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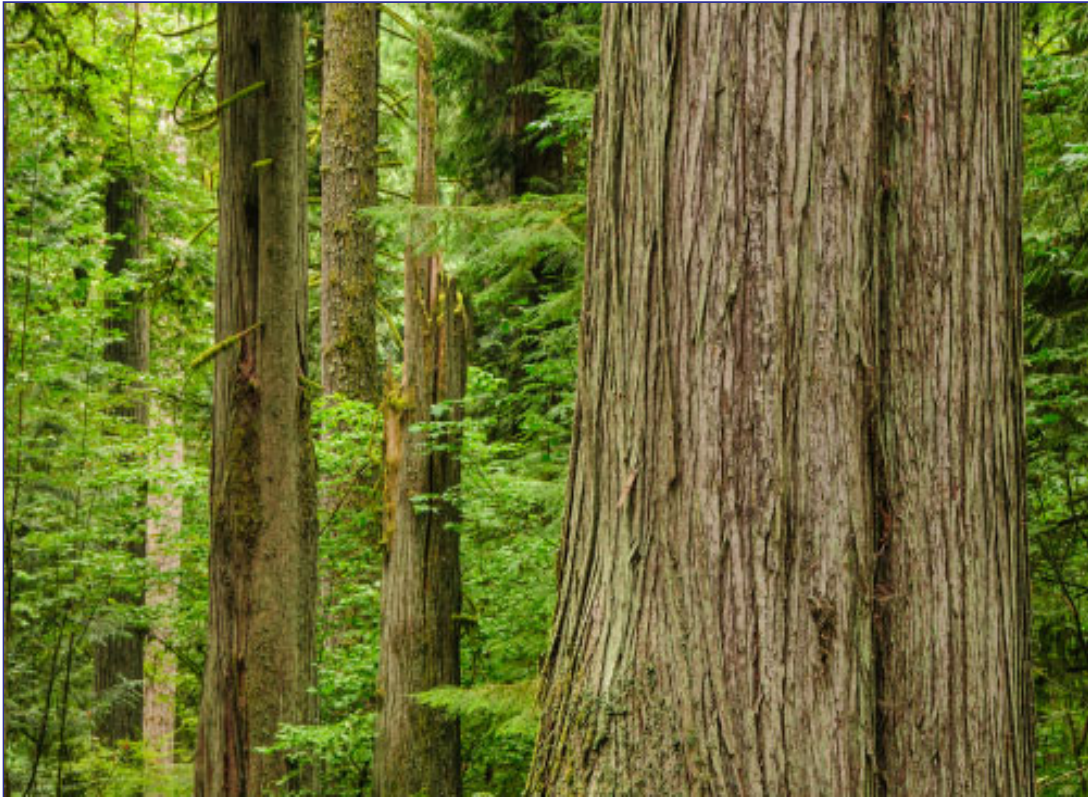


‘Put in the Sickle, for the Harvest has Come!’ (Mark 4:29)

