Pastor Sabastiyan, Tamil Nadu
Pastor Anil Juit, Bihar
Pastor Sachin Paneerselvam, Tamil Nadu

Year | Arson attacks
---|---
2018 | 10 Church buildings
2019 (YTD April’19) | 11 Church buildings

A Persecution Relief Initiative

For Private Circulation within the Church only
BUT WE ALSO GLORY IN OUR SUFFERINGS, BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT SUFFERING PRODUCES PERSEVERANCE; PERSEVERANCE, CHARACTER; AND CHARACTER, HOPE.

ROMANS 5:3-4
ANANIAS, BE READY

The Holy Spirit is preparing many Ananias’s across India, to anoint the Saul’s to Paul’s, with the power of the Holy Spirit, in the coming days.

Saul, notorious for persecuting Christians, had departed Jerusalem after obtaining a letter granting him authority to arrest any Christians he can find in Damascus and bring them to the Sanhedrin. Saul believed that everybody was on his side – the government, the Politicians, Leaders, Local Administration – that he was not accountable to anybody in his offensive against the Jews. Saul’s hatred for Christians fuelled his offensive, as he systematically kept destroying the church in Jerusalem, hunting down men and women and turning them over to the authorities.

All set to persecute and kill the disciples of Jesus Christ, Saul undertook a grueling 220 kms long journey to Damascus, the next Christian bastion that he hoped to destroy. But he was clueless what awaited him.

Jesus called out to him from a bright shining light that threw him on the ground. “Saul, why are you persecuting me?” Saul was struck blind. Jesus commanded Saul to go to Damascus and wait to be told what he must do. He is led to the city by those who are traveling with him and he waits for three days and nights without any food or water.

Separately, the Lord appeared to Ananias, “a disciple at Damascus”, in vision and tells him “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision, he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.” (Acts 9: 11-12)

God asks Ananias to go and confront the ringleader of the persecutors. When Ananias heard God’s voice, despite his initial hesitation he was faithful and obedient. His response and readiness were just like the faithful men of the Old Testament - Abraham, Samuel and Isaiah – who responded without knowing where they were going. Ananias was a courageous man and his small act of obedience led to a great harvest for the kingdom.

Even when God’s command seemed contrary to reason and logic, Ananias obeyed. “The Lord said to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. 12 And in a vision, he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.” (Acts 9: 11-12)

God wanted him to go to Saul because Saul was known as the destroyer of all things Christian. Though there is such a small, yet significant mention of Ananias, God used this man to further His purposes, in launching the career of the most influential of the apostles. Saul, the chief of sinners, the persecutor of the church, was God’s chosen means of bringing the gospel to great and small, Jew and Gentile alike.
God allowed Stephen to be killed for many reasons - one of which was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. When Paul heard the way Stephen prayed, his conscience began to prickle him and he began to think, “This cannot be a false religion. Maybe I am wrong.” Later, on the Damascus road, the Lord told him, “It is hard for you to keep on kicking against the pricks of your conscience” (Acts 26:14) - and he was converted.

This whole encounter made the transformation of Saul to Paul - a man passionate and full of zeal. Paul was just the first of many thousands who have been converted in the past 2000 years. He came from a wealthy business family in Tarsus and could have chosen an easy life, when he was saved on the Damascus Road. But he didn’t do that. He went out to serve God and endured hardship.

“From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting’s often, in cold and nakedness besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches” (2 Cor. 11: 24-28).

Christian, are you ready to be the ‘Ananias’? If Ananias had not gone to Saul of Tarsus, God would have sent someone else. If you don’t go where God tells you to go, God will give your ministry to someone else.

Ananias’s of India, you have a job in hand, to anoint the Saul’s to Paul’s. Many Christians are withdrawing and running away in fear from sharing the gospel. Persecutors like Saul will be the people who will proclaim the gospel boldly across the nation in the coming days.

Many persecutors are inventing various laws, rules and legislations, to persecute the Church and all things Christian. They have the machinery, the administration and the political muscle behind them. But let them not forget that our God who keeps us, “neither sleeps nor slumbers” and “His eyes are upon the ways of a man, And He sees all his steps” (Job 34: 21)

I believe that India will witness the transformation of several Saul’s, who are going to be thrown down from ‘their high horses’. These ‘Saul’s’, will take the baton of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the flag of “Jehovah Nissi” across India. I believe that this will be the final lap of the relay race, before the trumpet is blown.

Church, lift up fervent prayers for the persecutors, for their transformation, that they may win millions of Indians to Christ. It started with the obedience of Ananias, to go, to touch Saul’s eyes and open them, for a life-changing experience. It is our responsibility to open the blind eyes of the persecutors, and to anoint them with the Holy Spirit.

Our perspective is so limited. God’s perspective has no boundaries, taking in all of the earth in a single glance. We are going to see the glory of God shine across India in our lifetime. Christians are going to walk to the high places giving counsel to Leaders, about the future events to come. The future of India is in our hands.

Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth; Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (Mathew 28:18-19)

Let us exercise our authority in the Lord.

Shibu Thomas
Chief Editor
Voice of the Christians
Persecution of Christians in India continues to rise – Easter Sunday saw an alarming spike in attacks on worship services, with increasing intolerance and unprovoked violence across India.

In West Bengal, in village Nandkishorepur, Post Office Narayangarh, West Medinipur District, Pastor Tolas Mandi ministers at Thomas Christian Church. In a separate hall, built adjacent to this residence, believers gather every Sunday to worship for the past 10 years.

Residents of all religions in the area, have enjoyed a relatively cordial relationship. Therefore, targeting the Christian minority, came as a shock to Pastor Tolas, especially on Easter, a significant festival for Christians.

