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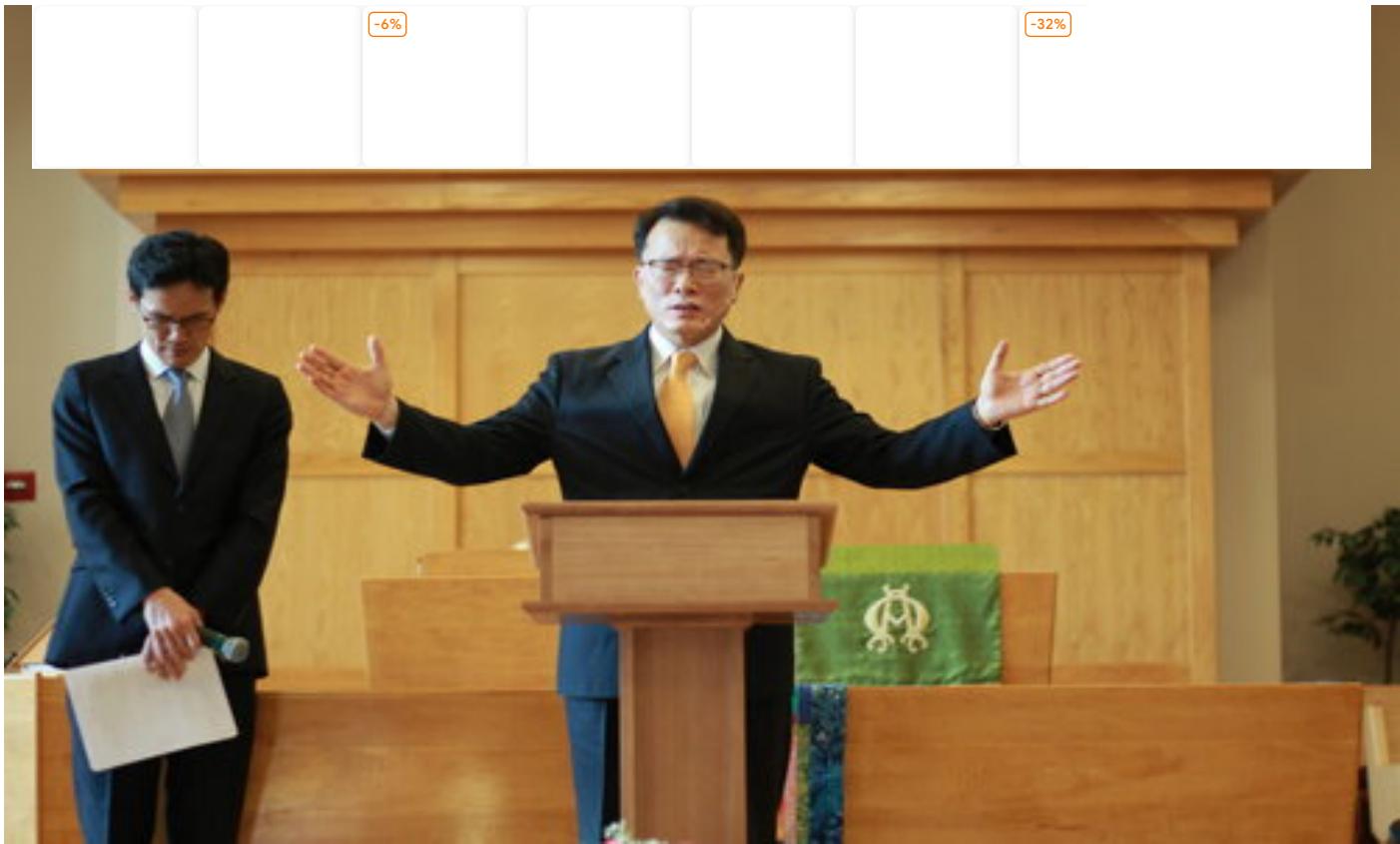
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ARTICLE

South Korea's Dangerous Descent Into Restricting Freedom Of Religion





BY JOHN STONESTREET/BREAKPOINT.ORG JANUARY 22, 2026

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A few thousand worshippers at last week's Sunday service at Segero Church in the city of Busan South Korea sang loudly, "All my life, you have been faithful. All my life you have been so, so good I will sing of the goodness of God." The song is appropriate for a congregation that has grown so dramatically from about 20 members a few decades ago to a 23-acre campus buzzing with life and activity. After the service, dozens of church members prepared free lunch for everyone who wished to stay, as they do every week.

This practice, an elder told me, makes it possible for the church to also offer meals for the wedding celebrations that take place at Segero Church nearly every weekend, at no charge to the marrying couples. It is an essential way for the church to address the crisis of the nation's declining marriage and fertility rates, among the lowest in the world, though you would not know it from the hundreds of young people gathered at the stage to sing each service. Last year, the church also started a Christian school.

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And yet, since August, the lead pastor of Segero Church has been in prison, accused by the government of election interference. I visited Pastor Son, hoping to encourage him. Instead, he encouraged me, and I mean that in the most literal sense of the word. He gave me courage, like he has for his three children, who advocate on his behalf; the elders and pastors of the church, some of whom are also being targeted by the state; and his wife, who spends most nights sleeping and praying at the church. Meanwhile, during the time he has been imprisoned, Pastor Son has written a book and is sharing the Gospel with his fellow inmates.

It may be that Pastor Son, in his zeal to speak out against the current administration's progressive, socialist, and pro-LGBTQ platform, violated the letter of South Korean law. At best, that might merit a fine. Instead, he has been arrested, threatened with 16 charges, held in



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I asked if the government's attempts at intimidation was working, or if other pastors and Christians were speaking out. Many had spoken out, I was told. But many others had not. They, like many Americans, believe that Christians should avoid politics altogether.

Of course, Christians just across the border in communist North Korea have no luxury of even having an opinion. There, I learned from a tour guide, a Bible will earn you a lifetime sentence in a hard labor camp. There is no freedom, religious or otherwise. There's also not enough food.

South Korea, on the other hand, is an economic miracle. Industry, infrastructure, and innovation abound. Seventy-five years after the communist North invaded the free South, the results are in, and it's not even close. South Koreans have every reason to sing of the goodness of God. And that is why they also have every reason to be concerned by the outrageous treatment of Pastor Son, as well as the many other ways the current party in power is compromising religious freedom.

Years ago, Chuck Colson warned of alarming language being used by certain American political leaders. Instead of "religious freedom," they referred to "freedom of worship." There's an essential difference, said Colson, between the freedom to order one's public life around their deeply held convictions and merely allowing someone to believe what they want in their own heads, hearts, homes, and houses of worship. Thankfully, in the years since, American courts have consistently upheld true religious freedom, but not because progressive lawmakers, politicians, and judges haven't tried their best to chip away at it.

This seems to be what is currently happening in South Korea. If it does happen, it will be because of both progressive lawmakers who hope to sideline any religious resistance to their agenda and because of Christians who were willing to have their convictions sidelined. And it would be a tragedy.

Please pray for Pastor Son, his wife, and his children. Please pray for the leaders and members of Segero Church, that they would remain faithful and courageous during this time. Please pray for his trial and sentencing, which is scheduled for the end of this month. And please consider signing the petition launched by the Christian Broadcasting Network, asking our government to speak out on behalf of Pastor Son.

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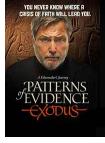
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