



GLADYS AYLWARD 1902-1970

Gladys Aylward was an English missionary to Asia from 1930 until the end of her life in 1970. Her incredible life story has been told through several biographies and movies, the most famous being the 1950's movie, *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, starring Ingrid Bergman. When Gladys was a teenager, she answered a call to missions during a revival meeting. She later read about the need for missionaries to China and was determined to go there, no matter the cost.

Although she failed to pass the examinations with China Inland Mission, she discovered another opportunity to train with Mrs. Lawson, a retired missionary woman who ran an inn for mule caravans in Yangchen, China. Each evening, the two ladies entertained the travelers with stories of Jesus and many of them became Christians. Gladys soon learned enough Chinese to become a Chinese citizen and after Mrs. Lawson died, Gladys was asked by the Chinese government to become a foot inspector to enforce the recently outlawed custom of foot-binding for women. She used that job opportunity to spread the Gospel through the countryside.

It was during that time that she discovered many abandoned children and she began to house and care for them in her home, eventually accumulating around 100 orphans. China was fighting wars with Japan in the late 1930's and Gladys often helped her adopted country by traveling behind enemy lines to spy on the Japanese. When the Japanese threatened to capture her, she decided to flee with the children to the safety of a Chinese orphanage in Sian, about 100 miles away.

The arduous journey took 27 days, but by God's grace, everyone made it safely despite Gladys suffering with typhus, pneumonia, exposure and malnutrition. Eventually she started a church in her new location, but was expelled from China in 1947 during the Communist takeover and she returned to England for about ten years.

Later in life, she returned to Asia and established a settlement for lepers near Tibet, and an orphanage in Taiwan. Her life was characterized by living humbly and courageously in difficult circumstances. Gladys wrote this of herself at the end of her life: "My heart is full of praise that one so insignificant, uneducated, and ordinary in every way could be used for His glory for the blessing of His people in poor persecuted China." Many years earlier, the people in China called Gladys "Ai-weh-deh," which means "Virtuous One." It remained her name throughout her life in Asia. Her life story is a testimony to how God can be glorified in the most extreme of circumstances.