Asia Harvest



Swing the Sickle for the Harvest is Ripe! (Joel 3:13)

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Every Christian in these pictures was martyred for the Gospel in China over the past century, including Liu Haitao (center), murdered for his faith in Henan, Oct. 16, 2000.

Persecution in China & The China Living Martyrs project

From the Front Lines

with Paul & Joy Hattaway

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first… Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they shall persecute you also." (John 15:18, 20)

As we have ministered in various countries over the years people often ask us, "Why are Christians persecuted in China?" There are several things to say in reply, not the least is the fact that Satan is a real enemy, and God has promised Christians that they will face persecution and death while they are in this world.

But let me start by making a statement that may shock and surprise you.... **There is absolutely NO persecution for Christian FAITH in China today.** People have the freedom to believe in God if they choose, and as long as they keep it to themselves, and confine their activities to within the four walls of a government-sanctioned 'Three Self' Church, they will not experience any persecution for their faith. The government always says people have freedom to believe in any religion in China today, and in a sense that is true.

HOWEVER, there is a tremendous level of persecution for Christian DISCIPLESHIP in China today! Millions of people have been so deeply changed by the power of Jesus that there is no way they can remain silent and keep their faith to themselves. They have drunk so deeply at the well of God's grace that they must tell others where to find water to quench their thirst, and China is a desperately thirsty land. Like Jeremiah, and like the lepers in the time of Elisha, they cannot keep this good news to themselves: ***"His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones; I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot." (Jeremiah 20:9). "The men who had leprosy...said to each other, 'We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us." (2 Kings 7:8-9).***

When Chinese believers refuse to sit in the church pews and keep their faith to themselves, they immediately become law-breakers and persecution begins. Millions of house church Christians in China today face daily harassment, fines, beatings, and imprisonment. The leaders are especially targeted. Yet Christians around the world need to realize that this is the path the house church believers have **CHOSEN**. Every morning when they wake up they have a question to ask themselves. Should they choose to be just a believer today, or should they be a disciple? The option to ease back and take it easy is always there if they want. They will not face opposition from the authorities and they will be left alone to worship God in peace if they register with the government. But every day millions of men and women, boys and girls wake up and decide they want to be a disciple of Jesus, and to obey His commands regardless of the risks in-

volved or the hardships they will face. Therefore, **persecution in China is a choice.** Because so many make this choice to be Jesus' disciples, China has been experiencing a tremendous revival for about 30 years.

Despite some misleading information coming from some organizations in America, house church believers have found the past 18 months to be a particularly testing time. Many have said the present persecution is the worst for 20 years. More than 1,000 house church pastors are in prison as you read this, and are suffering torture and humiliations at the hands of wicked men. The Chinese government continues to see genuine Christianity as a threat to their existence, this despite the fact that Christians are the best law-abiding and most hard working citizens in the country, and wherever there is a significant concentration of Christians the crime rate is the lowest.

There is an interesting story from the ancient Chinese book entitled *Han Feizi*, which tells the story of a man named Bian He who lived about 500 years before Christ....

> Bian He found a large stone which was actually an unpolished piece of jade. He presented it to the emperor. The emperor saw nothing but a large stone, thought he was being tricked, and ordered Bian He's left foot to be chopped off. Bian He later sent the same present to the next emperor, who also saw only a stone and ordered his right foot to be chopped off. When a third emperor came to the throne, Bian He held his jade in his arms outside the emperor's palace and wept three days and three nights. The emperor sent someone to investigate, then ordered the stone to be polished. Only then did they discover a beautiful jade inside it.

One day China (and many other nations) will see that the Christians they torture, believing them to be ignorant lumps of worthless stone, were actually the polished jewels sent by God to bring salvation to their communities.

In Western nations we Christians often love to quote God's promises to us. Several years ago someone gave us a 'Bible Promise Handbook' listing hundreds of 'positive' promises from God's Word to do with health, peace, joy and prosperity for the believer. In China the persecuted believers also lay hold of God's promises from His Word, but the verses they quote are often ones we avoid at all costs in the West, such as, ***"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves." (Matthew 10:16)***, ***"Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12), "Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin." (1 Peter 4:1), and "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." (Philippians 3:10)***

Fifty years of hardship and suffering for the sake of Gospel has prepared the Chinese church to be the refined (yet far from perfect) vessel that it is today, with millions of believers willing to lay down their lives for Jesus, and thousands of people being won into the Kingdom of God every single day.

