

Faithful Warrior



I WANT NOTHING FOR MYSELF;

I WANT EVERYTHING FOR THE LORD.

Watchman Nee



Conflict Today Is Fierce

WATCHMAN NEE
1903-1972



FAITHFUL WARRIOR

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be
able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (Ephesians 6:10-11)*

Watchman Nee had a keen awareness of the normally unseen war raging between God and Satan over the possession of mankind. As a voice declaring the truth concerning Christ in the spiritual darkness of China, Nee writes in this hymn how “hell’s forces rally all their pow’rs” to stir up “the wildest storms.” This war grows stronger, louder, harder, and more bitter toward the end.

If the truth of this hymn unmasks Satan’s strategy to wear down and discourage God’s people, it also works to awaken them from any confusion, numbness, and indifference toward the fight. Few Christians may ever be called to speak to thousands or suffer imprisonment for their faith as Nee did, but each one has an all-important opportunity to experience and display Christ’s overcoming life in daily routines. We are surrounded by people who desperately need to see Him expressed through us. This is our battlefield until at last “the triumph song’s begun!”

As soldiers in Christ’s army, what should our attitude be toward this hidden, yet so real, war? Nee exhorts us to be encouraged, for the Lord Jesus quickly comes; to sing, for He is near; and to be happy, for we have greater power to witness. Captivated by His glorious return and motivated by the overcomers’ future reward, we “will forward go, strong in His mighty power.”

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Verse One

Conflict today is fierce,
The strength of Satan more;
The cry of battle calling now
Is louder than before.
The rebel voice of hell
E'en stronger now becomes;
But list, the midnight cry resounds,
Behold, I quickly come!

Verse Two

Trials more bitter grow,
The fighting doth enlarge;
Hell's forces rally all their pow'rs
And gather for the charge.
Yet while we wait and watch
And feel the war severe,
We hear the joyful song ring out,
Jesus, the Lord, is near!

Verse Three

'Tis harder at the end
The word to testify,
For Satan fights with all his pow'r
Our witness to defy.
Much greater strength we need
The foe to overcome;
How happy when the Lord we see
And all our sighing's done!

Verse Four

Who then will forward go
Strong in His mighty power?
Who then will firmly trust the Lord
Until the vict'ry hour;
Till with the conqu'rors blest,
The triumph song's begun?
That man will then rejoice to hear,
Behold, I quickly come!

Verse Five

Who then will choose God's best,
And take the narrow track,
Though passing thru the wildest storms,
Yet never turning back?
Who now will dare press on,
Enduring pain and fear?
All such will then rejoice to see
Jesus, the Lord, is near!

Verse Six

Though deep the darkness be
We still would onward go,
Till we the day of rapture greet
And glory 'round shall glow.
'Tis there we'll see the Lord,
And Satan overcome;
The overcomers will rejoice,
Jesus, the Lord, has come!

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*Faithful
Warrior*

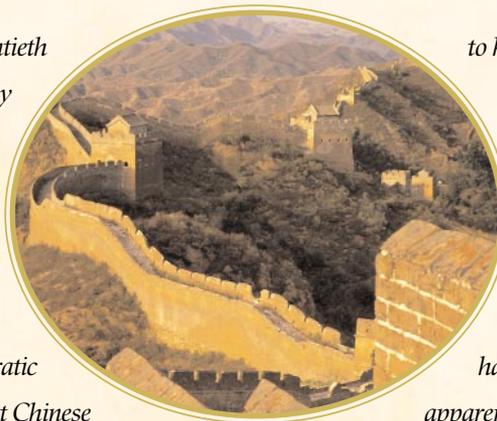
CONFLICT TODAY IS FIERCE

Faithful Warrior

CROSSWINDS OF CHANGE

In the first half of the twentieth century, China was buffeted by turbulence from crosswinds of change. Controversy swirled on multiple fronts: political, economical, cultural, and religious.

