

## **Chapter 4: The Valley and Comfort**

**(Ages 49–62; 1988–2001; A Period of Spiritual Testing)**

**"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4)**

### **I. Walking Through the Valley of the Shadow of Death**

**Subjected to bullying, exclusion, rumors, and slander within the church**

After leaving the "Witness Lee-led church," I had initially assumed that my fellow workers were staunch defenders of the faith—akin to the Puritans of old—possessing pure hearts and a love for God capable of transforming the social atmosphere of the time. However, once the dust settled and I began to meet and serve alongside them, I gradually discovered that the reality fell far short of expectations; it felt like a case of "new bottle, old wine"—nothing had truly changed. The co-workers who had left Lee's circle were self-aggrandizing and self-righteous. One white co-worker's wife even cut off a Chinese brother while he was sharing during a meeting, declaring that she had no desire to listen to his "nonsense." Another co-worker—an immigrant from the Philippines—demanded that a portion of the church's general offering funds be allocated monthly to support John So (who was not serving locally). A multitude of irregular and improper incidents occurred one after another. This was the case in the Anaheim church, as well as in the churches in South San Francisco and Cupertino, Northern California. Jeng Guangmin and YCA quarreled incessantly, even going so far as to slam the table in front of Brother Joseph Qu. It was astonishing to witness the poor character and low caliber of the co-workers whom Lee had once heavily relied upon.

Among these co-workers, there were only a few—such as Joseph Qu and Abraham Chu—whom I deeply respected; regarding the others, I felt utterly disillusioned. Because I served the Lord while maintaining a secular profession, I was viewed by them as a second-rate (or even non-entity) co-worker. Typically, they would devise plans among themselves before presenting them to us merely for prayer and announcement. I will detail the bullying, exclusion, rumors, and slander I endured at their hands in later sections.

**The vast majority of the co-workers were of extremely poor character.**

It is unclear how Mr. Lee originally selected the co-workers for full-time service to the Lord; not only did most of those who followed him harbor ill intentions, but the majority of those who left him also displayed appalling character. Here are a few examples to illustrate this:

A Western co-worker, BM, originally led churches in the southeastern United States. However, he failed to manage his own children properly, resulting in them committing crimes and ending up in

prison.

A Western co-worker, BF, served in the church in City SE, then in City AN, and later moved to the church in City PH, Arizona. Not only did he go through a cycle of divorce, remarriage, and divorce again, but his daughters' marriages also ended in divorce.

A Chinese co-worker, YCA (English name ZY): his wife once complained that at home, he would simply lie on the sofa reading novels and subjected her to domestic abuse. His son engaged in sexual immorality and gambling; after years of futile attempts by his daughter-in-law to counsel him, she finally filed for divorce. YCA actually called his in-laws, claiming that his son's situation was a "cross" for them and his daughter to bear, insisting they must learn to carry the cross and not divorce.

A Chinese co-worker, BSH, once entrusted my non-profit religious organization with managing his church's offering funds, as they had not established their own non-profit entity. On one occasion, he requested \$8,000 in cash because the church was planning a group trip. During the call, I asked them to collect receipts for travel expenses to serve as proof for IRS reporting. He refused to listen to my explanation, stating that in Taiwan, no receipts were required regardless of the amount spent; he accused me of treating the church's money as my own and trying to control their spending. My repeated explanations were to no avail, and he even hung up phone on me twice.

### **A Brief History of the New Church in Orange County, Southern California**

Initially, the saints from the Anaheim area in the north and the Huntington Beach area in the south gathered together at a single location—a rented conference room at the Brookhurst Plaza Inn in Anaheim—while our prayer and service meetings took place in a small second-floor office I rented on Euclid Street in Anaheim for my literature ministry. After more than a year, we relocated south to a two-story building I rented in Garden Grove (formerly a dental clinic); we held meetings upstairs and used the downstairs area for children's classes. We met there for over three years until the Garden Grove city hall issued an official notice prohibiting us from holding gatherings in a commercial building. I was compelled to hire a Jewish attorney to negotiate with the city, and we were granted a six-month extension. During this period, the church purchased two adjacent residential properties—spanning about one acre—for \$500,000. We planned to demolish the existing structures to build a meeting hall and a parking lot at a cost of approximately \$800,000. However, we faced two major hurdles: a lack of funds and an inability to secure a bank loan, and the requirement to obtain approval from local residents at a public hearing before applying for a zoning change—a process about which we had no certainty of success.

Just as we were at a loss for what to do, I received a call from a real estate agent about an existing church building for sale. The asking price was \$1.35 million, and the seller was willing to provide financing. It was an ideal facility, featuring a large sanctuary (seating 500), a secondary hall, a dining area, a kitchen, multiple classrooms for children, and a parking lot capable of accommodating about 200 vehicles. Since I was still employed at the time, I asked a fellow worker, Joseph Chu, to go and inspect the property, but my request was ignored. It was not until the weekend—and after much persuasion—that I finally convinced Hadson Du, John Ingles, and Joseph Chu to visit the site. Even after seeing it, they remained unwilling to make an offer. Just as I was feeling completely helpless, I received a call from Brother Hadson Du; he said that, provided the church had no financial issues, the property was actually quite excellent. I asked him to share his views with John Ingalls and Joseph Chu; the situation then took a rapid turn, and

the deal was ultimately concluded at a price of \$1.27 million. That is the full story behind the purchase of the Westminster meeting hall. Today, everyone considers it a bargain, yet they remain unaware of the grievances I endured during the process.

### **\*\*Entrusted with Managing Funds for the Lord's Work\*\***

Just as I was leaving the "Witness Lee-led church," an elderly sister from Taiwan came to visit. She was the wife of the chairman of the Land Bank of Taiwan and felt a burden to support the livelihood of the co-workers. Since I had founded a non-profit organization called the "Christian Digest" to facilitate the literature ministry, she made a donation specifically designated for the co-workers' living expenses; I distributed the entire sum to them in accordance with her wishes, keeping not a penny for myself. Several months later, she visited Southern California again and asked, "Brother Huang, do you still need money?" Relying on faith, I replied, "The Lord's provision is more than sufficient." Mistakenly believing I had ample funds on hand, she diverted the money she had originally intended to donate to me to a church elsewhere. I later heard that this substantial donation caused a split within that church—an incident that made me deeply wary of the dangers of Mammon.

