# **AS1a** Harvest



Swing the Sickle for the Harvest is Ripe! (Joel 3:13)

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Messages from the Chinese Church (Part 1)

### From the Front Lines

#### with Paul & Joy Hattaway

During the 15 years since we first arrived on the mission field in Asia we have increasingly felt that a large part of what God has called us to do is to be a link between the Church in Asia (especially the persecuted church) and the Church around the world.

This newsletter is part of that process of being a link between East and West. One one end of the chain, many thousands of people in Asia are impacted and blessed by Christians around the world praying for them and giving so that evangelists can be supported, Bibles printed, imprisoned pastor's families helped, etc. On the other end of the chain, many people over the years have told us that as they have read about the advance of the Gospel in Asia and prayed more for the Asian church, and as they have helped come to Asia on short-term teams or support certain projects, that God has blessed their own lives and churches back home. The blessing therefore strengthens believers both in Asia, and around the world. This is a principle of Scripture. "The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All will share alike." 1 Samuel 30:24

We have been privileged to be in the middle of this blessing, prayerfully creating structures to pass it on with maximum efficiency. Sometimes it has been difficult because of the spiritual distance between the church in revival in Asia and some believers in the West, who often seem to be disillusioned in their faith, cynical, tired and passionless. Some years ago we decided our job was not to try to justify what the Lord is doing in Asia. If people want to believe it or not, it is between them and God. Our role is simply to report accurately and truthfully. For some people, if they fail to see God moving in their own lives and communities, then it makes sense that God must not be moving anywhere! If people where they live show no interest in the Gospel, then they reason that testimonies of thousands of people coming to Christ in Asia must surely be false! They have adjusted their theology to suit their experiences, instead of interpreting their experiences according to the unchangeable Word of God.

For the next few Asia Harvest newsletters, we are taking a new, more direct approach. In the past few years we have conducted many hours of interviews in China with house church leaders. They are leaders of millions of believers, and firsthand witnesses of some of the most remarkable moves of God in history. They have also experienced years of brutal persecution for their faith in Jesus.

The Chinese church is far from being perfect, but they have witnessed God move like the early church did in the Book of Acts, and the lessons they learned are well

worth listening to.

In this newsletter we begin Part One of "Messages from the Chinese Church." These messages form part of a new book entitled *Back to Jerusalem*, which we had the privilege to write at the request of several Chinese house church leaders. *Back to Jerusalem* contains the missionary vision of the Chinese church today, and discusses what they plan to do in order for the giant strongholds of Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism to give up their billions of captives. On page 13 we have information about how you can order the *Back to Jerusalem* book. We believe it is absolutely essential reading for any Christian who wants to know what God will do in these end times.

The three Chinese church leaders who shared in these interviews are Brother Yun, Peter Xu Yongze, and Enoch Wang. They are each recognized as among the key figures in the ministry of the house churches in China. Between them, these three men have spent more than 40 years in prison because of their faith. We hope you are blessed by their message, and challenged to live a life worthy of the high calling you have received.

#### **IMPORTANT NOTICE -**

#### PLEASE UPDATE YOUR RECORDS

We have decided to make our U.S. address the main contact address for Asia Harvest. This means we are phasing out the use of our Post office box number in Thailand. As it is, more than 70% of all our mail has been coming through our U.S. address anyway, so by consolidating to one central contact point we believe we will be able to reply to letters and requests faster and provide a better service to our friends and supporters. Please update your records. We will continue to keep our Thailand post office box active for some time, so if you have recently written to it please don't worry, but from now on we will not be listing it in our literature and so will gradually phase it out. The main Asia Harvest address is now therefore:

Asia Harvest P.O.Box 901 Palestine, TX 75802 U.S.A.

For those who live in various countries around the world, please either write to the above address, or if you prefer, to the Asia Harvest address nearest to you. Thank you.

### Messages from the Chinese Church

**PART ONE:** 

# DISCIPLES, OR JUST BELIEVERS?

"Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.... Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:27.33

"From that time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him." John 6:66

Why are there still so many needy countries and areas of spiritual darkness in the world today? Why is there still a need for the Chinese church to send missionaries after twenty centuries of Christianity?

