict.

"My legs feel stronger," she finally said.

In our hearts, we were shouting, "Praise the LORD!"

Ministering to the sick is not limited to the Book of Acts and to apostles. Rather it is for those who would dare to believe that the way God did things nearly 2,000 years ago is the way He does them today. If we examine the incident of Peter and the lame beggar, we see that Peter did not pray to God for the beggar to be healed. Instead, Peter first got his attention and then commanded, "In the

name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!" Peter did not pray and then hope that the beggar would be healed. Rather he commanded healing with great boldness and expectation. He certainly would not have told the beggar to walk if he did not expect that God was healing his legs at that moment. If we would minister to the sick, we must learn to speak with authority in the name of Jesus Christ.

On another occasion, we were taken to visit an elderly Christian couple who lived upstream on the bank of a Kapuas tributary, the Sekayam River. They and their sons and their families had carved a small family enclave out of the Bornean riverbank jungle. When we arrived, they welcomed us warmly. We all sat down to get acquainted.

"How old are you, Grandfather?" I inquired respectfully.

"I'm eighty-eight years old," he replied.

"The Lord has certainly blessed you with good health and long life!" we exclaimed.

"Yes, he has," Grandfather agreed. "But I have a problem with my hearing. I cannot hear anything at all with my left ear. It is sometimes difficult for me to understand what my sons are saying." Something began to move in our hearts. We knew that Jesus had made the deaf to hear when He was on earth. Would He help this elderly man now?

"Grandfather, Jesus healed the sick 2,000 years ago. We believe that He does the same thing today. Would you like us to ask the Lord to open up your deaf ear?"

Grandfather agreed for us to pray for him. In the name of Jesus, we asked the Lord to restore Grandfather's hearing in his left ear. After prayer, I stuck my finger into the ear, and with as much authority as I could muster, commanded that the ear be opened in the name of Jesus.

"Grandfather, can you hear what I'm saying?" I asked,

covering up his good ear with my hand.

"What did you say? I can't hear what you're saying!" he answered. His hearing had not improved at all.

"Grandfather, the Lord will heal you in His own timing," we shrugged. There was nothing else we could say.

But late that night, long after we had gone home, a strange thing happened to Grandfather. As he lay in bed, his left ear felt a cool sensation, as if someone was blowing softly into it. It continued all night. At dawn, Grandfather happily discovered that he could hear with his left ear. He could even make out the words of one of his daughters-in-law whispering in the next room!

Chapter Five

The Sick are Healed

I had arrived in Borneo as inexperienced as a two-year old trying to fly an airplane. In fact, I was only two years old in the "New Birth." Pastoring the church at Sanggau-Kapuas was a bit like trying to pilot an aircraft through a turbulent sky. But the Lord is the greatest of teachers; He instructs while one "flies" the craft, and we learned much in those four months.

He taught us His word and anointed us to preach and teach the flock. He taught us how to minister effectively to the sick in the name of Jesus Christ. After four months in the School of the Holy Spirit in Borneo, I felt ready to move on to a greater challenge. I wanted to fulfill the vision that had brought us out to Borneo in the beginning: to preach the name of Jesus Christ and make disciples where the gospel had never been heard before. In January of the following year, the Lord released us from the Sanggau-Kapuas church. We sought His leading for our next step, and the Lord brought us together with a brother who told us of two small villages located three hours upstream on the banks of the Kapuas River. This man pastored another church in Sanggau-Kapuas and had just recently tried to begin a work in these villages. Only some children, however, had come to the meetings, and it had been difficult to find a boat for the six-hour round trip when he needed it. He suggested that we move up into the villages and take over. We agreed.

In late January of 1979, with our friend, we boarded a small wooden boat and headed upstream on the Kapuas River. The two-horsepower inboard engine was barely able to keep us moving forward against the strong current. Three agonizingly long hours later, we came upon a riverbank village where we disembarked. It

was called "Biang," which roughly translated, means "source."

The few hundred inhabitants of Biang, Chinese settlers mixed in with Indonesian Muslims, lived on a long, narrow strip of land running alongside the river. Behind them was the vast Bornean jungle; before them stretched the mighty, life-sustaining Kapuas. Forced by the bitter reversals of life which had condemned them to this remote outpost, many of them eked out a living by rising long before dawn to collect sap from rubber trees which they sold to one of a handful of local merchants. Others fished with net and line from tiny canoes for their food, still others plied the Kapuas with their small boats bringing in supplies from Sanggau, the nearest major town, to resell in the village at a profit.

At that time, Biang was a village not yet touched by the benevolent arm of the Indonesian government which sought to develop the thousands of villages like Biang scattered throughout the country. There was no electricity or telephone service. No post office or mail service. There were no motorized vehicles of any kind; even the one or two bicycles to be found were unsuitable for the dirt path which served as the main boulevard of Biang.

We located a small vacant house which the owner was willing to rent to us for three months. The rent for the three months amounted to eight dollars in American money. It was a reasonable figure, but not surprising in light of what the house had to offer. To describe it is simple: wooden boards nailed onto a wooden frame, with no frills. Without any interior paneling, one could spy on people walking by outside or catch a ray of brilliant sunshine through the cracks between the boards. The same advantage applied to the wooden planks comprising the floor. Sweeping it required no dustpan, for the dirt simply fell through the cracks onto the ground underneath the house. But this turned out to be a two-way street. Insects, mainly worm-like creatures, occasionally crawled into the

house to visit us through the cracks and holes. Since the house came unfurnished, we had to sleep on thin mats laid down on the floor. My great concern was the thought of a worm crawling onto our sleeping mat in the middle of the night and discovering a welcome spot on our warm bodies.

The windows were simply large square holes cut in the walls and covered by wooden shutters which swung open and shut on hinges. During daytime, when the windows were open, all manner of creatures, from hungry mosquitoes to wandering bees to inquisitive roosters, flew in to see us.

The house had two rooms: a small area partitioned off in a corner to serve as a bedroom and the remaining space which served as a living room and dining area. There was no kitchen as we know it. For cooking, we bought a small kerosene stove. To wash dishes, we had to go down to the river. Instead of bathrooms, the people of Biang relied on outhouses provided for public use down at the river's edge. These outhouses were built on small wooden platforms floating just off the riverbank. In a typical outhouse, about the size of a shower stall or larger, there would be a rectangular hole in the floor through which one could see the water of the Kapuas flowing by a few inches underneath. This hole is the equivalent of the Westerner's toilet. However, as we were soon to discover, in Biang there was no equivalent for toilet paper. As in most of the world, naked hands are used to tidy up after using the toilet.

Often, the one in the outhouse would not be alone on the platform. If it happened to be early in the morning or after mealtime, the platform was a center of activity. Women would be washing their clothes in the river, squatting on their haunches over the platform's edge. After mealtimes, they would be there washing and rinsing their dishes, or brushing their teeth and rinsing their mouths with the river water. They usually appeared oblivious to the

person a few feet away inside the outhouse who would be using their river water for an entirely different purpose.

Most intriguing to me was bathing. This also took place at the river's edge. To ensure privacy one went into the outhouse and closed the door. Only a dipper was needed. But what about water for bathing? With the dipper, one would scoop up water through the same hole which at other times served as a toilet and pour the water over oneself. After getting wet, the bather would apply soap to his body. A final rinse followed, again using water taken from the hole with the dipper.

Not just one, but several outhouses floated off the banks of Biang, up and downstream. One had to pay particular attention to the outhouse which was upstream from you, especially if it was occupied when you were taking your bath. Otherwise, you took the risk of finding foreign substances coming from upstream into your clean bath water.

Under such living conditions, Laura and I set up our home. From the outside, it appeared bleak. We had found ourselves in a remote riverbank village in the middle of West Borneo, which in turn was known as one of the least developed areas of Indonesia. There was absolutely nothing to do for fun in the village....no movie theaters, no restaurants, no parks, no department stores or shopping malls. No television, just the Voice of America on our radio. No magazines or newspapers. The only available activity would seem to be watching the Kapuas River flow by.

Moreover, in the eyes of the world, Laura and I were destitute. We had given up all our earthly possessions in the States when we left. No more car, no house. No savings in the bank, no stocks, no investment portfolio. Our monthly income amounted to \$200 each month, which the Lord graciously provided through my older sister Irene in New York. In the eyes of the world, we were

without hope.

Strangely enough, I had never felt such a sense of meaningfulness as I had living along the banks of the Kapuas. We were living for the Lord and doing His work. The challenge and commission which He had set before us---to bring the Kingdom of God to the people of Biang---spawned in me such a joy and excitement that nothing else in the world mattered.

After we had settled into our new home, the brother who had brought us to Biang returned to Sanggau. We were now left on our own to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who had never before heard.

And one day, as an old lady approached us, we also discovered the willingness of these people to believe. "My eye has been giving me pain for a long time. It's unbearable. It feels as if someone were jabbing my eyeball with a needle. Can your Lord help me?"

The white-haired, elderly woman had come up to us during our meeting in our house. Several people had showed up, interested in hearing the new teaching which we had brought to the village.

We had decided to begin the work by opening up our little house for meetings. With a corner of the house taken up by our bedroom, the remainder of the floorspace was available for people to sit down to listen to the good news.

In the gospels, we read that Jesus proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom with great power. He performed many miracles and healed those who came to him believing and seeking his touch. Because of the miracles he did and the words he spoke, the disciples whom he had chosen believed that he had been sent by God.

And so we chose to proclaim the Christ of the gospels, the one who was sent by God to save, heal and deliver. Boldly we announced that whoever put his faith in Jesus Christ would be saved

from sin, healed from sickness and delivered from evil spirits. Salvation from sin they could not readily see, but they were very familiar with sickness and evil spirits. In an area where ignorance of basic hygiene was the rule, sickness was rampant. In an area where fear of dark powers governed people, they would not go out for any reason at all---even to work---if they had heard the ominous cry of a certain bird. Or, if a snake crossed their path on their way to some destination, they would immediately turn about face and head home. Those in the past who had foolishly taken lightly these signs had paid with their well-being. One could not flout the local spirits and get away with it. They knew well the power of darkness. In such a spiritual environment, we began the proclamation of the gospel. If they were to believe that Christ could deliver them from the evil of sin, they first had to see that He could deliver them from the palpable evil saturating the very air they breathed.

It was on the evening of that meeting in our house that the elderly woman came forward in front of all the other listeners and in desperation appealed to Jesus Christ for help.

"Can Jesus help me?"

I laid my hand on her eye and asked the Lord to heal her. "Does it still hurt?" I asked her afterwards, removing my hand from her eye. She blinked. Then she said, "When you put your hand on my eye and began to pray, I felt a cool sensation in the top of my head. As you continued to pray, it slowly spread down through my head into my heart. When the coolness reached my heart, I felt a wonderful release and sense of peace. And the pain in my eye? It's gone!"

She decided to believe in Jesus Christ.

The news spread by word of mouth that the Lord proclaimed by the missionaries was real. More and more people came to hear the gospel. Among those who came were two brothers whose names

were Amin and Akong. Amin was the older of the two, in his late thirties or early forties, and had a wife and children. Through he had but a few years of elementary school education, he had amazing understanding of technical matters. He could repair boat engines, diesel generators, even watches. He was an accomplished carpenter and could build a house. Though he had never studied electronics, he could work on a radio and even understood the function of transistors.

However, Amin had problems in his life. He was addicted to cigarettes, smoking two or three packs every day. And he had a fondness for sitting down with his neighbors for an evening of gambling. He worked on and off, having income only when something in the village needed fixing or when a passing boat had engine problems. What was the purpose of life, anyhow?

Amin's brother Akong was a young man of nineteen. He was a small man, measuring barely five feet in height and ninety pounds on the scales. A few years before he had begun to rebel against his father who had despised him. Hate toward him built up to such a degree that Akong cursed him. Eventually his father died and his mother was heartbroken. But Akong himself reaped the fruit of his hate when a high fever came upon him. After the fever subsided, his voice disappeared. When finally his voice came back, it was not his usual voice but a high-pitched falsetto which remained permanently. It became a source of much inner turmoil to Akong whenever he traveled out of the village to another area where people did not know about him and the problem with his voice. When he spoke, people would turn and stare at him. Occasionally, someone who did not know him would wonder whether Akong was a man or a woman. Facing new people became a dreaded experience for him. His life was reduced to gathering sap from rubber trees for a daily pittance. His world was reduced to the little village of Biang where the people

knew and accepted him. Then one day, the kingdom of God came upon him. "We must die to ourselves, die to the world, die to sin, and live for Jesus Christ. Only then will we know what is truly life."

We were all sitting on the floor in a big circle in our house.

Fervently, I challenged them to follow Christ. Akong was sitting several listeners away on my left. He was listening attentively.

"Who here is tired of living? Who here wants to die to self, and live for Jesus Christ? Those of you here who want to die, raise your hand!"

Something in Akong's heart burned. His hand went up. Shortly, he was baptized in the river, signifying that he wanted to die to his old worthless life, the first person to do so in the village of Biang. Akong had become a new person in Christ.

Not long afterwards, Amin also decided to receive Jesus. After his water baptism, he came to us with a testimony.

"I used to be hopelessly addicted to cigarettes," he said. "Everyday I had to smoke three or four packs. If I didn't smoke, I'd get headaches and stomach pains. But after I was baptized in water, I stopped smoking all at once. And I feel fine."

As the Lord continued to work through His word, more and more people came to believe in Jesus Christ. Several were healed of their afflictions. All of them, as they were delivered from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, found themselves free from the fear which had once paralyzed them. Before the kingdom of God appeared in their midst, their lives had been controlled at the whim of very real evil spirits who took pleasure in oppressing them into forced obedience. Often they did not go out for work, spending the day shut up at home because they had earlier seen or heard some evil omen. The lost wages meant financial hardship for them. But now, they awoke each morning with thankfulness in their hearts toward their Lord by whose death on the

cross their enemy had finally been destroyed. With joy and confidence they left their homes in the pre-dawn darkness for the fields and forests where they labored, knowing that their Lord was with them to keep them from harm. Working regularly from day to day, they were blessed with steady wages.

We saw the Lord restore order to other lives, like a certain boy whose mother approached us one day. "Please come over to see my son," she pleaded. "He's in great pain."

It was early in the morning. We had a visitor, a woman from the village whom we had seen before in our village but with whom we had not yet been acquainted.

"Please come in, Auntie. What happened to your son?" Laura said, addressing her in the customary manner.

"It was like this. Yesterday afternoon, when my son was walking home from school, he suddenly collapsed on the ground. He didn't trip over anything, he just collapsed. His leg was in a lot of pain. He tried to get up, but he couldn't. So he crawled all the way home. I called for a witch doctor to have a look at him. She came to see him. She broke open a chicken egg to see what had afflicted him. According to the position of the egg yolk, she said that my son has been attacked by a strong demon. She said she couldn't do anything for him and left."

We left with her and followed her to her house. She led us into a room where her son lay on the floor, clad only in a pair of trousers. He was about sixteen years old. His hair was disheveled, dark semi-circles hung under his eyes.

"I couldn't sleep at all last night," he said weakly, looking up at us. "My leg hurt so bad. I was writhing on the floor all night. I can't get up....can't take it much longer." Pain and exhaustion were etched on his face.

I looked at him and said, "If you believe in Jesus Christ, you

will be healed. Do you want to believe in Him?"

"Uh...yes...I'll...I'll believe in Him," he answered through lips contorted by pain. It was difficult to see how else he could have answered under the circumstances.

"In the name of Jesus Christ," I spoke, "I bind this spirit which has afflicted you. Get up and walk, in Jesus' name!" With that I took him by his arm and dragged him to his feet. "Walk!" I said, pulling him forward and releasing him. With a big step he lurched forward and kept on going. He reached the wall, stopped and turned around, still on his feet.

"How does it feel?" I asked.

"It...it doesn't hurt anymore," he answered uncertainly.

"Is the pain gone?"

"Yes...it's gone."

"Can you walk now?"

"Yes." Color and life were returning to his face.

"Jesus has healed you. Believe in Him and follow Him for the rest of your life."

The young man, his mother and father, his older brother and sister, all came to believe on Jesus Christ.

God, in His unfathomable grace, visited the little village of Biang with manifestations of His kingdom. Through these, a little flock began to form, calling themselves Christians. For the first time in this remote area since Satan took dominion over the earth, men and women saw and received the light from their Creator.

Upstream from Biang, perhaps over a mile distant, was another village called Menjaya. Even compared to Biang, Menjaya was small and primitive. Shortly after we had settled down in Biang, we ventured out with the Word of God into Menjaya as well.

Our first meeting took place at the house of a man named Su Fong who had a wife and several children. After hearing the gospel, Su

Fong commented that he had heard about this religion before. In fact, he said he had in his possession a book about the man Jesus Christ. Curious, we asked him to show us the book. It was a rather thick book bound with a vaguely familiar green hardcover. As Su Fong handed it to me, I opened it up to the title page. It was a Bible! My eyes dropped down to the bottom of the page where I read the words, "Published by the Watchtower Society." It was a Jehovah's Witness Bible, fondly known among evangelical Christians as "the Green Phantom!"

As we proclaimed the Word of God to Su Fong and the others who came to listen, the Lord confirmed the message by healing the sick, just as He was doing in Biang. Su Fong and his family were the first in Menjaya to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, followed by several others whose names had already been written in the Lamb's Book of Life. The joy of the Lord from heaven spread among the believers as the Holy Spirit came upon them, filling them with a Life which they had never known existed on earth. Elderly women, who had never known a moment of fulfillment in the bitter hardship of village life, came to the meetings at Su Fong's house with faces radiating heaven's joy. Our thrice-weekly evening meetings in Menjaya alternated days with our meetings in Biang which were also held three times a week.

For commuting to Menjaya, Su Fong offered us the use of his rowboat. We purchased a used twelve-horsepower outboard engine and attached it. With this arrangement, the Lord provided transportation for us back and forth between Biang and Menjaya.

One night after our evening meeting in Menjaya, we set out to return to Biang. After Laura climbed into the boat, I fired up the outboard with the rope, pushed off from the pier and set off downstream. The night was pitch black from the heavy clouds which had rolled in early that evening. Moments after we left

Menjaya, the wind picked up ominously. Then the rain came. Visibility plummeted to zero. Under clear nighttime skies, I had no problem steering the boat since I could just make out the land on each side of us as we headed downriver toward Biang. Even under dark nighttime skies we could make it, being guided by the lamps of Biang downriver which we could see in the distance as we approached. But with the rain coming down that night, I could see absolutely nothing and could not tell whether we were going downstream or heading toward land. The Kapuas River at that point was perhaps nearly a half a mile wide. I slowed down the outboard to just over idle speed and allowed the boat to drift. Squinting my eyes to keep out the pelting rain, I looked ahead, straining to catch a glimpse of any speck of light in the distance which hopefully would lead us to Biang.

"What are we doing here in this little rowboat, in the middle of a storm on a river in remote West Borneo.....how did we ever get ourselves into such danger.....?" Even as my grip on the steering arm of the outboard tightened and my eyes scanned the darkness for light, my thoughts turned inward.

"I'm not supposed to be here. I've never driven a boat before in my life, I'm a poor swimmer. We're in danger! What are we doing here? I'm supposed to be in civilized America, pursuing a successful career as a respected scientist or businessman. I'm supposed to be rising in the world, owning a big house and driving an expensive sportscar....." But then it suddenly become clear to me even as I shivered under the wind and driving rain.

"Yes....that's right....God has taken me away from all that. Yes. By His grace, I have become a citizen of an another world, a heavenly kingdom where I am no longer entangled in the desires of this life. God has chosen me to receive the highest calling of all, to give up everything and to become His servant. That's why we're

here in this little boat in the middle of nowhere. How strange and unfathomable are the ways of God.....praise His wonderful name....." Finally I understood.

"Bob! Bob! There's a light over there!" Laura shouted over the din of the rain, waves and outboard. I looked, and in the distance on our left a light flickered faintly. Praise God. Hopefully we had not drifted too far, past Biang. I steered the boat toward the light, compensating for the current which pushed us steadily downstream.

As we drew closer, more lights appeared. It was Biang. We looked for lights that were familiar markers to us. The rain had begun to subside, and as we pulled up alongside an outhouse where for the time being we could tie up the boat and take up the outboard, it had stopped. I was wet, fatigued and cold. I wanted to go home right away and change into some warm, dry clothing. But we couldn't leave the outboard engine outside at night. Unattended, such things were known to disappear. With Laura holding the flashlight, I loosened the vises which held the outboard to the boat and pulled it up out of the water onto the boat.

Now for the tricky part. Standing on the shaky little rowboat I hoisted the sixty- or seventy-pound engine up onto my shoulder. As I prepared to step off the boat over to the pier straining to keep my balance, I wondered, as I usually did, how it would be if while stepping over I slipped and fell into the river with an outboard engine on my back. Gingerly I stepped off the boat onto the pier and headed toward the riverbank which led up into the village. The rain had soaked the riverbank, turning it into very slippery mud. If only my friends at home in the States could see me now, I thought, as I lowered the outboard onto the pier and took off my shoes and socks, handing them to Laura. The outboard then went back up onto my shoulder. I trudged forward into the mud, digging my toes down hard with each stride to get better traction. Up the bank I plodded,

taking each step with painful care until my legs began to ache. Thank the Lord our house was so close to the riverbank. I reached the house. The outboard now felt like two hundred pounds. Climbing carefully up the four ladder rungs of the stairs leading up to our front door, I went inside and set the engine down on its stand in the corner of our living room. "We're home at last," I thought to myself, breathing a sigh of relief. "I can't believe we're out here in the jungles of Borneo, risking life and limb. I can't believe we're out here doing all these things." But God had brought us home safely again.

Chapter Six

The Spirit of Elijah

Laura was weeping. Though it was a gloriously beautiful morning in our home, she seemed surrounded by a heavy, dark cloak of oppression.

The blistering mid-day equatorial sun was not yet high, and a refreshing cool breeze from the Kapuas down below blew in through the front door. I sat on the bare living room floor with my Bible in hand, enjoying the Lord's presence and rejoicing at all the glorious things He was doing through us in Biang and Menjaya.

I looked up at Laura who was sitting at our dining table, her face buried in her hands. I got up and went to her.

"Laura, what's wrong? How come you're crying?"

"Bob, I feel so horrible. Everything is so black."

"What do you mean?" I asked again, curious to know what could possibly be wrong.

"I feel so depressed. There's no meaning in my life. Everything is just meaningless, hopeless and black. I'm so unhappy! It's been like this for a few days now. Every morning I feel so horrible. I've been afraid to let you know, I was afraid you wouldn't understand."

I was dumbfounded. How could she find life meaningless when God was using us so mightily to save and deliver souls for the kingdom of God?

"What do you mean, 'everything is meaningless and black'?" We've been privileged to be called by the Lord to serve Him full-time. He's opened the door for us to come here to Indonesia. We've been bringing souls into the kingdom, we've been seeing miracles almost every day! It's so glorious, how can you feel it's all

meaningless? What could be more meaningful than what we're doing?" I was getting impatient with her.

"I don't know, Bob, it just feels so black. I can't help it. Try to understand and comfort me."

But I couldn't understand and I couldn't comfort her. "But you should know better, Laura, you're a servant of the Lord and you're supposed to know better. Do you know where those feelings are coming from? From Satan! You've got to stop believing Satan's lies and resist him in the name of Jesus. Come on, Laura, snap out of it! You know, you don't have enough faith!"

As I now look back at it, I could not tolerate any sign of weakness in Laura because she was one flesh with me and I considered myself to be God's man of faith. Thus I could not accept any frailties in the ministry of which *I* was the head. Instead of accepting it and dealing with it in love and truth, I blamed Laura for her condition. Instead of praying for her to be freed from the attack, I instead chose to condemn her. Day by day, each morning, the cloud of darkness came upon Laura. Toward the afternoon, when usually we went out to minister, the cloud would lift. In the evening, after a meeting in either Biang or Menjaya, we would return home with glad hearts having accomplished work for our heavenly Father. But the next morning, without fail, the darkness returned. It was embarrassing for me.

Laura cried out to the Lord for the depression to be taken away. But it was to no avail. Nothing seemed to help. Why wouldn't the Lord help us? We were soon to discover that it was not the Lord who would not help us. Rather, it was something which long ago Christ had commissioned his disciples to perform in His name. Mark 16:17 includes the very last words that He uttered before leaving this world: "And these signs will accompany those

who believe: In my name they will drive out demons...". *Who* would drive out demons according to this verse? *We, the believers*, would do this in the name of Jesus Christ. If He already gave *us* the authority and the commission, would it not be better for *us* to do it rather than ask Him? Would He be obligated to do something for us that He had already given *us* the authority to do?

But we would not understand the authority of the believer until much later. Only then would Laura be set free from her depression.

After three months of intensive ministry in Biang and Menjaya, our extraordinary adventure came to a close. The return-to-the-United-States portion of the round-trip airline tickets we had purchased in Los Angeles nearly one year beforehand was soon to expire. We felt it was time to go home to reflect on the eleven incredible months we had just experienced, and to seek the Lord concerning His will for our future. God willing, we would return to Borneo!

In each village God had given us a small flock of believers in Jesus Christ. Appointing Amin and Su Fong to oversee the two fledgling churches, we committed them all into the hands of the Lord who had called them. Then we returned to the United States.

"Nothing is impossible with God." Indeed, He had done the impossible through two obscure and untrained people. Several people had told us that it could not be done, but Laura and I are two witnesses of what the Holy Spirit can do through yielded and filled vessels.

The next nine months saw us waiting on the Lord for a door to return to Borneo. After a brief stay in California, we crossed over to the East Coast and stayed with my older sister in New Jersey.

Amy took us to worship with her in First Christian Assembly of Plainfield. The pastor and saints there opened their hearts to us as we shared our testimony of Borneo. Without our appealing for their support, this one congregation graciously committed itself to provide full support for us to return and continue our ministry in the jungles of Borneo.

The pillar of cloud was once again on the move!

In May 1980, we returned to West Borneo and stayed in Pontianak for about one week as a guest in a Pentecostal Church pastored by Pastor Luwuk. We had heard from different people on two separate occasions about an area called Batu Ampar. It was said that Batu Ampar was a place of great darkness where worldliness and immorality prevailed. The gospel was unknown there, and it would be difficult to win souls to Christ. This intrigued us. The Lord used Elijah to challenge the servants of the false god Baal to a celebrated power encounter on Mt. Carmel. This was at a time when a vast majority of Israelites had succumbed to Baal's not insignificant power. We were looking for such a challenge. After Biang and Menjaya, we felt that the Lord would entrust something bigger to us, and perhaps Batu Ampar would be that challenge. And so we made preparations to scout out the area first. Again, we found ourselves in the position of knowing no one and having no contacts there. We would have to depend completely on the Lord again.

Late one morning, we went down to the harbor down at the Kapuas River in Pontianak and boarded a vessel, which was known as a "water bus," bound for Batu Ampar. It sailed south on the Kapuas and several hours later in the early evening found its way to the coast of West Borneo where the river emptied into the South China Sea near a town called Kubu. After stopping at Kubu for about a half an hour for the passengers to get off and stretch, we

took another river which turned inland in the direction of Batu Ampar. A few hours later, at about ten o'clock, I wandered to the back of the waterbus where, alone, I looked up at the gloriously bejeweled nighttime sky and spoke to God.

"Father, thank you for bringing us to Batu Ampar. Show us your glory there, Father, manifest your power and glory that many may believe in Your Son, Jesus Christ. For You are the Living God, the One who created all that I see above my head tonight. There are none like You; only You are worthy to receive glory, honor and praise....." I continued to worship Him for several minutes more, my eyes fixated on the heavens above. Suddenly I noticed a distant milky haze over the horizon in the direction we were heading. I looked into the blackness before us and could make out many specks of light in the distance. It was the town of Batu Ampar! I continued my prayer.

"Father, give me this area. Give me Batu Ampar. Let me take this area for Thy Kingdom. Grant me your anointing to proclaim your word in the power of the Holy Spirit, with signs and wonders following. Let me glorify your name here, Father!" With a half hour, we arrived at the dock of Batu Ampar.

It was 10:30 at night when we disembarked onto the dock. But despite the hour, Batu Ampar's harbor bustled with activity. People were everywhere. Some were out for an evening stroll. Others were busy serving customers at the several coffee shops and restaurants still open. Still others hung out at boardwalk corners with their buddies.

We had arrived. But not knowing where to go, we ambled up the boardwalk which led into town. The boardwalk ended at a dirt path which went to our left and right. Streams of people walked the path in either direction. We didn't know whether to go left or right,

but somehow we chose to turn left and were swept into a wave of pedestrians. There were no cars or paved roads, only that single dirt path lined on either side with houses, stores and coffee stops, some lit up with bright kerosene pressure lanterns, others with electric lights. On our right, we passed a movie theater playing a low-grade kung-fu martial arts movie. Crowds of people, young men and women, parents with their young children, milled outside the theater waiting for the next feature to begin. Large horn speakers attached to the outside of the building amplified the din of the fray inside on the screen out onto the theater courtyard. Beyond the movie theatre, we went down a gentle slope, passing dilapidated sawmill housing on the left and more stores and coffeehouses on the other side of the path. We came upon another movie theatre similar to the first one. Everywhere, people engrossed in the pleasures of Batu Ampar nightlife.

As we walked, we had no idea where we were going, but we continued to pray silently to the Lord for his guidance. Suddenly, as we were approaching the second theater, I developed an urge for some ice cream. Just beyond the theater was a coffee shop. I pulled Laura off the path and we sat down at an outside table. We took our knapsacks off our backs and set them down. A young woman came out to take our order. We ordered ice cream, and she went back inside to prepare our order.

Shortly, she returned with our "ice cream," which was actually crushed ice spiced with red sugar water. Setting the two small dishes before us, she inquired, "Are you two from the ocean freighter?" Large ocean freighters, many from foreign countries, frequented the harbor to pick up sawn timber produced in the ten sawmills which had sprouted up around Batu Ampar within the last ten years. While ships were being loaded, their crews went on shore leave in Batu Ampar. Since our waitress knew by our appearance

that we were not natives of Batu Ampar, she assumed that we had come ashore from one of the ocean freighters anchored in the harbor.

"No, we're not," Laura replied in the Hakka dialect of Chinese. "We've come to Batu Ampar to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ." She looked blankly at Laura.

"Have you ever heard of Jesus Christ?" Laura continued.

"No, I've never heard of it," she replied. There was a pause.

"Is there a hotel here where we could spend the night?" asked Laura.

"No. The hotel was burned to the ground in the big fire that we had here a few months ago. It hasn't been rebuilt yet." That's great, I thought to myself after Laura translated her answer to me. Lord, where are we going to stay? Please provide a place for us!

"Why don't you stay in my house?" she offered suddenly.

"My husband and I live here with his parents," she explained. The coffeehouse occupied the front half of the bottom floor in the two-story house. "I'm sure we can find you a place to sleep. Maybe somewhere upstairs. And I'll cook for you."

"Praise the Lord," I whispered in my heart. His wonders never cease.

That night we stayed with our new friend, whose name was Akim, and her family. They were extremely gracious to us. Her parents-in-law not only welcomed us to their home, but even gave us their own bed to sleep in. They moved into the living room where they slept on the floor. They did this unusual act of kindness for us who were complete strangers. It was God.

The next morning we woke up to a satisfying breakfast of fried eggs prepared by Akim. We had mentioned to Akim's father-in-law that we were looking for a house in Batu Ampar. After breakfast, he took us out for a look around. A hundred yards down the path, next to a mosque, he pointed out to us a house which was

up for sale. It was a small, simple wooden dwelling with a yard in front. We went inside, spoke to the owner, and the house was ours for about \$1600.

On the next day, we left Batu Ampar to return to Pontianak. During the following week in Pontianak, we made preparations for our move to Batu Ampar to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God.

Chapter Seven

Demons are Cast Out

Our Kingdom foray was blocked even before we had opportunity to charge into battle.

Our plan was to begin the work in Batu Ampar with a big outdoor miracle crusade. We brought in powerful sound equipment from Pontianak, secured permission from a sawmill to use its soccer field for the meeting and obtained approval from the local authorities. Leaflets were printed up announcing a "night of miracles" each day for three days. We even prepared an audio-visual message to be presented in the movie theater inviting people to come and meet Jesus Christ. Fresh from our success in Biang and Menjaya, we were ready for the big time: glorious miracles of healing and multitudes of pagans won to Jesus Christ. Batu Ampar would shortly be ours.

But something intervened to thwart our ambitious plans for the kingdom of God in Batu Ampar. Two rival tribes in Batu Ampar threatened to fight one another. The local authorities, taking this possibility very seriously, took every step they could to defuse the situation and preserve the peace. Any large public gathering, they knew, could provide an opportunity for an outbreak of violence between the two tribes. The meetings we were planning were especially risky. They were to be held outdoors and at night, attracting all kinds of people. The topic involved Christianity, always a very touchy subject in Indonesia where a majority of the population subscribe to other beliefs. Thus the local authorities revoked our permit to hold the crusade. We did all we could to have the revocation reconsidered. We begged, pleaded, even taking a day

to travel to our local capital to appeal to the higher authorities. But it was all to no avail.

It was a great blow to us. Our dreams of a sensational debut for the gospel in Batu Ampar had been dashed. What had happened? It was not until much later that we received understanding about this. It would not be until twenty years later that we would see multitudes come to Christ and multiplied miraculous signs in mass meetings. And it would not be in Indonesia. The Lord is sovereign and had His time for us.

After our recovery from this great disappointment, we set about to begin the work with whatever the Lord had given us. God had given us a house where there was a small room in the front measuring about nine by eighteen feet. Here we would begin our meetings. Certainly very humiliating in comparison to a mass miracle crusade. But sometimes God can be more interested in the development of our character than in simply the number of souls that we can bring to Him.

Indonesian law discourages Christians from going door-to-door to preach the gospel, especially to adherents of other officially recognized religions. And so we decided to open up our little front room for nightly meetings where we shared the gospel. People came by twos and threes to hear what new religion the Americans were bringing. After they heard the gospel, many did not come back. We had come face to face with the spirit of polytheism which rules Indonesia.

There are five government-recognized religions in the nation: Islam, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism and Hinduism.

All people not already adherents of one of these five religions, such as the several million people of Chinese origin who mostly worship the spirits of the dead, are officially encouraged to convert to a recognized religion. The government wisely acknowledges that

traditional religion is incompatible with communism, which is anathema and outlawed in Indonesia. Religion, Lenin said was the opiate of the masses, is now the savior of the masses from communism.

The spiritual heritage of Indonesia, however, is not any of the traditional religions, but rather the worship of spirits, or polytheism, for all practical purposes identical with idol worship and animism. Before Islam, Buddhism and Christianity came to Indonesia, people recognized the existence of invisible spirits, both good and bad, which inhabited their world. Many of these spirits were thought to be the spirits of people who had died and become gods. These gods had to be feared, fed and worshiped, or else they would not bless one with health, prosperity and long life. Not only would they not bless, they would also curse and ruin those who were lax in offering them the required offerings of incense, tea, cigarettes, pork, chicken, beef, fruit and various other foods. To those who zealously sought supernatural power through fasting and steadfast obedience to their ritualistic demands, they bestowed strange demonic abilities. When such a disciple died, he could become a local deity given charge over his own turf on earth.

Against this backdrop, missionaries came to the then East Indies from Europe and other distant regions bringing their religions. The people received them and the new teachings they brought, but only in a formal, outward sense. For the new teachings did not necessarily replace the old beliefs; in most cases, they merely supplemented them. The polytheistic spirit embedded within their heritage permitted them to receive the new religion but not exclusively; the god(s) of the new religion, to put it somewhat simply, were appended to the parade of the East Indies pantheon.

Thus some adherents of the Muslim faith in Indonesia, who worship Allah and him only, will seek out sorcerers for help in time

of sickness and need or even to avenge themselves against their enemies. Buddhists, most of whom are Chinese, continue their old beliefs by worshiping the spirits of their deceased parents and ancestors. They consult witch doctors to predict their future days, to predict the winning numbers in next week's lottery, to place evil spells on those who have incurred their disfavor, even to place a love spell on another man's wife. Those who profess Hinduism have no difficulty whatsoever with many gods. It has been said that in India, the cornerstone of the Hindu faith, there are some 30 million gods. Last but not least, we must consider the Christians of Indonesia. Though the number of born-again believers is steadily increasing, yet in 1980 perhaps the majority of Christians both Catholic and Protestant would have little qualms about visiting a sorcerer should the Lord their God delay in answering their prayers. It was not until the 1990's when this changed dramatically as revival swept the major cities of Indonesia.

Sorcerers, of course, call on all manner of spirits by whose power they are enabled to operate in the supernatural realm. One former sorcerer whom we knew had at his disposal nine hundred and ninety-nine "gods." We know that these gods are in reality demons. Sorcery, therefore, has as its root polytheism.

To those in Batu Ampar who heard the gospel we preached, it sounded strange and alien. "You must believe in God the Father through His Son Jesus Christ and in Him only. Moreover, you must trust in Him and in Him only for all your needs, spiritual, financial and physical. He must be your one and only God. You must no longer worship and trust in other gods. You must no longer worship your dead ancestors," we declared.

But these people had lived all their lives by the adage, "the more gods, the merrier." They could not understand our teaching.

"Who is this Jesus Christ that we should give up the gods of our fathers and worship Him alone? If this Jesus Christ can get along with our gods, fine; perhaps we can accommodate Him and worship Him as well. But if we were to betray our gods, they would be very displeased with us and might seek revenge on us. We do not want to incur their wrath, for they are powerful. Moreover, our parents would be displeased if we refuse to worship and offer food to their spirits after they die. They would get very hungry and angry and come back to haunt us. And what if someone were to cast an evil spell on us? Our sorcerers can sometimes find ways to appease the evil spirit and it may leave. But can this Jesus Christ protect and deliver us from these spells? Perhaps he can save us from our sins and take us to heaven but what can he do for us here on earth?"

Batu Ampar, unlike Biang and Menjaya, had a prosperous circle of professional sorcerers whose power was proven. With their spirits they could negotiate a deal for their clients who were suffering at the hands of other spirits. They appeared to be able to heal the sick. And they also knew how to cast spells which could swoop down upon a person with terrifying effect. A lock of hair, a photograph or a piece of clothing worn by the intended victim was enough to cast the spell. One resident remembered that "a strong wind blew and the tree branches shook, and the undergarment tangled up in the branches flapped wildly. Suddenly, inside the house, there was terrified screaming followed by frantic crying. The spell had hit her. She went insane; eventually her hair fell out. It took her a long time to recover."

Thus, in order to reach people for Jesus, we needed to give them glimpse of His temporal power which would serve as a sign of His power to save from sin. The darkness embedded in their spirits through unknown centuries would not be dispelled by mere words. They had to witness something which would draw their attention to

Jesus Christ. Only then would they give attention to His claims of being the only Lord and Savior. And only when they paid attention and listened to the word could the Holy Spirit convict them of sin and bring them to the new birth. If they witnessed miracles done in the name of Jesus Christ which their own gods could not do, we reasoned, they would be more willing to listen. Of course, the gospel is much more than simply presenting a more impressive show of outward power than the pagans are able to. But some pagans need a sign to point to the One whose words they would do well to listen to.