Not long after, Cheng Ruifu, an elder from the Singapore church, made a special trip to Southern California to visit me. He had always regarded me as a humble, upright gentleman and wondered how I could have dared to break away from Witness Lee. I recounted everything I had witnessed and experienced in Anaheim. He immediately declared his intention to use his influence not only to sever the Singapore church's ties with Lee but also to persuade churches across Southeast Asia to do the same. Before leaving, he mentioned his considerable wealth and asked me to tear out a deposit slip from my checkbook for him. A few days later, a remittance of \$50,000 USD arrived. I promptly wrote to ask about his intended purpose for the funds; he clearly stated that he wished to support the churches and co-workers across North America who had separated from Witness Lee. I then established a three-person advisory committee—comprising Joseph Qu, Jeng Guangmin, and David Wang—to consult on the principles of fund allocation and to report to them on the actual distribution of the donations. From then on, a new donation of \$50,000 arrived every three months. By the end of 1997, feeling that the burden had lifted, I asked Brother Cheng Ruifu to stop the remittances and returned the remaining \$60,000 to him. Over this period, Brother Cheng had remitted a total of nearly two million US dollars. My declaration of faith—that the Lord's provision is more than sufficient—was fully confirmed through this experience.

### **\*\*Strictly Distinguishing Between Public and Private Matters\*\***

My own writing ministry was supported by donations from readers; I maintained separate bank accounts and accounting records for it, never mixing the funds. For all payments made to support fellow workers personally, I filed Form 1099 with the IRS each year and sent copies to the co-workers for their own tax reporting. Brother Cheng's "Overseas Fund" was used to assist co-workers in need with their living expenses, help churches purchase meeting halls, and cover the costs of the annual co-workers' fellowship conference.

Some co-workers were not greedy for money; for instance, Brother Joseph Qu returned the very first check he received, stating that he was already being cared for by the government and did not need additional financial support. Similarly, Brother Xue Daorong from Taiwan voluntarily wrote to decline further aid after receiving small amounts of short-term assistance for a few

months. However, there were also co-workers who were dissatisfied, complaining to others that the amount given to them was insufficient.

### **\*\*Coming to Know the Character of the Elderly Brother Cheng Ruifu Through the Overseas Fund\*\***

While I was originally in Singapore, I had heard that the church elders did not get along, so I was hesitant to associate closely with them for fear of being drawn into conflicts. I had even witnessed two workers—Jeng Guangmin and He Yuxiang—arguing openly during a meeting, with each backed by different elders. Frankly speaking, I was not well-acquainted with the elderly Brother Cheng Ruifu during my time in Singapore, though he had indeed been observing me. After leaving the "Lee's Church," my wife and I returned to Singapore to visit the congregation and were warmly received by Brother Cheng. He personally drove to the airport to pick us up; while driving on the highway to his home, I repeatedly heard the sound of emergency braking behind us. It turned out that the elderly brother was changing lanes very slowly, creating a rather dangerous situation. I later suggested that he give up driving and take taxis instead. He accepted my suggestion to sell his car and switch to taking the bus instead. By then, his wife had passed away; he hired a sister from the church to come once a week to clean and cook a few dishes to store in the refrigerator, which he would then reheat for his meals. The dining table in his home was a makeshift affair with a plywood top. He was reluctant to use air conditioning, relying instead on an old Tatung electric fan that rattled noisily as it oscillated—I dubbed it the "shaking-head-and-sighing" fan. To accommodate us, he even bought two single wooden beds (he mentioned he had never hosted guests before). He lived a simple life and was frugal with himself; yet, to my knowledge, he donated nearly a million dollars annually to churches around the world.

### **Brother Cheng accompanied us on visits to churches across Southeast Asia**

To share the "first-hand" testimony of my experiences in Anaheim with church leaders across Southeast Asia, Brother Cheng personally accompanied us and purchased our flight tickets. We traveled from north to south, visiting over a dozen cities across Thailand, West Malaysia, East Malaysia, and Indonesia. We even flew in an old World War II-era propeller transport plane, climbing a rope ladder to board; the cabin held only a dozen or so seats. While airborne, it felt as though the plane might plummet at any moment. Sure enough, shortly thereafter, news reports confirmed that a plane of the same model had crashed. Although we received a warm welcome during the tour—Brother Lee Wentao, a wealthy Indonesian businessman, hosted us in his home, and his daughter kept my wife company—the overall results of the visits fell short of expectations; only a few churches in Thailand and Malaysia responded positively.

### **John Ingalls: Wrong motives and a tendency to shift with the wind**

John Ingalls, who had long held the number-three position—and aspired to the number-two spot—within the "Local Church" movement, delivered a message on the Book of Esther just as the then-number-two figure, Max Rappaport, was falling from power. He spoke of how, after Haman was executed, Mordecai replaced him as the second-in-command to King Ahasuerus; the implication was clear: he was the modern-day Mordecai who had taken Max Rappaport's

place. To his surprise, however, Witness Lee transferred Bill Freeman from Seattle and used him to force Max Rappoport—who had been his second-in-command—to become the scapegoat for the "Berkeley Incident" (discussed in detail in Chapter 3). Rappoport was forced to step down in disgrace, and Bill Freeman took his place. This is the true account of the internal power struggles within the "Witness Lee-led church" at the time—facts I witnessed firsthand.

Later, during the "Door-Knocking Movement," John Ingalls publicly recounted an anecdote at the Anaheim church: he described how the saints in Taiwan lined up at Taoyuan Airport to welcome Witness Lee, shouting, "Brother Lee, we love you!" He then described how the Taipei church lined up outside their meeting hall on Ren'ai Road to welcome him, shouting, "Brother Lee, we love you \*even more\*!" Ingalls then suggested that we, too, should go to Los Angeles

International Airport to welcome Witness Lee and shout, "Brother Lee, we love you \*the most\*!"

