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it is my great pleasure to present to you the first edition of our brand new “Voice of the Christians” monthly magazine. My desire is for this magazine to become a great movement with a distinctive mission, to present a more in-depth, honest and bold view of the persecuted Church in India, as we move forward.

My hope is that this non-denominational magazine will revitalize and move beyond conventional journalistic practices, to be the window to the persecuted Church, for the cause of Jesus Christ in India! It will table realistic stories of miracles, heroism, courage, fidelity, dedication, faith, boldness, of missed opportunities - and the wonderful doings of the person of God. We hope to be the pioneers in making a real difference in the way authentic persecution news is published.

I wish to thank you for your overwhelming support for the last 18 - Editions of 'Voice of the Christians' Newspaper. Your encouragement has given us the impetus to launch this 40-page Magazine. With the release of this magazine, VoTC Newspaper will be suspended.

This magazine comes at an extraordinary time of monumental, demographic shift in India – a time when we need to be more aware than ever before of the changing seasons, trends, challenges and victories; a time when the ground is literally shifting beneath our feet, with a partisan identity, increasingly concerned about justice, politics and public life; a time when we have an even greater role in communicating more clearly our responses, as ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

I am very excited about this launch. The focus of 'Voice of the Christians' channels a lot of my passion for the Persecuted Church and the people of God. I hope you will join us, not just as a reader but as a co-laborer in this work.

If you are not yet a subscriber, join us today. If you are a subscriber, I encourage you to consider sharing 'Voice of the Christians' magazine with your friends and family.

Sign up for the opportunity to partner with us to serve the Persecuted Church in India. Our God is a God of Providence. We can trust Him to order our circumstances for His glory and for our good. Amen.

In Christ,

Shibu Thomas
Founder & President
PERSECUTION RELIEF
Sis. Pushpa is married to Bro. Manoj and they have 4 daughters & 1 Son. They live in the village Jalalabad, Ghazipur District of Uttar Pradesh State. Both of them had committed their lives to following Jesus Christ and His teachings.

The couple shared their newfound faith among the neighbors and friends. They started a Bible Study and prayer meeting at their home. Soon the fellowship started to grow but anti-Christian village leaders forced the villagers to give up their Bibles and renounce their faith.

Out of fear of public beating and humiliation, many of them gave up following and practicing their faith, except Sis. Pushpa and her husband. Sis. Pushpa continued to preach the Word among unbelievers and was very popular. However, anti-Christian villagers have made false allegations that she was converting people.

The police who had promised protection to Sis. Pushpa but had told her to not hold meetings in her home. Since there is no other private place away from the persecutors prying eyes, they used to travel to the next village and gather together at Nagli Poona (near Balswa, Jehangirpuri) church in Delhi (affiliated to Christian Evangelistic Assemblies). The Panchayat learnt of these developments and made life miserable for Sis. Pushpa and her family.

She was socially boycotted and not allowed any access to the facilities and benefits in the village. India is hot enough with temperatures reaching 40 degrees Celsius. Vital water supply and access to drinking water, water for the crops and their cattle, was cut off. The local Hindus refused to sell water from their borewells – a costly price for their faith in Jesus Christ. Despite the attack, Sis Pushpa and her family refuse to deny Christ and continued with the meetings.

SHE WAS SOCIALLY BOYCOTTED AND NOT ALLOWED ANY ACCESS TO THE FACILITIES AND BENEFITS IN THE VILLAGE. THE GREATEST TYRANNY OF ALL WAS DENYING THEM ACCESS TO WATER

RELIEF PROVIDED
When Persecution Relief were alerted about this persecution, they extended financial support and installed the bore well with handpump on her own property. Overwhelmed with tears at God’s faithfulness and provision, Sis. Pushpa said, “I used to walk a long distance to the community well, carrying water pots for my family needs and for my cattle. But now my God has provided me water right in my property which I will give to all believers and unbelievers”.

“Thank you, Persecution Relief family, for installing the bore well and the hand pump. God bless you for your support”
Pastor Harjot Singh and his wife Harvinder Joth have both been working in the Lord’s vineyard for several years. ‘Christ Power Ministry’ is based at Jalandhar, Punjab. Pastor and his family live in TV Tower, Jalandhar, Punjab and minister there.

