**From Desperation to Deliverance**

Psalm 50:15

*Sunday December 2nd 2012*

(AK’s last Sunday at GICF)

If you are facing a crisis of some sort in your life; if everything seems to be going wrong for you; if troubles are piling up faster than you can deal with them; if you are beginning to feel overwhelmed by circumstances that seem impossible to resolve and you are getting desperate – then I have good news for you this morning from God’s word, the Bible, in Psalm 50 and verse 15:

**“Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you, and you will honour me”.**

My title is “From Desperation to Deliverance”, and I want to share with you from my own personal testimony over the last 16 years in Guangzhou how when I called on God in my day of trouble, He delivered me – sometimes in miraculous ways. And I want to tell you that He can do exactly the same for you!

If you are now facing your “day of trouble” – perhaps in your marriage, or your family, perhaps at work, or in your financial situation, perhaps you are facing a serious health challenge, perhaps someone you love and care about is in deep difficulties – call on the Lord, and He **will** deliver you!

When I arrived in Guangzhou in June 1996, I found myself plunged into the most excruciating loneliness I had ever known in my life.

I had left a secure family life, a caring church, and a fulfilling job to suddenly find myself all alone in a Guangzhou hotel room for months on end (for my first five months here I was on my own before Lynn could join me), no Christian friends at all, no church, and a job where I was not wanted by the Chinese partner and they basically shunned me.

The sense of loneliness hit me like a tidal wave; I felt isolated, friendless and unwanted.

If I had not been absolutely certain that God had called me to China for some purpose, I would have packed my bags and gone home straightaway – which is exactly what Satan wanted, of course.

Do you believe in Satan?

I do!

The Bible tells us that Satan is the second-most powerful being in the universe, and he is the cause of all evil in the world. He is the enemy of God, and he is our enemy, too. In I Peter 5:8 we are told:

**“…your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”.**

He was trying to devour me in that summer of 1996. He wanted me to make wrong decisions, to fall into sin, and fail to fulfil God’s assignment for my life.

Some of you are facing a similar battle in your life right now.

And when Satan saw that loneliness on its own wasn’t enough to get me to run back to the UK, he tried more aggressive tactics.

I was kidnapped, not once, but twice.

*The first time by a criminal gang wanting money; the second occasion by agents of a Chinese company wanting to do a business deal that I was advising against. In both cases, God kept me safe and delivered me.*

Satan then tried a different approach; if he couldn’t get me to leave China, then perhaps he could get me to mess up my life - so he sent along temptation:

*I knew I had to somehow find some Christian fellowship, so I asked various staff at the hotel if they knew of a church, and finally one of them told me about Dongshan church.*

*The next Sunday I went along; during the service, a young lady pushed through the crowd to come and sit next to me. She told me that she spoke English and had been asked to translate for me. After the service, she asked me if I knew how to get back to my hotel. I admitted that I wasn’t sure how to find my way back. She told me she was a Guangzhou tour guide, and would help me get a taxi to the hotel, and on the way she would show me some of the places of interest in the city. I thought “how kind!”*

*But, no sooner had we set out, she started to tell me what a bad husband she had, how she did not love him, and that what she really wanted was to find a nice foreign husband! I excused myself as politely as I could and made my way back to my hotel. But she then kept calling me every day for weeks, trying to get me to go on some outing or other with her. She would turn up at my hotel late at night and at weekends.*

I began to understand how Joseph must have felt when he was pressured day-after-day by Potiphar’s wife!

And then, while all this was going on, Satan played what he thought would be his trump card: he would get me fired from my job. And with no job, I could not stay in China, I would **have** to go back to the UK.

*I had come here to be the General Manager of a Joint-Venture with a State-owned Chinese company. But the venture had been set up very badly – the Chinese and English versions of the contract were significantly different, so the Chinese partner were doing all sorts of thing the UK had never agreed to;*

*the factory equipment was not that which had been specified, and could not make the products that had been agreed;*

*the boss of the Chinese partner had taken money meant for the water-treatment plant to buy himself a new car, and I soon realised the venture could not be profitable and was heading for disaster.*

*When I reported all this back to Head Office (who had set up the project) I was told “You are the General Manager, it’s your responsibility now; you sort it out!”*

*No help there, then - I was on my own!*

Well – not **quite** on my own; God was with me, and I soon found out how, in an amazing way! And I learnt how God is able to deliver His children from every circumstance, however impossible.