Throughout the "Door-Knocking Movement," John Ingalls stirred up trouble by pushing the saints to close the meeting hall doors on Sunday mornings so that everyone would go out to knock on doors. At that time, our Japanese-speaking group had grown from five to over thirty people within two years; we had many new believers who needed feeding and care, so we continued to hold our Sunday meetings as usual at the home of a Japanese brother. Ingalls tried to force us to stop our Japanese-language Sunday meetings, but I stood my ground and refused to yield.

Fortunately, a white elder named Roger Beck suddenly walked in; I asked for his opinion, and he stated that, given the circumstances, feeding and caring for the many new believers was more important—a remark that effectively silenced Ingalls.

Later, Ingalls changed his stance completely; he seized upon the scandal involving Witness Lee's second son, Philip Lee, and became a leading figure in opposing the "Door-Knocking Movement." His about-face was incredibly swift—like flipping one's palm—which is why I characterize him as someone with "dishonest motives who shifts with the wind."

Some years after leaving the "Witness Lee-led Church", John Ingalls once returned to attend a meeting at the newly acquired meeting hall of the Anaheim assembly—located diagonally across from Ball Road—only to be spotted by Benson Philip and promptly expelled. John Ingalls told me this himself later on; I do not know why he went there, nor do I know why he shared this incident with me.

After leaving the "Witness Lee-led church," he looked down on me yet simultaneously needed my help. I was the one who suggested the title for his book, \*Speaking the Truth in Love\*, and I also arranged for its printing using an overseas fund. However, when he showed me the manuscript of the English Bible translation he was working on, I poured cold water on the idea. I told him that translating the Bible requires a team effort and a user base of tens of thousands to sustain publication—something far beyond the capabilities of our small group of a few hundred people. From that point on, he began to resent me.

### **Falsely Accused of Opposing Brother Watchman Nee's Associate, Brother Steven Kaung**

When news arrived of Witness Lee's passing, John Ingalls immediately invited Brother Steven Kaung—on behalf of the Westminster church—to hold a special conference. Prior to this, Brother Kaung had been very cautious; he avoided holding conferences in the Southern California churches formerly associated with Witness Lee (such as the Rosemead church) and instead held WCCC conferences in surrounding areas. During an elders' meeting, I merely remarked that the timing of his invitation to Brother Kaung was unwise. Had the invitation been extended either before Lee's passing or after a suitable interval following it, it would not have seemed so

abrupt—or appeared as though there was an impatient rush to place the church under a different "umbrella." John Ingalls then told Brother Kaung that some of the Westminster church elders opposed him. In reality, I have always held Brother Kaung in high regard and have attended many of his WCCC conferences; I harbor no prejudice against him whatsoever. Years later—two years before the Lord called him home—he met us at the Alhambra church and made a special point of coming over to shake hands and greet my wife and me.

During regular Sunday gatherings, John Ingalls would often arrive late for the first session (the Breaking of Bread); frequently citing physical indisposition, he would skip the first session entirely and only appear for the second session—the one where he delivered his message. Yet, while preaching during that second session, he showed no signs of physical frailty. This was particularly evident on the occasion he invited Brother Kaung to the Westminster church: he arrived at the meeting hall a full hour before the service began. Since my wife and I customarily arrived ninety minutes early on Sundays to clean the hall, we were the ones who witnessed him arriving early specifically to welcome the distinguished guest.

### **The Story Behind the Publication of the "Selected Hymns"**

To facilitate our gatherings after separating from the "Witness Lee-affiliated churches," we decided to print a bilingual (Chinese-English) hymnal titled \*Selected Hymns\*. Without consulting anyone else, John Ingalls took it upon himself to compile the English edition, which contained 764 hymns; however, more than two hundred of these lacked Chinese translations, and he failed to include nearly a hundred excellent Chinese hymns. I was personally responsible for editing the Chinese edition of \*Selected Hymns\*. I quickly asked Chinese-speaking co-workers for their input, hastily translated the hymns that lacked Chinese versions (ensuring they rhymed), and added a selection of fine hymns to the latter part of the book, bringing the total to 848 hymns; I also wrote a brief preface for the volume. I further covered the costs of typesetting (including musical notation) and printing for both the Chinese and English editions of \*Selected Hymns\* using the "Overseas Fund." Later, Mr. Lee sent a legal letter threatening to sue over the distribution of \*Selected Hymns\*. He argued that although a few of the English hymns within the collection were written by individuals who had left the "Witness Lee-affiliated churches," those authors were technically employees of Lee's ministry organization at the time of writing; thus, the copyright belonged to Lee's organization. John Ingalls did not consult me regarding this legal letter; instead, he conferred only with the brothers Joseph Chu and James Chu before unilaterally replying that the book would not be reprinted. He informed me only after the fact, treating me as if I were merely a subordinate expected to follow orders. Subsequently, to meet the needs of churches in various locations, I independently arranged for the printing of several thousand additional copies of the bilingual \*Selected Hymns\* (without musical notation) in Singapore. Later, John Ingalls collaborated with brothers such as Christian Chen to compile a different English hymnal (\*Christ in Song\*). However, as there was no corresponding Chinese edition, the original \*Selected Hymns\* was abruptly discarded, causing considerable inconvenience in practice. A few years later, they reverted to using \*Selected Hymns\*; this sequence of events demonstrated John Ingalls's tendency to act arbitrarily and unilaterally.

