THE COST OF FAITH:
INDIAN CHRISTIAN PAYS WITH LIFE

Global Christian News, 10th February 2017 Sarinder Kaur

A Christian and his family in Jharkhand were brutally tortured for their faith by the local villagers resulting in the death of one member of the family.

To add to the horror and trauma the family faced, villagers would not allow the son to bury his father after his death. They insisted on a agreement that the entire family had to return to their ancestral faith.

Bartu Urawn, 50, a resident of village Kubuaa, district Palamu, died on 20 January 2017, after suffering brutality for about three years in his home village.

Bartu and his family followed the indigenous religion of the Tribal population – Sarna Dharam meaning “Religion of the Holy Woods”.

“We lived in utter poverty and did not have food for a single meal. There were series of young deaths in our family which broke us completely,” said Beneswar Urawn, son of Bartu Urawn while speaking to Global Christian News.

“We were completely broken as a family after we lost my elder sister, elder brother and younger brother one after the other. It was then the gospel was preached in our village,” added Beneswar.

Ten years ago, Urawn family along with nine other families started to follow Christ.

Gradually the villagers noticed that the lives of the 10 families, including the Urawns had begun to improve and they began to persecute all the ten families.

“We had food to eat, health in our bodies and Mother Mary’s Statue Desecrated in Mumbai

MUMBAI -- A statue of Mother Mary was allegedly desecrated by unknown persons in suburban Kurla in the wee hours today, leading to tension in the area.

The grotto of the Virgin Mary was installed on a roadside in Kurla and was desecrated at around 4 AM, police said.

The incident led to tension in the area and police were trying to pacify the angry locals.

They were also trying to obtain CCTV footage of the area. In one of the footages that they have managed to get, three persons were purportedly seen moving on a bike near the site, police said.

Efforts were on to nab the culprits, they said. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone V, Paramjiti Singh said police personnel are on the spot and the situation is under control.

Reacting to the incident, social activist Nicholas Almeida said this kind of disturbance happens every now and then during election time.

In 2016, right after the canonisation of Mother Teresa, a statue of Jesus Christ at Juhu Tara road in Mumbai was desecrated by unknown miscreants.
Christian persecution seen in more locations across the globe, new report shows

By Perry Chiaramonte
Published February 02, 2017
FoxNews.com

In the past year, the persecution of Christians has not only increased, but it has also spread to more corners of the globe – with incidents occurring on every continent, according to a new report.

The advocacy group Open Doors USA recently released the latest edition of its annual World Watch List, which ranks countries based on the treatment of their Christian populations. The group said the increase in incidents occurred because persecution was alarming and only getting worse.

“It is appalling that Open Doors has to report that persecution has increased again in 2016 and we are still at the worst levels of persecution in modern times,” David Curry, president and CEO of Open Doors USA, said to Fox News. “The spread of persecution has gotten worse, now hitting nearly every continent in the world. There were 23 Christians killed in Mexico specifically because of their faith.”

Christians the most persecuted Group in World for Second Year in a Row

The report comes on the heels of another study by the Center for Studies on New Religions that showed nearly 90,000 Christians were killed for their faith in 2016 and that as many as 600 million were prevented from practicing their faith through intimidation, forced conversions, bodily harm or even death.

“These numbers underscore what we already know,” Robert Nicholson of the Philos Project, an advocacy group for Christianity in the Middle East, told Fox News at the time of the report’s release. “There are many places on Earth where being a Christian is the most dangerous thing you can be. Those who think of Christianity as a religion of the powerful need to see that in many places it’s a religion of the powerless. And the powerless deserve to be protected.”

Open Doors said in its new report that some 215 million Christians around the globe are facing some degree of persecution. But that number, it noted, could actually be much higher.

“Our report is conservative because it only calculates incidents that are reported and can be validated,” Curry told Fox News. “It is likely that there are thousands of incidents that are never reported and nobody knows because Christians are often fearful to tell anyone – even their own family members.”

Curry said the group has seen an uptick in persecution in various countries throughout Asia, driven by governments and Islamic extremism. Christians in that part of the world have been targeted by nationalist religious movements – Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist – in such countries as Pakistan, India and Myanmar.

“Governmental raids increased, church membership requirements were suddenly doubled overnight resulting in churches being regarded as now illegal, among other things,” Curry told Fox News. “This is one area of the world that we are keeping a careful eye on because of the dramatic rise in persecution.”

Many of these groups increasingly view Christianity as a foreign, “colonial” import, and believe its practitioners are doing the bidding of the West, experts say.

India saw some of the highest increase in incidents as Hindu nationalists battered Christian churches ever since the election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May 2014. Since he has been in office, Modi has instilled Hindu nationalism, and experts say that has had devastating consequences for Christians in India.

There was an average of 40 incidents per month of Christian persecution last year in the subcontinent, including pastors beaten, churches burned and Christians harassed. Eight Christians were killed for their faith. Of the 64 million Christians in India, approximately 39 million experience direct persecution, according to the Open Doors study.

