

Sub Editor's Note

I was feeling very sick earlier this week. For 5 straight days, I was battling a terrible bout of infection, high fever, fatigue, dizziness and couldn't figure out what was going on. This year, across both North & South India, without exception, the weather has been extremely hot, humid and sultry. Summer seems to have come in too early! Most Newspapers and Government Agencies issued 'Heat and Health warning' encouraging us to stay indoors, hydrated and to drink sufficient water, as you could collapse from dehydration - like I almost did! Experts say that although thirst would seem to be the main indicator of dehydration, it is actually not. By the time one feels thirsty, he or she may very well already be dehydrated!

Could the same be true with us spiritually? How many of us are walking around spiritually dehydrated and not even aware of it? Satan, the enemy of our souls, would love nothing more than to lull us into believing that we are fine. Most of us are unaware of the parched condition of our souls and dire need for the Living Water of the infilling with the Holy Spirit.

The words of Jesus sprung to my mind.

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Our soul's deepest thirst must be for God Himself. When His Spirit dwells within, He is a fountain of spontaneous and continual supply of Living Water.

Let's examine ourselves today. Have we been drinking enough of the Living Waters? Are we drinking of Him and sharing the joy with others?

Asha

If you want a copy of 'Voice of the Christians' (VoTC) news paper, write to us at Votc@persecutionrelief.org



PASTOR'S HOUSE & CHURCH BUILDING BURNED

India is experiencing an escalation of attacks and acts of violence against Christian Churches and on its Christian minority

If the fire that gutted 'Daiva Sabhai' meaning 'Church of God', (translating from Tamil), located at Attipatu village, in Chidambaram, Cuddalore District, in Tamil Nadu, had been a test of faith, then Pr. John Muller says that he has come out stronger than ever.

Pr. John recalls that he had unknown visitors, the same week, who threatened him to stop worshipping and promoting Christianity failing which his Church would be burned down. Although disturbed by the intimidation, Pr. John did not report the matter to the police.

On the 3rd of May, Pr. had set out to Chidambaram, to get pamphlets printed for the upcoming VBS. His wife had also gone out to minister. When they both returned in the evening, what greeted them was to find their simple home and small church, made of brick, bamboo, and coconut leaves, burned down to ashes by arsonists. Owing to the prior threats, it is assumed that religious



Standing amidst the smoldering remains, both husband and wife, dressed in the only clothes that escaped the fire, he said, "Thankfully, no one was injured and my pregnant wife is safe. As believers, we believe that all things happen



fundamentalists destroyed this house of worship that had been the centerpiece and served the local community for the last 4 years.

Gone are the Church's music equipment (amplifier, sound system, drums etc.), instruments, the Bibles, Christian literature and the home that was adjacent to the Church – all engulfed and consumed in flames. The loss is great but even through this tragic incident, all that remains are their unshakable faith in Jesus Christ and memories.

These attacks are done with the motivation to inject fear and strike terror among the community, to discourage corporate worship.



for a reason and something good will come out of this". It is indeed amazing to hear these words of hope from Pr. John, whose wife has only recently conceived after 7 years of marriage. As they wait for the birth of this 'miracle of life', their faith in Jehovah God is steadfast and unmoved.

If you want to help the persecuted families, please write to us at votc@persecutionrelief.org

PERSECUTION RELIEF

AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL INITIATIVE TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT TO THE PERSECUTED CHURCH IN INDIA



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Luke 10:19 (KJV)

"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

Growing up a Southern Baptist Preacher's daughter, I would watch my dad study all week long. I would often run back in the back room we called his office just to get hugs from him because he was busy with ministry. I also grew up with a mom that had that "Old Time Religion" in her heart, singing all the time. So, naturally, being in church Sunday morning, Sunday night, and every Wednesday in addition to a mother who continually sang over us, I was able to learn a lyric or two.

Now, as most children do, I grew up and discarded all that I had learned, but that seed was planted and only through God and the people He put in my path did I come right back to my roots. I was invited to go on a ministry trip with a powerful woman of God and she brought to my remembrance about the hymns. While we chatted,

we went over the lyrics and I couldn't help but smile so wide. It didn't matter that they were written over a lifetime ago, they were so strong and should be applied even in today's times. In 1878, Elisha A Hoffman wrote a song called, "Are you washed in the blood?". In that song, the words speak of the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus. Lewis E. Jones, in 1899, wrote, "There is power in the blood". This one speaks of overcoming evil in victory. And lastly, in 1876 Robert Lowry wrote, "Nothing but the blood". This song tells of atonement, hope and peace, overcoming, and becoming whole. ALL of these speak of the possibilities through the power in the blood of Jesus. The sacrifice our Lord went through when He was crucified and died at Calvary.

As we grow in Christ, it is important that we know who we are in the Lord. Once we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and savior, we become royalty. We are a child of the Most High God. An unwavering Father who cares for us, giving us graces and mercies in addition to sending the Holy Spirit to constantly teach and guide us as we seek His face. BUT WAIT, THERES MORE!

Jesus, Himself, is at the right hand of the Father interceding for us (Romans 8:34). Romans 5:17 says, "For if by the trespass of the one (Adam), death reigned through the one (Adam), much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in [eternal] life through the One, Jesus Christ." – AMP. Brothers and Sisters, we have been equipped and empowered!