### **Termination of the "Overseas Fund" Ministry**

Around 1996 or 1997, John Ingalls's wife fell ill. A sister named .JD volunteered to help with

housework at the Ingalls home. Brother Joseph Chu privately discussed with me the idea of allocating a fixed stipend for this sister from church offerings. I advised against using general church offerings for an individual sister, as doing so over the long term could invite gossip. Consequently, I took the initiative to increase the monthly allocation from the "Overseas Fund" to John Ingalls by \$1,000, leaving it to his discretion to pay the sister. Towards the end of 1997, when I was stepping down from managing the overseas fund, I gave that sister advance warning that her financial support might be cut off, simply to ensure she wouldn't face unexpected hardship; unexpectedly, I was accused of trying to drive a wedge into their employment relationship.

At the end of 1997, I merely informed Brother Cheng Ruifu that, due to differences in vision with my fellow workers, I no longer felt led to manage the overseas fund; I did not speak ill of any of my colleagues. Unexpectedly, John Ingalls flew to Singapore specifically to meet Brother Cheng. Brother Cheng declined the meeting, citing a cold, yet John Ingalls insisted on standing outside the door for half an hour, ultimately failing to see him. He later shifted the blame onto me, claiming I had badmouthed him behind his back. I can honestly declare before the Lord that I never spoke ill of them at that time. John Ingalls returned home disappointed, but while in Singapore, he made inappropriate remarks to Mrs. Tian and her son; this caused them to misunderstand me and view me with disdain for a time. Fortunately, they eventually learned the truth from some source, and the misunderstanding was completely resolved.

John Ingalls' wife eventually succumbed to illness, but before her death, he went to Australia to pursue his second wife, a Chinese woman who was the widow of a doctor from Hong Kong. Shortly after his first wife's passing, John Ingalls was in a hurry to remarry, and it is said that his second marriage was not happy.

### **The Incident Involving Ransford, a Leading Worker in Ghana, Africa**

Ransford rose to prominence in Ghana, Africa, and held considerable influence among the local churches there. When he saw that the churches in Europe were withdrawing from the "Witness Lee-affiliated churches" (the "Lord's Recovery" movement), he led the Ghanaian churches to do the same. Possessing a gift for public speaking, he was frequently invited to help lead the annual youth conferences held in Europe. However, his personality seemed to lean toward playing both sides. During visits to the United States, he cultivated friendships with figures such as Max Rappoport, John Ingalls, and Bill Freeman. On one occasion, while on a street corner in Anaheim, he received the laying on of hands and prayer from Max Rappoport, who held Charismatic leanings. Ransford intended to invite Bill Freeman to Ghana to hold a conference. Upon hearing this, I took Ransford out to lunch and warned him to be cautious; I recounted how, during Bill Freeman's time in Anaheim, the team of about sixty people he had brought from Seattle had acted independently and failed to integrate with the local saints. Ransford, however, disregarded my advice, insisting that he had the right to invite any fellow worker he chose. I retorted that if he insisted on exercising his right, he should be aware that the European churches also had the right to stop inviting him to lead their youth gatherings.

Sure enough, the situation played out exactly as anticipated: Ransford complained that the dozens of American saints Bill Freeman brought to Africa overwhelmed the local Ghanaian churches, while simultaneously provoking a backlash from the European churches, which severed ties with both him and the Ghanaian congregations. Later, Ransford confronted John Ingalls, asking why he hadn't warned him. The reality was that, because my standing was

humble, Ransford had ignored my warning and instead blamed John Ingalls. This shows that what people pay attention to most is not the content of the speech, but who said it. Soon after, news came that Ransford, after attending a special meeting in various parts of Ghana, was hit by a bus wheel that came off while he was in a taxi on his way home and died instantly.

### **Warm Reception in Hong Kong Prior to 1997**

My wife and I visited the church in Hong Kong on several occasions, and the reception we received differed drastically depending on whether the visit took place before or after the 1997 handover. Before 1997, we were treated as honored guests; the entire group of about a dozen co-workers and elders would dine with us. After the meal, Brother Joseph Feng would accompany me for a walk and conversation by the seaside, and we wouldn't return to the guest quarters until eleven o'clock. On another day, Brother Hadson Du took us up to Victoria Peak on Hong Kong Island via the tram to view the night scenery, while Brother Feng took us to visit several meeting halls during the day. The two of them also invited me to attend a meeting of the Hong Kong church's co-workers and elders, where they asked for my views on how the church should handle the situation following 1997. At that time, it seemed that the entire Hong Kong church—from top to bottom—held me in high regard.

After 1997, however, things changed; both Joseph Feng and Hadson Du left the Hong Kong church, and the elder Brother big Tang immigrated to Toronto. The church then invited T.K. Chia and James Chu to hold special conferences in Hong Kong annually. A turning point occurred when I was staying at the Hong Kong church's guest quarters. One morning, after attending the corporate morning watch as usual, I met a family—including a brother responsible for a local church—who had come to Hong Kong from the mainland. After exchanging business cards, they warmly invited me to visit their church. I did not dare to agree on the spot; after they left, I asked the brother in charge of the Hong Kong church for his opinion. He replied that the situation at that church was poor and not worth a visit, so I returned to the United States. Back in the U.S., I received a phone call from the mainland asking why I hadn't visited them, as they had just hosted five or six co-workers and elders from Hong Kong. The Lord has a sense of humor; the following year, when we were taken to visit a church in another part of the mainland, we happened to run into those very brothers from Hong Kong—including the elder who had told me the visit wasn't worthwhile. To this day, I have never received a word of apology or a letter regarding the matter. From then on, whenever I passed through Hong Kong, I never stayed at the church's guest quarters again.

Furthermore, two of the most influential co-workers who left the Hong Kong church once had a major argument with each other over the church's future strategy. One of them was excessively praised, described as Watchman Nee's successor and the purchaser and builder of Westminster Church, which is an exaggeration and truly shameful.