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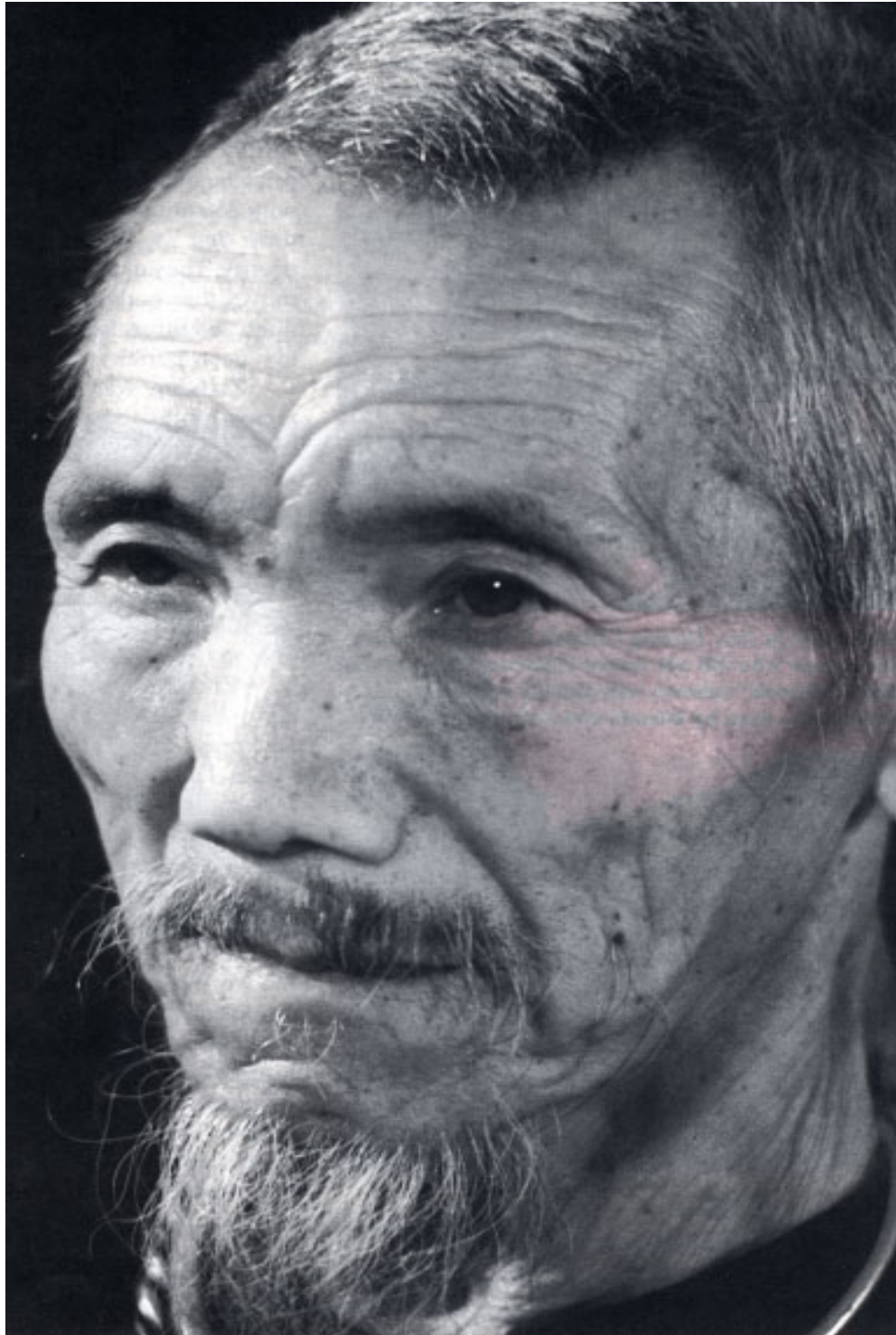
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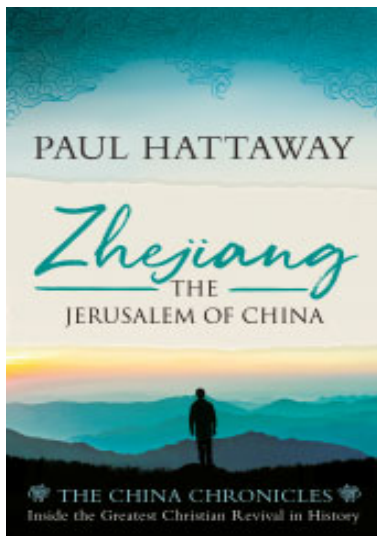


## THE CEDAR OF LEBANON

*A Testimony from the Church in China*



Miao Zizhong, the 'Cedar of Lebanon'



# THE CEDAR OF LEBANON

## - A Testimony from the Church in China -

*from Book 3 of 'The China Chronicles'*

In our last newsletter we shared the testimony of Lame Huang, a little-known evangelist from Zhejiang Province in eastern China. We received an overwhelming response to his story, so this month we are sharing another testimony, excerpted from our new book "Zhejiang: The Jerusalem of China".

This time we share the extraordinary story of Miao Zizhong, a house church pastor whose strong leadership and courage in the face of overwhelming persecution earned him the nickname, 'The Cedar of Lebanon' from other Chinese Christians.

Although in China, Miao is much better-known than Lame Huang, few Christians in other nations have ever heard of him, so we pray this glimpse into his life will encourage you in your own walk with the Lord.

