

Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 1 Peter 5:8-9

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The year of 2004 has seen a fresh surge of persecution against Christians across China and Vietnam. While on the surface we have an illusion of emerging prosperity and stability in these nations, beneath that facade the real battle continues to rage between the powers of heaven and the powers of darkness.

The lines are clearly drawn, and the outcome of this conflict is certain. The God of truth, love, righteousness and life prevails. No matter how much Satan struggles, threatens, and lies, he will not ever prevent God's promises from becoming reality. Satan's goal is to destroy the power of God's Word and the effect that God's Word has on the lives of those who believe and live it. And though there are countless numbers of men, women, and children suffering for their faith in dark prisons around the world, thousands more are turning to the salvation of Jesus Christ because of the bold testimonies of those who still dare to stand with Jesus Christ in this very real war of spiritual powers waged here on earth.

All around the world people are giving up their lives for Jesus. Countless people are bearing indescribable abuses for Him at this very moment. Yet they do so willingly, understanding by faith the reality of this war. In spite of their innocence, those people have made their declaration of faith in Jesus Christ and are now the target of Satan's evil ambitions.

How should we respond? Perhaps one of the most important ways to respond is to realize that the 'blessed' lifestyle many of us enjoy does not mean we have become immune to Satan's schemes. In fact, all true believers have a great responsibility to stand guard and make sure they are not spiritually disabled while basking in these blessings while becoming spiritually numb, having lost the knowledge and joy of participating in God's divine power and purposes [2 Peter 1:3-4]. This spiritual war is as real in our own nations as on the streets of Iraq. We are in a real war! That means you are a target, regardless of your level of awareness.

Of course, this is not anything new. Jesus made it very clear that those who follow Him would be targeted and persecuted.

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I have spoken to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also." John 15:18-20

It's a matter of fact! In following Jesus we have joined ranks under His command in His battle against the forces of darkness - whether we realized it or not when we enlisted! That means we accept the risks. That means we'll shoulder the costs. As Jesus' followers, we agree to be disciplined, focused on His mission, dedicated to sharing in His passion for lost souls. We serve under His Lordship. He expects nothing less from us!

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Chinese Pastor Arrested



CAA (Midland, Texas)—December 10, 2004
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China Aid Association confirms that one of the most prominent Chinese House Movement leaders, pastor Zhang Rongliang, was arrested on December 1, 2004. According to CAA source, 53-year-old pastor Zhang was arrested at Xuzhai village, Zhengzhou city, Henan province in a rented apartment at about 1pm. One eyewitness said a Volkswagen car which apparently belongs to Ministry of State Security had been parked near that apartment before Zhang's arrest. The license plate is given as Yu-A (illegible number) 0191. His wife and his children were not at home when arrest occurred and they were able to escape and are now in hiding. The apartment was searched and all Pastor Zhang's Christian DVDs, materials and photos revealing relationships with foreigners and foreign agencies were confiscated. According to CAA's reliable source, in the evening of December 1, the village where pastor Zhang was arrested was surrounded by many police and every household was searched. It was believed pastor Zhang's wife and children were the targets of the search. Meanwhile, Mr. Gao Shunping, who helped pastor Zhang get an ID for his travel during parole time also disappeared. Moreover at least three house churches at Fangcheng area were raided last week after Zhang's arrest including the house of Ms. Xiao Min's parents. Xiao Min has been wanted by the authority because of her prolific writing of Chinese indigenous worship songs which are known as "Canaan Hymns".

There has been no communication with Pastor Zhang since his arrest, but it is believed that he is in custody in the Zheng Zhou area of Henan Province.

Pastor Zhang is the leader of the Fangcheng Mother Church in Henan and the leader of the China for Christ Church, which is one of the largest house church networks estimated to have more than 10 million members. He has been well known by the international community as one of the house church patriarchs. He is a co-author of the published House Churches of China's Confession of Faith and Declaration in 1999. He has been featured in a number of international articles and books, including 'Jesus in Beijing' (2003) by former TIME journalist, David Aikman, Newsweek (12th May 2004), TIME magazine, Charisma and Christianity Today.

Pastor Zhang has been wanted for many years since his last imprisonment in August 1999. He has already spent twelve years in prison for his faith since his secret baptism in 1969 during five separate detentions. He experienced extreme harsh torture including electric shocks during his prison terms.