While Christians continue to be targeted by ISIS radicals in Syria and Iraq, the religion is also under threat in other sections of the Middle East – with incidents of Christian persecution on the rise in Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations.

Surprisingly, North, Central and South America are also seeing increases of Christian persecution – even though Christianity is by far the most practiced religion in the region. In all, 23 Christian leaders in Mexico and another four in Colombia were killed specifically for their faith.

While Mexico is considered more than 80 percent Catholic, a number of priests have come under attack and killed in the country the past few years.

Mexico’s Christians Face Beatings, Forced Conversions at Hands of Hybrid Faiths

In January of last year, some 30 evangelical Christians in the state of Chiapas were banned by village elders who then destroyed their homes, according to supporters.

A Catholic nun walks outside the San Marco cathedral in Taxila Gutierrres, Chiapas, Mexico February 14, 2016. (REUTERS/Carlos Jasso)

Curry said he hopes the Open Doors list will bring more attention to the global epidemic.

“It is vital to remember that the Open Doors World Watch List is not just about numbers. Rather, this represents a real life that was either taken or harmed. It is someone’s mother, father, brother, sister, friend, etc.,” he said. “This is one of those issues that really are about life and death. It matters what we do as Americans and it is time that we took a stand and said that we will not allow this to happen anymore.”

Perry Chiaramonte is a reporter for FoxNews.com. Follow him on Twitter at @perrychiaramonte

17 Y/O Girl Abducted by Sex Traffickers Rescued After She ‘Prayed and Prayed’ Family Would Find Her

By LEAH MARIEANN BLETTIG 20, 2017 11:54 AM EST

A 17-year-old Utah girl abducted by sex traffickers in Las Vegas has been rescued after she “prayed and prayed” her family would find her.

Sarah Dunsey from Logan, Utah, was found in Venice, California, on Friday after she disappeared over a month earlier. At the time of her disappearance, the teen was on a trip with her friends in Las Vegas, where she was believed to have been kidnapped into sex slavery.

Sarah’s mother Annie, who made an emotional plea for her return in a video campaign that went viral, took to Facebook to celebrate the news of her daughter’s safe return.

Annie revealed that Sarah told her family: “I prayed and prayed that you would come, and you came”.

She wrote: “We found our Sarah Beariah!!! Thank you all for sharing, getting Sarah’s face out there, and helping us to find her. Thank you to the people that sent us the tips that found her.”

Annie added, “We are tied to each other in more ways than we think. I felt everyone prayers and energy sent to our family and Sarah. We all want the same thing for our children. To be safe and feel loved. We are tied by a universal need and desire for our children to not be hurt. Thank you for helping my baby girl come home.”

According to the MailOnline, Sarah was reunited with her family at a hospital in California over the weekend. Currently, two men believed to be responsible for the abduction are being questioned by the FBI.

As reported, 474 people were arrested; 142 men were charged with solicitation, while 36 men were held on suspicion of pimping. The children were turned over to the care of various agencies and were being helped by two organizations, Saving Innocence and the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking.

Sheriff Jim McDonnell explained that over 70 percent of child trafficking victims are often under the care of foster homes. Because the children are hungry for affection and love, they are easily swayed by pimps, who lure them into a trap by tricking them into believing that they will give them what they are looking for.

“They’re looking for love. They’re looking for someone that cares about them. The pimp says that they’re going to give them this, then leads them down a path of destruction,” McDonnell said.

Speaking to the victims of human trafficking, McDonnell said, “You are worthy of more. And we will work tirelessly with our partners … to provide you services and help you rebuild your life.”
Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer was stripped naked and hung by his neck on April 9, 1945 in Hitler’s concentration camp at Flossenbürg. In his now classic book of Discipleship he wrote: “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”

The world is increasingly a dangerous place for Christians. Globally, in unprecedented numbers, Christians are being beaten, imprisoned and killed. Yet here in America, pastors preach “dying to ourselves” to people sitting in comfortable chairs and then they serve them jelly donuts and Starbucks after the service.

Though there is this uniquely American decimation among Christians that Jesus suffered so we don’t have to, or that we will escape it—the Bible actually says the opposite: “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (2 Timothy 3:12) It’s time to revisit the central Christian message of suffering for Christ. Even in free nations religious liberties are being taken away.

This season of Lent through Easter as Christians worldwide remember Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection, Pastor Steve will underscore how the LIFE of Jesus is revealed in ridicule and mistreatment, mockery and martyrdom. You won’t leave forlorn, fearful or depressed.

“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not discouraged; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body…” 2 Corinthians 4:8-10

Here are some of the highlights of the first three messages in the series:

- This aversion to Christian suffering and persecution is extra-Biblical and uniquely American.