We pray the testimony of Brother Miao will also stir up the faith of believers inside China, who are currently going through a dark and excruciatingly examination of their faith. May the example of believers like the 'Cedar of Lebanon' remind them of God's faithfulness and goodness, and that regardless of what wicked men do to them, nothing can ultimately separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

**The remainder of this newsletter contains an excerpt from 'ZHEJIANG: The Jerusalem of China'. It shares the testimony of house church leader Miao Zizhong, who provided godly leadership to the Body of Christ for decades before his call home to heaven. To order a copy of the book, please visit our website ([www.asiaharvest.org](http://www.asiaharvest.org)) for details.**

***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.***

On the night of October 17, 1989, more than 1,000 tearful Christians gathered outside a small village in Wencheng County, a mountainous area near the city of Wenzhou. As the brothers and sisters respectfully sang 'Waiting for the Lord's Return to Meet Again', the body of Miao Zizhong was lowered into a grave. This man, who had gone to be with his Lord at the age of 73, was so highly respected that he had earned the nickname 'The Cedar of Lebanon' from his fellow believers.

In the 1950s a total of 49 Chinese pastors from the Wenzhou area were arrested and sent to prison labor camps in northeast China's frozen Heilongjiang Province. Of these men, Miao Zizhong was the only one to survive the ordeal and return home alive.

Miao grew up without knowing the gospel, and he regularly hurled foul-mouthed insults at the servants of the Lord. He became an angry man, bitterly lashing out at other people without provocation.

Everything began to change in Miao's life in 1948, one year before China became a Communist country. When he was 32 he contracted a serious disease, and when he went to the largest hospital in Wenzhou they declared his case incurable and advised him to return home and prepare for death. News got around that Miao was perishing, and a relative visited and pleaded with him to believe in Jesus Christ. He accepted the gospel and repented of his sins.

From the moment Miao received God's offer of salvation, his physical condition improved, and after a while he was completely healed. Overcome with gratitude to the Lord for sparing his life, Miao surrendered his future to God's service, and he immediately traveled to another district to preach the gospel.

For the next six years Miao continued to proclaim good news to the spiritually hungry people of Zhejiang, until the authorities caught up with him in the winter of 1954. He was hauled in front of a 'struggle session' by the local people's militia, and was lectured about the evils of Christianity and commanded to sign a statement renouncing his faith. With a calm demeanor, Miao looked his persecutors in the eyes and declared:

*"Jesus is the Savior of my life. I would be ungrateful to deny Him and as such I would go to hell. I cannot do this.' Upon hearing that, the cadres began to gnash their teeth and with their fists they started beating Miao viciously. He prayed fervently, asking the Lord for help. The evil men used every method, but in the end were unable to coerce him into submission."*



Miao was declared a 'counter-revolutionary,' and a few months later he was falsely charged with the crime of 'collaborating with overseas counter-revolutionary organizations.' He was sentenced to five years reform through labor near the border with Russia.

Miao struggled with the bleak conditions and the incessant back-breaking work at the prison camp. He had no hope in this world, and reasoned that if he was destined to die in that place then he should die sharing the gospel with his fellow inmates. When the prison authorities discovered he was still propagating his faith they flew into a rage and added ten years to his sentence.

### ***Miao's Lowest Point***

The greatest difficulty Miao Zizhong experienced during his first year in prison was the bitterly cold winters in Heilongjiang. One day, a group of more than 70 elderly Christian prisoners were forced to walk to another place to work. To reach their destination, they had to cross a frozen river. When they got to the middle of the river the ice cracked from the combined weight of the men and they plunged into the frigid water. Although most of the men were able to scramble up the riverbank, their wet clothing soon caused all but one to die of hypothermia.

On one occasion, the cruel prison wardens tortured Miao by removing a heavy iron grate from the oven and hanging it around his neck. He was forced to parade around the prison courtyard with the grate—which weighed more than 40 pounds (20 kg)—dangling from his neck. When they had finished mocking him that day, Miao was placed in stocks and thrown into solitary confinement for several months.

Despite the intense beatings, loneliness and deprivation, Miao experienced his most difficult moment during his second year of incarceration. His wife back in Zhejiang had been his best friend and a faithful companion since their wedding, but one day the prison officials delivered a letter from her requesting a divorce. She had heard that Miao's sentence had been extended to 15 years, and she gave up all hope of seeing him alive again. She decided it was better to make a fresh start as a single woman.

Miao was in a state of shock after reading his wife's letter, and after her words sank in he became so angry that he fainted. He had reached his lowest point. Miao considered his miserable situation and felt he had nothing to lose.

Taking no notice of the cold, Miao opened the cell door and ran to a grove where he fell to his knees on the snow-covered ground. With loud sobs he wept before the Lord. He was unable to suppress his grief and tears flowed like a fountain. Suddenly he heard a very clear, personal and tender small voice from heaven saying, 'You must be patient that you may fulfil God's will and obtain the promise.'

