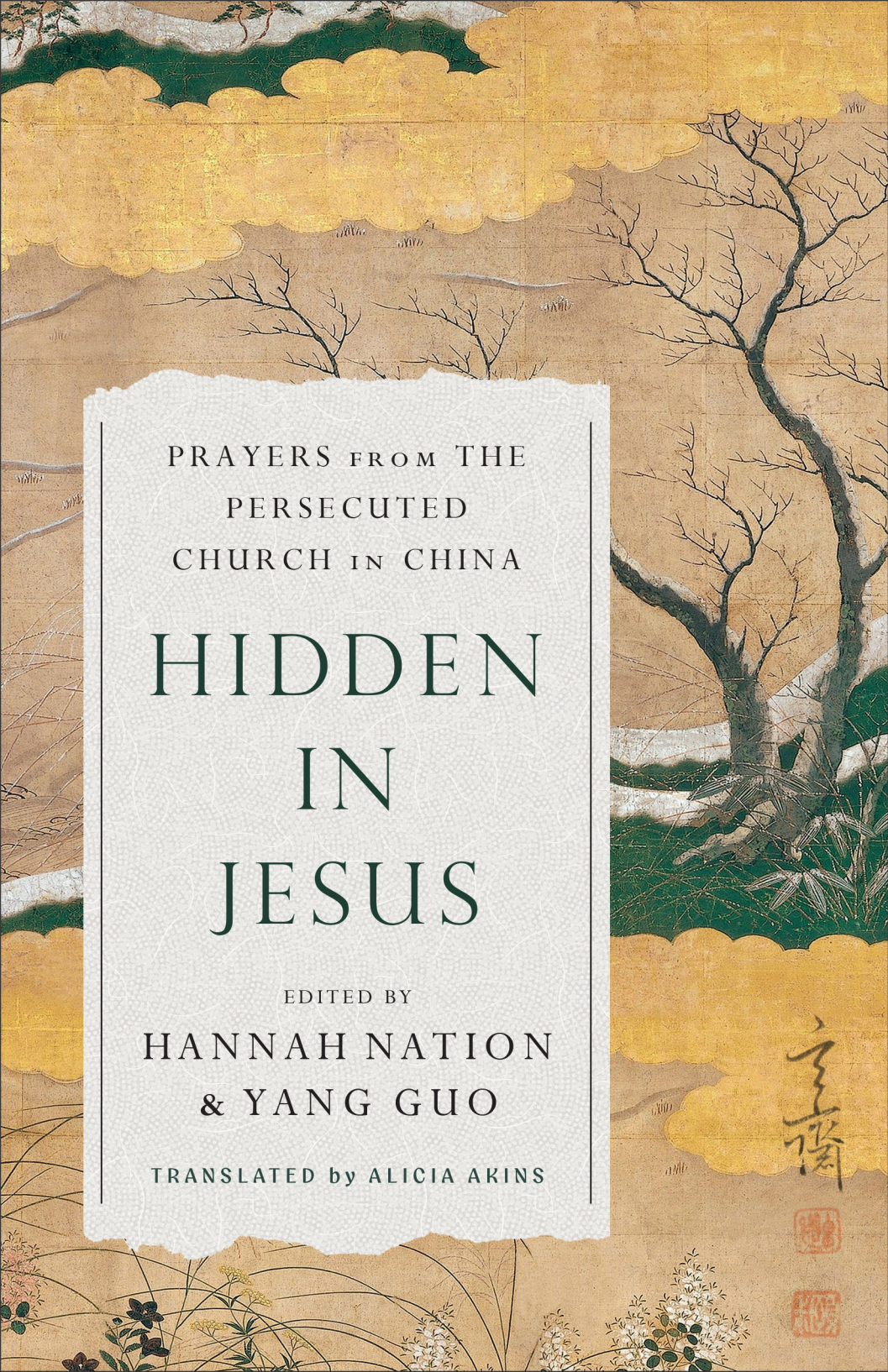


The background of the book cover is a traditional Chinese landscape painting. It features a large, gnarled tree on the right side, with its branches reaching across the top. The sky is filled with large, stylized yellow clouds. In the foreground, there are various plants and flowers, including some with small yellow blossoms. The overall style is characteristic of traditional Chinese ink and wash painting, with a focus on natural elements and a sense of tranquility.

PRAYERS FROM THE
PERSECUTED
CHURCH IN CHINA

HIDDEN
IN
JESUS

EDITED BY
HANNAH NATION
& YANG GUO

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Confidentiality is important for the ongoing ministries of the pastors featured in these pages. Their churches are often closely monitored and threatened with being disbanded. Some of the biographies are purposefully short and names changed to protect their identities.