Accordingly, we began to look for opportunities to pray over the sick. The recent miracle crusade fiasco had dampened our enthusiasm for ministering to those with infirmities. But as we saw that our work in Batu Ampar was progressing so very slowly, we felt we had to give the people a demonstration of God's power. This was confirmed in a conversation with our Brother Akwet, who was among the few who received Jesus in the early months of our work.

"Brother Akwet, what is it going to take to bring many people to believe in Jesus Christ here?" At that time, the little nine by eighteen feet room we were using for meetings was not even half full. Batu Ampar, an area with 10,000 people, was simply not taking us seriously.

"I think," said Akwet without hesitation, "that if evil spirits could be cast out and sick people healed, a lot of people would come to believe in the Lord."

We began to offer prayer for those with afflictions.

Strangely enough, however, no one we prayed over was healed. We could not understand it. Time and time again, nothing happened when we ministered to the sick. The Lord had worked mightily in Biang and Menjaya. Why was He not doing the same here in Batu Ampar?

In frustration, we sought the Lord.

One day, Laura pulled a paperback book out of my shelf. It dealt with the practical aspects of casting out demons from people. Since I thought I already knew enough about deliverance, having observed how Jesus and the apostles cast out evil spirits in the New Testament, I didn't feel pressed to read the book. But when frustration with the lack of fruit in our work set in, we were ready to learn. I read the book and considered it carefully. In the book I discovered a point which I had not considered before. Casting out demons, I had thought, was simply a matter of commanding them to come out of a person in the name of Jesus Christ. Once that was done, we believed by faith that the person had been delivered, even though his condition appeared unchanged. In time, there would be a change. This book, on the other hand, taught that this way may be inadequate for many people needing deliverance from evil spirits. According to the book, the minister should keep on commanding the evil spirits to leave until they actually come out as evidenced by some physical sign or actual change in the person's condition. For example, in Luke 11:24 after Jesus drove out a demon that was mute, the man who had been mute was able to speak. I knew that some aspects of this teaching had become a point of contention among Christians. We were aware also that many do not believe that a Christian can have a demon. All the theological arguments for and against this teaching notwithstanding, we considered our little flock of believers. Nearly each one of them had some kind of physical or "psychological" problem. Regardless of how we ministered to them, they simply could not get well. More importantly, they displayed a spiritual dullness which kept them from growing in understanding and zeal for the Lord. No matter how powerful or impassioned was the word we gave them, they were simply not being touched by the Holy Spirit. Something was

holding them back. Fookso, a sister who was one of the early believers, was one of them.

Fookso lived alone with her five young children at the edge of town in a dilapidated house. At that time her husband was away serving time in prison for selling unauthorized lottery tickets. The story of her family before they received the good news, a story of wretched darkness and misery, is typical of the countless families in Indonesia who live on earth apart from the light of Jesus Christ.

When she was little, her father was a prosperous trader who bartered goods to the Dayaks, the indigenous peoples of Borneo, getting back gold in return. His success, he thought, was a blessing from the large idol set up in their house by his wife's uncle, who was a skilled practitioner of sorcery. So determined was he to remain in the good graces of the power behind his idol that he would spend hours at a time on his knees in front of it. The skin on his knees became tender and cracked. In time, he was able to accumulate considerable wealth.

One day, however, he began to experience severe pain in his stomach. He rushed over to see his wife's uncle, who had become their family witch doctor. After the treatment, he felt better. Paying the standard fee, he left for home. Several days later, the pain returned, just as bad as ever. He went back to his wife's uncle, who had cured him the first time. The man again treated him in consultation with the spirits he had summoned, and the pain subsided. Fookso's father gratefully paid a generous amount in return for the man's professional services and went home. Not too many days later, however, the pain recurred with such severity that Fookso's father thought he was going to die. As before, he made his way over to his trusted sorcerer and was treated. In this way, there began a long repeated cycle of pain-treatment-recovery-payment-pain which eventually drained the family of the financial resources

they had worked so hard to accumulate. They came to realize that the man who had been healing him was also the one who had been afflicting him. To those in the trade, it is a simple matter to send a spirit to afflict someone for the purpose of drawing the victim to come in for treatment. The treatment will involve arranging for the afflicting spirit to desist until after the patient, now "healed," has returned home. At an opportune time, the spirit recommences his work, the sickness returns, and the victim hurries back to the witch doctor willing to pay any amount to be relieved of the unbearable pain. We cannot say that all sorcerers in Indonesia engage in this deceitful practice. But it is not surprising that many do, given the character of their master, Satan.

Jesus once said that "Satan cannot cast out Satan," replying to the Pharisees who claimed that he was casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. Indeed, sorcerers cannot cast out evil spirits. At times, however, they may appear to. But in reality, no true deliverance is taking place. I have come to conclude that each time a sufferer visits a sorcerer for relief from a demonic attack (not all physical infirmities are a result of demon activity), another demon is summoned. The new demon either appeases or persuades the afflicting spirit in the sufferer to refrain for the time being. He may even quietly join the first demon, taking residence in the person's body. The patient may then feel relieved from his suffering, his faith in the witch doctor reinforced. Unknown to him, unfortunately, the cure is only temporary. Now he has two demons instead of one (or at least more than he had before) who at some time in the future will induce even worse symptoms than before. The victim hastens back to pay homage and cash to the witch doctor while unwittingly taking additional uninvited guests into his body. Even in the case where the infirmity does not appear to recur after treatment by occultic methods, the damage is already done. The

patient's faith in sorcery has been built up; the demons indwelling his body, soul and unredeemed spirit will certainly dull his spiritual sensitivity to the things of the other Kingdom. When he hears the gospel for the first time, his heart will already have become like stone.

Fookso's family became destitute. The money and gold with which their idol had blessed them was all gone. Her father's health had been permanently broken. Her mother had to do menial work in order to support the family. The powers of darkness, however, were not yet satisfied. Since they had no more money, they were unable to make good on debts owed to the sorcerer for past services rendered. Fookso's mother was forced to endure unbearable shame and torment at his hands. Then her uncle began threatening to wipe out the entire family.

Late one night Fookso was at home. She was sitting in the living room, across from the big idol. Her family was no longer happy with the idol, but they could do nothing. If they had the idol removed, they feared that something worse might happen to them. All of a sudden, a sense of terror came upon her. She looked up and saw the most horrifying thing she had ever seen in her life. A large black being stood before her, its shape vaguely humanoid. She was petrified and was unable to move. The creature moved toward her. Arms stretched forth and reached out. A powerful grip locked onto her neck. Fookso began to suffocate. Struggling with all her might to no avail against something which was not flesh and blood, she began to lose consciousness. With her remaining breath, she let out a long, desperate scream.

Fookso was not the same after that horrifying night. It was not only the fear that seemed to follow her wherever she went. But just going outdoors became an agonizing ordeal for her. She found she could not control her own legs anymore. Like a drunkard, she

weaved back and forth dizzily as she walked. Something, not her own will, was moving her legs in this direction and than that direction. She feared that one day the force would lead her off the road into the ubiquitous ditches which lined one or both sides of Batu Ampar thoroughfares. It took such effort to stay on the path that a short walk outdoors would leave her exhausted.

When she was about eighteen, she married. Her mother was so displeased with her and her husband that she swore a curse on them before the local idol temple. It was not without effect. By the time we met her, she had had six children. One passed away in infancy. Another was born little more than a vegetable and did not live to see her tenth birthday. Her husband, though having some education, could not hold on to a job. Eventually, he was forced to deal in illegal gambling, was caught, convicted and incarcerated for one year.

After Fookso and her younger sister Asiu came to believe in Jesus, by faith they became children of God Almighty and received eternal life. But as far as Fookso's pitiable condition in the flesh, there was no discernible change. The weight of her crippling physical infirmity, of her fear and constant anxiety continued to bear down on her.

Where was the victory over Satan that Christ had purchased for her on the cross? Where was the resurrection life? Fookso was not the only believer in this condition. Most of the other new believers were in similar positions as well, though not necessarily as severe as hers.

It was in this context that we began to seek the key which would release these believers from their prison. According to the book we had been reading, Christians can have demons. The question, "Can a Christian be demon-possessed?" is not meaningful, for to my knowledge the Greek verb which is usually translated "to

be demon-possessed" literally means "to have a demon." This is not splitting hairs. To have a demon is very different from the demon having you. Although Satan cannot have or possess a true Christian, a believer may possibly have a demon somewhere in his life. In many cases, the multitudes of afflicted people came to Jesus because they had heard His words, seen His works and chosen to put their trust in Him. And because they believed on Him, Jesus ministered to them. At His command, demons which were in these new believers *came out of them*. The demons had gained entrance to their victims through their past way of life. Note that even after they had chosen to follow Jesus, in many cases they were not set free from evil spirits until Jesus ministered to them specifically.

Thus we saw our Batu Ampar brethren in a new light. Virtually all of them had been involved in the occult to some extent. Not only was sorcery and witchcraft inherent in the heritage of their culture, they had personally been implicated in it. They had worshipped their dead parents. They had worshipped in idol temples. They had consulted witch doctors. Some had even personally engaged in occultic practices. Even if they had never done these things, at the very least when they were ill they were taken to sorcerers by their parents for treatment. The sorcerer would have them ingest various occultic preparations and give them a fetish to wear to ward off the spirits causing the sickness. Needless to say, these activities are a direct invitation for evil spirits to enter the participant.

The question is, when someone who has been a long-time dwelling place for demons repents and turns to Jesus Christ, do all the evil spirits automatically move out? Let us pose a parallel question. When someone who has been deeply involved in some sin, for example, looking at pornographic magazines, decides to turn to the Lord for salvation from sin, does he automatically stop

looking at the magazines without any effort on his part? The answer is clearly no. Although his *sinful acts* have certainly been forgiven, he must nevertheless take an active part in resisting his *sin nature* which Satan will attempt to revive. It will be *his responsibility* to resist, with God's grace, the unclean thoughts and desires which will very likely come to him. God will not automatically shield him. If he does not actively resist the temptations, there is a possibility that he will return to his sin.

In the same way, an idol-worshipper is certainly forgiven for the abomination of worshipping false gods. But these false gods will not necessarily on their own leave the temple they have indwelt for so many years. Even though the temple is no longer theirs---it has been purchased by God with the blood of Christ---they would like to remain in the house as long as they can, even though as trespassers. Demons do not willingly go by the rules nor obey God's law; they obey only when *they are forced to do so* by a power which is greater than their own. In Luke 11:24-26 Scripture implies that it is not easy for evil spirits to relocate after they have been driven out of a person. They would rather go with someone to church or synagogue every week than to search for another person to dwell in. Jesus once cast a demon out of a man in the middle of a synagogue meeting. How then are the evil spirits made to leave? They leave when someone with greater power forces them. Who is to do this? Jesus said, "These signs will follow those who believe. In my name, they will cast out demons...." (Mark 16:17) *We* are the ones to whom has been given the responsibility and the authority of the name of Jesus Christ to cast out demons. The same principle can apply to ministering healing to those with purely physical infirmities.

Armed with this understanding, we saw why during the early days of Biang and Menjaya Laura could not be healed of her depression even after crying out to the Lord. Her condition was

caused by demons, although certainly not all depression is. She was set free from the dark forces when in the name of Jesus I commanded the unclean spirits to leave her.

Thus we began to teach the brethren about deliverance from the spirits they formerly worshipped, encouraging them to come to us for ministry. Fookso came, requesting us to pray for her.

After we sat down, we asked her to pray to the Lord, renouncing her former practices and beliefs. Then I began to speak to the evil spirits I believed were still there.

"Demons of idol-worship handed down to Fookso from her parents and ancestors, I now break your link to her and command you to come out in the name of Jesus! Demons of ancestor worship, come out in the name of Jesus! Demons from consulting sorcerers, from the fetishes you ate and wore for protection, I bind you. Come out in the name of Jesus! Demons from bathing in water blessed by sorcery come out in the name of Jesus Christ! Demons from fortune-telling and palm-reading, leave in the name of Jesus!" The list of demons I had drawn up went on and on. For several minutes, I continued to speak to the evil spirits, repeatedly commanding them to come out. Nothing happened. Doubt arose in me. Was I making a fool of myself, just talking to the air? Were there actually any demons in Fookso? Nevertheless, I continued to command the demons in the name of Jesus, trying to fight the doubt.

Fookso sat before us with her eyes closed. We had instructed her not to make anything happen on her own. She was not to cough voluntarily or attempt to spit something up. Suddenly, her face drew up and she discharged a cavernous yawn.

"Laura, did you see that? She yawned!"

"Yes, I saw it, Bob. She did!"

Encouraged, I renewed my commands to the evil spirits with vigor. "Come out, you demons. I know you're hiding in there. You

can't deceive us any longer. I don't care how long you've lived in this woman. She's been purchased by the blood of Jesus. You have no more right to live here. It's not your house anymore; it belongs to God. Come out in the name of Jesus, you trespassers!"

Fookso yawned again and again and again. For several minutes, as I continued to command the demons, she yawned. I did not fully understand what the yawning signified, but the fact was she was yawning involuntarily. I looked down at my list of demons to cast out and saw, "spirit of fear of cats." Before the deliverance, we had asked Fookso what she was excessively afraid of. She had great fear of cats and ducks.

"You demon who makes her afraid of cats, come out in the name of Jesus!"

Immediately there was a loud thud against the front door. We were in the front room, a few steps from the door. I rose and went to the door, opening it. There in front of the door we saw a black cat. It looked at us, turned around and ran off into the night. We have heard stories of demons going out through doors. But what we personally experienced that night was too strange for us to apprehend. Coincidence? Or for a moment had we been allowed to see a spirit being?

The next day, Fookso reported to us that she was well. From that day on she was able to walk normally.

The other believers also came in for deliverance. Most, *but not all of them*, manifested signs during deliverance. Some coughed, others experienced phlegm coming up, still others vomited forcefully. Generally, the worse the symptoms of the affliction or the more the person had been involved in the occult, the more dramatic were the manifestations. But not always were there visible signs. *Much more significant than manifestations were the changes in the people's lives.* In nearly every case, the person was much

improved or set free from his affliction. Even children were being delivered from evil spirits.

Brother Akwet had seven children at that time. Before he came to know Jesus, he had worked with his nephew who was a local witch doctor. Witch doctors can operate in various spiritual gifts which are counterfeits of the spiritual gifts given by God through the Holy Spirit. One of the demonic gifts in which Akwet's nephew could operate was speaking in a demonic tongue. This unknown demonic language, like an unknown tongue from the Holy Spirit, needs an interpretation to be understood by the listeners. Akwet was the one who provided the interpretation of the unknown language.

Since he was actively involved in the occult, he suffered from oppression. His children, especially a little ten-year-old girl name Ali, paid dearly for their father's occupation. Ali was sick regularly.

Each time, her father would take her to see his nephew the witch doctor. Each time, little Ali would be subject to all manner of strange treatments which frightened her. Once the sickness was especially severe, she had to be "hospitalized" overnight in her uncle's "office" where the big idol altar and related paraphernalia were. It was a nightmare for little Ali.

Akwet and his children, including Ali, came to be prayed for. The evil spirits which for so long had tormented Ali with sickness were cast out in the name of Jesus, and Ali no longer suffered from the weekly attacks.

When, in 1981, our second year in Batu Ampar, we learned how to cast out demons, the floodgates were opened for a new harvest. The initial harvest when we first arrived in 1980 was scanty; the ground was hard. But when people heard that our Lord had authority over evil spirits and disease which the sorcerers could

not match, they began to come to listen the word and to be healed of their diseases. Some of their diseases were caused by demonic spirits, and when the spirit was driven out, often the disease would be healed. But what of those diseases that are purely physical in nature and have nothing to do with demons? In such cases, deliverance is not called for. But the authority that is exercised in commanding and driving out demons is the same authority that drives out disease to bring physical healing. As we grew in authority over demons, we also grew in authority over physical disease.

When ministering deliverance to people who have *never* been involved in sorcery, witchcraft, idol-worship, and the like---whether as practitioners or victims---we may see visible manifestations with *far less frequency* than we did in Indonesia. For example, ministering deliverance to those who have been raised in a western culture like that of the United States may be accompanied by fewer or no outward manifestations. But I would emphasize that we focus not on manifestations or their absence, but rather on lives that through Christ have been set free from the manifest power of Satan to serve and worship God.

Chapter Eight

The Storm is Rebuked

Sometimes it appeared the walls in the little front room of our house would blow out from all the people assembled inside. In the spring of 1982, our little house, stuffed with the new harvest like a Kansas silo in wheat-gathering time, was taken apart and replaced by a larger facility.

Included in the building was a new meeting room nearly five times larger than the old one. This new room had not yet been completed, but since we had no other place to use, we had our meetings there. The ministry of deliverance had given us a fresh outlook on proclaiming the gospel in Batu Ampar. We were able to see how Satan resisted our brethren at every step of their lives as people destined for the kingdom of God. Although a person had already opened his heart to Jesus Christ, Satan would attempt to keep him from maturing through his demons which had been implanted long ago. Through physical and "psychological" infirmities, through a spiritual numbness cultured over countless generations of darkness, he would keep them from growing in understanding and in the resurrection life that was available to them.

He would keep them from being filled with the Holy Spirit, a prerequisite for living a life worthy of their heavenly calling and for becoming witnesses of Jesus Christ. We felt that if our brethren were to become followers of Christ just as we followed Him, they first had to be set free from the evil spirits which stubbornly clung to them. Almost without exception, they all had come out of long-term spiritism, which meant they all probably needed deliverance. In the States, we are wisely counseled not to look for demons behind every bush. Americans for the most part are raised in a Christian culture

and are relatively free from the consequences of involvement in witchcraft and the occult. However, those who are raised in an area where the gospel has never been preached, where evil spirits are in fact worshipped, will become filled with those spirits. In the same way, we who worship the true God become filled with the Spirit of God.

On one Sunday morning, we planned to expose the wiles of Satan in our Sunday message. At the end of the message, we were going to pray for mass deliverance for everyone in the service. During the week before that Sunday, I had fasted and prayed fervently that the power of the Holy Spirit would be manifested in our midst. We prayed that God's anointing would be upon us to cast out the demons from all the people in the meeting all at once.

In Batu Ampar, one factor which could wreak havoc on Sunday morning attendance was the weather. Rain on a Sunday morning could reduce attendance by a half or more. Heavy rain and strong wind, which could strike suddenly especially during the monsoon season, were known to decimate services to even one-tenth of their normal participation. In our area, some of the believers lived in offshore sawmills. They had to catch inconvenient "water taxis" in order to come to town. These vessels were slow, relatively expensive and difficult to get on and off, in particular for elderly people and women carrying babies and small children. During rain, climbing on and off these boats became not only inconvenient but risky as well. One had to fumble with umbrellas as well as carry children and take extreme care not to slip while clambering up to the dock from the boat. After getting to the harbor, it was another half-mile walk in slippery mud to our house. Rain in Batu Ampar would be a valid excuse for any reasonable person not to go to church.

That Sunday morning a thick layer of dark clouds shut out the sun from horizon to horizon. A couple of hours before the service,

the wind picked up. The skies grew more ominous and a light rain swept through town on the wind which had by now increased to nearly gale-force. Satan doesn't want me to hold this service, I said to myself. He doesn't want to be exposed before the people; he doesn't want his remaining hold on them to be broken. Satan's the one behind this weather, I concluded.

I asked the Lord to stop the storm for the sake of His people who needed to hear His word. Jesus had once rebuked the wind, the rain and the waves, and it become calm. In His name, I would try to do likewise.

"In the name of Jesus Christ," I spoke forth loudly, looking up at the sky through the window, "I come against the ruler of Batu Ampar. I bind you in the name of Jesus Christ. You will not stop God's people from gathering to worship Him today." Fixing my eyes on the sky, I continued, "Rain, I command you to stop falling all over Batu Ampar in the name of Jesus Christ. Wind, I command you to blow away all these storm clouds, away from Batu Ampar." For a few minutes, I continued to speak to the wind and rain. Nothing happened. The storm gave no hint of subsiding. Again I spoke, and kept on for a few more minutes. Then, going to my knees, I sought the Lord with regard to the meeting and the word I was going to bring to the people. When I looked up several minutes later, the wind had stopped and the rain had ceased to fall. It was still an hour to the service and I knew that the brethren would be coming. During the meeting that morning, the Lord poured out His grace and manifested His power over evil spirits. As I stood at the pulpit and commanded the demons associated with idol-worship, spiritism and sorcery to leave God's people, the evil spirits came out.

"Sister Amee, have you heard about the man and woman from America who are teaching some sort of foreign religion

here? They're saying that their God isn't pleased with wrongdoing and with the worship of our idols and local gods. They say that only their God is the real God and that only He can take us heaven."

"Nonsense," replied Sister Amee scornfully. "The only true gods are the ones we know. And we've known them from the time of our ancestors. Religions are useless. What good can they be? But our gods are real, they can bless us, protect us and heal us when we're sick. Why, I've even healed the sick with their power."

I wish they would heal me, she complained after her friend had gone. Gingerly, Sister Amee lay down on the worn pads over the bedroom floor which served as a bed for her and her husband. Looking up, she surveyed the bare cubicle where for the past year she had spent most of her waking hours. At night, she slept there with her husband and eleven-year-old daughter. After they had spent all they had to treat her sickness, they were forced to move into this pitiable hut. No more than ten feet wide, it had a tiny "living room" facing the front, a dilapidated, crumbling area in the rear for cooking and a little bedroom sandwiched in between. It was so hot inside; the aluminum sheet roofing over her head absorbed the blistering rays of the sun and with great efficiency conducted the heat down below, turning the house into a furnace. And her body.....was little more than the proverbial skeleton draped over with skin. Her disease, whatever it was, had emaciated her. She could hardly get up to buy groceries to feed her family. It had started some years ago, getting progressively worse. Her husband had tried every kind of sorcery they could find. Now their money was gone. Her husband had given up hope of her getting well. But at least he hadn't left her to die by herself. He had dutifully taken over all the household chores.

Sister Amee began to think of the three children they had lost to illness in the recent past. Wherever they were, she reflected, she

was about to join them. There was no hope. A surge of grief swept over her and she wept. Like an infant whose cries are not heard by its forsaking mother, she cried herself to sleep.

"Sister Amee, Sister Amee, are you there?"

She stirred, half hearing her name.

"Sister Amee, Sister Amee! Hello!"

Her eyes opened. "Yes?" she answered weakly.

"It's me, A Bakso. Can I come in for a moment?"

"Yes, come on in."

Sister Amee rose to her elbows as A Bakso came into the room. A Bakso was a distant relative by marriage; her sister had married Sister Amee's husband's brother.

"How are you doing, Sister Amee?" asked A Bakso in her husky voice. A Bakso had goiter and it had affected her normal woman's voice.

"Not too good, A Bakso. I feel so weak today...." she trailed off despairingly.

"Sister Amee, you've been sick for years already. No one's been able to help you. But there are some new people in Batu Ampar who might be able to do something. Do you know that couple from America? They've been teaching about another Lord who's called Jesus Christ....."

One evening, as we were about to begin a meeting in the house of Chinso, a new believer, in walked a lady whom we had never met. She was very thin and weak. She sat down and we began the meeting, telling of the eternal hope which God has given us in His beloved Son. She was listening attentively. At the end of the meeting, she thanked us and went home. For the next few weeks, she showed up faithfully and listened. Week by week, there

appeared barely perceptible changes.....a new sparkle in her eyes, a smile that waxed with hope. Finally, one day, she came up to us and told us that she wanted to follow Jesus Christ and be baptized in water.

Baptisms in Batu Ampar were most unorthodox. Since we lacked the kind of facilities found in Western churches, improvisation and unabashed disregard for tradition prevailed. Batu Ampar had no nearby river, only a very dirty harbor. We needed a baptistery. At that time, however, we had no church, let alone a baptistery. We looked around for a large container which could hold water and into which an adult could be immersed conveniently. The only things to fit this description were the fifty-five gallon oil drums which were commonplace in Batu Ampar. They were used to hold gasoline, oil, diesel and kerosene which were shipped in from Pontianak. Afterwards, people used them mainly to store water. We had a couple of them for holding water for bathing and cleaning. One of them was pressed into service at the evening of Sister Amee's baptism to take place at our home.

That evening Sister Amee arrived accompanied by her friend A Bakso. After a time of instruction, she was ready to be baptized into the death of Jesus Christ, looking forward to the resurrection life which would be hers. A small stool was placed next to the drum. We helped her step up onto the stool from which she climbed into the drum, which had been two-thirds filled with water. The water was cool, but Sister Amee stood quietly as I prayed over her. Finally came the moment. "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit....." I lay my hand on her head and pressed down lightly. Sister Amee went down into the drum into a squatting position under the water. Moments later, I tapped her on the shoulder and she came up. It was done.

A Bakso helped Sister Amee climb out of the drum. She went inside the house to put on the dry clothing she had brought with her. When she returned, she sat down, eager to receive the complete deliverance which the Lord had promised her. We had decided to waste no time in ministering to her. Already she had turned away from the gods she had served faithfully since childhood; deciding to follow Christ from then on, she had submitted to water baptism. However vaguely the outsiders understood the Christian faith, they did perceive that once a person underwent baptism, he had made an irrevocable covenant with the Christian God. In light of this, we felt that there should be no delaying deliverance for our sister whom Satan had bound for years.

"In the name of Jesus Christ, come out, you evil spirits!" Usually, manifestations, if there were any, took minutes before appearing. But within a minute, Sister Amee began to spit up large amounts of phlegm. A steady stream came up for several minutes as we continued to speak in the name of the Lord. But there seemed to be no end to it. As long as we commanded the evil spirits to leave, the manifestations continued. This was not surprising since Sister Amee had been quite involved in her devotion to her former gods. Nevertheless, we were getting tired. Eventually, we called it a day and bid our sister goodnight.

That night proved to be very unusual for Sister Amee. The phlegm continued to come up even long after she had gone to bed. But more interestingly, she dreamt of some paper-like object suspended in the heavens on which she could read the letters of her name. Could it have been symbolic of the Lamb's Book of Life in heaven? Throughout the night, moreover, she was exhilarated by hauntingly beautiful melodies of adoration to her new Lord which

she heard as she slept. Could this have been an angelic choir rejoicing over her repentance unto life from death? When Sister Ameer awoke in the morning, she felt marvelously refreshed in her spirit. And her body? Her strength had returned. God had healed her in the night.

In His unfathomable love, the Lord had redeemed Sister Ameer from immeasurable spiritual darkness. He had then proceeded to redeem her body from sickness. But He was not yet finished. Within about a year Sister Ameer became pregnant and gave birth to a healthy baby boy whom she named John. Not long afterwards, the Lord blessed her again with another boy whom she named Joseph. Not only had He redeemed her soul and body, He had even redeemed the fruit of her womb as well!

With more experience in dealing with demons came greater discernment in knowing which afflictions were caused by demons and which were simply a result of a physical condition. Problems caused by evil spirits tended to be "psychological" in nature. Frequent nightmares and hallucinations, excessive anxiety and mental confusion, even dizziness and headache often appeared demonic in their origin. These were the milder cases. On the opposite end of the spectrum, we found that epilepsy, psychotic behavior and insanity could be traced back to evil spirits. Dealing with these, however, was no simple matter. They were powerful, and to expel them could take much persistence and stamina. How much do God's servants need a powerful anointing from the Lord to cast out demons quickly and efficiently as Jesus did when He was on earth! Their time and energy would be released for other ministry.

When we first cast out demons, it was exciting. There was a

thrill in seeing evil spirits submit to us so graphically as we uttered the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was power in that name, and frankly, we enjoyed using that power. But perhaps this is why in Luke's tenth chapter Jesus warned His disciples, "Rejoice not that the spirits submit to you, rather rejoice that your names are written in the Book of Life." Even earthly wisdom acknowledges the dangers of possessing power which can corrupt absolutely. For us human beings, this is true not only in the political or military realm, it also goes for spiritual power as well.

After a couple of years, deliverance ministry for us became a chore and no longer a joy. No longer did we enthusiastically encourage people to come for deliverance. Constant ministry of this sort would have drained us of time and energy. Only when it was requested of us or there was an obvious need for deliverance did we seek to expel demons. We much rather preferred for the brethren to be set free through anointed worship and the preaching of the word. Once a woman who had been involved in witchcraft began to attend our meetings. On a particular Sunday, the evil spirits within her could no longer bear the presence of the Holy Spirit as God was being exalted. She stood up and exited through the side door. Putting her hands over her stomach, she bent over the ground and vomited several times with great force. Evil spirits do leave as people grow in faith through worshiping together and receiving the word of God. But so often did demons cross our path that, like it or not, we had to confront them directly and trample on them. In this the Lord sent help to us. As He exalted His name through miracles, He began to draw His disciples to us to be taught to do the very same works. The first of His disciples to join us was our brother Akong from Biang.

Akong arrived in Batu Ampar after a two-day trip by bus and boat from Biang. In his heart he was longing to serve the Lord, and when we wrote asking him to come join us in the ministry in Batu Ampar, he was delighted. The Lord was to have him work alongside Asiu, who was the younger sister of Fookso.

Asiu had given her heart to Jesus. Her mother, father and older brother had also come to confess Jesus as Lord. For her mother, it was the beginning of a new life where she was finally freed from the horrors inflicted upon her by the spirits her husband had so feverishly worshipped in years past. For Asiu's father, it would take him to meet Christ face to face.

When he first heard the gospel, his body had already been ravaged by the years of sickness due to the curses put on him by his wife's uncle. Finally he had a stroke which left him very weak and partially paralyzed. His ardent devotion to spiritism had broken him physically and financially. But his spirit had not yet been broken.

I still recall the day in 1981 when Laura and I went to his home to share about Jesus.

"Uncle, we've come to tell you about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom God sent into the world to save us from our sins by dying on the cross," Laura began. She went on to explain who Satan was, what he had done to the human race, and what he had done to Uncle personally. "You've been worshipping Satan all your life without knowing it, Uncle, and because of that he's been able to do to you whatever he wants. You've been faithful to him all your life, but look what he's done to you and your family. He's deceived you and tried to destroy you in every way possible. But Jesus can save you from him. And Jesus can heal your broken body."

I looked at him and saw tears welling up in his eyes.

"You mean Jesus can save me? He can save me from Satan?"

he asked pleadingly.

"Yes, Uncle, Jesus can save you. You must believe in Him with all your heart and follow Him forever. He gave Himself to die on the cross to take the punishment that we deserve for our sins."

"Wahhhhhhh!" Uncle's face puckered up and he began to wail like an infant. Tears dripped down. I was taken aback. Never before had I seen such a response to the gospel. Perhaps he's a little senile, I thought, or maybe so many years of worshipping evil spirits has impaired his mind.

"Don't cry, Uncle," said Laura soothingly. "What is it? Why are you crying?"

"My life has been so unbearable.....I've been through so much pain and loss....I can't begin to tell it all to you. And now you tell me it was the one I gave myself to who put me through it. Oh, how I hate him. How I hate Satan! If I had his neck in my hands, I would choke him to death!" Angrily Uncle brought his hands together in a ring ready to strangle. He tried to rise as if to throw his entire body into one final reprisal against Satan.

"Uncle, you can't fight Satan that way," explained Laura gently. "He's not flesh and blood. He's spirit. The only way you can defeat him is by giving yourself to Jesus, who has already destroyed him."

Uncle calmed down. "Can Jesus really save me?"

"Yes, Uncle, he can save you if you really believe in him," Laura reassured him.

Again Uncle closed his eyes tightly as if grimacing in pain. Again from the depths of his soul came forth a wail so mournful, so plaintive that I felt like turning away in embarrassment. Then I came to understand.

No one can comprehend the torment Uncle had suffered on earth. Now he was realizing that all the agony he had undergone

was in some sense unnecessary. If he had worshipped the right God, if he had followed Jesus all those years instead of following the deceiver, he could have been spared the pain. It had not been necessary. Bitter regret over his wasted life overwhelmed him. Finally I understood.

"But Uncle," Laura reminded him, "Jesus can save you. It's not too late for you. Believe in Him now. Do you want to receive Him as your Lord and Savior?"

"Yes, yes, I want to believe in Him. Jesus, Jesus, forgive me! Jesus, save me!!" Uncle was still weeping, but the wail of desperate regret had perceptibly changed into a cry of desperate hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.

After Uncle became a believer, we visited him on several occasions to pray that the Lord would restore his health. The Lord touched his body, and he was able to get up and walk. In order for him to keep improving, we suggested that his wife and son take him out for daily walks. We encouraged them to bring him to church every Sunday. But his family feared that he might not be able to sit through a whole service, or that he might disturb others in the service. Uncle no longer had control over his bowels and bladder. This could prove embarrassing at church. His wife was kept very busy changing and washing his soiled underwear and bedding. Perhaps because of this she had no strength left over to take him out for exercise. However, on the rare occasions that Uncle was brought to church, he distracted no one but simply sat in his chair weeping as he listened to the word. Could he have been longing to be with Jesus?

Uncle's condition deteriorated. One day it was apparent that

his situation was serious. His family had neither the means nor the inclination to take him down to the hospital a day's journey up the coast in Pontianak. So it was decided that Uncle be brought to stay with us in our home. He was placed on an improvised stretcher and carried over to our house. At that time we had no room suitable for him. The only rooms comfortable for him were our bedroom and the bedroom of our daughter Esther who was nearly two years old at that time. Esther moved over to sleep with us and we prepared her room to receive Uncle. To care for her father, our sister Asiu also moved in to spend the nights with him.

For the next several days, we prepared food for him and came in frequently to pray for him. Asiu's mother came over during the daytime to feed, wash and change him, while Asiu kept vigil at night. But despite all our efforts, he grew worse day by day. No longer could he sit up or speak, his communication with the outside world reduced to moanings which betrayed the pain racking his body. The smell about him was the smell of death.

The room where Uncle lay was separated from ours by a door and plywood wall one-eighth of an inch thick. Near the ceiling, the "wall" consisted of wire screening for air circulation between our daughter Esther's room and ours. At night, then, we could hear every sound that Uncle made. Every now and then, a helpless, excruciating scream shattered the stillness of our sleep. We did not know what pain he felt, what fear had gripped him, what desolate loneliness had terrorized him in the prison cell which his body had become; we only knew that his God would never forsake him. For the first few nights, Asiu had faithfully slept next to her father. But the sudden shrieks in the dark hours of the night had so shaken her that she could no longer stay with him.

One evening, we were at a house meeting in a local sawmill. Halfway through the meeting, our little helper Kit-Chiang walked in and quietly informed us that Uncle was in critical condition. After the meeting, we hurried home and straight into Uncle's room. The family had gathered together in the room.....Asiu, her mother, older brother, older sister and her husband. I knelt down next to Uncle's mattress and looked down at him. He gazed up at me beseechingly. I reached out for his hand and held it. Suddenly, his grip on my hand tightened, his gaze turned to fear and bewilderment as if sensing that death had just gained a foothold into his body. He shook as if in pain and then relaxed momentarily. Laura could feel the presence of the spirit of death in the room. Again Uncle looked up at me beseechingly, as if I could help him or reassure him about what was going to happen. Almost instinctively, I said, "Spirit of death, I bind you in the name of Jesus Christ. I do not allow you to take Uncle. Leave this room in the name of Jesus Christ. Go! And I command resurrection life to be manifest in Uncle's body in the name of Jesus." Again I repeated it. But Uncle kept sinking. The look of bewildered fear reappeared on his face as if death had succeeded in fastening yet another claw on him. His eyes pleaded with me again. It was as if he had put his trust in me. What? Put his trust in me? Who am I? Or who have I made myself out to be?

Even at that point, foolishly enough in retrospect, I made no effort to comfort and strengthen Uncle in his faith toward Jesus his Savior before he passed over to eternity. For some reason I felt that such counsel would have been tantamount to an admission of defeat on my part. Somehow I felt that I had to keep rebuking to the very end the vulture of death which was hovering insistently over Uncle. Only in heaven will I know what I should have done, or what was God's perfect will for Uncle at that moment. For His own purposes, God can choose not to heal on earth and to take His people back

home for their complete and perfect healing.

He grew weaker and weaker and could no longer focus his eyes on me. I released his hands and put my arms around him, all the while continuing to resist the irresistible. Finally I realized that Uncle was going to die. Why I kept rebuking death even at that stage I do not understand. Perhaps it was to put on a good show of faith for the relatives. By now, Uncle seemed to have lost consciousness. Convulsions shook his body every few moments. In a final paroxysm, Uncle shook off his body in my arms and left for the heavenlies above.

There was silence in the room. Uncle's wife and children who had huddled around him all this time knew that he had gone. Finally, breaking the stillness Laura pronounced, "Uncle has gone home to the Lord." Asiu and the family then broke into loud wailing for their father. But Uncle was finally alive and well with Jesus.

A very sick invalid had spent several days and nights in our home as his body slowly decayed. Finally, he died in the room where our little daughter played and slept. But this man was our brother in Jesus Christ.

By word of mouth the news of Uncle's death was spread to the other believers. Some came by right away to comfort the family, others stayed to help prepare Uncle's body for burial. Fookko, Uncle's son-in-law by marriage to Fookso, took charge. He and brother Chensook from the sawmill helped to carry the body out of Esther's room into our half-finished sanctuary in front. There they placed two church benches face-to-face and laid the body down, covering it with a large cloth. Laura had Esther's room thoroughly scrubbed with an antiseptic solution and her bed moved back over the spot where Uncle had slept.

In areas such as Batu Ampar, there are no funeral homes or undertakers. Deceased persons must be interred quickly. Thus the funeral was set for the following morning. The coffin, a morbid wooden affair bearing resemblance to an ancient Egyptian sarcophagus, was brought into the house. Uncle's wife and oldest son had purchased it several months before. Fookko found a plastic bucket and filled it with water. Moistening some hand towels we provided for them, he and Chensook wiped Uncle's body from head to foot. It seemed to be more of an act of respect than of preparation for burial. Uncle's best-occasion shirt, trousers and shoes were brought over and put on his body. By the time everything was done, it was after midnight. Fookko and Chensook stretched their weary frames out over some benches and promptly fell asleep, keeping vigil over Uncle's body.

The next morning, escorted by a small crowd of townspeople, we lifted up the coffin and carried the body to the graveyard, about a mile and a half out of town. There we buried Uncle's body.

Chapter Nine

The Calling of Elisha

Put off by the high cost of consulting witch doctors, A Bak came to the grim conclusion that A Sia, his son, would have to live with his physical ailment. A Bak reached his decision when told by his wife, A Bakso, what it would cost to have the witch doctor treat the boy.

"He wants how much"? A Bak asked his wife, thinking he must have misheard her the first time.

"The witch doctor wants \$250 to treat him," answered A Bakso softly. Her voice was slowly disappearing because of her goiter.

"*Two hundred and fifty dollars* to treat A Sia for his fainting spells?" These witch doctors are all greedy crooks, A Bak said to himself. "Why does he want so much?"

"Well," explained A Bakso patiently, "he says he'll need to bring sacrifices to the spirit at the temple. We'll have to buy some pork, some chickens, some fruit and incense for him to offer. Then, of course, there's a hefty fee for his services."

A Bak lost his patience, something which he had difficulty keeping. "If that's how it is," he said testily, "then let's forget about it! We can't afford it. We'll just have to live with A Sia's problem."

His oldest son's problem was not the only worry on A Bak's mind of late. After all, it was just a few months ago that the Big Fire had razed the whole Batu Ampar marketplace, including A Bak's small ice factory, to the water. It had been real bad. One hardware storeowner lost about \$80,000 worth of inventory. Some people lost everything: store, coffeehouse, cash savings, even their home.