On the 16th August, Pastor Harjot Singh and his wife along with 12 other Church members, were in a car, headed to a branch Church in Rajasthan, that was started a year ago. This was just another customary monthly scheduled visit.

Pastor Madanlal who oversees the Church in Dablirathan, Hanumanganj, Rajasthan had made all the arrangements for their arrival and ministry. This was to be a 2-day event. 16th August, was the first day of the meeting. After the Praise and Worship, as Pastor Harjot stepped on to the stage to pray, a mob of religious fundamentalists, who apparently had pre-planned this attack, illegally trespassed into the Church and began to indiscriminately beat all the members with lathis and their fists, in broad daylight. Women and children assembled there were also not spared. The unidentified perpetrators desecrated the place of worship, destroyed personal property, damaged closets, smashed offering boxes and tearing literature. All members were in shock after enduring such a brutal attack.

Pastor Harjot was the obvious target with the motive of putting him out of action. He received the most critical & grievous injuries – with multiple fractures on his leg, and blows to his head which have resulted in open wounds that needed sutures. Pastor Harjot, his wife and children, Pastor Madan Lal and several members of the congregation were rushed to Hanumanganj Hospital for treatment.

Although the Police were alerted, they arrived only 2 hours after the incident took place. Many victims complained about the lack of police action, including hostility towards Christians. No arrests have been made so far. The impunity enjoyed by these violent mobs is also a cause for concern.

Speaking to the Founder, Pastor Harjot mentioned that he is not disappointed but has requested prayers for his Persecutors. Persecution Relief extended financial assistance towards all medical bills.

“I am happy in the Lord and have forgiven them all”.

Church, please pray that the Lord will minister to this distraught family by healing them of their injuries, strengthening their faith and comforting them in their grief.

Thank Him for the faithfulness of their Christian community; praying that they will continue to stand firm and utilize every opportunity to share the Gospel. Intercede for those currently opposing His people, asking God to remove the hatred from their hearts and bring them to a saving knowledge of Christ.

Lying on the Hospital bed with multiple fractures, Pastor Harjot send us a video showing the progress of his recovery, by the grace and mercy of God.

“I want to thank Almighty God for preserving me and for all the prayer and support that I have received from the Church of God. I want to specially thank Persecution Relief, who were the first organisation to reach me in my distress. I thank the Leadership for the strength and comfort of his counsel, his prayers and financial support.”

“Thank you, Persecution Family, for all your efforts & support. God bless you”.

RELIEF PROVIDED
Persecution Relief provided financial relief by paying for the medical treatment of Pr. Harjot and Pr. Madanlal.
ADOPT
A PERSECUTED FAMILY

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Pr. Somesh Rao was originally from Jeypore - Koraput Ghat road, Odisha. In 2013, he moved residence with his family to Patna in Bihar, where he started the “Assemblies of the New Life Church”. Assisting him was Pr. Jeetender Kumar who is a local person from Bihar. Both of them primarily ministered among the unreached Bastar and Chamar tribes.

Every month, Pr. Somesh and Pr. Jeetender Kumar conducted a prayer meeting at Sis. Gudiya Devi’s home, since 2015. On the 14th of August, as usual, Sis. Devi had organized the meeting, which started at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.30 pm with prayer and the sharing of the Word. The meeting was well attended by around 25 sisters.

According to Pr. Somesh, after the meeting, both the Pastors stepped outside when 4 men approached them in the pretext of enquiring about their whereabouts. While they patiently explained that they were visiting Sis. Devi and had come to pray, these men insisted that they accompany them a little ahead. As they went along, a mob of around 15 unidentified religious fundamentalists who had been in hiding, descended and manhandled them.

Accusing them of conducting conversion activities, shouting anti-Christian slogans, they beat these defenseless men, left them bruised & bloodied, almost dead. With their hands forcibly held back, these defenseless pastors were beaten on the and face, with so many blows, causing severe and critical injuries to their eyes which were bleeding profusely. Finding them gone for a long while, the rest of the believers came looking for them and found them in this precarious condition. They were rushed to the hospital in a critical state and provided immediate medical care.