Miao Zizhong received comfort and strength from the Holy Spirit as he emptied his soul before God, and he realized that Christ alone would never leave or forsake him. He returned to his cell and replied to his wife's letter, telling her to proceed with the divorce if she wished.

### ***An Angelic Encounter***

The overcrowded prison camp was home to 1,300 men from across China, including many church leaders. The unhygienic conditions provided a fertile environment for disease. During one especially cold winter, when the temperature plummeted to minus 45 degrees, a plague swept through the labor camp. Within hours, hundreds of men had come down with severe fever. Their eyes bulged from their heads and many went into convulsion and died. Bodies were dragged out of the cells and tossed into a giant pit, and within days 1,050 of the 1,300 men had perished.

Miao was also infected by the horrible plague and was taken to see a doctor, who shook his head and said, "Here is another one." He was put in a room where corpses were stored before being taken for burial. As Miao lay among many dead bodies he prayed, "Lord, I ask you to save me. Please don't allow me to die here where your Name will be reproached. If you heal me and allow me to return home in peace, I will serve you all the days of my life and will do the work of an evangelist."

Suddenly, an angel dressed in a glorious white robe appeared and tenderly said, "Do not fear. Only believe." In his own words, Miao recalled what happened next as he teetered between life and death:

*"The angel stretched out his right hand and took hold of my left hand and led me out of that building. I was taken to a beautiful room, pure white beyond description. The angel had me sit on a chair and he took a stethoscope from around his neck. He then took a white tube and put it in my mouth. When the angel blew into it I felt a cool sensation which made me feel comfortable.*

*When I came to, the sickness had left me. I knelt among the dead bodies and loudly praised the Lord, rededicating my whole life to Jesus. I was hungry, so I went back to*

*the doctor to ask for food. When the doctor saw me entering he was so shocked he broke into a cold sweat and stumbled backwards, crying out, 'Are... you... a... ghost?'*

*I laughed and told him, 'Don't be afraid. I am Miao Zizhong. My God has healed me and saved me from death. He has sent me to proclaim the way of salvation to you. Therefore you must believe in Jesus.' The doctor immediately knelt down, saying, 'Your God is true. Jesus is truly alive. I now believe and ask Jesus to receive me.'"*

### ***Return to Trouble***

The years went by, until Miao found himself the longest-serving inmate at the Heilongjiang prison camp. Thousands of men had come and gone, and conditions were so harsh that even young prisoners only managed to survive a few weeks before they died. Yet through it all, Miao had endured, and his faith in Jesus Christ remained intact. One secret to his survival was that he often slipped away from his cell late at night, when the other exhausted prisoners were asleep. He would go to a small grove near the compound where he knelt down and prayed to God. The Holy Spirit always met him in that blessed place, giving him strength and encouragement to endure another day.

In 1969, Miao completed his 15-year sentence and was placed on a train back home to Zhejiang Province. He was unaware at the time, but he was released at the height of the Cultural Revolution, when Red Guards were terrorizing the land and Christians everywhere were under intense pressure.

As soon as the local officials discovered that Miao had returned home, he was called in for questioning. When asked if the last 15 years had changed his religious beliefs, Miao boldly replied, "These 15 years of labor reform have not changed my belief; moreover, my relationship with Jesus has been strengthened and my faith is stronger than ever!" The officials flew into a fit of rage, pushed him to the floor and beat him with their fists and batons.

The following year Miao was ordered to attend re-education classes by the local authorities, along with dozens of criminals and gangsters.

One hot summer afternoon, Red Guards came and bound Miao's hands tightly behind his back. After being dragged to a place where a high wooden platform had been erected, officials accused him of "hideous crimes" against the nation.

They commanded Miao to publicly deny Jesus, and finished by snarling, “Today, if you continue to believe in Jesus, we will beat you to death!”