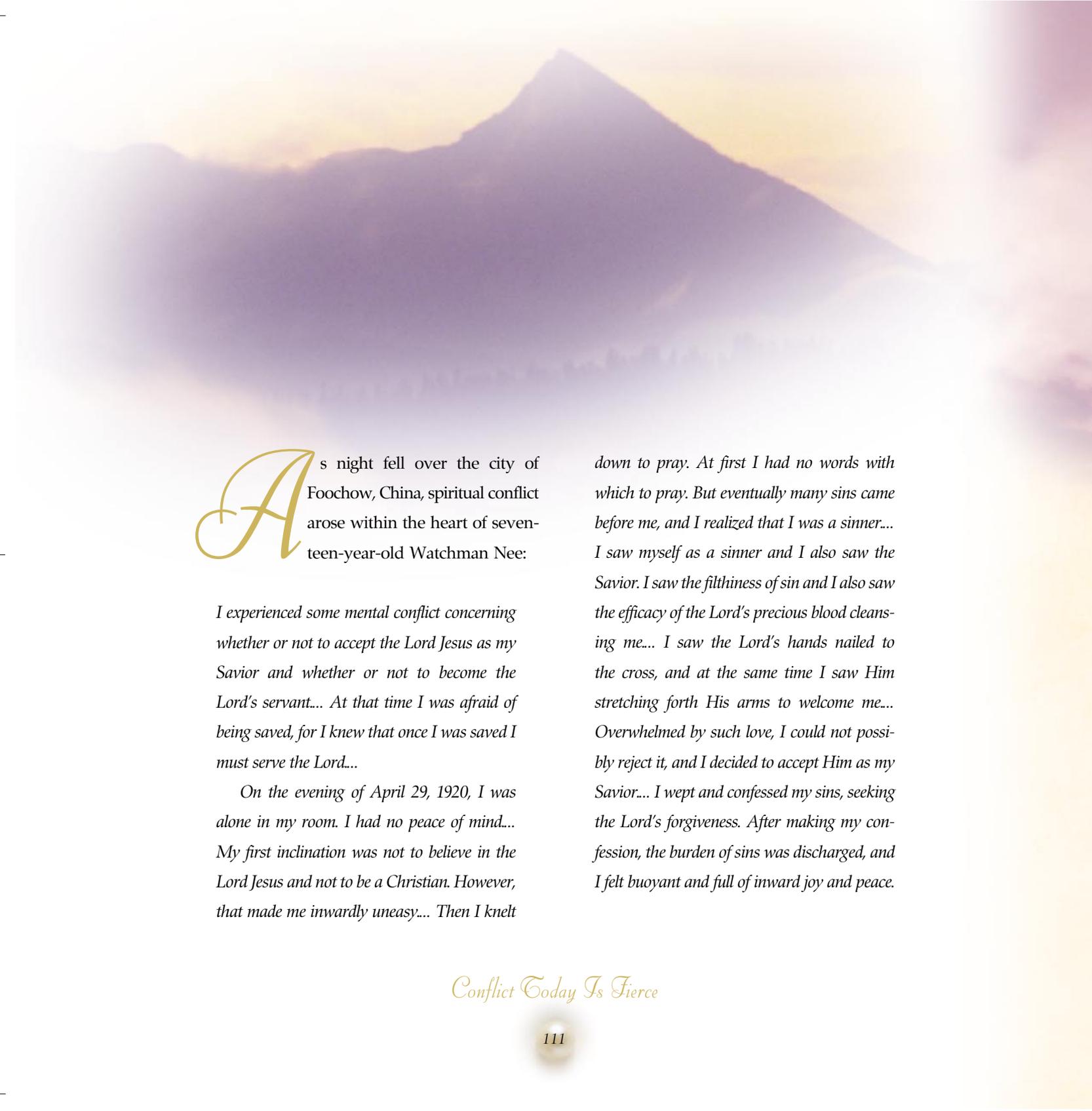
The newly formed democratic government confronted ancient Chinese autocratic rule. Capitalism rivaled communist philosophy for the hearts and minds of the younger generation. The growth of Western influence endured bitter resistance from an ancient social culture that sought



to keep China closed to the modern world. Buddhism's adherents challenged the advances of the Christian faith. It was an age of issues, questions, tensions, and clashes.