It was strange, reflected A Bak, how times had been so very

good in the 1970's when the price of sawn timber on the world market had shot up and capital flowed like a river into Batu Ampar to build and run the ten local sawmills. The sawmills earned big profits; laborers converged on Batu Ampar from all over West Borneo and even other provinces of Indonesia to work the mills and spend their wages on food, drink, clothing and fun every night in town. People were getting rich, thought A Bak, and I wasn't doing too badly myself selling ice to fishermen and to the coffee shops which had sprouted like mushrooms to dispense beer and young girls to the thirsty sawmill laborers. Everyone was doing so well, even the pimps and prostitutes and the illegal gambling operators. The police wouldn't just look the other way, they would even ride shotgun for them if they were paid off generously.

But now, it's not like the old days anymore, he lamented. A Bak had had to spend nearly his last dime to rebuild the ice factory which had been destroyed in the fire. Moreover, timber prices had plummeted, forcing sawmills to cut back and lay off workers. Money everywhere was extremely tight.

But A Bak had done his best to gain the favor of the powers above. He had generously supported all the local religions, contributing to the Batu Ampar temple, giving donations to the cause of the Chinese idol-worshippers and even buying a pressure lantern for the meeting place of the Christians. The Christian religion had just recently come to Batu Ampar through a couple who people said were from America.

I've been good to everyone, A Bak said to himself. I've touched every base that I know of. But look what happened to me. We're still struggling to make a living. What have I missed? Is there a true God? All these religions confuse me!

It was the middle of the night.

"A Bak, wake up! Help me, I'm scared!"

A Bak shook himself out of deep sleep and turned over to look at his wife. "What's the matter? Are those things bothering you again?"

"Yes, it's those dark shadows again. I saw them on the ceiling. They won't leave me alone. I'm afraid to sleep. It's so frightening.....night after night. A Bak, I don't think I can go on like this much longer."

A Bak tried to reason with her. "But there aren't any shadows. They're not real; they're just in your mind. Why be afraid? Try as she might, A Bakso could not apply reason to dispel the very real fear and anxiety which were gradually encroaching upon her sanity. She could not close her eyes until the first glimmer of dawn appeared on the ceiling over her.

Later that morning, A Bakso had some business which took her to the outskirts of town. The morning light had brought hope to her, and she felt much better as she strode along the dirt path in the coolness of the early morning. Suddenly she felt something brush against her face, just as if she had walked into a spider web. Instinctively her hand went up to brush the web away, but there was no spider web. The familiar fear began to mount in her heart. Almost desperately she looked up and around. There were no trees or wires directly above from which a spider web could be suspended. Oh, no, not again!

A Bakso kept walking, not wanting to attract attention. The spider webs which were not there kept brushing against her face and clinging to it. Her hand automatically reached up to remove the sticky webs but found nothing. It's no use, A Bakso decided, I'll just try to ignore it. But it was impossible to ignore. The nonexistent webs were getting thicker and thicker and accumulating on her face.

It was a revolting sensation. What is this, she wondered desperately. Am I going crazy? Did someone put a curse on me?

When A Bakso returned home late that morning, her husband was in the factory servicing one of the diesel machines. The engines ran twenty-four hours a day and needed constant supervision. A breakdown meant less production of ice and that meant less income.

To be near to the machines, they had set up their living quarters in the same building as the machines. The din in their quarters from the diesels was deafening. When her husband came in from the engine room, A Bakso shouted, "Tomorrow I'm going back to Serukam." Serukam was a missionary hospital two days away to the north, run by Conservative Baptists from America.

"What did you say?" A Bak shouted back over the roar of the diesel engines several yards away.

"I said, 'Tomorrow I'm going to see the doctors at Serukam. My goiter's getting bigger and bigger, my voice is going on me, and the shadows at night are frightening me to death. This morning, I felt the spider webs again on my face. I'd rather die than put up with this any longer!'"

Early one afternoon, Asiu's mother hurried through our front door, looking for Laura.

"Teacher, my daughter-in-law is having trouble giving birth. The baby won't come out. Please come quickly!"

"Who's there now attending the delivery, Auntie?" Laura asked, wanting more information.

"The witch. We couldn't get hold of the midwife; she's busy attending another birth. So we had no choice but to call the lady witch."

That's just great, Laura sighed in her heart. Many people in areas like Batu Ampar customarily summoned witches to handle

births, thinking them to have the special skills needed. But Laura had heard some gruesome stories about witches delivering babies, and she wondered as she followed Auntie out the door what she would witness at Auntie's place.

Ten minutes later, Auntie led Laura into her house near the marketplace. They walked into the bedroom where Laura was greeted by an unusual sight. Auntie's daughter-in-law, Asok, was lying on her bed in the birth position. A lady from next door, Chinso, was kneeling on the bed at her head. Leaning over Asok's head, she had her hands placed on Asok's bulging abdomen. Another lady with a very dark complexion stood between her legs, giving periodic instructions to Chinso. She was the lady witch.

"Now push. Push hard. We've got to get the baby out of the womb before it gets lost inside. Push!"

Laura stared incredulously as Chinso began to push on the baby still inside the womb, trying to shove it toward the birth canal. No! That's not the way to do it, she screamed silently. They'll going to kill both the mother and baby that way. The baby's not coming out yet because it's just not time yet!

Laura had read some books in preparation for the birth of our first child, Esther. That and the experience of Esther's birth had given her some limited understanding of what was to take place during a normal birth. What she was witnessing was definitely not a part of a normal delivery!

Laura saw a long strip of cloth tied like a sash around the mother's body. It was tied very tightly right above where the baby was.

"Auntie, *what is that?*" she exclaimed.

"That's to keep the baby from going deeper back up the womb, Teacher. Babies could go up and get lost in there if you don't tie on that sash. It forces them to go down instead."

Again Laura watched helplessly as the lady witch gave the command to push on Asok's stomach. Again Chinso pushed on the reluctant baby within. Nothing was happening. Laura knew nothing was going to happen until the mother cervix had fully dilated, allowing the baby to pass through. The poor mother! The poor baby!

Laura could hold back no longer. "Stop! *Stop!* It won't work that way. Please stop. The baby won't come out because it just is not time yet!"

Auntie replied, "Teacher, please be quiet. You don't know what you're doing. Let the lady witch take care of it. She knows what she's doing."

Laura swallowed any further protest and stood back meekly as the ordeal wore on. But when all the pushing failed to expel the child from its womb, the lady witch finally gave up and left the bedroom to sit down in the kitchen for some rest. Laura followed her out.

"I've delivered some five hundred babies," she swaggered to Laura, hoping to shift attention away from Asok still groaning in the throes of childbirth in the next room. But she did not mention that in perhaps half of the births she handled the newborn infants did not live for longer than a few days. After a birth, her custom was to cut the umbilical cord with an old rusty knife. Tetanus would destroy the young life within a few days.

For over an hour the two of them waited in the kitchen, when they were called into the bedroom. It was finally time for the baby to be born. Without any pushing or shoving, but in the time set by God, the baby came out, a boy. The umbilical cord was tied off and severed, and the newborn infant was placed, unwrapped, on the bare wooden floor in a corner. When the placenta failed to come out

immediately, the lady witch climbed on top of the bed and stood over Asok. Bending over, she grabbed hold of the cord with one hand, and, with the other hand braced against Asok's very tender tummy, began to yank on the cord with all her might. Asok began to scream in indescribable pain.

"Auntie, *what is she doing?*" gasped Laura in fear and concern.

"They have to get the placenta out quickly before it gets lost inside, Teacher." replied Auntie matter-of-factly. "Some women have died because the placenta didn't come out soon enough. That's why you've got to pull it out by force."

Laura stared in fearful apprehension as the lady witch dug her fingers into Asok's tummy and began to wring the flaccid abdominal wall, while all the time wrenching on the cord with the other hand. It began to dawn on her why so many women had lost their lives in childbirth. They had bled to death after the placenta was torn out of their wombs by this butcher. Now her hand was pressing down forcefully on Asok's belly, as if to squeeze out the reluctant afterbirth. Now back again to twisting and wringing the tender flesh as if to dislodge the placenta from its place in the womb. Meanwhile, the other hand kept jerking on the cord, determined to rip it out.

"*Teacher, Teacher, tell her to stop! Please! I can't stand it any longer! Please tell her to stop!*" The pain Asok was feeling had passed the point of comprehension. Laura could no longer remain quiet.

"STOP! STOP! You're killing her! You'll cause a tear when you rip out the placenta and she'll hemorrhage and bleed to death in her womb! You must stop!

But Laura's pleas and Asok's screams were not heard as the lady witch worked on steadily, like an unfeeling robot. The placenta

finally released its grip and came out. Asok's cries subsided. Laura excused herself and left, her heart churning with anguish. "I'll never let such a thing happen again," she vowed in her heart on the way home.

Asok, as Laura expected, began to hemorrhage profusely. Her blood pressure dropped dramatically. The lady witch, of course, could do nothing. The midwife, who by this time had returned from the other delivery, was summoned. She came, and, finding Asok's condition critical, called a medical assistant. After several infusions, Asok's blood pressure steadied. Eventually, she recovered. Thank the Lord.

It was late in the afternoon when A Bakso returned to Batu Ampar from the missionary hospital at Serukam. Her trip had been a tiring one. A four-hour leg from the hospital in a stuffy overcrowded van into Pontianak, followed by another four hours on the public longboat. As the longboat pulled up alongside the harbor, she decided not to get caught up in the rush to get off. Longboats were long, skinny affairs, unstable and known to turn over without much provocation. They were made of wood and propelled by twin forty-horsepower outboard engines. At times as many as sixty people would cram on board, seated on a couple dozen bare wooden planks laid across the width of the boat like passengers on a bus. But there was no aisle down the middle, no backrests to support your back, no cushions on the hard planks, and no legroom between you and the seat in front of you to stretch your legs out. If the boat was full, the trip could be agonizing. Since the benches were laid out about one foot above the floor of the boat, it was more like sitting on one's haunches than in a seat. After a few hours in that position, knees, thighs, buttocks and back were screaming for relief.

Moreover, a person couldn't stand up to stretch because of the plastic awning a few inches above his head to keep the sun and rain out.

A Bakso was relieved to have arrived at last, but could wait a few minutes more as the other passengers scrambled over the rows of benches to the front to clamber up to the pier. Others with less patience and more agility had climbed atop the outside rail of the boat and, like tightrope walkers, were inching their way to the front.

Finally, when only a few stragglers remained, A Bakso stood up with her bags and, stooping under the plastic awning, carefully made her way to the front, stepping over the rows of benches.

From a distance she could hear the perpetual din of the diesel engines laboring in the ice factory. As A Bakso walked into the yard, she paused at the entrance of the engine room. Inside the dark, dingy room was A Bak her husband, stripped to his shorts, on his knees working on one of the engines. The machines ran 24 hours each day until they quit. Aside from oil changes and maintenance, they had no time off at all. When one of them stopped running, which was not infrequently, A Bak had to drop whatever he was doing, diagnose the problem and get the machine running again. An idle machine meant a loss in ice production. And that meant a loss in income. A Bakso sighed plaintively and went into the house.

An hour later, A Bakso had taken a bath and was resting from her trip. A Bak came in, his hands black and his body and face streaked with a mixture of oil and perspiration.

"I didn't see you come in," he said, "the old machine broke down again. I think we'll have to buy a new one. I don't know where we're going to get the money, though. Things have been so hard ever since the fire. What did the doctor at Serukam say about your goiter?"

"The doctor said that nothing much could be done for it," A

Bakso answered. "But he said that God is the one who heals, and that nothing is impossible with Him."

"God?" replied A Bak, wrinkling his brow. "But we've tried so many gods already, both for you and for A Sia's problem. Is the doctor talking about the God the American teacher is telling people about, the one they call Jesus Christ? And what about the shadows and spider webs that've been bothering you.....what did the doctor say?"

"He said, 'Put your hope in Jesus Christ,'" A Bakso replied softly, sensing a desire for that hope to dawn in her heart. "He's the only hope we have left, A Bak. We've tried everything else. I'm going to find out more about this Jesus Christ."

A Bakso and A Bak came to us and listened to the good news. God opened their hearts to the message and they confessed His Son Jesus Christ as their only Lord and Savior. They asked the Lord for forgiveness concerning their former trust in idols and renounced all involvement in spiritism. When A Bakso came in for prayer for deliverance from her physical and "psychological" afflictions, the Lord graciously heard. Her goiter gradually disappeared and her voice returned to normal. The tormenting nighttime shadows and spider webs left her and did not return.

Shortly after dawn one morning, A Bakso was already up and busy with housework. She stepped outside to check on the ice factory, where customers were soon to drop in to pick up large blocks of ice. After that, she thought, she would stop by at the nearby marketplace where she did her daily grocery shopping. One of the local farmers had just slaughtered a cow the evening before. A Bakso had to hurry before all the choice cuts were gone! As she stepped out into the cool morning, she felt very thankful to her Father in heaven who had delivered her from the darkness in which

she once lived. There had been a new joy and a new peace in their hearts ever since they decided to follow Jesus. A Bakso lifted her eyes up to the heavens to acknowledge silent thanks to her God.

The town of Batu Ampar stood between the sea and a long, forested mountain ridge which meandered in and out along the western coast of Borneo. Mount Batu Ampar, as we called it, encouraged people to build their homes and businesses near its foot because sources of mountain spring water could be found there. Seawater was salty and rainwater was unreliable. Eventually, the town expanded north and south along the coast following the base of Mt. Batu Ampar. Among the many who came to settle in its shadow was A Bakso and A Bak.

As A Bakso looked up that morning, facing west toward Mt. Batu Ampar, she expected to see under the heavens the familiar sight of the ridge, overgrown with dense foliage and vegetation. But what she saw on top of the hill were not jungle trees and bush, but something so unearthly she could not quite believe what her eyes were telling her.

Something at the summit was glowing brightly. It was not the sun, she thought, for the sun had just risen over the opposite horizon in the east. Nor could it be a reflection of the morning sun from something on top of the ridge; it was too big for that. As A Bakso studied the object, she saw that it seemed to have the shape of a house. It did not, however, consist of wood, concrete, steel or of any material she had ever seen. It appeared to consist of nothing but LIGHT.....it was a house of light at the summit of the hill! For a few minutes she gazed at the sight in astonishment. Suddenly she heard behind her the voice of her worker, a man named Ali, who was busy carrying blocks of ice out of the ice machines into the yard. She went over to him.

"Ali, look up there. Do you see anything up there?" A Bakso

pointed up at the ridge. Ali stood up after setting down the ice block and looked up.

"No, ma'am, I don't see anything."

"Up there, Ali, at the top of the hill. Don't you see that shining object up there?" Ali again looked up obligingly.

"No, ma'am, I just see the hill, that's all."

A Bakso thanked Ali, sending him back to his work. She didn't know what to think. She looked up once again. It was still there, emanating a heavenly glory. Then, moments later, it was gone. Nothing but the familiar sight of the dense foliage at the peak remained. For perhaps five minutes, A Bakso had beheld something out of this world.

"Teacher, what was it that I saw before?" A Bakso, stung with curiosity about the incident, had stopped by at our house later in the day and recounted what she had seen.

I had never heard of such a thing before. It sounded as if A Bakso had seen some sort of vision. But I could not understand what it meant until suddenly I was reminded of what I had just taught the previous Sunday at our morning service. I had shared from 1 Peter 2:4-5:

As you come to him, the living Stone--
rejected by men but chosen by God and
precious to him--you also, like living
stones, are being built into a *spiritual*
house to be a holy priesthood, offering
spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God
through Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the Lord was telling us that He was going to build a

spiritual house in Batu Ampar. And that house would be all the believers in Batu Ampar whom He would call to His eternal kingdom. We would all become His priests for Batu Ampar, "a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9)

But what of the light, of which the structure was made? And why was it situated on top of the hill? After a bit of reflection, another scripture came to me: "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden." (Matthew 5:14)

Praise the Lord! We, the saints of God in Batu Ampar, were that house of light on the summit of the hill. And if my interpretation was correct, God was going to use us to radiant His glory all over Batu Ampar!

It was mid-morning on a Saturday when A Bak sat down in his dark, dimly-lit kitchen with his Indonesian Bible. Opening it, he began to read the Scriptures. The incessant roar of the Yanmar diesel machines in his adjacent ice factory filled the room but did not distract him. Years of exposure to the noise had inured him to it. After a while A Bak put the Bible down and closed his eyes.

"A Bak, tomorrow at five o'clock in the afternoon you will see the power of God."

A Bak opened his eyes. The audible voice had been clear and distinct over the commotion of the machines next door. He looked around, but saw no one. Who had spoken? A Bak began to realize that no man had spoken to him, but that the voice had been of supernatural origin. Had God spoken to him? Or an angel? Or some other spiritual being? A Bak wasn't sure. But he decided to step out in faith in His God.

"Teacher, please testify at the end of the service on my behalf." A Bak had come up to me the next day a few minutes before our Sunday morning service. He went on to relate what he had experienced the previous morning. I listened with interest.

"And you want me to testify to the brethren as to what you heard? Are you sure?" As enthusiastic as I was about what A Bak had experienced, I nevertheless knew that just on the basis of an audible supernatural voice, we would not be able to conclude that the voice was from God. The content of the message itself did not openly contradict Scripture, but wouldn't it be safer to wait until five o'clock that afternoon to see what would happen? If something actually took place, then we could give a testimony. What would happen if nothing took place?

"Yes," replied A Bak with quiet assurance, "please share it with the brethren at the end of the service."

I admired his boldness and at that moment felt a release in my heart to grant him his request.

"Brethren," I announced at the end of the morning meeting, "yesterday morning, our brother A Bak heard a voice that he believes was the voice of the Lord. The voice told him that at five o'clock this afternoon he will see the power of God." After that, the service was dismissed.

In the middle of the afternoon later that day, A Bak and a few other brethren decided to go out to visit with a family. Shortly before five o'clock, A Bak, Akong and another brother assembled and together set out for their destination. A Bak had forgotten about his five o'clock appointment with God. The family received them warmly and invited them in. A Bak was sharing about the Lord Jesus, when he saw an intense light that flooded the room, causing all else to fade from sight. Overwhelmed by the light, he let out a loud scream in front of his stunned listeners and fell to his knees in

worship to his God. The others did not see the light, but quickly fell to their knees as well and began to pray. That afternoon, A Bak, like the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, was appointed a servant of the Most High God. He gladly accepted the glorious call to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ to those living in darkness.

About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' "'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' (Acts 26:13-18)

As A Bak knelt on the floor praying, one of his companions saw beings that looked like angels in the room. His name was Karel.

Karel was originally from the northern tip of the island of Celebes (also known as Sulawesi), but because his father was in the military, they had moved from place to place as he was growing up, eventually settling in Jakarta. Karel rebelled against his parents, ultimately causing the death of his heartbroken father. He found great interest in sorcery, finally achieving the status of a master sorcerer who could claim an extremely high government official as one of his clients. Since Karel through his magic arts could influence the course of local weather patterns, the official would consult with him concerning his travel plans. With nine hundred ninety-nine demon spirits at his fingertips, Karel was able to perform very unusual supernatural feats and became the ringleader of a group of thugs. Once he was arrested by the police in connection with a crime that had been committed. Karel was led into a room where he was tied down, arms and legs, to a table. Shortly, a large, powerfully-built police officer came in. In his hands was a truncheon. With mouth-watering anticipation he leered at Karel, laid out helplessly before him. The officer raised his truncheon high into the air and swung it down onto Karel's body with full force.

"Aiee!!" the officer yelled, dropping his truncheon and doubling over in great pain and surprise. Karel lay peacefully on the table. He had perfected the use of "ilmu kebal," a magic art which prevented physical pain or injury to the body. Karel's skill took it a step further, returning the blow back to the adversary, a form of voodoo-doll magic. Not to be intimidated in front of his colleagues, the officer retrieved his truncheon and swung again at Karel. Again the policeman found that he was inflicting pain not on Karel, but on himself. After a few more tries, the poor officer gave up, leaving the room in shame and pain.

Karel was untied from the table and taken to a windowless

cell. Not long afterwards, he was again free on the streets of Jakarta. But it was not because the police had decided to release him. They did not even know that he was no longer in the cell. In fact, the door had not been opened. Karel had just vanished from his cell.

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating." (Acts 12:5-11)

Like Pharaoh's magicians, modern day sorcerers can also imitate God's miracles up to a point.

At times, Karel was able to purchase items using not money, but tree leaves. The merchant would see the leaves Karel handed to him not as what they actually were, but as Indonesian currency. After Karel left, the leaves would appear once again as leaves. Once again, it is evident that Satan is a proficient counterfeiter, for in Exodus 4:11 God says to Moses, "The LORD said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"

Karel had intimate fellowship with the spirits whom he used and who used him in return. Often, they would suddenly materialize before him in the form of human beings. Appearing as either male or female they conversed with him just as people would talk to one another. One particular spirit who bore the name of a deceased woman who had lived a notorious life of sin often came to Karel as a very beautiful woman. She "loved" him and wanted him to marry her! But Karel wisely resisted her advances; he knew the possible consequences of such a relationship. He knew that she could just as easily appear to him in the form of a snake as in the form of an alluring woman. Other men had not been so wise. Karel reported to us that after a certain man cohabitated with a spirit, the woman conceived and became pregnant, giving birth to offspring. These offspring, of course, did not possess flesh and blood, but could appear in the form of human beings. Such happenings may not be as far-fetched as they may at first appear to be. Genesis 6 may perhaps be describing such things, although there are other plausible interpretations of those Scriptures.

When men began to increase in number

on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days--and also afterward--when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown. The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

After living a life of utter depravity, including severely injuring people who tried to share the gospel with him---Karel hated the name of Jesus Christ---he resolved to commit suicide. He could no longer bear the constant turmoil seething in his heart. But Karel was saved when Jesus appeared to him during his suicide attempt, calling him to repent and to go out preaching the good news.

Karel arrived in Batu Ampar one day in the spring of 1982. He shared with us about his former way of life, and described how merciful God had been to him. We spent time fellowshiping with him and listening about the ways of sorcery in Indonesia. Many things he shared about Satan's power in the occult astounded us. But the very fact that Karel, formerly Satan's apprentice, is now born-

again and a servant of the One he once hated is a dramatic demonstration that God's power is far greater!

One day Karel walked about ten miles into the interior to a village called Selumbuk where we had never preached the gospel. There he made his way to the man the villages had designated to be the chief sorcerer of the area. Having been an accomplished sorcerer himself, Karel felt burdened for those who still practiced the dark arts and often sought them out. Karel introduced himself to the man, beginning with his own past and personal testimony. He recounted the supernatural power, success and influence he had gained in the capital city of Jakarta as a "dukun." The village sorcerer was clearly impressed by Karel's accomplishments. But Karel told him of the despair which gnawed away at his soul, and how Jesus Christ had snatched him away from death and destruction, giving him instead joy, peace and eternal life. The man understood the despair of which Karel spoke and was moved by what the Lord had done for him. But he had doubts about some important questions.

"But what about the spirits you used to serve? You've betrayed them and switched allegiance to Jesus Christ. Aren't they angry at you? Aren't you afraid they're going to get you sooner or later?"

Having heard this question many times already, Karel was ready with the answer. "The demons are indeed very displeased with me. They would indeed like to kill me. But God is far greater than they, and He keeps me safe. I am His child, His servant. But I must be honest and tell you that it has not been easy for me. Since they cannot kill me, they would like nothing better than to make me fall and become even worse than I was before." Even after his conversion to Christ, the demons would visit him and try their best to persuade him to return to them. At times the temptation was great. Failing to make Karel fall, they would attack him physically.

Now and then, Karel would feel a push, a shove, as he walked by the side of the road, next to a ditch or oncoming vehicles. But there would be no one nearby who could have touched him. No one human, at least. And Karel could often see things which were not visible to the physical eye. He could see the demons in their true forms, frequently grotesque and repulsive creatures that lurked in the shadows, waiting for opportunities to do their master's will. It was not easy or physically pleasant for Karel to follow Jesus Christ. But he felt a great joy in sharing his testimony, and this village sorcerer, it seemed, was interested.

"What do I need to do to follow Jesus Christ? he asked Karel.

"You must turn away completely from your present masters and burn everything you have that belongs to them. You must believe in Jesus Christ as your only Lord and Savior and trust in Him in everything." Karel had neither the time nor the patience to soft-pedal the steps to the Kingdom of God. A clean, hard break had to be made with the former things. No slow, gradual approach to please the faint-hearted. Karel kept encouraging the man and answering his questions for some time. Finally, he came to a decision.

"I think I would like to become a Christian," he said.

"Praise the Lord," beamed Karel softly. "Would you like to have your things burned today?" There was a whole roomful of occultic paraphernalia to dispose of: altars, big and small, large incense sticks, large fetishes hanging on the walls, enchanted daggers, big charms crafted by skilled woodworkers, scrolls with incantations, to name just some. A shadow flitted across the man's eyes at Karel's suggestion.

"Uh, let's, uh, let's wait until tomorrow to burn the things. I would feel better if we wait until tomorrow." Karel concealed his

disappointment.

"It would be better to do it right away," Karel answered, "but tomorrow would be alright."

"You can have supper together with me and my family, and spend the night here. Tomorrow morning we'll burn the things." Karel was happy to accept the man's hospitality. After supper had been cleared away that night, a straw mat was laid on the wooden floor for Karel. He stretched out on the hard surface, praying that he wouldn't feel the itch from the swarming mosquitoes already preparing to receive the newcomer. Mercifully, he was soon fast asleep.

During the night, it was not only mosquitoes which visited Karel, but irate proprietors of the soul Karel was straining to bring to Christ. A heaviness that would not lift, a darkness that could be felt, and in the background the sharp accusing voices of once familiar spirits threatening to spill over into a horrid violence from which he could not awaken. Fully conscious in his deep sleep, Karel tried to open his mouth to call on the name of the Lord, but could not move a muscle.

He awoke before dawn sensing that something was wrong. The nightmare he had was not just a bad dream as westerners understand it. Karel sensed that a struggle had taken place in the night over the decision of his host to leave his familiar spirits and turn to Christ.

"Good morning, Karel." Karel looked up from his Bible and saw the sorcerer standing in the doorway with a faint, almost embarrassed smile on his lips. "Did you sleep well last night?"

"I, uh, slept very well, thank you. And how are you this morning? Are you ready to follow the Lord Jesus Christ today?"

"My teachers visited me last night, you know, the spirits from

Thailand that I told you about yesterday. They came to me in a dream. They told me that if I wanted to leave them and follow Jesus Christ, it's all right with them. No problem. But they said that I shouldn't just burn up all of their things. That would not be right. They suggested that we hold a ceremony for them, offering animal sacrifices to return their things to them in a proper and dignified manner. They really didn't like the idea of our burning their things. In fact, they said that if their things weren't given back to them in the right way, I'd better watch out. They threatened me."

Oh no, not again, Karel said under his breath. I knew we shouldn't have waited. Satan doesn't give up his servants that easily. "So what do you want to do?" asked Karel uneasily.

"I think I'd like to do what they say. I still want to believe in Jesus Christ, but I ought to leave them on their terms. If we hold the ceremony they are asking for, then they'll leave me alone. They won't bother me anymore, and I'll be able to follow Jesus Christ without them hindering me. But if I don't do as they say, they won't leave me alone. Besides, I have my family to think of." The sorcerer knew what his masters could do. Through voodoo he had used their power to cast terrifying spells on people. Some had died horrible deaths. He certainly didn't want those things to come on *him*! "But Jesus will protect you!" protested Karel. "God created the whole universe through him. He is far greater than your masters. They won't be able to hurt you as long as you cling to Jesus!"

"Besides," Karel continued, "we can't come to Jesus on *Satan's* terms! We can only come to Jesus on *his* terms. And that means we *unconditionally* sever our relationship with Satan, even breaking whatever promises we've made with him. No apologies. No farewell parties. Just a clean break. That's the only way you'll be set free from him!" Karel knew how true this was from his own experience.

"I....I don't think I can do that," the man answered. "I'm afraid of what they'll do to me and my family. Maybe it's better if I don't believe in Jesus Christ."

Karel walked the ten miles back to Batu Ampar that day, disappointed. So much wasted time and effort, he said to himself with a sigh.

There is a spiritual tug-of-war which takes place when a sinner wants to repent and believe in Jesus. Of course, it is not always so graphic as in the case of the sorcerer. On the mission field in idol-worshiping countries, the conflict between the gospel and the forces of Satan can be very visible.

"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils." (Luke 11:21-22)

Satan is an armed and dangerous enemy. He is our mortal foe. We may safely conclude that with him there is no possibility of holding peace talks or reconciliation. Our differences with him are absolutely *irreconcilable*. Therefore in our dealings with him, as soldiers from the enemy camp, we act with violence to take spoils from him; with forceful authority we heal the sick and cast out demons. As the Scripture says, we attack and overpower. In the same way, if we presently belong to Satan, but seek to change our allegiance to God, we must desert and betray him without notice, apology or regard to his feelings or desires in the matter. There is no opportunity for dialogue or compromise with a mortal enemy.

If such an enemy seeks dialogue with us, we can be certain that his intent is deceit and treachery. He will offer us peace hoping to trick us into lowering our guard so that his agents might slip through our lines to cripple us from within. This why Karel would not agree to the ceremony demanded by the sorcerer's masters. First of all, they conditionally consented with their protege's decision to leave them and follow Jesus. We know this to be entirely out of line with the nature of Satan. "And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14)

How much more the members of his household! Deceit was behind this consent. Furthermore, if their demands for sacrifices were met, they would have had opportunity to strengthen their grip on the sorcerer. Each time a person is involved in occultic activity, Satan's control over that individual increases proportionately. By offering sacrifices to the demons, the sorcerer would have made his eventual deliverance from Satan all the more difficult. His growth as a Christian would have been greatly hindered. Moreover, the sorcerer would have demonstrated that he did not trust God for protection from his former masters, but that he still feared them so much so as to offer sacrifices to them. This kind of fear gives much ground to Satan to defeat a person even after he has confessed Jesus Christ. We see that insisting on the sacrifices would have given the spirits a continual hold on the sorcerer even after he had turned to Christ. As instructed by the Holy Spirit in 2 Corinthians 2:11, we want to be sure that Satan might not outwit us, "for we are not unaware of his schemes."

The spirits did not forbid the sorcerer to follow Jesus but forbade him to burn their idols and paraphernalia. Why? The burning of such objects shows convincingly that the user has turned against them in revulsion and wants nothing more to do with them, regardless of how expensive they were. Such repentance breaks the

power of the demons and the objects over him. In addition, since they have become ashes, they no longer provide a possible dwelling place or point of contact for demons to reach their former worshiper.

When they are not completely destroyed, they provide a bridge for demons to work in the life of the new believer. That is why

A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. (Acts 19:19)

Although the incident taught us much, we were nevertheless disappointed with the outcome. There were plenty of other witch doctors in the area who needed Christ. There would be another chance. But, again, we were not prepared for the fury of hell that we were to face.

Chapter Ten

Dancing with Sorcerers

It had just rained--one of those torrential outpourings experienced in Southeast Asia that seems to squeeze the clouds dry. But Fookso wanted more rain, of a different sort. She wanted the monsoon of the Spirit that would flow to every part of her being in need of cleansing and refreshing.

Fookso paused to thank God for the physical rain. It had been enough that she was able to collect two barrels of rainwater, and was able to do laundry. Now, after hanging it to dry, she sat down on her favorite stool in the kitchen. The older children were still in school, Ju Ju was outside playing and Afat was taking a nap. Her thoughts wandered and converged on the bitterness of her life. Ever since her husband had been imprisoned for running a small-time gambling operation, she and the children had had almost nothing. When he had been at home, it had already been bad. Fookko, a Chinese man whose Indonesian name was Elias, had never had much success in holding on to a job. He had more education than most in Batu Ampar, nearly graduating from high school. But for some reason, they had never been able to escape from the grip of poverty. Was it because of her mother, Fookso wondered, who once cursed them before the idol temple in town? Was it due to her husband's physical handicap? Elias had been born without a right hand. People who insisted on shaking hands with him found an unsettling stump of flesh in their grip. Most of his hair had fallen off. His liking for fatty pork had given him an ample, rotund physique. All in all, her husband's outward appearance had not helped him to succeed in the world. But then she was reminded of the wondrous things that had happened lately.

She had felt so well, so free from the dizziness that had held her captive for so long. God had set her free in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ. He was real! She wanted to get closer to this God about whom she had heard much recently. His love and mercy, His glory and majesty were said to be unimaginable.....how she longed for more of Him. Lately, at church, Fookso had heard about the Holy Spirit, the only one on earth who could reveal these things. She began to pray in her own Chinese dialect. The Indonesian language was almost foreign to her.

"Lord, fill me with your Spirit that I may know you better, feel your presence and your glory. I long to draw close to you and to know your deep love...." For several minutes Fookso continued to pray with the yearning of one who, having experienced a lifetime of hurt and disappointment, now sought hope and comfort in the things of the spirit. God loved her and answered her prayer.

An unfamiliar melody stirred within her, and Fookso began to sing a song she did not know. *"Engkau adalah Allah yang mahatinggi, yang menciptakan langit dan bumi, yang pada hari ini telah menyatakan diriMu kepada hambaMu yang rendah ini..."* The words flowed from her mouth effortlessly, birthed by the heavenly melody springing up in her heart. Fookso did not entirely understand what was happening, but at that point it did not seem to matter, for never before had she felt such joy, peace and the tender presence of God Almighty. Neither was she disturbed that she was singing words in a language with which she was not entirely familiar. Fookso, a Chinese woman educated in a Chinese school and brought up in a Chinese sub-culture, was singing in refined Indonesian.

Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in

your heart to the Lord, always giving
thanks to God the Father for everything,
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
(Ephesians 5:18-20)

Fookso kept singing songs of praise and thanksgiving, carried along by the Holy Spirit who had filled her. So beautiful and enchantingly lovely, the melodies resounded through her soul and moved her to tears before her God. She sang on.

Tap, tap, tap. Tap, tap, tap. Someone was standing outside Fookso's home, knocking on the door. For over a minute he had knocked, and could not understand why someone would not come to the door. Adding to his perplexity was the singing he heard coming from the inside. For he knew that his wife could not speak Indonesian that well.

It was Elias, Fookso's husband, who had been released from prison after finishing his term. He had just arrived at the door!

Coming home was a strange experience for Elias. His wife had changed. Even his children were different. Every time one of his sons saw him light up a cigarette, the little boy would frown and plead with his Daddy to throw it away. Elias was amazed. What had happened? His wife had been telling him about Jesus Christ, who had already made her well and given her much new hope. Elias decided he ought to look into this. He began to go to church with his wife.

Seeing and hearing about the miracles which were being done in the name of the Lord Jesus, Elias felt drawn. The Lord had been working in his heart, dealing with the sin in his life. He had confessed his sins and asked Jesus to be his Lord and Savior. Ever since coming back home to Batu Ampar from prison, he found he

wasn't at all interested in getting a job. He wanted to serve this wondrous Lord.

One day he heard about the wife of his friend, Chensook, who worked in one of the local sawmills. His wife had been suffering from "grand mal" epilepsy. He told us about her, and we agreed to go with him and minister to her. It was there when he witnessed firsthand the power of the name of Jesus Christ as the epileptic demon was driven out. Elias was deeply touched and invited Chensookmay to stay with him and his wife for follow-up care. She still needed much prayer for deliverance in connection with the countless times over the years she had seen witch doctors for her epilepsy. For over a week, Elias ministered to her day and night, encouraging her in the Lord and driving out many lesser demons in the name of Jesus as they manifested themselves. Finally she was well. In his ministry to Chensookmay, Elias felt the call to full-time service grow stronger.

With the Lord manifesting his power in our midst, people who had not been able to find help elsewhere came to Jesus. As they were healed when ministered to in the name of the Lord, their hearts were opened to receive the gospel. In this way the Lord added to our number until we had no more space in our little meeting place to hold all the people. We began to think about demolishing our present house to make way for a much larger building containing a room that would hold one hundred people.

At the same time, some of the brethren had been sensing a call to commit themselves to service. Among these was A Bak, Elias, Asiu and Akong. Having seen firsthand God's authority over the power of the enemy in casting out demons, we all sensed an excitement in going out to preach the gospel. After all, there was nothing that could not be done in the name of Jesus Christ.

Across the water from Batu Ampar harbor was a large island

where three sawmills had set up facilities. A little town called Teluk Air was sandwiched in between two of the lumber mills, serving the needs of their laborers. In one of these mills lived a sorcerer named Lo-Ap. Lo-Ap, whose name literally means Old Duck, had the most established practice in the Hutan Raya Sawmill. We decided that he needed to hear the gospel.

One morning, Karel, A Bak, Elias and I boarded a wooden "water taxi" at the harbor, intending to visit Lo-Ap in Hutan Raya. It was less than a mile away, but it took the six or seven horsepower inboard diesel a half an hour to haul us to our destination. We clambered up to the sawmill pier from our taxi, paid our fare to the young driver, and walked into the sawmill.

It was a dismal place, set up purely for the profit of its owners and without regard for the well-being of its workers. We walked past the huge saws, considered to be the heart of the entire complex.

Continuing on, we saw row after row of *gudangs*, where sawn timber was neatly laid and stored after coming out of the mill. Each *gudang* was simply a very long shed, some perhaps up to one hundred yards long, of corrugated aluminum roofing supported by many tall wooden beams. There were no walls or enclosures. Only the overhead roofing kept the lumber from the sun and rain.

Emerging from the *gudangs*, we came upon the settlement where the laborers lived under conditions unimaginable to a westerner. The houses were very bare, very primitive wooden shacks built with only haste and economy in mind. Most of them were already several years old, beginning to rot from exposure to rain. The ubiquitous narrow boardwalks which interconnected the shacks into a community over the mud and marsh underneath were dangerous to walk on. Rotting boards on them were replaced only after they had broken off, perhaps after an unwary passer-by had put

his foot through it.

Elias led us to the place where he said Lo-Ap treated his patients. As we approached on the boardwalk, Karel turned to me and said matter-of-factly, "there's a dragon standing at the corner of the house."

I turned and looked at him, but trying not to appear non-plussed, did not say anything. I looked where Karel pointed and saw nothing.

Getting closer, I could see an open doorway. Through it I saw a narrow table set lengthwise against a wall. Next to the table, with its backrest to the wall, stood a kitchen chair. A woman was on the chair, gazing up at the ceiling with a look of impatient resignation on her face. Seated at the narrow table facing the wall was a man. He was talking loudly, almost shrieking at times, in a shrill voice approaching a falsetto. His voice conveyed impatience and irritation. To whom was he talking, I wondered. He sat at the table facing and talking at the wall, about two feet in front of him. He was not at all facing the woman, who was seated more-or-less at his side. My curiosity piqued, I examined him more closely. Around his shoulders was draped something that resembled a red cape. On top of his head was fastened something that I can only describe as a cone-shaped dunce's cap.

For a minute, I stared and listened in baffled amazement. Elias, who had gone on ahead when I stopped, came toward me and explained.

"Lo-Ap is busy now, teacher. He's with a patient and has called up one of his spirits to diagnose and prescribe treatment for the person's condition."

Trying not to look surprised, I asked, "Who's he talking to? And what's he talking about?" Although Lo-Ap had been speaking in Indonesian, which I knew, he was talking very rapidly and using

local slang.

