

# All That God Has Done

By Rev. Joe B. Hopper written in 1973

*(This is apparently a talk he gave at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, N.C. which had supported them for many years. He summarizes the life of Dot and Joe Hopper in rural evangelist missionary work for their first 25 years in South Korea. More is available in his autobiography, Mission to Korea, 38 Years Below the 38th )*

Acts. 14: 24-28; Psalm 67

How would you like to sit down to worship (in one place) with over one-half million other worshippers? This was our experience one evening last May in Seoul, Korea. As far as we could see in every direction, a vast sea of people sat on the ground to hear Dr. Billy Graham preach. A few days later, on Sunday afternoon, an estimated 1,100,000 gathered for what has been called the largest assembly of Christians in history to hear the preaching of the Gospel. Surely this is a resounding "yes" to the question, "have missions in land such as Korea been a success?" In less than 90 years, a nation has been brought to the place where national Christian leaders could organize this astounding demonstration of the power of the Gospel of Christ. This event shook the nation of Korea, and points to the far-reaching effects of all Asia and perhaps elsewhere.

The home church can thank God for the privilege of significant participation in changing the course of history in distant parts of the world by "discipling the nations." Your missionary representatives rejoice in the exciting events God is directing among people who hitherto have walked in great darkness but have seen the light of salvation in Jesus Christ, to bring all men to repentance and sin and faith in Him as giver of salvation and Lord of all life. For us all there is simultaneously boundless joy in proclaiming this good news and a terrible urgency lest some perish because we have failed. Jesus said, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him." Jn. 3:36.

In our day the church is much maligned. Some say its era is past. Many criticize. Others even ridicule. Yet no one has ever improved on the Church as God's instrument to accomplish His purpose in the world. We believe that God is using the church in America, and this church in particular, to witness to the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. Your missionaries know that the young church in the lands we serve are extensions of this same body of Christ and that our primary function is to continue to plant churches where the Gospel is proclaimed, sinners are saved, gathered into fellowship, and sent forth to live and witness and serve for Christ in their communities. 10,000 church steeples in Korea today are visible proof of the power of this gospel.

For 90 years missionaries in Korea have used every God-given skill to accomplish these things. Your support and encouragement and prayers have sustained them. Modern education and medicine came to Korea largely through pioneer missionaries. Universities, seminaries,

medical centers and nurses' schools stand as monuments of that endeavor. For example, the Presbyterian Medical Center in our city of Chunju, which some of you have visited, offers the finest medical services available in Korea, ministering to patients from far and near. A day in the waiting rooms, or a tour of the wards is dramatic evidence of how God is using this ministry of healing to meet the needs of thousands who come. Here is demonstrated the love of Christ in meeting the physical needs of our neighbors. Here too, a staff of dedicated Christians witness to the deeper needs of souls so that hundreds depart with healing of the spirit and return home full of joy, praising God, as did those who received the miraculous touch of the Great physician.

Everywhere in rapidly developing modern Korea, Christians are at the forefront in business, industry, education, government. Many are products of schools founded by missionaries, now directed by national Christians (but still part of the total impact of the church). Visitors are amazed by the material transformation of Korea. Skyscrapers and apartment complexes crowd Seoul with its 6 million people. Paved expressways span the nation where were once muddy ox-cart trails or dusty gravel roads. Oil refineries, power plants, and factories turning out everything from transistors to trucks spring up everywhere. The new community development projects are modernizing village life in the country side. The price of progress may be obedient submission to edicts from above, yet nevertheless the results are astonishing. In this revolutionized situation, Christians are often not only leaders but voices bringing Christian principles into play. Less than 10% of the population is Christians, but this is a collective conscience for righteousness and justice and human rights which plays a significant role in the development of a young nation.

We are happy to have a small part in what God has done in Korea. Your investment in the work of world missions entitles you to know what we're doing in specific day-to-day terms. If our report is any incentive to you to "go and do likewise in this city and abroad, our words are not in vain.