Even so, Watchman Nee had deeper insight concerning the apparent conflicts. Beneath the unstable surface, he saw that the real battle was between God and His enemy concerning this generation—at stake were the millions of souls in China and the testimony of Christ in this vast land.

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*A*s night fell over the city of Foochow, China, spiritual conflict arose within the heart of seventeen-year-old Watchman Nee:

I experienced some mental conflict concerning whether or not to accept the Lord Jesus as my Savior and whether or not to become the Lord's servant... At that time I was afraid of being saved, for I knew that once I was saved I must serve the Lord...

On the evening of April 29, 1920, I was alone in my room. I had no peace of mind... My first inclination was not to believe in the Lord Jesus and not to be a Christian. However, that made me inwardly uneasy... Then I knelt

down to pray. At first I had no words with which to pray. But eventually many sins came before me, and I realized that I was a sinner... I saw myself as a sinner and I also saw the Savior. I saw the filthiness of sin and I also saw the efficacy of the Lord's precious blood cleansing me... I saw the Lord's hands nailed to the cross, and at the same time I saw Him stretching forth His arms to welcome me... Overwhelmed by such love, I could not possibly reject it, and I decided to accept Him as my Savior... I wept and confessed my sins, seeking the Lord's forgiveness. After making my confession, the burden of sins was discharged, and I felt buoyant and full of inward joy and peace.

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FROM AMBITION TO
CONSECRATION

Prior to his birth, Nee had been consecrated to the Lord by his mother, who was a second-generation Christian. After giving birth to two girls, she bargained with the Lord, pleading, "If I have a boy,
I will present him

to You." Her petition was answered in 1903 when Watchman Nee was born. She could not have known how useful her consecrated gift would become to the Lord's work in China and beyond.

Nee was a gifted individual, possessing a photographic memory. Rarely studying for tests, he consistently made the highest grades. The teenage student knew that his future was bright, and he had ambitions to achieve both fame and fortune. Once saved, his ambitions previously devoted to worldly pursuits would now be directed toward serving Christ.

However, despite his efforts to bring hundreds of classmates to Christ, he was not taken seriously!

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Through fellowship with Miss Groves, a missionary, he discovered the hindrance: "I immediately began to deal with my sins by making restitution, paying debts, being reconciled with my classmates.... Between 1920 and 1922, I went to at least two or three hundred people to confess offenses." Nee also began praying daily for his classmates, and soon all but one of the seventy students whose names were written in his notebook were saved.

However, Nee still longed to be "filled with the Holy Spirit to ... bring more people to the Lord." Due to his fellowship with Miss Margaret E. Barber, another missionary, Nee became convicted of a deeper matter between himself and the Lord. After a struggle, Nee felt that his love for an unbelieving girl named Charity Chang—the daughter of family friends

for three generations—had to be surrendered. He confessed, "When I spoke with her about the Lord Jesus and tried to persuade her to

believe, she laughed at me. I must admit that I did love her, but at the same time I suffered her laughter at the Lord I believed in. I also questioned at that time whether she or the Lord would have first place in my heart."

Prior to Nee's salvation, he scoffed, *"I considered [preaching] the most trifling and base of occupations.... [Preachers] were servile subordinates to the missionaries and earned merely eight or nine dollars per month. I had no intention of becoming a preacher nor even a Christian."*

However, after his salvation, he confessed, *"All my previous planning became void and was brought to nothing. My future career was entirely abandoned. For some this step might be easy, but for me,...it was exceedingly difficult."*

One day ... Psalm 73:25 appeared before my eyes: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee." After

reading these words I said to myself, "The writer of this psalm can say that, but I cannot."