*When I arrived to take up my new job, the Joint-Venture had already appointed a Malaysian Chinese man called Lau to be my deputy.*

*At this time, the plant was under construction, and everything had to be ready in time for the opening ceremony.*

*But behind the scenes, Lau was making sure that things did not go to plan.*

*He figured that if the opening ceremony had to be cancelled, or was a disaster, then I would be sacked. And, of course, he would then become GM!*

*I didn’t know at the time, however, that he was deliberately sabotaging things, I just began to realise that the project was falling behind schedule.*

*There was always a plausible explanation given when I enquired, and nothing improved, and things were heading for failure. I was absolutely desperate.*

*But remember Psalm 50:15?*

***“Call on me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you, and you will honour me”.***

*So I called!*

*I prayed, “Lord, you have surely not brought me to China to fail after just a few months. Please help me!”*

*And then a remarkable thing happened.*

*To oversee the start-up of the plant, another Malaysian Chinese man, an engineer called Goh, had been sent out. I was told that everyone was frightened of him because he spoke with ghosts and had special powers. They told me he could ‘read’ people, and know all about them just by looking at them. He had a ‘Master’ back home in Malaysia, a Buddhist priest who guided him.*

*I was also told that Goh did not like westerners very much, and so at first he pretty much ignored me.*

*But then people started telling me “Goh is asking a lot of questions about you”. “He says that every time he looks at you to try and ‘read’ you, everything goes foggy and he cannot see anything. He says this has never happened before, and thinks there must be something unusual about you”.*

*Eventually, Goh’s curiosity got the better of him, and he started coming to chat with me directly. One day he told me that the reason the project was behind schedule was that there were bad spirits in the warehouse. “Of course”, he said, “like all westerners, you don’t believe in that sort of thing”.*

*I said “Actually, I do believe in evil spirits, but I am not frightened of them like you are. I am a Christian, and I have the Holy Spirit, and he is more powerful than Satan and all other spirits!”*

*Goh looked at me for a long time, and finally said “So that’s it!”*

*A few days later he came to find me again.*

*He said “I need to talk to you. My Master in Malaysia has called me. He has had a dream, and saw me working with two men. One was good, one was bad. He said the good man was a white colour, that’s you, and the bad man was yellow, and that is Lau”.*

*“He says I must help the good man defeat the bad man’s plans. So I have been asking the workers, and they say that Lau has told them to work very slowly, that you will not be here very long, and he is going to become the boss. He has not ordered a lot of the materials needed to complete the work in time for the opening ceremony, which is only two weeks away, and he has now gone on holiday until then, so the factory will not be ready when all the top bosses and all the visitors come to attend the opening”.*

*“But because my master has told me to help you, I have already told the men that they must ignore what Lau has told them, and I will personally make sure that everything is ready for the opening.”*

*And it was!*

I had called on God, and He had delivered me.

And it was not just a one-off deliverance.

Lynn joined me shortly after, and so I was no longer lonely; the young lady from Dongshan church got a job that took her somewhere else; and Lau was sacked a few months later by the very boss that had recruited him.

And God didn’t just deliver me **from** my troubles – he delivered me **into** the wonderful family that is GICF!

At GICF I have seen God redeeming men and women, young and old, of many different nationalities, backgrounds and cultures; people who came here as Muslims, atheists, Buddhists, Hindus, nominal Christians, but who left as born-again sons and daughters of the living God, having come to a personal faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and experienced the life-transforming power of God’s Holy Spirit.

And I have seen God’s deliverance at work when GICF faced the “day of trouble” and we called on Him. Let me give you just one example: SARS!

In 2003, the SARS epidemic began right here in Guangzhou.

The epicentre of the whole world-wide epidemic was at QingPing Market, and the whole province went into lock-down.

All non-essential diplomatic staff and family members were sent home; foreign teaching organisations recalled their staff, schools closed, districts were quarantined. Hospitals were full to beyond breaking-point, temporary ones were having to be set-up. And then several cases occurred at the factory across the road from where I worked, and it had to shut-down.

The RAB suggested very strongly that GICF should close.

We prayed earnestly about it, and had to quickly decide whether to shut down completely, or keep going for those who wanted to keep attending. The pressure was very great. Then on the day I had to stand before GICF and announce our decision, my morning Bible-reading was Psalm 91:6-7:

**“You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.”**

This was not only God’s clear word to us to keep going – it was Hid promise of deliverance!

And when, after 5 months, the SARS outbreak ended, not one single person or family in GICF was touched by it!

***“Call on me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you….”***

When Lynn and I found GICF after our first few traumatic months in Guangzhou, it was like an oasis in the desert. And over the years, God has blessed us more than words can say through being part of GICF. Let me just share three personal highlights:

1. **Unity**

Psalm 133:1 says:

***“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!”***

And the degree of unity we have at GICF truly amazes me!

Many, many churches are divided over minor, insignificant issues, and yet, here at GICF, where we have people of different nationalities, different cultures, different colours, different languages, different denominational and theological backgrounds, we have a degree of unity and oneness that is rare!

I have seen a Jew from Israel worshipping alongside a former Colonel in the Palestine Liberation Organisation; I have seen Iraqis and Iranians taking communion together; I have seen people from warring factions back home worship together in fellowship here - even Democrats and Republicans!

This spirit of unity is demonstrated in our preaching team, our Elders team, our Deacons team, and all the ministry teams in GICF.

We come from America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia; we come from different church and cultural backgrounds, we have different theological perspectives on a number of issues; and yet, do not let secondary differences cause division, we work together as a team where “iron sharpens iron”, and we spur one another on in ministry and service.

***“In Christ there is no East nor West”….“we are all one in Christ Jesus”.***

On a personal note, I want to thank my fellow-elders and the deacons’ team members with every fibre of my being for their personal consecration, and their commitment to maintaining the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”. It has been truly wonderful to serve with them.