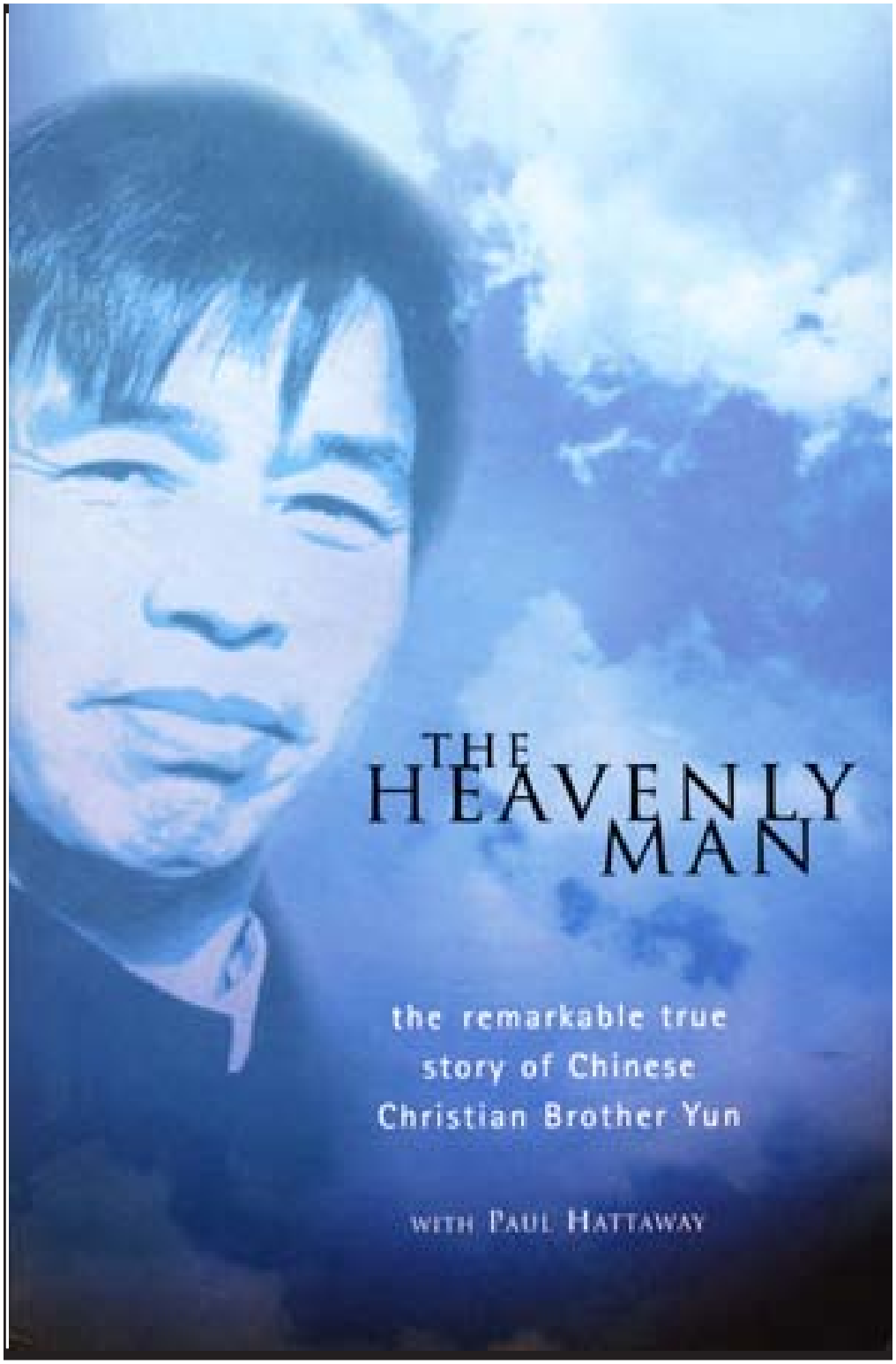
You could imagine how strange it is to Chinese house church leaders when foreign believers try to teach them that God only intends good and comfortable lives for His children! This does not match either the Scriptures or their own daily experiences. It is extremely dangerous when believers have such a one-sided view of God's promises. The result is immature, weak Christians who easily fall prey to Satan. Jesus taught about such a shallow follower. ***"But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the Word, he quickly falls away." (Matthew 13:21).*** Many teachers in the West have removed the teaching of the believers' cross from the Bible, but the Word of God has not changed and those who follow Jesus Christ will surely come across hardship, suffering and trials before too long. In the West our faith may be tested in a different way than in China, but it will be tested.

