

China Thought Jailing a Prominent Pastor Would Halt a Growing Christian Movement – They Couldn't Have Been More Wrong

All Ezra Jin wanted to do was to preach the gospel. It worked, as the gospel tends to.

Unfortunately for the Chinese Communist Party, it worked far too well. See, Jin refused to give the state control over his flock, which the country requires. For a while, they tolerated him and his unsanctioned church.

That's why he's been jailed since October. It's also why prominent Western leaders – including President Donald Trump – are telling Xi Jinping to back off.

Not that it's hurting Jin any, eternally speaking. Physically, of course, things are much more grim. But the worst news, in the long run, should be for the Chinese government.

Yes, seriously. Because him being behind bars hasn't halted the growth of his church.

First, the quick facts on Jin for those unfamiliar with the face of modern Christian persecution: Born in 1969, Jin was a student at China's most elite school, Peking University, during the government's crackdown in Tiananmen Square, leading to him questioning the meaning of life.

He then, according to The Wall Street Journal, "began to realize these Christians were different... they had God and a home they could sometimes return to, and they could be sure

God loved them.”

While he originally went through seminary in China and preached in the state-surveilled churches – which mix Christianity with the Communist Party’s principles – he left in 2002 and enrolled at Fuller Theological Seminary in the United States.

In 2007, he founded the Zion Church of Beijing: “From a congregation of around 20, Zion grew to more than 1,500 over the next decade, making it one of the largest unsanctioned churches in Beijing,” The Wall Street Journal reported.

During China’s boom years, these congregations posed little issue for the ruling authorities. Those boom years are over, and Chinese President Xi Jinping has included cracking down on unapproved churches as part of his panopticon state.



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However, in the United States, Jin’s case has received the kind of attention that Xinhua (or, for that matter, the BBC or CNN International, to the extent those three could even be told apart) would never give him.

Grace Jin Drexel, his daughter, has been trying to free her dad, who was one of more than 30 leaders summarily detained last October. It was a culmination of a battle that has taken the better part of a decade, including the government demanding the church install two dozen surveillance cameras so that the congregants’ activities could be checked.

It still grew from a congregation of 20 to more than 1,500.

“To him, Christianity really like changed his life,” Grace, a U.S. citizen, said to Freedom House.

“He was the generation of students during the 1989 Tiananmen

Square protest, and so at that time, the whole generation – many of them – just had completely lost faith in their future. And for him, he found hope and love and freedom in Christ.”

In addition to the usual privations of prison, Jin also suffers from Type 2 diabetes and other health conditions, for which he’s receiving predictably little treatment.

And when he was in good health, it wasn’t as if China was allowing him freedom, either.

“He has missed my wedding. He has missed my brother’s graduations. And my mom’s graduation,” Grace said, according to the George W. Bush Institute.

“The birth of my two children... I would really love for my father to meet his grandchildren in person.”

However, he does have some powerful advocates, including President Donald Trump.

“I’ve heard about it. I will certainly look into it,” Trump told reporters before his China trip, according to The National Desk. “I’ll bring it up. I’ve gotten a lot of people out of a lot of countries including China.”

Grace was more direct: “As a daughter, I just want my father back,” she told The National Desk.

And that would be excellent – but better still is the fact that Ezra Jin is a man who will not be bowed nor broken by communists, for he knows Jesus is his Savior.

According to The Wall Street Journal, fellow Zion Church Pastor Sean Long asked him what would come to pass if the worst-case scenario happened and they were all thrown behind bars. “Hallelujah,” Jin said, according to Long. “A new wave of revival will follow.”

“It’s the highest honor for a Christian, for people like

Pastor Jin, being put in prison,” Long told The Wall Street Journal. “That’s exactly the mark of following Jesus.”

Amen. As Jesus said, “For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.”

Jail beats hell by a wide margin, naturally, but to be in a place where those are the choices is proof that evil forces are indeed afoot and know what they’re doing.

The good news? They don’t win. Not in heaven, certainly, and not on the earth, either.

Jail believers like Ezra Jin, and watch their impact grow. More importantly, watch the legitimacy of the CCP-run church system diminish instantaneously.

What the CCP meant for evil, God meant for good. Not that there was any doubt, but it’s nice to see eternal cause-and-effect work on the earthly side, as well.

As early church apologist Tertullian put it, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” More than 18 centuries since he said it (give or take), that remains harsh but true.

We are not called to easy lives as Christians. Most of us are called to quiet lives of difficulty. Ezra Jin’s isn’t a quiet one, but it’s also exponentially more difficult than we can imagine in the free world.

Ezra Jin is less concerned about dangers to his body than to his soul – and Beijing apparatchiks can’t even get around to acknowledging its reality.

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