INTRODUCTION

Many Christian traditions were birthed by oppressive histories. If there had been no chattel slavery or long-standing racism in the United States, we probably would not have the Black church traditions that shape so much of American Christianity. If there had been no Nazi Germany, we would not have had Bonhoeffer's Confessing Church. Likewise, if there had been no restrictions on and persecution of the church by the Chinese Communist Party during the past seven decades, Chinese house churches as we know them today would not exist.

Therefore, though the existence of the Chinese house churches may seem like an accident of history, there are no accidents in God's plan. He causes all things to work together for his good purpose. As a result, Chinese house churches are a hidden treasure that God is now giving to the global church, and their prayers are the brightest jewels among this treasure.

Why Do We Need Another Prayer Book?

Over the centuries, there have been many collections of prayers throughout the global, historic church. Recording, documenting, and sharing our prayers seems to be common practice among

Christians of various ecclesiological, theological, and liturgical commitments. Early Christians shared written prayers through letters they wrote to each other, and medieval Christians often relied on the Books of Hours. Though the Reformers were keen to encourage direct prayer to God, unmediated through the words of others, the Reformation as a whole produced many written and published prayers. And who could fail to mention the Anglican Book of *Common Prayer*?

In recent years, whether through the rediscovery of older existing prayer books or the creation of new contemporary resources, there has been a marked resurgence of interest in drawing on written prayers for personal and liturgical use. The modern classic *Valley of Vision* first popularized the prayers of the Puritans for a new generation, and the interest has continued with projects such as Douglas Kaine McKelvey's multivolume *Every Moment Holy* and Kayla Craig's liturgies for young parents.

Why, then, do we need yet another collection of prayers? And in particular, why do we need a prayer book from a part of the world that might seem so far away, when we already have so many resources at hand from our own cultural context? We can think of two important reasons. First, our theology surrounding Pentecost teaches us that we must listen to not only the historic church but also the global church. And second, the lived experiences of the persecuted church in China can teach those churches in comfortable contexts something about prayer they wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to learn.

Context Teaches Us How Powerful Our Tools Are

Some people like to carry around a pocketknife. Imagine one such person who lives in the city; occasionally they may pull out their knife to slice an apple or open an envelope, but the function of the knife is limited to such trivial matters. Then one day this city dweller goes camping with a friend in the wilderness and watches this friend

use a knife to skin game, set up camp, and catch fish. They realize that the knife carried around every day in their pocket could be so much more versatile, useful, and powerful than they could ever have imagined in the city. Wouldn't this change the way they view that little knife of theirs?

For Christians living in comfortable contexts, their attitude toward prayer is not unlike that of this young city dweller toward their pocket-knife. Perhaps they feel that prayer is of little use because they use it only on trivial matters, and over time this gift from God is neglected. But through listening to the prayers of the Chinese house churches, such Christians have the opportunity to watch these distant believers wield prayer in a way they have either forgotten or never been exposed to.

These Chinese Christians invite us all to understand that the power of prayer is far beyond our imagination. Therefore, we have compiled this collection of prayers as a testimony of the most important tool the Chinese house churches use in the wilderness of persecution. Not only does this book teach us how to pray and what words to use in conversation with our heavenly Father but it also testifies to our union with the triumphant Christ even in our darkness. It is a union that makes our prayers powerful, for Christ is reigning in the heavens and is interceding for us at the right hand of God the Father.

We know a woman, let's call her Jing, who spent two months in jail for helping to lead a house church in a small Chinese city. After her release, she shared a reflection with us about her time incarcerated. Her words reflect exactly the power of prayer—the pocket-knife—in her context:

My prayers used to be more centered around my personal needs or the ministries of the church. It was similar in our church. We would pray about different things, but no matter how much we prayed, it did not seem like it helped us grow very much spiritually.

During the first three days that I spent at the detention center, I had high hopes that God would deliver me and that I would be able

to leave after a few days. But when I finally received a note that said that I would be detained for a month, I made my peace. I saw how Jesus the Word became flesh and entered into our world, this world of darkness and filth.

At first, I really wanted to leave that place because those who were kept there with me were all thieves or drug dealers or prostitutes. But praying the Lord's Prayer helped me recognize who I was and what God's will for me was in that situation. On the third day that I was there, I suddenly understood and surrendered my heart to his lordship and began to pray every day for the forty or more cellmates who were there with me.

God was so amazing. We were not allowed to share the gospel, but I prayed that his will would be done and that he would bring those whom I could share the gospel with to me. Two of my cellmates ended up coming to our church after I was released.

As I prayed, "Forgive my debts as I forgive my debtors," God helped me face my own sins. In particular, he helped me face my idols: the idol of comfort and worldliness and the idol of wanting others' approval. We had little privacy in there—we were often strip-searched, and we did not have much food and had to sleep on the floor. But God used all of that to deal with my idolatry.