1. **Worship**

Sadly, in many churches, worship can be a dividing factor – traditional versus contemporary, too loud versus not loud enough, youth-oriented and energetic versus older and more dignified, and so on.

And also, pride so easily creeps into an up-front ministry like worship and can cause untold damage to the life and witness of the church.

But in GICF, we have been blessed with a truly anointed worship ministry, which, as far as is possible in this life, manages to balance all these competing factors with both first-class musicianship and humility of spirit.

On some occasions when I have played the piano with them, I have had to stop playing, close my eyes, and silently offer my own praise to God as I listen in awe and amazement, to the sheer quality and purity of the worship around me as these young musicians and singers wholeheartedly offer their gifts and their own worship to lead us. I sometimes imagine I am in heaven surrounded by the angels praising God! But it’s **better** than the angels praising – it’s **redeemed sinners** praising, and we have so much more to praise God for than the angels!

Experiencing the worship at GICF each week is one of the great blessings God has brought into my life while I have been in Guangzhou. I thank brother Martin, and the whole team, from the bottom of my heart.

1. **Prayer**

There is no question but that GICF has grown spiritually in the last 3-4 years.

We have faced more spiritual battles, yet seen more dramatic victories; we have seen more people coming to faith, more lives transformed, more relationships restored, more people delivered from bondage.

And, in my mind, there is no doubt that this is directly related to the prayer life of the church.

*Someone who was unhappy at Charles Spurgeon’s emphasis on prayer in the life of his church supposedly said to him: “You know, Mr.Spurgeon, prayer is alright in its place, but you’ve got to keep things at the right temperature.”*

*“Yes”, replied Spurgeon, “and the right temperature is red hot!”*

The prayer life of GICF has been completely transformed in the last 3 years or so, and that is very largely due to the vision and commitment of brother Glenn Kwabena Gyimah and brother Richard Enyeobi.

If you want to know what a red-hot prayer ministry is like, turn up to a GICF prayer meeting! I have seen broken lives mended, broken bodies healed, broken relationships reconciled, and broken marriages restored.

God has used this prayer ministry to bless me more than I can say, and I go back to the UK knowing that whatever church situation I find myself in, the first thing I must do is establish a similar spirit of prayer and build a committed group of prayer warriors. That is the foundation and starting-point of any work of God.

So – Lynn and I have been through some tough times in our 16-plus years in Guangzhou, especially in the early years when Satan did everything he could to get us to leave and return to the comfort and security of life back in Britain, and therefore fail to fulfil God’s assignment for us in China. But I called on Him and He delivered me – God was faithful to His promise.

And He will deliver you, too, if you call on Him.

I can tell you from the fiery furnace of personal experience, that if you trust God, then whatever the challenge, whatever the obstacles, whatever the opposition, however desperate you are, even if Satan himself comes directly against you with all his demons and you find yourself staring into the very jaws of hell – if you call on God, He **will** deliver you! And you will live a life that honours Him!

As we close, I want us to come before God in prayer.

If you are facing overwhelming difficulties and problems in your life at the moment – bring them to God now and call on Him. Marriage? Work? Finances? Relationships? Children? Parents?

**“Call on me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you will honour me”.**

You have heard how I called on God in my day of trouble, and He delivered me; call on Him, and He will deliver you, too.

Bring **your** fears, **your** problems, **your** doubts, **your** impossible circumstances, and **your** sins, and by faith lay them at the foot of the cross where Jesus died to forgive you, and He will deliver you, and you will begin to live a life that honours Him.

*If you want to bring these things to God and call on Him to deliver you, then I invite to stand now, and make your own prayer to God as I lead.*

Let’s pray:

Our Father God,

I thank You for bringing me to Guangzhou, and for all the faithfulness You have shown to me and my family over the last 16 years. I thank You for each person here, and I pray for them now: I pray that they might know your unfailing faithfulness in their own lives.

I pray for those who are facing challenges, struggles, heartaches, burdens, some for whom life has become so tough that they do not know what to do or where to turn. As they call on You now, in their day or trouble, show Your faithfulness to them, act in accordance to Your promise and **deliver them**, rescue them, turn their lives around, forgive their sins and give them a fresh start, and bring them to honour You.

In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray.

Amen!

*[Worship Team come back on stage]*

[Announce prayer ministry – specific need, new believer – Glenn up-front]

I don’t know what the future holds – none of us do!

But because of God’s faithfulness in the past, I have absolute confidence for what lies ahead. “Because he lives, I can face tomorrow” – and so can you!

Let’s all stand.

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*[Song – Because he lives]*

Finally:

I thank God for the blessings He has brought into my life, and the life of my family, through GICF.

I thank God for the privilege of serving Him alongside all you wonderful brothers and sisters.

I love you all, and I shall miss you very much!

But what is absolutely certain: we are going to meet again, in one place or the other; if not here, there!

God bless you all!

God told Moses: “This is how you are to bless my people Israel”.

As my final act in GICF, I would like to invoke that same blessing on God’s people GICF:

***“May the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, may the Lord turn His face towards you and give you peace”.***

Amen!

*[Darius]*