In the scripture for this Christ's Corner (Luke 10:19), Jesus tells us that He is giving us the authority to trample over the adversary. He has given us all the power to overcome anything that would come against us and to do mighty works not only as He did, but greater (John 14:12). The scriptures clearly show the delegated authority for fulling God's purpose, but we must remember that is not through us that we do these things. It is through Christ Jesus's sacrifice with His blood. Once we have the revelation of the redemption and forgiveness that Jesus provided us, we will be able to move mightily in our lives. Ephesians 1:7, 1 Peter 1:18-19, Revelation 5:9, Hebrews 9:12, and Colossians 1:14 all

speak of redemption and forgiveness through the spilled blood of our Lord and Savior.

As I have grown and experienced the Holy Spirit, I have learned that pleading the blood of Jesus over situations, people, and circumstances actually works. I know from growing up with my background that most religions or religious veins might not agree with me, but I have witnessed, undeniably, the power of the Holy Spirit first hand. The word "Plead", when looking at it from a point of view as if being in a court room, means to invoke as an accusation or defense. In this phrasing, it would surely be a defense. We plead the Blood over the situation or person to remind Satan and his demons of the authority we were given, the purification we were given through Christ Jesus, and our sanctification. Hebrews 10:19-20 says that we should be bold through the blood. Without that wonderful gift, we have nothing. It is ONLY through Jesus and His sacrifice that we are redeemed and able to walk in the spiritual authority.

God Bless;
Anna Green

The Key to Radical Love

<http://www.desiringgod.org>
Devotional by John Piper

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12)

One of the questions I posed while preaching on loving our enemies from Matthew 5:44 was, *How do you love the people who kidnap you and then kill you?*

How can we do this? Where does the power to love like this come from? Just think how astonishing this is when it appears in the real world! Could anything show the truth and power and reality of Christ more than this?

I believe Jesus gives us the key to this radical, self-sacrificing love, described in Matthew 5:44, earlier in the very same chapter.

In Matthew 5:11-12, he is again talking about being persecuted, just like he was when he said in Matthew 5:44, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." What is remarkable about these verses is that Jesus says that you are able not only to *endure* the mistreatment of the enemy, but *rejoice* in it. "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you. . . . Rejoice and be glad."

This seems even more beyond our reach than praying for our enemies or doing good to them. If I could do this humanly impossible thing — namely, *rejoice* in being persecuted — then it would be possible to love

my persecutors. If the miracle of joy in the midst of the horror of injustice and pain and loss could happen, then the miracle of love for the perpetrators could happen too.

Jesus gives the key to joy in these verses. He says, "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven." The key to joy is faith in God's future grace — that is, being satisfied in all that God promises to be for you. He says, "Rejoice, for your reward is great in heaven." Our joy in persecution is the joy of heaven streaming back into this moment of horror and setting us free to love. So, this joy is the freeing power to love our enemies when they persecute us.

If that is true, then the command to love is implicitly also a command to set our minds on things that are above — all that God promises to be for us — not on things that are on the earth (Colossians 3:2).

The command to love our enemy is a command to find our hope and our deepest soul-satisfaction in God and his great reward — his future grace. The key to radical love is faith in future grace. We must be persuaded in the midst of our agony that the love of God is "better than life" (Psalm 63:3). Loving your enemy doesn't earn you the reward of heaven. Treasuring the reward of heaven empowers you to love your enemy.



To All Women

Be an *Esther*, bold and courageous enough to stand for the truth, to voice your opinion and fight for the good of others, even when it means to sacrifice yourself. If God has put you in a position, it is for a purpose. Never be afraid to heed to that inner voice.

Be a *Ruth*, loyal in all your relationships, walk the extra mile and don't quit when things get tough. Someday, you'll see why it was all worth the effort.

Be a *Lydia*, let your homes be open, let your hands be generous, let your hearts be big enough to help anyone in need. Joy is greatest when shared.

Be a *Hannah*, never cease to pray. It will never be in vain.

Be a *Mary*, humble and submissive. You don't have to be great for God to use you, you just need to obey.

Be a *Dorcas*, use your talents, however small it may seem to bring a smile on someone's face. You'll never know how much it can mean to someone.

Be an *Abigail*, remember how each decision can turn your life around for good or bad. Be wise.

Be an *Elizabeth*, never doubt what God can do. Miracles do happen.

Be a *Mary Magdalene*, never let your mistakes and judgments of other people stop you from experiencing true joy in Jesus.

Be a *Rebekah*, never forget that true beauty lies within. Draw your man closer to God through your character.



Violent Persecution of Christians Rises in India, 'An Attack Being Recorded Every 40 Hours' Report

<http://www.christianpost.com>

By Anugrah Kumar, Christian Post Contributor (Photo: Reuters/Danish Siddiqui)

A new report says that violent attacks on the Christian minority in India are increasing at an alarming rate, as the emboldened members of groups close to the governing Hindu nationalist party seek to create a "Hindu nation." There's an anti-Christian attack every 40 hours, the report highlights.

The report by the All India Christian Council says attacks against Christians increased by about 20 percent in 2016, and physical violence against Christians was up by as much as 40 percent. A fresh attack is being reported every 40 hours, it added.

"The attacks have become severe and more frequent. Incidents used to be confined to a few states. Now the violence has spread to 23 states," the report notes, pointing out that the sharpest rise has been recorded in the northern Uttar Pradesh state and the southern state of Telangana.

The attacks involve physical beating, vandalism and torching of churches, burning of Bibles, death threats, forcing Christians to renounce their faith and convert to Hinduism, and disruption of and attacks on church services and prayer meetings.

In one case, Hindu nationalists beat an evangelist with chains, stripped him and forced him to drink urine, the report says. In another incident, a Christian cemetery was desecrated and skeletons dug up and strewn across the graveyard, it adds.