"I think he's talking to the woman. But it's not him talking. It's the demon spirit speaking through him about the woman's sickness."

"Uh huh," I mumbled, trying to keep my mouth from dropping open.

The four of us retreated to a wider part of the boardwalk where a bench had been built at the edge. There I turned to Karel and asked more questions about what I had seen. Elias, who had gone back into the house, came out in haste looking ill. He leaned over the side of the boardwalk and retched. A thought occurred to me. I had seen this reaction before in dealing with demons. Could Elias somehow have been affected going into that den of evil spirits?

After a wait of several minutes, a man appeared at the doorway and called to us, motioning for us to come in. I got up and followed the others. At the door, we were greeted by a friendly man who waved us in with a smile, greeting me in slow, accented Indonesian as is not unusual for a Chinese in Borneo. But as I returned the greeting, I saw that *he was Lo-Ap*, the red-caped sorcerer with the screeching, rapid-fire voice in Indonesian!

Witch doctors in Borneo can do nothing of themselves. But when their familiar spirits come into them, they can become a different person with a different voice, even speaking in a different language. They may be given supernatural knowledge about a person's condition or past. Through them, the spirit will prescribe treatment typically consisting of ingesting the ashes of a piece of paper on which is written the words of a mantra before being burned. Or, the patient may be bathed in water contained such ashes. Fetishes are constructed and given to the sick person to wear on his body. Animals may have to be sacrificed, or the sorcerer may request a chicken, cloth material, incense, even cigarettes for

himself. The patient may even be directed to prostrate himself before the witch doctor when he is filled with his familiar spirit.

Lo-Ap invited us to sit down. Karel and I began to share the gospel with him. In the course of our conversation with him, it came to light that he had some Christian background as a youth.

"Then why are you in this business?" I asked incredulously.

"It wasn't my idea. I was never taught about sorcery. The spirits just came upon me one day and forced me to do their bidding.

And so I became a sorcerer. It's a way of making a living, too. But, frankly, I don't care for it. Even if my own children get sick, I don't consult the spirits for them. I send them to the medical technician."

Weird, I thought.

"Jesus wants you to go back to him. He loves you and will forgive you of everything you have done if you repent of your sins, renounce this witchcraft, and ask Him to save you....." Sensing that his heart was open, we continued sharing, encouraging him to repent. Lo-Ap listened receptively, not resisting us in any way.

"Would you like to receive Jesus now, Lo-Ap?"

"Uh, yes, I think I would." Praise the Lord! It was almost too easy. This witch doctor wants to believe in Jesus!

"Lo-Ap, would you like to pray to Jesus now and ask him to forgive you?" This was the way we had led people to Christ when we preached on the streets of Anaheim.....get them to make a decision quickly and have them pray to receive Christ right on the street.

"Well, the spirit who was treating that woman before is due back any minute now. This is the time of day when he is most active. Will it be alright?"

"No problem," I assured him confidently. "Once you ask Jesus into your heart, that spirit won't want to come back. Let's pray now."

"Alright," Lo-Ap answered gently, without hesitation.

"Good. Let's close our eyes, bow our heads and pray. You follow me and pray whatever I pray." Lo-Ap nodded and bowed his head. Karel, A Bak and Elias all followed suit.

"Heavenly Father," I prayed, "I come to you in the name of your Son Jesus Christ."

"Heavenly Father," Lo-Ap repeated, "I come to you in the name of your Son Jesus Christ."

"I am a sinner. I have committed many abominations in your sight." Lo-Ap repeated my words.

"I repent of my sins and ask you to forgive me." Again, Lo-Ap followed obediently.

"I believe that Jesus Christ is your Son, who came down from heaven to become a man to die for our....." Again, the faithful echo from Lo-Ap. I continued to pray, pausing after each sentence for Lo-Ap.

"Forgive me of my sins through your shed blood, Jesus." I paused. Silence. Thinking that Lo-Ap perhaps didn't hear this last sentence, I repeated it for him. Still the silence. I opened my eyes.

His head was still bowed, but there was something strange about his posture, as if his whole body was tensing up. Then his head came up slowly.

"Lo-Ap? Lo-Ap? Are you alright?" I looked at him. But it was no longer the man Lo-Ap. What I saw before me was crouched in the stance of a kung-fu master, hands extended out and up, fingers curled, ready to attack. The face was not the soft face of Lo-Ap, but with parallel rows of bared teeth exposed by lips drawn back, brow jutting forth over eyes glinting with fury, it was the face of an enraged monkey. Oh, no! Lo-Ap's monkey spirit had returned!

What followed was a surrealistic twenty-minute clip from a martial arts movie. But it was not a movie. From his kung-fu

posture, Lo-Ap suddenly flipped over in the air, somersaulting backwards and landing on his feet. It was a fitting introduction to what was to follow. Hissing and snarling like a monkey, he lunged at us like a human juggernaut. We backed away from him and countered with the name of Jesus Christ.

"In the name of Jesus Christ, we bind you, demon!" we shouted. It had no immediate effect. He came at us with hands thrashing and legs flailing through the air with familiar kung-fu movements. His head lunged at us now and then with jaws wide open, snapping and biting. Most of his attention was directed toward me, perhaps because I was the apparent ringleader of the group trying to take Lo-Ap's soul for God. I kept my eyes riveted on his movements, not wanting to get hit or bitten. My mind was blank. Nothing had prepared me for what was happening.

"In the name of Jesus Christ, come out of him, you demon!!" we continued to shout. He backed away from us. The four of us followed him, advancing on him as he withdrew. He looked at us, one by one, as we advanced, all the time snarling and hissing at us. Then again he took the offensive, forcing us to backpedal. This scene played itself out again and again over the next several minutes. During all this time, we kept shouting at him in the name of Jesus Christ, binding and trying to cast the demon out, until my voice tired and grew hoarse.

Something appeared to be restraining him as he lunged at us. He did not charge headlong like a raging bull to maim us as he could have. Instead, he would lunge at us and pull back, lunge again and pull back. He was not totally unbridled as was the demon-possessed man who attacked the sons of Sceva in Acts 19:13-16:

Some Jews who went around driving out
evil spirits tried to invoke the name of

the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

There was something in us--the Holy Spirit of God--who would not permit this evil spirit to jump on us to overpower us. But neither were we able quickly to overpower the evil spirit. In fact, if I had not moved back swiftly on some occasions, Lo-Ap would have struck me.

With a powerful leap, Lo-Ap suddenly landed atop a table in the room. With a sweep of his foot, he knocked off whatever was on the table. Turning to us, he began to scratch his torso exactly as a monkey would, at the same time shrieking. We moved forward, surrounding the table and binding the demon in the name of the Lord. Suddenly, he hurled himself off the table at me. I couldn't move back quickly enough; the demon was sure to get me. But moving quickly Elias threw himself between us and blocked Lo-Ap's attack with his back. In a rage, Lo-Ap began to destroy whatever he could find standing in the room. He overturned tables and chairs, knocked over altars, breaking glass and mirrors and scattering his sorcerer's effects over the floor. We watched in amazement.

Several moments later, he collapsed and in utter exhaustion after his frenzied rampage passed out on the floor amidst the wreckage. We stood around him, our bodies shaking and our minds numb.

"Please leave. Please go home." We turned to see a man standing at the door, dressed only in shorts. "I'm a friend of the family," he continued, "and Lo-Ap's wife requests that you leave now. You've caused so much trouble already. You've made him destroy the whole room. And look what you've done to him."

We could say nothing. Certainly we did not want to leave after not only failing to lead Lo-Ap to Christ, but also indirectly participating in the havoc he wreaked. It would be a poor witness not only to the small crowd that had long gathered to watch the spectacle, but also to others in the sawmill who would certainly hear about it. To leave now would be to leave undone and unresolved something for which we were responsible. But the family was asking us to leave right away. We left promptly and quietly through the crowd. On the way home in the water taxi, no one spoke a word.

What had gone wrong? Had we lacked wisdom in our approach to sharing the gospel with Lo-Ap? Should we have proceeded slowly with him, sharing just a little each time over several occasions? And what about Karel's experience with the sorcerer in the interior? Was it just another dramatic tug-of-war over a soul between us who came in the name of Jesus and Lo-Ap's master? I was not able to answer these questions to my own satisfaction. Of one thing we are now sure: it is not a simple matter to lead a sorcerer to Christ. Satan will not readily give up his servants.

A few days later, Lo-Ap's wife came to see us. Her husband, she said, had been driven by the spirit into the jungle to be

tormented. The spirit was angry with him for wanting to leave and believe in Jesus. As punishment, Lo-Ap would not be released from the forest until we, the instigators of the incident, provided certain sacrifices to be offered up to appease the offended spirit. Lo-Ap's wife pleaded with us to agree to the demands. Unfortunately, although we were very concerned about her husband lost in the jungle, we told her firmly that in no way could we give in to the demands of a demon. She went home.

Some time later, we heard that Lo-Ap had finally emerged from the jungle. When he tried to re-establish his practice, he found that much of his power was gone. The spirit had been grieved. Eventually, Lo-Ap packed up his bags and moved his family to Jakarta.

We found that we had much to learn. Winning souls in the darkness of Borneo was not as simple as we thought it would be when we were first filled with zeal to win the world for Christ. For our goal was not simply to outdo our adversaries, but to win them to the side of the kingdom of heaven.

For some, like the gentle Javanese man Pak Nasir, it was an incomprehensible Kingdom. He had asked us to come and minister to his sick wife. But first, we sang praises to God. Pak Nasir kept wondering: *Why on earth are these people singing songs here? I called them here to ask their God to heal my wife, and they've gathered around her to sing songs. They have no regard for me!* Perhaps his quandary was like that of Naaman:

So Naaman went with his horses and
chariots and stopped at the door of
Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger
to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven

times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed." But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage. (2 Kings 5:9-12)

Pak Nasir didn't appreciate what these Christians from Batu Ampar were doing. His poor wife had been suffering from bleeding for months. They had spent much money for sorcerers, but she kept getting worse, until her bleeding was, in Pak Nasir's own words, like water flowing. She was emaciated, unable to get up, just waiting to die.

But his son, Kemun, kept encouraging him to call for the Christians to come to pray over her. Kemun had had some exposure to the gospel from working for a Chinese man named Akwang who had come to know Christ. He knew that God could help people who called out to Him.

Pak Nasir for some time had resisted Kemun's proposal. They were Javanese who years earlier had moved from their native Java to settle in West Borneo. The island of Java, with ninety million people living in an area slightly smaller than the state of New York, was overcrowded in comparison to provinces like Borneo. The Indonesian government had encouraged Javanese farmers to migrate to Borneo, offering incentives like free land, a

home and a year's supply of rice and sugar. Pak Nasir and his family had settled about five miles outside of Batu Ampar in a village community of fellow Javanese. With abundant land, they lived off the soil.

When Kemun had decided to consider the gospel, Pak Nasir did not make much of it. After all, Christianity was officially recognized by the government. His son was old enough to decide for himself. But when his son suggested that some people from Batu Ampar come to the house to pray over his wife, that was no small matter. Pak Nasir was one of the prominent men in the community, and such contact would do more than raise a few eyebrows. But when his wife continued to worsen, he finally gave in. Kemun was allowed to go into Batu Ampar to seek help. At that time, Laura and I were on furlough in the States. A Javanese servant of the Lord named Setyo and his wife Marta were filling in for us during our absence.

Pak Nasir entertained second thoughts about these people as they knelt around his wife with their arms lifted up, their eyes closed, singing, "In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever, all my sins are washed away, by the blood of Jesus..."

"How is all this singing going to make my wife well?" complained Pak Nasir to himself. Impatiently, he eyed them one-by-one as they sang, hoping they would stop. A Bak he already knew. A Bak was the owner of the ice factory in town. That little fellow with the woman's high-pitched voice he had never met before. Kemun said his name was Akong. The girl, she had stopped by once before to see his wife. Her name was Asiu. And the friendly pastor and his wife from Java had introduced themselves when they first came in. Suddenly, they stopped singing.

"Heavenly Father, we come to you in the name of Jesus," one of them began to pray, "and we ask you to heal Ibu Nasir so that her

whole family might see your glory and love. Deliver her from this affliction so that their hearts may be open to the salvation you want to give them through your Son, Jesus Christ..."

Who are they talking to, Pak Nasir wondered. And why aren't they reading the prayer from their Holy Book? And they talk as if they personally know their God!

"In the name of Jesus Christ, we bind this spirit of infirmity in Ibu Nasir. We command the bleeding to stop. Be healed in the name of Jesus!" Now they weren't talking to their God anymore, they were ordering the evil spirit which was afflicting his wife! So presumptuous of them, thought Pak Nasir. Why should the spirit listen to them? The only way to get a spirit to leave is to appease him!

"How do you feel, Ibu?" asked Asiu, addressing her in the traditionally polite form of "Ibu," meaning "Mrs." Hovering over Ibu Nasir, Asiu felt particularly burdened for her.

For the first time that afternoon, a faint smile appeared on Ibu Nasir's lips. "You know, as you were praying for me, I felt a cool breeze blowing on my body. And I think, I think that the bleeding's stopped." It was the breath of God, the healing balm of the Holy Spirit.

"*Puji Tuhan, Ibu Nasir!* Praise the Lord, Mrs. Nasir!" But Asiu wasn't content to leave it at that. "Have you been able to get up at all, Ibu?"

"No. Lately I've been too weak to do anything but lie here."

"Try to get up now, if you can." Asiu was persistent.

Pak Nasir watched as his wife first lifted her head up from the straw mat, then up to a sitting position (even that had been difficult for her). He held his breath as she stood up, Asiu assisting her. On her own, she started to walk, at first slowly, but quickly gaining strength.

"Hallelujah! Praise God!" they exclaimed gleefully. Ibu Nasir kept walking straight into the kitchen. A few minutes later she returned with several cups of coffee on an old tray, and served everyone.

So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. (Mark 5:24-29)

That day, Ibu Nasir's strength and appetite began to increase. She gained weight rapidly and was restored to perfect health. Pak Nasir was even concerned that she was getting on the heavy side.

Through this miraculous sign, God opened the door for him and his wife to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. By the mercy and grace of God, they became followers of Christ. Shortly, they were both baptized in water, the very first household in their community to become Christians. Through a powerful miracle, God had given them the faith and boldness to confess Christ before their fellow villagers. God knew that they would need that faith to stand through

the difficult times which were to come.

Chapter Eleven

The Spirit of Elijah on a Widow

We had our old house demolished. After returning from a three-month furlough in the spring of 1982, we hired brother Akwet to tear down our old house, and its place to erect a new, longer, wider building.

It had room for a meeting place on the ground floor at the front and bedrooms upstairs for guests and workers. Laura, Esther and I lived on the first floor in the back. Our brother Akong was also staying with us, in addition to Kit-Chiang, a little motherless boy we had informally adopted.

Although Elias had not been a Christian for long, he showed such zeal for the Lord and such a desire to preach the gospel that we decided to have him work full-time together with us. He and Akong became a team.

One day, they went to visit a family in a nearby sawmill known as Bumi Raya. One of the children, a little boy, had been chronically ill. A Christian neighbor had shared with them about the Lord, and they agreed to receive a visit from our people.

Ajeen and Asang operated a little variety store from their sawmill-owned living quarters to supplement the salary that Asang earned working for the sawmill. They had two small children, their daughter Akian and her younger brother, Irwan. Akian was a normal child, but Irwan's health had caused them much misery almost from the time of his birth. When he was still an infant just learning how to walk, he had been stricken with polio. Not long after that, he began to develop lesions on his body which eventually spread everywhere, even to his scalp. The constantly hot and humid climate did nothing to help his condition, while mosquito bites kept

the little boy scratching day and night. With Ajeen often serving customers in the store and Asang busy at the sawmill, Irwan spent much time in the care of Asang's mother, Lanyi, who lived with them.

Lanyi, a widow in her mid-forties, was a tireless dynamo in word, thought and action. She took Irwan to doctors for treatment. She frequented sorcerers for help, and, whenever she heard of some new cure, she would try it on poor Irwan. She would take him out-of-town to consult with a sorcerer someone had recommended. Altars, idols, charms and fetishes given by witch doctors to treat Irwan adorned the walls of their home. She had tried virtually everything and had spent large sums of her own money on Irwan, but to no avail. She, her son and daughter-in-law found their lives revolving around caring for the little boy. Every night, Irwan would cry and whimper until dawn. Someone had to be with him or he would not sleep. Every night became a vigil for the three of them as they took turns staying up to rock him in his little hammock. For as long as he was rocked, he would sleep. But when the rocking ceased, he would wake up with a start and scream. Because of the constant pressure of attending to little Irwan, strain and tension pervaded the house.

But how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!

After Elias and Akong arrived, they explained the gospel to the family. Lanyi listened attentively, but made one request. If they would pray for Irwan so that he would be able to sleep that night, she and her household would believe on Jesus Christ. Elias and Akong cheerfully agreed, confident that in the name of the Lord the evil spirits tormenting Irwan could be bound for the night. They prayed over Irwan and then went home.

That night, Irwan slept peacefully until dawn. Lanyi was elated.

Late in the morning Elias and Akong returned to Bumi Raya as they had promised. Lanyi was waiting for them, ready to receive Jesus. Although she had no formal education, Lanyi had been endowed with an unusual measure of wisdom. By God's grace, she quickly recognized the truth of the gospel. Unlike some others who say they want to believe in Jesus yet do not wholeheartedly part with their idols, Lanyi grasped the concept of sin. She understood that all of their hope in sorcery was an abomination to the God who created the heavens and the earth. That day Lanyi received Jesus Christ with Asang and Ajeen following suit. Taking down all the various items which had been prescribed by witch doctors for Irwan, they relinquished them to Elias and Akong for burning.

Lanyi's faith grew as she faithfully attended meetings to worship her new Lord and receive spiritual food. With unwavering attention and understanding, all the more unusual for someone who never learned the disciplines of reading and writing, she listened to the Word of God. Irwan's steady recovery over the months also bolstered her budding faith, for it was for his sake that Lanyi originally came to Jesus Christ.

Irwan's lesions began to dry and heal. He was able to get up and walk by holding onto a railing. His nights were peaceful; the harassing spirits had been expelled. Smiles and laughter once again lit up the household. God was good. Lanyi began to give her testimony at meetings, sharing how God had healed her beloved grandson after she had turned away from idols to the true God.

One day during the lunar New Year festival, a time of high celebration and worship of Chinese deities, a troupe of dragon dance participants from Batu Ampar dropped into Bumi Raya. The dragon dance is an activity routinely performed in many Chinatown communities, even in some Chinese Christian churches, across the

United States to celebrate Chinese New Year. Most think it to be an apparently innocent ceremony commemorating the ancient culture of China, not knowing its possibly demonic spiritual origins. In Batu Ampar, in order to participate in the dragon dance, men must first worship the spirits and be endued with their power. Only when the spirit has entered into them can they perform with the proper abandon.

Each year the dragon dancers began at one end of Batu Ampar and paraded to the other, stopping by at the house of every Chinese family to request an offering for the deities. A portion of the offerings received, of course, would go to the troupe members. Usually they would not bother to enter the house of a family they knew to be Christian. A Christian could simply close his front door when he heard the dance coming. One could not miss the eerie drumbeats of an idol procession.

Perhaps by mistake, perhaps not, the dragon procession that day came to Irwan's house. Asang had not bothered to close the door. All of a sudden, they had appeared before his store. Asang felt disgusted, but his gentle nature would not permit him to disappoint the visitors. He hurriedly reached for five hundred rupiahs and gave it to them. They left, and Asang was relieved.

Coincidentally or not, Irwan fell ill that day. He became weak, listless and would not eat. For several days he remained in that condition despite frequent prayer for and over him. Finally, Laura, Lanyi and I took him to the hospital in Pontianak where he was admitted. His grandmother tended him day and night, sleeping on a mat at his beside. When at the end of a week he had improved, the doctor allowed us to take him home.

Within a few days of returning to Bumi Raya, Irwan's condition worsened again.

Lanyi, still confident as ever that God would heal her

grandson, brought him to stay with us at church. We offered her my spacious study upstairs, but she declined, preferring to stay downstairs on the first floor where it was cooler. She chose a spot in our sanctuary, directly behind the pulpit. There Lanyi attended him during the day and there she slept at his side at night. Much prayer was offered up for him, especially by our co-laborers who frequently dropped by to visit. Nevertheless, Irwan grew steadily worse. One side of his frail little body become immobile. Occasional seizures racked him. Somehow, Lanyi's faith never wavered.

Finally, on Saturday evening, Laura felt a terrible heaviness about Irwan. It was as if she sensed the spirit of death hovering over him. That evening a gnawing anxiety settled into Laura's heart. Several times before we had had gravely ill people stay with us. Some had been miraculously healed by God. Others, like Asiu's father, had died. There was something horribly unsettling about having a corpse in our home. It was not so much fear---we were not concerned about the corpse rising as a zombie in the middle of the night, as unbelievers in Batu Ampar dreaded---rather, it was the macabre, gruesome spirit of death pervading the house, particularly in the hours of the night. But, since they had no where to go, where else could believers bring their dying and dead, except to our house? We, who proclaimed the Lord of compassion, the Lord of the living and the dead, could not refuse them.

But even more troubling than the presence of death in our house was the reaction that the death of a believer would kindle in the unbelieving community. Because of the gospel we preached which called people to repent from sin and idolatry, and through Jesus Christ alone, many hated us. Such people loved their sins and did not appreciate our pricking their conscience with our talk of turning to the Most Holy God and living holy lives. Moreover, we proclaimed a gospel of healing and deliverance in the name of Jesus.

Indeed, in this way, many people in Batu Ampar were made well and received Christ as Lord. But, on the other hand, people came with all sorts of motives and dark secrets known only to God. Then again, the Almighty is sovereign and in some cases may choose *not* to heal. So when for some reason, the person did not get well but instead died in our house, outsiders would rejoice and taunt us about our powerless and faithless God. Idolaters wave away explanations of our God's sovereignty as excuses for his failure to deliver what is promised. As far as they are concerned, the god who delivers the greatest external blessings wins. Therefore at that time we felt we had to preach not only the Christ who saves, but also the Christ who heals as well. But preaching a gospel which includes physical healing involves not only high yield, but also high risk, bringing great pressure to bear on the one ministering.

Laura had taken to heart some of the words slung at us by enemies of the gospel when God had allowed someone in our care to be taken. The words were vicious and caused deep wounds in her. That night, as Irwan's condition deteriorated, anguished memories surfaced to torment her. With difficulty she went to sleep.

A few hours later, a blood-curdling shriek pierced the night. Both of us awoke out of deep sleep with a start, but Laura hurled herself out of bed and ran toward the sanctuary where Lanyi was. Perhaps Laura's worst fears had come to pass and Lanyi had just found Irwan gone. A few minutes later, Laura returned, looking slightly relieved.

"It wasn't Lanyi screaming," she said. "Irwan's still O.K. It must've been the lady next door screaming." A mere three yards separated our sanctuary from our next door neighbor. "She must've had a nightmare." Still a bit unnerved, Laura climbed back into bed, but could hardly sleep for the rest of the night.

Early in the morning, she slipped out of bed and immediately

went out to the sanctuary. Lanyi was sitting up, clutching her grandson in her arms, rocking him. She was sobbing silently. Laura looked at Irwan. He was awake, but extremely weak, not even able to speak. She looked into his eyes, and saw the glassy daze that spoke with certainty of that which could not be said. She saw a fear in his eyes, something she had not seen before. Apparently, little Irwan himself, a scant four years of age, knew that he was dying.

Laura fought back the tears and put on a veneer of gentle calmness. "Irwan," she said with soft tenderness as she knelt down, "don't be afraid. You go with Jesus now. He will take good care of you." Tears broke through and dripped down her cheeks. She rose and hurried out.

"Bob, I think Irwan doesn't have much time left," she said to me as she came in our bedroom. I got out of bed and putting on my clothes, followed Laura out to the sanctuary.

Elias was there on his knees praying. It was he whom the Lord had used to reach the family. "Father, where are you? Why have you forsaken us? Please don't let Irwan die, Father, please let him live!" Elias had gone through the pain of having lost two children in recent years before his turning to Christ. "Father, we ask you in the name of Jesus Christ, please don't let him die, please!"

We gathered around Lanyi, still holding Irwan tightly in her arms, as if to ward death away from him. We could do nothing. Moments later, his eyes closed slowly and he stopped breathing. Lanyi looked at him and broke out anew in loud wailing, frantically rocking his little body back and forth. All of us broke down and wept, releasing the anxiety that had been building up in us over the past few days. Lanyi gently put Irwan's body down on his sheet, rose and went upstairs to the study. She closed the door behind her and grieved for her grandson.

Downstairs in the sanctuary, Irwan's body lay on the platform

behind the pulpit. Suddenly, the main double doors in the back opened. I looked up from the pulpit at the front and saw several children peering in. It was nearing eight o'clock on Sunday morning. The children had arrived for Sunday School.

I stepped down from the pulpit and made my way down the aisle to the back of the sanctuary. There, with difficulty, I explained to the children that there was a problem inside and asked them to wait outside for a few minutes. It would do nothing for these young children to know that there was a dead body in the sanctuary.

Irwan's body was taken upstairs to my study where his grandmother had secluded herself in grief. I retired to my bedroom downstairs to gather together my thoughts. The morning adult service was to begin in less than two hours. Before then I had to go to Bumi Raya to inform Irwan's parents that their son was no more. How I dreaded the prospect! But who else could go if not the one who shepherded them in life and in death? Then, in the afternoon, we would have to bury Irwan. The hot climate precluded any delay. Many preparations would have to be made, including making a small casket. Our brother Akwet who was a carpenter could take care of that....

Laura came in without looking at me and sat down.

"What is it, sweetheart?" I asked, sensing she had something to tell me.

"Bob, Akwet just came by and told me that his daughter-in-law A Ngo just gave birth this morning to a son. But he was born dead."

For a moment I just looked at her. Oh no! What was going on? Words describing Job's horror came to mind:

That day--may it turn to darkness; may
God above not care about it; may no

light shine upon it. May darkness and deep shadow claim it once more; may a cloud settle over it; may blackness overwhelm its light. That night--may thick darkness seize it; may it not be included among the days of the year nor be entered in any of the months. May that night be barren; may no shout of joy be heard in it. May those who curse days curse that day, those who are ready to rouse Leviathan. May its morning stars become dark; may it wait for daylight in vain and not see the first rays of dawn ... (Job 3:4-9)

I understood dimly at that moment what Job was feeling when he spoke thus about the day of his birth.

At the end of that day, after going through two deaths, a Sunday worship service and the burial of two children, we collapsed numbly into one another's arms. Our bodies had finally ceased, giving our minds opportunity to begin turning again. Uppermost was Lanyi and her family. She had believed in the Lord for the sake of her grandson. For several months, his improvement had delighted them. Now he was dead. Lord, what's happening? Would they continue to follow Him? Or was their faith contingent on God doing for them what they had been told He would do?

Each day over the next few days we visited Lanyi and her family, crying with them, grieving with them, assuring them that Irwan was finally healed and with our Lord Jesus. On the third day, God comforted us. Lanyi told us of a dream she had had on the

previous night.

"Teacher, I saw Irwan upstairs in your house. He was well, able to stand up and walk on his own. He had a big smile on his face. I tried to get close to him, but each time he would run away from me. There was a big man standing with him. And he had a school knapsack on his back.

"God was telling me that Irwan is fine now, not suffering anymore. God wants him in heaven. He's much better off there. Maybe he's even going to school there in heaven!

"You know, Teacher, I believe that God took Irwan because Irwan had already served his purpose here in this life. Through his illness the family and I came to believe in Jesus. Now that we've all become God's children, God took him home. Teacher, we're going to go on with the Lord."

Perhaps Lanyi was right. God had given her several months to grow in the truth so that when Irwan was taken from her, she would not fall. Irwan's death would also be a test of her faith. Did she believe in God for what He could do for her here on earth? Or did Lanyi believe in Him because she was convinced that He was the only true God who freely gave her eternal life through the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ? By God's grace, she passed the test. Because of this, God poured His grace upon Lanyi with even greater measure. She grew strong in her faith, becoming a bold witness for Jesus Christ. The Lord enabled her to minister to the sick.

One evening, a young man name Ahin who worked at Bumi Raya stopped by to see Lanyi at her son Asang's store.

"Lanyi, I need your help. My wife's in trouble. She's been in labor for three days already. The baby's just won't come out."

"Three days?" Lanyi asked incredulously.

"Yes, she's been in intense pain these past few days. All the neighbors in our complex can hear her screams all night. The midwife hasn't been able to do anything. Can you come and help?" Ahin had been to church a couple of times and knew about the power of the Lord. In particular, he had heard that God had used Lanyi to minister to the sick.

"But your wife doesn't believe in the Lord. Not only that, she's tried to keep you from believing in Him and she's even mocked and made fun of what we believe." Lanyi had shared the gospel before with Afa, Ahin's wife, and not only had she rejected the Lord, she bitterly opposed the faith. Ahin's parents, his brother and his brother's wife had all received Jesus, but his wife simply did not want anything to do with righteousness and holy living.

"Please come, Lanyi, just do whatever you can do."

Lanyi put on her shoes and followed Ahin the short distance to his quarters in another part of the sawmill complex. At the front door, Lanyi removed her shoes and went past the front room to the back where she could hear Afa moaning quietly. She entered the small room where a large bed took up nearly the whole room. A homemade mosquito net of bedsheets hung open over a metal frame attached to the bed. Large pictures of Chinese movie stars torn from calendars were plastered over the walls to cover the wide cracks between the wooden boards of the walls.

"Afa, Afa, it's me." She said softly.

Afa opened her eyes and looked weakly up at Lanyi. The days of pain had exhausted her. Fear and despair had settled in. Yet there was a silent pleading as she gazed at Lanyi.

"Afa, I'd like to help you. I know that you've suffered terribly these last three days. But I can't do anything. I'm just a human being. But Jesus can help you. He's the Son of God. Afa, if you now call on the name of the Lord and repent of your sins, *your baby*

will be born."

Afa closed her eyes and braced herself as a throb of pain surged through her body. For a few moments she lay quietly without opening her eyes.

Finally, she looked at Lanyi and said faintly, "Alright. Please pray to the Lord for me."

"Afa," answered Lanyi, "you pray to Him yourself. He hears you. Just confess your sins to Him and ask Him to save you."

Afa nodded and closed her eyes. "Lord," she began, "I repent of my sins. I'm sorry I tore down the pictures of you that my husband put up. I'm sorry that I've rejected you. Please forgive me of my sins. Please help me now."

After a pause Lanyi began to pray. "Lord, you've heard Afa's words. She's confessed her sins and asked you to forgive her. Now forgive her, Lord, and let her baby be born. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen." Lanyi opened her eyes and put her hand on Afa's swollen belly. "In the name Jesus Christ," she commanded, "baby, come out!"

A half-hour later, a healthy child was born.

Interestingly, we had never taught the believers about commanding babies to come out. But we *had* taught them to exercise their authority over demons and disease in the name of Jesus.

Chapter Twelve

Betrayed

Asiu was 19, and still only a seventh grader, but inside her heart was a nuclear reactor of passionate energy. She had especially felt God's glory when she ministered to Ibu Nasir along with the others and witnessed the power of God stop her bleeding and raise her up.

Asiu felt God's calling on her life. The local junior high school was losing her attention while she felt more and more drawn to preach the gospel full-time. When she discussed this possibility with us, we agreed to train her and send her out under our covering. She came to stay with us in our home.

Asiu and Akong were sent out as our first evangelists. In the eyes of the world, they were a most unlikely couple to succeed. Of slight build, Akong measured barely than five feet tall---and that was being generous---and spoke in a strange-sounding falsetto, causing people to be unsure of his gender. Asiu, big for an Asian woman, towered over him. Akong was a few years older and had but six years of formal education. He had known Jesus for over three years and Asiu had been saved for about two.

About a half-hour's walk from Batu Ampar was a village called Kemuning. We wanted Akong and Asiu to open up this area with the gospel.

"But, teacher, how do we approach these people? What are we supposed to do?" they asked. We had already trained them in the truths of the gospel, but had never demonstrated to them our methods for witnessing. That which worked for westerners sharing the gospel in America might not work for villagers sharing about Jesus in Borneo.

"Just go," we answered them, "and preach the gospel to every creature, to every home. Heal the sick, cast out demons. And the Lord will lead you."

Akong and Asiu walked into Kemuning. Standing before a house, their hearts began to thump wildly and their mouths went dry. But they found themselves walking into the yard and up the steps and knocking on the door. From one house to another they went, day by day, bringing the good news of the kingdom to people in utter darkness. Some families received them and their message; others did not. Some experienced the power of God on their sick bodies as Akong and Asiu ministered to them and welcomed Christ into their hearts. But always, there were those who glowered at them from a distance, who would never give a moment of their time to listen. These were Satan's agents in the village, those who were dedicated to the beliefs and secret arts handed down to them from their ancestors.

Each evening after their day's work in Kemuning, Akong and Asiu came home tired in body but content in heart, bringing back with them the firstfruits of their ministry---perhaps a very large cluster of bananas suspended from a pole over on their shoulders (like the huge grapes brought back from the promised land by the twelve spies sent by Moses), some football-sized papayas, a basket of tree-ripened *rambutan* (menacing-looking fruit with short spiked hair) or a bag of some exotic fruit. Grateful families had blessed them in return for bringing the message of God's love through Jesus Christ. Eventually, as the word of the Lord spread out through them, many families received Christ. And others became enemies of the cross of Christ.

One day a young boy showed up at our home. It was the son of one of the believers in Kemuning, an elderly man named Tua-Lau-Bak. A helper met him at the door.

"Is Teacher here?" He was looking for Laura or me. "We need help. My father's having a seizure."

"Teacher's not here now," answered the helper. "But Asiu is. I'll go get her." A few moments later, Asiu came down and spoke with Tua-Lau-Bak's son.

"Your father's having a seizure?" asked Asiu with apprehension. Tua-Lau-Bak had once suffered from *grand mal* epilepsy. But after becoming a Christian, the seizures had practically ceased. Asiu had not had much experience in dealing with such violent manifestations.

"They started this morning. He's been on the ground shaking and curled up like a shrimp. All the neighbors came and tried to help out. They tried everything. They rubbed his neck and shoulders with raw garlic. They tried to invoke their spirits to help him. They tried to pull him out straight. But nothing worked. Now there's a whole crowd of people milling around just waiting for what's going to happen next." Asiu listened, her thoughts all the while racing nervously at the prospect of her going in to Kemuning to minister to Tua-Lau-Bak. But she had to go; she was the only one at home at that time.

Asiu went back upstairs to her room to change. She came down, slipped on her shoes, and with the boy set out for Kemuning at a brisk pace. From a distance, Asiu could see a small crowd of people gathered in front of Tua-Lau-Bak's house. As they arrived, the boy led her through the people to his father. Asiu could hear some of the men snicker as she made her way through.

"Hey, look! There's that Jesus Christ girl coming here. But what good can her prayer do for Tua-Lau-Bak? Even the witch doctor couldn't help him. Besides, she's just a girl!" Asiu pretended she didn't hear as she came up to Tua-Lau-Bak who was still locked in the powerful grip of the convulsion. She looked down at him. He

was not conscious, but his contorted body was flopping spasmodically like a freshly-caught fish on a pier. Asiu bowed her head and began to speak.

"Oh Father," she prayed, "I asked you to deliver Tua-Lau-Bak from these seizures. He's your son, and you are the Almighty God who made heaven and earth. I ask, Father, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen." She opened her eyes. Everyone was looking at her. "In the name of Jesus Christ," she continued, "I bind this unclean spirit, and I command you to come out of him!"

Almost as if a switch had been turned off, Tua-Lau-Bak stopping convulsing and his body straightened out by itself. The onlookers just stared wordlessly.

Eventually, Tua-Lau-Bak, who was still unconscious, was lifted up by some able-bodied men and carried inside to his bed. When he awoke, he had no recollection at all of what had happened.

Akong and Asiu soon took the gospel five miles into the interior riding in the back of a motorscooter driven by a helpful acquaintance of ours. The trip into Jeruji Kiri took nearly an hour, punctuated by several stops to get past numerous obstacles on the makeshift trail. The objective was to share the gospel with a little elderly Chinese woman who happened to be the influential matriarch of a large clan. We all called her "Grandmother." Slight, frail and wizened, Grandmother was nearing eighty years old and four generations of offspring honored her. Although a grandson named Ameng and a few others had already made Jesus Christ their Lord, most of the other family members did not dare to follow. They had heard about the name of Jesus through the ministry of our workers in Batu Ampar and were attracted. But unless Grandmother took the step first, they would not commit themselves. Doing that which honors one's family, elders, and ancestors is a singular driving force behind Chinese culture and behavior.

Akong and Asiu visited Grandmother on a few more occasions, and, while she received them cordially, she would not forsake her strict Buddhist beliefs. For about fifteen years she had fastidiously forsworn eating meat, even bringing her own eating utensils wherever she went lest she be accidentally defiled by eating with utensils unknowingly contaminated by contact with meat. Grandmother was a rare example of exceptional faithfulness to Buddhism in Batu Ampar, and was not about to throw away all her merit and good works for something as nebulous as “faith.” But one night she had a dream.

Grandmother saw herself standing on a beach. A ship appeared on which she saw many people beckoning to her---she could identify them as her family---her son, daughters-in-law, grandchildren and spouses, and their children. They were all experiencing great joy and well-being on the ship and were calling her to join them. A man in a white robe in the ship let down a rope to pull her up. She hesitated to grab hold of the rope. The ship subsequently sailed off into the distance. Then she woke up, regret lingering in her heart because she had been left behind.

Shortly after Grandmother’s dream, Laura and I at the urging of Akong and Asiu paid a visit to her. Perhaps she could be persuaded by us if not by them. At that time she was living with her grandson Akwang who with his wife operated one of the variety stores owned by the family. As we sat with her in the back section of the store set aside for living quarters, she related her dream to us. What she saw was not difficult to interpret for her. God had prepared Grandmother’s heart that she might believe the gospel and enter the kingdom of God.

The ship represented an ark of salvation similar to Noah’s, and just as God wanted to save Noah’s entire family, so He wanted to save Grandmother’s. Her family, on board the ark, was already

enjoying God's salvation and wanted Grandmother to receive eternal life as well. We explained to Grandmother that God had already provided the way for her to climb aboard the ship. The white-robed man in the dream was the Savior Jesus Christ who by his atoning death on the cross would lift her up to the ship of salvation from the waters of sin and death. And not only that, Jesus Himself WAS the ship, the ark of eternal life. He is not only the WAY and the truth, but also the LIFE as well.

"And so what must I do to climb aboard the ship to be with my family?" Grandmother wanted to know, recalling her sadness at being left behind.

"Grandmother, just believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your family!" I answered, smiling at God's marvelous ways.

"I want to believe in Jesus!" By her sincere faith Grandmother received the perfect righteousness that she had been working so hard to earn by not eating meat. Later, on the day of her baptism, Grandmother showed her ingenuous eagerness to receive total forgiveness of her sins. To baptize her we were using a small dirt well about five feet deep in front of her son's home in Kemuning from which the family got their water for washing purposes. First I descended into the four-foot-diameter well, then Grandmother, helped by her son and daughter-in-law who stood by to witness the baptism. I gave her some brief instructions to squat down into the water for baptism by immersion. Then I plunged her into the muddy water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I then promptly tugged on her gently so that she could stand up and emerge from the water. After all, she was a frail eighty-year-old who might not be able to hold her breath for long. I felt resistance; she did not come up. Quickly I tried to pull her up, but she remained squat and anchored in the water. Concerned that her

baptism would not only symbolize spiritual salvation but also result in physical death as well, I said sharply, “Grandmother, come up, now!”