### **Co-workers from the Hong Kong church intervene in the split of the South San Francisco church**

The co-workers who had left the "Witness Lee's Church" had split into two major factions. One faction consisted of co-workers from churches in Singapore, Thailand, Europe, and Northern California who advocated upholding the "local ground" of the church; the other comprised co-workers from Hong Kong, Canada, and Southern California who advocated abandoning the

ground. At the time, I already harbored some doubts about the "local ground" doctrine, but because I managed the overseas funds, I dared not voice my views. The dispute between the two factions raged on, erupting during co-worker conferences in Rosemead and San Francisco; the conflict caused the elderly Brother Cheng Ruifu to weep bitterly in my hotel room in San Francisco. I proposed using the overseas funds to rent a hotel where all the co-workers could stay and sit down face-to-face to resolve the matter clearly. Although initially agreed upon, the plan was never implemented because the co-workers favoring the abandonment of the "local ground" position later deemed negotiation futile.

The schism involving the South San Francisco church finally came to a head during a Sunday meeting. Brothers and sisters who had immigrated to the U.S. from Hong Kong—backed by co-workers Joseph Feng and Hadson Du—had arranged for Hadson Du's son, Charles Du, to preside over the secret purchase of a meeting hall on Ocean Avenue. During a Sunday service, they formally announced the establishment of a new church and publicly denounced co-worker Wu Chenghui, causing many sisters in the congregation to weep openly. This incident was the reason why, during an elders' meeting at the Westminster church, I insisted that the leader of the Ocean Avenue church—who had instigated the trouble—must publicly apologize before we could restore normal fellowship with the breakaway congregation. From that time until I resigned as an elder of the Westminster church at the end of 1997, Brothers John Ingalls and Joseph Chu honored this agreement. However, after I resigned from my position as an elder at the Westminster church, John Ingalls and Joseph Chu immediately ordered local youth leaders Sam Huang and John Yao to invite young people from the breakaway "Ocean Church" to attend a conference for working-age youth. Upon their arrival, these young people formed cliques and sowed division among the local Southern California youth. Sam Huang and John Yao reported the situation to their co-workers, Ingalls and Chu, asking them to intervene and resolve the division; however, their request was rejected with the claim that youth issues should be resolved by the youth themselves. Consequently, the two leaders decided not to invite the Ocean Church youth to the year-end youth retreat. This move angered Ingalls and Chu, who forbade the use of church offering funds for the retreat—even though the youth argued that the money consisted of their own designated offerings. The co-workers remained adamant, leading to a conflict. John Yao twice issued open letters accusing the co-workers of acting in a domineering manner—once in April and again in October. I was not in Southern California on either occasion; in April, I was attending a conference in Stuttgart, Germany, and in October, I was attending one in Bangkok, Thailand. Sam Huang also read aloud a passage written by John Ingalls—titled "Speaking the Truth in Love"—in which Ingalls had criticized Mr. Lee; Huang pointed out that the co-workers' current words and actions were identical to the criticisms Ingalls had leveled against Lee in that text. Ingalls, however, brushed this aside, claiming that the text had been written ten years ago and that the current situation was a different matter entirely. This attitude provoked dissatisfaction among the local youth, leading them to decide to leave the Westminster church and begin meeting independently in Fountain Valley starting in early 1999. John Ingalls botched the situation but shifted the blame for the division onto me, telling everyone that "Brother Huang" had led away over thirty young people—an attempt to make me a scapegoat. I had never even spoken to my own children about the idea of leaving, let alone other young people; this is the truth.

**\*\*Joseph Chu, in the early stages of dementia, lacked sound judgment\*\***

Regarding Brother Joseph Chu, I felt more sympathy and regret than resentment. He was suffering from senile dementia and had lost the ability to exercise sound judgment concerning the church and spiritual matters; he blindly adopted the views of three fellow workers—Joseph Feng, Hadson Du, and John Ingalls—and was consequently dragged into the midst of divisiveness and controversy. Brother Chu was roughly the same age as my eldest brother; in his university days, he had once made headlines for refusing to bow to the portraits of the Founding Father and the President. He was an upright man, and the four children he raised were well-behaved and devoted to the Lord. Unfortunately, his wife often lacked discretion in her speech and frequently said the wrong thing. On one occasion, her words nearly caused their second son and daughter-in-law to divorce; it was only after his uncle, James Chu, offered counsel that he realized the fault lay with himself. He hurriedly bought flowers to apologize to his wife, and they reconciled.

When Brother Chu and his wife were forced to leave the "Witness Lee's Church," they were devastated by a remark from Mr. Lee: "I never ordained Joseph Chu as an elder of the Rosemead church." This statement dealt a severe blow to the couple—especially his wife, who for months could barely eat or sleep, becoming gaunt and frail. Upon hearing the news, I visited their home in Huntington Beach to offer comfort and invited them to attend meetings in Anaheim. As their physical and mental well-being improved, they became deeply grateful to me, often inviting us over for a lavish dinner every week or two. Yet, over time, that gratitude inexplicably turned into animosity—a situation that left me truly at a loss.

In 1998, during a Sunday sermon, Brother Joseph Chu quoted Acts 20:29—"savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock"—implying that I was one of these "savage wolves." I was sitting in the center seat of the front row at the time. When the sermon ended and the floor was opened for sharing, I stood up calmly and quoted another verse from Acts 20:20—"I kept back nothing that was helpful"—to make the point that if there was an issue, it should be discussed openly and frankly; in the church, one should avoid making attacks through insinuations. Then I sat down.

The background to Brother Chu's message was that I had stepped down from managing the overseas fund and had asked the Westminster Church to accelerate the repayment of a \$150,000 loan, to the extent that their finances allowed. Initially, Brother Chu claimed that the \$150,000 was a donation and the church was under no obligation to repay it. I showed him the promissory note he had signed on behalf of the church, but he replied, "Even if it was a loan, the church isn't paying it back." Despite all my reasonable appeals, he remained unresponsive, so I stopped pursuing the matter. Two years later, the Westminster Church—having received funding from an unknown source—suddenly paid off the entire amount. I immediately asked the senior Brother Cheng whether I should wire the \$150,000 back to him. He replied that his daughter was making a fuss about his donation and instructed me to distribute the funds locally among three churches (South San Francisco, Cupertino, and Fountain Valley); consequently, I wrote three checks for \$50,000 each to those churches. Unexpectedly, however, Sister Chu went around telling people that I had pocketed the \$150,000 for myself. Dr. Zhou in Rosemead told me about this; the rumor that I had embezzled the money had even traveled from Betty Lau in the Philippines to Sam Kumi, who was visiting churches there at the time. Regrettably, Sister Chu has yet to address this slanderous rumor; I truly hope she can meet the Lord with a clear conscience.