Both Pastors have refused to file a Police complaint, no suspects have been taken into custody as of this day. Police said that investigation is ongoing.

Relief provided
Persecution Relief assisted the Pastors financially to meet their medical bills.

Pastor Somesh said, “Vengeance is the Lord’s. These people are ignorant and don’t know what they are doing. We forgive them”.

Standing alongside his wife, he testified: “I am privileged to be persecuted for Jesus Christ. Nothing will deter our faith in Him, all the days of our life”. “I am grateful to Persecution Relief for their timely financial support, prayer and counsel. It is so good to know that we are not alone but the saints of God are with us through this situation”, Pastor Somesh added.

His wife Priya was overwhelmed with gratitude and expressed sincere thanks for the support and prayers from the Church of God.

Relief provided
Pastor Luka Marandi has been ministering in Sodepur village at the AG Church over the last 15 years or so. Sodepur village is located in Galsi-I Tehsil of Bardhaman district in West Bengal, India.

His son Pastor Prem Kumar Marandi has been pastoring with him. Over 350 believers attend the worship service every Sunday. Around 4 believer families averaging 15 members, live in and around a radius of 1.5 kms from the Church. Almost all of these families have been persecuted many times. The Believers had faced the backlash of radical Hindus on the 05th of June, 28th of June and 08th of July.

An ailing old lady who had been to Vellore for treatment had passed away. Her mortal remains was brought back to the village which resulted in the local villagers, belonging predominantly to the Santali tribe, objecting to the dead body being kept overnight. They demanded that the Christian families leave with the dead body and in the dead of the night, chased them out of the village. All the families had to abandon their property, houses and possessions and leave with just the clothes on their backs. These families sought refuge in a forest nearby and reached out to Pastor Luka, who arranged to transport them to the Church.

Most of these families are first generation believers and have no other extended family except the brethren of the Church. The believers have been terrorized and threatened with dire consequences if they come back to the village. In fact, people who they have lived with them around the village, have threatened to rape the women if they returned. Therefore, all of them have sought and found refuge at the local AG Church. Although they risk losing everything they called their own, they are unwilling to return. After a violent attack, it is difficult for some people to move on with their daily lives.

Pastor and these families have approached the local administration and Police but have received very little support from them.

Fear mongering is one of the tactics employed by these fundamentalists who are trying to precipitate panic and distress among the believers. It is rumored that the national Ruling party and its agents are involved.

On 12th July, around 12 village leaders met, in an unofficial court, without a single representation from any Christian Leader or family, to defend or give evidence. It was arbitrarily decided that not a single Christian family will live in the area. Violence against Christians has been on the rise over the last few years, with assailants growing more defiant and daring. Christians continue to live in fear of practicing their faith.

The situation is still tense. After a meeting with the village elders, 4 believer families and the Police was arranged, the SDM has instructed the villagers to accommodate the Christian families who were thrown out of their homes within 15 days and settle the matter. While assurance of Police protection has been given, pray that the villagers who are still staying at the Church premises will return to their homes and continue to be powerful witnesses of Jesus.
FOLLOW CHRIST
ENDURE HARDSHIPS

SHIBU THOMAS
Founder - Persecution Relief

www.persecutionrelief.org
India is experiencing an escalation of attacks and acts of violence against Christian Churches and the Christian minority.

If the fire that gutted 'Daiva Sabha' 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 recollects 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, Pastor 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 their home and house of Worship was by Religious fundamentalists 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.

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

Persecution Relief responded by sending the District Co-Ordinator on the ground, who took on the responsibility to visit Pastor John Muller and his wife. He and his team prayed and encouraged them in the Lord. Immediate and much needed relief and support was provided in the form of unperishable groceries, food-parcels, several sets of new clothes, and financial assistance to rebuild their home.
A Christian family in Odisha state, including a women, were brutally beaten because they refused to deny Christ.

Bro. Padlam Kurani lives with his wife and two sons Takru Kurani & Laxmi Kurani, in the village of Borkaliguda, in the town and municipality Malkangiri in Malkangiri district in the Indian state of Odisha. They are part of “Malyawantha Jeewan Vikas Parishad” Church which is pastored by Pr. Bijay Pusuru.

