

Asia Harvest



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

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The Two Sides of God

Gaining a Balanced View of the Bible

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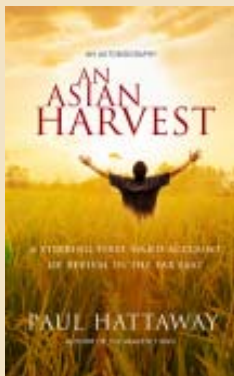
“Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God” (Romans 11:22).

“You feel sorry for us in India because of our great poverty in material things. We who know the Lord in India feel sorry for you in America because of your spiritual poverty. We are praying that you also might come to church with a hunger for God and not merely a hunger to see some form of amusement.”

— **Bakht Singh, Indian church leader**

Several years ago the Smithsonian Institute displayed an exhibit of Thomas Jefferson’s Bible. Jefferson had taken a pair of scissors and cut out all the parts of the Bible he didn’t like, and God’s moral laws which he felt were outdated. He removed all mention of hell, and because he didn’t believe in miracles, he chopped those passages out too!

While most Christians would agree that Jefferson’s actions were ridiculous, I’ve met numerous believers who do exactly the same thing to God’s Word, albeit not usually with a pair of scissors. By picking which parts of the Bible they want to accept, people invariably choose those verses that make them feel good about themselves, while ignoring the rest.



The following excerpt is taken from Paul Hattaway’s autobiography, **‘An Asian Harvest’**. Thousands of Christians have already been greatly blessed and encouraged by the book. With Christmas approaching, we invite you to consider giving the book to friends or family. Orders can be placed by mail, or from our website (www.asiaharvest.org).

Alternatively, if you send a donation to any Asia Harvest project, please indicate that you would like a complimentary copy of book and we will gladly send you one. If you give online, add a note “please send your new book” when you donate.

During the years when I spoke in meetings throughout the world, at times I found it difficult to effectively communicate testimonies from the Church in Asia to believers in “free” countries. Often when I spoke in meetings, people looked at me like I had just dropped in from another planet.

I became aware that the spiritual dynamics of the persecuted Church in Asia were completely different from those in Western Christianity. The differences were so stark that it sometimes felt like I was interacting with two different faiths. Even the most basic understanding of God’s character appeared to be fundamentally different.

For example, on one occasion in China I shared a powerful testimony from the Mru tribe of Myanmar. The Mru number about 25,000 people, most of whom are Buddhists. The gospel had recently experienced a breakthrough among them, and several Mru villages turned to Jesus Christ. The Buddhist monks were furious when they heard about it, so they hired two gangs of thugs and sent them to the Christian villages to beat the believers, rape the women, and burn their houses down.

Armed with chains and machetes, the first group of thugs made their way on foot to the Christian area. Before reaching their intended destination, however, a freak electrical storm descended on them as they traversed a mountain pass. All of the men were killed by lightning. The lightning also struck the 400 year-old Buddhist temple in the Mru township, burning it to the ground.

The second mob of would-be persecutors traveled to the Christian villages aboard a large raft. As they made their way down the river, a thick fog suddenly enveloped them, making it impossible to see where they were going. A barge sliced through the fog and struck the raft, hurling the thugs into the rapids where they all drowned.

When news of these events spread, the fear of God fell on the Mru communities. Realizing that the Living God had displayed His awesome wrath, hundreds more people turned to Christ and repented of their sins.

When I shared this testimony with the Christians in China, they literally jumped up and down with joy and shouted, “Hallelujah!” at the top of their voices. They rejoiced in the judgments of God, as the Bible says: ***“Zion hears and rejoices and the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments, Lord”*** (Psalm 97:8).

Just a few weeks later I found myself standing in front of a congregation in Texas. As I shared the same testimony from Myanmar, I looked out at a sea of grim faces staring back at me. There was no rejoicing in that meeting, and not a single “Hallelujah” was uttered.

After the service, an elderly lady came forward to confront me on behalf of the other church members. She strongly rebuked me with the words, "Our God is not like that, brother. Our God is a loving God!" I noticed many people behind her nodding their heads in agreement.

Like that congregation in Texas, many believers imagine God to be a cuddly teddy bear-like figure, whose main purpose is to encourage and bless them. They think God is so gentle and loving that He would never harm a fly, and Christians who dare to mention His wrath or coming judgment are often pushed into a corner and considered a threat to the peace of the church.

With such a skewed, chummy attitude toward God, it's no wonder that many Christians no longer fear Him. They love to hear about how John reclined at the dinner table by leaning against His best friend Jesus, but few remember that the two men met again many years later. This time the resurrected Lord Jesus was dressed in the robes of a Roman judge. John was absolutely terrified, and wrote, *"When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead"* (Revelation 1:17).

All followers of the Lord Jesus need to cultivate a deep, loving intimacy with Him, while not becoming so familiar that we lose a healthy fear of God. May we never forget that one day the anger of the Lord will be so fierce that people will *"call to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?'"* (Revelation 6:16-17).

I once shared at a home meeting in New Zealand about the need for every Christian to take up their cross and follow Him. To illustrate my message, I shared the testimony of Sister Yuen of Shanghai. It is a favorite story of the house church believers in China, and touches a deep chord in their hearts whenever they hear it.

Sister Yuen, a widow with two small children, was arrested and thrown into prison because of her faith. In a bid to make her renounce Christ, the guards brought Sister Yuen's children and had them stand outside the prison gate. With their arms outstretched, they begged their mother to come home.