- There is a grace for suffering and persecution; martyrdom is a spiritual grace/gift. How could it be a gift? Certainly that would be a gift no one would want! Spiritual gifts aren’t to play with them are graces for spiritual breakthrough. There is a grace to give up your life for Christ. Martyrdom is the one spiritual gift you aren’t sure you have until you need it and it’s the only spiritual gift that you can only use once.

- The propellant behind the grace of martyrdom is love. Martyrs are sustained by grace and propelled by love. (1 Cor 13:5, John 15:13)

- Martyrdom is simultaneously a holy detachment and a holy attachment as we give Jesus and our lives. (Revelation 12:11)

- You can’t even be a disciple without taking up your cross and following him. (Mt. 16:24)

- Martyrdom was the expectation of the early Christian Church, not the exception.

- The cost of following Jesus is about to skyrocket. There have been 45,400,000 twentieth century Christian martyrs – more in the last century than in the previous two centuries combined. We typically refer to the first century as the Age of Persecution or martyrdom. However, the Bible teaches the latter age of martyrdom will be far worse and we are in that latter age of martyrdom. (Matthew 24:9-14)

- Lots of wasted human life these days. Yet there is no such thing as a martyr dying in vain.

- If grace is what sustains a martyr and love is what propels him, loyalty is what describes him. The epitome of love and loyalty is martyrdom.

- If grace sustains martyrdom and love propels it, loyalty is what describes it and willingness is what allows it. Martyrdom isn’t accidental or unavoidable, it’s a choice. It’s choosing to follow Jesus down the path he took. Hebrews 11:25 says “Moses chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.”

- Fear of death is not a Christian concern. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said “do not worry about your life… who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” He was saying don’t worry about preserving or prolonging your life.

- When the martyr dies, who wins and who really loses? Tertullian said: the death of the martyr is the seed of the church. Something greater comes forth. But we think of death as a horrible defeat. That’s not how God sees it. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. (Ps 116:15).

- This confidence in facing death comes from good theology. This fear of death among Christians is evidence of a shallow theology. Many have unjustly beliefs about death and dying. We have this ‘fraidy cat view of death, that it is this travesty. We see it as final, as the worst thing that could happen. God views it very differently. Jesus took the sting out of death for the believer and the believer doesn’t have to face the dreaded second death (Rev. 2:11).

- Self-preservation is not a Christian virtue. It certainly is a human instinct but it is not a Christian virtue. A Christian virtue is… greater love has no one than this, that he lay his life down for others…

- Letting go comes natural for the martyr as they lived a life of faithful giving in the little things.

- ‘If you can’t give your stuff, you won’t give your life. If you can’t give your money, what makes you think you’d be willing to pay the skyrocketing cost of discipleship? ’

- Giving your life to Christ means giving your life up for Christ.

The Urawn family is back home and we are free to believe whom we want to,” revealed Be...
Christian Dalit women stand up for their rights

Ritu Sharma, New Delhi, India, UCA News.com

Dalit Christian Women for Change formed a network aimed at ending discrimination in society and the church on Feb. 13 in Bengaluru. (Photo supplied by Indian bishops’ Commission for Dalits and Indigenous People)

February 24, 2017

Christian women from Dalit groups in India have formed a network to curb physical and sexual abuse, foster leadership and promote education for women.

“It is a first network of Dalit Christian women to express their concerns about discrimination and injustice,” Isabella Xavier, president of the newly formed Dalit Christian Women for Change told ucanews.com Feb. 24.

She was referring to some 40 Dalit Christian women from across India who gathered in the southern Indian city of Bengaluru Feb. 13 to set up this new national-level organization. That meeting was organized by the Indian bishops’ Commission for Dalits and Indigenous People.

“Dalits, especially women, do not have any identity. We are looked down upon as outcasts even within the church,” Xavier said. Dalit means “trampled upon” in Sanskrit and is used to denote casted space for Dalit people in church-es and cemeteries. India has some 27 million Christians and at least 60 percent of them come from Dalit or indigenous backgrounds who struggle socially and economically.

Christian Dalits suffer further because the government denies them state benefits set aside for Hindu Dalits. Indian law allows for job and educational quotas to Hindu Dalits as a means for affirmative action but denies them to Christians and Muslims on the grounds that their religions do not recognize the caste system.

Xavier said that the situation of female Dalits is further complicated by India’s patriarchal society that excludes women and leaves them vulnerable to abuse. Women have no leadership or means to speak up for their rights or education. Hence Christian Dalit women in all 180 Indian dioceses need to build leadership programs. Father Z. Devasagayaraj, secretary of the Indian Catholic bishops’ Commission for Dalits and Indigenous People, said “it is high time” that issues of Dalit Christian women are brought forward but added that such a new network would be a “separate and independent entity” and not be part of the bishops’ office. “But we will promote and support them,” he said.

According to the International Dalit Solidarity Network, Dalit women experience are discriminated against because of their caste, economic situation and their gender. Dalit women often work in modern slavery and are key targets for trafficking, often used as debt slaves in brick kilns, garment industries and agriculture or “may also be born into temple prostitution as ‘Devadasis’ (sex slaves) ... or be branded prostitutes due to their caste status.”