On one occasion, Brother Joseph Chu was invited by the Seattle church to hold a special conference. It is said that he stood on the platform for about five minutes without being able to

utter a single word, eventually stepping down to let Brother Godwin Sun take over the speaking duties. The following day, he stood there for over ten minutes, his mind once again a complete blank. I believe the symptoms of his dementia were becoming increasingly apparent.

## **II. Preserved by the Lord's Presence**

### **Publishing Expository Books with Tien Dao Publishing House (Hong Kong)**

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, my writing ministry involved the publication of seventy-two issues of the \*Christian Digest\* monthly magazine and its supplements. However, as I grew older and my physical strength declined, I asked the Lord to allow me to focus solely on writing rather than distribution. The Lord answered this prayer by connecting me in Cupertino, Northern California, with Rev. Paul Yung—the former General Secretary of Hong Kong's Tien Dao Publishing House—who kindly wrote a letter of recommendation to the current General Secretary on my behalf. Consequently, I traveled to Hong Kong with the letter and signed a contract with Tien Dao. Under this arrangement, Tien Dao handled the typesetting and printing while I covered the publication costs; the publishing house then managed distribution and reimbursed me for the copyright fees and printing costs based on the actual number of copies sold each year. At the outset, I made an agreement with the readers of my monthly publication: if each reader contributed \$200, I would guarantee the delivery of the complete set of New Testament expository books. The response was positive, providing me with sufficient funds for printing. With the guarantee of Brother big Tang—an elder in a Hong Kong church—I managed, after some difficulty, to open an account at HSBC in Hong Kong. I not only fulfilled my promise by sending the full twenty-three-volume New Testament set but also included four volumes of Old Testament exposition—a total of twenty-seven volumes sent to the saints who had supported the work. With a retail value of over \$300, the outcome delighted everyone.

Unexpectedly, my expository books proved very popular. I soon received news from the mainland that my books were being printed and distributed without authorization in several locations. I chose not to intervene; my purpose in writing was not profit, but rather to serve the Lord and the saints. I tacitly accepted the involvement of others in their distribution. To my knowledge, saints in coastal provinces—including Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Shandong, Hebei, and Liaoning—were all involved in this effort.

### **Establishing the "Chinese Christian Bible Study Website"**

The rise of the internet only really took off in the 1980s. I never imagined I would witness and participate in this era; the transformation from knowing absolutely nothing about computers to having electronic data readily at one's fingertips has been immense. Initially, I would have been satisfied if the "Chinese Christian Bible Study Website" attracted just a few thousand readers. However, news from saints in Silicon Valley, Northern California, revealed that my site had become one of the top Chinese-language resources, ranking highly on search engines like Google, Yahoo, and Baidu. Additionally, a Christian group requested my electronic materials to produce CDs for free distribution to Christians in China; this led to the creation of the "Complete Bible Study Collection" (\*Chajing Daquan\*). Today, this collection is available online and accessible via mobile phones, and its traffic has actually surpassed that of the original "Bible

Study Website." Regardless of which site draws more traffic, I am delighted by the outcome—after all, the goal is simply to serve the Lord and the saints.

### **Experiencing the Lord's Preserving Presence**

During this period, I also experienced the Lord's preserving presence in many ways. While commuting to and from work, my car was rear-ended five times, yet I emerged unscathed on every occasion. I never filed a claim for damages after any of these collisions. Once, while I was stopped at a red light, my car—a Toyota Corona, a model known for its lack of structural robustness—was struck violently from behind. Surprisingly, my rear bumper remained undamaged, whereas the hood of the car that hit me buckled upward into a triangular shape, and its radiator burst and leaked. On another occasion, while driving on the highway, the car ahead of me braked suddenly and spun 180 degrees, hurtling straight toward me; fortunately, by the Lord's protection, it slid right past the side of my vehicle.

I have also fallen many times without suffering serious injury. Once, I fell from a table; my leg went through the shattered glass tabletop, yet I did not sustain a single scratch from the glass. Another time, while I was climbing a metal shelving unit to retrieve some books, the entire eight-foot-tall structure tipped over. Piles of new books scattered across the floor, and I fell with them; fortunately, the unit was blocked by another one nearby, preventing it from crushing me. Had it landed on me, the consequences would likely have been dire, given the immense weight of the metal frame combined with the books stacked on the upper shelves. Most recently, while suffering from gout in my right foot—which limited my ability to lift my leg high—I tripped over a concrete wheel stop in a parking space. I fell hard onto the concrete, landing on my cheek, right knee, and left palm, yet I suffered only minor skin abrasions; neither my facial bones nor my kneecap were fractured.

On yet another occasion—in late October of the year 2000—I had planned to attend a conference in Bangkok, Thailand. My itinerary included a stopover in Singapore for a Sunday service on the return leg, followed by a flight back to Los Angeles via Taipei on Monday. However, because my younger brother had to work, I volunteered to drive my sister-in-law to her thrice-weekly cancer chemotherapy sessions (a journey taking about an hour and a half each way), so I cancelled my original Singapore Airlines booking. Later, I saw news reports revealing that on October 31st, a Singapore Airlines flight had crashed at Taiwan's Taoyuan Airport, resulting in over eighty fatalities. Calculations revealed that the flight in question was the very one I had originally booked; I had escaped disaster only because I stayed behind to care for a sick person—surely an act of the Lord's protection.