The young man made every effort to distract himself from the Lord's word given to him concerning Charity. He related,

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[I] asked God to be patient and impart strength to me until I could give her up. I asked God to postpone dealing with this matter. But God never reasons with people. I considered going to the frontier of desolate Tibet to evangelize and suggested many other enterprises to God, hoping that He might be moved not to raise again the question of my giving up the one I loved. But once God's finger has pointed to something, He will not withdraw it. No matter how I prayed, I could not get through. I prayed constantly, hoping that my earnest supplication might change God's mind.

Deeply convicted, Nee answered the Lord's call to "have none upon the earth" but Him. He later declared, "I was filled with His love, and I was willing to lay my loved one down." Obedience was followed by elation:

On that day I was in the second heaven, if not the third. The world appeared smaller to me, and it was as if I were mounting the clouds and riding the mists. On the evening of my salvation, the burden of my sins rolled away, but on that day, February 13, 1922, when I laid aside my beloved, my heart was emptied of everything that previously occupied me.

Soon, Nee and others expanded their gospel work, and "several hundred people were saved at the same time." Moreover, the earthly love Nee had previously crucified in his heart was now returned to him by the Lord in resurrection. After ten years, Charity also believed in Christ, and a new godly love was rekindled between them. They were married in 1934, and she proved to be the helpmate he needed.

LIVING BY FAITH

Throughout his life, Watchman Nee suffered from numerous physical ailments. At only twenty-one years of age, he contracted tuberculosis. He came so close to death that at

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one point his doctor advised him to put his affairs in order, for he would not survive the night. Rumors circulated that he had already died. But by faith in God's Word, he was miraculously healed that evening, and all signs of the disease were forever gone. Nee believed that although his illness was an intense spiritual attack, it was allowed by God. While still seriously ill, he wrote, "What I have experienced during my illness is most profitable. From the very beginning I prayed that I would gain from this illness what I needed, for I am not willing to be ill for nothing."

Though miraculously healed from tuberculosis, God allowed a serious heart condition called *angina pectoris* to remain. For the rest of

his life, he was constantly aware of his human frailty. Like Paul's thorn, which limited the gifted apostle, this unrelenting heart ailment sapped Nee's strength, causing him to rely on the Lord's grace. Often he was in great pain while sharing messages; breaking out into a sweat, he needed to lean against the podium in order to finish his speaking. Afterward, he could only lie in bed in pain. All during these physical trials, he affirmed the positive aspects of the circumstantial dealings in his life, saying that "a believer can never be the same after passing through suffering."

As one who lived by faith, Watchman Nee also had many experiences in trusting the Lord to meet his financial needs. In a message, he told



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this story concerning the Lord's provision of his traveling expenses while on a gospel journey:

When the time came for us to leave [for the provincial capital by bus], there was still no money in hand [for the ticket]. I packed my luggage as usual and hired a rickshaw... When the rickshaw had been pulled about forty yards, an old man with a long gown came from behind shouting, "Mr. Nee, please stop!" ... After handing me a parcel of food as well as an envelope, the old man departed. I was then so grateful for God's arrangement that my eyes were filled with tears. When I opened the envelope, I found four dollars inside, just sufficient for a bus ticket.

He explained that he immediately sensed the devil's bothering him for trusting the Lord each step of the way:

The devil kept speaking to me, "Don't you see how dangerous it is?" I replied, "I was indeed a little anxious about it, but it is by no means dangerous, for God has supplied my need in time." After arriving in Amoy, another brother gave me a return ticket.



*Framed quote in
a Philippine meeting hall:*

GOD PAYS ATTENTION MORE TO WHAT WE ARE THAN TO WHAT WE DO. THE REAL WORK IS THE OUTFLOW OF LIFE. THE SERVICE THAT COUNTS IS THE LIVING OUT OF CHRIST.

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He then concluded,

I can bear testimony today that God is the One Who gives... It has been my experience that God's supply arrives when I have spent my last dollar. I have had fourteen years of experience. In each experience God wanted to get the glory for Himself. God has supplied all my needs and has not failed me once.