About 98 percent of those forced into dehumanising work of removing human waste by hand, are Dalit women and about 70 percent of Dalit women are illiterate in rural India.

“Dalit women are therefore considered easy targets for sexual violence and other crimes, because the perpetrators almost always get away with it,” according to the website of the network that advocates for Dalit human rights nationally and internationally.

I, The Convert

My conversion was not a change of religion; it was a change of heart

Anand Maladavann

I was born a Brahmin and am the grandson of a priest whom I dearly loved. I am educated and my current professional standing indicates that I am reasonably intelligent. I am also affluent and my income would put me distinctly in the upper middle class bracket. I guess that would make me high-caste, rich and smart. In other words, I am not a tribal, or poor or dim-witted. And yet, I chose to become a follower of Jesus Christ.

The world would call me a convert to Christianity. I have no problems with that, though I see my faith more as a relationship with God through Jesus Christ than as a religion. And for the record, I can truthfully claim that no one financially induced or threatened or deceived me into converting to Christianity.

I am fiercely proud of my national identity as an Indian and I am completely at peace with my cultural identity as a Hindu. I retain the name my parents gave me. My wife, who also shares my faith, continues to go by her Hindu name. We have two children and we have given both distinctly Hindu names. In fact, many of my colleagues and acquaintances who may happen to read this column are likely to be surprised. They have no inkling about my faith, for I generally don’t go about announcing it. But if someone does ask me the reason behind the joy and hope that is everpresent in my life, I am always delighted to share it with them.

I write this piece to make one point—that my conversion was not a change of religion but a change of heart. To explain this, I need to go back to my childhood in Chennai, similar to that of so many other Tamil Brahmin boys like me. My grandfather, every bit the virtuous priest, had enormous influence over me. I absoluately adored him and as a toddler, always clung to him. He too loved me to a fault. There was no wish of mine that he would not rush to fulfil. But even in my early, formative years I was unable to relate to the religion he fervently practiced. Later, in my school days, I once spent my summer holidays with him in Trichy. Memories of dawn walks with him, for the ritualistic dip in the Cauvery river, cow in tow, are still fresh in my memory. I learnt many shlokas, some of which I still remember. But I never understood any of it and none of it helped me connect with God. When I was 19, a Christian friend with whom I used to play cricket invited me to his house for prayer. If he had invited me to a pub, or party, I would have gone too. At his home, he and his sister prayed for me. It was a simple yet delightful conversation with God that lasted all of five minutes. I don’t remember it verbatim, but they articulated a prayer of blessing on me.

Tribal people in eastern India protest investor summit

Bijay Kumar Minj, New Delhi, India

February 21, 2017

Legislative protections have been amended and big business is eying mineral-rich tribal lands

People protest against Jharkhand state government’s amendment to protective land laws. The laws were changed in November 2016 to help the government take over tribal lands. (ucanews.com photo)

Tribal people and church groups in eastern India Jharkhand state have been denied the opportunity to peacefully protest near the venue of a business summit that they say encourages land grabs. Numerous protests were held in the state before the government’s Global Summit of Investors Feb. 16-17, which led authorities to ban gatherings of more than four people near the event’s venue in state capital Ranchi.

Jesuit Father Stanislaus Tirkey, secretary of the Indian bishops’ office for tribal people, told ucanews.com that the summit intended to attract investment and ignores tribal people’s demand to revoke changes made in November to the land protection laws that allows the government to take over tribal lands for industrial and welfare projects.
In case you missed it: First lady Melania opened Trump’s Saturday Campaign rally with the Lord’s prayer

Taylor Berglund: Feb 20, 2017: Charisma News

Anne Graham Lotz defended “You read about me in history books, based on a lie.”

However, while Roe v. Wade has been laid to rest. I think it’s safe to say that the entire abortion industry is based on a lie [and] I am dedicated to spending the rest of my life undoing the law that bears my name.” –Norma McCorvey

Back in 1973, I was a very confused Christian. [I was] a child in Christ now. I was the “Jane Roe” in the historic Roe v. Wade Supreme Court case of 1973. However, while Roe v. Wade officially legalized abortion in America, McCorvey later deeply regretted her role [in the case] and became a Christian.

“Back in 1973, I was a very confused twenty-one-year-old with one child and facing an unplanned pregnancy,” she says in an ad released nearly 10 years ago. “At the time I fought to obtain a legal abortion, but now I am dedicated to spreading the truth about preserving the dignity of all human life from natural conception to natural death.” she concluded in the ad.

Father Frank Pavone, National Director of Priests for Life, was a close friend to McCorvey and was a key figure in her faith life.

“Norma has been a friend of mine, and of Priests for Life, for more than 20 years,” Father Pavone said in a statement following her death. “She was victimized and exploited by abortion ideologues when she was a young woman but she came to be genuinely sorry that a decision named for her has led to the deaths of more than 58 million children.”