The problem lies in the kind of Christianity practised by the majority of believers today. For countless millions of people, following Jesus is little more than a cultural experience. Joining a church means little more than joining a social club where they can meet new people and exchange pleasantries about inconsequential matters.

If the Bible is read at all, it is from a sense of duty rather than as part of a relationship with its real, vibrant and life-changing author.

Jesus is viewed as a historical figure who died on the cross, and as a future figure who will one day come again, but few Christians really, genuinely, walk with Jesus today, sharing their dreams, fears and concerns with him as a lover, friend and Lord

Millions of churches around the world, including inside China, are bound by legalism. Obeying man-made rules has become more important than taking the hand of Jesus and walking with him in the cool of the evening. The Christian life has become an endurance test, and all traces of life and joy have long since evaporated!

Brothers and sisters, don't be deceived, such a bound church is nothing less than a work of Satan, and such a collection of believers will never be able to save any souls for the kingdom of God. It is absolutely impossible for a legalistic believer to lead a single person to Jesus Christ. They may occasionally lead someone else to obey the same rules they do, but they will never lead a thirsty soul to the well of eternal life. How can a person show a lost soul the way to someone they themselves cannot recognize?

One thing is certain: the two billion Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus we are targeting in the Back to Jerusalem vision will never be reached by passionless Christians. They will only respond when they are confronted by the truth of God's Word as revealed in the lives of true

disciples of Jesus who have given up all they have to follow him.

There are more than enough Christian "believers" in the world today. God wants more disciples!

God wants men and women, boys and girls who are willing to take the fire and love of God to millions of people who will be infected with spiritual life!

Only disciples of Jesus can ever hope to impact the nations for God.

Prior to the 1950s, most Christians in China were also mere 'believers' in Christ, and when the heat of affliction came on, many fell away from the faith. Many others, however, got serious about God and decided to follow him whatever the cost. They were gradually transformed into disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Today most Christians in China's house churches are disciples.

True disciples are usually people that few understand. They are viewed as potentially unstable fanatics. Often the same governments that tolerate the existence of mere believers will stop at no ends to completely eradicate any disciples within their borders.

Mere 'believers' try to follow God, but their prayers and commitment are clouded by indecisiveness. Their prayers go like this: "Oh Lord, I am so weak. Please send your power. I am weighed down with sin. Please come and relieve me." If they ever hear the King's call to go somewhere and do something for the sake of his kingdom, they feel they need extra encouragement before they can safely step out: "First let me check with my wife, my pastor, my boss and my mother-in-law to see if it's OK with them."

A believer always seeks assurances that nothing will go wrong if they step out for Jesus. Only when they are convinced that the coast is clear and no harm will befall them are they willing to take their first step!

Disciples have a different attitude. In China many disciples beg God to give them just a little of his dynamite power. They pray, "Oh God, if you will lend me just a little spiritual dynamite, I promise I will take it to the darkest area I can find, place it there, and pray you will send your fire from heaven to explode it."

God always does.

This is how the Gospel has spread so quickly in China.

There are literally thousands of testimonies we could share with you about disciples in the Chinese church whom God has used in a mighty way. For now, let us share just three testimonies that display different aspects of the life of a true disciple of Jesus.

## The Obedience of Sister Chang

"The reason I wrote to you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything." 2 Corinthians 2:9

When God spoke to Sister Chang, a house church leader from Henan, he told her to do something that made no earthly sense at all. He told her to go and preach the gospel on the steps outside the local police station. Such an action may lead to arrest even in Western nations, and in Communist China it is a sure way to invite

severe punishment. But the more Sister Chang prayed about it, the more clearly the inner voice of God continued to tell her to do it. Finally, she saw no option but to obey God.

Standing on the top step outside the police station, she boldly proclaimed the gospel to astonished onlookers. Within a few minutes several officers dragged her inside and placed her under arrest. To the human eye her obedience looked foolish, but God can see things that we can't.

