

Continuing to Preach

Li De Xian and Zhao Xia
Mainland China 2002

“Christ was the first to suffer,” Pastor Li De Xian said. “We just follow Him. There are many thorns, but we are just injured a little on our feet. This suffering is very little.”

As any know who remember his story from pages 170–175 of *Jesus Freaks*, Pastor Li speaks about suffering from experience. The man who said “I will preach until I die” has stuck to his word. Despite continued pressure from the Public Security Bureau (PSB), Pastor Li refuses to miss a service unless he is in prison or change his message of salvation through Jesus Christ. During the period from October 2000 to May 2001, he was arrested fifteen times for preaching in his unregistered house church in Guangzhou. He has

been arrested so many times during the past two years that he has lost count. During one recent detention, jailers tied his arms and legs together and chained his arms and legs to a bedpost for three days. When they finally released him from this torture, he was forced to work on an assembly line in the prison factory putting bulbs into strings of Christmas lights to send to America! He and the others had a quota of between four and five thousand bulbs a day. “They suffered this inhumane treatment simply because they failed to meet their daily production quotas in the Chinese labor camp.” Li has seen imprisoned Christians tortured so badly that their buttocks bled through their clothing. He spent fifteen days in prison on this particular occasion.

Yet rather than this experience teaching him to be afraid, it has taught him to be prepared. He travels at all times with a small black duffel bag that he keeps packed with a blanket and a change of clothes—the things he will need for prison whenever he is arrested next. “Arrests will come at any time, but we are not afraid, as we have prepared ourselves, and we have not done any crimes.” Whenever possible he will spend his time in prison reading the Bible, something he manages to smuggle in with amazing regularity.

His wife, Zhao Xia, strongly supports him in this and refuses to worry. “God will take care of him,” she says, “so there is no need to worry.”

In 2000, PSB officials also confiscated Li’s church and welded the doors shut. In early November 2000, in the city of Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, they reportedly blew up and demolished at least 450 churches, temples, and shrines. Government officials said religious leaders had built the churches and temples illegally.

“Don’t feel sorry for us,” Zhao Xia says of their lifestyle. “At least we are constantly reminded that we are in a spiritual war. We know for whom we are fighting. We know who the enemy is. And we are fighting. Perhaps we should pray for you Christians outside of China. In your leisure, in your affluence, in your freedom, sometimes you no longer realize that you are in spiritual warfare.”

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The Chinese character for “crisis” is actually a combination of two other characters. One is “danger,” but the other is “opportunity.” We usually view a crisis as something to totally avoid. We see or experience the danger, never dreaming or desiring that it may involve an opportunity.

If we are truly dedicated to serving God with our lives, the circumstances of life will be springboards for opportunities to further God’s kingdom. Paul acted much this way in his life: Being locked up in prison was an opportunity to save the jailer and his family; having a Jewish hit squad out to kill him was an opportunity to appeal to Rome and take the Gospel there. Perhaps Joseph said it best: “God turned into good what you meant for

evil. He brought me to the high position I have today so I could save the lives of many people” (Genesis 50:20 NLT).

Because of this, people like Pastor Li and his wife never have the time to feel sorry for themselves as they are too busy looking for the door God will open next. When Pastor Li enters prison, he reaches people for Christ he might not have otherwise met. He has become so well known that whenever he is arrested again, it makes headlines worldwide and China’s policies toward Christians are again under scrutiny. They know they are in spiritual warfare and believe that is just where they need to be to serve God properly. And they wouldn’t miss that opportunity for the world.

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains.

Paul

(Ephesians 6:19–20 NIV)

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