As for the police and officers who arrested me, I had a lot of anger toward them at first, but I knew that I had to forgive them. Before I was released, an officer asked me, "Do you hate the government?" At that moment, I really could not feel hate in my heart, and they were amazed by my answer.

While detained, I was especially worried about my church. I thought, *This is the end, our church must be divided now*. I thought there would be no one to lead; our church must have stopped gathering, and they must have stopped studying the Bible. So I prayed for the church according to the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

But the most amazing thing happened. During the month of my detention, the church had not stopped worshiping. The reason was that pastors from other cities had traveled to our city to lead our

little church in worship. Moreover, even more churches immediately set up three teams—a pastoral team, a legal team, and a prayer team—in order to support us.

That was why I was able to spend my days in detention quite joyfully. It is also why the Lord's Prayer closes with "Amen"—because in all things we see God's glory being revealed.

My time in detention was really quite all right, and I felt very thankful for that.

How to Read This Book

This collection of prayers is divided into fourteen themes loosely following a Reformed order of worship. Allow the house churches in China to lead you in worship, praise, thanksgiving, repentance, and prayer. Perhaps their prayers can help you remedy the areas you have often overlooked in your own praying life.

Because of the unique circumstances of the Chinese house church, their prayers are refined by suffering and trials, and such experiences have expanded their prayer repertoire and sharpened their focus. This volume contains laments that reflect Chinese Christians' heartache for their cities. It contains some jarring calls for justice—not unlike many of the imprecatory prayers in Psalms—that reflect their righteous anger in the midst of an idolatrous and unjust society. You will notice that many of these prayers for justice and mercy are by the people of Early Rain Covenant Church, whose pastor and elders are, as of this writing, being unjustly imprisoned. It contains prayers of repentance that reflect their desire for refinement rather than relief in times of trial. It contains messages of forgiveness that reflect their mercy toward those who persecute them. It contains benedictions that reflect their love toward a country that has often mistreated them. Above all, it contains thanksgivings that reflect their firm conviction that God has never abandoned them even in times of darkness.

The first prayer in this book comes from Wang Mingdao, a man widely called the father of the house churches by Chinese Christians of all theological, ecclesiological, and geographic backgrounds. Not only did he stand firm in his faith in the midst of heavy persecution but he also laid the foundation for the spiritual traditions of the house churches. It is because of these spiritual traditions that we see so many Chinese brothers and sisters persevering in prayer in the midst of their hardship today. This book also contains the prayers of other house church fathers such as Watchman Nee, as well as the prayers of current well-known house church pastors and leaders such as Wang Yi and the elders of Early Rain Covenant Church. Last, the book contains the prayers of many ordinary people. Some of them have departed from us and gone to their heavenly home, but most are still living in China and facing persecution today. For security purposes, we have used pseudonyms for many of them. Although they live in a difficult environment, like their predecessor Wang Mingdao, they hold tight to their faith, trusting that their prayers are filled with power. Even in the toughest of circumstances, our heavenly Father will continue listening to them and leading them through the darkness of night.

We also hope you will learn a few things from this collection of prayers.

First, we hope you will gain a better understanding of the house churches of China through these prayers. These prayers talk about the recent COVID pandemic, imprisonment, persecution, difficulties in daily life, and challenges Christians face in fulfilling the Great Commission, as well as our brothers' and sisters' sins of the heart and lack of faith. Most of the authors of these prayers are still in China, and their prayers give us a window into their lives.

Second, we hope you will learn from the spiritual attitudes of the Chinese house church through these prayers. You will find that our Chinese brothers and sisters often do not ask suffering and persecution to end; they only ask that God will continue to be with them,

purify them, lead them to repentance, strengthen their faith, and help them bear a beautiful testimony in the midst of suffering. They have firm courage to face the darkness because they are convinced that suffering is an inevitable experience on the way of the cross, and that suffering in persecution is the very proof of their union with Christ.

Third, we hope you will learn from the spiritual practices of the Chinese house churches through these prayers. Their daily way of connecting with Christ is not through extraordinary miracles or new and wonderful revelations. They are connected to Christ through prayer, Scripture reading, corporate worship, and the sacraments—practices historically known as the ordinary means of grace. They know these are the primary tools God has given us to strengthen our faith. The greater the challenges, the more they rely on these ordinary means of grace to commune with God. That is why you will see Bible verses permeating their prayers, insisting that God will help them keep meeting and worshiping on Sundays in spite of difficult circumstances. These spiritual tools are indispensable to us as Christians.

