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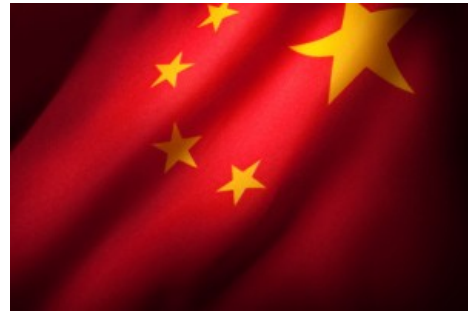
# “If This is What God Intended, So Be It” — The Persecuted Church in China

*The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever.  
Amen. 2 Timothy 4:18*

Thursday, April 21, 2011

The church is known as Shouwang, or the Lighthouse. It is located in Beijing, but it does not have a building. What it does have is enemies — and chief among them is the Chinese government.

As *The New York Times* reports, the Shouwang Church is a so-called house church, even though its membership and attendance would outstrip any residence. The key issue is that Shouwang is one of China's thousands of unregistered churches. This is true, even though Shouwang has applied for registration.



In recent months, the church even raised \$4 million to purchase a building. Instead, the church was forced into the streets, where its members were arrested for the crime of public prayer.

As Andrew Jacobs reported:

*Evicted yet again from its meeting place by the authorities, Shouwang announced this month that its congregants would worship outside rather than disband or go back underground. Its demands were straightforward but bold: allow the church to take possession of the space it had legally purchased. Officials responded with a clenched fist. On Sunday, for the second week in a row, the police rounded up scores of parishioners who tried to pray outdoors at a public plaza. Most of the church's leadership is now in custody or under house arrest. Its Web site has been blocked.*

This is a truly alarming development, but it is actually in keeping with the periodic repression of Christians that has been demanded by the Chinese Communist Party. The church has maintained a steadfastly nonpolitical stance, but the Chinese government clearly sees this church — and the thousands like it — as a threat.

As the paper reports, China has been cracking down on dissent in recent months. Churches in Guangzhou have had their facilities taken away. The advocacy group China Aid claims that at least 3,343 Chinese house church members were detained or beaten in 2010. Some experts estimate that two-thirds of China's Christians worship in house churches.

This current outbreak of persecution may have been sparked by the Chinese government's outrage over plans by some house church leaders to attend the recent Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in South Africa. Most of the leaders were detained and prevented from attending the meeting.

To understand how the Chinese government exerts its oppressive power, just consider this paragraph:

*Shouwang's latest troubles began again three years ago, shortly after its application for official recognition was denied. Officers from the Beijing Public Security Bureau burst into Sunday services, pronounced the gathering illegal and*

wrote down the personal details of everyone in the room, one by one. In the days that followed, calls were made to congregants' employers or college administrators. Many congregants say they were threatened with dismissal from jobs or school if they did not switch to an official church. Some left, but Shouwang's ranks continued to grow.

How many of our American church members would disappear if officials went about threatening jobs and college placements?

Ominously, the Chinese government has spoken its mind through official state-owned newspapers. One of these papers, the *Global Times*, ran an editorial last week that stated: "All Christians, as well as those of other faiths, are Chinese citizens first and foremost. It is their obligation to observe discipline and abide by the law."

"But our citizenship is in heaven," Paul reminds us, "and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." [Phil. 3:20]

While the New Testament commands Christians to obey the righteous laws of a nation, believers cannot bend the knee to the regime as their primary allegiance. No Christian is "first and foremost" a citizen of any earthly kingdom or nation. This is a despotic demand for the idolatrous worship of the state.

One Shouwang member spoke with Christian courage. He told *The New York Times*, even as his doorway was blocked by police: "I am fully prepared to go to jail for my church. I belong to the Lord, and if this is what God intended, so be it."

We must pray for persecuted Christians around the world, including these brave believers in China. Let's keep this verse in mind, even as we pray for them:

"The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen." [2 Timothy 4:18]

After all, it was written by a man who had direct experience with being persecuted for the sake of the gospel and was about to be martyred for his devotion to Christ.

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I am always glad to hear from readers. Write me at [mail@albertmohler.com](mailto:mail@albertmohler.com). Follow regular updates on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/AlbertMohler](http://www.twitter.com/AlbertMohler).

Andrew Jacobs, "[Illicit Church, Evicted, Tries to Buck Beijing](#)," *The New York Times*, Monday, April 18, 2011.