A protester holds a placard during a rally by hundreds of Christians against recent attacks on churches nationwide, in Mumbai, February 9, 2015. Five churches in the Indian capital New Delhi have reported incidents of arson, vandalism and burglary. The latest was reported last week when an individual stole ceremonial items.

Attacks on Christians have been on the rise since the Hindu national Bharatiya Janata Party won the national election in 2014. The BJP believes in and propagates the Hindutva ideology, which envisions an India where Hindus and the Hindu culture will dominate. The BJP is believed to be the political wing of the chief Hindu nationalist group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

Last month, more than 100 members of U.S. Congress wrote a letter to India's interior minister, urging him to allow U.S.-based Christian child sponsorship organization Compassion International to continue its work in that country. The charity recently ended its programs in India amid an ongoing crackdown by the BJP government on nonprofits that receive foreign funds.

The Indian government's treatment of Compassion International has "caused serious concern within the U.S Congress," said the letter addressed to India's Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

The Indian government alleges that Compassion was funding religious conversions.

"We are writing because we believe the Ministry of Home Affairs has issued an inter-bank circular preventing all commercial banks in India from processing CI's

wire transfers without prior Ministry approval. As a result, Compassion is unable to process the funds it needs to continue ... to the detriment of the hundreds of thousands of children Compassion serves in India. Many of our constituents, who have built emotional attachments through years of building relationships with these kids, are devastated by this wrenching cutoff," the letter continued.

Earlier this month, the Hindu Yuva Vahini, a rightwing youth organization known for arson and violence on minorities, forced police to stop a Christian prayer meeting in the Dathauli area of Maharajganj district in Uttar Pradesh, which was being attended by over 150 people and 11 American tourists. The group lodged a complaint

alleging it was aimed at conversions to Christianity.

Earlier this year, the Hindu Yuva Vahini attacked the Full Gospel Church in Gorakhpur area in Uttar Pradesh, alleging conversions.

The group was formed by a BJP leader, Yogi Adityanath, who assumed office of Uttar Pradesh state's chief minister last month after the victory of his party in that state.

In February, an evangelist, 47-year-old Dr. Kusuma Anjeneya Swamy, reportedly fell into a coma not long after he was harassed by Hindu nationalists for publicly distributing copies of the New Testament in the southern city of Hyderabad. The group of men threatened to burn him alive and questioned whether "Jesus will save you from the flames."

Although there was no evidence of physical violence, the evangelist apparently suffered a brain hemorrhage and slipped into a coma hours after the incident.



PRAY FOR BELIEVERS IN PRISONS, HOSPITALS AND THOSE WHO HAVE BACKSLIDDEN FROM FOLLOWING JESUS CHRIST



PERSECUTION RELIEF PRAYER CALENDAR

2017 MAY

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
Pray that God's kingdom will invade prison cells, changing, transforming and restoring prisoners to Jesus	Pray that the incarcerated people will be focused on God's fresh vision for their lives	Pray that the incarcerated people will be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to stop breaking the law	Pray that the incarcerated people will seek God's forgiveness and restitution	Pray that prisoners will build new lives based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and trained to be his disciples	Pray that the prisoners will use the surplus time that they have to use it productively in prayer and fellowship	Pray that God will remove all guilt, shame and darkness and fill each prisoners heart with acceptance, restoration and peace of God.
DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10	DAY 11	DAY 12	DAY 13	DAY 14
Pray that the incarcerated people will be delivered from their own selfishness and shame	Pray that Almighty God, the giver of life and health, will look mercifully on those who suffer with sickness	Pray that the Great Physician, arise and repair every damaged cell, in the body of His saints, in the name of Jesus.	Pray for people who are infected with AIDS and other contagious diseases to live meaningful lives	Pray that every inherited sickness from the family line, be pulled out from its roots, in the name of Jesus.	Pray that every destruction planted by witchcraft will be powerless in the lives of the sick people, in the name of Jesus.	Pray that every spirit of death be bound and cast into the consuming fire, in the name of Jesus
DAY 15	DAY 16	DAY 17	DAY 18	DAY 19	DAY 20	DAY 21
Pray that every sin that binds and cripples, that causes sickness be loosed in the name of Jesus	Pray that every curse placed upon God's saints will be nullified, cancelled and rendered ineffective forever, in the name of Jesus.	Pray that God's healing promises will bring healing and faith to the sick	Pray that every door that has been opened to the enemy be closed forever with the blood of Jesus	Pray that the power of the blood of Jesus be released against every dead bone in the name of Jesus	Pray that every organ of the body that is dead or malfunctioning, be repaired or replaced in the name of Jesus.	Pray that God will heal all backsliding from His children's lives, in the name of Jesus
DAY 22	DAY 23	DAY 24	DAY 25	DAY 26	DAY 27	DAY 28
Pray that God would be abounding in mercy, slow to anger, to restore His saints who have withdrawn in guilt & shame	Pray that God would heal our faithlessness, whatever may be the reason for backsliding.	Pray that God would forgive our sins so far and restore us to the joy of His Salvation	Pray that God would send the Spirit of conviction so that we may confess all our shortcoming to God	Pray that God would endow us with the Holy Spirit to live a victorious life	Pray for the lost to be saved according to the will of God	Pray that whatever or whoever the backslider is placing his trust in, outside of Jesus, would be removed from his life.
DAY 29	DAY 30	DAY 31				
Pray that we would be constantly reminded of what it was like to be in fellowship with God.	Pray that the church will prepare their hearts to receive the backslider back with joy and excitement.	Pray for the eyes of the backslider be open to the truth and remove any delusion the enemy tries to bring				



Savio Gonsalves, who stays opposite the Cross and looks after it along with other community members. Gonsalves said that while he had been praying there for 30 years, elders of the locality vouch it was there even before 1964.