Finally, we hope you will pray for the house churches in China with these prayers. China's house churches will face increasingly daunting challenges in the coming years, and we can use the words they have given us to pray more deeply and specifically for our brothers and sisters in China. We are one family in the Lord; let their prayers be our prayers, their worship be our worship, and their thanksgiving be our thanksgiving.

May God bless you through this collection of prayers as you use it to pray for your brothers and sisters in China.

PRAYERS FOR GOD'S PRESENCE

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION IN THE HIDDEN PLACE

Gracious Father,

I commit my spirit into your sheltering hands and ask for your protection. Life is full of temptations and the world is full of snares; I cannot protect myself, but you are able to protect me and keep me from losing my footing. I give myself fully to you.

I commit my spirit into your gracious hands and ask for your comfort. My life's worries are many; the waters in which I wade are too deep and the flames I face too fierce. Before long, I will pass through great darkness in which I will lose all joy. But whisper to me, "Yet I am with you," and I will have no fear.

I commit my spirit into your repairing hands and ask you to sanctify me. If your discipline can make me more pure than before, I will happily endure it. Deal with me according to your own will, and I will praise you for your stripes.

I commit my spirit into your creating hands and ask you to perfect me and use me for your glory. I do not want to

live for myself. Allow me to be made nothing that Christ may be great in me. Shape me as a potter shapes his clay. If I can be a vessel the Lord uses, full of his favor, I would be satisfied. You are able.

Should death come for me by surprise, I will hear your greeting and will answer, “I commit my spirit into your redeeming hands; glorify me.” Your creating hands have shaped me, your sheltering hands have protected me, your counseling hands have led me, your loving hands have greeted me, your punishing hands have chastised me. But these were all your saving hands, protecting me, and your shading hand that guarded me. I have seen that these all are the hands of grace, and I have proven that these hands are powerful. So I will entrust myself wholly and always to you. Into your hands, Lord God of faithfulness, I commit my spirit, because you have redeemed me.

—Wang Mingdao

O LORD, COME AMONG US

O Lord, come among us; let us see your glory.
Open our eyes and hearts, that we may discern the way.
Only you are God, the true God, the living God, eternal King.
O Lord, come among us; illuminate our hearts.

—Canaan Hymn

WE ARE BLESSED

Gracious heavenly Father, we thank you for giving your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to us. We see the tenacity of your beloved Son in the wilderness, how humble and obedient unto death—even death on a cross—and, at last, ascending into glory. We thank you for choosing us in Christ before the creation of the world. Because of this we are in Christ and Christ is in us. The path Christ walked, we will also walk.

We thank you today for all of our persecutions and tribulations. They show that we are blessed, that we are graced, that we are chosen by God. We are willing to come to your Word and keep on strengthening our faith, looking to Jesus Christ, who is the author and finisher of our faith, walking this wilderness road to the end, and rejoicing in the hope of God's glory.

Continue to lead us, this church of the wilderness, and strengthen each of our saints. We thank you and give glory and gratitude to you. We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

—Su Xiaomu

COME TO MOUNT ZION IN HEAVEN

Gracious heavenly Father, we thank you. You have given us this five o'clock in the afternoon in China.* Every afternoon, many of your children gather before you at this time to pray to you. Lord, we are particularly grateful

* Since the arrest of Pastor Wang Yi of Early Rain Covenant Church in 2018, the elders of Early Rain have organized a nationwide prayer movement to pray for the imprisoned house church Christians and their families at 5:00 p.m. every afternoon.

for the many brothers and sisters in detention centers also united with us at this moment in prayer before you. We do not pray to you from dark, dank cells. Neither do we pray to you just from our homes. Rather, when we come before you, we come to the heavenly Mount Zion, where hosts of angels and armies of heaven, where assemblies of firstborn sons gather, where the spilled blood of our Lord Jesus Christ lies.

O Lord, thank you, for you truly love us. Prayer meetings like this cannot be torn down or stopped by the world. O Lord, please give ear to the prayers your children offer up to you. O Lord, we also praise you, for you have given us freedom. We pray to you because today we are still in the wilderness, Lord, and we need your holy hand to uphold us. Lord, please help us. O Lord, each day give ear to your children's prayers; each day send down from on high the blessings of heaven and grant us that spiritual blessing.

O Lord, we thank you. In the precious holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

—Anonymous

YOU NEVER LEFT THE STAGE

Dear heavenly Father,

We thank and praise you. We desire that your Word abide in our hearts, giving us courage and hope to face coming hardships.

Unfortunately, our expectations of a better future may fail. Unfortunately, we hope that we can strengthen our ability to face difficulties, yet when we see future difficulties, they are more than we can face.

But Lord, we also find that you tell us we have an incomparable hope: You have never left the stage nor left us in the thick of our troubles. Although you are not at the center of the stage, maybe it is just that we did not notice—all we saw were those fearful things such as plagues and pestilences because in the moment they appeared center stage.