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Nee learned how to accept God's sovereign circumstances and considered them as opportunities to gain Christ. For example, he developed successful companies solely consecrated for the financial support of Christian coworkers, the churches, and the Lord's work. While he was anonymously financing his fellow Christian servants, the very ones benefiting from his care started rumors that Nee had become worldly through working so hard at business. Nonetheless, he kept contributing to them while accepting their criticisms as from the Lord. Samuel Chang, Nee's brother-in-law, spoke concerning Nee's businesses: "I can bear witness that his motive was absolutely not to

make himself rich. He was utterly captured by the Lord." Nee learned to endure with grace whatever came against him as he sought to advance God's purposes in China.



THE EFFECT OF THE CROSS

Watchman Nee renounced any self-seeking use of his natural talents in exchange for the life of a grain of wheat falling into the ground. He was convinced that the power of resurrection life carried out in godly service would be immensely more fruitful than his own power of persuasion. Thus, he encouraged others to live under the effect of the cross:

Beloved brothers, the time of the Lord's coming back is fast approaching. We must be faithful. In the days ahead we may suffer more misunderstanding and more severe opposition; but since we have been destined for this we should remain faithful... Brothers, please continue to remember me in your prayers so that in all my afflictions I may be able to stand fast, faithfully bearing a good testimony for the Lord.

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Watchman Nee refused the opportunity to flee China prior to the communist takeover in 1949. Rather, he chose to shepherd the flock there as long as he could. Consequently, he was imprisoned in 1952 and held unreasonably for years beyond his release date. Although it was his legal right, he was not allowed to visit his dying wife or attend her funeral. Furthermore, he was deprived of sufficient food and care, and thus he died an uncompromising martyr's death, true to the

Lord after twenty years of imprisonment. A note written with shaking hand was found beneath his pillow and later quickly memorized by a family member who came to the prison after his death:

Christ is the Son of God Who died for the redemption of sinners and resurrected after three days. This is the greatest truth in the universe. I die because of my belief in Christ.

Lord Jesus,

Become the faithful One in me! Forgive my passivity in contending for the faith. Strengthen me to stand and be faithful to You until the end. You are the overcoming One in me. You are the Lord and God's Christ. How happy we will be at Your return! Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Amen!

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Watchman Nee

1903–1972

Watchman Nee was born as Nee Shu-tsu in Foochow, China, in 1903, into a third-generation Christian family. His paternal grandfather was the first Congregationalist pastor in northern Fukien province. His father studied in the American Methodist College in Foochow, and his mother was educated in the Chinese Western Girls' School in Shanghai.

Nee excelled at Anglican Trinity College in Foochow. After being saved in 1920, he adopted the English name Watchman Nee and the Chinese name *To-sheng*, meaning "the sound of a watchman's rattle." Through missionary Margaret E. Barber, he obtained the foundation of his spiritual life. In 1934, Watchman Nee married Charity Chang. They had no children.

Nee's preaching led to a spiritual revival in Foochow in 1923. Thereafter, he faithfully