Police officers said that heavy police bandobast was put in place to avoid any untoward incident. Police said that

there was severe opposition from the locals but the crowd was controlled by the police teams and the demolition was carried out.

After the demolition, community members conducted a prayer service and even put up a temporary Cross at the place. A number of people went to

the Bandra police station to protest the demolition. The issue of illegal shrines and structures has been making rounds for a while. The Supreme Court, responding to a PIL, had ordered all illegal structures in public places to be demolished. "All the notices were responded to by us," said Rita D'Sa of the Bombay Catholic Sabha.

"They have confused it with the illegal ones," said Godfrey Pimenta, adding that "this Cross didn't feature in the list of illegal ones."

"We have received an application in this regard and we will look into the matter and if required we will register a complaint against the responsible person(s)," said an officer from Bandra police station. Sharad Ughade, Assistant Municipal Commissioner, H-West ward, where the demolition was carried out, was not available for comment.

Sanjay Deshmukh, Additional Municipal Commissioner, in charge of the BMC in the absence of the municipal commissioner said, "We are only in charge of routine affairs. Get in touch with Mrs Kundan for discussions on this issue."

Bandra Cross demolition upsets Catholics

<http://www.dnaindia.com>

Angered, the community members have filed a complaint with the Bandra police

The demolition of a Cross in Bandra (West) by the Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Saturday has left the catholic community irked. The Cross was on D' Monte Street near Bazaar Road abutting a house in Gaothan area.

"They came early in the morning with a lot of police and demolished the Cross at around 11.30 am. We showed them papers stating the legality of the Cross, but they didn't relent," said



BMC demolishing the Cross; (R) Temporary cross put up at the location by community members

Hindu party pushes anti-conversion law in Indian state

<http://www.ucanews.com>

The ruling pro-Hindu party in eastern India's majority-tribal Jharkhand state has pushed for an anti-conversion law that church leaders fear will be used to intensify the harassment of local Christians.

The two-day state-level executive meeting of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP), that concluded May 1 in Palamu, adopted a resolution proposing a law to end religious conversion activities in the state.

"The resolution asks the state government to formulate a law that will make all conversions done through allurements or force illegal and punishable," J.B. Dubit, the state's BJP spokesperson, told ucanews.com May 2. The BJP and other Hindu groups maintain that Christian missionaries' service in the fields of education and health are a cover to attract poor tribal



Jharkhand's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief Ravindra Rai addressing a meeting in state capital Ranchi on March 29. The party is pushing for a law against conversion in the state, where BJP is in power. (Photo by IANS)

and Dalit people in the villages.

"We are not against religious conversion per se, but it is not acceptable to take advantage of someone's poverty, or other such issues, by coercing them to switch religions," Dubit said.

However, he did not identify any specific religious groups or provide data to support such claims. The Indian

Constitution "provides all citizens the freedom to practice and propagate the religion of their choice without any interference from anybody, including the government," Auxiliary Bishop Telesphore Billung of Ranchi, based in the state capital, told ucanews.com. "We Christians do not convert anyone through allurements or force but allow those who want to join the community of their own accord," he said.

Bishop Billung said that the BJP was pushing its agenda of turning India into a theocratic Hindu state, using all resources at its disposal. "The party has used the media to carry false news of conversion from Hinduism and reconversion to Hinduism to prepare the ground for an anti-conversion law," he said. The state, under BJP rule since 2014, has witnessed a series of anti-Christian activities including Hindu hardliners banning Christian prayers and the entry of pastors in villages.

Many Dalit and tribal leaders allege that their communities are threatened with violence to dissuade them from becoming Christians.

Bishop Vincent Barwa of Simdega who is based in the state and is chairman of the Indian bishops' Committee for Tribal Affairs, told ucanews.com that the push for this law confirms that the BJP is playing a "game to divert the attention of people from real issues" of poverty and misrule. Jharkhand has some 9 million tribal people, who form 26 percent of state's population of 33 million. About 1.5 million people in the state are Christians, at least half of whom are Catholics, almost all of them tribal. The state's almost 5 percent Christian population is much above the national average of 2.3 percent.

Several Indian states such as Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha carry laws that restrict religious conversion, making it a punishable offence to convert without the prior permission of local government authorities.

Chief minister of UP, India assured the Christian community, no one will take law in their own hands

<http://persecution.in>

By Matters India Reporter.

Lucknow: The Catholic bishops of Uttar Pradesh on April 21 called on Yogi Adityanath, the new chief minister of the northern Indian state. "It was primarily a courtesy visit," Father Donald de Souza, spokesperson of Lucknow diocese, informed. Yogi Adityanath, a Hindu ascetic, became chief minister of India's most populous state on March 19 after the Bharatiya Janata Party won the state assembly elections.

Father Donald said the bishops used the occasion to seek an assurance from the chief minister that Christians have the full freedom and protection to practice their faith. The delegation comprised bishops of Agra, Allahabad, Bareilly, Bijnor, Gorakhpur, Lucknow and Varanasi

The prelates, led by Bishop Gerald

Mathias of Lucknow, also expressed their concern about the difficulties faced by educational institutions at times because of interference by local administration in many places.