What then is the attitude of China's Christians towards suffering? They have learned that suffering and persecution is not merely something to be endured, but **it is PART OF THE GOOD NEWS.** Through many difficult experiences they have learned to embrace suffering as a friend. With such an attitude it is no wonder the Church in China has grown despite half a century of strong opposition and brutal suppression from the government. We have had the privilege to know some of the outstanding leaders of the house churches in China but NOT ONE has ever asked for prayer that the persecution of Christians would stop. The Chinese believers NEVER pray against their government or against the nation's leaders, but rather they pray God would be glorified and they would be found faithful to the Lord in whatever circumstances they find themselves; whether in prison or free, beaten or safe; fleeing from the authorities, or resting at home.

In this newsletter we are doing something a little different than usual. We are focusing on a theme that we believe may be beneficial for your spiritual walk while at the same time educating and informing about the Kingdom of God in Asia. To do so we will be using several excerpts from a new book, a biography of Chinese house church leader Brother Yun, who has been given the nickname 'The heavenly man' by Christians inside China.

Finally, in this newsletter we will introduce our 'China Living Martyrs' project. Even though it has been in operation for approximately 18 months this will be the first time we have taken the opportunity to actually explain how this project came about, how it operates, and what it achieves. God bless you!

We apologize that due to an extremely hectic schedule over the last several months, we have been unable to produce a newsletter since October. This was the first time we have failed to send a newsletter before Christmas, so we want to now take the opportunity to thank you for your prayers, encouragement and support throughout 2002. We hope you and your families experienced a restful and Christ-centered Christmas and New Year period, and we pray for the Lord's touch to be on your lives in a fresh way during 2003.


THE HEAVENLY MAN
the remarkable true story of Chinese Christian Brother Yun
WITH PAUL HATTAWAY

Excerpts from

The Heavenly Man - The Remarkable True Story of Chinese Christian Brother Yun

Brother Yun is known throughout China as "the Heavenly Man." This nickname stemmed from an incident in 1984 when he refused to tell his real name to the authorities. Divulging his true identity would have endangered local Christians. In reply to the threats and beatings of the Public Security Bureau to reveal his name and home address, Yun shouted, "I am a heavenly man! My home is in heaven!" The local believers, who were still gathered in a nearby house, heard his shouting and knew he was warning them of danger. They all fled and avoided arrest. As a mark of respect for his courage and love for the Body of Christ, house church believers in China have called Yun "the Heavenly Man" to this day. The following are excerpts from his recently-released book. In these excerpts he talks about suffering. Yun is well qualified to speak on this subject, having been arrested more than 30 times in China for his faith, beaten and tortured on numerous occasions, and having served four lengthy prison sentences because of his love for the Lord Jesus. His understanding of why Christians suffer for the Gospel may surprise and bless you.

There are many ways the Lord may lead a Christian during his or her life, but I'm convinced that the path of every believer will sooner or later include suffering. The Lord gives us these trials to keep us humble and dependant on Him for our sustenance.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 4:1, *"Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done away with sin."* I believe when suffering and pain increases, sinning decreases. I've certainly not yet reached the point of being 'done away with sin.' I still complain to the Lord when I suffer.

How we mature as a Christian largely depends on the attitude we have when we're faced with suffering. Some try to avoid it or imagine it doesn't exist, but that will only make the situation worse. Others try to endure it grimly, hoping for relief. This is better, but falls short of the full victory God wants to give each of His children.

