

# THE STORY OF MY LIFE — BY DAVID LIN PART ONE OF TWO

**David Lin is well-known in Adventist circles because of the sufferings he has undergone, while ever remaining staunch for the truths of God's Word.**

**That which follows is an autobiographical account—David's own story of his life, as told on a recent (1991) trip to America.**

**However, to more clearly understand his youth and manhood, one needs to understand the historical background in which this story was set. Unfortunately, there are few in the West, today, who are well-acquainted with 20th-century Chinese history.**

**Therefore, to help you understand David's story better, we have interspersed throughout it a brief historical overview of Chinese history since the turn of the century. This was done without David's knowledge or consent. Therefore, he is not responsible for any of the historical facts we have included. Here now is the story of David Lin, as told by himself:**

*HISTORICAL BACKGROUND—During the latter part of the 19th century, China had been forced to cede Korea and Formosa to Japan, and give certain coastal cities to European powers. There were young Chinese who resented this foreign influence, and secret societies were formed in order to somehow counteract it. Among these nationalists was Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), who had lived in Honolulu for three years and graduated from a medical school in the British colony of Hong Kong. For years, he and others laid plans to overthrow the tyrannical Manchus dynasty which governed China. After periodic uprisings in south China had been fomented, Sun Yat-sen was forced to flee the country. For 15 years he worked among Chinese communities abroad to organize the Kuomintang, or Nationalist Peoples Party. Overseas Chinese communities sent him money to begin a revolution.*

*In October 1911, Chinese rebels succeeded in overthrowing the government, and in the spring of 1912 the Manchus abdicated. An imperial army, led by Yuan Shih-k'ai had been sent to put down the revolt, but Yuan bargained with the rebels in the north and joined them. Now, as their leader, he marched south.*

*Sun Yat-sen was in London when the revolution began, and he immediately returned to China and became leader of the rebels in the south. In December 1911, he was elected president of the United Provinces of China. Meanwhile, Yuan, hop-*

*ing to make himself monarch, set up a capital in Peking. Sun Yat-sen was forced to compromise, and let Yuan become president in 1913.*

*In 1915, Yuan tried to declare himself emperor, but both Sun Yat-sen and the warlords opposed it. Yuan died in 1916, and Sun Yat-sen began fighting to gain control of the nation from the warlords.*

I was born in 1917 as the second son of Lin Bao Heng, a graduate of Columbia University, when he was serving as Chinese vice consul in Manila, Philippines.

My mother, Pan Cheng Kun, had, in her childhood, attended a Christian school in Suzhou, Jiangsu. An American missionary, Miss Pyle had taught her to pray, which habit she neglected for many years until after she was married and gave birth to Brother Paul and me. The trials of married life drove her to her knees. One day I ran a high fever and was rushed to the hospital. My worried mother knelt in prayer and promised God that if He healed me, she would bring me up as a preacher. Before the doctor had diagnosed my case, I recovered instantly. Since that day, Mother drilled it into my head that I belonged to God and would become a preacher.

In 1919, my father was transferred to Vancouver, B.C., Canada, where he served as Chinese consul. Mother, Brother Paul, and I joined him in 1921. And, from 1922 to 1925, we both attended the Magee School and went to the Baptist church in that city.

*HISTORICAL BACKGROUND—After a lengthy conflict, Sun Yat-sen was elected president in 1921. But China was still not unified, and the Western powers would not help him. So he turned to Communist Russia (which, in 1917, had recently completed its own revolution). They sent him money, guns, and advisers. In 1921, the Chinese Communist Party was formed, and that same year a Communist regime took control of Mongolia. Sun Yat-sen died in 1925. Immediately, Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), a brilliant military officer under Sun Yat-sen, fought to gain control of the government. Leading his army northward, he captured the government at Peking in 1927 and united China under one rule.*

*But, having encountered growing opposition from the Communists, Chiang Kai-shek turned against them and was successful in the purge which followed in killing or exiling most of their leaders.*

In 1927, when Chiang Kai-shek came to power, Father lost his official position under the defunct Peking regime. So we moved back to Shanghai, where Paul and I attended a school run by British schoolmasters in the British settlement.