The chief minister assured the Christian community that no one will be allowed to take law in their own hands and that the community need not fear in the practice of their faith, said Father de Souza, who was involved in the preparation of the Bishop's meet.

Father de Souza, who is also the chancellor of Lucknow diocese, had met the chief minister a few days ago with a few people led by the outgoing Eurasian member of the state legislative assembly.

The chief minister was born Ajay Singh Bisht on June 5, 1972. He renounced his family at the age of 21 and came under the influence of Mahant Avaidyanath

then the head priest of Gorakhnath Math. He became his disciple and subsequently was given the name 'Yogi Adityanath.'

He was promoted to the rank of Mahant of Guru Gorakhnath Temple, following the death of his guru on September 12, 2014.

He has been the Member of Parliament from Gorakhpur for five consecutive terms. He was the star campaigner for his party at the last assembly elections. He is also the founder of the Hindu Yuva Vahini, a youth organization.

Christians in Uttar Pradesh are a tiny minority comprising mostly Catholics and Protestants who belong to the



Bishops with chief minister of Uttar Pradesh-India

Church of North India. Christianity was introduced to Uttar Pradesh during the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556-1605). Akbar sought out educated Jesuit priests from Goa and gave them permission to propagate their religion in his land.

Christians manage several reputed educational and healthcare institutions in the state.



International news

Forgiveness: Muslims Moved as Coptic Christians Do the Unimaginable

<http://www.christianitytoday.com>

Amid ISIS attacks, faithful response inspires Egyptian society.

JAYSON CASPER IN CAIRO

Image: MOHAMED EL-SHAHED / AFP

Twelve seconds of silence is an awkward eternity on television. Amr Adeeb, perhaps the most prominent talk show host in Egypt, leaned forward as he searched for a response.

"The Copts of Egypt ... are made of ... steel!" he finally uttered.

Moments earlier, Adeeb was watching a colleague in a simple home in Alexandria speak with the widow of Naseem Faheem, the guard at St. Mark's Cathedral in the seaside Mediterranean city.

On Palm Sunday, the guard had redirected a suicide bomber through the perimeter metal detector, where the terrorist detonated. Likely the first to die in the blast, Faheem saved the lives of dozens inside the church.

"I'm not angry at the one who did this," said his wife, children by her side. "I'm telling him, 'May God forgive

you, and we also forgive you. Believe me, we forgive you.'

"You put my husband in a place I couldn't have dreamed of."

Stunned, Adeeb stammered about Copts bearing atrocities over hundreds of years, but couldn't escape the central scandal.

subtitled and recirculated the satellite TV clip.

"In the history and culture of the Copts, there is much taught about martyrdom," he told CT. "But until Libya, it was only in the textbooks—though deeply ingrained."

The Islamic State in Libya kidnapped

Roman persecution under Diocletian. Troubles with pagan and Muslim rulers have ebbed and flowed over time, but in his Easter message Pope Tawadros lauded the Coptic Orthodox as a "church of the martyrs."

This history returned with a vengeance in 2010, when the Two Saints Church in Alexandria was bombed on New Year's Eve. Copts poured out into the streets in anger, presaging the Arab Spring. In the months that followed, Muslims rallied around them and defended their churches.

Nearly seven years later, the nation has grown weary. The Palm Sunday twin suicide bombings killed more than 45 people and are the second ISIS attack on Christian sanctuaries in five months. Twenty-nine people were killed in a suicide bombing at the papal cathedral in Cairo in December. This week, ISIS attacked the famous St. Catherine's monastery on the southern Sinai peninsula.

All three Christian denominations canceled Easter Sunday festivities, and the Orthodox postponed the reception of condolences. The state declared a three-day period of mourning and held an Easter service for the injured in a military hospital. Muslims reacted in shock and sympathy.

But while signs flutter in public squares about national unity, the visible outpouring of solidarity appears far less.

The atmosphere has changed, said Amro Ali, a Muslim assistant professor of sociology at the American University in Cairo (AUC).



Coffins are carried to the funeral of Egyptian Christians killed in Palm Sunday bombings.

"How great is this forgiveness you have!" his voice cracked. "If it were my father, I could never say this. But this is their faith and religious conviction."

Millions marveled with him across the airwaves of Egypt.

So also did millions of Copts, recently rediscovering their ancient heritage, according to Ramez Atallah, president of the Bible Society of Egypt which

and beheaded 21 mostly Coptic Christians in February 2015. CT previously reported the message of forgiveness issued by their families and the witness it provided.

"Since then, there has been a paradigm shift," said Atallah. "Our ancestors lived and believed this message, but we never had to."

Copts date their liturgical calendar from 284 AD, the beginning of the

Lions Reportedly Save Pastor and His Friends from Attack by Islamic Extremists

Veronica Neffinger | Editor,
ChristianHeadlines.com

A pastor who is ministering in the Middle East was reportedly saved by lions who prevented a group of Islamic extremists from attacking him and a group of Christians.

Pastor Paul Ciniraj's story seems like a story straight out of the Bible. Pastor Paul detailed the modern-day miracle on his ministry's website.

"My risen Lord Jesus Christ has saved my life once again," Pastor Paul wrote, "and I praise and thank God for His unspeakable grace!"

Before the attack when the lion saved him, Pastor Paul had been attacked by another group of Islamic extremists. He had escaped and was recovering at the home of a former Muslim who was a Christian convert. The man's home was near a forest area.

Pastor Paul led worship services there. On Easter Sunday, while a group of believers was gathered and he was leading one such service, militants came upon them, brandishing weapons.