The Lord wants us to embrace suffering as a friend. We need a deep realization that when we're persecuted for Jesus' sake it is an act of God's blessing to us. This might sound impossible, but it is attainable with God's help. That is why Jesus said, *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven." Matthew 5:11-12*

We can grow to such a place in Christ where we laugh and rejoice when people slander us, because we know we are not of this world, but our security is in heaven. The more we are persecuted for His sake, the more reward we will receive in heaven.

After my arrest in 1997, I was taken to a court hearing where the judge said, "Yun, I'm sick of you. For many years you've opposed our government and turned our society upside down. You've escaped from custody on numerous occasions. Tell me Yun, if you have the opportunity to escape again, will you take it?"

I thought about it and answered truthfully, "Judge, that is a good question. I don't want to lie to you. If I have an opportunity, I will try to escape. I'm called to preach the Good News all over China, and I must do all I can to obey the call God has placed on my life."

The judge, court officials and guards were all furious at my answer. The judge snarled, "How dare you, you delinquent! I'm going to break your legs permanently so you will never escape again!"

I was taken to an interrogation room where several guards forced me to the floor and made me sit with my legs apart. I begged them not to beat me, but one sinister-looking man hardened his heart and pulled out his baton. To ensure I would never be able to escape, he struck my legs between my knees and feet repeatedly. They destroyed my legs until I could stand the pain no more. I lay on the ground screaming like a wounded animal. Excruciating pain surged through my body and mind. All I could do was try to focus my thoughts on the Lord Jesus and His suffering on the Cross.

I thought I was surely going to die but the Lord sustained me because he was not finished with me. My legs below my knees turned completely black and there was no feeling in them at all. My entire body ached and was bruised from head to toe.

When my torturers carried me back to my cell, however, I wanted to defiantly show them that they could never break my spirit, so I laughed and told them, "I want to thank you for the wonderful massage you gave me today. I feel much better. Thank you!"

Sometimes Western visitors come to China and ask the house church leaders what seminary they attended. We reply, jokingly yet with underlying seriousness, that we have been trained in the Holy Spirit Personal Devotion Bible School (prison) for many years. Sometimes our Western friends don't understamd what we mean. They ask, "What materials do you use in this school?" We reply "Our only materials are the foot chains that bind us, and the leather whips that bruise us."

In this prison seminary, we have learned many valuable lessons about the Lord that we could never have learned from a book. We've come to know God in a deeper way. We know His goodness and His loving faithfulness to us.

Christians who are in prison for the sake of the Lord are not the ones who are suffering. When people hear my testimony they often say, "You must have had a terrible time when you were in prison." I respond, "What are you talking about? I was with Jesus and had overwhelming joy and peace in His intimate presence."

The people who really suffer are those who never experience God's presence. The way to have God's presence is by walking through hardship and suffering – the way of the cross. You may not be beaten or imprisoned for your faith, but I am convinced each Christian will still have a cross to bear in his or her life. In the West it may be ridicule, slander, or rejection. When you're faced with such trials, the key is not to run from them or fight them, but to embrace them as friends. When you do this you'll not fail to experience God's presence and help.

When a child of God suffers you need to understand it is only because the Lord has allowed it. He has not forgotten you! The devil cannot snatch you away! Jesus made this beautiful promise to His children, *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." John 10:27-29*

The first time I went to prison I struggled, wondering why God had allowed it. Slowly I began to understand He had a deeper purpose for me than just working for Him. He wanted to know me, and I to know Him, deeply and intimately. He knew the best way to get my attention for a while was to give me rest behind bars.

There is always a purpose why God allows His children to go to prison. Perhaps it's so they

can witness to the other prisoners, or perhaps God wants to develop deeper character in their lives.

When God first took me out of China I thought my days of persecution were over. I was wrong! Since arriving in the West the opposition has not ceased, it just became different. In the summer of 2000 I was invited to speak at a series of meetings in Canada. On the very first day of the trip a Christian journalist in California sent an email to thousands of people around the world viciously attacking me, my family, and my mandate to represent the house churches of China.The article said I was a Judas who betrays other Christian leaders in China and causes division and damage to the Body of Christ.

When I heard these words my heart was pierced with grief. Ever since the Lord revealed Himself to me in 1974 I had, by the grace of God, never betrayed any other believer in China. I'd spent many years being tortured in prison for the very reason that I refused to be a Judas to the Body of Christ.