CAA also learned the arrest comes in the midst of a serious crackdown on the house churches. Alongside a generally worsening situation and increased arrests it is reported that there is now a disinformation campaign, similar to that used against the Falun Gong before the major crackdown against them. In recent weeks the Chinese government has launched an international media propaganda campaign. It was reflected from articles both in an overseas pro-China website called DUOWEI news and the New York Times within which the house churches were portrayed as secret religious fanatics even committing murder for new membership fight. It is believed that the Chinese government purposely provided misleading and untrue unbalanced information to these news media by linking the house church with a criminal group disguised as religion called Eastern Lightning.

In September, in Kaifeng city alone there were over 100 pastors arrested, and at least 11 were sentenced to one to three years re-education through labor camps already. They are Pastor Zhang

Wanshun, Ping Xinsheng, Guo Zhumei, Yang Jianshe, Zhang Weifang, Zhang Tianyun, Yu Xiangzhi, Yu Guoying, Shun Fu, Chen Yanjing and Pastor Li Qun. These pastors, from 25 to 57 years old, were all accused of being "leaders of evil cults" and are already experiencing harsh treatment including severe beatings. Among them pastor Ping Xinsheng has lost consciousness due to continuous beatings three times since his arrest in August.

Excerpts from a recent interview with Pastor Zhang Rongliang from the recently released video, "The Cross; Jesus in China"



"The first Bible I received was from a Sister. Someone from Hong Kong had given it to her. During our meeting we passed it around so that everyone could touch and feel it for awhile. Everybody held it to their cheeks and kissed it.

After being kissed by 30 people, the Bible was soaked with tears and the red color became faded."



"I don't feel pain when I'm in pain. I don't feel hungry when I'm hungry. I don't feel alone when I'm pursued and put in prison. I don't feel depressed after I cry. I feel sweet! My whole life has been saved by God's love."

"The government keeps on tracking us down and arresting us. We have no choice but to leave home. But everywhere we hide, we spread the gospel. In the beginning we didn't want to leave our homes, but it turned out to be just what God wanted. If it weren't for the persecution and the arrests, we probably wouldn't have built such strong teams.



Crackdown on Vietnamese Christians



November 15, 2004 was the date set for new strict measures to be implemented to enforce Vietnam's recent move to root out the underground church that is rapidly growing throughout one of the world's last Communist strongholds.

Approved earlier this year, Vietnam's Decree on Religion No. 26 states that religious activities can only occur in a place of worship approved by the state and be led by religious leaders who have been authorized by the state and have received permission to lead religious activities. Vietnam continues to outlaw all house churches and does not recognize their leaders.

The house churches across Vietnam responded to this new threat in several ways.

- All across Vietnam the house churches spent three days in fasting and prayer for God's direction, ...and for the USA presidential elections. The date of November 15, set to implement the new decree, was set after our elections by Vietnam's government in order to first see how the USA elections would turn out! The outcome would then determine the methods and extent that the Vietnamese authorities would enforce their new law. Praying that George Bush would win the election, the Vietnamese Christians believed he would represent a greater incentive for their government to honor human rights or at least be more cautious in enforcing their new anti-Christian agenda.
- It has purified the house churches. Many people in the house churches who were there for the benefits and not willing to 'bear the cross' have left.
- It has caused the house churches to scatter. Many meetings now consist of only 4 or 5 believers. Thus there is a leadership vacuum and opportunity now for God to raise up new church

pastors and leaders.

The end result of this new religious decree is that the house churches have been strengthened. For this they are very happy! So far we have not received any reports of increased persecution apart from a general increase affecting both China and Vietnam this year.

Please pray for our Brothers and Sisters in Vietnam and China.

China Bible Bust

We've been hearing reports that a large printing of Chinese Bibles and Christian literature has been discovered and confiscated in Beijing. I've confirmed this report and learned that 200,000 to 400,000 books have been lost. Furthermore, the printer who dared to take his stand for the gospel has been given a life prison sentence, confirming again the new and harsher stand China's government is taking against 'illegal' Christians.