This family belongs to the Koya tribe or Koi Community. Their main occupation is hunting. The Koyas are expert hunters and the good hunters are looked upon as heroes. The Koyas deify their ancestors and worship them on all social occasions. All the clan members join together to worship their ancestors.

Bro. Padlam Kurani and his family, along with 22 other families, had come to know the living God, and put their faith in Jesus Christ, 16 years ago. Upset that this tribal family had left their indigenous religion, the villagers constantly ostracized and bothered them. However, when the villagers realized he would not renounce Jesus Christians in spite of being threatened and ostracized, they decided to teach him a lesson.

They called for a meeting on the Friday, 18th of August and Bro. Padlam Kurani was given 3 days to renounce his faith or face the consequences. At the end of the meeting the entire family were brutally by the villagers who had surrounded them.

At the end of the 3rd day, Sunday, 20th August, 100’s of villagers gathered and demanded to know their decision. Learning that in spite of the all the torture, they were unwilling to forsake Jesus Christ, the villagers took a decision to ex-communicate and throw them out of the village. After the verdict was pronounced, Bro. Padlam Kurani, his two sons Takru Kurani & Laxmi Kurani and their wives were brutally beaten again. Father and 2 sons are critically injured and were rushed to the nearest hospital.

RELIEF PROVIDED
Persecution Relief Team extended financial assistance through Pastor Bijay Pusuru, to cover the medical bills for the treatment of Bro. Kurani’s family members and relocation costs. The Counselling Team also spoke to the family members to encourage them in the Lord, so that they may they continue to live under Jesus Christ's Lordship and not give up.
Around 10 families were living in Padmapur Village, Rayagada District of Odisha, which is around 5 kms from the nearest Railway Station, Muniguda. All of 34 members had committed themselves and their families to following Jesus Christ as their Savior and were baptized in February 2016.

However, this did not go down very well with the rest of the local villagers who made it their goal to drive out every Christian from their village. The local villagers boycotted them from all village activities, all privileges and even cut off their power supply. Finally, they were threatened with death after which the believers were forced to abandon their homes.

On 16th March, 2016, the believers fled for their lives into the surrounding jungles, leaving behind all their personal property and possessions. With no place to go, they wandered around 2 – 3 kms into the nearest jungle area, which falls under the jurisdiction of Jhariyapani village in Raygada District of Odisha.

These families had spent months living out in the vast expanse of the jungle, surviving by foraging for food and drinking from streams. They had cleared out some of the forest land and made temporary huts for their immediate relief. Despite the rudimentary materials used to build their ramshackle wooden huts, their faith and commitment to Jesus Christ remains steadfast in spite of their circumstances.

However, with the onset of the rains and the cold season, the families were struggling. The lakes were overflowing and access to the shops to buy food stuff was cut off. They had to walk several kilometers around a mountain to access the town. Secondly, to protect themselves from the elements, they needed to reinforce their dwellings by laying sheets as roofing. Persecution Relief has been in regular touch with Pr. Raghunath Pani, who had petitioned for support to purchase aluminium sheets for them.

RELIEF PROVIDED
Persecution Relief family supported the 10 families by providing them shelter as they were chased out from their villages and were living in the Jungle. Timely assistance was provided to protect them from the natural elements.
THE SKYROCKETING COST OF DISCIPLESHIP
Jesus paid the highest and ultimate price for us yet so many think following him is free. The day is not far off when those of us who have given our lives to Christ might actually have to give our lives for Christ.

When we come to Jesus, he asks for our everything. Of course, our everything up to that point doesn't amount to much. We're trading our mess for his perfection. Very few people look back at their moment of salvation and wonder if it was worth it. However, as we grow in our walk with God, we become more and more aware of what he is asking of us. He's not just interested in changing our behavior; he also wants to change our thoughts. He's not simply addressing our actions; he reaches deep into our motives. Five, ten or twenty years down the road we are continuing to surrender ever more delicate parts of our lives as we align ourselves more with what he is calling us to.