In 1930, we moved to Peking, where Paul and I attended the Peking American School. I began in the 6th grade, taught by Miss Moore, the principal. One day she let the pupils say what they wanted to be after they grew up. When I said I was going to be a preacher, all were stunned, and after that I was regarded as an odd fellow.

*HISTORICAL BACKGROUND—Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government was recognized by the Western powers in 1928 as the official government of China. After the suppression of Communism, relative peace prevailed in China for several years. Britain and America gave some help, and industrial and financial improvements occurred. But soon the Communist rebels began fighting in south China. Once again, they were trying to take over the nation.*

On Sundays Mother took us to the Methodist church, where we made friends with Pastor and Mrs. Fred Pike, whose children (James, Louise, and Ruth) were my schoolmates. In 1932, when Father moved to Hankow to work in the Bureau of Internal Revenue, Mother joined him and left me to stay with the Pikes. In Hankow, there was no Methodist church, so Mother visited different churches in the city.

One day an SDA missionary came to solicit for Harvest Ingathering. Father made a contribution and conversed with him in English. Thereafter a Bible worker, Miss Abbie Dunn, invited Mother to attend the Hankow Adventist church, where she was impressed by the reciting of the Ten Commandments by the church members. This made her recall an instance when her brother-in-law, who was a lawyer, questioned her regarding the rules of the Christian faith. When she said that Christians lived by the Ten Commandments, he asked her, "Which ten?" She tried her best to recall them, but all she could repeat were nine precepts. The relative smiled and remarked, "You've been a Christian for ten years, and can't even recite the Decalogue correctly!" Mother was chagrined. Now, in the Adventist Church, the emphasis on the Ten Commandments convinced her that they taught the truth. During

summer vacation, I went to be with my folks in Hankow, and Mother explained to me the Sabbath doctrine. When I returned to Peking and the Pikes learned of my new belief, they tried to dissuade me. Meanwhile Abbie Dunn wrote to another Bible worker in Peking—Miss Lucy Andrus—who came to my school one day, introduced herself, and invited me to study the Bible with her. Thus began a tussle which put me in a strait—to keep or not to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. In 1934, Mother came back to Peking and we attended the Adventist Church together.

When I graduated from high school in 1935, Paul was studying in Park College, near Kansas City, Missouri. One day he was killed while speeding on a motorcycle, and that left me the only son in our family. Relatives tried to dissuade me from my intention to study for the ministry, stating that I should strive for a more lucrative vocation in order to bear the family's financial burdens in the future. For preachers in China were poorly paid.

The Lord arranged for me to attend the China Training Institute in Chiaotouzhen, an Adventist junior college where I majored in Bible. I happened to be the only ministerial student who paid my own tuition. All my classmates were beneficiaries of a scholarship set up to encourage young people to train for the ministry. Any student who could afford to pay tuition took premed, business, or the normal course. Only those who could not afford an education applied for the ministerial scholarship. In this respect, I was again an "odd fellow."

*HISTORICAL BACKGROUND—In the winter of 1931-1932, Japan seized Manchuria and, in 1933, took inner Mongolia. In July 1937, Japan invaded China, and large areas had been conquered by October 1938. (Earlier, recognizing that Japan was too formidable an opponent, in 1934-1935 the rebelling Communists had marched out of China and into Russian territory. They had suspended the Communist-Komingtang Civil War until the end of the war with Japan (which ended in August 1945 when America dropped those two nuclear bombs).*

Then came the Sino-Japanese War in August 1937, when the school closed down. I went to Hong Kong, where I received funds from my folks to enable me to obtain passage to Pacific Union College, where I continued to study for the ministry. During the dreary war years, my folks were

safe in the northwestern city of Lanzhou, which was never occupied by Japanese troops. However, it was badly hit in a big air raid. All buildings around the house where my folks stayed were razed, but their one lone structure remained standing amid the rubble—a mute witness to God's watchcare over His own.