On Sunday, 21st April, 2019, the day of the incident, worship service had started at 11.00 am. Around 30 believers, predominantly from the Santal Tribe (The Scheduled Tribes- STs) are officially designated groups of historically disadvantaged people in India) were in the presence of the Lord. Around 12 noon, midway through the service, all of them were deeply engrossed and focused on God, when the attack took place. Taken totally by surprise, right-wing religious fanatics barged into the meeting shouting slogans and terrorizing the congregation. They began indiscrimately beating up the Pastor who was leading the worship, the elders and members of the congregation who came to the rescue of the Pastor. The fanatics demanded that the worship service be stopped and the place vacated.

Pastor Tolas, his Father Upurno Mandi, his brother Debu Hasta, father’s brother Chetan Singh and his wife Belo Singh, were physically assaulted alleging conversions and suffered injuries.

The mob vandalized everything inside the Church - musical instruments, sound system, furniture etc. They collected Holy Bibles that were in the Church, and took them along...
with them, to be burned. After accomplishing what they had set out to do, they stole a new Bicycle, that was parked outside – the only means of conveyance for Pastor. The Church has suffered loss of approximately around Rs. 25,000/-. Further, they left threatening the family, never to conduct any prayer meetings at their home in future or face dire consequences in the future.

Speaking to Persecution Relief, Pastor Nabin Mandi, a senior Christian Leader in the area and other Pastors, together went to Narayangarh Police Station, and lodged a complaint. A FIR was lodged but none of the perpetrators have been taken into custody so far.

Pastor Nabin added that he has heard from reliable sources, that the fanatics have planned similar attacks the following Sunday, to a Church belonging to Assembly of New Indian Church in the neighbourhood.

In 2018, West Bengal recorded 7 incidents of hate-crime against Christians. However, in just the 1st Quarter of 2019, West Bengal has already recorded 6 incidents so far.

“I AM GRATEFUL TO PERSECUTION RELIEF FOR THE SUPPORT EXTENDED TO US BY SPEAKING TO SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE (SP) ALOK RAJORIA”.

- PASTOR TOLAS MANDI
On Saturday, 27th April 2019, Pastor Narbada Kumar and his daughter, Jyoti (16 yrs), had gone for a house meeting to Bro. Ram Dulare’s house. Pastor had been conducting regular prayer meetings for the past few years. His Church is affiliated with Himalaya Evangelical Missions, located at village Kaptanganj, Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh. Around 20 Christians had gathered and the meeting had just concluded.

Suddenly, local Police barged into the house disrupting private prayers at the house. They began abusing and accusing Pastor Narbada of carrying out religious conversions. In spite of narrating that they only meet to share the Word from the Bible and pray, the police authorities sternly questioned Pastor Narbada for organizing the prayer meeting without availing permission from the concerned local authorities.
In an attempt to harass and intimidate them, Police demanded that Pastor, his daughter Jyoti (16 yrs), Khushboo (16 yrs) a resident of the village who was at the meeting, and the house owner, Bro. Ram Dulare, accompany them to Ramkola Police Station for further questioning.

The Christians were detained for few hours at the Station before Pastor John Joy, Director of Himalaya Evangelical Missions, and Ajay, son of Pastor Narbada, who were outside the Police Station, informed Persecution Relief about the incident.

Speaking to the Mr. Rajiv, Superintendent of Police (SP), Bro. Thomas of Persecution Relief briefed him about the illegal and unauthorized detention. Local Church Leaders also put pressure on the Police for targeting innocent Christians without any evidence, based on the instigation and baseless charges of fanatics.

The Christians were released as the allegations against them were found baseless.

Sources informed Persecution Relief that a right-wing religious organisation had tipped off the Police with this false complaint.

Church, pray for protection and the peace of God that surpasses human understanding, to abide with Pastor Narbada, Bro. Ram Dulare and the rest of the praying Cell. Pray that God will continue to use him for His glory and honour.

"PERSECUTION RELIEF REALLY PROVIDED TIMELY SUPPORT. AS SOON AS WE REACHED THEM ABOUT THE INCIDENT, BRO. THOMAS SPOKE TO MR. RAJIV, SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE (SP), AND BRIEFED HIM ABOUT THE UNAUTHORIZED DETENTION. WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL. GOD BLESS THIS MINISTRY” – PASTOR NARBADA KUMAR
On Friday, 26th April, 2019, Pastor Manoj K.R., accompanied by 4 other Church Members on an Outreach Mission, travelled in a Jeep (Force Tempo Traveler) to village Karkosh, which is around 10 kms from Chirgaon, a town in Jhansi district of Uttar Pradesh. While conducting the meeting there, they spoke to a group of children, narrating stories with morals. Soon, parents joined the curious children, engrossed in the stories.

As a nearby school had dispersed in the neighbourhood, the school children also joined them, as they shared captivating stories with good meaning and morals, on how to be obedient and respectful to parents, and look after them etc.

Suddenly, Policemen in 3 Jeeps landed at the spot and confronted the pastor and his team.

“What are you doing here?”

“What are you telling them all these stories? To convert them”?

One of the Policemen, even addressed the Parents, reprimanding them for allowing their children to listen to such stories.

“They will convert and take away your children from you”, he meanly added.

In order to further harass the Christians, the Policemen took away the Bible tracts, demanded identification proof, confiscated the original ID Cards, Driving License and the Vehicle Registration Book etc. from Pastor Manoj, asking them to report to Moth Police Station.

In spite of explaining to the Police that their intentions were honourable, the Police were adamant that they should report to the Police Station.
Sensing danger and further escalation of this innocent incident, these men prayed to God for wisdom and decided to call Persecution Relief. The Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Dr. Om Prakash Singh was contacted and he directed them to speak with the Additional Superintendent of Police, Mr. Rahul.