Sister Chang was sentenced without a trial and sent to the local women's prison, where she was placed alongside thousands of spiritually lost souls. She boldly and lovingly proclaimed the gospel to her fellow prisoners. The light of the gospel spread like wildfire. Within just three months, 800 women believed in Jesus! The entire atmosphere of the prison changed, and new sounds of praise and worship were heard echoing down the prison hallways and in the courtyard.

The prison director was greatly impressed at the change in the atmosphere and was able to trace it to the preaching of Sister Chang. He brought her into his office and said, "You have made my job easy! There is no more fighting between the prisoners and the women have become gentle and obedient. We need more people like you working here. From today, we have decided to let you go free. We want to give you a full-time job here in the prison, and we will pay you 3,000 Yuan per month" (about US\$ 375, a fortune in rural Henan). He continued, "We will also give you a car and your own driver, and will find you comfortable housing."

Sister Chang briefly considered the offer, and then replied, "Twenty years ago I became a disciple of Jesus Christ and he has been wonderful to me. I don't believe your offer of a car, driver and salary is in line with what Jesus wants to do with my life, and I belong to him. All I want to do is preach the good news."

Despite her rejection of his offer, the director released her from prison that day, and she continued her ministry for the Lord.

It always pays to do what the Lord tells us to do. Don't argue, don't fight it, and don't try to work out all the details with your mind. Just do it. That is one mark of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

### Sister Yuen of Shanghai

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:26

Sister Yuen came from one of the wealthiest families in Shanghai. In 1967 she was arrested and sent to prison. At the time she was a widow with two young children, a son aged eleven and a daughter aged nine.

After Sister Yuen has been a year in prison her mother — who had been taking care of the children — died. The authorities decided to have "compassion" on her so she could go home and take care of her children. They told her that all she had to do was produce a written confession of her "crimes" and they would free her. They said, "This past year your conduct has been excellent, so now we plan to reward you."

The officials arranged for her small children to be brought to the prison gates for a visit. Yuen was ordered to pack her bags as if she was going home. As soon as she caught a glimpse of her precious children, her heart was torn and tears of love welled up in her eyes.

Then the guards asked her, "What do you want, your Jesus or your children? If you want Jesus you will remain in this prison. If you want your children, you can go home. Surely your God would want you to be kind to your own flesh and blood?" Sister Yuen's son and daughter called out

"Mummy, we miss you! Please come home!"

A prison guard gave Sister Yuen a pencil and a piece of paper and asked her to write down her confession. She wrote in large characters, "Jesus can never be replaced. Even my own children cannot replace Jesus."

She chose to stay in prison.

The warden shouted, "Listen, you kids! Your mother has rejected you! She doesn't love you!"

She remained in prison for twenty-three more years.

When she was finally released, her son was 34 years old and worked in a government job in Tibet. Sister Yuen had not seen him even once in all those years. He had been taken by the state and raised in atheistic schools, so he had no belief in God and had been told his own mother had forsaken him. Many Christians had visited him and shared the gospel with him, but he always responded by saying, "Your Jesus took my mother away from me, why should I believe in him?"

Upon her release Sister Yuen went to Tibet to find her son. He rejected her, screaming that he had no mother, and pushed her from his home. She has never seen him again. It is not easy being a disciple.

The world can do nothing to someone who has no fear of other people.

It has rightly been stated, "If you haven't discovered something you are willing to die for, then you haven't yet found anything worth living for."

Have you found something worth dying for yet?



#### **MESSAGE TWO:**

### SLEEPING CHURCH, AWAKE!

"He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son." Proverbs 10:5

"A sluggard does not plough in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing."

Proverbs 20:4

The world is lost! The Bible declares all of mankind to be spiritually dead, and a dead corpse cannot help but stink! The people of the world are drowning in an ocean of sin and wickedness. If they don't hear the gospel in their lifetime, then they are destined for an eternity of punishment in hell. The only way they will hear that Jesus had made a way for them to escape this dreadful destiny is if we tell them! Many Christians somehow think it is someone else's responsibility to tell the lost about Jesus. We make up numerous excuses to try to justify our inactivity and ease our consciences, but the Lord knows the truth.

"Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering towards slaughter. If you say, 'But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?" Proverbs 24:11-12

The time is short, and it will not do for Christians to continue to play games while millions of people around us are perishing and going to hell.

To be a Christian and have only a lukewarm, passionless heart for Christ and the souls of lost men and women is a terrible indictment. Millions of people die without knowing Jesus because the Christians they came into contact with couldn't be bothered to be "prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" 1 Peter 3:15

Jesus even suggests that people suffering eternal torment in hell have more passion for evangelism than many Christians! He told a parable about a rich man and Lazarus. The rich man, suffering in agony in the flames of hell, called out across a great chasm to Abraham, "I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment" Luke 16:27

If people in hell strongly desire to reach the lost, shouldn't we who are called by the Name of the Lord be even more committed to this task?

God cannot use a person who wants a safe and comfortable Christian life. If your only aim in life is to get yourself to heaven, then you are not likely to take many other people with you. Many Christians have somehow become deceived into spiritual selfishness, gorging themselves on the latest Christian teaching, books, seminars, music and fads. When we spend all our time edifying ourselves and not seeking to win the souls of lost humanity, we are in deep trouble! Ironically, the more we feed our souls without serving God's purposes in the earth, the more our souls get sick of the food

and bloated with information. This is why the Scripture says, "He who is full loathes honey; but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes great" Proverbs 27:7

The Dead Sea in Israel serves as an excellent example of what can happen to a believer, a church, or even a whole nation that is self-absorbed. The Dead Sea is aptly named, as it is full of salt and contains few living creatures. Yet a closer inspection reveals that it has 153 sources of fresh water flowing into it. Numerous rivers (including the famous Jordan), streams and creeks flow into the Dead Sea, carrying fish and other aquatic life.

Yet once the fresh water reaches the Dead Sea the fish die and the water starts to stink. Why do the fish and other forms of life die? Simply because the Dead Sea has no outlet. It is constantly taking in but never giving out. The water stagnates and salts up. Life turns to death, freshness to salty sludge.

Christian, beware! You must have an outlet for your faith or your spiritual life will stagnate and begin to stink! Pastor, be warned. You will be held responsible before God not only for what you feed his sheep, but for what form of outreach you lead them into. Are new souls being birthed in your church on a regular basis? If not, you are stagnating. You must find an effective outlet for your faith, not only to expand God's kingdom among the lost but also to focus the vision of the believers and bring life to your congregation.

When Christians are regularly engaged in genuine outreach, they will be giving out and not only taking in, so they will need more spiritual nourishment in order to replace what they gave away. There will be a

spiritual flow, in and out, and the cobwebs and spiritual disease that can easily riddle believers' lives will be washed away. When people are focused on the needs of others, there is little opportunity for them to sit around complaining, gossiping and slandering each other. Instead of criticizing your sermons, people will start to obey God's word and will themselves become a living sermon to the world. The Bible will stop being a book of knowledge and will become a book of life.

The same holds true for prayer. It, too, needs to be outward focused. It is a spiritual principle that people who only pray for themselves and their own personal needs will never change. But when they intercede on behalf of other people, God will change their hearts as they pray. The best way for a selfish person to be delivered from self-obsession is to start praying for and meeting the needs of others.

The church in China is not focused on evangelism merely because it an activity of the church. Evangelism is for the glory of God. It is the reason we exist on this earth; it is our main act of worship. Worship is far more than just the singing of songs. Worship occurs every time a believer does something that brings honor and glory to Jesus.

If God's only goal was to get people into heaven, then he would take us there as soon as we first believed in him. However, he chooses to leave us in this world so that our lives and words can witness for Jesus Christ to all of humanity. When we witness, not as works but because we love Jesus and want to see his name glorified, our spiritual

lives will be strong, as will our love of God's word. No hardship or persecution will dampen our hunger for the Lord, for "to the hungry even what is bitter tastes great."