But Lord, your Word tells us you have not left, and you stand beside us as we come in faith and prayer to seek you.

And when you do return once more to center stage, this all will end. You will take us into eternity—what a joy that will be! Help us to have faith and to see the glory you have stored up for us. Thank you, Lord, and keep us. And may the Word of the Lord be with us always and forever, reminding us that the Lord Jesus Christ, Immanuel, is with us at all times.

—Fred Wu

EXPERIENCING YOUR PRESENCE

Dear Lord, please be gracious to the church in China.

Actually, we do not possess any characteristics of a real people.

We only have your Word.

We only have eyes fixed on you.

We only know you have all power in every circumstance.

We only know that when we obey you, when we experience you, when we carry our cross, you allow us to see the risen Christ, to see your grace, and you strengthen our lives once more.

Bless us that as we experience these things we may all the more experience your presence. May our lives not be lived merely out of head knowledge but rather out of an inner reality.

May we know your presence.

When our little becomes much, we reveal to the world a worship that is in truth and in your presence, so that more may be drawn to you.

— Preacher Yang

LEAD US TO RAISE OUR VOICES TO YOU IN PRAYER

Lord, we ask you to lead your children to yourself; guide us to raise our voices to you in prayer. Enable us to deeply root ourselves in the gospel and live lives renewed by it. Enable us to calmly and fearlessly come before you and admit that we at times are truly helpless and weak.

O Lord, this environment appears disappointing, but when we look to you we will never be disappointed.

— Nathanael

PLEASE BUILD YOUR SON'S BODY

O Lord, I dare not take one step, for I know your Spirit is working in my heart.

My humble prayer is that the Lord be gracious to us, so we do not rely on talent or strength but on God's Holy Spirit to preach the gospel of our Lord.

I deeply confess I am but a sinner saved by grace. My thoughts and actions are full of imperfections before God. That which I most hate is myself. O God, I, your useless servant, am to be pitied.

Dear friends, let us lift our heads once more to look upon our heavenly Father. Let us once more with faithful hearts come before him, lean in to his embrace, and breathe

his life. Let us confess afresh that we are empty while he is abounding, that we are nothing while he is everything.

Should he not grant us grace, treat us kindly, and fill us, we would be nothing more than sinners with nowhere to turn. Let us then, with grateful hearts, praise and thank him for the grace given to us through Jesus Christ.

O holy Father, what you have entrusted to me is now here. If you see it as good, please bless it. May you, in this last generation, keep your children from corrupt flesh and evil spirits.

O Father, please build your Son's body, destroy your Son's enemies, hasten the coming of your Son's kingdom.

Father God, I look to you.

I rely on you. I praise you.

—Watchman Nee

WHEREVER YOU ARE

Father, we thank and praise you; you love us.

O Lord, may we build ourselves up within your love.

O Lord, when we think of the striving and struggling of our lives, may we look to you and put our lives into your hands.

Our lives only find their true value and meaning, and we are only able to face the constant trials in our lives, if you are there.

O Lord, we beg you: Strengthen us.

In your truth, renew us over and over again.

Shape us over and over again.

Allow us to truly follow you.

—Qingen

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

O heavenly Father, amid earth's varied storms and maelstroms, the devil's roar resounds. Circumstances entangle us. Self and sin engulf us. We are hard-pressed!

But, through the Lord who saved us on the cross, we are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37). We can partake in the worship by the sea of glass in the future (Rev. 15:2).

Heavenly Father, may your Holy Spirit help us and strengthen our faith in Christ. In the midst of our difficulties, may we hold fast to the anchor you have prepared for us: our Lord and Savior Jesus, who died and rose for us.

O Lord, guide us. Unite us with Christ, as a branch to the vine, to face various storms by relying on the Lord.

May our Father give us living hope.

In the holy name of the mighty, great, magnificent Lord Jesus Christ, who calmed the wind and waves, we pray.
Amen.

—Paul Peng

MAY WE DELIGHT IN YOU

Dear Father God,

We come before you asking for your Holy Spirit to illuminate us. We thank you that your Word gives us insight into your knowledge, enabling us to see your heart. May all this, through your Holy Spirit, become a part of our lives, become our worship, and become our rest.

Your holy Word shows us the extreme goodness of your heart in creation. You desire to dwell among those you have fashioned in your image, that we may delight in

you. Your heart is satisfied as you live among us. You have pitched your tabernacle among your people. May your good pleasure become our lives' deepest desire and satisfaction. Daily we come before you, to dwell with you and enjoy your presence.

—S. E. Wang

REDIRECT OUR STEPS

Our heavenly Father, we thank and praise you. How vast is your grace!