Pastor drove 40 kms from Jhansi, and met with the Police Officer, who was very polite and patiently listened to their grievance. Given an opportunity to explain their side of the story, they were finally exonerated and released without any charges.

Moth Police Station was instructed to handover the ID and Vehicle Registration papers back to them, as they had not committed any crime.

Speaking to Persecution Relief, Pastor Manoj expressed disappointment, that “even when you try to do good, imparting morals and values, you still get a bad reputation. But when we “consider Jesus and fix our eyes upon Him”, who endured untold hostility and never grew weary, we are encouraged.”

He expressed gratitude to the Senior Police Officials who were supportive and fair.

Church, please pray for Pastor Manoj and his team, that God would be their supernatural protector, and that He would grant them courage and wisdom, as they continue to find favour with God and open doors to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Thank you Bro. Shibu Thomas for the counsel and support provided during our detention. He spoke to the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Dr. Om Prakash Singh and Addl. SP Mr. Rahul and facilitated our release without any charges. I praise God for Persecution Relief and their ministry” – Pastor Manoj KR
"As Christians, you are fighting against the army of a defeated king; Be courageous, move forward and take possession".

FOUNDER - PERSECUTION RELIEF
Thatched Church reduced to ashes in arson attack, Tamil Nadu

Pastor Sabastiyan had been serving the Lord part-time, along with a secular job for the past 10 years. However, when he was definitely and firmly persuaded that it was God’s call upon his life, he gave up everything to serve full-time for the past 3 years.

Pastor Sabastiyan ministers at “All to Jesus” Church, in Valkudi village, Thiruparkadal, Nagapattinam District in Tamil Nadu. Over 50 believers regularly gather in this thatched roof Church, built on a rented land, since the past 1 year.

On Monday, 29th morning, one of the Church members, Bro. Selva Kumar, had gone to the Church for a time of prayer, when he found the Church completely gutted in a fire. Shocked beyond words, he called Pastor to inform him about the calamity.

Pastor who lives in Thirupurkad village, located some 6 kms away, rushed to the site to find that nothing could be salvaged – chairs, pulpit, floor mats, Holy Bibles and music instruments were completely destroyed to ashes.

Talking to Persecution Relief, Pastor mentioned that the Church was located in an interior village with no houses in the vicinity. He also added that there was no electricity in the Church for a possibility of short circuit to have caused the fire. Expressing shock, Pastor was sad that somebody could indulge in arson of a religious property in order to obstruct a person’s right to exercise his religious beliefs.
The loss and damage are estimated at Rs. 45,000/- Pastor has solicited our prayers and support to rebuild the Church.

If any of you are led by the Holy Spirit to support Pastor Sabastiyan in rebuilding the Church, please write to us at persecutionrelief@gmail.com.

Church, pray for the protection of Pastor and the congregation, and for the salvation of the persecutors, that they may all come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Persecution Relief has recorded 477 persecution incidents in 2018 of which 67 incidents were recorded in Tamil Nadu – the 2nd hostile state following Uttar Pradesh.

In 2019, 20 hate-crime incidents have been recorded in Tamil Nadu, in just the first quarter. Church arson attacks continue to be a problem, as the number of churches that have been destroyed, have increased dramatically in just the past 4 months this year. This is the 11th Church that had been targeted by arsonists.

We are grateful to Dr. Morvinyabesh, who helped Pastor and the Church from the moment he heard of Church burning in Tamil Nadu – for informing about the incident to Persecution Relief.

"WE ARE GRATEFUL TO BRO. SHIBU OF PERSECUTION RELIEF, WHO HAS FINANCIALLY ASSISTED US, TO START THE WORK OF REBUILDING THE CHURCH. GOD BLESS BRO. SHIBU"

PASTOR SABASTIYAN

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PASTOR SABASTIYAN
Church destroyed in suspicious arson attack, Tamil Nadu

On Wednesday, “Jesus with us” Church had gathered for a fasting prayer meeting. The meeting concluded late in the evening and after everybody had left, Pastor Sachin Paneerselvam, locked up the sanctuary and left for his home, around 12 kms away at Thittacherry Nagapattinam.

A few hours after reaching, Pastor recounts that he and his family were getting ready for bed when he got a call from the local Police at 11.00 pm. The Police from the local Naneelan Police Station, told him that the Church building was on fire.

Alarmed at the news, Pastor’s natural reaction was to rush to the Church, to help put out the fire and salvage the contents. However, the Police were adamant that he should not come to the spot as firefighters were battling the blaze. Police said that they would investigate the cause of the fire as that they had no idea if it was an arson attack or an electric short circuit which caused the fire.

Speaking through an interpreter to Persecution Relief, a shaken Pastor Sachin said that he waited for day break to rush to the Church, but nothing could prepare him for what greeted his eyes!!

The Church building, made of wooden pillars and reapers, supporting by thatched roof from coconut palm fronds, was completely gutted.

“The entire Church structure has been reduced to ashes. Along with the Pulpit, musical instrument, microphones, floor mats, Holy Bibles, Song books and around Rs. 7000/- of Church offering that was left in the cupboard, were completely burnt or robbed”.

“We have no enemies and we are peaceful people. In fact, we had no suspicion that such a thing might happen. I cannot believe that somebody would have done this to us deliberately”.

The loss is estimated at around Rs. 35,000/- (thirty-five thousand).
Pastor Sachin who ministers with “Jesus with us” Church, in Sannanallur village, Thiruvarur District, Tamil Nadu, built this Church around 4 years ago. The land located in a remote area, was leased from the land owners for Rs. 1000/- per month. Over 40 locals attend the Church regularly.

