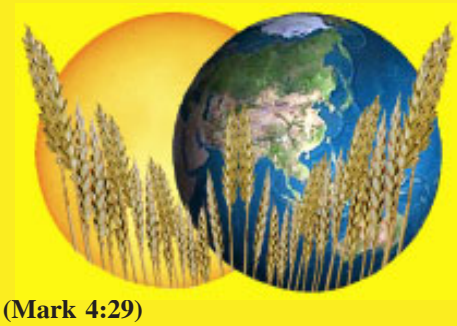
Asia Harvest



'Put in the Sickle, for the Harvest has Come!' (Mark 4:29)

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Trouble in China

The Brutal Persecution of the Chinese Church

From the Frontlines

"We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:8-9).

Although the Apostle Paul didn't go into detail about the kind of pressure he was under when he visited areas in present-day Turkey, it's interesting that the Greek words he used here were in relation to what occurs when a heavy stone, weighing as much as 300 pounds, was slowly lowered onto the chest of a restrained person to torture them. The pressure gradually increased as the stone came down, making it almost impossible to breath. The victim was immobilized, unable to move forward or back. They were completely helpless. That's the kind of pressure Paul experienced when sharing the gospel.

As believers, we often face hardshipd, but many times we manage to find an escape route, or at least we are able to delay the pain. Sometimes, however, there are no options available, and we must be totally stripped of all props. God is able to bring us to a place of utter helplessness in ourselves or in other people. All we are left with is Jesus, and if He does not sustain us, we will die.

When we get to this place, we will be able to say with Paul that we "rely not on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead." Indeed, God did figuratively raise Paul from the dead on that and many other occasions, and he continued to establish God's kingdom among the Gentiles until the day God called him home.

In China today, many Christians also feel like Paul did. Since President-for-life, Xi Jinping, announced his plans to clamp down on religion, massive persecution has broken out against God's people, in ways that have not been seen since Mao's demonic campaigns to destroy Christianity from the 1950s to the 1970s.

In this newsletter, and subsequent issues, we plan to share a thorough overview of what is going on in China today, especially in relation to the Body of Christ.

Cover photo: *A real picture of a Chinese believer named Huang Xikai being tortured by Communist police. This and other gruesome images were smuggled out of China and published some years ago. Thousands of Christians are currently undergoing sumilar barbaric treatment. Please pray for our precious brothers and sisters.*

Why is China still trying to Destroy the Church?

We believe the main reason behind Chinese President Xi Jinping's current mad campaign to control and destroy religion, especially Christianity, is because of the massive growth of the Church in recent decades. The government knows very well that millions of people each year have been turning to Christ, despite all their efforts to persecute God's people and stomp out the revival brought by the Holy Spirit over the last 40 years.

We recently conducted a thorough review of our detailed study on the Church in China, which estimates the number of professing Christians in all 2,803 cities, districts and counties in every province of China. Our previous research almost a decade ago led us to publish a figure of 103 million Christians of all persuasions in China—a figure which was been quoted by numerous media outlets and mission organizations.

When our update was completed last year, we found, according to our best information and estimates, that **129.6 million people in China now consider themselves to be followers of Jesus Christ!** Although this still represents only 9.1 percent of China's population, the upward trajectory of the Church appears to be behind Xi's demonically-inspired plans to subdue—and ultimately obliterate—Christianity.

Our study titled "The Church in China" can be freely accessed under the "Resources" tab at our website: www.asiaharvest.org

There, you will find hundreds of inspirational testimonies, pictures, prayer profiles, maps, graphs and other useful information about the Church in China. We hope these tools will be a great blessing to Christians all around the world who desire to learn how God has glorified His Name in the world's most populated country.

Instead of welcoming the great revival has swept millions into the kingdom of God, the God-hating atheists of the Chinese Community Party continue in their futile attempts to dethrone the Lord Jesus and usurp His place in people's hearts and minds.

Like countless other kings and rulers throughout history, their puny efforts will ultimately fail, as they up against the Almighty God, whose Word declares: ***"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever"*** (Revelation 11:15).

The Mass Expulsion of Foreign Christians

In 2016, Asia Harvest was among the first to warn that a massive persecution was about to erupt across China. By the following year, house church leaders we work with were telling us things like: "The persecution we're experiencing is the worst since the Cultural Revolution 40 years ago!" We published newsletters such as, "A Gathering Storm: Massive Persecution is Brewing" (September 2017) and "A Special China Issue: Massive Persecution is Underway" (March 2018).

Finally, by mid-2018, other Christian ministries finally caught on to the fact that the Church in China was experiencing savage persecution.

If you have read any of our *China Chronicles* books, you will know that the typical Communist strategy whenever they plan to persecute God's people is to first remove foreign believers. This cuts the Chinese Church off from outside help, and hides them from the glare of international publicity. This happened in the 1950s before massive persecution erupted, and for the past several years this same strategy has been implemented again.