You are a God who delights to be gracious, to forgive, and to save! No matter how much we may have sinned against you, when we return to you, you will save us and draw near to us!

I come before you now to offer a prayer for myself: In the midst of all this roaring wind, turn my steps toward you. Remove from me the fear and anxiety in my heart, that I may see your lovingkindness. Standing upon the rock of Christ's salvation, I receive your peace and joy! Give me a heart to adore you as a deer pants for flowing streams!

I come before you now to offer a prayer for the church in China: In the midst of the dual difficulties of persecution and isolation, keep us gathered before you. Forgive our sins: our lukewarmness toward you, our lusting after the benefits offered by the world, our compromising with the world, and our earthly pursuit of what the world values.

Withdraw your wrath. Turn us back to you to worship you alone!

In this present darkness, lead your church to gather before your throne of grace. We cry out loudly in supplication and praise to more deeply experience your

lovingkindness and faithfulness. Grant us faith and courage to testify to the earth of your righteousness and power!

May the gospel of the redemption of the cross be preached in the land of China. May the name of Christ be exalted in this land.

May the kingdom of Christ expand unhindered in this land!

—Hai Mu'en

HIDDEN WITHIN THE TRUE HOLY ONE

Heavenly Father, thank you for granting me the privilege of coming into your presence.

You have said that without holiness no one can behold your face, yet I, who am by nature unholy, each morning, each Sunday, can see you.

Each and every moment, I can openly come before you, my ever-present help. For I have been hidden within the True Holy One. Through him, I am a chosen people, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a people belonging to God (1 Pet. 2:9).

Help me not only be grateful for this hidden identity but also to use this identity as a motivation to discipline myself.

—Lee Haggai

YOU DID NOT SEND US ALONG STRAIGHT PATHS

Lord, I thank you.

You are God. From everlasting to everlasting, you are our dwelling place, O Father, even to this day.

When the flood overwhelms us, you are King. When earthly powers disobey you, and gather against you, you are still King.

You are especially the protector of your people.

You did not send us by straight paths directly to the land of Canaan. Instead, you took us through the wilderness, to wander, to circle, that our eyes might discern. Your pillars of cloud and fire guided us to set camp, to rise up. So that we may concentrate and fix our eyes on you alone.

For you are Jesus, who delivered us out of trouble and out of Egypt, the God who will guide us into the new heavens and the new earth—which will be glorious.

Help us in the midst of our troubles.

Because your pillars of cloud and fire are with us, because we have never lacked manna; our shoes, they have not worn out, and our hearts are full of contentment.

Your rod and your staff comfort us.

—Susan

IF NOT IN YOU

You are the eternal Lord. You give us eternal hope. If not for being in you, all would be fleeting, even our faith, our obedience, our ministry—all fleeting. If these all do not arise from you but instead from ourselves, who could endure? Who could press on? Who could persevere to the end?

Who can trust in themselves to be saved?

Lord, have mercy on us, help us. Enable the church in China today to see your grace in the journey. O Lord, the fat of your abundance covers the earth beneath our feet. We seek your love in China. Please pour out your love on

us, so that onward we may continue, one day returning to the family of the global church. We will worship together with your children from every nation. We will participate together in the mission of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth, in your presence. We will worship before you forever and ever, thanking and praising God for hearing our prayers and supplications.

In the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen!

—Wang Yi

PRAYERS FOR COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION

SHATTERING BROKENNESS, PUTTING DEATH TO DEATH

O Sovereign Lord, the world hates your claim of sovereignty over human life. I fear being mocked or angering others when I speak about you. But if you are not constrained by fear of threat from the “powers” of the world, then neither should I be. Let me understand the joy of obedience to you and the fearlessness that comes with you.

Father, you use your Son as a response to the chaos and conflicts of the world. He will eventually shatter brokenness, put death to death, destroy destruction, and eliminate all sadness. Please teach me to take refuge in you—through Jesus—to hide in your forgiveness and to be assured of a glorious future in your wise will. Amen.

— Sister Bao En

TRUE HOPE

Holy and righteous heavenly Father, your Son, Christ, was sealed in a tomb, and his resurrection brings us true hope.

In the midst of worldwide sickness and war, use your church to preach and witness to the gospel, so that more people may come to know Christ, who gave his life for us and rose from the dead. Give rulers and authorities the humility and wisdom to formulate policies in an appropriate manner, and direct their God-given authority to do good rather than treat people harshly.

Enable every Christian to be light and salt in their own city so that the evil nature of humankind will not continue to deepen and multiply and the marginalized of society would not hurt each other. Let people see living proof of the gospel, and may peace and joy draw others to know the gospel.