In spite of this unfortunate turn of events, Pastor Sachin and his congregation were adamant and resilient not to let this incident be a setback. Within 48 hours, armed with brooms and bags, volunteers and members of the congregation, helped clean up the damage and debris caused by the arson fire and looting. They bought new wooden poles and erected metal sheets on top of them, to make a makeshift shelter, so that they could gather and worship the Lord at the same place. By the grace of God, Sunday worship service went ahead as scheduled.

“It was such a blessing to see the community resilient, joining hands and fearlessly gathering to worship, in a time like this.”

While condemning the violence, local Church Leader, Bro. Jayakumar, told Persecution Relief that Pastor Sachin is determined that his only objective is to obey and follow the teaching of Jesus Christ and worship him.

“I have forgiven the persecutors. I do not know who did this, but my God knows. I will not pursue this matter legally with the Police as I have forgiven them, just like Jesus commanded me”, said Pastor Sachin.

Church, pray for the protection of Pastor Sachin and his congregation, and for the salvation of the persecutors, that they may come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Persecution Relief has recorded 477 persecution incidents in 2018 of which 67 incidents were recorded in Tamil Nadu – the 2nd hostile state following Uttar Pradesh.

In 2019, 20 hate crime incidents have been recorded in Tamil Nadu, in just the first quarter. Over 10 Churches have been targeted by arsonists across India.

Across the country in India, the doors of a multitude of Churches have been sealed and scores arrested on false charges of indulging in conversion activities.

Relief Provided

“I HAD NEVER HEARD OF PERSECUTION RELIEF UNTIL THIS INCIDENT AND I AM GRATEFUL TO GOD FOR SUCH A MINISTRY. WE ARE EXTREMELY GRATEFUL FOR THEIR TIMELY COUNSEL, HELP AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT. GOD BLESS THE FOUNDER”.

Pastor Sachin Paneerselvam
Vandals break giant hole through Church wall, Bihar

In an innovative attack on a Church, crafty religious fanatics, forced entry by “breaking through the wall”, in order to access the Church.

Pastor Anil Juit, who lives 2 kms away from the Church, had left home to arrive early at “Holy Saviour Church”, to oversee arrangements for Sunday Easter Service. The Church is located in Arrah city, Bhojpur District of Bihar, where he ministers to around 60 believers every Sunday.

The vandalism was discovered only on Sunday, 21st April, 2019, when Pastor reopened the Church. As soon as he unlocked the front door of the Church, he was “unpleasantly” shocked, to see a gaping hole on the wall of the Church, through which the suspects entered.

Debris from the broken wall, burnt Holy Bibles, burnt Christian literature, the Pulpit, the Lectern, Chairs, Floor rugs, Music instruments were burnt and thrown around and destroyed. Damage to the church was extensive, as the “gang of perpetrators”, systematically destroyed everything that could be destroyed.

The perpetrators of this crime also wrote a bigoted graffiti reading “jai sri ram” on the walls of the Church, in an attempt to hurt religious sentiments and polarize society.
“I am pretty shocked about what has happened. I live just around 2 kms away, in a rented home. However, none of my neighbours seem to have heard anything. Living adjacent to the Church and our immediate neighbour is a Police Officer!’

“I believe that this attack was carried out during the late hours of Saturday night and lasted for a couple of hours”.

“I had recently bought 10 new Holy Bibles – this was also burnt.”

Pastor Anil lodged a complaint with the Nawada Police Station. At the time of this story going to press, no arrests have been made so far.

THE STATE OF BIHAR WAS RANKED AS THE 3RD HOSTILE STATE IN 2018, RECORDING 37 INCIDENTS OF PERSECUTION, WHILE IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2019, IT HAS ALREADY RECORDED 7 INCIDENTS OF HATE CRIMES AGAINST CHRISTIANS.

ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN INDIA, THE DOORS OF A MULTITUDE OF CHURCHES HAVE BEEN SEALED AND SCORES ARRESTED ON FALSE CHARGES OF INDULGING IN CONVERSION ACTIVITIES. CHURCH BUILDINGS HAVE BEEN BURNED TO ASHES, AND MANY VANDALIZED.

Persecution Relief has recorded 477 Hate Crime cases against Christians in India in 2018.

In the first quarter of 2019, 130 incidents of persecution have been recorded so far.

The State of Bihar was ranked as the 3rd hostile state in 2018, recording 37 incidents of persecution, while in the first quarter of 2019, it has already recorded 7 incidents of hate crimes against Christians.

Across the country in India, the doors of a multitude of Churches have been sealed and scores arrested on false charges of indulging in conversion activities. Church buildings have been burned to ashes, and many vandalized.

“WE ARE GRATEFUL TO PERSECUTION RELIEF FOR THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED IN A TIME LIKE THIS. GOD BLESS THIS MINISTRY.”

PASTOR GABRIEL, HEAD OF THE HOLY SAVIOUR CHURCH MINISTRIES.
PRAY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH IN INDIA

ATTACKS ON CHRISTIANS

WWW.PERSECUTIONRELIEF.ORG
Two rows of men walked the shore of the sea,
On a day when the world's tears would run free,
One a row of assassins, who thought they did right,
The other of innocents, true sons of the light,
One holding knives in hands held high,
The other with hands empty, defenseless and tied,
One row of slits to conceal glaring-dead eyes,
The other with living eyes raised to the skies,
One row stood steady, pall-bearers of death,
The other knelt ready, welcoming heaven's breath,
One row spewed wretched, contemptible threats,
The other spread God-given peace and rest.

A Question...
Who fears the other?
The row in orange, watching paradise open?
Or the row in black, with minds evil and broken?

WHICH ROW PLEASES GOD?

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.
Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.
Whoever acknowledges me before men,
I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.
But whoever disowns me before men,
I will disown him before my father in heaven

(Matthew 10: 28,32,33)
WHICH ROW UNDERSTANDS?