"We had no idea what to do," Pastor Paul recalled. The group of Christians thought they were all about to die.



Just then, a lion appeared out of the forest and began to attack one of the militants. The other two militants tried to fight the lion off, but then two more lions appeared. The militants ran away in fear and the lions left Pastor Paul and his group alone.

"Equally astonishing," Pastor Paul added, "records show no lions are supposed to live in that forest."



Nigeria: Boko Haram Releases 82 Chibok Schoolgirls

<http://www.christianheadlines.com>

Eighty-two of the kidnapped Chibok schoolgirls have been released by their Boko Haram captors, according to a report from The Christian Post.

The nearly 300 girls were abducted three years ago, and while several of them were released previously, were able to escape, or reportedly died, this marks the largest release of the captives.

The Nigerian government has been under pressure to negotiate the release of the girls. The girls' parents and communities have not stopped campaigning for their rescue. The #BringBackOurGirls campaign received national attention.

"I am very, very excited with this development. I cannot even sleep tonight," said Yana Galang, whose daughter, Rifkatu, was among those kidnapped. She added that it's not known yet if her daughter is among those who were released "but we're very happy that many have been freed ... I hope and pray that my daughter is among these released girls."

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari's government was able to negotiate the release of the girls in exchange for the release of suspected Boko Haram prisoners.



Photo: A woman holds a sign that reads 'Bring back our girls' during a protest outside Nigeria House on May 9, 2014 in London, England. 276 schoolgirls were abducted from their boarding school on 14 April, 2014 in the town of Chibok in north-eastern Borno state in Nigeria. The abductions have sparked protests around the world calling for the release of the girls who are being held by the militant group Boko Haram. Photo courtesy: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

"The President has repeatedly expressed his total commitment towards ensuring the safe return of the #ChibokGirls, and all other Boko Haram captives," said a statement from the president's office. The extremist Boko Haram militants have been terrorizing Nigeria for several years. Their name means "Western education is a sin," and they especially target schools.

The released girls are currently in military custody and will soon be transferred to a medical facility. Although there is much rejoicing at the release of the 82 girls, 113 still remain unaccounted for.

Will Committing Suicide Send a Person to Hell?

Suzette Gutierrez-Cachila
The Gospel Herald

Christian apologist and author Ravi Zacharias attempted to take his life when he was 17 years old but was arrested by God, who turned his life around. Facebook/Ravi Zacharias

The question “If a person commits suicide, will that person go to hell?” is arguably one of the toughest and most frequently debated questions among believers. Here, Christian apologist and author Dr. Ravi Zacharias weighs in on the subject.

Zacharias, speaking before an audience, admitted he did not have an “absolute answer.” However, he pointed to a verse in the Bible that refers to murder: [Genesis 9:6](#). The verse reads, “Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.” He explained that taking a life, whether someone’s life or your own, is an attack on God’s image.

“In Genesis 9:6, murder is called the ultimate attack upon the image of God. That’s what murder is,” Zacharias said. “So by violating the image of God in someone else, or I violate it in myself, it is the ultimate act of lack of faith, and without faith, it is impossible to please God.”

“I’d just say this: I wouldn’t want to



Christian apologist and author Ravi Zacharias attempted to take his life when he was 17 years old but was arrested by God, who turned his life around. Facebook/Ravi Zacharias

meet the Lord after I have taken my life,” he said.

Zacharias also said he will not “stand as judge” in front of a family who lost a loved one through suicide because God is the one who determines a person’s eternal fate. “I cannot stand as a judge and tell the parent of an 18- or a 19-year-old their life has been wasted ... that that’s the end and that person is hell bound,” he said. “That’s not my prerogative in life.”

“I would have to leave God as the judge and leave God to work for the

peace of a family that has had to live through it.”

The apologist briefly recounted the time when he himself attempted to end his life. He said it was a moment he found difficult to talk to his parents about, and it took years before he was able to do so. He wrote his testimony in a 2013 article for Christianity Today. When he was a teenager, his life revolved around cricket and tennis. He did not have good grades, and he received beatings from his father because of it.

Not excelling in school became a source of shame for him, especially in Delhi where kids are expected to do well in their studies. “I often pondered life’s meaning,” he wrote. “Rich in friends, impoverished when alone, I was well on my way to an isolated me.”

His failure in his studies kept haunting him, until one day, he decided to end his life, thinking to himself that “a quiet exit will save my family from further shame.” He hid in the bathroom and drank poison. He was 17 years old. Fortunately, their servant was able to rescue him and brought him to the hospital. While there, Fred David, the director for Youth for Christ, gave him a Bible and asked his mother to read to him starting at John 14.

The words of Jesus in John 14:19 struck him: “Because I live, you also

will live.” And God turned his life around. “The fact that I tried to take my life is a devastating thought to me. The only consolation I have is that I didn’t know Christ at the time,” he said. “Now that I know Him, I will never violate the image of God that is given to me.”

He then talked about Romans 14, which says that “everything that does not come from faith is sin.” This means doing something outside a conviction that God has given you is “clearly a sinful thing to do,” he explained.

If he came across anybody who is contemplating suicide, he would tell that person to not go through with it and to treasure God’s gift of life. “Eternal destinies are in the hands of God, but the moment is for us to choose and select. Let us not violate what God has given to us as a sacred gift. It is a privilege that is entrusted,” he continued.

He also encouraged those who are going through difficult times to trust God in the unknown and “through the wildest twists and turns. When you finally meet with Him, you’ll find He sustained you the greatest in your darkest night of the soul.”