O Lord, your will is higher than our will, and your ways are higher than our ways. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

— Sister Bao En

YOU HAVE BLESSED US WITH SUCH AN ENVIRONMENT

Lord, we pray for ourselves and for our fellow pastors and workers in the church. It is in the midst of such challenges and such persecution that you reign. May your will be done for these children whom you have called. Lord, shepherd your church with your Word every day. Let us live every day in the reality of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in the transcendence of our identity, which is now united and seated in heaven with you.

You have put us through challenges and hardships we do not know how to navigate; give us clear instructions and a clear path. Through such circumstances, allow us to more deeply rely on you, for nothing you put us through is in vain. All is for your Great Commission. Lord, we are especially thankful that you have granted us such an environment, one in which we can help and encourage the weak in this grueling task. Remember us especially in our whole community of life, and let us see daily the gospel of Christ. We pray for the coming of your kingdom and the manifestation of your glory. Lord, we ask that you continue to equip your armies because we are about to head into battle; so, Lord, we look to you.

—Sister Bao En

ACCEPTING YOUR WAY

Our God, we bow down and worship before you.

Not one thing you have arranged is bad. Many times, we choose our own paths, but you block our way, not giving us smooth paths but instead calling us seemingly to run us into walls. We want to say, “If this is to your liking, we cannot question why you have treated our brothers and sisters that way but have treated me this way, or why you have been gracious to our brothers and sisters but not gracious to me.” We want to accept your way, accepting what is reasonable as well as what is not, and accepting what seems beneficial as well as what does not.

You call us to learn to see your way. O God, you do not need to tell us why, but, O God, only that it is your work, and all of it is good. O God, all you do is good. You call us,

in everything, not to argue or ask why. Save us from all of our “whys” and all of our questions. We look to you for salvation. Lead our hearts to this step, that each one of us may be a footstool before your throne for you to step upon, that we may be able to obey and worship.

Bless our brothers and sisters; we look to you to be gracious to us. In the name of the Lord Jesus, amen.

— Watchman Nee

EXPAND OUR BOUNDARIES

Father God, before we pray,
ready us with confidence in prayer,
with a sense of security,
and with the assurance that you, Father God,
will answer our prayers according to your good pleasure.
The world hates the gospel; it hates the church.
The world longs to hear lies, not the truth.
And the world is desperately afraid.
Afraid of the gospel being preached,
of God’s church being united,
of God’s people being strengthened and emboldened.
So they use many ways to restrict and intimidate us.
I know that all we experience is in your hands.
Without your permission,
not a hair of our head would fall to the ground.
Since you have allowed the church to go through
such suffering, persecution, and hardship,
we trust in God the Father.
In the midst of these difficulties,
you will prepare sufficient grace
for your people and your church.

Heavenly Father, in the midst of such persecution,
let brothers and sisters more deeply long
for the fellowship of the Spirit
and the encouragement of one another,
which is a blessing from heaven in the Spirit.
By the grace of the Lord in Christ,
connect pastors and co-laborers with each other.
Heavenly Father, may you come and expand our boundaries.
May you exalt your name in our lives.

— Guo Zhong

THIS WORLD CANNOT SHAKE YOUR KINGDOM

Only your words can bring us comfort.

The promises of your Word are the hope you bestow on
those of us who are in despair.

The hope you have granted us is the true, never-changing
hope because your unshakable kingdom will be realized in
this world, renewing the universe.

O Lord, although this world is shaking, it cannot shake
your kingdom or shake the faith of those with believing
hearts.

Give all of us believing hearts.

O Lord, come!

— Pastor Li

ENTER A DEEPER PLACE IN CHINA'S CULTURE

O Lord who grants us strength for war, we pray to you. On
this Spring Festival, your children are like sheep among

wolves, scattered among every city and town.* May we enter a deeper place in China's culture. Especially watch over the faith of every one of your children, that we would pray unceasingly with soberness and serve you in the midst of tears and suffering.

O Father, since you have chosen us, the lowly and the weak, you are able to save our whole family. Grant us a heart of prayer to pray for our family and friends because each one of their souls is precious. Use us to fulfill the great needs of the gospel.

Father, in the midst of the apathy of the human heart and moral degeneration—how much sorrow and despair there is in the hearts of people—please give brothers and sisters a spiritual sensitivity to boldly break through a superficial false hope and to probe the true requirements of the gospel. Grant us courage and gentleness to testify to your fragrance.

—ERCC Prayer Bulletin

BECOMING A HEAVENLY KINGDOM

You are the Father in heaven, enthroned in power. Out of love, you created humankind, and you want us to be stewards of the world you created, to be fruitful and multiply. You want us to obey your command in eating: We are not to eat of the tree of good and evil in the garden. You want us to live lives worshiping you, obeying you, loving you, and following you by faith throughout all your creation, so that we may create a godly culture within it.