First of all, we are a man and wife team engaged in rural evangelism (as far as I know the only couple in this kind of work). Our city of 300,000 population is the center of a province where 500,000 live. Most of them are rice farmers and it has always been our goal to establish a church within an hour's walking distance of everyone. In some areas this goal has been reached. In our 25 years of service, we have seen the number of churches double once and then double again. They are organized into 4 Presbyteries. We work closely with the evangelistic committees of two of them in planning and establishing new churches, supervising their development, and assisting in every way possible. Many have already reached the point where they can care for themselves, but others still need our assistance... particularly those in remote mountain valleys or in fishing villages by the seacoast where there is much poverty, less education, and hence slower development. These Presbyteries usually assign us 2 dozen churches for which we have direct responsibility. In most cases the only paid worker is an unordained lay evangelist, with little education and a very low salary.

To visit all these places regularly calls for careful scheduling. Saturday morning after breakfast sees us pulling out of the city in a Land Rover towing a small travel trailer (gift of Covenant Church men) ... the only one I have ever seen here in Korea. Since our youngest child went away to boarding school six years ago, we have used this rig over some of the

roughest roads in the world. For the first time we look forward this fall to using paved highways taking us 30 or 40 miles in two directions. Before lunch we park our bedroom on wheels in a distant village and are ready to go to work. All afternoon we visit from house to house, perhaps in 4 or 5 villages adjacent to the church. The local evangelist and a deacon or so accompany us, and behind us trail perhaps 75 children curious about these Yankee Pied Pipers. We concentrate on non-Christian homes, or those where there is a prospect of leading non-believers to Christ. We carry Gospels and tracts to distribute. As a couple we are free to enter any home, and many village women have learned to look forward to the visit of a missionary lady with the team. When all are out at work, we go to where they are gathered in the fields to transplant rice or to thrash grain. Often there are those who are sick or in need of medical attention and we encourage them to visit our Medical Center. Where financial help is needed we use the Good Samaritan Aid fund put at our disposal out of the Easter Relief offering you give.

Before the evening service, Dot and my assistant hold a children's meeting. Using pictures or flannel graphs she tells Bible stories to the hundreds who pack in to the little churches. When I see them surging out afterwards, I am reminded of the circus trick I saw years ago where endless numbers of clowns kept climbing out of the same old Ford automobile (but when packed into the church they are best described in the Korean way as looking like a pot of bean sprouts). Meanwhile, in a nearby home or in the trailer, I examine candidates for church membership to discover the faith and Biblical knowledge of new Christians. Records show 7500 such examinations in 25 years. During the evening service I preach, hold the sacraments, and select new officers as needed. The Lord's Supper is often the highlight: for the Christians a moment of deep spiritual inspiration; for the curious non-Christians clustered outside the windows a fulfillment of our Lord's words when He said that eating this bread and wine, "ye do so forth the Lord's death 'til he come." Often these services do not begin until nine o'clock or later and we are tired when we drag back to the trailer. Before retiring Dot gives a "sight-see" to the church women who crowd around to see our home. Sometimes a grandmother alights announcing that she has been to America and back! The next day we move on to another church to repeat this routine, so that by Monday or Tuesday when we return to Chunju we are physically exhausted but have the joyful satisfaction of this participation in the Lord's work.

Life at home is still crowded. Dot's schedule calls for visiting among the women and children patients at the Medical Center one afternoon a week. This attention, and the spoken word of sympathy and the prayer for God's healing have often been the patient's first contact with a Westerner, and they seldom forget. Another day it's the orphanage, to give "the tender love and care" toddlers the world over need to grow happily and normally. Ladies from a local church often participate in this with her. She regularly visits the women prisoners at the local penitentiary, some of whom have become earnest Christians. Two prison officials are elders and open the way for this ministry. She also works with the local women-of-the-church organization. All these ministries have Scriptural warrant, as Christian love is extended to prisoners, orphans, the sick and the needy.