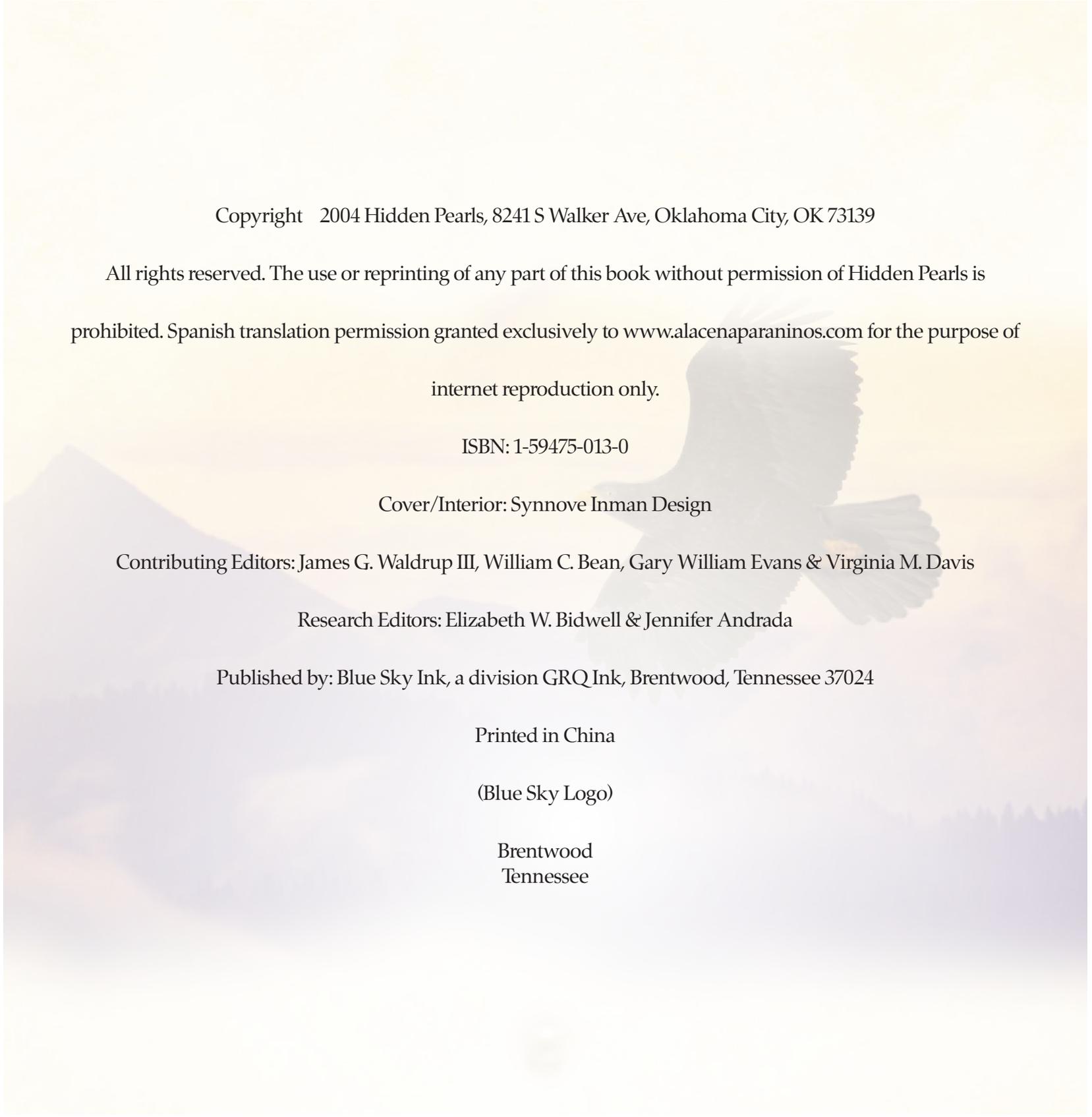


labored to minister the great truths of the Bible. He built a training center and held conferences for the perfecting of seeking believers. He financially supported Christian coworkers and needy saints. By 1949, he had been used in raising up hundreds of local churches—one in every major city of China's thirty-three provinces. Many of his messages have been compiled into book form, yielding a treasury of Christian literature. His writings and hymns continue to minister to Christians today.

His entire Christian life, Nee endured a steady battery of religious and political persecutions, culminating in imprisonment in 1952. Even so, he firmly maintained his overcoming testimony to the end. He died a martyr of Jesus Christ on May 30, 1972. Written just hours before he died, in shaking hand, are his final words:

I die because of my belief in Christ.

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ISBN: 1-59475-013-0

Cover/Interior: Synnove Inman Design



Contributing Editors: James G. Waldrup III, William C. Bean, Gary William Evans & Virginia M. Davis



Research Editors: Elizabeth W. Bidwell & Jennifer Andrada

Published by: Blue Sky Ink, a division GRQ Ink, Brentwood, Tennessee 37024

Printed in China

(Blue Sky Logo)

Brentwood
Tennessee