Fulfillment comes when we serve God through serving the needs of mankind. This is the explanation of the Apostle Paul's words to Philemon: "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ" Philemon 6

Have you ever wondered why some churches have a problem with lukewarm, backslidden Christians? We have found that backsliding is mostly due to a lack of witnessing for the Lord. Pastors often think people backslide because they cannot hold onto certain theological truths, but the problem is usually disobedience, not theology. The longer a person disobeys God, the colder their heart grows. The gospel is a gospel of action, not a gospel of selfpreservation. The pursuit of doctrinal purity in and of itself only results in legalistic bondage if you have no intention of also obeying God's command to proclaim the gospel throughout the earth.

Christians, if you have truly been saved, don't be ashamed to get busy for the Lord! There are multitudes of souls perishing all around you. If you don't go and reach them, who will? "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" Romans 10:14

Don't be discouraged when the devil sends people along who try to stop you or persuade you to wait until you are "more mature". If we wait until we are perfect before

we serve God, we will be waiting until Jesus returns.

A good church leader is someone who spends lots of time with the Lord and receives direction from the word of God to guide the church. The leaders should be the ones who cast the vision before the people, calling them to join in the work of the Lord. The leader needs to be full of love and mercy, but also strong and confident, for "if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" 1 Corinthians 14:8

All through the Scriptures – whether we study the life of Moses, David, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Peter or Paul – God's leaders were people who sounded a clear trumpet call. The people respected the hand of God on their lives and willingly followed the vision set before them.

Pastor, your primary responsibility is to give spiritual direction and leadership to the flock God has entrusted to your care. In China we believe the shepherd should be out in front of the flock, leading them through dangerous places. The willing sheep follow behind.

Too many times, however, the shepherd of a church is not leading from the front but is at the back of the flock, trying to encourage the weakest and most nervous sheep to inch their way forward. This kind of leadership will never achieve anything! You will spend all your time in counselling sessions and dealing with the problems in your congregation! The devil will continually invent more problems just to keep you tied up and away from leading your church into the real battlefield, which is the war for the souls of mankind.

Denominational pride is one of the easiest ways the devil can deceive us. Often our denomination or church thinks it is doing well compared to others. We sit in our boats and closely watch others as they drift further and further from the shore of God's truth. "It's terrible how they have drifted into error," we say, not noticing that we, too, have slowly drifted away from the shore while our attention has been focused on our pitiful neighbors.

Whole churches and denominations have drifted into dangerous territory without any realization of it. The answer to staying rooted in the Lord is to stop comparing ourselves with others and compare ourselves with the Lord Jesus instead. When we compare ourselves with others, we usually feel pretty good about ourselves. When we compare ourselves with Iesus, we see we are wretched and naked and we throw ourselves at the feet of the Lord, asking for mercy. This is how God intended us to live, in daily reliance on him for our existence. "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions...without comparing himself to somebody else" Galatians 6:3-4

Christians all around the world use Revelation 3:20 as an invitation to salvation, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." But closer examination of this passage reveals that Jesus wasn't knocking at the door of unbelievers' hearts when he said those words. He was knocking at the door of the backslidden church at Laodicea! Jesus was standing outside the door of the church,

knocking and asking to be let in! What a sad indictment that Jesus is an unwelcome guest in many churches today. Many continue to operate in their lifeless religiosity, "having a form of godliness, but denying its power" 2 Timothy 3:5

Wake up! Repent! Let God come into your lives and into your churches. He loves all people and as long as you have breath in you it's not too late for him to use you for his glory.

A spiritually dull church or believer is a poor witness for the living, resurrected Jesus.

A church is meant to be a training centre and command hub for war, not a social club for pleasantries and hypocrisy, where people give lip service to Christ while refusing to obey his commands.

It's time to wake up!

What should you and your church do if you have been sleeping and neglecting God's work? The answer is clearly found in the words of Jesus to the lukewarm church: "Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard, obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you"

Revelation 3:2-3

In the next issue of Asia Harvest we will hear what the Chinese house church leaders have to say about evangelism. They offer encouragement for believers everywhere, and a teaching from the Gospels that brings a very different understanding and clarity than most Christians have been taught.