The first summer in the U.S. I spent canvassing in Chinatown, San Francisco. Otherwise I worked in the college cafeteria, machine shop, bindery, or in the forest cutting cordwood, paying my way through in four years. After graduation in 1941, I studied at the SDA theological seminary in Takoma Park, where I also canvassed for a living during my spare time. In the winter, I worked in Danville, Virginia, as a colporteur. I began working on my Master's thesis—a study of the "Today" in Hebrews 3:13 and its connection with the "Sabbatism" of Hebrews 4:9. I did not complete it until 1946, when I received my degree. To acquaint myself with the use of Psalm 95 (where the "Today" occurs) in Jewish liturgy, I attended the services in the synagogue and befriended its rabbi. In the fall of 1942, I was called to teach Chinese at Pacific Union College. In 1943, I resigned and went to Honolulu to spend a year as a colporteur. I set a few sales records, gave Bible studies to a Japanese family, and won them to the Sabbath truth.

In 1944, I was called to conduct the Chinese Bible correspondence school at the Voice of Prophecy. Lacking Chinese type, I printed the lessons by hand and had them duplicated by offset.

*HISTORICAL BACKGROUND—After World War II ended, Communist forces again sought to take over China. They were helped by the fact that Russia now controlled Manchuria. Late in 1945, full-scale war broke out between the Nationalist government under Chiang Kai-shek, and the Chinese Communists under Mao Tse-tung. Russia gave Mao weapons they had captured from the defeated Japanese.*

*In four years of fighting (1945-1949), Chang Kai-shek's Kuomintang was driven from the mainland to Formosa (which they renamed Taiwan). The birth of the People's Republic of China was proclaimed on October 1, 1949. Only U.S. intervention kept the Communists from invading Taiwan.*

After peace was restored, I returned to Shanghai with a group of missionaries, in December 1946, and worked with Milton Lee in the radio department of the China Division. In 1948, the

civil war in China was reaching a decision in favor of the Communists. The liberation of Shanghai was imminent. By December most of our missionaries had withdrawn to Hong Kong, where a provisional China Division headquarters was set up. The radio department moved to Canton, functioned for six months, then moved to Hong Kong in June 1949. I was appointed editor of the Hong Kong edition of the *Signs of the Times*. In December 1949, the provisional office of the China Division turned over all duties to the Chinese staff in Shanghai, and I returned to Shanghai as division secretary. Hsu Hua was division president, and S.J. Lee was treasurer.

The Korean war broke out in June 1950. As American GIs fighting under the UN flag drove into North Korea, Chinese volunteer troops marched across the border to push them back. Meanwhile the U.S. seventh fleet was ordered to patrol the Taiwan straits to block any attempt by the Red Army to liberate Taiwan. China and the U.S. were at war. Since the SDA mission was an American organization, its assets were frozen in December 1950. In due time it wholly disintegrated. Politically active elements among our workers got the upper hand, and the division officers were replaced by more suitable persons. That was in December 1951.

From 1952 to 1954 some of us who were discharged got together to make slide rules for a living. At the same time we took time translating *Desire of Ages*. The other volumes of the *Conflict Series* were also eventually translated. A group of young people of the Shanghai SDA church produced mimeographed copies of these books and distributed them.

In 1955, I quit making slide rules to compile a book on servicing X-ray machines and then wrote a condensation of amateur telescope making.