Dear friends,
Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.
If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.
(1 Peter 4: 12-14)

A time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you.
(John 16: 2-4)

WHICH ROW WILL PREVAIL?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?
As it is written:
"For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."
No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 8: 35-39)

WHICH ROW SEES?

When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.
"Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."
At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, ...
While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."
Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."
When he had said this, he fell asleep.
(Acts 7: 54-60)
Two Rows by the Sea

©Bible Society of Egypt

A little over a week ago, the world stopped for a moment on hearing the news of 21 Coptic Christians, murdered by ISIS on the shores of a beach in Tripoli. Coptic Christians don’t get much attention on the world stage, but this was different. The pictures of those orange clad men on the beach surfaced everywhere, the stories of their lives gaining more attention every day.

We are a people of short attention spans, so what has not gotten attention is how Egypt itself has responded to the killings. Coptic Christians are familiar with persecution, and often it is at the hands of their fellow Egyptians. Yesterday I received a poem forwarded to me from my husband. Egyptians at the Bible Society of Egypt wrote it to be distributed in a pamphlet, along with other verses of comfort and hope. By Thursday they had printed over one million copies ready to distribute across Egypt.

This is hope indeed. Several times I have said that the people most afraid of ISIS are those who are sitting on comfortable couches in well-designed living rooms. As I pass on this poem, my hope is that we, in the often spiritually bankrupt West, are challenged by our brothers and sisters in the East.

I would be remiss if I did not speak to the many others who have been brutally murdered or displaced by ISIS. In early November I sat with women and men in a refugee camp, all Yezidis, all affected by ISIS. They lost their homes and the lives they knew; many watched beloved family members killed. My husband came back from Erbil two weeks ago. He too sat with people who had to flee their homes because of ISIS. In all these places — Egypt, Turkey, Iraq — the Church is coming alongside the grieving, offering comfort and hope.

Picture Credit: Bible Society of Egypt
Pray for the results of the Election, that the newly elected Government will have an all-inclusive vision, engaging every people group while shaping their policies, value authenticity, model integrity, truly democratic and strive for righteousness.

It was stated that “if BJP comes to power again, we will change the Constitution” by Pankaja Munde, currently Minister of Rural Development, Women and Child Welfare. Pray that the Constitution of India will continue to stay secure, as far as Minorities are concerned.

The Government-run National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has dropped a full chapter – ‘Democracy in the Contemporary World’ – from the political science textbook for Class IX. Pray that the Government will not be biased and partisan towards any religion or party, but ensure facts are imparted to the students.

Pray that the Anti-Conversion Law will be repealed in India. It is currently effective in 8 States of India. This Anti-conversion legislation bill, prohibit Hindus from converting to any religion, and exploits religious tensions by enforcing “forcible conversions”. Christians continue to face floods of harassment by religious fundamentalists especially in the states where the anti-conversion law was passed.

Pray that the Freedom of religion in India, which is a fundamental right guaranteed by Article 15 and Article 25 of the Constitution of India, where everyone has the right and the freedom to preach, practice and propagate her religion, will be upheld by all Institutions of the Government, in letter and law.
In February 2018, new regulations regarding religion took effect in China to help “block extremism.” Getty Images

China is one of the worst persecutors of Christians, The United States Commission on Religious Freedom has revealed in its annual report highlighting about 30 countries where religious freedom rights are being egregiously violated.

Released on April 29, the 2019 report classifies China as a “Tier 1” CPC - a country that has taken extreme measures to regulate and oppress religious freedoms. The report specifically mentioned the persecution of Early Rain Covenant Church, which was closed down by the government in December. Early Rain’s senior pastor, Wang Yi, remains behind bars after speaking out against President Xi Jinping’s brutal regime.

“Article 36 of China’s constitution grants citizens ‘freedom of religious belief’ and directs the government to protect ‘normal religious activities,’” the report noted, before pointing out that this freedom “is limited by the requirement that religious activities cannot ‘disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system.’”

**JIHADISTS KILL PASTOR, FOUR OTHERS IN BURKINA CHURCH ATTACK**

Gunmen killed four worshippers and a pastor in the first jihadist attack on a church in Burkina Faso, security and local sources said Monday, in the latest violence to rock the formerly peaceful west African nation. Sunday’s raid took place in the small northern town of Silgadji near Djibo, the capital of Soum province.

“Unidentified armed individuals have attacked the Protestant church in Silgadji,
killing four members of the congregation and the main pastor,” a security source told AFP. Around 4.3 million people have been driven from their homes in the worsening violence that has engulfed the entire Sahel region, including one million over the past year, according to UN humanitarian officials.

**FESTIVAL OF CHRISTIAN DEATHS IN NIGERIA: 100 KILLED IN APRIL AND 750 IN 4 MONTHS OF 2019 – INTERSOCIETY REPORT**

ONITSHA (Sundiata Post) – Human rights group, the International Society for Civil Liberties and the Rule of Law (Intersociety) has said 100 Christians were killed in April 2019 while between 750 and 800 Christians lost their lives in the first four months of 2019 in attacks carried out by herdsmen.

The latest release by Intersociety coincided with the report on Friday by the Acting Inspector-General of Police, Mohammed Adamu that 1,071 persons lost their lives in crime-related cases across the country in the first quarter of 2019.

**U.S. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM BODY WANTS CHINA SANCTIONED FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES**

Christopher White, NATIONAL CORRESPONDENT, Cruxnow.com

In this photo taken Saturday, June 2, 2018, a worker looks out from a truck parked in front of a church and the Chinese national flag near the city of Pingdingshan in central China’s Henan province. Under President Xi Jinping, China’s most powerful leader since Mao Zedong, the Chinese government is waging the most severe systematic suppression of Christianity in the country since religious freedom was written into the Chinese constitution in 1982.
WASHINGTON, D.C. - China has been singled out by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) for its attacks on religion and human rights in its newly released annual report.

