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# *Preparing For The Coming Persecution*

By

Mark McGee



Religious persecution is coming to North America. That seems certain at this point unless God supernaturally intervenes. What is not certain is whether the Church in North America is ready for persecution and the suffering that comes with it. That is the focus of this eBook.

## Are We Ready?

Do you believe Christians in North America are ready for serious religious persecution? Are you and your family ready to be persecuted for being Christians?

Let's begin by defining serious religious persecution.

- Limit of religious freedom through government legislation that controls religious activities
- Government enforcement of laws that control religious activities
- Government monitoring of Christians and surveillance of their activities, including attending church meetings and home Bible study groups
- Government confiscation and destruction of church property (including crosses, Bibles and buildings)
- Government restriction on Christians and their interactions with other believers, their travel and communication (including phone, Internet, social media, news and information, etc)
- Government control of Christian families – how parents raise their children, religious education of children, etc.
- Government or allowed physical attacks on Christians
- Government arrest of Christians
- Government trials of Christians
- Government torture of Christians
- Government murder of Christians

Many Christians who are being persecuted in China now have benefitted from lessons learned during Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Mao, who began the Communist attack on Chinese Christians with the Communist Revolution in 1949, ramped up the persecution with his Cultural Revolution in 1966. Mao attacked four 'old' elements within Chinese culture: old customs, old habits, old culture, and old thinking.

The 'Red Guard,' made up of militant high school and university students, did Mao's bidding to purge China of the 'four olds.' The student 'Guard' existed with the permission and authority of the Chinese Communist Party to help Mao "combat revisionist authorities" ([Encyclopedia Britannica](#)). Millions of students participated as members of the Red Guard during the early days of the Cultural Revolution, but fell out of favor with the government within a couple of years.

The attack included intellectuals, academics, school teachers, government officials, and Christians. Many were sent to communal farms to work. Christian leaders were arrested, beaten and paraded from town to town to both humiliate them and serve as a warning to others who might think about continuing to openly worship Jesus Christ. The Communist government destroyed Christian materials and property in addition to arresting, torturing and murdering Christians.

Mao died in 1976 and things began to improve for Christians, at least for awhile. One of the things Christians learned from the persecution of the Cultural Revolution was to be prepared if they should face persecution again – which they have.

## China Today

China has an estimated 100-million Christians. About 30-million are affiliated with the government-authorized church (TSPM). The remaining 70-million are involved with unapproved house churches. The number of Chinese Protestants has grown by an average of 10 percent annually during the last 40 years, which means China is on track to have the world's largest population of Christians by 2030 ([Council on Foreign Relations](#)).

That sounds like a lot of Christians until we look at China's population – 1.4 billion people. That means Christians make up about 7% of the total population of China. That compares with Christians (self-identified) in North America making up about 75% of the population. That's a huge difference and one of the main reasons religious persecution is not a major problem in North America, yet.

The desire to persecute Christians is real in North America, but the power to move against the Church here is stymied for the moment because of the sheer number of people who identify as Christians. However, that number is changing. Christianity, which is currently the majority religion in North America, is on track to be one of the minority religions in North America in less than a hundred years. Thus, the reason for this article.

[You can read another recent article we've written about [the challenge here](#).]

Religious persecution in China is on the rise again. The atheistic Communist government led by President Xi Jinping has increased its attacks on Christians and churches in the past few years. The government is closing churches and arresting, fining and imprisoning Christian leaders as part of a five-year plan (started in 2018) to promote the ‘Sinicization of Christianity.’ This is the government’s process of forcing Christians to adapt their practice of Christianity to Chinese culture, which means corrupting and changing Christianity to whatever the Chinese government wants it to be. That includes retranslating the Bible to include Confucian, Buddhist and socialistic teachings. Pastors are required to submit their sermons to government workers before preaching them in their churches. The government workers have the authority to edit the sermons and demand the pastors use the edited versions. Worship services are also changed to affect hymns and songs, what church leaders wear and the architecture of church buildings. That’s one of the reasons so many crosses have been removed from some church buildings while the government destroys other buildings. The government requires churches to display pictures of President Xi Jinping and sing the Communist anthem at the beginning of services. The government also requires facial recognition cameras to face audiences during services, which has led to the closing of churches that refuse to do that. The Chinese government is also closing Christian schools and seminaries and forbidding children under the age of 18 from receiving religious education or taking part in any religious activities. Foreigners are often deported if they are found to have any religious affiliation.

While that might sound similar to what happened under Mao during the Cultural Revolution, a big difference is how Christian leaders have prepared church members to respond to the growing persecution under Xi Jinping.

## Prepare Now

How did pastors and other leaders prepare Chinese Christians for the persecution they are facing now? They taught them about **suffering**. That is something Christians need to learn in North America because persecution is coming.

A Chinese church leader wrote this in an online forum after the government detained him for questioning after raiding his home church.

“We will not stop our gathering in the Lord, but are prepared to bear all possible persecutions and costs for our Lord Jesus Christ — to go to jail or be sentenced or killed. We are willing to entrust ourselves to God.” An Yankui

Yankui’s name was also mentioned in the Congressional Record as one of the Chinese Christians who signed [A Declaration for the Sake of the Christian Faith](#).

Pastor Wang Yi’s name appears first in the signers of the declaration and is currently serving a nine-year sentence in a Chinese prison for the offense of “inciting subversion of state power.” Instead of making a public case against the pastor, the government tried him secretly and sentenced the pastor.

Yang wrote a six-page statement denying the allegations against him. It included these words –

“As a pastor, my disobedience is one part of the Gospel commission. Christ’s great commission requires of us great disobedience. The goal of disobedience is not to change the world but to testify about another world.”