Fr. Pavone also said McCorvey would want pro-life activists to continue the fight for life.

“Just prior to the March for Life this January, Norma told me to greet all the politicians and dignitaries. His speech also touched on the importance of caring for veterans, whose “vigorously has kept our liberty alive.”

Trump thanked the American people for their prayers, which “have sustained me through some of the toughest battles with the media, the First Lady led the crowd in Matthew 6:9-13.

“Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name,” she said. “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Click here to watch a video of First Lady Melania praying and speaking before introducing President Trump at the rally.

International News

China kicks out Christian Missionaries

Crackdown targeting South Korean’s evangelizing in communist state

North Korean defectors at the South Korean Hanawon resettlement facility, the first stop for North Koreans who have fled their impoverished hard-line communist homeland. More than 30 South Korean Christian missionaries in northern China, who were providing assistance to fugitives fleeing North Korea, were arrested and deported by Chinese authorities. (Photo by Jung Yong-Mu/IBP)

February 17, 2017

Officials from China’s communist government have expelled dozens of South Korean Christian missionaries following a series of police raids on church groups. According to a recent report from Asia news, authorities arrested four missionaries and deported at least 32 more last week as part of an ongoing crackdown against Christian evangelizing. The missionaries had been working in the northeast region of the country, providing assistance to fugitives fleeing North Korea. Dozens of South Korean Christian missionaries had traveled to China in past months and along with preaching the Christian gospel, they sought to help defectors navigate the perilous journey across the Yalu River, which separates China and North Korea.

The South Korean government in Seoul has confirmed reports that some Korean missionaries had been arrested in China, the Breitbart website reported. Some of the missionaries had been working in China for decades.

Although foreign missionary work is illegal in China, local authorities have often turned a blind eye to evangelizing efforts by South Korean missionaries, taking advantage of the free humanitarian service they provide as well as the substantial bribes paid in order to avoid prosecution.

In recent years, however, China’s President Xi Jinping has tightened government control over religious activity in the country, often targeting Christians.


“1 I am praying for you. ’Those are the five words that never, ever touch to fail my heart’; Trump tells prayer breakfast attendees America must never stop asking God for wisdom

Claire Chretien : Feb 2, 2017: LifeSiteNews

“The quality of our lives is not defined by our material success, but by our spiritual success. I tell you that from somebody that has had material success.” – President Donald Trump (Washington, DC) — [LifeSiteNews]

At Thursday morning’s National Prayer Breakfast, President Trump said the whole world has a duty to stop the “genocide” of Christians in the Middle East. (Photo Credit: C-SPAN via LifeSiteNews)

He blasted the terrorism that religious minorities face in some parts of the world, said we “must never, ever, stop” asking God for wisdom, and declared that America will flourish “when religious liberty can flourish.”

“Freedom of religion is a sacred right,” President Trump said. He promised that his administration “will do everything in its power to defend and protect religious liberty in our land” and around the world …

Trump said he will “totally destroy” the Johnson Amendment, which threatens religious liberty in our land” and around the world …

Trump rejoice that “one nation under God” is part of the Pledge of Allegiance. He called the reference to God “a great thing because that’s what we are and that is what we will always be and that is what our people want.”

“God will always give us solace and strength and comfort,” he told the audience of American and foreign politicians and dignitaries.

“Tell me that you from somebody that has had material success. Many of the ultra-rich are ‘very, very miserable and unhappy people.’ Trump said, while he’s noticed the less wealthy who have their families are often happiest. “Those to me are the successful people,” he said.

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“God will always give us solace and strength and comfort,” he told the audience of American and foreign politicians and dignitaries.

Norma McCorvey, the “Jane Roe” of Roe v. wade who became pro-life, dies at 69: “It was the biggest mistake of my life”

News Staff : Feb 20, 2017: CBN News

“I’m not a lesbian. I’m just a child in Christ now. I was the Jane Roe of vs. Wade, but Jane Roe has been laid to rest. I think it’s safe to say that the entire abortion industry is based on a lie [and] I am dedicated to spending the rest of my life undoing the law that bears my name.” —Norma McCorvey

(Rockwell, TX)—[CBN News] According to The Washington Post, McCorvey died Saturday from heart ailments at an assisted-living home in Texas. (Screengrab via CBN News-Click here to watch the CBN video report)

McCovey was just 22-years-old when she stepped into the spotlight as “Jane Roe” in the historic Roe v. Wade Supreme Court case of 1973. However, while Roe v. Wade officially legalized abortion in America, McCorvey later deeply regretted her role [in the case] and became a Christian.