I thanked the Lord when Grandmother finally emerged. “Why didn’t you come up out of the water sooner, Grandmother?”

Her answer brought smiles and laughter to us all. “I stayed in the water a long time because I wanted *ALL* my sins to be washed away!” Grandmother’s faith, if not her theology, saved her.

Grandmother’s daughter-in-law had prepared a meal for everyone after the baptism. In normal circumstances, since meat was on the menu, Grandmother had special food prepared for her because of her Buddhist beliefs. But she had now become a Christian, saved by faith alone in Jesus Christ and no longer in bondage to legalistic requirements of religion. Her righteousness no longer depended upon her own efforts to obey religious decrees, but now stood firmly grounded in the perfect righteousness possessed by Jesus Christ the Son of Man who was continually obedient to God, even unto death on the cross. Since she was already declared perfectly righteous by her faith in Christ, Grandmother was now free to eat whatever she wanted!

Her daughter-in-law had prepared, among other things, a dish of mouth-watering pork for us. The tantalizing smell of the pork, which Grandmother had not permitted herself to enjoy for fifteen difficult years, was simply too much to resist. “Teacher,” Grandmother began, “now that I’m a Christian, I can eat what I want as long as I’m thankful for it, right? Even pork?”

“That’s right, Grandmother.” I assured her. “But you haven’t eaten meat for so many years now, do you think your stomach can take it? You don’t want to get sick!”

“I’ll just start with a small portion, Teacher.”

We gave thanks to the Lord and ate. Grandmother ate. And

ate. And ate. But she suffered no ill effects. By faith, she ate heartily that afternoon and enjoyed God's provision!

Grandmother's faith in the Lord grew. The most compelling proof of her faith was her earnest desire to worship God and partake of His word. This frail eighty-year-old lived with her grandson Akwang perhaps five miles from Batu Ampar. When I went to see them, I always rode my trail bike, specifically designed for rugged terrain. During the rainy monsoon season, the trail turned to impassable mud, a trip not for the faint of heart. Yet, somehow, week after week, Grandmother showed up faithfully at church on Sunday. She always sat in the same place at the front of the sanctuary beaming radiantly as she heard the word of the Lord. How did she travel the ten miles roundtrip each weekend? Grandmother negotiated the entire distance, dirt or mud, on foot.

Because of her faith, the entire clan came to know and serve Christ. In time, among her grandchildren were counted full-time servants of God.

It was a heady time for me. Just six years as a born-again Christian, I had already spent four years on the mission field in an expanding ministry which we had begun from nothing. Disciples whom we had trained like Elias, Akong and Asiu, even younger than we were in Christ, were being sent out to win souls and in turn were making their own disciples. Akong and Asiu had opened up Kemuning. Akong had also teamed up with Elias to evangelize the ten sawmills operating in the area. Each sawmill was a virtual den of iniquity, rife with greedy and corrupt operators preying on their laborers who themselves lived in extreme spiritual and physical darkness. Idolatry, sorcery, drunkenness, gambling, adultery, fornication, prostitution, brawling, illiteracy, superstition, sickness, insanity, demon possession, poverty, horrid living conditions, filth,

high infant mortality --- such was their lot. Elias and Akong went into these sawmills without fanfare or credentials but brought the light of Jesus Christ. Idol-worshippers were saved, nominal Christians from other areas who had moved to Batu Ampar for employment in the sawmills found Christ. Joy and gladness characterized our meetings. Our church, propelled by the power of the Holy Spirit along with continual miracles, was growing. In our letters home to the States, we proudly described how the Lord was at work in our midst, being careful of course to give Him all the glory.

Some missionaries, we had heard, had labored for many years among the pagans and had not won a single convert to Christ.

Moreover, the Lord had begun to bless us financially. He had raised up a strong church in New Jersey, First Christian Assembly, as well as some individuals to support us. With this, we had purchased a trail motorcycle for our daily needs and for ministry to the interior. Once a week I embarked on a trip into Jeruju Kiri for a Bible study at Grandmother's home. When the path was dry, the trip was not difficult. But during the rainy season, the trails could become treacherously slippery. Some stretches of the path became long quagmires that could swallow both bike and rider. But despite the danger, I felt I had to prove my faithfulness to the brethren and to the Lord. If I proved unfaithful in ministry before the people, how faithful could I expect them to be? Even after a heavy rain, I anxiously and reluctantly departed on my scheduled ministry to the interior. Approaching the mud bogs, I had to build up speed, relying on sheer momentum to get me through before the wheels mired down in the thick mud. At times, the bog was deeper than I had thought, and, unable to keep going, the engine died, leaving me stranded. But I was most afraid of crossing ditches going over "bridges" consisting of but one or two planks of wood laid across the ditch. Exposed to the rain, some were rotting and ready to surprise a

biker by breaking under the weight of his motorcycle. Most nerve-racking was crossing such a bridge in the rain. The bike, despite the knobby trail tires, could slip on the slick planks and end up six feet down in a ditch or canal. But despite my fear of the danger, I was faithful to the work in the interior.

All of these things---the growing ministry, the disciples being made for Jesus Christ, the miracles and our faithfulness to the work--gave me reason to feel good about myself. Surely God would continue to bless us and do even greater things.

"Bob, Pak Leo dropped by before. He wanted to see you." I had just gotten home. Laura had been waiting for me.

"What for?" I asked. Pak Leo was a medical worker in Batu Ampar, and by virtue of his position an influential man. He was one of several Catholics who had moved to Batu Ampar years earlier in search of a livelihood. When we first arrived in Batu Ampar, he had received us cordially as fellow Christians. After our arrival in Batu Ampar to proclaim the gospel he noticed the good response to our work and was encouraged to build a modest chapel where he would hold services for the scattered Catholics who had migrated to Batu Ampar.

Lately, however, Pak Leo had been displeased with us. Asiu and Elias had both been raised as Catholics in the areas they lived before they came to Batu Ampar. Although in Batu Ampar they had never had any fellowship with Pak Leo as fellow Catholics, Pak Leo resented their "conversion" to evangelicalism through us.

Now Christmas was a couple of months away. Pak Leo was making preparations for a Christmas program at his chapel. In the previous year, he had staged an elaborate and gala affair with several local dignitaries, who happened to be of the Muslim faith, as his guests of honor. Even I had an opportunity to participate in the

program as the main speaker. Nevertheless, we sensed that the intent of the evening was not so much to celebrate the birth of our Lord as it was to bring an aura of official acceptance to the Catholic faith in Batu Ampar. For this reason, it was important that leading government and community officials, although not Christian, should be present. Indonesian government policy also encouraged its leaders at all levels to attend functions of other religions in order to promote inter-religious tolerance and thus national stability. But as a westerner I perhaps naively saw the purpose of celebrating Christmas in a very different light, that is, as a time for Christians to rejoice in an event of great spiritual significance. In America, politics does not normally enter into the realm, of all things, of Christmas. But in Indonesia as it is in most of the world---and I was to learn this the hard way---religion and state are not separable.

"So why did Pak Leo come to see me?" I asked Laura impatiently.

"He wants to have a combined Christmas service with us. His chapel won't be big enough for what he's planning, so he wants to ask if we can have the program in our church."

"Oh no," I said, frowning. All my negative feelings about Pak Leo personally and his Christmas programs surfaced. The reports I heard of drunkenness at his Christmas affairs didn't help my attitude. And now he wanted to expose *our* people to that kind of worldly celebration *in our own church*. It was too much for me. "We can't do it. I hate that kind of Christmas program!"

Laura tried to reason with me. "Yes, Bob, I don't like it either. But we have to be very careful what we say to him. We don't want to offend him. He's says he's coming back here tonight to talk to you."

"He's coming back *here* tonight? I don't want to see him!"

"Bob, you've *got* to see him when he comes tonight. He said

he would be back at about eight o'clock, and if you're not here when he comes, he'll be very offended." In retrospect, perhaps God was trying to speak to me through Laura. But I would have none of it.

"Sweetheart, Pak Leo has been known to get drunk, especially after his Christmas programs when everyone's gone home. The Bible tells us not to associate with drunkards who call themselves believers....."

That evening when Pak Leo came by to see me, we were not at home. Relations with Pak Leo deteriorated steadily, and we had offended him. To add fuel to the fire, our work had been enjoying God's blessings while Pak Leo was struggling. His meeting place was located in the middle of town, while ours was a ten-minute walk down the path. Nevertheless, each Sunday morning Pak Leo would witness streams of people walking past his church on their way to ours. And Pak Leo as a medical worker held a prominent position in the community, while we were newly-arrived foreigners. Jealousy mixed with resentment to fuel a crusade that he was soon to launch against us.

Rumors began to circulate in the community that I was not actually a minister, but a charlatan who had been unmasked in the town of Sanggau after which we had fled to Batu Ampar. Pak Leo had done some research and discovered that we had in fact pastored in Sanggau some years earlier. We were teachers of heresy, the rumors had it, and to prove this, many people had died in our church after coming to us for ministry. Soon these reports reached the ears of our people.

Pak Leo enjoyed widespread popularity in Batu Ampar as a medical worker. He worked in the public health center and received patients at an office in his home after hours. Some of his patients were people who attended our church. During office visits, it was

reported, he slandered us, trying to persuade them to leave our church and attend his. Not only was I a fake, but our church did not have permission from the local authorities to function. Soon the government would close us down. The people would be better off going to his church. Those who had left Catholicism to come with us were threatened with cut-off of his services. Finally, Pak Leo's intense jealousy led him to stand by the side of the road on Sunday mornings to urge people on the way to our church to turn off into his church instead.

During the time David was being pursued by King Saul, he wrote a number of his Psalms. Never did we understand the depth of anxiety he may have felt until we ourselves experienced slander and persecution:

My enemies say of me in malice, "When will he die and his name perish?"
Whenever one comes to see me, he speaks falsely, while his heart gathers slander; then he goes out and spreads it abroad. All my enemies whisper together against me; they imagine the worst for me, saying, "A vile disease has beset him; he will never get up from the place where he lies." Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me. (Psalm 41:5-9)

But perhaps there was a major difference between David and me. The persecution that came against me was a result of my own immaturity and misunderstanding of Scripture. It does teach us to be

at peace with *all* men, insofar as it depends upon us.

In the United States, a person who has suffered slander has legal recourse to stop the defamation and even seek compensation. But we were in Indonesia as aliens and in an area where the law of the jungle often prevailed: the strong can do as they please. As a leader in the community, Pak Leo could continue the slander with impunity. Moreover, we were Christians and aliens in the world; we would not react in the ways of the world. We would not counter his accusations with accusations of our own, but we would simply tell the truth about ourselves. Nevertheless, we lived under stress from day to day, anxiously anticipating the next attack from Pak Leo. And when the report reached our ears, we could do nothing but agonize quietly.

Perhaps most disquieting about Pak Leo's slander was the element of truth weaved into it. Our church---and this situation is not uncommon to many new churches in Indonesia---did not yet have governmental *izin*, or a license, to hold religious services. According to Indonesian law, a church building may be built only when given permission to do so by the government. Such permission is typically very difficult to obtain because the government's decision usually hinges on the consent of the neighbors in the immediate vicinity of the proposed church. If only a single family does not want the church in the neighborhood, its veto will give the government good reason to deny the proposal.

The government of Indonesia wisely seeks to avoid sectarian and religious strife. It has witnessed the destabilizing effects of blood shed in the name of religion in other countries around the world. Thus it is willing to curb certain freedoms in order not to give fanatic adherents of one religion good reason to engage in violence against followers of another faith. In Indonesia, most

Muslims are peaceful unless they feel threatened. There may be nothing more threatening to some Muslims than the invasion of a Christian church into their quiet and Allah-worshipping neighborhood. One might imagine the indignant reaction of a zealous, evangelical congregation to the construction down the street of a dome-topped mosque, complete with regular chanting broadcast over outdoor speakers beginning daily at four in the morning. It is just such tension between religions that the Indonesian government seeks to avoid, for tension can escalate into violence. The simplest way to prevent such action is to refuse permission to the Christians to build their church.

From the very beginning in Batu Ampar, we had assembled not as a formal church, but just as a gathering of believers meeting in our house. Our immediate neighbors were all kind Muslims. Directly across the road from us lived the head Muslim priest of Batu Ampar. On our side of the road, one house separated us from a *surau* and a *madrassah*, buildings used by Muslims for religious studies and worship. All of our other neighbors were Muslim as well. Yet they had very cordially tolerated our presence in their midst and had never publicly complained about us. The local government, seeing that all was well between our neighbors and us chose to leave us alone. Regulations could be bent as long as harmony prevailed. But now this harmony was endangered not by the Muslims, but by one who professed to follow Christ. In making threats about our "unauthorized" meetings, Pak Leo was pointing out to us our precarious position. We would need to correct this by acquiring a suitable site where we could erect a government-approved meeting place for the church.

In 1982 A Bak, our brother in Christ who produced ice for the community, offered the church a plot of waterfront land not far from the central marketplace where he was planning to move his ice

factory. Preliminary inquiries to the Muslim families living in the immediate area revealed no objections to our plans. If any problems arose, it would come from them. In fact they had no legal grounds for objections, since they were only temporarily (and illegally) living on the land owned by A Bak which he intended to donate to the church. Encouraged by the lack of opposition, we submitted an application with the local government for permission to build on A Bak's land. But before the government could act on our application, the area residents surprised us by acting together to draft a resolution to the government indicating their opposition to the construction of a church in their area. Later, we heard that Pak Leo had visited with the area residents. The resolution came out shortly after that. Knowing that the government would surely deny us permission to use A Bak's land, we abandoned our plans and happily continued our meetings in the large sanctuary in our home. Somehow God would provide a suitable site in His time.

However, the following year, we were stunned by another resolution signed by our immediate neighbors, people who had always been cordial with us. The resolution, stating that the people were adamantly opposed to the Christian meetings being held in our home in violation of the law, had been sent to local and provincial officials. The turning of our Muslim neighbors against us and the subsequent resolution seemed to fit a familiar pattern. When the resolution reached the office of the Governor of West Borneo, a man who had been personally appointed by and directly responsible to the President of Indonesia for preserving the peace in West Borneo, it seemed all hell broke loose upon us.

As orders from the Governor to investigate and defuse the situation trickled down the chain of command to his subordinates, I was summoned to appear before the regional military commander. The chief official of the county ordered me to appear before him in

Padangtikar, three hours away by boat. An official of the Department of Religious Affairs was sent from Pontianak to make inquiries. Finally, an official government investigator arrived in Batu Ampar. We were summoned for an interrogation. It was a time of crisis for us. It was a time for us to cling to our God.

"Come in, come in," Pak Sudi called through the door as we approached the Police Station. It was 7:30 in the evening, the hour of our summons to appear before the Indonesian FBI agent sent from Mempawah, our regional capital. We sat down on two wooden chairs across a table from Pak Sudi, fearful anxiety gnawing away at our hearts. An old portable typewriter adorned the bare top of the wooden table. Pak Sudi inspected us with a knowing smile. From the Melayu tribe indigenous to Borneo, his complexion was dark; his thinning black hair combed straight back, offset by a mustache which gave him a most sinister appearance. I shivered.

"We've been told about some problems arising from your religious work here, and I've come to ask you some questions." Pak Sudi's cordial, almost reassuring tone belied his demeanor and the gravity of our situation. He went on to ask us about what we were doing in Batu Ampar and what we were teaching. "Do you have any kind of book from which you get your teaching material?"

"Why, yes, we do." I replied, slightly surprised.

"Do you have it with you? May I see it?"

I pulled my Indonesian Bible out of my bag and handed it to Pak Sudi. He opened it and after glancing at a few random pages, put it down on the table.

"What do you think about the Catholic religion?" he asked. The Catholic religion? I asked myself. Why is he asking me about the Catholic religion? Immediately it dawned on me that our differences with Pak Leo had drawn much attention. Perhaps Pak

Leo was behind this all thing! I phrased my answer as carefully as I could so as not to appear antagonistic toward Catholicism.

"Is it true that you were once in the area of Biang, near Sanggau-Kapuas, and that after a while you were chased out? I would like to have a detailed account of what you have been doing and where you have been ever since you stepped foot in Indonesia."

Combing my memory for dates and places, I recounted to Pak Sudi our activities beginning from our arrival in Biang in 1979, assuring Pak Sudi that we had never been chased out from anywhere. Where, I wondered sarcastically (remembering Pak Leo's slander), could he possibly have heard that? With painstaking two-fingered slowness, Pak Sudi tapped out our story on the typewriter as I related it to him. Finally, over an hour later, the record of our activity in Indonesia was on paper. Pak Sudi leaned back in his chair and looked at us.

"Who is your sponsor here in Indonesia?" he asked. Every foreigner working in Indonesia was required to be under an umbrella organization which would be responsible for him. I gave him the name of the Indonesian evangelical denomination which had graciously received us years earlier and given us papers to minister in Indonesia. Taking the papers out from my bag, I laid them out on the table in front of Pak Sudi. All the papers were bona fide. I had nothing to fear, I thought to myself.

Donning a pair of black horn-rimmed glasses, Pak Sudi picked up the documents and perused them one by one with furrowed brow. He set them down on the table and looked up at us.

"Are you with the COG?" he asked matter-of-factly.

"The COG? What's the COG?" I asked in bewilderment.

"The COG stands for the Children of God." Pak Sudi replied.

The Children of God? Suddenly it came to me. I had read about it in the Indonesian newspapers. The Children of God sect,

led by Moses David, had recently begun sharing their liberal gospel on the streets of Jakarta. A clamor had arisen, and the Department of Religious Affairs had branded them a cult out of the mainstream of officially-recognized Christianity. They were declared *persona non grata* and asked to leave the country. When a similar crisis involving religion erupted in West Borneo, it was suspected that we also were from the outlawed Children of God!

"No, Pak Sudi," I replied with relief, now understanding why the government had reacted so strongly to the problem in Batu Ampar. They feared the COG had already spread outward from Jakarta to the provinces. "We're not with the Children of God. They're a cult which has been banned. We're working with a government-recognized church denomination, as you can see from our papers."

"Yes, I suppose you're not from the COG. But what about your visa to work in Indonesia? I would like to see it." I froze inwardly. That was the one question I dreaded.

In Indonesia working visas are given by the government only after an arduous and often very lengthy bureaucratic process. They allow the person holding the visa to perform only the work specified on the visa. If someone applies for a visa to do a geological survey for a particular oil company, the visa, if granted, will permit him to perform only that function. He may not engage in any other kind of work. My visa indeed permitted me to work in Indonesia, but it was not specified for missionary work. Anyone who has tried to get a missionary visa to minister in Indonesia will testify that it is a frustrating, if not impossible, undertaking. And so up until then I had been staying in Indonesia with a visa for secular work. If this were discovered by the authorities, I might face expulsion.

"My visa? Oh, yes, here it is," I replied with a composure that betrayed the panic already running loose within me. I handed

the long yellow card over the table to Pak Sudi. This was my Achilles heel; the one weakness that could do me in. Like a sword of Damocles suspended over me by a fragile thread, the uncertainty continually haunted me: when would I be found out and expelled, our precious flock abandoned to the mercy of savage wolves?

Pak Sudi took the card and studied it. On the front, under my name, nationality, birthdate and passport number, was clearly stated my occupation. It had little to do with missionary work. Pak Sudi's eyes went up and down the card. There was no reaction, no comment, no sudden realization and accusing stare. He flipped it over and looked at it. Then he handed it back to me.

The LORD said to him, "Who gave man
his mouth? Who makes him deaf or
mute? Who gives him sight or makes
him blind? Is it not I, the LORD?
(Exodus 4:11)

That night Pak Sudi concluded that we were innocent of wrongdoing, victims of an envious competitor in religious work. Such would be the gist of the report he would be filing with his superiors in Mempawah. But still, there was the thorny problem of the Christian congregation meeting in a potentially hostile Muslim neighborhood. That could not be allowed to go on for long. The Christians would have to move to a neutral location. A date was set for a town meeting to discuss the issue.

Chapter Thirteen

War in the Spirit over a Child

"Teacher, Teacher!"

It was Akong's voice from the hall outside our bedroom door. Already well after eight o'clock in the evening, our minds were winding down, looking forward to sleep. Akong didn't usually call for us at that time of the evening. And there was a just noticeable urgency in his voice.

"Yes, Akong, what is it?" replied Laura, folding a freshly-laundered diaper into her basket. Our little daughter Esther had already fallen asleep next door in her room.

"Oom Foon is here, Teacher," answered Akong through the door. Oom was Dutch for the word "Uncle," pronounced as in "comb." "He wants to see you. There's a very sick baby in the Bamiko sawmill and Oom has come to ask you to go and pray over her." Laura and I looked knowingly at one another. This again. My body tensed imperceptibly at the prospect of another emergency call. Sometimes God healed dramatically and the victory was sweet. Other times He did not and we dreaded facing bereaved family and the cruel comments from gloating unbelievers that often followed in the aftermath.

"Tell him that we'll be out in a minute, Akong."

Oom Foon hailed from the Moluccas, a group of islands predominantly, though often nominally, Christian. He had come to West Borneo to seek his fortune many years earlier, settling down in Pontianak as a trigger-happy officer on the police force. Oom had been brought up to believe that though Christianity was a religion to be respected, real power was to be tapped through knowledge of the occult. Thus wherever he went on his police beat, he was armed to

the teeth with all manner of charms and fetishes to protect him from harm. They could be found around the wrist like a bracelet or around the neck like a necklace. But since Oom had enemies who had survived his commando style of law enforcement, earning him the infamous epithet of "Uncle Trigger," he needed more than just standard protection. For him, nothing less than the equivalent of a bullet-proof vest would do, twenty four hours a day. This consisted of an entire sash of fetishes wrapped around his upper body under his clothes. With this kind of help and gifts which he received from grateful (or wise) shopkeepers in the city, Oom flourished financially. But as it can be when God desires to wake up one of his wayward children, Oom eventually found himself discharged from the force after killing someone unjustifiably and financially broke. Somehow he wandered down the coast into Batu Ampar and was able to find a position in a sawmill as a security guard.

When Elias and Akong first stepped off the water taxi from Batu Ampar to bring the gospel to the Bamiko sawmill, they visited Oom at his quarters. Oom's first reaction to them was one of surprise and disdain: one of this Laurel and Hardy team had a missing right hand while the other fellow spoke like a woman. And besides, who were these two Chinese guys to preach at him, he who had been baptized and a Christian from birth! But eventually the Lord melted Oom's heart and he became a passionate follower of Jesus Christ. He threw away his considerable collection of abominations, deciding to trust in Christ instead to save him. Though Oom was unable to overcome all his weaknesses (like chain smoking) with dispatch, he had sincerely repented and become a witness for God. On several occasions his colorful testimonies of miracles that God had very graciously done for him left the congregation howling with laughter. "Good evening, Oom," I said as I saw the familiar face, dark as dark could be, crowned with short black curly hair. He had been

waiting for me in our living room. This was a man whom, with all his shortcomings, we could not help but love. "What brings you here at this hour?"

"Good evening, Pastor," returned Oom, smiling. "There's a baby girl at the sawmill who's doing very badly. She's had cholera for the past three days. The parents are unbelievers. I went to them and told them about how Jesus has helped so many people and that He could help them. I said I could bring you to pray over their daughter." Oom paused from his habitual rapid-fire delivery for breath before continuing. "But they told me they couldn't afford a hundred dollars to have a pastor come."

"They think I want money to go?" I interrupted, laughing. "They must be confusing me with a witchdoctor!"

"So I told them that you've got plenty of money of your own and you don't need theirs," continued Oom. "Then they said, 'OK, go and ask the pastor to come.'"

"We'll come, Oom. Please wait while I get changed. Akong will come with me."

Nearly a half an hour later, Oom, Akong and I boarded a boat down at the harbor. It pulled away from the dock, following the coastline for ten minutes to arrive at the sawmill known as Bamiko. We clambered up to the pier and followed Oom, walking gingerly in the dark over rickety boardwalks to the quarters occupied by the family of a man named Aliung.

Aliung was a tall, greying Chinese man in his forties. He solemnly invited us into his home where some relatives and neighbors had gathered to comfort him and his wife. Babies often died in areas like Batu Ampar. Friends and relatives were quick to come to offer solace to the grieved parents. Aliung's child was still alive, but from the look of her no one thought she would live to the

morning. They had seen enough tragic cases like Aliung's daughter to know that she wouldn't last much longer. The death of a child is an ineffable horror. But what could be done? Life was just so fragile. Aliung led us into the kitchen where a young woman was sitting vigil over an infant, laid out on a piece of cloth which had been spread out over the bare hardwood floor. Akong and I knelt over the child. Barely eight months old, she was in deep distress. Weak and barely breathing, her eyeballs had rolled back in her eyes. I looked up at Aliung.

"Teacher," Aliung began, "she's had vomiting and diarrhea for the past three days. We've taken her to Batu Ampar for treatment at the Public Health Center but nothing has helped."

"Have you taken her to a witchdoctor?" I asked instinctively. Unbelievers, especially if they were Chinese, invariably resorted to sorcerers as well as medicine for treatment of illness. Every sawmill had at least one witchdoctor who had taken up local residence, making a living consulting spirits for his clientele of laborers. For the several sawmills isolated from Batu Ampar by water or jungle, the sorcerers offered a convenient and inexpensive alternative to seeking medical aid in town. Bamiko's resident witchdoctor was a man known only as "Lo Wong" which translated, means "Old Wong." Aliung hesitated momentarily before answering my question. He knew that sorcery is taboo to Christians.

"Well," stammered Aliung, "I, uh, yes, I, uh, I did. We took the baby to see Old Wong. But she didn't get any better."

"Aliung," I asserted, "if a person wants help from God, he must first confess that God is indeed his God. He cannot trust any more in idols or sorcery, but must give them up unconditionally. If you want to ask God to heal your baby, you must first give up all your idols, charms and fetishes. Give them to us and we will burn them in the back."

During the earlier days of our ministry, I usually encouraged people to repent and turn to God as a condition of receiving healing from Him. Upon closer study of the Lord's healing ministry in the gospels, I later found that Jesus imposed no such condition. The single most important factor in the sick receiving healing from him was faith that Jesus could and would heal, not faith in Jesus as the Messiah. After witnessing the miracle, however, many decided to follow him as their Messiah. In my view this was the primary purpose of the miracles Jesus performed.

The sick baby's father agreed to my condition after a moment's hesitation. It wasn't easy to part with things he thought were endowed with special power, let alone giving them up to be burned! Some of them were made by Old Wong himself, who lived just several doors away down the boardwalk. If Old Wong were to find out that Aliung had surrendered his blessed fetishes to the blasphemy of the flames, there was no telling what he would do! But at stake was the life of his beloved only child. He disappeared into his bedroom.

Moments later, Aliung reappeared with a few small objects in his hand. Hiding my disappointment at such a small cache of plunder for the Lord, I took the fetishes and gave them to Akong, who took them out the back door to burn them. Along with Oom Foon, I began to pray for the child. While Oom called on the Lord with an earnest voice, asking for mercy, I laid my hand on her forehead and rebuked the infirmity in the name of Jesus, commanding her to be healed. Akong returned and joined in prayer.

After several moments of prayer, the baby's eyes closed. I gazed at her face, so lovely with long eyelashes and soft doll-like features. She opened her eyes and looked up at me. For several

transcendent moments her limpid eyes held my gaze with an indescribable tenderness. Her little hand reached up toward me pleadingly, touching my shirt. My heart broke.

Suddenly she shuddered; her eyes rolled back again as she slipped back into difficulty. We quickly laid our hands on her once again rebuking the affliction in the name of Jesus. A feeling of *deja vu* came over me; I had faced this kind of life and death struggle before. Now how would this one turn out? O God, give us wisdom to know what to do, I cried in my heart.

Kneeling over her, Oom Foon kept crying out to God while I rebuked the spirit of death which was hovering over her like a vulture being kept at bay. After a few minutes, she began to strengthen, her eyes returning to normal and her respiration steadying. Seeing this, we paused from the warfare to rest. But as soon as we stopped, she relapsed again into distress. At that moment, a thought came to me. I stood up and walked over to Aliung.

"You still have more fetishes back there, don't you, Aliung?" I asked curtly. "If you want your daughter to be well, you must surrender all of them. God sees everything. You can't hide anything from him!"

Aliung grunted in embarrassment and strode to the back. Within seconds he was back with a few more things in his hand. Akong took them out back to be burned. I went back to the baby, kneeling over her once more. "In the name of Jesus Christ," I intoned, "I say unto you, little child, be healed!" The familiar struggle went on. When I spoke in the name of the Lord, she recovered. But when I paused, she sank back into distress. But there was a slight difference: the period of recovery before relapse lasted longer than before. We had gained, but the end was still not in sight. It was getting late; weariness was setting in. I rose and

confronted Aliung as before. He scurried to the back and returned with more fetishes. Once more Akong marched outside with matches and a small bottle of kerosene.

Oom needed some fresh air after over an hour in the sweltering kitchen praying for the baby. He slipped out quietly during a break in the ministry to the front room which faced the boardwalk. There seemed to be some commotion outside. Oom could hear thumping noises and excited voices. People had gathered in the porch and on the boardwalk to watch something or somebody. His interest aroused, Oom looked out the front window. His eyes fell upon a half-naked man holding up in each hand a huge blazing joss or incense stick, dancing back and forth on the boardwalk in front of Aliung's house like a possessed witchdoctor.

Oom looked carefully. In the light from the burning incense he could easily make out the face of Old Wong, the Bamiko sorcerer. What on earth was he doing, wearing nothing but a pair of shorts, pot-belly exposed, jumping up and down with those gigantic incense sticks? Suddenly, Oom understood. Someone who had seen what was going on inside the house had gone to inform Old Wong. His clients, Aliung's family, were being snatched away by the hated Christians. They were expelling "evil spirits" from Aliung's daughter, for whom Old Wong in the past couple of days had consulted his spirits. This was blasphemy to him! Worst of all, the Christians were burning the magic charms which Old Wong had made over the years for Aliung's family! Furious, Old Wong grabbed the biggest pair of joss sticks he could find in his supply closet and after igniting them rushed off without even bothering to put on his shirt and trousers. He would surely teach these Christians to respect his proven arts and his gods. He would call upon his gods to destroy both the Christians and the child they sought to help. Surely the gods would defend their honor and their servant. They

were not without power. Going into his trance in front of Aliung's house, Old Wong invoked with all his might the highest satanic powers he knew to strike down the intruders.

In the meantime, Akong, oblivious to what was going on in front, was outside in back of the worker quarters, ready to torch the third batch of fetishes. Usually he prayed for the Lord's protection before burning fetishes, but since this was the third time that evening, Akong wearily decided to forego prayer. After pouring kerosene over the fetishes, he struck a match and set them on fire. Akong watched as the disintegrating fetishes popped and crackled in the flames.

Suddenly, pain sliced through his forearm. "Aieeee!" he shrieked, looking down at his arm. Blood was about to ooze forth from a scratch just above his wrist. Quickly putting his free hand over the wound, Akong cried, "In the name of Jesus!" He removed his hand from the wound and looked. About two inches long, it resembled a scratch from a cat. But who or what had done it? Akong looked around him but saw nothing. Besides, no person or animal could have gotten so close to him without being seen. At that moment, Akong realized that it had been an attack from the realm of the spirit.

Inside the house, another drama was unfolding, a battle for the life of a baby girl. I could not understand it. Aliung had apparently given up all his fetishes. Each time I came against the child's infirmity in the name of Jesus, she would come out of the agony. Seeing this I would stop ministering. But within seconds, the writhing, the rolled-back eyeballs, the torturous struggle to stay alive, returned. What was going on? God would not be playing cat-and-mouse with us, teasing us over and over with the semblance of deliverance, then allowing the child to sink once more into the jaws

of death. Would He?

The kitchen felt oppressively hot. My shirt was soaked in sweat. Beads of perspiration dripped off my face onto the floor as I knelt over the child, speaking to the infirmity in the name of Jesus. And I was tiring, my body, my legs, my knees, my voice. It had been two hours already. Each time she relapsed, my cracking voice picked up again, almost mechanically, like a recording, "In the name of Jesus ..." I just could not stop; she would surely die if I did. I had to persevere, for the sake of this child, for her parents, for the kingdom of God, but perhaps most of all for the sake of my reputation and ministry. For what will people say if the child dies in my hands? (How deceitful is the human heart!) But how much longer will this last? How much longer will I last?

I did not know about the intense struggle in which I was playing a part. Looking down from the heavens, an observer might have seen two opposing forces locked in fierce combat. In the house were two or three Christians invoking with all their strength the name of their Lord Jesus Christ to restore life to a dying infant. But outside the house an enraged sorcerer was mustering his entire array of demons to attack the blasphemers. The horde failed to penetrate the shield of the Most High around His servants except to cause a small scratch on one. Perhaps they turned their fury on the distressed infant. Whenever the name of Jesus Christ was spoken, they had to retreat, and the power of God quickened the child. But whenever the Name ceased to be spoken, they reconverged on the baby like a flock of ravenous vultures.

By sheer persistence, I kept up the fight. Like the mythical Greek protagonist whose efforts to push a large rock over a hill were repeatedly frustrated when each time he neared the top, the rock rolled back down into the valley, I also felt trapped in an endless cycle. But as time passed the baby seemed to improve. Each time

she seemed to get closer to the top, and when she slipped back down into the valley, it was not as deep as the previous time. Sensing victory at hand, I summoned my remaining reserves of energy for a final push over the top.

"In the Name of Jesus Christ, I bind the forces of evil which intend to take the life of this child. *Little baby, be healed !*"

I looked down at her. Her eyes were alert, wide open. She was breathing robustly. Kicking her legs, she seemed to signal to me that she was well. I waited several moments for a relapse. None came! Rising to my feet, I informed Aliung and his wife that the name of Jesus Christ had saved their daughter. I urged them to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord.

When Akong and I arrived back home that night, it was midnight, and we were weary. In Bamiko we had wrestled with the powers of darkness in a tug-of-war struggle that lasted nearly three hours nonstop. God had given us the victory.

The next morning, Oom came by again. "Pastor," he beamed, "the baby is completely well. The people could hardly believe it. There were so many who gathered in Aliung's front porch to take a look at the child that the floorboards cracked under their weight!"

Within a few weeks we were able to start a weekly meeting in Bamiko. The situation reminded me of what Daniel experienced:

At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, I

looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude ... Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But *the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days*. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come." (Daniel 10:2-6, 10-14)

The fierce struggle between the forces of God and those of Satan in the lives of the saints, depicted so clearly by the prophet Daniel, continues to the present.

Chapter Fourteen

The Lame Walk

The town meeting to discuss the matter of the troublesome Christians of Batu Ampar was set for April 24, 1984. A vacant movie theater in the middle of town was the site. All the prominent men of the community had been invited, for nothing could be decided without the consent of the entire town. The government wanted to minimize the chance of religious violence in the future.

The meeting was called to order by the *Camat*, the leading public official over Batu Ampar. Two other government officials helped to co-chair the meeting. Seated on one side of the *Camat* was the *Danramil*, the commandant of the local army garrison.

Opposite, sat the *Kapolsek*, the local chief of police. They three sat behind a school cafeteria-type folding table at the front of the theater facing the small crowd of townspeople who had filled the first five or six rows. Scattered in the crowd here and there were a few Christians, including Laura and myself.

The *Camat* opened the meeting with remarks encouraging the people to be fair and tolerant toward people of other religions in compliance with the spirit of *Pancasila*, the foundation upon which Indonesian constitutional law is built. It was an obvious reference to the reaction of the community to the recent Christian foothold in Batu Ampar. Then he asked the assembled townspeople to express their opinions about where the Christians should build their church.

"Batu Ampar has many people of the Islamic faith," said one man, "It is not appropriate for a Christian church to be built here. Let the missionary and his wife build their church in Tanjung Beringin, where there are Christians." Tanjung Beringin was a remote area many hours away by boat. Several others

enthusiastically seconded the suggestion.

"Gentlemen," interrupted the *Camat*, "the missionary and his wife have the right to advance the Christian religion in Batu Ampar.

According to the Pancasila, Indonesia is not a Muslim state, but a country where adherents of the five recognized religions, including Islam and Christianity, have the right to practice their religion."

Although the *Camat* himself was a Muslim, in his role as a public official he had been admirably trained to uphold the law impartially.

Having established that we could not legally be chased out of Batu Ampar, he returned to the question of where we would build our church. "The *Danramil*, *Kapolsek* and I would now like to propose various sites where the Christians may build. We, meaning all present at this meeting, must work together to come up with a location acceptable to everyone. We must work together to achieve peace and harmony to facilitate future progress for our town."

It sounds good, I thought, hearing the *Camat's* words. *He's trying to be fair*.

"We have already heard the opinion of the residents in the neighborhood of the ice factory," the *Camat* continued, referring to the resolution drafted by the immediate neighborhood in reaction to our proposal to build our church on the land donated by brother A Bak. "They do not want a church on Mr. A Bak's land. And neighbors of the Pastor have also indicated that they object to his house being used as a place of Christian worship. Therefore, gentlemen, we propose another site which we hope will be acceptable to you all. We propose a site off of Kemuning Road, near the *Danramil's* Headquarters." *That is being very fair*, I thought. A couple of men immediately stood to their feet. "We do not want a church to be built there!" said one. "We live in that area." *Oh, come off it*, I objected silently.

"If that is the case," answered the *Camat*, "we suggest another

site, an undeveloped plot of government land about two hundred yards behind the pastor's house. There's no one living nearby, so it should not bother anybody."

There was a brief pause. "No, we object!" shouted voices from behind us. "We own fields in that area where we plant crops. We don't want a church near us when we're working our fields."

A slight furrow formed on the *Camat's* brow. He was getting impatient with these villagers. Why should a church across from their field bother them? *Is their faith in Allah so weak that they might fall away just by walking past or looking at a church*, he thought, shaking his head.

"Alright, then. Gentlemen, we must be fair. Try to place yourselves in the shoes of the Christians. Would you like to be treated in the way you are treating them?"

"Let me suggest another site," continued the *Camat*. "This new location is far enough from your houses and fields. We can give the Christians some land at the far end of the public field." The public field was situated at the edge of town, about a mile from the central marketplace. It was used for sporting events and public gatherings such as Independence Day ceremonies. And it was remote from homes and cultivated land.

There were murmurs and whispers in the crowd. The *Camat* waited for a response. *They couldn't possibly object to this location*, he thought.

A man in the front raised his voice. "We do not agree to that location. It is too close to the Muslim cemetery."

At that, the *Camat* couldn't hold back anymore. "What's wrong with the church being close to our cemetery? Do you think the spirits of the dead there will be influenced by the church nearby?" *This is ridiculous*, he fumed to himself. He waited, knowing that it would be in vain. He knew the people were not

trying to be fair, but purposely rejected his suggestions so as to force him to propose some far-out-of-the-way location.

Laura and I sat passively listening to the proceedings. It was as if we were spectators at a movie, watching as others discussed and determined our fate.