*HISTORICAL BACKGROUND—Life under Mao became very difficult. At first, he won popularity with the peasants. He wanted to build up the nation's industrial and military power so China could become the dominant power in Asia. But terror became a basic method of control. He later admitted that his government had executed more than 800,000 persons who opposed his programs.*

*Industrialization was pushed with ruthless energy. Families were frequently broken up. Farms were collectivized into government-controlled groups of several hundred families. But, as food*

*shortages increased, industrial growth was slowed and more attention was given to growing food.*

*In 1965, 77-year-old Mao began a series of purges to get rid of imagined opposition. He called it the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Schools were closed and hundreds of thousands of students were organized into "Red Guards" to go out and attack and kill teachers, provincial officials, the elderly, and anyone else with old ideas and ways. In 1968, as the convulsed nation neared total disintegration, the Cultural Revolution was stopped.*

In April 1958, I was arrested on a counter-revolution charge, and in 1960 sentenced to 15 years. I was sent to a water conservancy project where I pushed wheelbarrows, operated a power winch, and served successively as X-ray technician, power station switch operator and tractor electrician on a State farm. In all these years I received humane treatment, and at times I could so arrange my work as to keep the Sabbath fairly well. My children came to visit me several times, and on one occasion I baptized my son, Roger, in a moat. It has been said that I baptized some souls in prison: That is not true. It was possible then only to tell others the truth. On March 28, 1991, I was fully exonerated. In retrospect, I praise God for His providential care in making all things work out for the good of all concerned. Firstly, the years of trial have revealed many flaws in my character, stressing my need to overcome them. Secondly, He who sees the end from the beginning put me in "cold storage" to tide over the perilous years of the "Cultural Revolution," when the whole nation went berserk. A labor camp warden observed that I was in an "air raid shelter."

Only after many years did I realize that my arrest was God's way of protecting me from virtual disaster. A political tornado stuck our home in 1966. My father had died in 1959, my mother, wife, son, and four girls remained to brave the storm. If the Lord had not also miraculously provided for their safety in those trying years, they would not have come through alive.

The rumpus started by the organizing of young people into "Red Guards" to protect chairman Mao from "bourgeois elements" who, it was said, threatened to undermine our socialist system. Religious people naturally became targets of attack. And because our oldest girl, Flora, had given her school much annoyance by her Sabbath "truancy," our home was the first one to be attacked

when the Red Guards launched a city-wide onslaught on the bourgeoisie. Our home was ransacked six times through those tempestuous months. And they made it a point to come with their war drums on the Sabbath. All my books were piled in our alley and burned. A voice told my mother to go stay with her aunt in Tientsin. She was already 72; so the Lord arranged for a young relative to accompany her, and she stayed long enough in Tientsin to tide over the most dangerous months, during which my wife, Clara, was beaten, had her hair cropped, and forced to stand on the street to be a public spectacle.

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13, NKJ). In the light of these words, as far as moral stamina is concerned, my wife stands highest in God's estimate: for He suffered her to undergo the toughest trials, and though she did once falter and lose His presence, by His grace she overcame. As for Mother and me, God saw that we might not survive, so put us under shelter.

Another fact which speaks in favor of a high score for my wife is that she managed, by God's help, to bring up all five children in the nurture of the Lord. Every one of them kept the Sabbath during their school years and continued to keep it while employed in various capacities under the socialist regime. We must stress the fact that it was by the grace of God that they have witnessed for Him successfully. When our youngest girl, Angelina, was quizzed by a panel of grade school teachers, they asked her, "Who taught you to keep the Sabbath?"

"The Bible," she answered.

"Do you mean that you will read only the Bible and not Karl Marx?"

"I read the Bible and also Karl Marx, and will obey what is true."