### From our Mailbox

I so enjoy the Asía Harvest newsletters. My husband is a retired minister and a semi-invalid. He is no longer able to read, but I read your little booklets cover to cover to him. I have not sent any money over the years and so have expected the last copy of your newsletter to be the last one we receive, but as I find each new one in our mailbox I am so grateful. We have no money to send, but many prayers. Thank you for keeping us on your mailing list.

Esther H., New York, USA

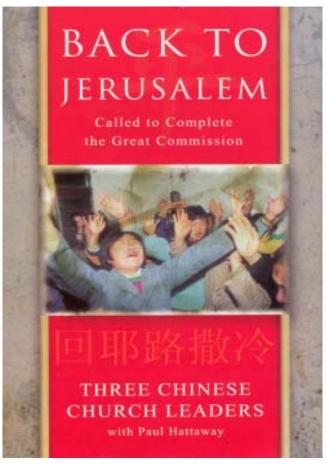
David B. is a friend of ours. He was a mass murderer but now he is a new creation in Jesus! There is nothing impossible with God! He received Christ 15 years ago in prison and he is truly born again. We have friends who get silent when we say he is born again but our reply is always, "do you believe the Gospel or not?" David is quite an intercessor and has a burden for many nations. He is the Chaplain's clerk and the congregation he attends prays for China as a corporate body. He would be so thrilled to receive your newsletter; he would cherish it. No doubt he would share the prayer needs with the congregation as well. We already receive the newsletter but I like to keep my copy if possible. If you cannot send him the newsletter please let me know and I will send him mine.

I don't care to communicate with anyone who has such views on religion as you do. I doubt if anything will cure you of your religious bigotry. If someone wants to worship an idol, good for them. As long as they are not pounding it into my brain and leave me to worship however I please. If you believe that your god is powerful and jealous, good for you. There is no god. In essence, whatever happens to you, good or bad, it is up entirely to you. I am not going to tell you which religion is right or wrong. If you want to believe in Vodoo, then that is fine with me, but don't go around saying that other religions are no good or wrong, and there is only one true religion. received by email

We are excited to include money for the sponsorship of two children in your Project Smile. The children in our playgroup worked very hard cleaning their toys and equipment to raise enough pocket money to sponsor these children. This was very special for the children because they have seen the progress of my son who was born with a unlilateral cleft lip and palate and had his first operation for his lip repair which amazed all the children. They are very excited to know that they are helping other children who don't have the same access to medical assistance.

A Playgroup in Australia

## Back to Jerusalem



We would like to announce the release of a new book, Back to Jerusalem. This book was produced at the request of Chinese house church leaders, who desired to tell the world about the great vision God has given them to win the world for Christ. This vision is not new, but dates back to the 1930s and has been renewed among the present generation of Chinese Christians. The three Chinese leaders who shared about this vision to send 100,000 missionaries into the heart of the Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu world, Brothers Yun, Xu Yongze, and Enoch Wang have spent a combined total of more than 40 years in prison for their faith. If you are interested in what God is doing in these last days, this book is a must! We were privileged to be asked to

write this book for them, and believe it is the most important book we have written.

Patrick Johnstone, the well-known mission statesman and author of Operation World, had this to say about *Back to Jerusalem*: "Who could ever have believed that after 50 years of Communism and terrible persecution, the Church in China could grow so mightily that China might become one of the foremost missionary-sending countries in the 21st century? This remarkable little book shows something of the conception and birthing of this vision in our day. This records the beginnings - what will the end be? May it be to the praise and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ!"

Back to Jerusalem costs US\$ 11, plus \$ 6 postage to anywhere in the world. Please send a \$ 17 check (made payable to "Asia Harvest"), money order or cash to our USA address, and your book(s) will be dispatched as soon as possible. Alternatively you can purchase the book by credit card or check over our website: www.asiaharvest.org