The *Camat* finally threw up his hands and said to the crowd, "So then where would you have them build?" He knew that the crowd would be satisfied only with a location which they themselves chose. They would certainly choose something outrageous. But what could he do? As a public official, his job was to keep the peace at any cost. And if it cost the Christians a decent location for their church, that's the way it had to be.

"Mr. *Camat*." A man stood up.

"Yes?" said the *Camat*, acknowledging him.

"We propose a place in back of the Kalimantan Sari sawmill, along the edge of the water."

The *Camat* thought for a moment. He tried to place the location in his mind, but without success. "Where exactly is that?" He asked. "I'm not sure I know where that would be."

The *Danramil*, who was more familiar with the local area, stood up and sauntered over to a blackboard which had been wheeled in for the meeting. Picking up a piece of chalk, he drew a rough sketch of the area in question. Then he pointed to the proposed location.

I knew the place. Distance-wise, it was not far from the center of town. But it would be difficult to get to. In order to get to church, we would have to fight our way through some very rough terrain. It was either that or walk through the maze of the big Kalimantan Sari sawmill. Either way was unappetizing. I started to weigh the possibilities of using that land. We would have to clear our own path to the church from the main road.....

"Pastor, is this location acceptable to you?" I heard the *Camat* address me.

"Yes, uh, yes, it's, uh, it's fine." I heard myself answer, although I hadn't yet seen the land or had the time to consider it in detail. We were lucky enough not to get chased out, I felt. The *Camat* had tried to be fair to us, defending our rights before the community. I knew I'd better take what they gave us. Things could have been a lot worse. We agreed to take the land and, as the *Camat* requested, build our church on it as soon as possible. The townspeople were satisfied. They knew that in such an inaccessible location the message of the gospel could be sufficiently quarantined. Apparently, they knew that the land given us was unusable swampland overgrown with dense prehistoric foliage. During the annual rainy season which lasts for a few months, it was actually *underwater*. Later we would also find out.

With the matter of our church site apparently settled, we turned our full attention back to the ministry. Through books from the States, we learned about the concept of cell groups.

Cell groups had become very popular in some American churches. In some cases they had contributed dramatically to rapid church growth. We wanted to see the same kind of growth in our congregation, so we initiated cell groups. Our hope was not only to bring many new souls into the kingdom of God. But we also desired to see the people chosen to head the cell groups eventually mature to become the leaders of the church. It was becoming clear to us that we would not be staying in Indonesia forever. When it came time for us to leave, there had to be people ready to take over the leadership of the work.

God had already prepared some people to lead the cell groups. A Bak and his wife A Bakso, Elias, Akong, Asiu and Lanyi

were obvious choices. To these we added Chin-guo, Ameng, Ibu Sri and Ibu Simon. Chin-guo was a brother who owned a coffee shop next door to A Bak's house in the central marketplace. Ameng was a grandson of Grandmother, the grand old matriarch for whom I sometimes risked life and limb on my weekly ministry trips by trail bike into her interior village of Jeruju Kiri. As a sixteen-year-old, Ameng was the very first member of Grandmother's big clan to receive Christ. Ibu Sri was the wife of an army soldier posted in Batu Ampar. And Ibu Simon lived in a sawmill called Medang Kerang Jaya or "MKD" with her husband who captained a small ship for the sawmill.

Each one of these who had been chosen had met God in a stirring way. Each had a moving personal testimony. And each was ready to proclaim the name of the Lord Jesus who had called them.

We brought them together and explained what we felt God desired of them. They received God's call to serve and committed themselves to be trained. After several weeks of training, the cell groups began under our supervision. Once each week, they met with us to receive the materials which they would teach in their individual cell groups.

In the beginning, the program was a success. Within two months, attendance at our Sunday services was up by forty percent.

We began with fourteen cell groups, and the Lord blessed. Akong's cell group started with three people. In six weeks, attendance in his group hovered around twenty-five. Lanyi, just two years in Christ, preached with such fervor in her cell group meetings that she would nearly lose her voice. Often, at the end of her meetings people would ask her to minister healing for their physical infirmities. Her mountain-moving faith frequently resulted in instant healings.

In this way the leaders found ample opportunity for ministry in their cell groups. In the past, the people usually came to us for

healing from sickness or prayer for some other problem. Now they brought their needs directly to their cell group leader, who would minister or pray with them. In this way, the people came to see that God not only answered the prayers of the teachers from America, but also honored the prayers of local people as well. This marked a significant change in their thinking. Their past experience with sorcerers had shown them that power from their god was channeled only through the sorcerer. When the sorcerer consulted his spirits for them, they were required to do nothing other than to wait passively or to go through the external motions of burning incense or prostration. They did not have to believe in their hearts. There was no need for heartfelt worship and adoration, for an active, believing faith when they approached their god. The sorcerer took care of everything.

But now the people were seeing that Jehovah God not only heard the prayers of the missionaries, He also heard the prayers of the cell group leaders. And if God listened to the local leaders, there was no reason why He wouldn't listen to them as well. In this way, the people were encouraged to seek their God directly through His Son Jesus Christ. It was the beginning of the priesthood of all believers in Batu Ampar.

At the same time, new things were taking place on Sunday mornings.

A young man named Aweng was sick for several days with a very high fever. He had come from another area called Padangtikar to visit his younger brother who lived in Batu Ampar. We were called to minister to him. Over a period of a few days, several of us shared the gospel with him and attempted to minister healing to him. But the fever raged on. Finally, Lanyi took him to the Conservative Baptist missionary hospital to the north of Pontianak, not far from

the border of East Malaysia. It was a difficult two-day trip, and only someone with the grace and strength of Lanyi could have taken him.

The missionary doctors were able to treat his fever. But for some reason, when the fever left, he became lame. Aweng had to be carried back to Batu Ampar, healthy but unable to walk. He and his relative Aliung returned in the middle of the week.

We visited Aweng at his brother's house and encouraged him to trust in the Lord. Sorcerers had failed to treat his fever. The kind doctors at the missionary hospital had dealt with the fever, but now he was lame. He was a young man about to take a wife and his life was still before him. He had to get well. But there was no one else to turn to but the God of the Christians. Aweng would be sure to come to church that coming Sunday for to be healed.

For the remainder of that week, I prayed for Aweng. I asked God to heal him during the service that coming Sunday. The sermon would focus on the power of God. What better demonstration of this power could there be than the miraculous raising of the lame young man? A few times each day leading up to that Sunday, I asked the Lord to provide that demonstration to strengthen the faith of His children.

That Sunday morning shortly after nine o'clock, I was out in the sanctuary setting up the equipment. The sound amplifier had to be hooked up, microphones and speakers plugged in. The wall fans had to be faced in just the right direction to provide maximum cooling; the crowd and the mid-day heat would soon turn the room into an oven. The rows of benches had to be aligned perfectly parallel....

Suddenly I heard voices and approaching footsteps. I looked through the back double doors. There was Aweng, propped up by two men, each holding an arm. They carried Aweng up the

walkway, his dangling legs making a feeble effort to help. I greeted him with a smile as they brought him into the sanctuary, setting him down in the front row. But looking at his legs from up close, my mountain-moving faith suddenly evaporated. *His legs are really bad*, I said to myself. *They're worse than I'd imagined. O Lord, I cried, help me. I can't do anything for him. If you don't heal him, he's not going to walk!* All the faith and I-can-do-all-things-through-Christ confidence I had stored up in prayer for Aweng over the past week vanished, leaving me feeling as helpless as a whimpering puppy.

At ten o'clock, our service began. As we worshiped, I managed to get my thoughts off of Aweng and onto the Lord. But soon worship was over, Laura sat down and gave the rest of the service to me. I stood up and began to teach the brethren about God's power. It's easy, I've found, to talk with your mouth about the Lord's power. It is a different matter when seated in the front row is a lame newcomer who expects to see a demonstration of the power you so blithely speak of.

"There is nothing too difficult for God," I boasted. "There is no sickness which He cannot heal," I added, swallowing the safety-valve addendum, "if it is His will." I had been raised in a spiritual atmosphere in which such a phrase, when tacked on to a prayer for healing, was snickered at. But I had seen enough instances where the sick were not healed. Perhaps God did have a will after all. I was not to understand this more fully until much later. These principles are discussed in our forthcoming book on miraculous healing to bring souls to Christ.

But that morning, faith had to be injected into the people, into Aweng, if we were going to witness a miracle. "If it is His will," although its theological validity is arguable in certain cases, certainly does nothing to encourage I-believe-it-I-have-it, mountain-moving

faith. Besides, would God embarrass Himself and me by not healing Aweng in front of the Sunday crowd?

Occasionally, as I spoke, I looked at Aweng. He was listening attentively. But as soon as I saw him, I remembered his legs. My spirit would twinge, my faith arrested. How in the world am I going to minister healing to Aweng?

But stubbornly I kept preaching about God's power to the people and to myself. Hopefully, the word would push our faith over the threshold into a glorious miracle for Aweng's legs.

Finally, the message was finished. "But the service is not over, brethren," I said. "For we would like to see the manifestation of the power I have just spoken about. In our midst this morning, we have a visitor. You have seen him and you know that he cannot walk. We are going to ask God to heal him right now." Stepping down from the platform, I walked over to where Aweng was sitting.

The cell group leaders stood up and gathered around him, laying their hands on him. I prayed, asking the Lord to heal his legs. Then, "in the name of Jesus Christ," I said for all to hear, "I rebuke this affliction and command your legs to be made strong!"

I took hold of Aweng's arms and pulled him to his feet. "In the name of Jesus Christ," I said, "walk!" Then I let him go.

Aweng stood still very briefly as if testing the strength of his legs. Then he took one step forward, quite gingerly, and then another. Then another. He kept going, walking slowly around the room by himself. The people broke out into shouts and praises to the Lord, for they had seen a miracle with their own eyes. People stood up to clap and thank God for His mercy and grace. A group of teenagers, first-time visitors from the MKD sawmill, were so impressed they declared, "this is a great church and we want to come every week!"

But the true purpose of a miracle is not to be found in the emotionally-charged atmosphere of a miracle service. Rather it is revealed in the changed lives of people weeks, months and years after the miracle has taken place.

After his miraculous recovery, Aweng went home to Padangtikar, an area devoid of the Word of God three hours away by boat. He failed to continue in his faith. When a few years later the kingdom of God finally arrived in Padangtikar, Aweng had lost all interest in eternal matters. He was enjoying his good health and fishing business too much to seek after the spiritual.

As for the young people who had so heartily endorsed our church after witnessing Aweng's miraculous healing, few continued to come in search of the kingdom of God.

It is entirely possible to perform a physical miracle simply by one's faith in the name of Jesus Christ. The will of God in the matter does not necessarily have a bearing on the miracle. As some have taught, there are laws of faith which can at times operate in the physical realm when the proper conditions have been met.

The greater miracle is outside the jurisdiction of man's mountain-moving faith, one which the sovereign God alone works out in His own time and way with those who have been give "free will." This is the miracle of a soul thirsting after righteousness, leading him to find the new birth through Jesus Christ. But no one should think a physical miracle will *always* lead to a spiritual one.

Chapter Fifteen

God's Handmaiden Asiu

We were now in the remarkably wonderful situation of working ourselves out of a job.

Leaders of home cell groups were maturing with experience; God's anointing upon them grew. Things which we had done in the power of the Holy Spirit they were also enabled to do. We found ourselves with less to do as they took over ministry to the flock.

Asiu, still in her early twenties, decided in 1985 to begin a work in the town of Kubu, where she had once lived as a child. Each week Asiu boarded a longboat for the two-hour trip to Kubu. There she ministered to people whose lives were deeply rooted in idolatry and sorcery.

Asiu's older brother Achoon had settled down in Kubu with his wife and children. They received Asiu and the message of salvation she brought. Nearby lived a young woman named Asuan who suffered from a chronic dizziness which left her unable to lead a normal life. Asiu shared the gospel with Asuan, who promptly received Jesus Christ as her Lord. After prayer and ministry, she was freed from the dizziness.

Asiu disciplined Achoon and Asuan. Eventually, they became her co-laborers, accompanying her as she went from house to house preaching Christ Jesus. Opposition sprung up from zealous followers of local spirits and sorcerers; many did not receive her message. But God gave grace to certain ones to receive the knowledge of eternal life.

Asiu, Achoon and Asuan brought the gospel to an outlying village of Chinese farmers. There they were received by a man named Mr. Lie who had several daughters. The entire family

received Christ. Soon Asiu began a meeting in their home where neighbors gathered with the family to hear the Word of God. Mr. Lie grew quickly in the faith. He frequently led the weekly meetings when Asiu was not able to come.

After about a year, roughly twenty families had come to know Christ in the Kubu area through Asiu and her co-workers. After her two days in Kubu each week, Asiu would return to Batu Ampar. Usually, within a few hours after her return, I would hear a knock on the door of my study. Asiu would come in, take a seat and relate to me what the Lord had done in the last two days. I'd marvel at how Almighty God was using this young woman. Without guile, without a desire for a name or financial gain, but with a simple desire to obey the One who had saved her, she had gone out. And the Lord honored her.

During the days she was in Batu Ampar, Asiu faithfully shared the gospel. She took the gospel into most of the ten sawmills scattered in the area, sowing and reaping. At one point, roughly half of the people in our flock had been won to Christ through her personal witness. When at home with us, she faithfully did her share of the household work, cooking, washing and cleaning. Never had I met such a devoted handmaiden of Christ.

Asiu became proficient at discipling others. Some of the older women she taught became fruitful cell group leaders. Ibu Sri was the wife of a soldier stationed in Batu Ampar. After Ibu Sri accepted Christ, Asiu went to see her weekly, teaching her the truths of the faith. She eventually became one of the original nine cell group leaders.

Ibu Lis taught at the public school where Asiu was a student before she went into full-time service. Originally from Northern Sumatra, Ibu Lis was of the Batak tribe, christianized by missionaries from Germany generations ago. But when she first

came to our church, Ibu Lis had never known Christ personally. After receiving the Word of God, she received the Lord and was born again. Asiu went to see Ibu Lis weekly, teaching her the Bible. She grew strong in faith and took over as cell-group leader when Ibu Sri and her husband moved to Java.

However, Ibu Lis' husband, Martin, had not been quick to follow his wife in the faith. He had once served in his church back in Sumatra, and already knew all about Christianity. Besides, he enjoyed his worldly lifestyle which permitted him to smoke. But Ibu Lis prayed fervently for him. Sometimes she allowed herself to chide him for his smoking.

On one such occasion, Martin decided to put to the test the Lord his wife had boasted so much about.

"Look," he challenged his wife, "I can't stop smoking. I've been smoking since I was young. If God is so great, let him make me stop smoking!" As it turned out, it was not his wife Martin had challenged, it was God Himself.

Ibu Lis prayed to the Lord to make Martin quit smoking. Not long afterwards, as Martin sat down in his favorite chair to light up, he found a bitter taste from the cigarette. A bit puzzled, he put down the cigarette, snuffing it out. *Could it be my wife praying for me, he wondered. Could God be doing this to me? You mean, God actually exists?* Martin shoved the thought aside. It was something he'd rather not deal with yet.

But later in the day, the desire to light up returned.

This time Martin knew he had to come to grips with the matter of God. *If it tastes bitter again, he decided, I'll have to believe it's God.* Martin lit up and took a deep puff. Suddenly, he gagged, expelling the bitter fumes. *It's even worse than it was before. This must be God.*

Through this, Martin came to grips with his God. He

repented and asked Christ to come into his heart. God took him and later called him to take Ibu Lis' place as cell group leader when she became pregnant with their second child.

At one time, Asiu made weekly visits to the Medang Kerang Djaya sawmill to share the gospel. Ibu Simon, one of our brethren, lived there with her husband. Soon she was accompanying Asiu all over the sawmill, sharing Christ and ministering to people who wanted to come out of indescribable darkness. In time, when the cell groups were instituted, Ibu Simon was called to be the leader for the Medang Kerang Djaya cell group.

Another saint whose life was touched by Asiu was a young woman name Amoy, whose family owned a business in the central marketplace. She had been led to the Lord by A Bak's wife. Asiu, sensing that God had a calling on her life, visited her often. Soon Amoy was accompanying Asiu on her evangelistic rounds in the marketplace. Amoy also became a cell group leader and eventually helped to open up the new area of Padangtikar.

Early in 1987, Asiu went to Java to stay with her brother and mother. Soon after, she enrolled in a Bible school in Central Java. How precious to us was this simple young woman, so lacking in the things treasured by the world, yet so filled with the things which belong to them who shall inherit the Kingdom of God!

In 1987, after Asiu had left Batu Ampar, Indonesian servants of the Lord came from Java to minister in our area. A team of them went to stay in Kubu for a month to strengthen the believers there. The Lord was gracious. After the month was over, there were many new believers as well as a solid core of people ready to carry on the work by themselves. Leading them were Asiu's brother Achoon and Asuan. Because of the spreading influence of the Christian faith in Kubu, the flames of opposition had also been fanned. Achoon in his

zeal for the Lord had made some very pointed remarks about the real nature of idolatry to some idol-worshippers. Sorcerers and defenders of the local gods took offense and found a cause. They would attempt to eradicate this new belief from Kubu.

One night, Achoon and a few others were praying in the house where the church meetings were being held. While in prayer, their spiritual eyes were opened. In the spirit, they saw two creatures standing outside the door. From their appearance, Achoon knew these beings to be demons. And, based on threats they had received from idol-worshippers, they knew that the demons had been sent to harm them. Achoon and the others cried out to the Lord for protection. They prayed against the demons and rebuked them in the name of Jesus Christ.

Then a vision of the sky was given to them. At first, all was dark. Suddenly, a bright light illumined the heavens, and a cross appeared against the backdrop of the brilliance. When the vision faded, they were suddenly aware that the demons were no longer crouching at the door. They had fled.

The next morning, Achoon was approached by some unbelievers. They looked at him curiously at first, but then smiled.

"Do you know what happened last night?" one of them asked excitedly. "One of the most powerful witches in Kubu tried to put you out of business. He put a terrifying hex on you when you and the others were worshiping your God. But nothing's happened to you. Your God must be very big!"

Praise the Lord for Lanyi. She was our eyes and ears. Everyday she tirelessly pedaled her made-in-China bicycle out of the Bumi Raya Sawmill to see us. Her daily routine included stopping by at the central marketplace in town, so she knew what was going

on and what people were talking about. What she saw and heard that involved the work of the church, she relayed to us. But one day, her report had been too much for us to believe.

"A love triangle in our church, Lanyi?" we said dubiously. "Come on, that's just couldn't be!"

There was a young single man named Martin (not Ibu Lis' husband who is also named Martin) in our congregation who had been faithfully attending meetings and had shown some interest in serving. He had even helped lead a Chinese man and his wife to the Lord in Bumi Raya where they worked as laborers. Though he lacked refinement in his manner, we were quite pleased with his spiritual growth.

We were very skeptical that afternoon when Lanyi told us something was going on between Martin and the Chinese man's wife. Though Lanyi's reports were usually accurate, we thought in this case her suspicions had gotten the better of her judgment. Martin was a vigorous man in his twenties. Chow-Wong-So, the Chinese brother's wife, was a very plain-looking woman whose oldest of several children was 16 years old. Lanyi's talk didn't make sense. But several days later, we were forced to swallow our doubts.

Lanyi burst into the house. She sat down very deliberately, taking off the wide-brimmed straw hat which had earned her the sobriquet "Auntie Big Hat."

"Teacher," she announced, "Chow-Wong-So has left her husband and run off with Martin."

"Lanyi, you're kidding," Laura answered in half-belief. "She what?"

"Martin and Chow-Wong-So eloped. Chow-Wong went to the police. The police found them and arrested them. They're being held at police headquarters in Telok Air."

An hour later, Elias and I were on our way to Bumi Raya to see the husband, Chow-Wong. The matter was serious. A scandal involving the police and accusations of adultery and wife-stealing in our church would only add to the controversy surrounding our church. Chow-Wong had gone directly to the police without seeking mediation from us. Unless something could be done within the church, our work would suffer shame.

Chow-Wong was not at home. His next-door neighbor A-Sung saw us and came outside to talk. Like Chow-Wong, he also worked in the sawmill, but to supplement his income he moonlighted as a sorcerer.

"Chow-Wong's gone to the police station in Telok Air, Teacher," he said, addressing me politely. "Do you know what happened?"

"Yes, I do," I answered somewhat sheepishly.

"That Martin is a bad guy." I could almost hear the glee in his voice. "He came here often, several times a week. Sometimes he spent the night in their home. They thought he came to help them, but now he's run off with Chow-Wong's wife.

"He used black magic to make her fall in love with him," he said.

"Black magic? You probably had something to do with it," I said to him under my breath.

"We're going to Telok Air to see them," I told him. "Maybe we can convince Chow-Wong-So to go back to her husband."

"Forget about it," A-Sung volunteered. "It's a very powerful spell that's on her. You won't be able to break it." The man was challenging us. More than that, I felt he was purposely challenging the Lord we served.

"If you can get Chow-Wong-So to return to her husband," A-Sung vowed matter-of-factly, "I promise to kneel before you."

Elias and I made our way through the depressingly dark and dilapidated sawmill worker shacks to the Bumi Raya pier. A-Sung's stinging challenge still ringing in our ears, we boarded a small water taxi heading for Telok Air. Would God vindicate us? I wasn't sure.

Chow-Wong-So had already made her choice. Would God forcibly deliver her against her will? People who had experience with deliverance would say no.

Our little wooden craft chugged its way toward the big island across the harbor from Batu Ampar. Telok Air was nestled in between two big sawmills hidden on the opposite side of the island. Twenty minutes later, we disembarked at the police pier. I went to see the Chief of Police.

The Chief was glad to see me. He had already tried to persuade Chow-Wong-So to go back to her husband. She had refused, preferring to drown herself in the sea than to part with Martin. She wanted to get married with him. The Chief had informed her that it was not such a simple matter. She had broken the law by running off with another man. Her husband had filed formal charges. If she persisted in her madness, the chief would have no choice but to imprison her. Prison in Indonesia is a dreaded place where inmates, whether convicted or not, forfeit the right to physical safety. She would not want to go to jail. Yet even this threat could not dissuade her from leaving Martin.

"Pastor, if you would like," said the chief, a dark-complexioned, heavy-set Javanese man, "please talk with Chow-Wong-So. If as her religious authority you can settle the matter and get her to reunite with her husband, he will probably drop the charges. Then we can forget the whole matter. Otherwise, it will be very messy." That was precisely what we hoped to avoid. We agreed to see her.

Elias and I were taken to a room adjoining the Chief's office.

Chow-Wong-So was led into the room and seated at a plain wooden chair.

Her face sullen and hardened, she looked down at her lap, motionless. *She's changed*, I thought. *She's not the same person. It must be the spell that Martin put on her.*

Elias went over to her.

"Chow-Wong-So," he said softly. "Pastor has come to see you."

She made no response. Again Elias spoke to her. But it was as if we were not there.

I sat down next to her.

"Chow-Wong-So," I said, "we're here to help you."

I paused. Nothing.

"Martin put a spell on you. It made you fall in love with him.

You left Chow-

Wong, you left your children. The little ones still need you. You know this is not right."

"Satan has done this to you," I continued. "He wants to destroy your family. He wants to destroy you. The police told me that if you don't go back to your husband, you'll go to jail."

I waited a few moments for my words to sink in.

"I know you still want to go with Martin," I went on, "but may we pray for you so that you can think clearly and be free to do what is right?"

"NO!" she lashed out abruptly, "I want to go with Martin. I would rather die than go back to my husband. I don't want you to pray for me!"

This is going to be hard, I thought. *We can pray for someone who wants to be free, but she doesn't even want prayer!*

"Chow-Wong-So, we want to help you. You need help. Satan has blinded you. At least admit that you're blind and that you

need help. At least let us pray for you."

"NO!"

"But you're God's child. And now you're sinning against Him."

"I don't care," she retorted, "I want to get married to Martin."

This is getting nowhere, I concluded. *Maybe we'll just minister to her whether she wants it or not. We'll just have to wrestle with Satan for her.* I was not going to give up that easily. Chow-Wong-So's act would give much ammunition to the unbelievers.

"Let's minister to her," I said to Elias, who had been at my side translating my remarks from Indonesian into Chinese. We laid our hands on her.

"In the name of Jesus, we bind you, Satan. We rebuke this demon from the spell cast by Martin. We command you to leave!" As we continued to come against the spell, she closed her eyes and grit her teeth. She was not about to be delivered from Satan's trap.

"In the name of Jesus, come out, demon!"

She sprang to her feet, trying to get away from us. But we cornered her and continued to pray.

"In the name of Jesus, leave her, you unclean spirit!"

Like a collared animal, she struggled against our grip. But we would not let go. She contorted her face, resisting our prayer with all her might.

For about an hour, a very long hour, the battle continued. I began to tire. My thoughts flashed back to the tug-of-war I experienced with the dying baby girl in the Bamiko Sawmill. But this was different. This woman didn't *want* our help.

But gradually, her resolve weakened. I noticed that her face was beginning to soften. She opened her eyes. It was at that point, as she was to relate to us later, that she felt power surge through her.

The armor of deception suddenly fell away. She had never before felt such awesome power. It convinced her that God was indeed real.

"Will you go back to your husband now?" I asked, sensing an opening.

"No, not yet," she answered faintly.

"Then come back to the church with us. You can stay with us for awhile, until you're ready to go back home."

"I, I.....alright, Pastor."

Meekly, yet with a bit of hesitation, she followed us down to the pier where we boarded a water taxi bound for Batu Ampar.

After Chow-Wong-So had settled down in an upstairs room in our home, we summoned Chow-Wong and his children to come to see her. We arranged for the children to go in first. When her youngest child, a little girl four or five years old, walked into her room, she got up and embraced her stroking her face tenderly. Then the other children joined them. Finally, Chow-Wong came in to see her, thoughtfully bringing hot noodles from the local Chinese take-out.

That night, after Chow-Wong and the children had gone back to Bumi Raya, she had a dream. She saw herself drowning in the sea. An elderly man came by in a boat and rescued her. When she awoke, she understood what had nearly happened to her.

That morning, Chow-Wong-So returned to her family.

A few weeks later, we were surprised at our home by an unannounced visit by A-Sung the sorcerer. After he exchanged greetings with me, he asked for a glass of water. I went to the kitchen to get the water. After handing it to him, I sat down. He probably wanted to talk about something. But he knelt down at my feet, offering me the glass of water with outstretched arms.

Alarmed, I jumped to my feet. But as I tried to pull him to his feet, he said, "I'm just fulfilling my vow to you. Remember, I promised I would kneel before you if you brought Chow-Wong-So back to her husband?"

"It wasn't me," I protested. "It was the name of the Lord Jesus Christ which delivered her. *This is not right. Please get up!*" It was a taste of how awkward Paul the apostle might have felt long ago when people tried to offer sacrifices to him after God had healed a lame man through him.

When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. (Acts 14:11-15)

Chapter Sixteen
Like an Old Testament Prophet

"Are you tired of living, sir?" The words just streamed out of Lanyi's mouth at the mocking man who had slapped at her Bible.

In addition to operating a small variety store in his home, Lanyi's son Asang also ran a makeshift soda fountain from his front porch. Sawmill laborers, thirsty from pushing one-ton lorries laden with sawn timber from the mill to the huge storage sheds, often dropped by during their break. Asang had turned the porch fence into a counter where customers could be served.

That morning, Lanyi was relaxing outside at the counter. Her Bible was open on the counter in front of her. She had never been to school, but nevertheless she had learned a few characters of Chinese on her own. Even though she couldn't get a lot from her reading, she felt good just skimming the surface of the Word of the Lord whom she loved.

Footsteps approached. Lanyi looked up to see a neighbor walk by on his way to work in the sawmill. The walkway led right past the soda fountain.

"Hello," he said, smiling at Lanyi, "everyday, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!"

Lanyi waved and smiled back. She had gotten used to frequent good-natured bantering after her faith had become widely known in the sawmill. Many still did not believe in her Lord. But like that neighbor, they respected her.

There was a loud whack on the counter right under her nose. Lanyi jerked to attention. A defiant hand had slapped down on her open Bible. She looked up and saw a man named Mahmud.

"Everyday, hallelujah, hallelujah!" he sneered, looking down

at Lanyi with scorn. Pak Mahmud despised Christians, especially those who were Chinese and couldn't even speak the Indonesian language. And Lanyi was a defenseless woman.

But Lanyi's fury ignited. It was that moment she shocked him with her question. Pak Mahmud turned and left.

Next day, the supervisor of Pak Mahmud's shift noted that he had not come in again. It was strange that yesterday he hadn't shown up, nor called in. He hadn't come in today, either. The supervisor inquired, but no one knew where he was. Pak Mahmud was a bachelor and lived by himself. But there was no cause for worry. Pak Mahmud was a strong healthy man in his early forties. But when after three days, no one had seen him, a search was begun.

The search finally ended at his quarters in the sawmill complex. The front door had been locked from the inside for the past three days. The searchers broke down the door and went inside.

As they entered the kitchen in the rear, they found Pak Mahmud stretched out on the floor. He was dead. A plate of half-eaten stale rice was on the dining table.

Lanyi's daughter-in-law couldn't bear it anymore. The next time that buffoon whom everyone called Hairlip came into their store to bother them again, Ajeen was going to grab a broom and sweep him out the front door.

A few days later, Hairlip wobbled in with the familiar smell of whiskey trailing behind him. He bought a kilogram of kerosene from Ajeen and turned to leave. On his way out the door, he stopped. "Ajeen," he drawled, "you believed in Jesus Christ and you lost your son Irwan. If you believe in my god, I'll make you an altar for your house, and he'll give you a son."

"Get out!" screamed Ajeen, reaching for her broom to make good on her vow. "Get out of my store! I'll get you for saying that!"

Lanyi came out quickly from the kitchen.

"Don't bother with him, Ajeen," she said, trying to calm her daughter-in-law. "He's just a drunken fool. Don't pay attention to what he says."

Ajeen relented and Hairlip stumbled out intact.

One Friday, Lanyi was on her way to Batu Ampar from the sawmill where she lived. As she was pedaling past the graveyard at an isolated section of the path, her rear tire went flat. Lanyi coasted to a stop. A bit annoyed, she got off and began walking the bike. Batu Ampar was still far away.

Suddenly, she heard a man's voice. She turned around and saw Hairlip emerging from the forest which lined each side of the path. He seemed to be muttering.

"You believed in Jesus Christ, so your grandson died. But if you now believe in my god, he'll give you another grandson."

Lanyi was caught offguard. The flat tire had already bothered her. Now this fool was shooting off his mouth again.

"If your god gives me a son like you," Lanyi shot back, "no thank you. A son like you would be better off never having been born."

With that, Lanyi turned and strode away in indignation.

That night, Hairlip fell ill. His stomach became bloated. The following day, Saturday, brought no relief but rather worsening symptoms. By Sunday, his concerned relatives brought him to Batu Ampar to see the doctor.

"Why did you wait so long before bringing him here?" he reprimanded them. "This man has obviously been sick a long time. He's beyond help. I'm sorry, but there's nothing I can do for him. Please take him home."

Hairlip's family took him home. Within hours, he died in great pain.

A few days later, Hairlip's niece came to see Lanyi.

"Before he died," she said, "my uncle said that all this happened because you rebuked him that day."

"Piau-So, why do you always pray before you eat? I'm your Lord Jesus! Ha, ha! I'm the one who gives you food to eat!"

Piau-So had just bowed her head to give thanks for her meal when Tall Guy walked in uninvited. Not that he needed an invitation. He and her husband A Piau were buddies, working the same shift at the sawmill in Bumi Raya where Lanyi and her family lived. In sawmill housing there was little privacy. Where Piau-So lived, reserved for those who had some rank in the sawmill, the unfinished wooden units measured about five yards by fifteen yards where a family would cook, wash, eat and sleep. Like primitive townhouses, the units were adjoined, one to another on each side. A single wall consisted of horizontally-laid wooden boards separated one family unit from another. Often they were constructed from newly sawn boards, still soaked with the moisture that nourished the tree. After several weeks the boards dried and shrank, leaving parallel open spaces where previously the boards had fit together snugly. Of course, whatever you said could be heard by your next-door neighbors. If you didn't want them to peer through the cracks into your bedroom, you would discreetly hang sheets of newspapers or old calendars as wallpaper.

A common boardwalk at each dwelling's front door consolidated the separate units into an involuntary community. Since no one bothered to keep his front door closed during the day---it was so hot---there was practically no privacy. Relatives, friends,

acquaintances, neighboring children, cats, dogs, chickens and even strangers passing by, might drop by your kitchen without notice. Piau-So didn't mind Tall Guy stopping by, but she didn't appreciate his frequent remarks about her new faith. God had raised her newborn baby back to life through Lanyi. She was grateful to Him for that and for the peace He had given. But Tall Guy, a vigorous Chinese man in his middle forties, liked to make fun of her. Moreover, he was a source of temptation to her husband. A-Piau like his wife had also been baptized as a believer in Jesus Christ. At one time he had given up alcohol, but his drinking buddy Tall Guy had helped to pull him back into the pit.

One day Tall Guy showed up at Lanyi's store. For some reason he was in a hurry.

"Hello, hallelujah, hallelujah!" he bantered. "Quick! Measure me out one kilogram of dried vegetables!"

Lanyi of course was quite familiar with Tall Guy's joking, but this time decided to kid back.

"Why are you in such a hurry, Tall Guy?" she asked. "Are you in a hurry to meet the god of the underworld?" (The Chinese half-jokingly refer to passing on to the next life in this manner.)

"Oh, I'm not going to meet with the god of the underworld," Tall Guy asserted. "I'm going to the place of the hallelujah's!"

"No, you're not," shot back Lanyi with a grin, "people like you can't go up there; you're going to the god of the underworld."

"Come on, Lanyi," Tall Guy responded, laughing. "I want to go with you to your heaven." The friendly ribbing went on as Lanyi weighed out on a primitive iron hanging scale the amount that Tall Guy requested. He took the vegetables and went out the door, following the boardwalk to his quarters which were about a minute away. Lanyi turned and returned to the kitchen in the back to

resume cooking.

She had barely picked up her wok when one of her neighbors burst in through the front door.

"Lanyi, Lanyi!" she screamed.

"What happened? What happened?" asked Lanyi, dashing out of the kitchen.

"Tall Guy is dead! Tall Guy is dead!"

"Dead? He was just here a half minute ago. Where is he?"

"He's outside on the boardwalk."

Lanyi turned and went out the door, followed by the neighbor. Several yards down along the boardwalk, she saw people huddled over someone stretched out on the ground. Quickly she reached them and knelt down over Tall Guy. His eyes were closed.

"Tall Guy! Tall Guy!" she cried out, picking up his hand.

"Are you really leaving us?"

Tall Guy opened his eyes weakly and looked at Lanyi. He said nothing. But perhaps he knew. He closed his eyes and was gone.

Chapter Seventeen

Elias

"Teacher," said Akwet, "the nails are almost gone. We have to buy some more."

We were enlarging our meeting place and adding an extra floor above to accommodate our growing work. Our brother Akwet, who was a carpenter by trade, came daily to work.

I was a bit annoyed. Being basically frugal, I kept close track of every "rupiah" spent. And it seemed to me that too many of them were being spent on nails. I mentioned the matter to Laura. At that time, our sister Sister Amee had been staying with us, helping to watch our two-year-old daughter Esther.

We had just purchased a few kilograms of three-inch nails. They had been put down in the back of our meeting room along with the assorted tools which Akwet kept on hand as the work progressed. But when he went to get the nails, many were missing, perhaps as much as a whole kilogram. Akwet noticed that something was wrong but did not mention it until he had used up the remaining nails and had to ask me to buy more. I was bewildered. *What could be happening to those nails?*

Late that morning, Sister Amee approached Laura, saying, "Teacher, I know what happened to those nails."

"You know?" said Laura. "Tell me."

"Elias took them," she replied. "He came this morning to help out. And when he went home, he took with him a pink plastic bag filled with nails."

"Are you sure, Sister Amee?" asked Laura. Elias was serving the Lord full-time with us. He of all people would know that it was wrong to take the nails. If he did take them, it would be a

very difficult situation to handle.

"Yes, Teacher, I saw him take the nails," answered Sister Amee. "You can ask Akong. Akong went with him this morning to his house."

We called Akong down from his room upstairs and asked if he had seen the nails. Akong also saw the pink bag of nails slung over the handlebars of Elias's bicycle on the way to his house.

"What does he need those nails for, Akong"?

"Probably to build a chicken coop for the chickens you bought for him, Teacher," he replied. "He's been putting one up in his back yard."

"Yes," I said after a moment's thought, "that makes sense." We had recently bought a few dozen chicks for him to raise. When they matured he could sell the eggs they laid and have additional income for his family. *Why doesn't he just ask me for money to buy the nails?* I wondered.

That afternoon we sent a message to Elias, asking him to stop by at our house. We wanted to talk to him.

After he arrived, we led him to a large upstairs room where we all sat around a big square table that Akwet had put together from leftover pieces of lumber. We and those who wanted to serve the Lord often gathered there to study the Bible. Sister Amee, Akong and Akwet were present. I asked Elias if he had taken the nails. "No, Teacher," he answered, "I didn't take the nails."

"But people saw you take the nails, Elias."

"I didn't take any nails from here."

I looked at Sister Amee. I asked her, "Did you see Elias take the nails this morning?"

"Yes, I did, teacher," replied Sister Amee. "He had them in a pink plastic bag."

Turning to Akong, I said, "What about you, Akong? Did you

see the nails when you went home with him before?"

"Yes. They were in the bag slung over the handlebars of his bicycle."

The witnesses had testified. *Surely, I thought, Elias will confess his wrongdoing and ask for forgiveness.*

I looked back at Elias. "Elias, did you take those nails?"

There was no answer.

I repeated my question to Elias and waited. Through the open windows overlooking the main path of Batu Ampar which passed in front of our house, came the voices and bustle of children on their way home from school.

"Elias, Sister Amee and Akong saw you take those nails. Will you admit it?"

Elias stared at me, his round face expressionless. "Yes, I did take them." The words came out very deliberately, with a coolness that revealed no remorse for what he had done.

"Do you know that what you did was wrong?" I asked.

"I've admitted that I took the nails," he retorted. "Isn't that enough?"

"Elias," I explained, "You're a servant of the Lord. You know that when we do wrong, we must repent. You know that repentance doesn't just mean confessing the wrong, but being truly sorry that you did it."

"I admit I took the nails." But there was no repentance in the tone of his voice. He was willing to admit to taking the nails, but not to any wrongdoing.

"Elias," I pleaded, "I know that the nails themselves are a very small matter. They just cost a few hundred rupiahs. But far more important is the principle of honesty. The Bible says that anyone who is faithful in a small matter will be faithful in a big matter, and that those who are dishonest in a small matter will be

dishonest in a big matter. You're a servant of the Lord. You've got to be honest to the last rupiah!"

I know that you've won many people to the Lord, that many sick people have been healed by God through your ministry. But all that will come to nothing if a person is not willing to admit his sin."

For the next half-hour we did our best to convince Elias. But despite our efforts, he refused to admit that he had done wrong. Finally, in frustration, I called the meeting to an end. At least, he admitted to us that he took the nails, I consoled myself as we descended the bare wooden stairs. *Whether or not he repents in his heart is between him and God. We've said and done all we can.* But somehow I knew that it was not the end of the matter. Laura and I retired to our room on the ground floor.

