

# A Letter To My Chinese Brethren

Greetings, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

My webmaster contacted me with the surprise that my website hits suddenly increased by over a million in a few weeks. He asked if I had any idea why. I did not, but I asked him to see where the increase had originated and suggested it may be China. Sure enough, that turned out to be the case.

Now why my Chinese brethren suddenly surged in accessing my website is a mystery to me. I doubt that it could be the work of a single man recommending it, so it seems best to attribute this to the Lord's doing. All I can say is that I am grateful and hope that I have been of some use.

Such a significant sudden access to my papers deems some sort of response; hence this letter.

So I welcome you all and trust that the Lord will use my meagre efforts to encourage and edify you in the truth of God's word and the sovereignty of his purpose on Earth.

In the West we do not get to hear accurate details of what life is like for the people of God in the interior of China, but we know enough to understand that it is very difficult. I will not get into any politics here because I do not want to jeopardise any of you. Suffice to say that God is your preserver and that all things work together for the good for those that love him.

What does give me great joy and thanks to God is that the laborious efforts of previous generations of faithful workers, beginning with men like Robert Morrison and later Hudson Taylor and then men like CT Studd and WC Burns, is obviously continuing to bear fruit. To this must be added the later great works of Chinese disciples used by God, such as Wang Ming Dao, John Sung and Watchman Nee.

While the West is capitulating to apostasy and wickedness in huge numbers and the church is deserting the truth of God's law, it is heartening to see that large numbers of Chinese brethren are searching for the truth and bearing witness in great difficulties and affliction. I commend you.

I know nothing of your circumstances, which I am sure vary from region to region, but I want to pass on some basic thoughts for your edification and prosperity. These are eternal truths which will do you good whatever your circumstances.

In all things and in all ways centre your life upon the word of God. Trust no one but God alone; men will let you down. Only God's word sustains the soul and directs the life. If you search carefully you will find an answer to every problem you have, whether theological or practical. God's word will not let you down because every word is truth and God honours his word above all his name.

To do this try to get the best available Bible version. I have explained elsewhere that New Testament versions based upon Byzantine textual sources are the only ones to be trusted. The eclectic (Alexandrian) text is the work of men and committees based on flawed methods. The King James Version (though it has antiquities and is harder to read) is good,

however, I use the New King James Version because it corrects places where the KJV is less accurate and is easier to read.

In everything that you do, seek to focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ; make him the centre of everything. Seek to bear a testimony to the glory of Jesus, make that the focus of your life. If your motivation is to constantly glorify Jesus then you cannot stray very far from God's will.

Ask for the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit every day and always pray to be filled with the Spirit. Once you have asked for guidance, expect it.

Spend time contemplating the glory of God. Seek to understand his attributes so that you can recognise what is of the character of God and what is not. Learn about God's decree so that you can put all aspects of salvation and providence into God's perspective. When you understand the plan of salvation and the purpose of God you can line up your life to work for the right things. So many people have spent their lives working for wrong things, which turn to dust.

Be patient in tribulation. This is hard, but afflictions are very necessary for the child of God. Without them we wander from the path; with them we cling to God like needy children. Always seek God's will when you are undergoing trials. Try to learn the purpose of it.

Do not trust open doors. Just because a door opens to you that does not necessarily mean that it is God's will. God expects you to use discernment and make your own decisions based upon truth, not circumstances. The apostle Paul sometimes had an open door, which he ignored, or guaranteed persecution, which he walked into. On other occasions he fled from persecution and went through open doors of opportunity. God expects you to have a renewed mind that understands God's will.

Come to God as a little child. Dependence upon God is one of the keys of a fruitful life. Those who are utterly dependent upon God will prosper; those who run after their own great ideas will fall.

Have a real perspective of yourself. Understand that you are always just a sinner saved by grace and an unprofitable servant. Never let yourself be puffed up; pride comes before a fall. If Jesus, being Lord of the Universe, could be humble, you should have no difficulty being humble since we were originally merely rebellious dust.