In seeking to become disciples of Christ, we discover that the cost grows over time as we grow closer to him, and we are subsequently more willing to pay the price. Just as Jesus asks more of us over time, the times will demand more of us as well. Not all days are created equal, and days to come are actually designed to stretch each of us in our pursuit of God.

**THE PRICE IS ONLY GOING UP**

There is a cost to discipleship, a high cost. And the price is only going up, way way up as we proceed toward the end of the age. One of the main reasons people will fall away at the end of the age is because the price to follow Christ will get too high. In fact, the cost of following Christ will skyrocket. In Luke 14:25-27 Jesus forewarned that following him will cost people even the relationships they presently hold dearest; father, mother, wife and children. He said we each need to calculate this high cost.

*Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down*
Martyrdom

and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it. For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it...

Jesus was speaking parabolically about people who start following him and fall away. Jesus then referenced a king about to go to war against another king asking, will he not first sit down and calculate if he has the strength to fight to the finish? His point is that the Christian life isn’t easy, in fact it’s a battle and the day is coming when the battle will rage with unprecedented intensity against Christ and his Church.

In Matthew 24, Jesus warns that the falling away at the end of the age will be in part because people are not willing to die for Him in martyrdom: “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time, many will turn away from the faith…”

As Bonhoeffer famously wrote; “the call to Christ is a call to come and die.”

Today people have a fraidy-cat view of death seeing it as the worst thing that could happen-- as the end, as a travesty, as a total loss, as the worst that could happen. God sees it very differently. To him death leads to life; unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains only a seed (John 12:24). Confidence in facing death comes from good theology. Ungodly beliefs about death and dying will result in people deciding not to pay this high price to follow the path of Christ to our own cross.

The Gospel that is preached in so many places is about life and resurrection but few are reminded and readied for the reality that crucifixion comes before resurrection. People aren’t hearing that message and some even teach Jesus suffered so we don’t have to or that we will escape tribulation, both of which are clear deviations from 1 Timothy 3:12... “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

Self-preservation is not a Christian virtue. It is certainly 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” (John 15:13). Also, a fear of death is not a Christian concern. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, “Give no thought to your life... Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” (Matthew 6:25, 27) He was teaching us to not worry about preserving or prolonging our lives.

THE GRACE OF MARTYRDOM

There is a grace or spiritual provision for suffering and persecution; in fact, martyrdom is a spiritual gift. How could it be a gift? Certainly it would be the gift that no one wants! My friend and teacher Dr. C. Peter Wagner wrote the classic book on spiritual gifts and he always gets a chuckle when he says martyrdom is the one spiritual gift you aren’t sure you have until you need it and it’s the only spiritual gift you can only use once! Levity aside, spiritual gifts aren’t toys to play with, they are graces for spiritual breakthrough. There is a grace to give up your life for Christ.

Martyrs are sustained by grace and propelled by love. The propellant behind the grace of martyrdom is love. But for many believers the end of the age will be a time when their love grows cold. Martyrdom is simultaneously a holy detachment and a holy attachment, as we love Jesus not so much our lives”
their love grows cold. Martyrdom is simultaneously a holy detachment and a holy attachment, as we love Jesus not so much our lives. Revelation 12:11 says “...they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” Some people bristle when I connect the dots between money and end-day American materialism with our unwillingness to give our lives. Letting go comes natural for the martyr as they have 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?

In the Beatitudes Jesus said this is the path God blesses and the one we should expect; “Blessed are those who are persecuted... for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:10, 12). In other words, it won’t be any different for you than it was for them. Hebrews tells us they were flogged, put in chains, imprisoned, stoned, sawed in two and went about destitute, persecuted and mistreated (Hebrews 11:36-37).

At the culmination of the age when evil retaliates against everything that is good, followers of Christ will face these refining fires. During that time of Great Tribulation, to use the familiar expression: many will get out of the kitchen because they can’t take the heat. That’s what this chapter is about - apostasy will be seen as an escape from martyrdom.

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 jelly donuts and Starbucks after the service. The normal Christian life for most westerners is two or three Sunday mornings a month in church with a vague idea that we should be applying what we have learned there during the week. In our culture, faith is measured in such subtle ways that we have neighbors who we think “might be Christians... but we’re not sure,” and they may have the same thoughts about us.