In its 20th annual report, released on Monday, the Commission offered a bleak picture of oppressed conditions for practicing faith for believers of all stripes in the world’s most populous country.

The report calls on the U.S. State Department to redesignate the following 10 countries as “countries of particular concern,” (CPCs): Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan - and also adds six other countries to receive the same designation: the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Russia, Syria, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

AFTER ATTACK, PASTOR IN NEPAL FILLED WITH FEAR - AND FAITH

NEW DELHI, April 30, 2019 (Morning Star News) – More than a month after men claiming to be Maoists in Nepal assaulted Dhurba Kumar Pariyar, the 40-year-old pastor is still physically and mentally traumatized.

One of the leaders at Devotees Nepali Assembly in the Nepali capital of Kathmandu, the pastor was riding a motorcycle on his way back from distributing free toys and stationery to Dalit children on March 24 in Sarlahi District when two motorcyclists with riders on extra seats stopped him 36 miles from Mahottari at about 7 p.m., he said.

The pastor, who is also president of BG Hands Ministries in Kathmandu, sustained injuries on his face, arms, elbows, knees and ankles, after they brutally beat him and fled.

Pastor Pariyar and his guest immediately went to the area police station to report the attack, and then to Gadhimai Hospital, Lalbandi in Sarlahi District for treatment. The next morning the pastor registered a First Information Report in the Kesharganj Police Station after submitting a written complaint.

The Nepal Christian Society also reported the attack to the National Human Rights Commission, according to the Religious Liberty Forum Nepal (RLFN).
Mary, Mother of Jesus – Part 2

THEN SIMEON BLESSED THEM AND SAID TO MARY HIS MOTHER, “BEHOLD, THIS CHILD IS DESTINED FOR THE FALL AND RISING OF MANY IN ISRAEL, AND FOR A SIGN WHICH WILL BE SPOKEN AGAINST; (YES, A SWORD WILL PIERCE THROUGH YOUR OWN SOUL ALSO,) THAT THE THOUGHTS OF MANY HEARTS MAY BE REVEALED.”

LUKE 2: 34, 35 (NKJV)

In the Book of Luke Chapter 2, we see that Mary brought her infant Son, Jesus, to be dedicated in the Temple, as was the custom of the day. The aged, godly Simeon, led by the Holy Spirit, taking the Baby in his arms and blessing him, said to His mother, “A sword will pierce through your own soul also.” Mary was to experience darkness as well as delight, as her “first-born” set forth to fulfil His mission in the world. Being conversant with Scripture, she would see Him as “the sign spoken against.” Manifold sword piercings were to be hers as the mother of the Lord. We know of her Son’s life and sojourn on the earth as well as the last three and a half years of his earthly ministry. But it is the bitter trial of His death that must have been a particularly sharp sword in her life.

Mary had listened to the angel voices as they sang and hailed her new-born Baby as the Saviour of Mankind. She had heard the shepherds recount the vision they had seen. She had witnessed the worship of the three wise men, led by a star, as they paid homage to her Child in that manger. She “kept all these things in her heart” over the years. We are not told that she recounted any of these things to her growing Son. However, it is quite possible that from his earliest conscious years, Jesus had an inner awareness of who He was, from where He had come, and what His mission on this earth was to be. Mary must have had many inner pangs about this precious Son of hers, but she remained submissive, patient and trustful, knowing that the sword piercing her heart from time to time was in her heavenly Father’s hand.

After the annual Feast of Passover in Jerusalem, when Joseph and Mary were returning home chattering with their relatives, Mary realized that Jesus, her 12-year-old, was
not with them. Going back to Jerusalem, she found Him in the Temple discussing Scripture with the learned men of the day. At being gently admonished by Mary for not going back with them, Jesus said to her, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”

Christ’s reply must have been like a sword piercing Mary’s heart. Young though He was, He knew about His divine parentage that separated Him from other men, and He expected His mother to realize what such a gulf meant. There in Jerusalem, Mary, perhaps for the first time, understood that her Son knew only God as His Father. There in the Temple, Nazareth faded from His mind and earthly ties receded into the distance. He felt only one presence, the Father above with whom He had dwelt in close communion. Mary’s divine “lost” Boy was to be God’s only hope for a lost world.

What mixed feelings Mary must have had! On the one hand, she was reproaching her Son for disregarding her feelings and concern for Him. On the other, she was watching Him in awe as He expounded on the Scriptures with a wisdom and maturity far beyond his twelve years. We are witness, however, to the humility of Jesus who, like every Jewish boy of that age, was submissive to his parents. He indicated this in his reply to Mary, for He “went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them.” For the next 18 years, he yielded Himself to his home authority. There are indications he took over Joseph’s carpentry business, probably due to the death of Joseph because we do not read much about Joseph thereafter.

At the wedding at Cana where Jesus and Mary were guests, Mary suggested to Jesus that He take care of the situation when the wine ran out. Jesus replied abruptly, “Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.” Jesus was not showing disrespect to his mother, for this was the proper mode of addressing Hebrew women in those days. He was, however, indicating to her that she was in no way to interfere in his mediatorial work. In obedience to Mary, though, He went on to perform his first recorded miracle of turning water into wine, saving his hosts from a potentially embarrassing situation.

Who can blame Mary for coaxing her Son to reveal His divine nature? For close to 30 years, she had been carrying the promises of God close to her heart, and her heart was close to bursting with keeping its secret.