A Western Christian teaching English to her eager students in China.

The leaders of several mission organizations have told us they are struggling to make contact with their Chinese co-workers. Many believers have been arrested or have gone into hiding, turning off all their electronic devices so they can't be tracked by the authorities.

Meanwhile, thousands of foreign Christians who have given their lives to serve the Lord in China are feeling devastated. They've been kicked out of China and banned from returning for five years or more.

In a single week last year, at least 300 foreign believers—who were living legally in China as students, teachers, business owners and in a host of other roles—were expelled from China from all across the vast nation.



Shell-shocked families turned up in places like Hong Kong and Thailand, having been forcibly expelled from China. They told how they had been issued deportation orders, and were taken immediately to the nearest airport and placed on a flight out of the country. Many were not even allowed to go home to gather their belongings, or to withdraw money from their own bank accounts.

Distraught families were given no opportunity to appeal. After local authorities were ordered to expel them, they did so with military speed and precision.

We have been told that one major denominational mission group has had two-thirds of their workforce expelled from China, and over half of another large mission's workers are gone. Many believers, seeing what had happened to their co-workers, decided to leave voluntarily to avoid the spectacle of being forcibly removed like criminals. All of this happened before the Coronavirus outbreak, which has depleted the numbers even more.

The sole reason they have been kicked out of China is because they have been identified as followers of Jesus, as President Xi appears determined to complete the job his predecessor Mao failed to do—to rid the country of Christianity.

One American family, who were expelled from a city in southern China where they had lived for many years, told us that the local authorities showed them a thick file,

containing the transcripts of all emails, phone calls and text messages they had sent to friends and supporters for years. These Christians wrongly assumed that their communications were secure on such as Skype and WhatsApp. Their private messages were used as evidence against them as they were unceremoniously expelled from the country they love.

China's Influence Spreads

In the past few years, a disturbing new trend has emerged, as the Chinese Communist Party has exported their atheistic, God-hating philosophies across its borders into surrounding countries. First, seminaries and Bible schools in countries like the Philippines, Myanmar and Malaysia came under pressure not to allow any students from Mainland China to attend. School roll numbers sharply reduced as hundreds of Chinese Christians were forced to return to China.

We have been told of numerous other incidents in diverse locations, with Christians living in border regions of Nepal, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam being warned to stop all ministry or face dire consequences from their giant neighbor.

For example, in 2018 China bullied the authorities in northern Myanmar (formerly Burma) to shut down over 100 churches among the Wa tribe, who were experiencing the early stages of a revival from God. One Sunday morning, thousands of Wa Christians went to their churches to discover the doors had been chained shut and padlocked. Undeterred, believers met in the open air and continued to worship God.

One Wa Bible school inside Myanmar was closed, and 41 of its students were arrested and forced to render hard labor for the Wa rebel army, which is backed by the Chinese Communist Party.

Only recently have many of the Wa churches in Myanmar been allowed to reopen. Many of these persecuted fellowships are not located close to the Chinese border, but China is increasingly flexing its muscles deep inside other countries.

At least 100,000 Christians Arrested in China!

While we knew that something very dark and demonic was taking place throughout China, it was difficult to get a clear picture on the scale of the persecution. Two China Church experts, however, stuck their necks out and put a number on the size of the problem.

Bob Fu (a former house church leader from Shandong Province), and Nina Shea, a respected researcher of the persecuted Church around the world, estimated that in 2017 a total of 3,700 Christians had been arrested for their faith in China. Things escalated so quickly that in the following year, Fu and Shea estimated 100,000 Christians had been arrested! In case you missed that...



One hundred thousand Christians were arrested in China in 2018! Many believers have been taken away and not heard from again.

The number of arrested Christians in China has only worsened since then, but no further estimate has been made.

At a local level, the harassment and persecution of Christians has continued at every level. Thousands of churches have been forced to close, both unregistered house churches and government-sanctioned Three-Self churches. Some fellowships have been ordered to install facial-recognition cameras in the front of the sanctuaries, facing the congregations, and leaders who have refused to comply have been arrested. In many places the police have ordered churches to take down crosses and other religious symbols and to show their patriotism by replacing them with portraits of President Xi and the Chinese flag.

New religious laws that took effect in February 2018 are directed against young people's rights to access the Gospel. The current strategy is two-fold—to introduce

school curriculum that Christianity is bad; and to encourage children to attack their parents' faith as dangerous and to report them to the authorities. In many places, schools have held special meetings to teach children how to oppose religion.

Because China is such a huge country, any policy tends to be implemented unevenly, so at the moment there are still parts of the country where the Church has experienced less problems, and others where it is being decimated by the authorities and leadership is being systematically wiped out.