“I’m not a lesbian. I’m just a child in Christ now. I was the Jane Roe of vs. Wade, but Jane Roe has been laid to rest. I think it’s safe to say that the entire abortion industry is based on a lie [and] I am dedicated to spending the rest of my life undoing the law that bears my name.” —Norma McCorvey

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Because the accounts of Jesus’ death and resurrection are central to Christian faith, they have been subjected to special challenge. Nevertheless, strong evidence supports the essential Gospel reports about Jesus’ death and resurrection. Other narratives may have figured as much in early Christian ethical preaching, but early Christians probably would have told and retold the passion story, which lay at the heart of their gospel. No record remains of any form of early Christianity that lacked the basic structure of the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Paul’s sequence is similar to Mark’s (1 Cor 11:23; 15:3-5; compare Jewish and Roman responsibility in 1 Cor 1:23; 1 Thess 2:14-15), and if, as is probable, John represents an independent tradition, his passion narrative again confirms the outline Mark follows, suggesting a passion narrative that existed before Mark (R. Brown 1994:53-55, 77-80). Other evidence suggests the substantial reliability of these accounts. First of all, the basic story seems to have been established among Jerusalem Christians within a decade after the resurrection. The basic components of the story and their outline are surely earlier than Mark; Paul and John independently attest the same material. Mark himself appears to presuppose that his audience is familiar with some details of the story (especially Barabbas and other insurrectionists, despite Pilate’s many confrontations with such revolutionaries; Theissen 1991:171, 182-83).

Further, the “criterion of embarrassment” makes it nearly impossible to believe that the early Christians could have invented the account. Christians would not invent one disciple’s betrayal or other disciples’ abandonment (both shameful in their milieu); the earliest Christians, who were Jewish, probably would not invent condemnation by the majority of their own people’s leaders; Christians would never have invented shameful death by crucifixion; and they would never have invented the treason charge “King of the Jews,” which would have made all Christians look seditious and invited Roman retribution.

Finally, the accounts of Jesus’ arrest, trials and execution fit what we know of the period in question (Craig Evans (1995:108) accurately compares Josephus’s account of Jesus ben Ananias, who similarly entered the temple area during a festival (Jos. War 6.300-301). Like Jesus, he predicted doom on Jerusalem and its sanctuary, even referring (again like Jesus) to the context of Jeremiah’s prophecy of judgment against the temple (Jer 7:34 in War 6.301; compare Jer 7:11 in Mk 11:17). The Jewish authorities arrested and beat Jesus ben Ananias (War 6.302) and handed him over to the Roman governor (War 6.303), who interrogated him (War 6.305). He refused to answer the governor (War 6.305), was scourged (6.304) and—in this case unlike Jesus (though compare Mk 15:9)—was released (6.305).

The primary difference, that Jesus of Nazareth was executed whereas Jesus son of Ananias was not, also makes good sense: unlike Jesus ben Ananias, Jesus of Nazareth was not viewed as insane and already had a band of followers, plus a growing reputation that could support messianic claims (compare E. Sanders 1993:267). Jesus ben Ananias could simply be punished; Jesus of Nazareth had to be executed. The basic points of the passion story—including those most apt to be questioned—make excellent historical sense.

**Arrest, Martyrdom, Resurrection**

BibleGateway.com

Because the accounts of Jesus’ death and resurrection are central to Christian faith, they have been subjected to special challenge. Nevertheless, strong evidence supports the essential Gospel reports about Jesus’ death and resurrection. Other narratives may have figured as much in early Christian ethical preaching, but early Christians probably would have told and retold the passion story, which lay at the heart of their gospel. No record remains of any form of early Christianity that lacked the basic structure of the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Paul’s sequence is similar to Mark’s (1 Cor 11:23; 15:3-5; compare Jewish and Roman responsibility in 1 Cor 1:23; 1 Thess 2:14-15), and if, as is probable, John represents an independent tradition, his passion narrative again confirms the outline Mark follows, suggesting a passion narrative that existed before Mark (R. Brown 1994:53-55, 77-80). Other evidence suggests the substantial reliability of these accounts. First of all, the basic story seems to have been established among Jerusalem Christians within a decade after the resurrection. The basic components of the story and their outline are surely earlier than Mark; Paul and John independently attest the same material. Mark himself appears to presuppose that his audience is familiar with some details of the story (especially Barabbas and other insurrectionists, despite Pilate’s many confrontations with such revolutionaries; Theissen 1991:171, 182-83).

Further, the “criterion of embarrassment” makes it nearly impossible to believe that the early Christians could have invented the account. Christians would not invent one disciple’s betrayal or other disciples’ abandonment (both shameful in their milieu); the earliest Christians, who were Jewish, probably would not invent condemnation by the majority of their own people’s leaders; Christians would never have invented shameful death by crucifixion; and they would never have invented the treason charge “King of the Jews,” which would have made all Christians look seditious and invited Roman retribution.