There are several recorded incidents that tell us how Mary realized slowly that Jesus was severing Himself once and for all from her
At previous meetings with Christ, Mary expressed her feelings. Now as He died, she was silent. For who could comprehend the magnitude of her inner grief as that “which she brought forth” was dying.

Some of His disciples had forsaken Him and fled in fear. But her love never surrendered, even though her Son was dying as a criminal between two thieves.

c control. Concerned about his health and his safety, Mary and her sons came to remonstrate with Jesus to take care of Himself. In the Book of Mark Chapter 3 we see her admonishing Jesus “to eat bread” lest he suffer from hunger and exhaustion. Here again, Mary received another mild rebuke from her Son in which He hinted that her blessedness was not in her being His mother but in believing in Him and His God-given mission. Jesus again denied any earthly authority’s hold over Him when He said, “My mother! Who is My mother and My brothers?” Pointing to those seated around Him who believed in His word and followed Him, He said, “Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, my sister, and mother.” So, the distance between Mary and her Son widened, and the piercings of the sword which old Simeon had prophesied, were keenly felt by Mary. Although she was called “blessed” and highly favoured by all generations, here was a bitter cup of sorrow that she was compelled to drink.

The deepest piercing of the sword, however, was when Mary stood at the foot of the old rugged cross, witnessing the degradation, desolation and death of the One whom she had brought into the world and loved intensely. What agony she must have experienced! Hearing the blasphemies of the priests and the people against her beloved Son, she watched the life ebb from Him, His every drop of blood shed for the redemption and salvation of mankind. His life on this earth might have been snuffed out, but her faith never faltered. We wonder why she was not spared the harrowing ordeal of watching the Son of her womb die a despicable criminal’s death. Perhaps it was in the divine order of things, though, that she should be found beneath the cross to receive the parting benediction of her Son and Saviour, as He committed her to the care of the disciple whom He loved.

At previous meetings with Christ, Mary expressed her feelings. Now as He died, she was silent. For who could comprehend the magnitude of her inner grief as that “which she brought forth” was dying. Some of his disciples had forsaken him and fled in fear. But her love never surrendered, even though her Son was dying as a criminal between two thieves.

In that last moment, the tremendous truth must have dawned upon Mary, that He who hung upon the cross was not her son; that before the world was, He was; that so far from being His mother, she was herself His child.
The 2nd book of Psalms

The Psalms are divided into 5 books. Let us study what is spoken about the remnant / true believers in the 2nd book of Psalms. The 2nd book of the Psalms consists largely of prayers from the people of God asking respite and protection from those who are persecuting them. Out of the 31 chapters in the 2nd book of Psalms, only 6 chapters do not specifically deal with suffering and shame. Chapter 45 speaks of Christ, chapters 65-68 largely speak of the character of God and chapter 72 is a prayer for blessing on Solomon, King David’s son.

Our focus will be on the chapters where suffering is consistently a part of life of the believer. Repeatedly in many of the chapters the Psalmist begins with a cry for help and saving from the evil people who are persecuting them. The Psalmist always end with hope in God, trusting that the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will not allow the wicked of this world to triumph. Some of the most powerful chapters of hope for persecuted Christians comes from the 2nd book of the Psalms, and many of our famous lines are from here as well.

The famous song “As the deer panteth for the waters, so my soul longs after you” is from chapter 42. The Psalmist ends Psalms 42 and 43 by encouraging himself in the knowledge of the character of our God. God is trustworthy, so hope in God because He will save us and we will praise Him. Psalm 44:17 describes how even though one may be faithful to YHWH the true God, the faithful still may be allowed to suffer on this earth for a while.

The Quartodeciman Dispute

Dr. Chris Philip Mathew

www.persecutionrelief.org
so hope in God because He will save us and we will praise Him. Psalm 44:17 describes how even though one may be faithful to YHWH the true God, the faithful still may be allowed to suffer on this earth for a while. However even here, the Psalmist ends by trusting God to save His people. God is refuge, strength and help for the believer. In fact, the day will come, according to Psalm 47, when the leaders of all 70 nations (Genesis 10) will be believers. However, until then, according to Psalm 48, when the nations come to battle against God, they will be shocked. Psalm 49 confirms that the believer must not place their faith in mankind, but in God and that God will rescue the believer. This is the confidence that the believer has despite all their sufferings. In Psalm 50 vs14,15,23 we see that God’s remnant are those who are sacrificially faithful covenanters. The remnant is those who offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God (grateful even when things are not going in their favour), pay their vows to God (keeps the covenant), call upon God in trouble, and glorify God when delivered. The wicked do not do this. In Psalm 51, the remnant repents of their sins, and crave the presence of God. v17 shows us that the remnant has a broken heart, a broken and remorseful spirit. In Psalm 52:8,9 - The remnant believe in the steadfast love of God, are grateful, and proclaim His name in the presence of each other. Psalm 53 is specifically against the work of atheists as evidenced by vs 1,4. In v4 God calls some people as ‘my people’, but in vs. 2,3 it says that all of the sons of men have fallen away. Since it is obvious that the Bible does not contradict itself, this Psalm is using poetic hyperbole when it says that all have fallen away and no one seeks after God. However, it is clear that the remnant is a very small number. IN PSALM 54, THE REMNANT OFFERS FREEWILL OFFERINGS, GRATITUDE FOR ALL THE SALVATION THAT GOD HAS WROUGHT IN THEIR LIVES. PSALM 56 REMINDS US THAT GOD KEEPS RECORD OF OUR SUFFERINGS. IN PSALM 63, THOSE WHO SCANDALIZE THE REMNANT WILL BE DESTROYED BY GOD.
Talk Down on my Knees

Matthew 5:44: But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Preethi Alice Jacob

Life often is not fair!