Within 24-hours, various house church leaders sent faxes out of China, stating that these accusations were completely groundless, and confirming that I am an elder and their authorized representative.

In the days after this attack I struggled with this new form of persecution. In China I had been used to beatings, torture with electronic batons, and all kinds of humiliations.

I couldn't understand how someone who had never met me could write such a nasty article. I complained to my Christian friends, "Why don't these people call us and read the documents? I don't understand! Why don't they find the truth out for themselves? It's right here for them to see!"

My translator told me, "Brother Yun, these people don't want to know the truth. In China, Christians are persecuted with beatings and imprisonment. In the West, Christians are persecuted by the words of other Christians."

This new kind of spiritual persecution was no easier than physical persecution in China, just different. I forgave the writer of the article from the bottom of my heart and we continued our trip.

When people malign you, rejoice and be glad. When they curse you, bless them in return. When you walk through a painful experience, embrace it and you will be free! When you learn these lessons, there is nothing left that the world can do to you.

God is my witness that through all the tortures and beatings I've received I have never hated my persecutors. Never. I saw them as God's instruments of blessing and the vessels He chose to purify me and make me more like Jesus. If you embrace suffering like a gift from God, you will no longer fear what man can do to you, and the world can do nothing to a Christian who has no fear of man.

The Heavenly Man - The Remarkable True Story of Chinese Christian Brother Yun

The Heavenly Man is the intensely dramatic story of how God took a young, half-starved boy from a poor village in Henan Province and used him mightily to preach the Gospel despite horrific opposition. Brother Yun is one of China's house church leaders, a man who despite his relative youth has suffered prolonged torture and imprisonment for his faith. He has been arrested more than 30 times for his Christian testimony, and has endured four lengthy prison sentences. His account challenges any complacency about the situation in China, where brutal religious persecution is still a daily reality for millions. Instead of focusing on the many miracles and experiences of suffering, however, Yun prefers to emphasize the character and beauty of Jesus. This atonishing book will form a watershed in your spiritual life.

We at Asia Harvest could spend many more years writing newsletters about the church in China, offering glimpses of the situation and faith of the believers there, but all our efforts combined would be a pale relection of the dynamic truth and deep spiritual impact contained in this newly-released book. If you are a follower of Jesus, we are convinced this book will change your life and assist you on your spiritual journey.

Dr. Mark Stibbe, author of *Thinking Clearly about Revival,* says, "'The Heavenly Man' is an inspirational and heroic story of a radical Christian in the house churches of China. This book is like reading a modern-day version of the Book of Acts. Prepare to be deeply encouraged as well as rudely awakened. An absolute must for the sleeping churches of the West."

Peter Xu Yongze, one of the most respected leaders of China's Church for more than 30 years, says, "Through nearly thirty years of testing, Brother Yun has seen the grace of the Lord overflowing as a blessing to many. He is one of God's chosen leaders to this generation, a great fighter and faithful worker. Many signs, wonders and miracles have followed his ministry, attesting that he is an apostle of the faith. I testify that every story in this book is true. I have personally witnessed many of the events described in these pages, and recommend it as a true testimony of the great things God has done in China's church."

Dr. Rob Frost, evangelist and broadcaster, says, "The story of Brother Yun's persecution and imprisonment is heart-rending. It's a profound challenge to each of us to take up the cross and follow Jesus. I found it deeply moving."

One pastor from Sweden who obtained an early copy of the book wrote to say, "The Lord has used this book to change my life and ministry. I read every word with tears in my eyes." One Christian brother in Pennsylvannia sent an email in which he said, "What a tremendous encouragement! The book was startling and life-changing. I'd like to order a case of them, if possible." Another wrote, "I started reading it just before bedtime but found I could not put it down until I finished at 5 a.m. It challenged me deeply and moved me to my knees in praise and adoration of our Lord Jesus. Glory to God!"

How to Order

If you are interested in getting a copy of "The Heavenly Man' the cost is US$ 13 plus postage and handling ($ 5). There are three ways to order:

1. **You can order by sending a check or money order for US$ 18** to the Asia Harvest head office in Thailand, or the Asia Harvest United States office.
2. You can order safely and easily with a credit card over our website: **www.asiaharvest.org**
3. If you make a donation to any Asia Harvest project over the next few months, and would like a copy of the book, please ask and we will send you one for free.

