

## BITTEN BY A RED-BACK SPIDER

Barry Chant

A few years ago, Vanessa and I were guest speakers at an Easter camp for Asian university students. The kitchen staff were headed up by a pair of newly-weds named Wun Meng and Lai Pek. On the third night of the camp, Lai Pek had to leave for an evening shift at her part-time restaurant job.

We had a great meeting that night. At the conclusion of the message, I invited those who had a hunger for more of the Holy Spirit in their lives to move to the prayer room. (Next morning one of them testified. 'I felt I could touch heaven!' Another said, 'I never knew God's presence could be so real.')

While they were seeking the Lord, the rest of us continued with the main service. To conclude, we all formed clusters and prayed together. It was about 10 p.m. Two hours later, at midnight, there were still small groups of young people praying in different parts of the camp. It was a special time.

It was then we received a phone call telling us that Lai Pek was in hospital. Of all things, she had been bitten by a red-back spider! We called everyone together to uphold her in prayer.

Next morning, I walked into the dining room and there was Lai Pek sitting at the table!

'What happened?' I asked her.

'Well, I was standing at the bus stop and I felt something sting my leg, so I brushed it off,' she said matter-of-factly.

'So how did you know it was a red-back spider?' I asked.

'I picked it up,' she said simply.

'Picked it up!' I exclaimed. 'How?'

'I had a crumpled tissue in my pocket and I used that.'

I was astonished. 'Then what?' I asked fearful of what I might hear.

'I caught the bus and carried it with me to work,' she explained.

On the bus! I couldn't believe it. 'A live red-back spider in your hand on the bus?' I said.

'Oh, no,' she explained. 'It was dead. I killed it.'

'How?'

'I squeezed its head between my fingers,' she said, as if it was the kind of thing you do every day.

'Between your fingers!' I was stunned! 'So what happened then?'

'Well, I got to work and showed them the spider. When they saw it was red-back, they sent me off to the hospital straight away.'

'And then what?'

'They kept me under observation. I was afraid they were going to hold me there, so I was praying all the time, "Lord, I don't want to be here all night. I want to go back to the camp." Then after four hours, they told me I could go.'

'So how do you feel?'

'I have a small sore spot on my leg,' she answered, 'but that's all.'

From that day to this Lai Pek has never had any after effects.

I couldn't help but think of what Jesus said about treading on snakes and scorpions (Luke 10:19) and drinking deadly poison (Mark 16:17-18).

I was also struck by Lai Pek's simple faith. She was genuinely surprised that we thought her actions were unusual: to her, everything she did seemed obvious.

When recounting this tale to another youth group I reflected that we can be quite confident that our more dangerous enemy, the devil, will try to do his best to bring us down! But, like Lai Pek, we, too, can believe God for a great victory in every way. The Scripture says, 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you' (James 4:7).

By the way, it was the red-back spider that finished up in the hospital. They are keeping it as a specimen for future reference.

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## About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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