Finally, the accounts of Jesus’ arrest, trials and execution fit what we know of the period in question (Craig Evans (1995:108) accurately compares Josephus’s account of Jesus ben Ananias, who similarly entered the temple area during a festival (Jos. War 6.300-301). Like Jesus, he predicted doom on Jerusalem and its sanctuary, even referring (again like Jesus) to the context of Jeremiah’s prophecy of judgment against the temple (Jer 7:34 in War 6.301; compare Jer 7:11 in Mk 11:17). The Jewish authorities arrested and beat Jesus ben Ananias (War 6.302) and handed him over to the Roman governor (War 6.303), who interrogated him (War 6.305). He refused to answer the governor (War 6.305), was scourged (6.304) and—in this case unlike Jesus (though compare Mk 15:9)—was released (6.305).

The primary difference, that Jesus of Nazareth was executed whereas Jesus son of Ananias was not, also makes good sense: unlike Jesus ben Ananias, Jesus of Nazareth was not viewed as insane and already had a band of followers, plus a growing reputation that could support messianic claims (compare E. Sanders 1993:267). Jesus ben Ananias could simply be punished; Jesus of Nazareth had to be executed. The basic points of the passion story—including those most apt to be questioned—make excellent historical sense.

**Mother of Man Who Killed Pastor Embraces Christianity after Witnessing Forgiveness, Compassion of Church**

By LEAH MARIEANN KLETTI  Feb 15, 2017 09:56 AM EST

The mother of a man who struck a pastor with his car, killing him, embraced Christianity after witnessing the compassion and forgiveness extended by the church’s congregation.

According to Christian Aid Mission, the incident occurred in Vinh City, on Vietnam’s North Central Coast in Nghe An Province—a region known for its resistance to the Gospel.

Last year, the pastor of a local ministry was killed when a car veered into him. The director of another ministry in the region went to console the bereft congregation, and if anyone would volunteer to serve as a replacement for the late pastor.

“He asked for a replacement, and 30 men volunteered, even though it is a very hard place to minister,” the ministry director revealed. “Now there are 12 other churches in the area.”

However, what was intended for evil, God used for good. The mother of the driver who struck the pastor, surprised her, and so she believed in Christ,” the ministry director revealed. “A month after the accident, the driver, his wife and 6-year-old daughter came to church, but they have not yet believed. Please continue to pray for this church, and pray that this driver and his family would come to know the Lord Jesus.”

Vietnam is ranked 17th on Open Door USA’s World Watch List of 50 countries where Christians face the most persecution, up three spots from last year. Christians make up 92.7 million. According to Christian Aid Mission, violations of religious freedom increased in 2016 in comparison to previous years. The outlet reports that Catholics, members of unrecognized forms of Buddhism, and Protestant groups were targeted by authorities, and members of these groups were prevented from attending services, brutally attacked, and had crosses removed from their churches.

In an earlier report, CAM revealed that at least 108 pastors are currently imprisoned because they refused to register or combine their churches despite pressure from local officials. Churches regulated by the government are prohibited from meeting in smaller groups; no Sunday school classes for children or adults, no youth groups or other gatherings apart from the congregational worship as a whole.

In addition, taking Communion and collecting offerings are forbidden, police monitor sermons to ensure nothing is said against communism, and plural leadership is prohibited; only one leader is allowed for each congregation. Children are also prohibited from learning about Jesus Christ except for in the privacy of their homes.
How to Move on When You’ve Been Betrayed

Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth
Struggles & Sobriety

A while back, I received this desperate text from a hurting friend. She had discovered that some ministry leaders she greatly admired and who had played a significant role in her spiritual growth had been leading a double life—teaching one thing while covering a blatantly ungodly lifestyle. Incredible depletion by this whole process:

Sleepless night. I am angry; I am hurt; I am scared; I am in unbelief and a host of other things. Been thinking all night how everything I believed was a lie and how I am a fool and realizing how the last fourteen years of my life has been built around two people who today I don’t even know. I hate it all.

My friend was experiencing the piercing bitterness of betrayal. If you have ever been through something similar, you know it’s natural to feel hurt, sick to your stomach, like your world has been rocked. But while those feelings are natural, they’re not a healthy place to live for an extended period. I trust my response to my friend will bring you comfort, hope, and some practical ideas for how to move on and find healing.

He will hold you when you cannot hold yourself.

This will not be an easy journey. But He will walk through it with you. He will hold you when you cannot hold yourself. I haven’t been quite where you are. But I have been through intense disillusionment where my faith was deeply shaken. I can tell you that He is faithful and true.

Here are a few thoughts and suggestions as you walk through this painful process:

Be honest with God about what you are feeling. He can handle it.

Get some sleep. You have been incredibly depleted by this whole situation. When we are physically depleted, we are more vulnerable to believing things about God that just aren’t true.

Listen to music that speaks strong biblical truth to your heart. Listen to “Hidden in My Heart” lullaby CDs!

Keep them playing; listen over and over and over.

PARK in the Psalms for a while. Read slowly. See how the psalmists cried out to the Lord in their pain and how in time He lifted their heads. Keep reading, even when you don’t believe it or feel it.

Find a few verses that speak to where you are right now; memorize them and keep reciting them over and over again. I have been doing that recently with Psalm 18:1–3.