Many people who read the book then decide to order larger quantities to bless their family, friends, or church members. Significant discounts are available for bulk orders at the rates below....

10 books: US$ 9.50 each plus shipping
20 books: US$ 9 each plus shipping
40 books: US$ 8 each plus shipping
100+ books: US$ 7 each plus shipping

Finally, we believe this book is so important for the spiritual lives of Christians everywhere that if you genuinely cannot afford to buy a copy, please write to us and we will send you a copy for free. This only applies to people on our newsletter list, and only one book per family.

The China Living Martyrs fund

"A Christian martyr is one who chooses to suffer death rather than to deny Christ, or His work.... Someone who sacrifices something very important to further the Kingdom of God.... who endures great suffering for Christian witness." The Voice of the Martyrs

About 18 months ago we started listing a new project in our newsletters: 'The China Living Martyrs fund.' Because of other important needs and lack of space, we haven't been able to give any details about this project until now.

In January 2000 we met for several days with the top leaders of six house church movements in China. During that meeting the leaders were asked, "What is your most important need and your heaviest burden? Is there any specifc need we could try to help with, something that would enable you to minister more freely and effectively?"

We were somewhat surprised when they replied their deepest burden was their inability to help those pastors and evangelists in their churches who have been persecuted to the point that they are now unable to work. Many are crippled by beatings, others picked up serious illnesses because of filthy conditions in prison, some have lost their minds due to the vileness of their tortures.

The house church leaders eplained that they try their best to financially help these 'living martyrs,' but the rural believers are so poor themselves that even though they give all their worldly possessions to the work of the Lord, these injured pastors and evangelists who have given so much to the Gospel often struggle to survive.

The Chinese leaders were asked to make a list of all workers who are now unable to work for a living because of persecution. They were asked for names, ages, and a brief testimony of each worker. A few months later they gave a list of 1,050 crippled and sick workers who need support! Here are just a few examples:

'Peter', 38, Anhui Province.
He has five people in his family. Four months after he was released from prison his wife died of a brain tumor He spent all his money on medical help for his wife, but in vain. Now he lives alone with his 3 children. His eldest daughter serves our Lord and the rest of the children are still in school.

Brother Liu, dead, Anhui Province. When he spent 3 years in prison for the Gospel he was badly beaten around the head and developed a brain tumor. The prison authorities

refused to give him medical treatment. Six months after his release he was promoted to glory by the Lord. His wife and two children are in desparate financial need and are struggling to survive.

Brother 'Philip', 44, Anhui.
He spent 3 years in a prison labor-camp, during which time he was severely tortured. His right finger and thumb were broken and left foot was rendered useless until today. Now he continues to serve our Lord faithfully but his family of six has a medical debt of about 30,000 Yuan (about $3,600) and they live in great difficulty. Any assistance would be a great balm.

Brother Wong, 50, Heilongjiang.
Spent 3 years in prison for the Lord and was released last year. During his imprisonment both his arms were broken, and he became deaf and partially deaf because of a lack of nutrition. He continues to serve our Lord in Heilongjiang Province.

After reading through more than 1,000 such testimonies our eyes were filled with tears and we were deeply burdened to try to help with this important need. Even though this is the first time we have given details of this project in our newsletter, several organizations and many individuals have already started supporting the project! However, there are still more than 400 pastors and evangelists not receiving any support at all. We committed to give US$25 per worker per month. This may not seem like a great amount, but it is a tremendous help for a rural pastor with no income at all. Many of these men have wives and children to provide for.

If you would like to help this project, please fill out the yellow Response form inside this newsletter. In return, we will send you a receipt and a prayer card with some details of the worker you are helping and a brief testimony. If you prefer, you can make monthly credit card donations to this or any of our other projects over our website.

Because of the risk of further harm to these precious Christians, we do not send any specific information that could get them into trouble, or any pictures. The recipients themselves do not know where the money comes from. We give anonomously through the church leaders, who are then responsible to distribute the support among their workers. They are simply told the help comes from "God and His people."

The house church leaders have expressed what a tremendous help this project has been. Not only does it bless the injured pastors and their families, but it also frees up what little finances the churches have to use for evangelism and other needs.