That was unusual for a girl of eleven. We believe that such a wise rejoinder was not her own, but given her by the Holy Spirit. Yet in the last analysis, if her mother had not taught her to love the Lord and His Sabbath, the Holy Spirit would not have been with her in that crucial hour. My

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# THE STORY OF MY LIFE — BY DAVID LIN PART TWO OF TWO

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**—*The early 1970s witnessed a significant change in the outlook of the Chinese government. Under Premier Chou En-lai, government policy became more moderate, as China sought to end its international isolation and exercise more influence in world affairs. In 1971, China was voted into the UN, and Taiwan was removed as a member. Nixon's visit to China, in February 1972, also improved relations.*

*In 1976, after the deaths of Mao and Chou, a power struggle over the leadership occurred. A nationwide purge of Orthodox Maoists was carried out, and the "Gang of Four" (led by Mao's widow, Chiang Ching) was arrested.*

*The new leaders freed over 100,000 political prisoners, and expanded trade ties with the U.S., Europe, and Japan. From 1980 to mid-1989, under Deng Xiaoping, many additional changes were made which brought the nation closer to the modern industrial world and market forces. Then came the April 1989 Tiananmen Square disaster in Beijing. Since then, progress toward Westernization has continued.*

How did my family fare financially during those years of trial? God arranged for a rich aunt to supply most of our needs. She entrusted her funds to my mother when she left China, asking her to assist needy friends and relatives. She later died in the U.S. Apart from a savings account, she had some gold bars and silver coins deposited in a bank vault. Actually, the Lord was the real custodian. For when the notorious "Gang of Four" came to power and ransacked the banks, the crypt containing the gold and silver was left intact. After the "Gang" lost out and we opened the vault, the bank clerks expressed surprise at the miraculous preservation of this sole crypt. As communications with the outside world was restored, Mother notified her nephews in the U.S. to claim the funds of which they were the rightful heirs. Before this, they had never known of this "cache" to my mother. After my term was over, I was transferred from the State farm to a mining establishment in Huainan, Anhui, to translate technical literature. There I worked for five years, got regular wages, and enjoyed Sabbath privileges. Now, in retirement, I receive a pension and live in Shanghai, serving as one of the pastors in Mu En

Tang.

On March 28, 1991, I was fully exonerated. As I review the past, the most precious remembrance is the example of Mother's prayer life. It was her prayers which dedicated my life to God. After that, when in Peking, she spent time on the porch praying and singing praises to God. One day, her sister invited her to a movie. Mother sensed in prayer that the scenes in the movies were sinful, so she declined. Since then her example has also taught me to keep close to God in prayer and praise. Yes, we all need to pray more fervently as the end draws near. God wants me to be a man of prayer. Only thus can I finish my task. It was on his knees that Enoch walked with God. On his knees Jacob prevailed with God and with men. And on His knees the Son of Man overcame the world and prevailed in the garden of prayer. If we ever receive the "latter rain," we must pray as never before.

Teach me the secret of prevailing with God;  
Teach me the secret of prevailing with men;  
Teach me the secret of overcoming the world—  
Of fervent, effective prayer!

Many are concerned for God's cause in China, being worried over the matter of religious liberty. Their attention needs to be directed to the greatest need of God's people today—to overcome the flood of worldliness which engulfs them. And this danger is most real in countries which boast of their "freedoms," among which the freedom to sin has become a plague. And the church is not exempted. "insensibly the church has yielded to the spirit of the age, and adapted its forms of worship to modern wants . . . All things, indeed, that help to make religion attractive, the church now employs as its instruments" (*Great Controversy*, 386). One visitor from the West remarked that the Chinese TV programs are more decent than those in the U.S. That is because the authorities here stand for high social standards, so imported TV programs and movies are screened by a committee to cut out the obscenity and violence. Imagine! A Communist government rejecting the filth from "Christian" countries!

One great aim must be to possess and exalt Christ. He promises that "the Lord shall arise

upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee” (Isaiah 60:2). The magnificence of the crucified Christ will bring home the truth that God will actually dwell in a man wholly given to Him. Christ prayed, “Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may

glorify Thee.” So today when God dwells in man, man is glorified by His presence, and then only can a man glorify God.

—David Lin, March 29, 1991.

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