### **\*\*Visiting Churches Across the Country Under the Lord's Protection\*\***

During those years—prior to the SARS epidemic—I frequently visited believers in various locations. Initially, these visits were arranged by President Ji Zhaoqi of the Macau Theological Seminary; I was guided from place to place by different individuals, moving from one specific location to the next. At that time, connections were limited to isolated "points" rather than a broad network of interaction. During these visits, I heard moving and inspiring testimonies. For instance, there was a sister who continued to read the Bible and pray despite her husband's prohibition. He once grabbed her by the head and slammed it against a wall, causing her to lose consciousness; yet, upon waking, she resumed her prayers just as before. Eventually, her husband was deeply

touched; he voluntarily came to faith and began attending gatherings with her. Later, a sister who was a reader of my website hosted my wife and me in her home. We held a week-long Bible study at a nearby teahouse, remaining indoors from morning till night—dining and listening to my biblical teachings right there. On one occasion, I noticed a police officer open the door to check on us before closing it again. I later learned he was the teahouse owner's husband—a local police officer—who was effectively acting as security for our gathering. On another occasion, over a hundred believers from various provinces and regions stayed together in a high-rise building, where they ate, slept, and held their meetings. We spent a week living this way; everyone observed the rules and kept a low profile, ensuring no word leaked out. We arrived safely and returned home safely. Later on, restrictions seemed to ease somewhat. Once, two thousand people gathered from various places; the schedule involved rising at 4:30 AM and lights-out at 10:00 PM, with time dedicated to singing hymns, prayer, and listening to messages. Meals were served across 180 tables, and everyone was satisfied and joyful. We also held a gathering on an island. Although I had requested a limited number of attendees, eight hundred brothers and sisters in positions of responsibility arrived. They were a group of high spiritual maturity, and we enjoyed wonderful fellowship. At mealtime, the table was laden with a vast array of dishes—stacked three layers high—including a great deal of raw seafood that I didn't dare touch. I once accompanied a Japanese brother to visit various gatherings across China. Although he could not understand a word of Chinese, he marveled at how even elderly women from rural areas listened so earnestly—and seemingly with such relish. However, this Japanese brother was unaccustomed to the local food; for the first two weeks, he suffered from constant diarrhea. As for myself, I experienced several bouts of what seemed to be food poisoning, suffering from full-body itching and sleeplessness. Two fellow workers I knew—though it is unclear what they had consumed—contracted liver cancer; their skin turned dark, and both passed away shortly after returning to the United States.

### **\*\*\*Policies from Above, Countermeasures from Below\*\*\***

Generally speaking, the churches in China left a very positive impression on me. I also noticed that, compared to overseas congregations, a far higher proportion of sisters in China were actively serving the Lord—accounting for more than two-thirds of the total number of believers. Their devotion to the Lord and the church was also more single-minded than that of the brothers. In Henan, there was a family where three sisters had all dedicated themselves to serving the Lord; despite being arrested and imprisoned at different times and locations, they resumed their service immediately upon release, showing absolutely no fear. Some brothers and sisters outwardly complied with the policies of the atheistic authorities—adopting the official names approved by the state—yet in reality, they loved the Lord and pursued Him with greater zeal than many officially recognized Christians overseas. I even met "seminary students" who, while outwardly espousing atheistic teachings, privately sought spiritual guidance from older brothers and sisters, accepting their prayers and counsel. However, I also observed certain negative trends emerging within the churches in China: (1) The influence of financial support from overseas led to a significant number of church leaders developing a love for money. One so-called "elder"—leading a congregation of about three hundred—offered to place his entire church under the management of an overseas organization in exchange for a monthly subsidy of 30,000 RMB (at a time when the average monthly wage in

China was less than 1,000 RMB). (2) The infiltration of heresies was severe; superstitious cults such as "Eastern Lightning," "King Beili," and "San Shu" (Three Redemptions) seemed to permeate every nook and cranny. (3) Adherence to rules was taken to extremes; some regulations were simply baffling. For instance, in one location, I was required to wear my shirt untucked over my dress trousers. The shirt I was wearing was quite long—covering almost my entire backside—and had a curved hem; standing on the platform, I looked like a young woman wearing a trendy mini-skirt over trousers. They believed that tucking a shirt into dress trousers was tantamount to preaching in one's underwear. (4) Ordinary believers loved listening to sermons; regardless of the content, as long as there was a sermon to hear, they would gather even in the middle of the night. I heard some sermons that were utter nonsense, yet for every person spouting nonsense, there were people willing to listen to it. (5) Only a single cup could be used for the Breaking of Bread service; no matter how many people were present, everyone shared the same large cup after the thanksgiving prayer, rather than using individual small cups. I once saw many people suffering from colds and coughing, yet they continued to share the same cup, believing the Lord would disinfect and sterilize it. (6) Some gospel messages were overly extreme, claiming that simply believing in the Lord Jesus Christ would automatically resolve all difficulties. Such a gospel produced many superstitious believers; once they fell ill or encountered hardship, they would blame Christ for being "ineffective" and switch to a different, heretical sect that promised more "miraculous results." (7) The brother-and-sister leaders of the "Weeping for Rebirth" sect even immigrated to California with their families and a young Korean sister. The leader, a certain Mr. Xu, wanted to infiltrate Chinese churches in the U.S., but I frankly refused to have any dealings with them.

### **III. The Lord's Rod and Staff**

**Constantly face hostilities from young people, the generation gap was quite severe.**

After leaving the Westminster church and beginning to meet with a group of young people in Fountain Valley, I gradually realized that the generation gap was quite severe. Some young people would mock my English pronunciation, even going so far as to mimic my accent right to my face. On one occasion, a young sister was hosting several visiting sisters from Singapore. During the church's Sunday lunch, one of the Singaporean sisters remarked on the luxury of the hostess's home and asked me about its value. I replied that while I didn't know the current market price, I recalled the original purchase price was over \$500,000 or \$600,000. The young hostess herself interjected, saying it was worth far more; a neighboring house had recently gone on the market for over \$800,000. The next day, when I arrived at the young sister's home as arranged to pick up the visitors, she came out and told me to my face that she disliked people discussing her house; I hurriedly apologized. There was another young couple who hosted gatherings at their home; they suddenly told me I was not allowed to park my car on the concrete area in front of their garage. I explained that I was transporting an elderly person in a wheelchair and needed to park close to the entrance, but they insisted I could only drop the elderly person off before moving the car away. It turns out they thought my car was too old and might leak oil. Then there was a young sister who attended our youngest son's wedding; when I thanked her in person, she retorted that she hadn't come for *\*my\** wedding.

