

# Watchman Nee

• A Successful Life •

“Oh Lord, You  
have indeed been  
gracious to me.”



(1903-1972)

*W*atchman Nee was a native of a province in Southern China. As a young man he proved himself to be a very intelligent and promising individual. He was consistently the top student in his classes, achieving an excellent academic record. He, of course, had many youthful dreams and plans for a successful career. Nevertheless, in 1920 at the age of seventeen, he came under the hearing of the gospel and, after some inward struggle, received Christ as his Savior and Lord.

*The ministry of Watchman Nee has been one of the most significant and spiritual to emerge during this century. His labors had a profound effect upon the spreading of the gospel and the establishing of hundreds of local churches throughout Asia. Also, his many books*

*and spoken messages have become a rich supply to believers throughout the world.*

*Because of his faith, Nee was imprisoned in 1952 and remained so for the last twenty years of his life. His last letters from prison revealed his faithfulness to the Lord all the way to the end. Below is a brief testimony of his salvation experience and the months immediately following:*

**M**Y BIRTH was an answer to prayer. My mother was fearful that she would follow her sister-in-law in bearing six daughters, since, according to Chinese custom, boys were preferable to girls. She had already borne two daughters, and although she probably did not fully understand the implications of prayer, she spoke to the Lord and said, “If I should bear a son, I will present him to You.” The Lord heard her prayer, and I was born. My father later told me that before my birth my mother had promised to present me to the Lord.

For most people, the prominent feature of their being saved is the act of being delivered from sin. However, for me the question was whether I should accept Jesus and become both His follower and His servant. I was frightened that if I became a Christian, then I would be called upon to serve Christ, and that would be too costly. Eventually the conflict was resolved as I realized that my salvation must have two aspects. I decided to accept

Christ as my Savior and to serve Him as my Lord. The year was 1920, when I was seventeen years of age.

On the evening of 29th April, 1920, I was alone in my room, struggling to decide whether or not to believe in the Lord. At first I was reluctant, but as I tried to pray I saw the magnitude of my sins and the reality and efficacy of Jesus as the Savior. As I visualized the Lord's hands stretched out on the cross, they seemed to be welcoming me and the Lord was saying, "I am waiting here to receive you." Realizing the effectiveness of Christ's blood in cleansing my sins, and being overwhelmed by such love, I accepted Him there. Previously I had laughed at people who had accepted Jesus, but that evening the experience became real for me and I wept and confessed my sins, seeking the Lord's forgiveness. As I made my first prayer I knew joy and peace such as I had never known before. Light seemed to flood the room and I said to the Lord, "Oh Lord, You have indeed been gracious to me."

In the audience today there are at least three former schoolmates of mine, among whom Brother Kwang Hsi Weigh can bear testimony both to my bad behavior and excellent academic record at school. On the one hand I frequently broke the school rules, while on the other hand my God-given intelligence enabled me to come first in every examination. My essays were often put up for exhibition on the bulletin board. I trusted my judgment implicitly and had many youthful dreams and plans

for my career. If I worked hard enough I believed that I could attain any level that I wished.

Following my being saved there were many changes, and all the planning of over ten years became meaningless, and my cherished ambitions were discarded. From that day, with the undoubted assurance of God's calling, I knew what my life's career was to be. I understood that the Lord had brought me to Himself both for my own salvation and for His glory. He had called me to serve Him and be His fellow-worker. Formerly I had despised preachers and preaching because in those days most preachers were the employees of European or American missionaries, having to be servile to them, and earning merely eight or nine silver dollars each month. I had never imagined for a moment that I would become a preacher, a profession which I regarded as trifling and base.

After my being saved, while others brought novels to read in class, I brought a Bible to study. Later on I left school to enter the Bible Institute established in Shanghai by Sister Dora Yu. Before very long she politely expelled me from the institute with the explanation that it was inconvenient for me to stay any longer. Because of my gourmet appetite, dilettante dress and tardy arising in the mornings, Sister Yu thought fit to send me home. My desire to serve the Lord had been dealt a serious blow. Although I thought my life had been transformed, in fact there remained many more things to be changed. Realiz-

ing that I was not yet ready for God's service, I decided to return to school. My schoolmates recognized that some things had altered but that much of my old temperament had remained. Therefore, my testimony in the school was not very powerful, and when I witnessed to Brother Weigh he paid no heed.

After becoming a Christian I had spontaneously a desire to bring others to Christ, but after a year of witnessing and bearing testimony to my schoolmates there was no visible result. I thought that more words and more reasons would be effective, but my testimony did not seem to have a powerful effect on others. Some time later I met a Western missionary, Miss Grose, who asked me how many persons had been saved through me during that first year. I bowed my head and shamefully confessed that despite my attempts to preach the gospel to my schoolmates, no one had responded. She said to me frankly that there was something between the Lord and me hindering my effectiveness. Perhaps it was hidden sin, or debts, or some such matter. I admitted that such things did exist. She asked me if I were willing to settle them straight away. I agreed. Then she asked me how I made my witness, and I told her that I chose people at random and spoke to them about the Lord regardless of whether they showed any interest. At this she replied that I ought rather to make a list and pray for my friends first, then wait for God's opportunity to talk to them.

Immediately I started putting right the matters that were hindering my effectiveness, and also made a list of seventy friends to pray for daily. Some days I would pray for them every hour, even in class. When the opportunity came I would try to persuade them to believe in the Lord Jesus. My schoolmates often said jokingly, “Mr. Preacher is coming. Let’s listen to his preaching,” although in fact they had no intention of listening. I reported my failure to Sister Grose and she persuaded me to continue praying until some were saved. With the Lord’s grace I continued to pray daily, and after several months all but one of the seventy persons were saved.<sup>1</sup>

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Watchman Nee’s experience of finding Christ took place when he was a successful young man. He was intelligent. He was promising. He had dreams and plans that he felt confident he could achieve. Apparently, he didn’t need Christ. Perhaps this is similar to your situation. You are doing well and seem to be quite self-sufficient. But, like Nee, you must realize that Jesus Christ has a claim on your life.

Christ has a claim on every man’s life because man was made in God’s image. Genesis 1:27 says, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him.” And the image of God is Christ (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15). Since you have been made according to

Christ, He has a claim on your life.

Though you may consider your life a success, according to God's thought, success without Christ is failure. The meaning of your life and destiny is wrapped up with Christ. That is why Romans 8:29 says, "For whom He foreknew, He also *predestined* to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

You need to settle your destiny at once and receive Christ with the realization that your whole life belongs to Him. When Paul was saved on the Damascus road, he cried out, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6). God has a plan for your life, but for that plan to be worked out, you must cooperate by surrendering to Him and allowing Him to *work* in you and *do* in you His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). Trust Him with your life and you will prove the reality of Ephesians 3:20: "Now unto Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us."

As you take a step of faith to receive Christ, you will find that God's power will automatically do in you what you could not do in yourself. You will be like Abraham, who was "strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:20-21). Just as Watchman Nee testified, you too will be able to say, "Oh Lord, You have indeed been gracious to me."