Take walks. Listen to sermons or music as you do. Being sedentary fuels depression and unreliable emotions.

Don’t draw conclusions based on what you think or feel during the night hours. The enemy seems to create greater fear, doubt, and unbelief during the darkness.

Meditate on Jeremiah 17:5–10 and Psalm 118:8–9. How does the Lord want to transfer your trust from “men” to Christ?

I, The Convert....

Cont’d. from pg no 4...

life, future, career and family. It was a simple affair—no miracles, no angels visiting. All they did was utter a deep human cry out to the creator God and His only son Jesus Christ. When they said Amen, I felt in my heart a desire to understand, rationalise or explain. I simply accept it. It is my faith. It is what I choose to believe. That evening I did not change my religion, for in reality I had none. Hinduism was my identity, not change my religion, for in reality I choose to believe. That evening I did

If I read a good book, watch a good movie (Rock On is terrific, mate), or eat a good meal at a new restaurant, I would naturally tell my friends about it. In Jesus, I have discovered a truly amazing friend, guide, leader, saviour and God. How can I not tell all my friends about Him? And if anyone does not listen and he too comes to believe in Jesus, I am delighted. The world would call it a conversion; I call it a change of heart, like mine.

But I would never force anyone to listen to me, leave alone financially induce, coerce or con him into believing. That to me is pointless and against the very grain of my faith. But I do have a constitutional right to practice my faith and to preach it without deception, force or bribery. It pains to see such basic rights of mankind being cruelly violated every day in this great Hindu nation.

God bless India.
### Pray for INDIA

**Persecution Relief Prayer Calendar 2017 March**

#### DAY 1
Pray that God’s rule and peace would reign upon all the States, Districts and Union Territories.

#### DAY 2
Pray that God would forgive all the iniquities and transgressions and heal the land of India.

#### DAY 3
Pray that God’s people, will call on His name, humble themselves, pray and seek God’s face, for the Lord to hear and heal the land.

#### DAY 4
Pray that the Churches of God would fulfill the great commission of Jesus Christ with renewed vigor and prayer.

#### DAY 5
Pray that God would raise up ministers of God and believers among the gentiles, who would take the gospel to their people.

#### DAY 6
Pray that the religious Anti-conversion Bill will be totally removed from the State of Gujarat, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh and Assam.

#### DAY 7
Pray for the protection of Churches and Christian Organizations working in the nation.

#### DAY 8
Pray for the protection of Christian Schools, Hospitals and Orphanages in the nation.

#### DAY 9
Pray that the Mishmi Commission will be implemented immediately that will favor many thousands of people to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior.

#### DAY 10
Pray that the social evil of caste system would be completely eradicated in India.

#### DAY 11
Pray that the eyes of the people will be opened and the truth of Jesus Christ would set them free.

#### DAY 12
Pray for God’s rule and mercy would come upon all the villages in the remotest corners of India.

#### DAY 13
Pray for the correction, free administration – that Political leaders would govern with sincerity and honesty.

#### DAY 14
Pray that no Church will be built in villages, providing education, hospitals etc.

#### DAY 15
Pray that Gospel tracts and books will be published in a simple and easy to understand manner in local dialects.

#### DAY 16
Pray that while the opportunity remains to reach 300 million people with the gospel – all efforts will be made to utilise it.

#### DAY 17
Pray that God’s servants would be adequately equipped to reclaim again for Jesus, ground lost to skepticism, secularism and other myriad ‘isms’ in the Indian mind.

#### DAY 18
Pray that all Christians in India will live life’s modelled on Christ - that the preaching of the Word is matched with the quality of life.

#### DAY 19
In other words, 20 students education system blamed.

#### DAY 20
Pray for the rise of homosexuality in India against confusion against identities.

#### DAY 21
Pray for the wisdom and patience as there is a rise in divorce of young couples.

#### DAY 22
Pray for the rise of superstition, myths, witchcraft, demon possession, occult and worship of the dead.

#### DAY 23
Pray against possession, oppression, myriads, demon possession, occult and worship of the dead.

#### DAY 24
Pray for the countries bordering India – to be able to dwell at peace with our neighbor’s Pakistan, China, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

#### DAY 25
Pray against all the natural disasters that India faced – earthquakes, floods, river erosion, cyclones and tsunamies, landslides and avalanches.

#### DAY 26
Pray also for India who is vulnerable to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) emergencies and other man-made disasters.

#### DAY 27
Pray against marriage within family members for the sake of tradition wealth and caste, leading to birth of disabled and mentally challenged children.

#### DAY 28
Pray for the Armed forces; Army, Navy, Air Force. Pray for protection, wisdom and faithfulness. Also pray for their families.

#### DAY 29
Pray for the 20 million street children in India – living in poverty. Pray for protection from every form of evil, that they would be invisible to the enemy.

#### DAY 30
Pray for over 60 million child labourers in India – the highest in the world. Pray that they would have an opportunity to know Christ at an early age and trust in Him.

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Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Publisher.

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