Miao Zizhong had walked with God for many years by this time, and he was not going to throw away everything he had stood for. His life meant very little to him, but his faith and the presence of the Holy Spirit meant everything. He looked down from the platform at the large crowd that had gathered, and with a loud voice he made a speech which has gone down as a seminal moment in the annals of Christianity in Zhejiang. Miao declared:

*“Fellow countrymen, because of belief in Jesus I have already spent 15 years in the Heilongjiang labor reform prison, where I was ‘struggled against’ and beaten, yet my faith is stronger than ever. Why is that? It’s because the Lord Jesus whom I believe in is the true and living God. He is the Son of God, the Creator of heaven and earth. He was born for us, and because of our sins He was crucified on the cross. Therefore all of you should repent, leave your idols, cease from violence and believe in Jesus that you may obtain eternal life.”*

As soon as these words left Miao’s lips a mob of brutal men rushed onto the platform, and proceeded to kick and beat his head and entire body. As he slowly collapsed to the ground, his voice could be heard above the commotion, saying, “Lord, please forgive them. I commit my soul to you.”

Miao was seriously injured. His ribs and other bones had been broken, and he was covered in welts and bruises. Tufts of hair had been ripped from his scalp. He slowly recovered, however, and several months later he was back preaching the gospel.

During another public humiliation meeting later that year, Christians who were present testified that Miao’s face shone with glory, like that of an angel. He even taunted his persecutors who demanded to know the secret of his stubborn resistance by telling them: “Why don’t you get a knife and cut out my heart? Then you will know what’s in it.”

Countless more persecutions continued, including one episode when Miao was hit on the head with a small iron hammer after he refused to deny Christ. After several blows his head swelled to the size of a gourd, but his integrity and love for Jesus remained intact.

### ***The Final Lap***



After all the abuse Miao Zizhong had endured over the years, people were sure he wouldn't live long, but the Spirit of God helped him complete his race and finish the work entrusted to him. The authorities in Zhejiang didn't know what to do with this man. They had treated him with extreme violence, yet he continued to believe in God and encourage others to do the same.

Instead of persecuting Miao themselves, the local government officials hired a group of thugs to do their dirty work for them. As they the man of God through the streets, they tortured him with knives and kicked him to the ground. When they passed a cesspool full of human waste, they threw Miao's hat into the muck, then retrieved it with a bamboo pole and placed it back on his head.

To howls of laughter, the excrement ran down his face and soaked his shirt. Then, according to an eye-witness, one of the thugs picked up a lump of dog excrement and stuffed it into Miao's mouth. He shut his mouth tight, but they smeared his mouth and lips with it. He tried to spit it out, but all that came out were several mouthfuls of fresh blood.

As Miao Zizhong aged into his sixties, many Christians wanted to know the secret to his victorious faith. One visitor shared that each time Miao received a revelation from the Bible, he would jump up and dance with great joy. He remained single after his wife divorced him, and although he experienced much bitterness in this life, he was full of joy. In every home he stayed there was always the sound of singing, and often he would sing, cry and laugh until tears flowed.

Finally, in October 1989, the 73-year-old Cedar of Lebanon fell, not to rise again until the resurrection of the dead. Miao Zizhong left behind no children, except the thousands of spiritual children he had led to the Lord and nourished with God's Word.

**The great need of Christians in Zhejiang continues to be Bibles.** Believers in rural areas have struggled to access God's Word for many years, and the large number of new Christians has seen the demand far outstrip the supply. **The need for our China Bible Fund is greater than ever,** with an increasing number of believers unable to access the Scriptures due to government restrictions and persecution.

**With your prayers and support, Asia Harvest has provided almost 700,000 Bibles to house church believers in Zhejiang over the years, and we will continue to do so as long as the Lord Jesus Christ keeps the door open. Please pray for the Church in Zhejiang!**



## ASIAN WORKERS' FUND



*We currently support 1,380 Asian evangelists among 1,036 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 led **421,750 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.

## CHINA BIBLE FUND



*Current Total: 12,105,285 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 BIBLE FUND



*Current Total: 996,021 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 **362** 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 and elsewhere who are unable to work because of injuries or illness caused by persecution. 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 impacted **153,405** children for Jesus throughout Asia.*

The **Bless the Children Fund** introduces children to Jesus Christ in India, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and a host of other countries. Activities include printing and distributing children's Gospel literature, providing free surgeries for those with special needs, and generally lifting children out of spiritual and physical poverty. The results of this project have been staggering. It costs an average of just **\$10 to impact a child for Christ**.

## PERSECUTION & RELIEF FUND



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

This project provides assistance to the victims of natural disasters in Asia, by providing medicine, tents, blankets, food and water, rebuilding homes etc. The Asian Christians we partner with take every opportunity to share the Gospel, and multitudes of people have come to know the Lord Jesus. This project also provides physical and spiritual relief to Christian communities and families that have been affected by persecution.



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