### **\*\*A Donation Check Torn Up\*\***

Although I had left Westminster Church, I would still bring visiting believers—who felt out of place with the meeting style at Fountain Valley—to attend services at Westminster, such as Bee Kheng from Singapore and Bell from Thailand. On one occasion, John Ingalls, accompanied by Tim Louie, privately told me I was forbidden from returning to attend meetings. I explained that I was bringing out-of-town visitors, but he insisted I must publicly apologize to Westminster Church for leading young people to leave the congregation. I maintained that this was not the truth—I had been compelled to follow the young people when they left and could not apologize on their behalf—but he refused to accept this explanation. At that time, I wrote a check for \$1,000 and placed it in the Westminster Church's offering box. After several months passed with no activity—and seeing that the amount had not been deducted from my bank account—I called Tim Louie. He then sent me a photocopy of the torn-up check, explaining that Westminster Church would not accept my offering.

I was attending meetings in Fountain Valley at the time and found myself in an awkward position with both groups. On one hand, the young people at Fountain Valley looked down on me; they removed the Chinese hymnals I had placed at the entrance, fearing that newcomers might mistake Fountain Valley for a church exclusively for Chinese people (though, in reality, the vast majority of the congregation was Chinese, with only a few white members). On the other hand, I was unwelcome at Westminster Church, where I was labeled a traitor and a leader who had incited young people to leave (even though I held no such leadership role).

### **Discovering the Factionalism in Southeast Asian Churches**

During those years, in addition to visiting underground churches in mainland China, I also visited churches in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. While the vast majority of the believers welcomed me on the surface, a very small number of church leaders kept their distance. Among them were two men in Thailand—then middle-aged—one surnamed Lei and another known only by the Thai name "Surasa"; both were supporters of Jphn So. In Singapore, there were two men—one surnamed Bao (about my age) and one surnamed Cai (middle-aged)—later joined by two others, surnamed Chen and Luo. These four men in Singapore were supporters of Jeng Guangmin.

There was also a Brother Dong in Singapore, a contemporary of mine. He was a straightforward man who confronted me directly, asking if Brother Cheng Ruifu had sent me to oversee the Singapore church. I answered candidly that not only had the elder Brother Cheng not sent me to manage the church, but even if someone had asked me to do so, my personality would not allow me to interfere with the administration of a church in another location. He trusted my words completely; from then on, he drove my wife and me to breakfast every day. Later, his youngest daughter stayed at our home for a month, and we took her to visit the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone National Park, and Hawaii to reciprocate his kindness. As for the brother surnamed Bao, it is said that while he was on the phone badmouthing me to Jeng Guangmin—he had actually misunderstood my exposition of Scripture during a meeting; he thought my explanation regarding the sharp sword proceeding from the mouth of the Rider on the white horse in Revelation 19 was an allusion to the Jeng and So co-workers, implying that they preached but did not practice and would one day be judged by God's Word—he suddenly suffered a heart attack. He was rushed to the hospital but passed away a few hours later. Then there was the

brother surnamed Cai; initially, he was very courteous. On several occasions, he invited my wife and me to his home for seafood dinners, even peeling the shells for us. Unexpectedly, he later turned hostile. One Sunday, while I was chatting with an elderly sister near the back door of the meeting hall, I saw him enter through that same door. I raised my hand to greet him, but instead, he stopped, glared at me, and immediately turned his face away as if I were a stranger, treating me with great rudeness. Not long after, his wife—a middle-aged sister—was taken home by the Lord; I was deeply shocked. There was also the brother surnamed Luo; facing business setbacks and heavy financial losses—rumor even had it that his wife was contemplating suicide—he was on my heart. The Lord moved me to give him the four thousand US dollars I had on hand to help him through the crisis. Surprisingly, once he began making money again, he joined the ranks of those criticizing me.

### **\*\*Reconciling with Sister Tian After a Misunderstanding\*\***

In the Singapore church, there was a Sister Tian (the wife of a Brother Tian). It was said that her eldest son ran a factory in Malaysia and had donated hundreds of thousands of US dollars to the churches in Cupertino and Fountain Valley, respectively. Sister Tian herself was also deeply devoted to the Lord. One year—likely after John Ingalls had visited Singapore intending to see the elderly Brother Cheng Ruifu but failed to do so—I arrived in Singapore. One evening, I attended a prayer meeting; to my surprise, as soon as I sat down, I saw Sister Tian, who was in the back row, immediately stand up and move to the other side of the room. I later learned that she harbored a misunderstanding about me and disdained sitting near me. A few days later, Brother Dong took me to the home of Mrs. Tian's youngest son for a gathering. In my presence, the son recounted how John Ingalls had been treated unfairly upon arriving in Singapore; it was then I realized they had misunderstood the situation, believing I was a malicious person who had mistreated John Ingalls. Yet, I did not attempt to vindicate myself or argue my case; instead, I quietly committed the matter to the Lord. The following year—likely because Brother Dong had clarified the situation—Mrs. Tian's misunderstanding was completely resolved, and our fellowship was fully restored.

### **I find comfort in the Lord amidst all these adversities.**

I thank the Lord for arranging various adversities for me, like His staff and rod, constantly guiding and correcting me, lest I fall into the valley of the shadow of death. Therefore, I ultimately find comfort in the Lord even in adversity. Who am I? Even the Apostle Paul was despised, considered "the filth of the world, the scum of everything" (1 Corinthians 4:13). How can my situation be compared to his? Whenever I think of this, I find great comfort in my heart.