Please pray for this printer, his family, and others who are affected by this. Pray for the other printers around China and Vietnam who continue to print on 'underground' presses at great personal risk to provide for the need of an

estimated 50 million believers who are still begging for Bibles.

"I prayed for Faith, and thought that someday Faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But Faith did not seem to come.

One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, 'Now Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.' I had closed my Bible, and prayed for Faith. I

Pastor M. is an 85 year old Chinese gentleman who blessed our team by sharing with us his testimony of how he spent 23 years in prison from 1956 - 1970 for not joining the 'Official Church'. During his time in prison he was handcuffed for 129 days because he refused to not praying. At the time of his imprisonment there were about 2000 prisoners. At the time of his release, only 100 remained alive. He is accused of being the father of China's 'underground church'.

Pastor M. told us, "The Official Church Bible Schools are really a place where political leaders are trained. But prison is the real Bible School where you can really draw near to God."

November Trip to



The team of 12 flew directly to Beijing from the USA and Canada with over a half a ton of Chinese Bibles tucked away in their luggage! Everyone was amazed at how easy it was to bring them in through China customs and perhaps even disappointed that there was nothing dramatic to report. But I want to report that God's grace and mercy is something dramatic! They stepped out in faith, and God met us at the China customs, once again proving His love and power. I'll tell you, being swept up in God's divine power is always dramatic!

The team spent nearly a week in Beijing this time. After a bit of sightseeing, they had opportunity to build relationships with some local Chinese which has been a bridge to share the gospel with them. It was one of the highlights of the trip.

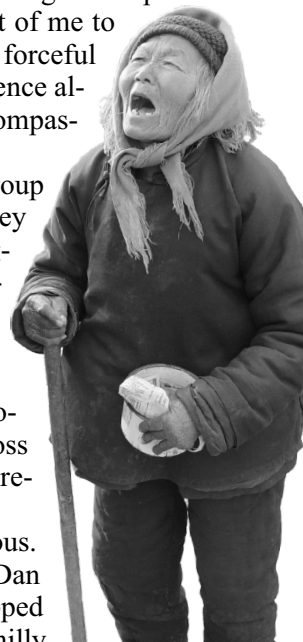
After a 29 hour train ride, we arrived in Hong Kong to continue with the Bible courier work. In spite of some problems getting proper visas, the team was able to help bring over 2 tons of bibles into China. These are immediately delivered to 'house church' believers across China who are eagerly waiting and praying for their very own personal Bible.

The beggars emerged from the darkness in feigned timidity to approach the group of foreigners on their way to purchase a few snacks at a western style grocery store. They were bundled in a hodge-podge of dirty and ragged clothing to protect themselves from the frigid winter chill that was invading their mysterious and precarious world. Washing those dirty clothes or getting a bath was a rare luxury seldom, if ever, experienced. A warm bed and secure roof was only a far off dream though just across the street some of the worlds wealthiest dined and lounged in the warmth of a Five Star Hotel.

I had seen these same beggars on previous trips to this area of Beijing. I really felt compassion for them, but with that were nagging questions of how to respond to their repeated aggressive pleas for a bit of change. Every time I walked down this part of the street, beggars would rush me, filthy hands outstretched, persistent in their efforts to break my will and get a few coins. They would hold on to my arm as I walked along and if I paused for the slightest moment, would get in front of me to block my path. They were clever and forceful and I often resisted them. Their presence always created a conflict of guilt and compassion in my heart.

I was not along with the small group from our Bible Courier team when they were approached by these same beggars that final night just before our departure on the train to Hong Kong. It was Dan's first expedience with beggars. Instead of wondering if the spare change would be used for alcohol, drugs, or taken by some cruel boss of an illegal beggars union, he simply responded from the heart.

What they needed was obvious. Fresh food. An apple would do. So Dan bought several. And then as they stepped out of the store onto the dark and chilly



street, once again they were confronted by the beggars who had been waiting for the team to finish their shopping. Dan was ready for them this time! He handed each a fresh apple.