But we are fallen and corrupt. You allow us to see a great light in the darkness. Whether in the darkness of a raging

* The Spring Festival is a fifteen-day celebration of the Chinese New Year on the lunar calendar, which usually falls between late January and early February.

pandemic, the oppression of sin, or the persecution of the church, we know that this light is the true light, the light of the gospel. May the light of your gospel edify us again and again. Lit by your true light, we will become a heavenly kingdom, living as we should in this world, creating a heavenly culture while also interacting with the earthly one and becoming the church of hope for all people.

— S. E. Wang

GIVE US THE GOSPEL OF THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM

Compassionate and merciful heavenly Father,
you have seated us in a country that continues to build walls,
China, known as the “walled country.”*
How much steel and concrete will it take
to ward off your wrath?
How many cameras will it take to keep you out of sight?
How many prisons can be built to keep out your voice?
When lies cover lies and dead bodies pile upon dead bodies,
when there will not be left here
one stone upon another that will not be thrown down,
how can we come to face our utter nakedness
and complete filth?
O Father, have mercy on us.
Have mercy on us
because the land is full of corruption.
The people of this land grow hoarse from hardship.
All around are sounds of mourning;
all around, the news of death.
Can we glean from ice the call of spring?
Or from death the call of life?

* In Mandarin, “walled country” has the same pronunciation as “strong country.”

Can we be illuminated by great light from within the darkness?
Father, give us that gospel of the heavenly kingdom.
Give us repentant hearts.
Give us a Savior who died and rose again.
Make us weep in love and compassion
for this nation and this city!

— ERCC Prayer Bulletin

YOUR GRACE PROTECTS OUR COMING DAYS

Lord, you are sovereign over all;
no matter the situation you are still King.
You rule over each and every one of our hearts.
Search within us all areas of our lives —
whether in words, in attitudes, or in our hearts —
any unwillingness to be ruled and governed by you,
where we know what we should do but are unwilling to obey.
Manifest yourself in these places and be our Lord.
In the midst of our weakness and weariness,
you allow us to hope in you, wait on you, and be renewed.
Particularly in times of weakness, you hold us up.
Lord, if you had not helped us, we would have no power.
In the midst of hardship, human ability is very limited.
We are often weary, and we may back away.
But it is you, O Lord, for your glory, for your name's sake.
You have lifted up your church, and you have lifted us up.
Into your hands, O Lord, we commit ourselves.
Lord, we commit ourselves into your hands
and ask you to reign among us.
Thank you for your grace to keep us in the days to come.

— Sister Bao En

USE TRUTH TO SUBVERT US

O Lord, what great honor you have bestowed upon your servants and children, that they should suffer with you and be faithful unto death.

Lord Jesus Christ, you were hung on a tree, charged with “incitement to subvert state power.” Only you could subvert this world that calls black white, and whose kings have already been judged.

Your kingdom has already come; your reign lasts forever. You always govern your people with lovingkindness and truth, and you grant them unexpected peace. Please use your truth to subvert us; let us proclaim your truth to this nation. We have no weapon apart from prayer and the Holy Bible, no hope apart from your crucifixion and resurrection.

Christ is Lord. Grace is king.

Bear the cross. Revive the gospel.

O Lord, please help us! Double our joy!

— ERCC Prayer Bulletin*

O LORD, MY HEART DOTH LOVE THEE

Riches, pleasures, fame, and earthly love,
these have I surrendered all to thee.
In suffering, scorn, and grievous woe,
O Lord, my heart doth love thee still.
Though frail I am, with tearful eyes,
and sorrow doth not cease,
yet with thy cross upon my back,

* This prayer was sent out three days after Wang Yi, pastor of Early Rain Covenant Church, was arrested. He was later sentenced to nine years in prison for “incitement to subvert state power.”

O Lord, my heart doth love thee still.
In the furnace hot, thou art with me,
on the cross, thou suffered pain.
Thou knowest my heart, O Lord,
and my heart is thine alone.
I gaze upon thy wounded hand;
O Lord, my heart doth love thee still.
Thy hand, once pierced, doth guide my path;
O Lord, my heart doth love thee still.
The alabaster jar is shattered now,
its fragrance poured upon thy head.
O Beloved, thou dost dwell within;
O Lord, my heart doth love thee still.
Purged by fire, I am formed like thee,
though my heart be torn in twain.
Thy love I shall proclaim abroad;
O Lord, my heart doth love thee still.
In heaven's courts, we shall meet again
and share thy glory bright;
seated near thy throne above,
with thee, I am at rest.
Until that day, my song shall rise:
O Lord, my heart doth love thee still.
Thy tender heart delights in my praise;
O Lord, my heart doth love thee still.

—Wang Xiangheng