"Why do you think Elias is like that?" I sighed to Laura as I settled back in the comfortable easy chair Akwet had made for us, putting my feet on the bed. "Why won't he admit that he did wrong?"

Laura gave me a knowing look. "Bob, the way people think here in Indonesia is different from the way people might think in America," she began. "Back in America, things can be black-and-white, either right or wrong. We are taught that honesty is a virtue. But here, it's much more difficult to be honest. Take as an example, public officials. Their pay is so low that humanly speaking they need to accept what we call bribes in order to have enough to live on. They need the extra income. It's a way of life here---it doesn't carry quite the same negative connotation it does back in the States--and it's this type of thinking that influences Elias. He's worked hard and God has used him to win quite a few souls. And we haven't given him the kind of salary that he would like. So he probably feels he deserves to have those nails."

"But I would like to raise his salary," I retorted. "You know

that. But his performance is so erratic. Sometimes he does very well and I've just about decided to raise his salary. But then all of a sudden he fouls up and disappoints me. I would have raised his salary a few times already. It's his own fault that it hasn't gone up."

"Whatever the case, for Elias to think that he *deserves* to take those nails is wrong. We paid for those nails. If he takes those nails without asking, it's plain stealing!"

Even though Elias failed to admit his guilt, I clung to the hope that somehow all would turn out all right. Perhaps he realized it was wrong and would never do it again, but simply could not get himself to confess it in front of others. Perhaps time would vindicate my choosing Elias to work alongside us despite the Biblical injunction against elevating recent converts to positions of leadership in the church. He had been so full of potential and zeal for the Lord. Why should he have to wait a long time before being permitted to minister? But in the end, time vindicated the Biblical position.

Elias's inconsistent performance continued over the next couple of years. Although there were times when we were very satisfied with his ministry for the Lord, his occasional lapses caused me much frustration. Finally, a string of seemingly minor infractions drove me to the breaking point. The last of these involved Immanuel. Immanuel was a long boat that we used every Sunday to transport people to church. Built with funds provided through a church in New York, it looked like a very long rowboat, the only difference being a forty-horsepower Yamaha outboard attached to the stern. The one appointed to drive and maintain Immanuel was Elias.

Constructed from ordinary wood, Immanuel needed periodic work on the underside where barnacles quickly multiplied and slowly ate away at the wood. The heavy outboard engine had to be

removed, the boat drydocked and the rotten boards replaced and repainted.

We were about to go out of town for a couple of days. Elias had come and informed us that Immanuel was in need of some work.

But since work had been done on it not long prior to that, we told Elias to wait until we returned before drydocking it. Then we left on our trip.

When we returned to Batu Ampar, Elias told us that he had drydocked Immanuel during our absence. The boat, he said, had been leaking badly, so he decided not to wait for our return but to begin work.

His decision not to heed our instructions bothered me. It was not the first time. Moreover, though I appreciated the fact that Immanuel had a bad leak, I was certain that Elias could have waited another two days for our return without danger to the boat. Added to the string of his previous infractions, this last incident convinced me that Elias was deliberately challenging my authority. He could afford to do so because he thought we would not be able to do without him.

After talking it over with Laura, I made my decision. Over the past few weeks, I had already approached A Bak and Lanyi about the possibility of releasing Elias. They too had observed that he was no longer a help to the work of the Lord and agreed with me. I decided that Elias would no longer work with us. He would be welcome to remain in fellowship with the church, but he would not serve any longer in a full-time capacity.

Accompanied by A Bak and Lanyi, we went to see him at his home. The owner of a little store at the outskirts of town had piled up debts and wanted to move far away to start anew. He had needed cash and had asked us for a loan. As collateral he would leave us his house, land and fruit groves for our use. Since Elias had been

looking for a house, we lent the money to the man and asked Elias and his family to live in the house. It was a cavernous wooden affair built several years ago on the banks of a canal which the local people called *Teluk Mastora*. Time and the monsoon rains had eroded the walls, shingled roof and floor, though the ironwood frame of the house still stood strong. We had the important areas of the house repaired and then Elias and his wife and children moved in. When we arrived at his house, both Elias and Fookso were at home relaxing. As he heard the news, Elias was dumbfounded. I gave him my reasons for why I was letting him go, and offered him two and a half months of severance pay. Afterwards, we returned home.

On the following day, Lanyi stopped by as usual. Parking her bicycle on the wooden boardwalk which ran all the way to the back on one side of our house, she walked in the front double doors clutching her wide-brimmed straw hat in one hand.

"Teacher," she said as she sat herself down on a bench, "I just came from Elias's place. He was fuming at what you had done. He accused you and said that you had no right to fire him. But I told him that what you did was right. Teacher, he's done some things that you don't know about, but now that he's gone, I want to bring these things out into the open.

"Teacher, do you know why Immanuel needed to be repaired so soon after having been serviced just several weeks ago? Do you know why Immanuel was leaking so badly that Elias decided not to wait for you to return before beginning repairs on it?

"Just a few days before it started leaking badly, our brother Ameng asked Elias to help out with a large quantity of sawn timber he needed to deliver to a customer. The boards were already at Teluk Mastora near Elias' house. In return for some money, Elias brought Immanuel into the canal and loaded up the boards. Then he

delivered the whole load to Ameng's customer. Teacher, the load was too heavy for the boat. That's why it started to leak."

When I heard that Elias had used Immanuel, the church boat, for private gain and in doing so had caused damage to it, I was incensed. *Had I known this before*, I seethed to myself, *I wouldn't have given him so much severance pay!* But it was also a confirmation that I had made the right decision in letting him go. But there was more to come.

Someone had to replace Elias as driver of Immanuel on Sunday mornings when it made the rounds bringing people to church. Brother A Bak agreed to take up the responsibility. A few days later, Lanyi came by with a report I found hard to believe. When Elias was still operating Immanuel for the church, every Saturday night I gave him some money from the church to buy fuel for the next morning. He would pick people up in the morning for church and in the afternoon take them home. On the following Monday or Tuesday, Elias would produce a receipt for me from the fuel kiosk operator showing that the entire amount I had given him had been spent on fuel. This system worked smoothly for the two years that Elias had handled Immanuel.

But Lanyi had picked up the report that Elias had been pocketing a portion of the gas money I had been giving him weekly. Rumor had it that the kiosk operator had helped out by writing receipts for an amount more than what Elias had actually been paying each week for fuel. Elias simply kept the difference between what I had given him and the actual amount he spent for fuel. Such a practice was not uncommon in Batu Ampar, but it would be unthinkable for a Christian, not to mention one who served the Lord full-time.

"It's not possible, Lanyi," we responded, almost with indignation. "Elias would never have done such a thing. He would

have known better than to steal the Lord's money. It couldn't be true!"

One day a few weeks later, A Bak came by our house to see me.

"Teacher," he began, "how much did the church pay each Sunday for fuel for Immanuel?"

"About 17,000 rupiahs," I answered. Seventeen thousand rupiahs amounted to about eleven dollars. "Why do you ask?"

A Bak looked at me apologetically and grinned. "Well, for the past few weeks, as you know, I've been driving Immanuel each Sunday. I've been keeping track of how much fuel I use. It seems as if Immanuel is using a lot less than when Elias had her. In fact, it's about half as much."

"Only half as much?" I thought for a moment, puzzled. "Maybe Elias's driving habits are different from yours," I volunteered.

"Well," answered A Bak, "the outboard has just a simple throttle to control. It would be hard for someone to use twice as much fuel simply by operating the throttle differently. And even when I push her hard, I don't get near to using as much fuel as Elias did."

Finally, I could not escape from the disturbing conclusion. Lanyi had been right. Elias *had* been siphoning off church funds into his own pocket. And he had been doing it for the past two years. Even more disturbing was that during those two years, Elias had taught the Word of God, led not a few souls to Jesus Christ and seen the sick healed miraculously through his ministry. I have wondered what Jesus had in mind when He said,

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord,
Lord, did we not prophesy in your name,

and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:22-23)

But the Lord was gracious to Elias, as He is to all of us who trust in Jesus to save us from our sins. The life and environment he inherited before receiving Christ could only adequately be described as under the curse of poverty in every sense. Though our salvation may be considered instant upon our confession of faith in Christ, our deliverance from a lifelong curse may be gradual, as is the process of our sanctification. By God's grace, Elias later attended seminary. After his graduation the Lord blessed him with a pastorate in Pontianak. The key to our salvation is not personal perfection, but a humble heart that cries out, "Lord Jesus, have mercy on me, a sinner!"

Chapter Eighteen

The Body of Christ Crucified in Batu Ampar

It was in early 1985 that the movie theater was put up for sale. Its location was perfect, right in the middle of town. Our meeting place no longer met the needs of our growing congregation, and besides our neighbors had already made it quite clear with a petition to the local authorities that their patience with our stirring, praise-filled services was running out. (In Batu Ampar, houses and buildings are not sealed with glass windows or insulated walls as a westerner would understand it. The sound of spirited singing and amplified instruments easily booms out through open windows and thin, single-layer wooden walls. We were blessed by the praise, but our neighbors weren't. All of five feet separated us physically from our nearest neighbor, a house used for the world's oldest profession. The girls who lived there often would drown out our praises with boom boxes playing Indonesian pop songs at blaring volume. It was not the kind of musical accompaniment that makes for anointed preaching.) The authorities had generously offered us a plot of desolate swampland to build our church home, but after inspecting the site we decided on a plan of inaction until something better should come up. Finally, the owner of Batu Ampar's two movie theaters decided to put one of them up for sale.

For a year the theater attracted scant attention from buyers, including us. We had been seeking alternative sites for our church, but never considered the theater. But little by little our attention was directed to the possibility of buying the theater. Time and time again the Lord would use people to impart to us the faith for the theater until we were convinced He wanted the theater for us.

It was a far cry from your typically plush western movie

theater, bearing some resemblance to a cement-floored warehouse lined with row upon row of wooden seats. But for us it was perfect, seating nearly a thousand people when filled to absolute capacity. Its downtown location would be so convenient for our people and for curious inquirers. Despite our previous experience with the townspeople who were so adamantly against having a church anywhere in their midst, we wanted to purchase the theater and convert it into a church. We had prayed much to the Lord about the theater, and we were convinced that it was His will for us to possess it. From the legal point of view we had a technical right to use the theater, since the only inhabitants of its immediate neighborhood were idol-worshipping Chinese, who had declared no opposition to a church in their midst. People living in other areas of town away from the theater had no legal voice in deciding this issue. We made our intentions known to the community.

Their reaction was swift and certain. Rumors began to fly around town, suggesting that if we dared to follow up on our intentions, our house would be torched. We also heard that the local military and civil authorities, fearing a violent reaction from the community, were opposed to our move. One morning we awoke to find a dead dog hanging by its neck from our front gate, a cruel illustration of what might happen to me. Ibu Sri, our sister in Christ whose believing husband served in the local military garrison and was privy to the feelings of the local commander, shuddered at our plan and advised against it. The commander had already pressured her, a zealous lay leader in our congregation, to stop serving the Lord actively. Yet, once I committed myself to the owner of the theater to buy it, I could not look back whatever the consequences might be. As the months passed and we applied to the regional government for a permit to use the theater for our church meetings, the anxiety and pressure upon us mounted along with the

explosiveness of the situation in Batu Ampar. Various leaders from all over town, including Pak Leo, worked together with Chinese idol-worshippers to force us to build on the swampland which the *Camat* had given to us. The incessant tension upon us drove us to seek God continually, giving us direct understanding of the words of Jesus in the gospel of John:

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. (John 15:18-20)

The news finally reached the governor of West Borneo. Under the governor was a hierarchy of officials to help him run the province. West Borneo, like other provinces of Indonesia, was divided up into several sub-areas called *kaubupaten*, each of them administered by a person called the *bupati*. Each *kaubupaten*, in turn, was sub-divided into regions known as *kecamatan*. The head official over each *kecamatan* was the *camat*. The *camat*, in turn, oversaw all the towns and villages that dotted the area of his jurisdiction. Each village had a head official, known in the Indonesian language as the *kepala kampung*.

One day in the early spring of 1985, we received an official document from the office of the *bupati* requesting our presence at a

town meeting where the potentially explosive problem of the movie theater would be discussed and decided upon. The governor had assigned the *bupati* to personally chair the meeting. The *camat*, *kepala kampung*, local military and police officials would be present. All the lay leaders, prominent citizens, and religious leaders of Batu Ampar, nearly thirty in all, were requested to attend. Moreover, the pastor and three leaders of the church in Batu Ampar were told to show up.

The meeting was to be held on April 5, 1985. Coincidentally--or perhaps not---that day was Good Friday, the traditional anniversary of the death of Jesus Christ, who suffered on the cross nearly two thousand years earlier to give birth to the Church of the Living God on earth.

Early that evening several of the brethren gathered in A Bak's house to pray concerning the town meeting. The *bupati* had arrived and settled himself into an upstairs room in Sarinah, a small inn-plus-restaurant affair overlooking the harbor. The meeting was to occupy the first-floor restaurant area of the inn. By around seven o'clock the *bupati* was ready to call the meeting to order. Laura, A Bak, Elias, Pak Martin (Ibu Lis's husband) and I were seated not far from the *bupati*, feeling greatly outnumbered by the hostile crowd surrounding us. A small-framed, dark man from the Melayu tribe attired in the standard safari-style outfit preferred by Indonesian government officials, he began the meeting with some preliminary remarks concerning the purpose of the gathering, and then addressed me in front of the people.

"Sir, we appreciate your efforts in coming from so far away to our country to teach us about Christianity. You are here at great personal sacrifice and at the expense of much time and effort. However, your presence in this community has brought problems. You are a guest in our country, and a guest should learn to live

according to the rules of the host country. But you, Sir, have been a misbehaving and trouble-making guest. You have caused tension between religions in this community and unrest for some local citizens here.” Eyes turn to glare at me as heads nodded silently at the *bupati*’s words. He had chosen not to consider the very real possibility that the tension was not caused by us but rather by certain religious leaders intensely resentful of us because of God’s blessings upon our labors.

“You have the right to teach your religion to your followers, but as far as purchasing the movie theater for use as your church building, that is a difficult proposition,” he continued. “The community is not willing to allow you to do that.” Turning to the community representatives around the room, he asked, “What do you think about the Christians turning the movie theater into a church?” An avalanche of voices from around the room spilled forth. “NOT POSSIBLE!” The townspeople, encouraged and emboldened by the *Bupati*’s position, gave themselves over to a lynch-mob spirit. They began to jeer and laugh at us for our idea of wanting the theater.

The *bupati* turned back to us, a shadow of a grin creasing his dark face. “You see, we cannot give you permission to use that theater as a church.”

“But what about the *Pancasila*?” asked a female voice in a very measured and deliberate tone. I turned to my side and heard Laura challenge the *bupati*. No one had said anything in our defense or raised any objections to the one-sided proceedings arranged by the *bupati*. I had been too intimidated to open my mouth. A Bak and Elias cowered silently next to me. No one had said anything on our behalf until Laura, filled with the boldness that comes from the Holy Spirit, referred to the rights accorded to us by the *Pancasila*, the great constitutional document which forms the basis for all law

in Indonesia. It grants the right for Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity (including Roman Catholicism and Protestantism) to co-exist in Indonesia.

Laura continued to speak, her tone velvety soft yet unintimidated. I had never heard her speak with such authority before. “Mr. *Bupati*, the *Pancasila* grants us as Christians the right to worship our God here in Batu Ampar.”

“The *Pancasila* does not apply here!” the *bupati* retorted. I could hardly believe what I had just heard from a government official whose sworn responsibility was to uphold the *Pancasila*, a document honored in Indonesia in nearly reverential terms. The lower-ranking *camat*, who was taping the entire meeting on a microcassette recorder, shifted nervously in his seat.

“This is not Jakarta,” the *bupati* continued. “This is a hick village where people are simply uneducated and cannot be expected to follow the *Pancasila*.” Apparently the *bupati* was intent on offending everyone at the meeting. The townspeople seemed not to mind, as long as they had their way with the troublesome Christians.

“Sir,” he concluded, “we cannot guarantee the safety of your church in that location. Therefore your request for a permit to use the theater as our church building is denied. However, we would like you to consider building your church on a site that the government can give you for free. There is a plot of land outside of town near the Bumi Raya Sawmill next to the graveyard where the Chinese bury their dead. We will give you that land to build your church.”

The site the *bupati* was so willing to donate to us was off the dirt path which connected Batu Ampar with the Bumi Raya Utama Sawmill, a distance of over two miles. A certain desolate stretch of this path penetrated into a densely foliated no-man’s-land where the only inhabitants were the spirits of the dead---or so it was thought by

the local people---because of the solitary presence of the graveyard. At night this lonely stretch was totally unlit, the only visible things being the ghosts, disembodied spirits, or whatever dreaded being that a terrified imagination could conjure up as one hurriedly walked or biked through the area. Equally frightening was the prospect of meeting with a mugger or rapist or some large animal that the jungle on either side might spit out onto the path as one passed by. Who would possibly want to go to, say, an evening church meeting in that God-forsaken area?

During the day, the situation would certainly improve, but for some, only infinitesimally. Two miles from the center of Batu Ampar, the location would create serious obstacles for the great majority of our people who could rely only on their two legs for transportation. Some of them would be mothers with young children who might have to carry an infant in one arm while dragging a toddler and older child with the other, and that after spending a half-hour on a water taxi just to get to Batu Ampar from their sawmill. When the skies were clear, the equatorial Bornean sun on many days could bake someone who dared step outside for just a few minutes, not to mention someone who would have to walk the mile and a half to a Sunday service in the proposed church site. During the rainy monsoon season, the disheartening situation would worsen considerably. The dirt path could turn into mud of a murderous consistency characterized by both slipperiness and molasses-like thickness for those who chose to venture outdoors.

It was immediately evident to me as soon as the *bupati* proposed this location that our years of work in Batu Ampar might not survive---or face a crippling handicap--- if we chose to accept it. The *bupati* noticed my hesitation and moved to press my back to the wall.

“You must accept this proposal,” he said with finality. “You

have no choice.”

“I’m sorry,” I replied weakly. My strength had been steadily drained by the stifling, oppressive atmosphere of the whole meeting. “I do not want to build our church on that land.”

The *bupati* was outraged by my obstinacy. “If you do not take the land,” he snarled, “I will report you to the military commander of West Borneo.” He handed me a typed agreement. “Sign on the bottom line, please.”

I tried to buy some time for myself by looking at the agreement in my hands. But I could not take the crushing pressure much longer, not just from the *bupati*, but from the townspeople who had gathered to see the lynching. I could sense the powers of darkness in the room screaming for our blood, “Crucify them, crucify them, crucify them!” An anti-Christ spirit had pervaded throughout the room, and every ounce of fairness and compassion for us had evaporated. People with whom we had normally exchange cordial greetings when crossing paths outside were transformed into snarling beasts spewing forth venom and hate as the meeting advanced to its conclusion.

In A Bak’s house where some of the saints had gathered to pray during the meeting, a vision was seen. In the vision appeared a powerful spirit in the form of an Indonesian man wearing a white skullcap, the kind worn by men who have earned religious merit by making a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. This spirit was seen attacking us viciously.

Finally I surrendered to the *bupati*’s wishes. Yet still I could not get myself to sign the agreement, and I asked A Bak to sign instead. A Bak did so. As we rose from our seats to leave the scene of utter defeat, a chorus of jeers erupted from the townspeople all around the room. On my way to the exit door a man who had attended the meeting was about to strike me, but a companion

stopped him. As we stepped outside we were swallowed up by a crowd that had gathered outside the restaurant to watch the spectacle through the windows. They pelted us with taunts, mockery, and derisive shouts as we left in apparent shame and defeat. The good news was borne by the wind to every corner of Batu Ampar that evening---the infidel Christians had been defeated! They were as good as dead!

Our brethren, hearing the outcome, were stunned. They had been fasting, they had been crying out to the Lord daily at five o'clock in the morning. They were believing that those who trust in the Lord will not be put to shame. But it seems that Lord had ordained that on that Friday night, the very anniversary of Christ's passion, the Body of Christ in Batu Ampar should likewise suffer great shame and be "crucified," in order that we might know the power of His resurrection.

Chapter Nineteen

Resurrection

If we have been united with him like this
in his death, we will certainly also be
united with him in his resurrection.
(Romans 6:5)

I slept fitfully that night after the meeting. Like Abraham who had given up all rights to Isaac back to God, I gave “my ministry” back to God. Unlike Abraham, of course, it was not the case that I had much choice in the matter.

“Lord, I can’t handle this matter. It’s simply too much for me. YOU take it. After all, it’s YOUR church.” With that, I turned over and slept peacefully until morning. Surrender to God has its benefits.

Laura, on the other hand, couldn’t sleep that night. Anxious thoughts like vultures circling overhead flocked to the memory of our massacre. What about the congregation we had planted? How could it possibly survive? What of the precious souls we had nurtured during five years of sacrificial labor? Wouldn’t they be scattered? She cast a glance at me asleep at her side. How could he sleep at a time like this?

Grabbing her Bible, Laura looked up Psalm 37. She read it aloud before the Lord.

Do not fret because of evil men or be
envious of those who do wrong; for like
the grass they will soon wither, like
green plants they will soon die away.

Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret -- it leads only to evil. For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land. A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace. The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them; but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming. The wicked draw the sword and bend the bow to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose ways are upright. But their swords will pierce their own hearts, and their bows will be broken. (Psalm 37:1-15)

The word of God began to minister to Laura's troubled soul.

She read it again before the Lord. “God, this is what Your word says; this is Your promise to us!” Again she read it outloud. And again. Mercifully, she finally fell asleep.

That Sunday, of course, was Resurrection Day, otherwise known as Easter Sunday. A few of the brethren who had gone through the Friday night humiliation with us were still in shock, weeping over the things that had happened. News of the decision reached at that meeting had spread all over town. The word was out that the “hallelujah” people had at long, long last been put in their place and taken a fatal hit by the government decree. So what if their God could heal the sick? Who would go to their meetings anymore? So much for their plans of winning Batu Ampar for their God! What new people would now want to visit their church, whose God could not save them but helplessly allowed them to be put to shame and exiled to a desolate site forty-five long minutes from town on foot? Snickers, taunting and mockery greeted our people outside. Laura led the saints in praise and worship, celebrating the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. But we had died on Friday night. What was there to celebrate? Gritting her teeth and pasting on a smile, she led us in that well-known Resurrection chorus:

“Alive, alive, alive forevermore, my Jesus is alive, alive forevermore

Alive, alive, alive forevermore, my Jesus is alive”

Yes, Jesus is alive. Although we are dead, He is alive. So there is hope. If He is alive, then we shall come back to life as well. Is not that the purpose of His Resurrection, but to demonstrate His power over death and sin and the devil?

I rose to preach and the spirit of the Resurrected Lord came upon me.

“Brethren, as all of you know, last Friday night our church was officially chased out of town to build on land that is basically

jungle. Our hopes and dreams have been totally crushed. We have been put to shame before the entire community. We were publicly put to death.”

“But saints, last Friday was Passion Friday, when Jesus died on the cross nearly two thousand years ago. On the third day, He conquered death and rose from the grave. Today He is alive and is with us right now. He is our Lord and we are to follow in His footsteps. As He was crucified, so have we been crucified.”

As I comforted the people, I reminded myself and them of Romans 8:28.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

I reminded them that for a Christian, death is not the end and that the public crucifixion we suffered that night was not the end of the matter. For I knew by faith that after the cross comes resurrection. Encouraging them to give thanks to the Lord despite the things that had happened, I challenged them to believe God for the *impossible*.

“Dear ones, where there has been death and crucifixion for the sake of Jesus, there will also be resurrection, just as Jesus rose.” I could sense hope and the spirit of boldness springing up from within my heart. Jesus indeed WAS alive and living IN ME. My voice climbed in intensity and conviction, and reaching a climax, declared, “Despite the things which have happened, God will yet give us the theater which He has promised us, IF YOU WILL JUST BELIEVE.

The time of utter darkness and defeat is the time to stand fast with the shout of victory and to renew one’s faith in the Living God. It is the time to face the Red Sea defiantly, moving on to see the hand of Almighty God descend to divide the waters!”

“I BELIEVE THAT THE CHURCH IN BATU AMPAR

WILL YET RISE FROM THE DEAD! HALLELUJAH! PRAISE
BE TO THE NAME OF JESUS!”

The next day was Monday, a day of rest for a pastor. However, rest was not on our minds. We were thinking instead of God’s deliverance. A new army commander had recently been appointed to oversee all of West Borneo. The Colonel was known not only for his harsh and demanding style of leadership but also for his fairness. In ordinary times the idea of seeking help from high-ranking Indonesian officials did not appeal to us, especially in view of how the *bupati* and other officials had treated us. Who were we, that the Colonel should even consider making time in his extremely busy schedule for us? But we were close to a pastor in the big town who might be willing to accompany us to see the Colonel. Pak Luwuk, a kind and gentle Dayak man pastoring a Pentecostal congregation, might help us. That Monday morning we hopped on a boat bound for the big town, committing ourselves to the mercy of God.

Arriving in town nearly three hours later, we took a little *oplet* to Pak Luwuk’s church. This form of public transportation utilizes tiny pick-up trucks imported from Japan. Over the seven-foot bed of the truck is placed a small shell to create a diminutive enclosed space for passengers. Foam-covered benches are secured to each long side of the bed to provide two rows of parallel seating for passengers, who seat facing one another under the cramped shell. People suffering from claustrophobia might want to think again before climbing into an *oplet*.

Pak Luwuk wasn’t at home in the church pastorate. Great. How could we meet with the Colonel? Should we try his Headquarters, a large, imposing fortress of steel and concrete guarded by a platoon of mean-looking sentries and a cannon in

front? No. That did not seem very inviting. Instead we decided to stop by his home in the evening. Hopefully the Colonel would be more relaxed and open at home.

Inquiring among our Christian acquaintances, we found that, since the Colonel was new in town, none knew him personally. (The Lord had moved him to our province just at the time when His children in Batu Ampar were crying out to Him for justice.) Everybody, it seemed, knew *of* him, for in Indonesia, where the army has a very high profile in domestic affairs, it does not take long for a high-ranking officer to become a public figure. But who could introduce us to him? No one. We thus had no choice but to rely on the grace which are abundantly ours in Christ Jesus, who has the highest rank of all in heaven and on earth. We went to see the Colonel by ourselves. Hailing a passing *becak*, a rickshaw/tricycle hybrid form of transportation, we headed toward the residential area of town.

The Colonel lived in a ranch-style house with, of course, sentries standing guard in the front yard. My nervous apprehension in actually meeting the Colonel nearly overcame our purpose in going. My weakening resolve barely kept me from turning around and running.

“We would like to see the Colonel,” I said to the two soldiers as meekly and politely as I could.

“The Colonel’s not at home,” came the reply. Our hearts sank, wondering, now where are we going to go? But mixed in with disappointment was an ironic sense of relief that we would not have to see the Colonel. We turned to leave.

“No, stop, don’t go!” beckoned the voice of a young man who had been standing there. “The Colonel’s wife is home. Come

on in!” He motioned for us to follow him. Laura and I were dumbstruck. Before our boldness in front of the guards had a chance to deflate, we followed the young man. But instead of taking us through the front door where any formal guest of the Colonel should enter, he whisked us in through a side entrance.

A surprised, elegant-looking woman turned to look at us from the kitchen sink where she had been tidying up some dishes. A quick, polite smile appeared on her face as she put down her kitchen towel to wave us on into the living room. “Please have a seat,” she said very cordially, “and I’ll be with you in just a moment.”

Laura and I just looked at one another in complete amazement. How did we get in here just like that? Who was that young man who led us into the Colonel’s house through the kitchen door? And who is this nice lady?

The formal living room was comfortably furnished in line with the Colonel’s high rank. We sat in silence in awe of where we were and what God was doing. After a few minutes, the lady returned to the living room bringing two glasses of a cold beverage. “*Bapak* is not here. He’s in Jakarta for some medical treatment. May I help you with anything?” (*Bapak* is the equivalent of “Mr.” or “Sir.”) We engaged in a few moments of small talk with her. Slowly we came to the realization that this elegant woman must be the wife of the Colonel.

We briefly explained our situation to her. She listened sympathetically to our story and said, “*Bapak* will be back next week. Could you come back at that time to see him? I’m sure he can help you. Please stay here as my guest while you are in town this week. And when you come back next week, please stay with us again.”

We spent a couple of days with *Ibu*, as we called her, and came to know her personally. It happened that she had grown up in

church, and that her father, now deceased, had been a pastor! Her sympathy for us stemmed from her own personal experience of the trials a servant of the Lord must undergo.

Who was that young man who had taken us inside the Colonel's home to meet his wife? He was *Bapak's* houseboy, Lukas. He had attended a Crusade in Pontianak where Laura and I were seated as guests on the stage near the speaker. When he saw us again in front of *Bapak's* home, he immediately recognized us as servants of the Lord and assumed that we were personal friends of *Bapak*. Among *Bapak's* many friends there were a number of pastors.

On the following Monday Laura and I returned to see *Bapak* and *Ibu* in their home. *Bapak* was a husky man of fiery temperament toward his subordinates, but very generous and gentle with his friends. He received us not in his official capacity as a military commander, but as a friend. God had indeed graciously given us favor! He listened intently with rising indignation as we described the gross injustice fostered upon our church in Batu Ampar. It was as if his trained military mind was already weighing the course of action he should take. If the Pancasila, which as a ranking Army officer he had sworn to uphold, had indeed been violated anywhere in his jurisdiction---even in some remote area---he would take quick action.

Moments after we finished relating our story, *Bapak* stood up and picked up a telephone. He barked some commands to a subordinate, summoning him to appear to receive orders to leave for Batu Ampar. The very next day the subordinate, a lieutenant colonel, arrived in Batu Ampar to investigate our allegations and to correct the situation if necessary. And that was that. We spent a few more days enjoying the generous hospitality of *Bapak* and *Ibu* in their home, then returned to Batu Ampar.

By the time we returned to Batu Ampar in the middle of the week, God had already delivered His church from shame. Sent by *Bapak*, the lieutenant colonel had led a detail of soldiers to Batu Ampar. He had sought out the details of what had happened, especially of the meeting on April 5th and the agreement that the bupati had forced upon us. Satisfied that the agreement had violated the spirit of the *Pancasila*, he had revoked it on the authority of the higher-ranking Colonel. We were now free to negotiate for the theater!

God had moved miraculously to deliver His people in Batu Ampar. Not only that, He had honored us in the sight of the townspeople. We had so recently been covered with shame. The April 5th meeting was a declaration of “open season” on all Christians in Batu Ampar who now had no one to defend them. We were almost ashamed to show our faces outside. But now wherever we went in town, people deferred to us in respect. Moreover, the *bupati* who had sanctioned the violation of the *Pancasila* in Batu Ampar was reprimanded.

He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be
with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.
(Psalm 91:15)

As one local wag commented, “Whoever is backing these Christians has very high rank!” He didn’t know how high His rank actually is.

I lift up my eyes to the hills -- where does my help
come from? My help comes from the LORD, the
Maker of heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:1-2)

Our Lord died for our sins and rose on the third day. In a

manner of speaking, His church in Batu Ampar died on April 5th, and rose twelve days later on April 17th. Indeed, death in Christ is followed by certain resurrection in God's timing. The oppression from the townspeople and authorities and heaviness from the realm of the spirit that had settled over us for several months was--- literally---lifted and replaced by the spirit of freedom and gladness!

....and provide for those who grieve in Zion -- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. (Isaiah 61:3)

Eventually, the Lord provided for our church building a beautiful plot of land at the edge of town. The movie theater building He set aside for another purpose.

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. (Exodus 15:1 KJV)

Not long after *Bapak* was used by God to rescue us from the clutches of the Batu Ampar townspeople, he was promoted in rank and reassigned to a higher post far away from West Borneo. Years later, *Bapak* himself would acknowledge to us that he had been posted to West Borneo just to take care of our matter. Eventually he rose to an extremely high rank in the Indonesian armed forces.

Chapter Twenty

The Mantle Given to Elisha

For a period of several months in early 1986, Laura and I, accompanied by Esther, now five years old, and Sarah, two, enjoyed a furlough in the States. Our nine local leaders were handed the ministry, a portent of a time to come. The inevitable testings came to teach them patience and endurance. During our absence some sheep of little faith stopped attending church regularly and preferred to “wait until Pastor Bob returns from America” before going back to church, demonstrating the Biblical principle that prophets are not honored in their home town. But at the same time quite a few new souls were brought into the Kingdom of God through the ministry of the Nine. The testimony of one in particular stood out.

Padangtikar is a town of fishermen, small shops, and farmers situated about three hours from Batu Ampar by water taxi. One of the villagers, a woman, had visited Batu Ampar and chanced to hear the gospel. Incredibly, she had not taken a bath in *five years*. Because of severe headache pains which resisted any medication she tried, she would not dare bathe in cold unheated water, the only mode of bathing available to her. After receiving Jesus as her Savior, she received ministry for her condition. The next day she was well and took a bath for the first time in five long years. She returned to Padangtikar, but so grateful to the Lord was she that she would make the six-hour roundtrip journey to Batu Ampar nearly every Sunday to worship Him. In her heart God placed a desire for the gospel to be preached in her own hometown. She would be happy to open her home for a meeting and to invite her friends and relatives to come to hear.

For ten days late in August, 1986, I had to be away from West Borneo because of a teaching obligation I had in Central Java. God, who knows the future, needed to do something to prepare the people for a time when they would no longer be able to rely on the faith of the missionaries. They had to experience God directly through their own faith.

Because of my absence for two consecutive Fridays, our usual Friday evening teaching session with the leaders was to be cancelled. On their own initiative, nevertheless, they decided to meet together at the regular time, not to receive teaching, but to worship and pray. God had seen great hunger in their hearts and heard their cry for new things.

As they gathered together in A Bak's home, the Lord poured forth His Spirit upon them. They saw visions. On one evening after prayer and ministering to the Lord, all seven who were present experienced the realm of the spirit for three or four minutes. Akong saw an angel, dressed in white and having wings, walk around them, encircling the group three times. Brother Chin-guo saw a Man with a shepherd's crook walking slowly on a grassy pasture. Sister Amoy reported seeing a halo of white light. Inside the halo she saw herself, appearing very small at the center of the circle. Asiu saw nothing but felt the presence of something or Someone extraordinary. A Bak's wife saw a bright light like that from the sun. A Bak himself saw a burning fire, as if from a burning bush. Lanyi reported seeing the same burning fire. After hearing of this visitation after my return to Batu Ampar, we concluded that God was preparing His indigenous servants to depend more and more on Him and less and less on us the missionaries. The job description of the missionary brings to mind the words and calling of John the Baptist:

The bride belongs to the bridegroom.

The friend who attends the bridegroom
waits and listens for him, and is full of
joy when he hears the bridegroom's
voice. That joy is mine, and it is now
complete. He must become greater; I
must become less. (John 3:29-30)

The Lord raised up A Bak in the eyes of the other leaders. During our furlough in the States, God used him in the pulpit, giving him an anointing to preach. He was also given the grace to minister in prophecy and words of knowledge to the brethren. About forty-one years of age and a proportionate 5'2" in height and weight, A Bak was by nature quiet, reserved, and soft-spoken. But in the assembly when filled with the Holy Spirit he spoke forth bold and decisive words of encouragement. Interestingly, neither Laura nor I ever saw such visions from God as experienced by our "converts" or ministered in the gift of prophecy as did A Bak. It was evident to us that someday God would put A Bak at the helm of the church. Already the Spirit was whispering to us about a future time when we would no longer be in Batu Ampar.

As a prelude to this time, the Holy Spirit moved our leaders to launch a gospel invasion of Padangtikar in October 1986. This town was an unevangelized stronghold of idolatry bound in spiritual darkness at the very least equaling that of Batu Ampar before the arrival of the gospel. Local sorcerers had powerful spirits at their disposal; every night dogs would howl eerily as if haunted by invidious, unseen tormentors. The healing of the woman who had not bathed in five years opened doors to two locations where evangelistic meetings were planned. Laura and I deliberately had little to do with the planning, execution, and follow-up. This

invasion was to be initiated and maintained by the local leadership, led by A Bak.

Before the evangelistic thrust scheduled for Thursday the ninth of October, the leaders gathered on Monday to pray. As before, Laura and I were out of town. As before, the Holy Spirit visited them and they saw visions. A Bak saw a crowd of people which suddenly became a large basket filled with red ripe apples. A new Javanese brother named Sudir saw a cross. Ameng heard the sound of heavy rain, though it was not raining. The next day Akong fasted, seeking the Lord for a visitation on Padangtikar. During morning prayer the Lord gave him a vision. He saw himself in Padangtikar holding the meeting with the other members of the team. Many people were listening to the word of God. Jesus entered the meeting room and instructed them how they were to minister to the sick, saying, "the sick desiring healing are so many that you are not to use your usual manner of the laying on of your hands. Rather you will simply lift up your hands before the sick, and they will be healed." After the vision, Akong asked the Lord to confirm it. A second time he saw the vision.

On Thursday morning the team set out for Padangtikar in our speedboat. There were about eight or nine of them in all; we did not accompany them. Two meetings had been scheduled for two different locations. At the second meeting in a place called Lotai Canal they saw what seemed to be the same group of people and the same house which Akong had seen in his vision. A Bak began to preach the gospel. Halfway through the message, a woman stood up to leave, explaining that since she was nearly deaf she could not understand at all what A Bak was saying. A Bak called her forward for ministry so that she could hear. After a bit of friendly coaxing by the other listeners, she came forward for ministry. The Holy Spirit graciously opened her ears and she was able to hear.

Returning to her seat, she remained for the rest of the service. After the ministry of the word, A Bak invited the sick to receive healing ministry. Those who came forward were surrounded by the team members, lifting up their hands unto the Lord as they had been instructed in Akong's vision. The Lord confirmed His word by healing people with various afflictions, including some who suffered from dizziness and one person who had eczema. It was a glorious time for these disciples!

On that same day the team ministered also in other places in the village. They ministered to a woman who hadn't bathed in a year and a half because water poured over her body resulted in headaches, symptoms of fever, and uncontrolled shivering. Later that day she enjoyed her first glorious bath in a year and a half, totally delivered. An elderly woman who had been paralyzed by a stroke was able to stand up after receiving ministry and eventually walked. Four people suffering from loss of hearing began to hear again that day. As for the woman whose hearing was restored in the middle of the Lotai meeting, she could clearly hear every word spoken to her by her daughter-in-law. Unfortunately, she advised her mother-in-law not to go back to the gospel meetings!

Following this powerful initial thrust, the team made weekly trips to Padangtikar to follow-up. A small core of believers gathered, at times surrounded by many spectators hoping to see the miracles.

Within two months of the first meetings, even unbelievers testified about the power of the gospel. The nightly howling by local dogs had ceased. Apparently animals can be sensitive to the realm of the spirit, perhaps even more than some humans!

The first to follow the Lord Jesus in water baptism---an

elderly woman and her husband---witnessed an especially humorous demonstration of the power of the name of Jesus. A relative who suffered from a psychological (or perhaps demonic) disorder dropped by for a visit while she was preparing dinner. The woman relative began to act strangely, pouring water on the floor and moving the food dishes from the dinner table to the floor. The sister tried to be patient, but when she could no longer endure it, she said to her relative, “You crazy demon, I’ll call on the Lord Jesus to finish you off.” At that very moment the woman froze, bowed her head and covered her face with her hands. When she came to, she looked around the kitchen, embarrassed at what she had done. “Did I do all this?” She asked sheepishly. Taking a pail and a mop, she cleaned up her mess. Then she left and dared not to go back again. Amazing is the power in the name of Jesus Christ, even when spoken by a babe in Christ!