People hurt you. Talk bad about you. Treat you badly.

Joseph had a good share of unfairness. His brothers did not like him one bit. They were angry and jealous of him because their father Jacob loved him more than his other children (Genesis 37:4). And to add insult to injury, Joseph was given dreams, dreams that his brothers did not like one bit. Dreams where his brothers and even his parents, were bowing to him? This was way more than what the brothers could handle. They were furious and green with envy. (Genesis 37:5-11). And the brothers were unkind to Joseph. They in their anger and bitterness did many things to harm him, even tried to kill him (Genesis 37:18-36).

Interestingly, however, nowhere in the Bible does it say that Joseph was unkind to his brothers. Joseph walks a good 50 miles to Shechem and then a further 15 miles to Dothan, to enquire about the well-being of his brothers, in obedience to his father’s instruction (Genesis 37:12-17). Joseph was a good brother and an obedient son, who went the extra mile.

God was preparing Joseph. He was making Joseph more and more like Him.
For the Weary Soul

God was developing in Joseph godly character for the role and plans that He had for Joseph in the future, which Joseph did not know at that time. The Lord was training Joseph to be patient and develop long suffering. Teaching him to accept hurt with patience. God was making Joseph more and more like Him. God often uses difficult people and difficult circumstances to grow us in the virtues of patience and long suffering and make us more and more like Him.

As you go through life, do you find that there are people in your life who are mean, even spiteful to you, hurting you on purpose. Those who ‘curse’ you, saying bad things about you. Know that the Lord is growing you in long suffering and patience, through that person.

And yet, what are we to do when friends or loved ones ill-treat us? When those you count as close speak bad of you? The Bible says love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44).

You and I are to choose love those who hurt us, asking God to bless them, to bring good things into their lives. We are also called to pray for those who persecute or trouble or hurt us. We are to talk to God about them and what they do, and not to people around, as these verses of this familiar Sunday school song reminds us:

I’ve been redeemed [I’ve been re-deemed]
By the blood of the Lamb [by the blood of the Lamb]
I’ve been re-deemed,
By the blood of the Lamb.
Saved and sanctified am I
All my sins are washed a-way,
Praise the Lord.

You can talk about me [You can talk about me]
All that you please [All that you please]
You can talk about me all that you please
I’ll talk about you down on my knees
All my sins are washed away
Praise the Lord.

Though this is by no means an easy task, the Lord promises His strength and power to enable us (Colossians 1:11) to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

So, who is one person you need to love and pray for today?
Summary:

- There has been a surge in anti-Christian attacks in Andhra Pradesh - the primary charge being alleged “forced conversions”
- In 2019, in the period January to April 2019, 9 incidents of hate-crime against Christians, were recorded, ranking it the 4th hostile state in India
- In 2018, Andhra Pradesh ranked 9th among the most hostile states against Christians, recording 16 incidents of hate-crime
- Anti-Christian propaganda through blasphemous films like “I am god”, unmonitored social media spreading hate and falsehood, are used with impunity, as religious extremists continue to malign Christians, in an effort to stop the spread of Christianity.
- House Churches and prayer meetings held in the privacy of homes are arbitrarily attacked, violating the privacy and sanctity of an individual or a family, and is shut down with impunity

Prayer Points:

- Pray for the safety and protection of all Christians, especially in the village of Andhra Pradesh, who are facing intense harassment, in Jesus’ name
- Pray for Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Mr. Chandrababu Naidu, his cabinet, the bureaucrats and all the persecutors

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. * (1 Peter 2:9)
EVENTS ATTENDED BY OUR FOUNDER, PERSECUTION RELIEF TO HIGHLIGHT PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS AND ENCOURAGE THE CHURCH IN INDIA TO STAND UNITED AND PRAY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH.
After 73 days in jail
Pastor Manoj Chacko T.J. released on bail

As usual, the end of the month, he goes around to collect the monthly transport fees from the parents. However, this time, the neighbours refused to give him the fees.

Father of 3 teenage boys, 41 years old Pastor Manoj and his wife Bindu, live in Parinjarakara, Wayanad, Kerala. Besides Pastoring a small House Church, he is also an Auto Rickshaw driver, working hard to give his children a good education. Pastor struggled and saved up his own money to buy an auto-rickshaw, and for the past 2 years, he transports school children of the age group 5 – 7 years, of Pattamai Local Government School, back and forth to school and home.

As usual, at month-ends, he goes around to collect the monthly transport fees from the parents. However, this time, the neighbours refused to give him the fees.

Speaking to Persecution Relief, his wife Bindu expressed shock and deep anguish at the way the neighbours cooked up a malicious story that almost destroyed their lives.

They accused him of molesting their children and reported the matter to the Police. A special Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) court framed charges against Pastor who was arrested by Kerala Police.

By the grace of God, Pastor Manoj has been released on bail. persecutionrelief, who has been in close contact with local Church Leaders and Advocates, have worked together to secure his release.

Pastor’s wife Bindu and the children are currently residing at the in-law’s home. But, since the in-laws are unbelievers, Pastor and Bindu, prefer to live separately, as they want to openly practice and live their faith.
Being the beneficiary of a Government scheme, Pastor Manoj had secured land from the Government, to construct a small 1-bedroom house. However, after the devastating arrest of Pastor and the following legal cases and expenses, the family have experienced overwhelming personal hardship and financial set back. The half-finished house with stark bare brick walls, the incomplete flooring and doors, is estimated to cost him around 2 lakh rupees, to complete the house and make it habitable.

If any of our readers, is prompted by the Holy Spirit to support this family and help complete their home, please write to us at persecutionrelief@gmail.com or WhatsApp us at +91 99932 00020.
PRAY FOR THE UPCOMING REFUGE CENTER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH IN INDIA

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