The guards taunted Sister Yuen by asking, "Doesn't your God want you to take care of your own children? You can return home today if you just sign a statement declaring you will no longer be a Christian."

Like any mother, Sister Yuen's heart was torn at the sight of her crying children, and she asked the guards to bring her a sheet of paper and a pen. They hurriedly fetched the items, thinking they had finally found a way to break her faith in God. Sister Yuen calmly wrote on the paper and handed it to the prison warden. A moment later his

face turned red with rage. She had written in large letters: "Jesus can never be replaced! Even my own children cannot replace Jesus!"

Sister Yuen was sentenced to 23 more years in prison. By the time she was released her children were adults, having been raised by the atheistic state. She spent months trying to locate them, and was finally able to reconcile with her daughter. Her son, however, had become a policeman and his heart was filled with hate for his mother and her God. He wanted nothing to do with her ever again.

As I shared this powerful testimony with the small group of New Zealand believers, a married couple, who were well-regarded in the Christian community of that town, threw their heads back and began to sigh and moan.

After the meeting, coffee was served. The couple marched straight up to me, obviously wanting to get something off their chests. "Your story is stupid!" they protested. "If we were in that woman's position, we would have signed the paper. Of course God wanted her to take care of her own children!"

"So are you saying you would willingly deny the Lord Jesus to avoid going to prison?" I enquired.

"Yeah, we would," they stated matter-of-factly. "God would understand and forgive us."

I was astonished that a pair of professing Christians could openly admit they would willingly deny their faith under pressure, and they didn't see anything wrong with it. I asked if they were concerned about the words of Jesus, who said, ***"Whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven"*** (Matthew 10:33).

"God wants us to take care of our children," they reiterated.

Following that incident, I was more careful about who I shared precious testimonies with, and was reminded of the warning the Lord gave His followers: ***"Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces"*** (Matthew 7:6).

* * * *

Anyone who wants to be a true Christian must first get to know who Jesus Christ really is, as revealed in the Scriptures. It may surprise them! Many church-goers have created a sentimental image of God in their minds. They imagine Him according to how they want Him to be, and not as He really is.

Our lives must be shaped by the Word of God, and we need to make sure we never shape the Word of God according to our lives. Possessing a self-made image of God is a dangerous form of idolatry.

My prayer for our family and co-workers, and for all Christians, is that we would gain a correct Biblical view of God. We must abandon all views of His character that do not conform with Scripture, for if that is distorted, the rest of our faith will be warped. The Bible instructs us to ***“consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God”*** (Romans 11:22).

For years the Lord had been stripping me of wrong ideas about His nature. The Holy Spirit gradually opened my eyes to see God as He really is in the Bible, and not how I think He ought to be.

As I studied His Word, I obtained a more balanced view of the two sides of God’s character. Just from the *New Testament* I discovered that God is love, but He is also an all-consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29);

I learned that the Heavenly Father is building a heavenly mansion for those who belong to Him, but He has also created a dreadful lake of fire for all who *“refuse to love the truth and so be saved”* (2 Thessalonians 2:10);

I read how the love of God has been revealed in Jesus Christ, but also that the wrath of God is being revealed against mankind (Romans 1:18);

I saw that the Lord delivers people from sin but He can also hold people under His punishment (2 Peter 2:9), and that while the Holy Spirit softens hard hearts, He is also able to harden people’s hearts (Romans 9:18);

I trembled to learn that while God loves to display the riches of His glory through vessels of mercy, He may also display His power by patiently preparing vessels of wrath for destruction (Romans 9:22-23);

Finally, I realized that in the New Testament the Living God opened blind eyes, but He also blinded seeing eyes (Acts 13:11), and while He brought the dead back to life, He also struck some people dead (Acts 5:1-10);

The good news is that if we still have breath in our lungs, it’s not too late to change! Whether it’s the persecuted Church in Asia or the Church in other parts of the world, ***“the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him”*** (2 Chronicles 16:9).

ASIAN WORKERS' FUND



Asia Harvest currently supports 1,171 Asian evangelists among 843 people groups.

You can sponsor an Asian evangelist among an unreached people group for **\$25 per month** each. Prayer cards and updates are sent to all regular supporters of this project. To date, the evangelists we help have reported **229,643 conversions to Christ**.



CHINA BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 10,618,650 Chinese Bibles printed and distributed.

Bibles are distributed free of charge to house churches in China, equipping the Body of Christ. **Each full Chinese Bible costs just \$1.80 to print and deliver.**

LIVING MARTYRS' FUND



Asia Harvest is currently supporting 289 living martyrs.

Supporting church leaders and widows in China, Vietnam and elsewhere who are unable to work because of injuries or illness caused by persecution. **\$35 per month** helps a living martyr.

ASIAN BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 795,481 Bibles printed in 93 languages.

The **Asian Bible Fund** provides the Scriptures in many languages to Christians in **Southeast Asia**, the **Indian subcontinent** and elsewhere. **Each Bible costs an average of \$2.70 to print and deliver.**

BLESS THE CHILDREN FUND



So far 132,387 children in Asia have been impacted by the Gospel.

Providing children's Gospel literature, Sunday school materials, and lifting children out of spiritual and physical poverty. It costs an average of **\$10 to impact a child for Jesus Christ**.



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