Understand that the best praise of God is that which occurs in secret in your private devotions. It is easy to be caught up in corporate adoration in church meetings and much that is supposed to be worship today is merely personal entertainment and emotionalism that feeds the old nature. Therefore, ensure that you praise God constantly at home; give thanks always. If you are afflicted and harassed, you can still thank God for breath, for life, for family, for blue skies, for Jesus and for salvation. There is never a shortage of things to give thanks for.

Begin your prayer time by reading God's word. Let that stimulate and direct your devotions.

Keep very short accounts of sin. That is, if you sin - immediately confess it to God and ask for cleansing. Do not let time elapse before you deal with it. Trust in God's mercy. Short accounts require faith.

If you have no conviction of sin, have faith that you please God because you are in Christ.

Try to understand the depth of what it means to be 'in Christ'. This phrase is repeated scores of times in the NT and it underlies a deep theological meaning. Learn what it is to be a new creation in Christ, united with Christ, dead with Christ, resurrected with Christ, raised with Christ. The power of true Christian testimony is resurrection life. This means properly understanding Romans 6-8, Ephesians 1-4, Colossians 1-3 etc.

Read Christian history. You can grasp a good many theological and practical matters from studying the lives of great saints.

Try to understand what your gift is and what your ministry is. This may take some time if you are a young believer. Everybody has a gift from God and gradually you will see how this becomes your ministry to edify others. Your gift will be something that you really enjoy doing and which gives you satisfaction in serving God. Never try to copy other people; follow Jesus and Jesus alone. Gradually, others will begin to recognise your gift because they will be blessed by your use of it.

Be in fellowship as much as possible. Now there are many places in the world (especially in the West today) where true fellowship is very hard to find. So many good people are isolated with no local church that is not apostate. In such circumstances, try to fellowship with God's people in whatever way that you can, whether this is by telephone, emails, Skype, correspondence, or other means of communication. At the very least you can fellowship with the minds of great believers through books. Get as many good Christian books as you can. Read widely but with discernment. Grow by reading more thorough books; big books make big Christians.

Always seek to do good to all people, but especially believers. Never return evil with evil but always return evil with good works. There is no shortage of ways of doing good; but always do good deeds in the name of Jesus and for his glory, even if it is mundane work.

Pray every day for your family; seek the conversion of everyone you know. Don't stop praying for people even if they do not believe after many years.

Try to give in the name of Jesus as much as you can. If you are poor, give in other ways – of your time, prayer and consideration or by helping others with chores. If you are rich, seek to give away as much as possible - God has made you a bank for the Lord's work not your pleasure. CT Studd began his missionary work by giving away his entire fortune.

Be faithful, always. In your secular work, be a conscientious worker. In your friendships always tell the truth and be honest. In your marriage, be monogamous and faithful. In your church always support the weak and vulnerable. In your area support the poor and needy.

In society, submit to the authorities that have been put there by God; submit and do not react with violence. Obey human laws, unless they directly contradict God's laws; then you must resist, but passively. The early church could submit to most Roman laws, even if they did not like them – with the exception of worshipping Caesar, that was impossible and they died for it.

Take care of your body – it is God's gift that you have under your control for a short time. Be wise. Be a good steward. Therefore, eat as well as you can. Get sufficient sleep but also sufficient exercise. Drink lots of good quality water. Avoid processed food. Avoid sugar. Avoid fizzy drinks.

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I wish to be of service to you if I can. If you have really difficult questions that you cannot answer, email me via the website. I can only deal with a very small percentage of you. Even if one percent of you contacted me it would overwhelm me (I am medically challenged and very pressed for time) as well as the server. So, try all avenues to answer your questions first: commentaries, Bible dictionaries, theological dictionaries, lexicons, dogmatics and so on. But if all these fail and you have a burning question, then email me and I will try to help if I can, as God wills.

Finally, please inform me what is going on in Chinese churches. Why did I get over a million hits in a few weeks?

So, I wish you every blessing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. May your works follow you to an eternal reward.

Grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your servant,

Paul.

Worthing, England, September 2019.

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