A government initiative called "Return to Zero" has been launched against the house churches, with the stated goal to "dismantle congregations, dissolve organizations, and dismiss the church." Believers who were caught in church raids



have been sent back to their home villages and have had their Identity cards confiscated, eliminating their ability to travel.

How God's People are Coping

Many people who contact us often quote a Christian cliché that was first voiced by the early church leader Tertullian: **"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the**

Church." It may surprise some to learn that this phrase is not in the Bible at all, but is what Tertullian said true? Is persecution always good for the Church, and does it invariably result in the expansion of the faith?

We believe that while Tertullian's quote may be generally true, a survey of Church history quickly reveals that persecution does not automatically result in the growth of Christianity.

It is not wise to view Chinese Christians as spiritual supermen and women. Did you know, for example, that when the Communists first ramped up persecution against God's children in China in the 1950s—when thousands of church leaders were arrested, killed or sent for long sentences in prison labor camps—that about two-thirds of believers in China fell away from the faith? It was from that crushed and refined remnant that the Lord Jesus put together the greatest Christian miracle of the last century - growing His Church from a few million to over 100 million members in the face of fierce persecution.

Although there have been reports of growth among churches in some areas since the persecution began in earnest in 2018, **many believers have struggled terribly, and some have fallen away from the faith.** In a throwback to the Cultural Revolution, house churches throughout China have broken down into tiny groups of 4 or 5 believers, who meet discreetly for prayer and Bible studies.

Please continue to pray for the Church in China. We invite you to keep partnering with us, as we do all we can to strengthen God's people in this time of tribulation.

Friends, we want you to know that despite the massive persecution underway in China, by the grace and supernatural protection of God, all our Asia Harvest projects remain active.

In fact, in 2019 we secretly printed more Bibles inside the country for the house churches than we had done for many years, and we continue to support hundreds of Chinese church leaders and evangelists through our Asian Workers' and Living Martyrs' funds.

In our next newsletter we plan to share reasons behind why China's rulers have such intense hatred for God's people. Please note that our email newsletters contain more information and supporting links than we can provide in these paper newsletters, so if you would like to know more please sign-up at our website.

CHINA BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 12,675,745
Chinese Bibles printed and distributed.

We are partnering with house churches in China in a long-term project to provide Bibles for Christians. We receive countless requests for God's Word from church leaders throughout the country. These Bibles are distributed free of charge, equipping the Body of Christ and helping add fuel to the revival in China.

Each full Chinese Bible costs just $1.80 to print and deliver.

ASIAN WORKERS' FUND



We currently support 1,390 Asian evangelists among 1,107 unreached people groups.

The **Asian Workers' Fund** supports indigenous church-planting evangelists among unreached Asian tribes and ethnic groups. These disciples have committed their whole lives to the Gospel but are hindered by lack of finances. To date, the evangelists we help have reportedly led **436,968 people to faith in Jesus Christ.** You can help support these dedicated workers for **$25 per month** each**.** A prayer card and occasional updates are sent to all regular donors of this project.

ASIAN BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 1,054,434 Bibles printed in 104 languages.

The **Asian Bible Fund** provides the Scriptures in numerous languages in **Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent**, and anywhere in Asia that God's people need His Word.

Each Bible costs an average of $2.70 to print and deliver. We also print millions of Gospel booklets for evangelism through this project.

LIVING MARTYRS' FUND

Because of your partnership we are supporting 1,558 living martyrs.



A martyr has been defined as "a Christian who chooses to suffer death rather than deny Christ or His work. One who sacrifices something very important to further the Kingdom of God and endures great suffering for Christian witness."

The **Living Martyrs' Fund** supports church leaders and widows in China, Vietnam, India and elsewhere who are unable to work because of injuries or illness caused by persecution. They and their families face extreme poverty and hardship. Through a gift of **$35 per month** you can help support one of these living martyrs. A prayer card is sent to every supporter of this project.

BLESS THE CHILDREN FUND



Your generous support has so far reached 160,671 children throughout Asia.

The **Bless the Children Fund** introduces children to Jesus in India, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and a host of other Asian countries. Activities include printing and distributing Gospel literature designed for children, funding Sunday school training classes, providing free surgeries for those with special needs, and generally lifting children out of spiritual and physical poverty. It costs an average of just **$10 to reach a child for Christ**.

PERSECUTION & RELIEF FUND



Transforming lives from ashes to beauty with God's love.

Over the years Asia Harvest has provided assistance to the victims of natural disasters that have struck Asia. In addition to providing aid through medicine, tents, blankets, food and water, rebuilding homes etc., the Christians we partner with take every opportunity to share the Gospel, and many people have come to know Jesus Christ. This project also provides physical and spiritual relief to Christian communities and families throughout Asia who have been affected by persecution.



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