“Life is too precious. Don’t squander it,” he said. “Go out into the darkness. Put your hand into the hand of God. It shall be to you better than the light and safer than the known.”

Ex-NBA player leads weekly Bible study with Pence, top Trump Cabinet members

www.theblaze.com
Tré Goins-Phillips

Vice President Mike Pence and many of President Donald Trump’s Cabinet members participate in a weekly Bible study led by Capitol Ministries founder Ralph Drollinger, who played in the NBA. (Michael Reynolds/Getty Images)

Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount is influencing the United States’ most important leaders in the hallowed corridors of Washington, D.C.

Drollinger began arranging the study during the Trump team’s transition from the campaign trail to the White House. The mission of Capitol Ministries, which was founded in 1997, is “to make disciples of Jesus Christ in the political arena throughout the world.”

“Our ambitious goal is to deliver the Gospel to every public servant in every capitol every year,” the organization’s 20th anniversary report reads. “We call this our Big Hairy Audacious Goal — our BHAG — and it’s one we embrace with enthusiasm.”

The weekly meetings are hosted by Pence and eight other Cabinet members, CBN noted.

Trump officials who participate in the Bible studies include Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Health and



Vice President Mike Pence and key members of President Donald Trump’s Cabinet participate in weekly Bible studies and prayer gatherings led by former NBA basketball player Ralph Drollinger, founder of Capitol Ministries, CBN News reported.

Human Services Secretary Tom Price, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, Energy Secretary Rick Perry, Environmental Protection Agency Secretary Scott Pruitt, CIA Director Mike Pompeo, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson, and Agriculture Secretary Sonny Purdue.

So why does the 7-foot-2 Drollinger spend his time poring over Scripture with such high-profile politicians?

“In terms of a country’s health and direction,” he said, “when its leaders are seeking God, the nation is in a position to be blessed by God in ways

that are ‘far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think.’ ”

The NBA-star-turned-pastor was referring to Ephesians 3:20, which reads, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.”

“This has been a wonderful time of prayer and fellowship, as I am presently teaching through the Sermon on the Mount — as well as handing out my weekly written Bible study as a homework assignment on a particular topic,” Drollinger said.

The Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew chapters 5-7, is perhaps the most famous collection of Jesus’ moral teachings. For believers, the lessons contained in the well-known sermon outline the bedrock principles of Christian discipleship.

It comes as no surprise that Pence is one of the Bible study’s sponsors. The vice president has been open about his faith. In fact, he frequently describes himself as “a Christian, a conservative, and a Republican, in that order.”

The leaders of the gathering have said Trump has an open invitation to join the group any time, though the details of his faith are much more jumbled, given his past penchant for uncouth comments about women and his apparent unfamiliarity on well-known Christian vernacular.

Last summer, though, Pastor Paula White, who serves as the president’s spiritual adviser, said then-candidate Trump “loves God” and is “much more hungry for God in his heart than I think people would imagine.”

According to Christian Today, interest in the high-profile Bible study was sparked by reporters who noticed the words “Cabinet Member Bible Study” on Perry’s schedule.

Indian government accused of attacking tribal identity

Rebranding a university deliberately alienates indigenous communities

<http://www.ucanews.com>

Bijay Kumar Minj, New Delhi, India

Student protests continue in the eastern Indian Jharkhand state after the government renamed a college after a Hindu nationalist, a move church activists say was done to dismantle the identity of indigenous people.

The government move was “totally unacceptable and we condemn it,” said Bishop Vincent Barwa of Simdega, chairman of the Indian bishops’ office for tribal people.

The protest began after the government, run by the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), renamed the state’s premier Ranchi College to Doctor Shyama Prasad Mukherjee University on April 17.

Mukherjee (1901–1953) was a Hindu who founded the nationalist Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951. Mukherjee is considered an ideologue of the pro-Hindu nationalist movement that was a precursor to the BJP.

With BJP in power in New Delhi and most states in northern India, Hindu groups have become emboldened and stepped up their action to establish a Hindu hegemony, ignoring



Tribal artists performing at World Indigenous Day in New Delhi in this file photo. Tribal leaders say the pro-Hindu government’s policies in Jharkhand state are aimed at destroying their identity. (ucanews.com photo)

the cultures and well being of tribal and Dalit people among them, their leaders allege.

Bishop Barwa said people from elsewhere may not fully grasp the ramifications of the decision and consequences for the life and identity of the state’s tribal communities.

The move pushes Hindu hegemony on people, “as they did not even consider changing the name to one of several tribal heroes who sacrificed their lives to protect indigenous land and identity,” said the bishop, who comes from the Oraon tribe.

In the past two weeks, hundreds of tribal students took to the streets to protest. They accused the BJP government of propagating right-wing Hindu ideology.

Tribal student leader Akash Kacchap told ucanews.com they wanted the

college renamed after a local hero. “Is it too much to demand that? This government is rigid and busy propagating pro-Hindu ideologies and pushing it on tribal people,” he said.

Jharkhand state was created by carving out tribal-dominated areas of Bihar state 17 years ago, purportedly to protect the interests of indigenous communities that make up 26 percent of state’s 33 million people. Christian missionaries began working in the region some 150 years ago.

About 1.5 million people in the state are currently Christians, most of them tribal people, and at least half are Catholics. Although missionaries started formal education a century ago, the government runs all nine universities in the state.

Founded in 1926, Ranchi College was made a university in 2015, making it the first college in the state to become a university. It has some 4,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Anabel Benjamin Bara, from the Jesuit-managed Xavier School of Management in Jamshedpur told ucanews.com that the government’s move is “not surprising as it furthers the agenda of destroying tribal identity and clearing the path for others to rule and loot tribal people.”