They were delighted. A fresh apple was obviously a rare and appreciated treat. Dan paused in front of a ragged and disheveled woman and said the only word in Chinese that he knew. "Yesu" (Jesus). She didn't understand and so he repeated it, still drawing a blank stare. Then with a final effort he traced a cross on his open hand and repeated his only Chinese word. The ice broke! Understanding lit her eyes and a smile of joy spread across her dirty face. Immediately she broke out in a song. It was a hymn that she sang to Jesus - for Dan. Suddenly the language barrier was shattered! The culture barrier was shattered! Here was a real human being! Here was a Sister in Christ. One of our own! She stood there in total humility and sang to Jesus in her sing-songlike Chinese style. She sang all the way to the end of the song and then repeated several times "Amen".

How many times I had hurried past her and from time to time given her a coin in order to shake her off. I had never considered or taken the time to realize that under the filth and strange demeanor was one of God's very own children. What is her story? Where did she come from? Why is she in this sad situation? How often have we rushed by on our religious quests and ... missed Jesus? Jesus - nagging and tugging on our arm for attention, pleading for just spare change of our life. How quickly He's brushed off because he doesn't appeal to our expectations and concepts. Now I care - but now it's too late.

Have I seen Jesus today and completely missed Him? Has Jesus come to me today and, in my efforts to find Him, have I completely brushed Him off because He didn't meet up to my religious expectations? That is the question I must ask at the end of the day. That is the question we all must give and answer to some day.

"They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated - the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what they had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect." Hebrews 11:37-40



Jake Ressler
November Bible Courier

This trip has changed the person that I am, and that I want to be in my view of Christ, and my everyday actions. The situation for Christians in that region of the world [China] is critical. Not only do they face daily challenges like us, but they must also keep their faith in the face of a hostile government. The Christians there choose harassment along side of Christ instead of darkness and sin. I see so clearly the need we have in America for a different kind of dedication. The church is not here for our pleasure and convenience. When there are men and women who have no real homes, and sacrifice all they have to spread the word of salvation to the billion people of their nation, how can I complain when I get bored in church? I have come to feel that many American Christians lack a higher level of passion for Christ. Not to say that they do not love him with their entire being, but there is a higher level of service

and dedication that is hard to understand as a religiously-free American. I encourage all people to make these trips or continue support for the hundreds of millions of suffering Christians in the Far East. They need our prayers, our support, and our time. Yet while we have so much to give them, I also believe that there is something spectacular that they can give to us. This is a new kind of understanding and compassion for the works of Christ. Who better to know Christ's suffering than the martyr? Through this experience I have seen a new light in life, and I thank you for helping me to be able to see that light. It was through your contributions that I was able to afford this mission. It is due to your prayers that I am safely home, and that the trip was a spectacular success. I beg you to continue praying for the people in the Far East. Pray that the Christians would be provided for, and that the non-believers would feel an unignorable yearning for a new meaning in the guidance of Christ. Thank you again for all that you have done for me.

Yours humbly in Christ,

Jake Ressler

Then I heard a loud voice from heavensay:

"Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ.

For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

They overcame him ❶ by the blood of the Lamb and ❷ by the word of their testimony; ❸ they did not love their lives so much as to shrink back from death."
Rev. 12:10-11

Are you an Overcomer? Jesus said that it would not be an easy road traveled by the Overcomer. Sometimes I feel that I would rather not report on the hardships that so many of God's people are enduring. It would be easier to talk about how serving the Lord will always guarantee an easy and comfortable life here on earth. But that is not the truth! Hardships and suffering are what many believers around the world experience when they make Jesus Lord of their lives. But the good news is that while suffering there is a joy that comes from being in the presence of the lord. This joy is not a religious pretense. It is so real that people gladly bare the cross Jesus requires of us. The cause of Christ is a cause well worth living, suffering, and dying for. It's a cause that promises the most fantastic personal and eternal results!

Thank you so much for what you are doing to advance God's kingdom in the difficult countries of China and Vietnam. Many of you have heard from the Lord and have done your part as He has directed you to equip, pray, or go personally, in the efforts to encourage our faithful brothers and sisters who are on the 'front lines' in these countries. Your involvement is so useful in helping these precious people maintain their courage and determination as they face some of the toughest head-on assaults from the 'accuser'.

On their behalf, "Thank you"!

Someday we will meet these people in heaven and what a joy it will be to worship our Lord together! Until then, it's such a privilege to share with you in serving our Lord. May He bless you with an keen awareness of his purposes and Presence in your life.

Serving Him with joy,

Wendell & Daisy Martin