My work in the city is equally varied. Most important is the mission press (again a gift of this church over 20 years ago) where we publish a small magazine sent to all churches in our denomination. Our editor is a highly qualified Korean minister, and this journal brings pastoral

helps to church leaders all over the nation. Like most such projects, production costs keep rising faster than our income, but so far the Lord has provided and 10 issues of 60 pages are produced each year. Frequently I am asked to preach in city churches, or at the 35<sup>th</sup> Korean Army reserve division where the commanding general is a Christian and the chapel is usually packed with over 500 men.

Great revivals have swept the Korean armed services with 1500 or 3000 baptized at once. Membership on numerous Presbytery committees, and services as chairman of the combined board of two seminaries, one for men and one for women, demand time. The seminaries are located in Kwangju and Chunju and train ordained pastors and directors of Christian education for an area of 6,000,000 people where the fields are white for harvest but laborers are still far too few.

A project begun this year is a new city church. Chunju is growing by 25,000 a year, mostly people from rural areas. Christians from our country churches, often the youngest and best, are among these thousands moving to the city. Without new churches to receive them, they can be lost. In June we purchased a small tract of land in a section where there is no other church. During my absence this summer, my assistant has been organizing the new congregation. Worship began in a tent the last Sunday of July and plans are afoot to start a more permanent building this fall as funds become available. This assistant, Mr. Ahn Young-moke, is taller than I by two inches. He grew up in a Christian home in a rural church. His wife is also a graduate of a seminary that trains women workers. His winsome smile and gracious manner are attracting many into the new congregation and we hope that within a year it will be self-supporting. Then, as always, we will turn our attention to another spot, perhaps in one of the other large cities of our province. For, (like women's work) the task of planting churches is never done.

Yet, it is people, individual people, coming for aid or counsel who consume the most time and energy...students in need of scholarships, pastors troubled by church problems, parents looking for jobs for children, the poor and sick in need of physical help. Let me tell of one, who illustrates how various aspects of mission work combine to accomplish the purpose of planting churches in Korea. Mr. Yoon is a middle-aged rice farmer, moderately prosperous. Five years ago he nearly died with tuberculosis and went to the Mission Hospital in Kwangju. Here he not only began to recover, but heard the Gospel and accepted Christ. There was no church in his home district and he vowed to start one. He wrote a mimeographed letter testifying to his faith and sent it to friends at home. Back in his village he sold part of his land, bought a place for a new church, and appealed to us to send a worker. This was scarcely done when Mr. Yoon began to have mental troubles and returned to the same hospital. Once he attempted suicide by jumping out a third story window. Badly injured he was taken to a rest home in Soonchun run by another missionary, Mrs. Hugh Linton. Again he tried to take his life, this time with a knife, further aggravating his condition. We helped him go from place to place in search of qualified help, and finally he was cured in answer to the prayers of many Christian friends. Now he has gradually regained full strength, attends church regularly, has been baptized and made a deacon. His wife, mother, children and brothers have become Christians. He is a leader in the village development program, so that his village won a national prize. He is a respected citizen leading others to Christ so that the church in Ingye is

on to the road to success. Here is a story which can be repeated often in Korea...proof that God is at work to bring a nation to Christ.

Most significant for the Church among the vast changes in our world today, is the shifting international relationships, especially among those parts of Asia long closed to the Christian witness. Cracks in political walls are appearing, doors may open soon for the Gospel witness. It is a day of challenge to Christendom to be ready with messengers of the good news of the Prince of Peace to occupy vast new territories. This note of opportunity was sounded loud and clear during the recent evangelistic crusade in South Korea, so that even Communist North Korea was stung by its impact and opened up with propaganda accusing the evangelist of being a super-shaman or witch doctor, hired to deceive and mislead the people of the south. The truth was that this encouraged weak Christians and weak churches to realize the tremendous power of a united Christian movement, it trained thousands of personal workers whose work will continue to bring revival, and it pointed clearly beyond the church itself and the shores of Korea to those millions in central Asia who need to know the love of God and saving power of Christ. Whether it is through a gigantic crusade, or missionaries working with needed individuals and pioneer rural churches, or you here in the home-church...we give thanks for all that God has done, and for how He has opened a door of faith. "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations..."