In November 2016, the government

changed two laws to help the state take over traditional tribal lands for development projects, to the fury of tribal people.

Bara said changing the names of public places will make people eventually accept the characters as historical leaders. The college name may be a “very small incident but the message is clear. They want to kill tribal identity,” he said.

Gladson Dungdung, a tribal activist, said the government has been following an anti-tribal policy to help industrialists plunder the state. “First the land rights of the tribals were taken away. Then they invited industries to invest in the state without consulting with indigenous people who are ultimately the protectors and owners of the land.”

Dungdung said that the “time has come for tribal people to unite and fight for their right before it becomes too late.”

Mukti Prakash Tirkey, editor of a weekly on indigenous affairs, said changing the name was “very serious” as it would force tribal people to think they belong to the wrong society. “When your house name is changed to one obviously unfamiliar to you it may confuse your identity,” he said.

“Government policy is to displace tribal people in order to exploit the mineral rich state,” Tirkey added.

Thirty-one (31) silent facts about the rapture

1. It is going to be the next greatest event that will shock all the continents of the world.

2. It is going to take place suddenly, abruptly, unexpectedly, without warning and without prior notice.

3. There shall be no second version of the event.

4. A greater percentage of Christians may be taken unawares.

5. Careless Christians who miss the event will have no other similar gracious opportunity.

6. The event shall have no regard or respect for ecclesiastical titles or church leadership positions.

7. It shall be a day when the sheep shall be separated from the goats.

8. The day shall differentiate between the Broad Way Christians from the Narrow Way Christians.

9. The day shall separate sincerity from hypocrisy.

10. The day shall differentiate between those who harbour secret sins from those who abhor secret sins.

11. The day shall separate those whose lives are hidden in Christ from those who are hiding in the church.

12. The day shall show a glaring, clear, conspicuous, demarcation between Christians who walk on the path of holiness from those who walk on the path of worldliness.

13. It shall be a day of double emotion: joy for some and unimaginable, indescribable, uncontrollable regrets for others.

14. It shall be a day of surprises- some “Big names” may miss the flight while some “Less known” may be on board.

15. Another surprise may be that a man or woman who had faithfully served the Lord for many years may defile his or her garment a few minutes before the sound of that summoning trumpet and miss the flight while a notorious sinner may surrender his or her life to Jesus within the same time frame and go to heaven.

16. This event may happen now, today, this week, this month, this year or next year!

17. Wise Christians, like the five virgins that took extra oil, are expected to get ready, yes, to get prepared.

18. After the event, all those who are bitter against one another, malicious, unforgiving, jealous, arrogant, haters, hypocrites, drunkards, fornicators, adulterers, adulteresses, murderers with weapons and murderers with tongue etc, shall have enough time to continue in their trade.

19. When the event is over there shall be revival among those who have chosen to stay behind not because there will be a second chance, no, but because the reality of the event would have struck them like a thunderbolt. But they will have to pay with their own blood.

20. When the event is over, those who are left behind shall no longer be safe to worship in their gigantic, fanciful and multi-billion Dollars/Cedis cathedrals.

Instead they shall seek safety in caves, bushes and abandoned and dilapidated but hidden structures.

21. When this great event is over, each time those who will miss their flight manage to gather for worship, they will pay attention to only one sermon- whether they gather in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North or South America; the sermon will only centre on “How to Meet the Divine Standard and Join the Other Saints”.

22. It is also worthy to note that those who will be left behind will never have any business with comedians at their altars anymore. No! There shall no longer be gatherings for entertainments. Whenever, they manage to gather, it shall always be for serious religious business only.

23. The prayer pattern of those who will be left behind will also undergo a radical change. They will not be praying for things anymore. They will only be praying for strength to withstand the tortures of the Anti-Christ and die bravely to join the other saints. None will be praying for jobs, marriages, etc.

24. It is equally worthy of note that some of those who will miss their flight will not be able to endure the torture of the Anti Christ. They will receive the mark of the beast and thereby be doomed forever.

25. When the ready saints are gone, all our denominational walls of partition will collapse. The man or woman who use to worship in Omega Fire, Jesus Chapel, Exousia Kingdom Gospel Centre, Deeper Life, for instance, will hide in the same place with those who worship in Christ Embassy, Church of God Mission, Assemblies of God, Word Aflame, Action

Chapel, Winners Chapel, Lighthouse Chapel etc and nobody will remember to claim superiority anymore because then they will be facing a common enemy.

26. When this event is over, each time believers who will miss their flight manage to gather anywhere for worship, there will be an atmosphere of sobriety. This rowdiness we witness today shall be no more.

27. There shall also be a radical change in the attitude of those who will miss their flight towards Bible study. What we have now is an attitude characterized by a high degree of nonchalance and indifference, but when the ready saints are gone, those who will be left behind will begin to take their bible study seriously.

28. All the teens and youths who come to church to please their parents will repent after this great event; yes, they will begin to seek God for themselves.

29. When the event is over, all those who will do any form of business in the schools, hospitals, banks, etc, will have to bear the mark of beast (666) or be hunted down and killed like common criminals.

30. One of the gains of this reminder is that there may be someone reading this piece today who will take a firm decision to ensure that he/she gets on board that celestial flight travelling to glory.

31. However, one of the greatest tragedies of this reminder is that there may be someone too who is reading this piece today but who will see no need to heed this warning. A tragedy indeed!

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