

Pastor Dennis Balcombe Speaks Out on His Arrest in China

Editor's Note: *Charisma News reported Monday that pastor Dennis Balcombe, a well-known U.S. church leader who ministers in China, was placed under house arrest Saturday. He was released and has been returned home safely. He offers this statement:*

I want to thank everyone for their prayers for us. After a day of speaking with authorities in my hotel room, I was allowed to leave with no restrictions placed on me. All the Chinese Christians, including the two sisters from Hong Kong who traveled with me, are free and safe.

The incident happened on Saturday, and the local authorities were probably investigating if the meeting was a cult gathering, as someone had called to report to the police that there was a religious meeting in which foreigners were present. There were only 70 local Chinese in the meeting, but with the recent activities of Eastern Lightning and other cults, they wanted to check out the meeting.

The meeting was organized by a local Prayer Mountain ministry located in Nanyang, Henan province. On the way to the meeting from the Zhengzhou airport, the organizer told us the meeting was safe, as they had cleared it with the local authorities. He said recently other Western ministers have ministered to this group with no problems. The meeting was held in a function room of a hotel in Nanyang, and we stayed in the same hotel.

The main purpose of my teaching was to equip the Christians to hold to solid biblical truths and to come against evil cults, especially the Eastern Lightning cult. Several weeks ago, four of these women cult preachers, masquerading as house-church

Christians from Shenyang, came to my office in Hong Kong to “convert” me. I soon exposed their true nature, and as I was taking photos of them, which I eventually gave to the Chinese public security bureau (PSB), they physically attacked me. Just last week, the PSB officers visited us in Hong Kong and gave us a DVD and information on how to prevent this cult from infiltrating Christian fellowships.

We were invited to speak to authorities in my hotel room, in which people from various departments discussed various issues with me. They all said I was a good pastor and preacher (they listen to my sermons on the Internet) and that our church and the churches we associate with in China are good “orthodox Pentecostal churches.” However, we had broken the regulations on religion by conducting a Christian meeting with over 30 people and not first registering with the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB).

After one day, we went to another hotel in the city on our own. My passport was returned, and they told me I was welcome to come back any time and could preach in Three-Self churches or even house churches but that I should notify them before I came for religious activities in Henan.

I plan to take them up on this offer in the near future. Another reason for my visit was to gather information from Chinese Christians for a new book I am writing. In this book I want to document the great revival that has taken place in China, resulting in perhaps over 100 million believers. I will especially focus on the work of the Holy Spirit in healing the sick and empowering people to boldly preach the gospel.

In 1994, I was detained with six others in Fangcheng County, which is administered by Nanyang. Given that this was nearly 20 years ago, and knowing the greater degree of religious freedom in other parts of China, I was surprised this would happen to us. However, in my discussion with the PSB officials, one of them admitted that Henan still is not as

open and free as other parts of China. They also admitted there is a huge Christian population in this part of South Henan.

Nanyang has over 10 million in population and is very famous in Chinese history, especially in the Han Dynasty. Every Chinese in China is well familiar with the history of Zhuge Liang (181-234), chancellor of the state of Shu Han during the Three Kingdom period, as well as Liu Bei, Guan Yu, Zhang Fei and Cao Cao. After our release from 24-hour detention in our hotel, with other local Christians we visited some historical sites. We also prayed with our Chinese brothers and sisters that they would continue to stand strong as they face pressure from authorities and dangers from cult activities, especially the evil Eastern Lightning cult.

Paul Hattaway, who wrote *The Heavenly Man*, also wrote a very informative book on Henan called *Henan: The Galilee of China*. Many of the China Inland Missionaries (now called OMF) under Hudson Taylor worked in Henan, especially in the Nanyang area. This is also where we did much of our ministry in the 1980s and 1990s. It is estimated that as many as 15 percent of the people of Henan (which has a population of about 95 million) are followers of Jesus Christ.

Though this experience was not at all enjoyable, it was a blessing and honor to be in the same place where so many missionaries and Chinese preachers labored and gave their lives for the salvation of the Chinese people. Seeing the reaction of the believers, I recalled what happened in the book of Acts after the first major persecution: "So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41).

Thanks so much for your prayers for and support of the ministry in China.