Dinah was a fifteen-year-old girl suffering for ten long years from the worst kind of epilepsy, *grand mal*, possibly related to the sorcery practiced by her father, grandfather, and aunt. The daily seizures, not treated by medication, left her bruised and battered in spirit, soul, and body. The incantations and sorcery of her family were unable to help; these things instead probably *aggravated* her condition. On a Sunday the team from Batu Ampar went to their home and presented the gospel to Dinah’s mother and grandmother. The brethren then ministered deliverance to Dinah in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Within a few weeks in mid-December she was free from the *grand mal* seizures, survived only by minor “shaking” seizures to be dealt with later. Much more alert and cheerful than before, Dinah looked forward to the weekly ministry visits of the Batu Ampar team. Her mother renounced all idolatry and spirit worship, putting her trust in Jesus Christ.

The Kingdom of Heaven arrived in Padangtikar through those

regarded by the world as foolish---uneducated, unsophisticated, and without formal Bible training. Like Jesus, we rejoiced that the Father chose to hide these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

Chapter Twenty-One

The Holy Spirit Poured Out

In connection with God's desire to establish a work in Batu Ampar that would outlive the first generation that had experienced God's visitation, God moved upon our youth in the spring of 1987. Up until then they were mostly typical kids who were not serious about their lives. But during a daylong retreat on a hilltop led by visiting servants of the Lord from Java, the Holy Spirit descended upon them in the form of a dove. As it came upon them it burst apart into many smaller doves which came to rest upon each of them. Many saw visions, heard the voice of the Lord, and began to prophesy. A report told of nine who received a special calling on their lives. Among them was Kit-Chiang.

Kit-Chiang was a very small fourteen-year-old boy when we first arrived in Batu Ampar in 1980. His mother had passed away not long before, forcing his dad to give away Kit-Chiang's baby sister to a family who could care for her. The lad, when not caring for his ten-year-old brother, roamed Batu Ampar like a homeless waif clad only in a pair of shorts, not having the habit of wearing shirt or shoes, unnecessary restraints to his freedom. Though he went to school, his negligible study habits rendered him unable to read or write.

Kit-Chiang had come to our meetings and was an early convert to Christ in Batu Ampar. Not long afterwards, he came to live with us because his father felt that we would be able to provide a better upbringing for him. Kit-Chiang became our "little boy," living, eating with us, doing chores and running errands for us. Because of his background, he suffered from disciplinary problems. Patiently we taught him, trusting that God would mature him. But

Kit-Chiang's erratic behavior remained a thorn to us, and several times we considered expelling him from our home. However, we could not forget that the little boy was virtually an orphan, his father having moved away and remarried.

By 1987 Kit-Chiang had grown into a young man, but spiritually, he had not developed in the way that we had hoped for someone who had heard the word so much. On that hilltop where the youth were receiving the ministry of the word, the heavens opened up for him. While kneeling in prayer he was convicted of his sins and began to weep. When he rose from prayer he had been transformed. Before the end of the day the Lord spoke to him in an audible voice.

The following week Kit-Chiang and four other young people walked ten miles into the interior to visit some Javanese brethren. As he began to share with them, the Holy Spirit came upon him in power. The Spirit spoke to him audibly and what he heard he spoke forth, electrifying the brethren. He spoke forth concerning things he had no way of knowing in the natural. Hidden sins committed by some were revealed to him, which he shared with the group. Six people repented. In the same way diseases suffered by some were revealed to Kit-Chiang by the Spirit, and, as he spoke them forth, the people were healed. Through the Holy Spirit he announced that a certain sick people in the village would be healed that evening at 9:10. The prophecy was fulfilled. A mini-revival broke out that so touched the Javanese brethren they kept Kit-Chiang and his companions an extra day there to minister to them.

That week our little boy took an immense stride toward manhood in Christ.

By April the Lord had accelerated the work of His Spirit in our midst, as if He were preparing His people for a new work.

Indeed He was. During one memorable Sunday we gave an altar call for those who wanted to serve the Lord full-time. It happened near the beginning of the service, just after the Lord had been glorified in soul-rending worship. Utter stillness had pervaded the sanctuary as the saints were immersed in the presence of the Almighty. A man's voice rang out, piercing the silence. It was the Holy Spirit speaking through A Bak.

"My people, do not lose another moment....*now* is the time to serve me....."

Out of that word came a call for those wanting to serve God full-time to come forward. As if propelled by an unseen hand, thirteen people rushed out of their seats and surrounded us who were waiting on the platform. Some of them were weeping. That morning the Lord reaped a harvest of workers for His field.

God amplified His presence and anointing in our Sunday services. Visions were not uncommon. Behind the pulpit in our sanctuary hung a large white screen for use with our overhead projector. A sister once saw a vision of Jesus superimposed on it during a service. For over ten enthralling minutes she beheld the beauty and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. On another occasion a brother saw a vision of a nail-pierced hand projected on the screen. Moments later he felt his feet, accidentally scalded that morning with boiling water, totally restored. Jesus was fulfilling His word....

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was **pierced** for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and **by his wounds we are healed.** (Isaiah 53:4-5)

For months during the late winter and spring of 1987 the Lord graciously multiplied manifestations of physical healing in our Sunday meetings. The Spirit moved upon the people of God as they stood to worship Him, healing them of their infirmities. No human hand was laid upon them, no prayer was offered up for their healing. It was God's sovereign touch upon their bodies as they adored Him. Even visiting unbelievers were touched by Him in the same way. We sensed that this move of God was leading up to something which He had not yet revealed to us.

Chapter Twenty-Two

House-Moving Faith

Like a barrage of bullets, the pounding at Bakso's door was incessant and loud. The knocking that Wednesday night in January, 1987, startled her, and caused her heart to skip a beat.

"That must be him," she thought, putting the last clean plate down on the dish rack. She could hear angry voices outside the door, maybe four or five men. The pounding started up again, louder, more insistent, more impatient. The shouting continued and she could make out one of the voices, the voice of her neighbor down at the ice factory she and her husband operated.

"Open the door, Bak, I'm going to get you for this!"

Bakso's heart began to race. She had heard the gruesome stories of what the Dayaks had done to the Chinese in West Borneo after the failed communist takeover in 1965. Thousands of Chinese had been butchered. She went upstairs to tell her husband.

A Bak was in the bedroom reading his Bible. He could hear the quick footsteps coming up the stairs. He looked up as Bakso came in and saw the fear etched on her face.

"He's here," she said softly, trying to stay calm, "and he's brought friends, four or five of them. They're at the front door, screaming for our blood."

A Bak looked at her. His eyes narrowed, anger rising in his breast.

"So if that's what they want, that's what they'll get!" He jumped up and grabbed his shirt. It had been a long time since his anger had seethed like that, and he knew that he should control himself. But this time it was too much. As he grappled with the buttons, Bakso said quietly, "No, don't go down yet. Let's pray to

the Lord first."

A Bak looked at her and knew she was right. He breathed deeply and knelt down beside the bed. Bakso knelt down at his side and together they called on the name of Jesus. It was a brief prayer, for A Bak wanted to go down and face the man once and for all. As they said "amen," A Bak's heart was beginning to cool off. He rose, quickly slipped on his trousers and went downstairs. Opening the front door, he found no one. They had left when no one answered the door. A Bak stepped out into the night to look for them.

Bakso stayed on her knees after her husband had gone. The feeling of terror had left, but the familiar anxiety was back. "Not another trial," she sighed in her heart. "What's going to happen now? Lord, help us!" She reached for her Bible and opened it on the bed before her. Her eyes fell on the Book of Psalms:

I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders ...
My enemies turn back; they stumble and perish before you. For you have upheld my right and my cause; you have sat on your throne, judging righteously. You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked; you have blotted out their name for ever and ever. (Psalm 9:1,3-5)

Bakso took comfort and committed the matter to God.

It had all started with a neighbor's small black and white television set. He couldn't watch it because there was no electricity to his house. In fact, few homes in that area of the town of Batu Ampar had electricity. But A Bak's ice factory next door had its

own generator and plenty of current to spare. A Bak, he reasoned, was Chinese and could be intimidated. So one day, without asking A Bak, he quietly tapped into an exposed power line at the ice factory and hooked the other end to his house nearby.

That Wednesday, A Bak's worker at the ice factory noticed the stray cable and the same evening went to his employer's house at the marketplace to report it. A Bak was annoyed and bothered. This was not the first time such a thing had happened. No one likes their rights trampled on. Yet he was Chinese and had his ice factory and family to consider. What could he do? After a moment's deliberation, A Bak left for his factory and disconnected the offending wire. He had had enough.

Later that evening when A Bak's neighbor sat down in front of his TV to relax, he found the TV dead and his cable disconnected. A Bak had nerve, he thought. In a fit of rage, he rounded up a handful of his cronies and headed for the market to teach A Bak a lesson. At the market, curious spectators gathered around as the men pounded and kicked at A Bak's front door while shouting threats.

About midnight, A Bak came home. He was exhausted. Bakso had been waiting and praying. After A Bak had left earlier that evening to look for the men, he had found them in the market area.

"I took them over to the police station, and the police settled the matter," he said weakly.

"How?" Bakso was anxious to know the outcome.

"The man wouldn't back down, even in front of the police. Kept insisting he had been wronged, as if he had some sort of right to steal our current. The police knew better, of course, but they didn't want to get him violent. So they asked me if I would compromise. If I were willing to hook his cable back up and give

him just enough current to run his TV but no more than that, the police would make him sign a statement promising never again to bother us about electricity."

"But there's no way we could control the amount of current that he uses. He'd even dare to *sell* our current to his neighbors!" fumed Bakso indignantly.

"Yes, I know, but what could I do? The Bible says to obey the authorities set over us. I ended up agreeing to the police proposal."

That night Bakso couldn't sleep well. "There's no justice," she thought. "This wicked man is getting away with murder. Lord, vindicate your servants!" At her side, A Bak slept soundly. Tomorrow was Thursday and he would be going to Padangtikar. He and some other brethren had planted a church there and A Bak made weekly trips from Batu Ampar to teach the new believers.

Early the next morning, A Bak awoke and sought the Lord in preparation for the day of ministry before him. At about nine o'clock he went over to the pier to prepare the church speedboat for the trip to Padangtikar. The pier was adjacent to his ice factory. His customers often docked their boats at the pier to load the big blocks of ice they bought from A Bak. When the speedboat was ready, A Bak fired up the 50-hp Suzuki outboard and was off.

Very late in the afternoon that day, Bakso went down to the pier to welcome her husband back. At about five o'clock she was relaxing on the pier watching her children play. She felt good.

"Mrs. Bakso."

She turned and saw Udin, a young boy who had been staying at the ice factory and helping out. He was holding a long cable in his hand.

"Yes," she answered, "what is it, Udin?"

"This cable, ma'am. The man over there," he said, pointing to

the house of the man whose cable A Bak had detached the evening before, "told me to give it to you. He said the police want it re-connected to our power line. He would like it done now."

Instantly her joy vanished. The frustration and humiliation which had kept her up the night before returned. She turned to where Udin was pointing and looked at the house. It was a simple wooden structure built on top of long stilt-like legs, as were all the houses crowded side-to-side along the water's edge. The tide could go up and down by six to nine feet in a single day, so houses there stood on stilts about 12 feet high in order to stay dry. As Bakso looked at the house, her anger burned. She took the cable from Udin while saying under her breath, "*may his house collapse.*" Then she had the cable reattached.

Late the next morning, Ali, another worker at the ice factory, came hurrying to A Bak's house. He was excited.

"It fell into the sea! The house collapsed into the water!"

A Bak looked at him, puzzled. He did not know what had happened at the pier the day before.

"What house? What are you talking about?"

"The house of that wicked man. It's collapsed straight down into the water! It's because of all those terrible things he's done to us!"

A Bak raced down to the pier to see for himself. It was true. The house had plummeted straight down into the water, as if some tremendous force had pressed down on it from above, as if all the legs had suddenly disappeared. The furniture and TV set were floating in the water. What could possibly have caused it?

There had been no strong wind or waves. No earthquake. Adjacent houses, just a few feet away on each side, were intact. A Bak had never seen anything like it. Such houses, if they collapse, always do so little by little over time. Nothing but an abrupt and

extremely powerful force from above could bring a house down so suddenly. Like the walls of Jericho, A Bak thought.

After returning home, A Bak shared what he had seen with his wife. Bakso went upstairs to her bedroom and closed the door. She knelt down before God. She said, "Lord, I am not rejoicing that this wicked man's house has collapsed. But I have now witnessed a glorious miracle done through your mighty power. I give thanks to you, God Almighty."

People in the market heard what had happened. Though they didn't know what Bakso had spoken to the house from the pier the day before, the outcome of her words was not lost on them. One of them, an ardent foe of the gospel, admitted, "Your God really exists!"

There were deep times in the night when, if Laura and I hadn't been certain about God's reality, we would have panicked. One Sunday morning, for example, about 2 o'clock, Laura awoke me with the words, "Bob, I think it's coming out now."

I awoke instantly and understood Laura's calm words.

She was at the end of her term in expectation of our third child. The Lord had already given us two lovely, spunky daughters, Esther and Sarah, who were six and three years old, respectively. We had not requested a third, but we know that He does more than we ask or imagine.

When Laura became pregnant a third time, she was not thrilled. When pregnancies are according to our plan we are happy. When they are not, we might want to grumble a bit, especially during the first nauseous trimester and the third heavy-laden one. Laura was no exception.

On one particularly burdensome day in her third trimester when Laura was particularly moody, the Holy Spirit spoke to her.

Just four words, but after that the weariness of carrying the baby left and the grumbling stopped.

“You shall be glad,” He reprimanded her in a motherly way.

”Yes, Lord, thank You,” responded Laura in her heart as the burden lifted, never to appear again. The living word of God is powerful and active!

Batu Ampar was far from the missionary hospital in Serukam where Esther and Sarah were born, requiring each time travel first by boat, then car, and finally by air on a Missionary Aviation Fellowship single-engine Cessna to arrive at the hospital. We were not eager to make another time-consuming trip, so we procrastinated until Monday, August 10, after all ministry duties on Sunday had been attended to. But God and the little one had other plans.

When Laura woke me in the middle of the night, I knew we were not going to make it to the hospital. It was going to be just we, the little one, and the Lord! I slid out of bed into the darkness of our bedroom. Normally after ten o’clock at night we would shut down the small diesel generator behind our house that provides evening lighting for us, leaving us with flickering kerosene lamps to ward off total darkness. Turning on the clanging generator in the middle of the night would awaken the whole neighborhood plus Esther and Sarah, who were sleeping in the next room. Instead I connected a forty-watt fluorescent lamp to a car battery which I normally used to power an electric fan to keep me cool during warm afternoons.

Laura handed me a large paperback book. “Quick, read Chapter Nineteen,” she instructed me between painful contractions. I grabbed the book --- the title *Where There Is No Doctor* stared back at me. Who else was going to deliver the baby but me? Chapter 19 provided concise and simple steps for delivering a baby. I sat down and read furiously.

Several minutes later I returned to the bedroom with sterilized

scissors and clean sheets (Note: never attempt to sterilize scissors with plastic handles in boiling water. Plastic melts.). Laura was already in the advanced stages of childbirth.

“Give me a pillow, Bob!” She gasped from the bed.

Thinking she wanted to make herself more comfortable I handed her one. She grabbed the pillow and, covering her face with it, muffled a loud, piercing scream. Never before had I heard her scream in such a way. Laura had great tolerance for pain, but the birth pangs were so unbearable she could not restrain herself. Not wanting to wake our neighbors she stifled her scream by burying her face in a pillow. Concern began to mount in my heart.

“It’s already our third child,” I worried to myself. “It’s not supposed to be that painful. Is something going wrong?”

I began to pray frantically. “Lord,” I pleaded, “let there be no complications. There’s no doctor here, and I won’t know what to do if an arm or a leg comes out first. Help us, Lord, and let the baby be born normally!”

I sat facing Laura, breathlessly watching what was going to happen. All the instructions, warnings, and cautions I had memorized from Chapter 19 of *Where There Is No Doctor* had deserted me. Laura had in particular reminded me that the head of the baby will be the first and biggest part of the body to squeeze through the birth canal. Once the head came out, the rest would be fast, sometimes even too fast. I would have to gently restrain the baby to keep it from coming out too forcefully.

A minute, perhaps more, elapsed. Then I saw it. The little one’s head slowly emerged into view. I sat frozen by what I was witnessing. After the head came out, the body, unrestrained by me, shot out like a cannonball. A warm, wet body slithered into my outstretched arms.

Looking down, I stammered, “Laura, it’s --- it’s --- it’s

another girl!”

As she took in her very first breath, the little one let loose a long, vigorous cry piercing the early morning quiet. Laura sighed with relief. In the next room, Esther and Sarah began to stir in their bed.

“Mommy and Daddy,” their sleepy voices drifting through the ventilation screening atop the wall separating our rooms, “is the baby born?”

“Yes,” I answered softly.

We named her Christina. Praise the Lord. True to the word He had given Laura, God gave little Christina an unusual spirit of comfort to bring extraordinary gladness to those around here.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Blacklisted

A shock loomed ahead of us on the zipping freeway of the summer of 1987. The authorities had initially approved of my application to remain in Indonesia for another year. But on September 2nd, they abruptly changed their minds and gave me just two months to leave the country. The decision was final. Why had this happened? We heard that someone who resented our presence and ministry in Batu Ampar had written unfavorably about us to the authorities.

What would happen to our people? We were their spiritual parents and they needed us. Would our seven years of painful sacrifice in Batu Ampar come to nothing after our departure? But in spite of our fears, we knew that God's Word stood.

And we know that in all things God
works for the good of those who love
him, who have been called according to
his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Perhaps God was taking us away to test our work.

If any man builds on this foundation
using gold, silver, costly stones, wood,
hay or straw, his work will be shown for
what it is, because the Day will bring it
to light. It will be revealed with fire, and
the fire will test the quality of each man's
work. If what he has built survives, he

will receive his reward. (1 Corinthians 3:12-14)

Praise the name of God our Father! He had not allowed these things to occur until after His purpose for us in Indonesia had been fulfilled. By His enabling strength we were about to complete the work He gave us to do in West Borneo. We came to the conviction that God had prepared our Batu Ampar brethren for our departure. A Bak and the other leaders had matured and were nearly ready to take over the work, determined in their spirits that they would not only survive but even thrive in our absence. We shared their confidence, having witnessed God in them and at work through them. Jesus' words to His disciples, "It is for your good that I go away" (John 16:7) also applied here. Already with the Lord's help they had planted churches in Kubu and Padangtikar and had begun to hold evangelistic services in nearby Teluk Air. As for us, we felt somewhat as Moses did when he only saw the promised land from a distance after forty years in the wilderness. Leading the flock into Canaan would be reserved for "Elisha"---our brother A Bak.

Most importantly the Holy Spirit had brought our leaders into a sweet oneness in Christ where servanthood, love, and forgiveness reigned. God would take us away to test their unity and faith. Through our absence they would learn to rely on God instead of us. We called together the cell group leaders including A Bak, Lanyi, Akong, and Asiu, and over a couple of months feverishly trained them to take over the work.

It was not a simple matter to close up and wind down seven long years of life and ministry in this remote part of West Borneo. When I first arrived in West Borneo in 1978, it had been in utter dependence on God with no support from churches, missionary organizations, without the benefit of formal training in missions or

the Indonesian language, or an invitation to minister from a local body in West Borneo. But over the years God had blessed us through His churches in the United States with a large two-story house with land, five motor scooters and a speedboat. All this would be left behind in the hands of the new leadership. The house and land were our personal property and could be sold to provide funds to help begin a new life for us and our children in the United States. But the Batu Ampar brethren would need the house and land for the ministry of the gospel. We would trust God and leave it all in the hands of the new leaders-to-be.

In September two pastors from the United States, my good friend Steven Shepard and Bill Self, came to help us prepare for our move home. Leaders were called from the churches in Kubu, Padangtikar and Gunung Bongkok to meet in Batu Ampar for training and encouragement from Steven and Bill. During the final evening we washed one another's feet, following the example of Jesus in the Gospel of John Chapter 13 shortly before He was to be taken away from his disciples to be crucified. Unlike that Passover evening nearly two thousand years previously, however, the brethren on that evening knew that their shepherd was going to leave them. The tears flowed.

On the October morning of our departure from Batu Ampar a crowd of brethren gathered at the harbor to see us off on the boat to Pontianak. We exchanged hugs and farewells with each of them. We had spent the most vigorous years of our lives in their midst, with pain and persistent toil birthing them into the Kingdom of God. Batu Ampar was the only home our daughters had known. All three had been born in West Borneo, and little Christina, two months old, was born in Batu Ampar itself. The joys and sorrows of the brethren we had shared, bringing their newborn into the world and burying their dead. Together we had borne the persecutions and

challenges of preaching the name of Jesus Christ in a region which had known nothing but darkness since the time of creation. Two questions hung over our heads as we said our final good-byes: will they be all right by themselves? Will we see them again?

As our boat pulled away from the pier and the waving of scores of hands faded away into the horizon, we could only commit our beloved brethren into the hands of the Lord who had called them into His glorious kingdom. We left Batu Ampar in September, 1987.

It was another hot morning in 1992. In the back of her simple home built on wooden poles directly over the water's edge, A Li paused from her scrubbing and looked up. Attached directly to the rear of her house was a dock built over the water which was very convenient for doing the laundry, washing and cooking.

It was great living by the harbor, she thought to herself. Her back door opened up to a beautiful panorama of Batu Ampar Harbor where in the distance the forested island of Teluk Air protruded from the gulf. Occasionally a huge ocean freighter, needing to pick up sawn timber from the few remaining sawmills still operating in Batu Ampar, would steam into the harbor in the middle of the night and drop anchor. Such a thrill it was for A Li, living in a primitive town tucked away in a remote corner of West Borneo, to see such modern wonders from countries unimaginably distant from her own.

It was a blessing also for A Li to live right next door to Pastor A Bak. Ever since the missionaries Bob and Laura had returned to the United States in 1987, Pastor A Bak had assumed leadership of the church. He was a good pastor. Under his ministry, A Li and her family had become Christians and had grown to trust in the Lord Jesus. Not only that, as Pastor A Bak's neighbor A Li had access to the abundant water which flowed down the hillside into his ice factory for making ice. There was certainly no shortage of water for

washing and drinking as there was in so many other areas of Batu Ampar!

Suddenly a wave of anxiety rose in A Li's heart. Where is little Jimi, her son? What's he up to now? She had left him to play in the bedroom just before going out back to scrub the laundry. But since then it had been quiet in the bedroom, far too quiet for a very energetic four-year old. A Li quickly rose from her wash basin and went inside to check on Jimi.

Jimi was not in the bedroom. A Li could hear the familiar metallic clanging from the diesel engines that ran nonstop in Pastor A Bak's ice factory up the hill nearby. Perhaps her son had gone over to play in the factory. A Li checked. He was not there. Maybe Jimi was playing with Pastor A Bak's son, A Tong. A Li walked quickly over to the pastor's home and inquired. No, little Jimi had not been there. The anxiety in her heart mounting, A Li went home next door and shouted for her son.

"Jimi, Jimi, where are you?"

There was only one place left to look, the one place which parents living at the harbor's edge would rather not even think about. Too many families had lost their kids to the water. Too many young children had fallen in and drowned. And little Jimi had not yet learned to swim. A Li ran out back to where her laundry lay unfinished on her dock. Standing at the edge, she looked out over the water. To her right, a small fishing vessel was pulling up to Pastor A Bak's dock to pick up large blocks of ice. There was nothing unusual in the water. Looking down to her left, she saw a small figure floating motionless in the water. A Li screamed. It was Jimi.

"Help! Help! My son is in the water! Lord Jesus, help! Save my son!" A Li's nightmare had begun. Her terrifying screams pierced the morning quiet.

A neighbor heard A Li's cries and came running. She looked at the lifeless form in the water below and for a brief moment stood stunned. A Li's frantic screaming stirred her to action. Jumping into the water she picked up Jimi and carried him to land. He was not breathing. Immediately she began mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on him, but to no avail. Jimi was dead.

By this time the news had spread to the other Christians in Batu Ampar. Pastor A Bak had arrived and was praying over Jimi. A Li knelt and cried out to God, asking Him to bring her son back to life. Jimi's father was there, attempting to draw water out of his son's lungs by sucking on his mouth. But Jimi was dead. One of the ice factory workers picked up the boy upside-down and, in vain, tried to shake the water out of him. Strangely, there was no sign of water in him. They all prayed over Jimi again. But he was dead.

Finally, Pastor A Bak thought it best to take the boy to the local clinic. Along with Jimi's father A Bak rushed him on a motorscooter to the government clinic where the sole doctor in Batu Ampar was on call. The doctor looked at the little boy as they carried him in and knew the worst had happened. He shook his head sadly.

"There's no hope for him," pronounced the doctor to A Li with finality. "He's gone."

But A Li had learned at least one thing since becoming a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ: nothing is impossible for God. She knew from Pastor A Bak's Bible teaching that God can raise the dead. Ask, and keep asking, the Bible taught.

"Jesus, save my son! He's the blessing You gave to me. Save him, Jesus! Please forgive me of my sins. Give my son back to me!" she pleaded. The doctor, no stranger to the sudden death of young children and wails of bereaved parents in Batu Ampar, could not help but shake his head in sympathy. He knew from experience

as a medical doctor that nothing could bring the boy back. He had been dead for nearly an hour by now. To spare A Li from false hope and even more grief, he had to make her understand that it was all over.

The doctor took a medical instrument and inserted it into Jimi's nose. He called A Li to come near to look. "See, there's no breath in your son. I'm so sorry, but there is no hope, no hope at all for your son."

A Li looked but would not give up. She continued to pray to God for her son. By this time all the servants of the Lord in Batu Ampar had gathered in the clinic around Jimi's body to call upon the name of their Lord. A Li put her hand on her son. Pastor A Bak stood at her side, holding her hand. All of them knelt to pray to the God, the God of all mercy and comfort, the Almighty God who created the heavens and the earth. They knelt to call on the name of the One in whom Abraham believed, the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as if they were.

After a while Jimi's father leaned over his son and put his mouth over Jimi's nose. He sucked. Jimi breathed once, just barely. "I heard him breathe!" shouted A Li over the din of the loud prayers being lifted up to the throne of grace. They all quieted suddenly.

"Jimi breathed!" said A Li. Everyone looked at the still lifeless form. He wasn't breathing now. But God had heard their prayers. He had begun to restore breath to Jimi. As if on cue all the believers in the room let loose a second barrage of prayer into the heavenlies. *Ask, and keep asking, and you shall receive.*

Breath began to enter Jimi's lungs and he whimpered weakly. Just once. A Li sensed victory and laid her hands on her son. With the authority that was hers in Christ she commanded, "In the name of Jesus, Jimi, come back to life!"

Jimi stirred and came back to life.

By this time, a small crowd of spectators and concerned friends and relatives had assembled in the clinic room, including unbelievers. Among them were local witch doctors and practitioners of secret arts who had heard the news of the drowning. For a long time they had heard reports of miracles happening among the Christians in their community. Drawn to the scene by curiosity as well as concern, they observed the Christians as they knelt before their God and asked for mercy in the name of the One they called Jesus Christ. It would be unheard of for the boy to come back to life, they thought among themselves. He had died for about an hour already. Certainly the spirits they served had no such power. Their skepticism mounted as the minutes ticked away and the boy remained motionless.

But when Jimi began to cry out, though nearly imperceptibly, their eyebrows arched with astonishment and disbelief. When in the name of Jesus the boy finally surged back to life, they for a moment at least became believers, clapping their hands at the dramatic miracle they had seen.

“Praise the Lord,” they all agreed as they got up to leave, “your son is saved!”

After twenty-four hours Jimi had recovered from his encounter with death. He was strong enough to talk to his father. “Daddy,” he shared, “I was playing on the dock. I fell into the water. I tried to grab hold of the poles underneath, but the water swept me away. I screamed and shouted, but no one heard me.”

Jimi paused to swallow a precious breath of air before continuing. “After I sank into the water I couldn’t breathe. But then I felt someone lifting me up out of the water. I floated up with my nose out of the water and my arms stretched out, like Jesus on the cross. Daddy, it was Jesus. Jesus was holding me up so that no

water came into me. Jesus saved me, Daddy.”

Yes, Jesus was with His disciples in Batu Ampar, Borneo, long after the missionaries who had brought the gospel to them had gone back home to the United States. God is faithful to and with His people, regardless of their race, nationality or language.

"Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." (Matthew 18:19-20)

...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

EPILOGUE

It was July 4, 1995, nearly eight years since we had last seen Borneo. In the late evening darkness our speeding boat pounded the waves of the gulf as we raced toward the distant lights of Batu Ampar.

God had opened the door for us to return to the land where we had spent over eight years of our lives laboring to birth a people for His glory. The church we pastored, Grace Community Fellowship in Houston, Texas, had been willing to let us go for several weeks. Our first stop in Indonesia had been Java, where we had received several invitations to minister in healing and deliverance services. The Holy Spirit had moved wonderfully. After these meetings we had left Java, flying over the Indian Ocean into West Borneo. Pastor A Bak had met us at the airport in Pontianak along with sister Amoy, who was now married to a pastor and had two children. They had waited very patiently for over four hours for our delayed arrival. I had marveled at God's faithfulness as I stepped out through the terminal door to find A Bak awaiting us. The last time I had seen him was at this very airport years ago when we bid him farewell and returned to the United States. Physically, he had not changed except for the appearance of crow's feet at the corners of his eyes when he grinned. God is to be praised.

Amoy had fussed over our daughters. Esther was just six years old, Sarah less than three, and Christina only two months old when we had left Borneo. Now Esther towered several inches over Amoy, Sarah was already shooting past her, and Christina was a joyfully vibrant eight-year-old. We had chartered a van for us and a small truck for our luggage and proceeded to Sungai Rasau where we would board a speedboat to Batu Ampar. After some haggling

we had found a driver willing to take us there at a premium price since darkness was falling fast.

The brethren in Batu Ampar were overjoyed at the news of our coming. It had been years of letters back and forth across the Pacific, tearful requests for us to return, and dashed hopes. But now the news was good: Pastor Bob, Laura and the whole family were returning for a visit!

Since we were scheduled to arrive in Batu Ampar between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, a crowd of believers had gathered in A Bak's home at the harbor for a homecoming service to welcome us. But by six o'clock we had not arrived. Seven o'clock, then eight o'clock came and passed with no news. Shortly before nine o'clock that night our speedboat rounded a gentle curve in the river which empties into the delta facing Batu Ampar. In the distance bobbed the familiar lights which had greeted us long ago when for the very first time we had arrived at this unknown, spiritually foreboding island. How long ago had it been?

I counted the years. It was over fifteen years ago that at the back of a waterbus lumbering down the river toward Batu Ampar I had looked up at the glorious nighttime heavens and worshipped. It was over fifteen years ago that upon seeing the myriad specks of light ahead in the distance I had asked God, "Father, give me this area. Give me Batu Ampar. Let me take this area for Thy Kingdom. Grant me your anointing to proclaim your word in the power of the Holy Spirit...." Had God granted my request? We were about to find out.

Land rushed toward us as the powerful 115-horsepower outboard propelled us irresistibly through the harbor. Stop, I shouted silently to the driver; this thing doesn't have brakes. But he did not slow down. At the very last instant he eased back on the

throttle. The boat tilted downward and plowed into the water, all but losing momentum. It inched the last few feet to the pier attached to A Bak's house for a perfect docking. We stood up and stretched our cramped legs.

Some young men on the pier, whom I did not recognize but who appeared to know me, helped us climb up to the pier. On the pier I wondered who would still be here to greet us. I walked through the back door into the rear of A Bak's home. It had been built after we went home in 1987 and I was not familiar with it. Entering, I looked down the hall to a front room where bright fluorescent lights illuminated a spacious room filled with people. I could hear the voice of someone in the room praying. It was Akong, leading others in prayer. Walking into the room with my family I saw beloved ones so dearly missed.

Your love, O LORD, reaches to the
heavens, your faithfulness to the skies!
(Psalm 36:5)

There were over twenty brethren still waiting although we were four hours late. White plastic chairs had been placed in rows and against the walls of the room for a welcome-back service. As we walked in, Bakso, who was standing at the front leading the service, took a microphone and gave thanks to God in the Indonesian language.

"We give thanks to you, O Lord, that after over seven years, you have brought back to us Pastor and his wife with their children. Thank you, Lord, for your love and grace through Jesus Christ..." Bakso handed the mike to her teenage niece Amee who led us in singing powerfully-anointed praises to God.

We celebrated in song as the Lord reunited us in His faithful

love. Brother Ambar, who had received Jesus at a wedding I performed shortly before we returned home in 1987, tapped away on his keyboard in accompaniment. Next to Ambar stood brother Mazmur, who strummed his guitar as we rejoiced in God's faithfulness. Mazmur had become a born-again Christian after we had left.

Ameng, one of the first believers in Batu Ampar and the first in Grandmother's large clan to receive Christ, was still in elementary school when we first came. He was there to welcome us. He was now married, with children.

Ajan, a young man just starting a business when he first came to know Jesus, was there. God had blessed him with a thriving enterprise, a wife from Padangtikar (Dinah's older sister), and two boys.

Jimmi, our young brother from the Medang Kerang Djaya Sawmill, was present.

Faithful Pak Yakobus, who captained a boat for the Hutan Raya Sawmill, was there to receive us back.

Asia, the eldest son of Brother A Bak, had come home to help manage his father's ice factory. He was there that evening.

Two young ladies from Gunung Bongkok, from the clan of Pak Nasir, were there to welcome us.

There were present a few young people whom I did not know. They, like many others I was to meet, had received Jesus under the ministry of brother A Bak.

Led by A Bak, the flock had prospered. During the two weeks we were in Batu Ampar, we saw the evidence of God's faithfulness to them during the nearly eight years they had been "left alone." They had grown in maturity. Many of the original saints had moved to other regions in West Borneo and Indonesia where they continued to serve and walk in the faith. Many new souls, at

the same time, had come into the kingdom in Batu Ampar under the ministry of A Bak. God had moved in power through him and His other servants. He had given them a vision to construct a church building to seat five hundred people, and at the time of our visit, the construction was nearly half complete. The psalmist expressed my feelings:

I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God;

I will sing praise to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel.
(Psalm 71:22)

Akong was spending a few days each week to minister in Padangtikar where A Bak and his team had planted a church in 1986. Brother Hotlan, originally from the island of Sumatra who had received Christ as a sawmill worker, was now shepherding the flock in Kubu. Sister Asiu, who had ministered so fruitfully in Batu Ampar and its surrounding areas, had returned to minister there after years of serving in faraway regions of Indonesia.

Many of the youth we had brought to Jesus years ago were now in active service to the kingdom of God. Our “little boy” Kit-Chiang had earned his Bachelor’s Degree in Theology and was pastoring on the staff of a strong church in the city of Depok in Java.

Aki, Achin-Ko’s daughter, had also graduated from Bible School and was now serving God alongside Kit-Chiang. They had just tied the wedding knot.

Akwet’s daughter, Ali, was serving on the staff of a Bible School. Sister Asuan from Kubu was serving in the church pastored by Amoy and her husband Yappi in Pontianak. Brother Yappi himself had previously served a stint pastoring in Padangtikar.

Ameng and some of his brothers had moved to the distant

interior town of Putussibau. As active lay people, they had helped to plant and build a church there. Ameng's Grandmother, whose faith did not find it discouraging to walk to church ten miles roundtrip nearly every weekend, had departed this world to enjoy a new life with Jesus in heaven. I can just imagine her joy in not having "missed the boat" she had seen in her dream!

In the church at Padangtikar, Brother Anen Sukeri had been one of the first believers. He had moved to Jakarta where he now served as a very active and committed deacon in a local church. There were numerous such testimonies to God's faithfulness. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

I will sing of the LORD's great love
forever; with my mouth I will make your
faithfulness known through all
generations. I will declare that your love
stands firm forever, that you established
your faithfulness in heaven itself. (Ps
89:1-2)

During that five-week trip to Indonesia in the summer of 1995, we ministered in over thirty meetings in major cities of Java as well as in the villages of Borneo. In many of the meetings, the Holy Spirit moved to heal and deliver miraculously. As we returned home our desire was to witness the same moving of the Holy Spirit in the United States as well. Was it true, as many believe, that God only does miracles on the mission fields of the Third World, and rarely in the countries of the developed West? I personally longed to see the miraculous power of God manifest in the United States as I had seen in Indonesia.

In September 1995 I was given the opportunity to find out.

Some Chinese Christians invited me to Massachusetts to minister. Many of the brethren there had need of physical healing from God. Others wanted a greater understanding of the Holy Spirit. Would God do as He had done through me in Indonesia?

He did. Several of the brethren reported healing or improvement in their condition after ministry in the name of Jesus. One sister, suffering from severe depression, came to a Friday evening meeting at a Chinese Mandarin-speaking church where I was sharing about our missionary adventure in West Borneo. For months she had been unable to sleep without medication or concentrate at work, forcing her to take a leave of absence. She would spend hours a day at home staring out the window. She even thought about suicide. But after that evening meeting she went home and slept well through the whole night without taking any medication. Her joy and desire to live came back. Her concentration returned and she went back to work, more productive than ever. God had quietly but totally healed her.

An elderly man from China came forward at a meeting in Boston, asking for prayer for his legs. For decades he could not feel any warmth in his legs, only icy cold. I laid my hands on him and asked God to heal him. Within moments, he cried out, I feel heat in my legs! Thank you, my God!

The following month I returned to Massachusetts for more meetings with the brethren; the Holy Spirit moved again. The Lord also opened doors for me to minister healing and deliverance in Indonesian churches in North America as well. What has been the overall effect of this ministry so far? Those who have been touched by the Holy Spirit in these meetings have been encouraged in their faith. Some have experienced the Holy Spirit move not only in physical healing, but also in imparting the love and restoring presence of Jesus into their hearts. They have grown in their

devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ and to one another in the body of Christ. These things are done totally by the sovereign grace of God when it is His will, and not by me. Thanks be to Jesus Christ!

In the summer of 1996, I returned to Indonesia where over an exhausting period of forty days, I ministered fifty times in mostly major cities in Java, Sumatra, and Borneo. Many of these meetings were evangelistic crusades where the Lord graciously enabled me to preach the gospel accompanied by miraculous signs confirming the gospel.

After returning to the United States, I began to sense a call to a ministry of teaching, training, and evangelistic crusades on the foreign mission field. In 2000, I started The Elijah Challenge, and the Lord opened the doors for Campaigns in different countries of the world. By August 2002, along with a team of 15 other believers, we held the largest evangelistic Campaign in the history of Egypt where 10,000 souls accepted Christ. And never before had miracles been witnessed in a public Tent Crusade in Egypt. Later that year in November, I held the very first evangelistic Crusade in the history of Niger, West Africa. For the first time ever in this very heavily Muslim nation, unbelievers saw miraculous healings in a Crusade and came to Christ. Most significantly, the miracles witnessed in these Campaigns were done not by me but by the believers whom we trained.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt 28:19-20)