

An Acts 4:29 Call to Prayer for China

Next week, on , people around the world will celebrate Chinese New Year. It is a good time to pray for our brothers and sisters in China and celebrate China's Christians.

It was the dream of the great Catholic Evangelist Frances Xavier to bring Christianity to China, and after his death off the coast of China in 1552, others followed in his footsteps. However the Emperors feared the church, and ultimately passed laws outlawing Christianity. In the 1830s, after Europeans forced open the ports of China, Christianity came to the treaty ports. Then Hudson Taylor and a host of missionaries carried Christianity into the heartland in the late 19th century.

There were 1 million Christians in China when Mao Tse-Tung established Communist rule in 1949. Like the emperors before him Mao feared the church. As his followers drove Christian missionaries out of China and persecuted the Chinese Christians, no one expected Christianity to survive.

Like the ancient Caesars, however, Mao did not understand that the kingdom of God was on the inside of believers, giving them strength to endure under persecution. The removal of the missionaries did not end Christianity, but simply made the church into a Chinese enterprise. When its property was confiscated it moved into the homes. And when its Chinese leaders were imprisoned, the Holy Spirit provided new leaders. As it had done during the Roman persecution, the church provided hope in a brutal society and continued to grow. Instead of fading away, the Chinese church has over 100 million believers today.

Unable to stop Christianity, the Communists attempted to

control it by establishing a state of controlled church structure, the Three-Self Church. Some Christians elected to participate in the state church, but many others refused. Instead, they formed the house church movement, which is still outlawed in China. For Catholics whose fealty to the Pope is considered to be treason, the Communists have appointed their own bishops and viciously persecuted Catholics.

Today the new “Emperor” of China, Xi Jinping, is still afraid of the church. He has declared himself as an opponent of Christianity and increased the persecution of Christians. A campaign against houses of worship has also been intensified. Recently the church building of a large charismatic church, built by members at a cost of \$3 million, was blown up and destroyed.

Meanwhile Pope Francis, in a conciliatory move, has agreed to recognize 7 Chinese bishops put in place by the Communists. The Pope’s decision is controversial among Chinese Catholics, but he seems to be hoping for peace between the Communists and the church.

Let us pray that the Pope’s gesture will overcome Xi Jinping’s fear and eventually lead to an end to the persecution of Christians. But let us also pray that the Chinese church will continue to boldly proclaim the gospel no matter what obstacles must be overcome.

May we in America honor and support our Chinese brothers and sisters. May we have the courage of the Chinese church to pray in the face of persecution the prayer of the church in Jerusalem:

“Now, Lord, look on their threats and grant that Your servants may speak your word with great boldness” (Acts 4:29). {eo}

Ron Allen is a Christian businessman, CPA and author who serves in local, national and international ministries, spreading a message of reconciliation to God, to men and

between believers. He is founder of the International Star Bible Society, telling how the heavens declare the glory of God; the Emancipation Network, which helps people escape from financial bondage; and co-founder with his wife, Pat, of Corporate Prayer Resources, dedicated to helping intercessors.