A Distorted Church

**TEXT**: **Acts 4:10-12 (ESV)** 10  let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. 11  This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12  And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Years ago circuses and amusement parks put up large mirrors which distorted the image of the person who stood in front of them. Today there are camera apps which do much the same thing. It’s always fun to watch one wacky image of a person being replaced by another which shows an even greater alteration.

Of course, it is possible to push things to where you are no longer able to recognize the individual.

According to Reverend Bob Fu of **China Aid**, that is what the Communist government is doing to many churches in China. Followers of the Christ are being asked to accept one State mandated change after another. The church is asking, “How far can we go before we stop being recognizable as the bride of Christ?”

Giving orders with a frequency and intensity which has not been seen since the days of the Cultural Revolution in the 1960’s, Pastors and parishes are being told:

* Accept a proposed new “translation” of the Old Testament and rewritten commentaries for the New Testament which mixes in some Buddhist scriptures, Confucian teachings and Socialist doctrines.
* Removal of crosses from the outside of buildings. When crosses are on display on an internal church wall they must be flanked by photographs of Chairman Mao and Chairman Jinping.
* At the beginning of every worship choirs must sing communist revolutionary songs praising the government. Only when that is done can Christian hymns be offered.
* In some places Christians are being visited in their homes and being asked to sign a document which says they made a mistake when they converted to Christianity.
* In some provinces it is now against the law for children to join a religious group. In other places they are banned from going to worship, listening to sermons, et.

The list of changes proposed by Communist leaders continues on and on.

One does not need a crystal ball to see the Chinese church is being asked to go where they will no longer be a church. And that, my friends, means, our brothers and sisters will soon be called upon to emulate the Apostles and say, ‘We must obey God rather than men.”

By God’s grace, and the Holy Spirit’s power, may they prove to be faithful and continue to proclaim only the crucified, risen and ever-living Redeemer can bring forgiveness to the sinners and salvation to those who were destined for damnation.

**THE PRAYER**: Dear Lord, grant the gifts of courage and faithfulness to believers under persecution all around the world. Lord we also pray for those in our country who are also being persecuted. Grant that we who have freedom of religion make full use of every opportunity to offer our thanks for all You have done, and continue to do for us. In Jesus’ Name I pray. Amen.