How can a Christian prepare to take a stand against a hostile government intent on controlling Christians? Be ready to suffer for Christ.

Suffering for being a Christian is not new. Christians have suffered from the earliest days of Christianity. Many Christians in China have been taught to use government attacks and interrogations as opportunities to share the Gospel with unbelievers. One post on a Chinese church’s online platform included this guidance –

“By the grace and help of the Lord, try to turn the interrogation process into a process of evangelism. Try ... to turn the interrogation room into a new meeting of the church.” (A Church No Longer Afraid, Voice of the Martyrs, March 2020)

That is a biblical idea and one we need to learn well before severe persecution against Christians breaks out in North America.

The Apostle Peter wrote his first letter (1 Peter) within a couple of years before he was murdered for his being a Christian leader. He addressed Christians as God's people suffering persecution for being Christians in an evil world (e.g. 1 Peter 1:6-9; 2:11-12, 19-21; 3:9, 13-18; 4:1, 12-16, 19). One of the key insights that today's Chinese Christians have learned from 1 Peter is this –

“And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. ‘And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.’ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” 1 Peter 3:13-17

Those of you familiar with Christian Apologetics will recognize verse 15 – “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” The word ‘defense’ is the Greek word *apologia* – which is where we get the name ‘apologetics.’

What we see in the writings and statements of modern Chinese Christian leaders is this idea of persecuted, suffering Christians always being ready to give a defense to everyone who asks them for a reason for the hope that is in them. That's what the Chinese Christian leader meant when he wrote – “By the grace and help of the Lord, try to turn the interrogation process into a process of evangelism.” Why would someone ask a Christian for a reason for the hope that is in them? Because of what the Christian was facing at the time of the questioning. Christians who are prepared to suffer persecution do not respond like other people do. Christians have an eternal hope and they will often be asked by their persecutors for a reason why they have that hope. That question opens the door to turning the interrogation process into a process of evangelism.

Those of us who are Christians in North America view apologetics as an opportunity to discuss worldviews with friends, family, co-workers, fellow students, etc. We finish the discussion, then return to our homes to eat a warm meal, watch a favorite television show, put our children to bed, then get ready for sleep ourselves.

Not so for persecuted Christians around the world. They do not get to return to their homes to eat a warm meal, watch TV, put their children to bed and sleep in comfort. Many are in prison or on the run for their lives. There is no quiet supper with family and friends. There is no television. There is often no time for being with children because the government often takes them away from parents. There is no comfortable bed, no good sleep. Persecution takes that away from Christians who are devoted to following Christ. Are we prepared for that in North America?

Another reason given for Chinese Christians being more prepared for persecution now is because more of them have their own copy of God's Word. Many Christian organizations have worked hard during the past several years to get Bibles into the hands of Christians. That effort has paid dividends for the persecuted Church in China.

You might ask how the Bible helps Chinese Christians when the government confiscates and destroys the Bibles it finds? Many Christians have memorized sections of Scripture in preparation of the government seizing their copy of the Bible. Even as we memorize Scripture so that we do not 'sin against' God (Psalm 119:11), we will also be able to remember those Bible verses and share with others when the government confiscates our copies in the future.

With that in mind, let's see what God's Word has to say about Christians preparing to suffer during persecution.

We begin with what Jesus told His disciples about persecution and suffering –

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”  
Matthew 5:10-12

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues.”  
Matthew 10:16-17

“These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble.” Mark 4:16-17

“So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and

in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” Mark 10:29-31

“And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.” Mark 8:31

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.’” Matthew 16:24-27

“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: ‘I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.’ Revelation 2:8-11

Here’s what the Lord’s disciples said and wrote about persecution and suffering –

“So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” Acts 5:41

“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” 2 Timothy 3:12

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.” Romans 12:14

“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know

whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.” 2 Timothy 1:8-12

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Romans 8:16-18

“Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’” Romans 8:34-36

“We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” 2 Corinthians 4:8-10

“Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.” 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.” 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5

“For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.” Philippians 1:29-30

“But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. ‘And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.” 1 Peter 3:14

“And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” 1 Corinthians 12:26

[You can read more about the staggering statistics concerning Christian persecution in China [at this website.](#)]

## In Conclusion

Might God send a mighty revival to His Church in North America? Of course He might. God is God and can do anything He wants to do. However, it would behoove us greatly not to sit back and wait for a special work of God to save us from suffering. Suffering is part of the prophetic and historic nature of being a child of God in this evil world.

There is much work to be done and some of that work for leaders in the Church is to prepare Christians for the real possibility that we or our children or grandchildren or their children may face severe persecution in the future.

As we pray for China, let us also pray for ourselves. May we also learn more about suffering persecution from our brothers and sisters in China and other countries around the world. Let's support them in every way we can – with prayer, with Bibles, with financial support for Christian organizations doing the work of helping our suffering brothers and sisters.

I have the privilege of communicating with leaders in the persecuted Church and the one thing I continue to hear from them is – “Pray for us.” Let us not forget our brothers and sisters around the world who are undergoing great persecution and suffering for our Lord. May we be faithful in prayer. *“Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.”* (Hebrews 13:3)

## **A Prayer for Persecuted Christians**

### **Resources About Persecution of Christians in China**

(In Alphabetical Order)

[ChinaAid](#)

[China Outreach Ministries](#)

[Christian Aid Mission](#)

[Open Doors](#)

[Release International](#)

[Voice of the Martyrs](#)

[Voice of the Martyrs Canada](#)

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