Watchman Nee was a leader in the Chinese church for decades. Christianity Today lists him as one of the 100 most influential Christians of the last century. His book The Normal Christian Life, is full of bold statements like this one: “What the Lord Jesus looks for in us is a life laid at his feet.” In Watchman Nee’s setting, the normal Christian life was much different. He was fiercely persecuted after the Communists took over China in 1949. After being thrown in prison on a ridiculous array of false charges, he was held there for the last 20 years of his life. Watchman Nee’s ‘normal’ was very different than ours. The question to ask is “Whose version of normal should be expected?”

If you look at church history, our insulated view of normal is a relatively new and untried one. For most of its existence – certainly during its time of greatest growth – the Church encountered outright resistance from the culture, the authorities and Satan. In fact, for those brief seasons where the Church was untested, we find that she quickly grew lackadaisical, inward and sinful. There is a wrong idea circulating in certain Christian circles that says the days
of persecution are over. That idea could only circulate inside the closed loop of Americanized, cultural Christianity because if you expand very far in time or geography, it would be hard to find people who agreed with that.

Historically, we have referred to the first two centuries as the age of persecution or martyrdom. All of Jesus’ disciples except for John were martyred. For generations to come, it was the expectation of the church. Jesus words in Matthew 16:24 echoed in their ears. “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” Christians in those days would have well remembered His cross and the price it exacted from His body.

Church historian Stephen Neill wrote “Every Christian in the first century knew that sooner or later he might have to testify to his faith at the cost of his life.” We look back at the days of the Romans throwing Christians to the lions and mop our brow with relief that we were blessed to be born so much after the fact, believing that the age of martyrs is over and somehow we escaped. Again, our narrow point of view deludes us.

For numerous reasons (aside from my Irish heritage), I track with the Celtic daily prayer rhythm and traditions. In Thomas Cahill’s best selling book How the Irish Saved Civilization, he talks about how God used fourth and fifth century Irish monks to copy and hide away literature, history, art and the riches of ancient philosophy and science preserving a vast treasury of knowledge through the period of the Dark Ages.

My contention is that throughout Church history, God raised up vibrant and faithful prayer movements (monasticism) when Christianity came into periods of compromise and crisis. A Celtic monk in the seventh century named Cambrai, in what we call the Cambrai Homily, outlined three categories of martyrdom designated by colors; red, green and white. (The term white martyrdom was first used by St. Jerome, a desert hermit in the third century).

Red martyrdom refers to when blood is shed; when they lop off your head or throw you to the lions. If Christ is indeed first, our safety and security are at least a distant second. You may see safety-first signs around your place of employment, but safety-first is not a Christian priority. Christ and his Kingdom come first.

In Matthew 10:38 Jesus said “anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” Long before the crucifixion of Jesus, he made the cross the symbol of Christian discipleship. What does discipleship look like? Is the symbol of discipleship an easy chair? Is it a remote control where we push buttons so God changes things for us? Is it a pair of hiking books? Is the symbol of discipleship a white surrender flag? Close, but not quite.

The symbol of discipleship looks like a cross. And Jesus is not saying here to drag your cross with great reluctance and resentment toward it. He’s saying take it up and embrace it. Interestingly, the Celtic saints never faced a period of red martyrdom but they still knew the call of Christ was to lose your life to find it. So Cambrai spoke also of green martyrdom to refer to those who leave behind comforts and pleasures, deny their flesh, assuming vows of poverty and chastity or living simply and frugally. You can easily see this in the priesthood in America and globally, and certainly in the various forms of old and new monasticism all alive and well in Christendom today. Even in evangelicalism there are people who live simply (having wartime mentalities and living wartime lifestyles) so they can be a greater blessing. That’s green martyrdom, selling your possessions to follow Christ. It’s the ascetic life; practicing rigorous self-discipline and abstinence from all forms of indulgence. If Christ is first, comfort and convenience can’t be.

The daily cross is the antithesis of comfort. Yet for some today coming to Christ means find a comfortable seat on Sunday. It means it needs to fit into my schedule. It means the inconvenience factor needs to be real low. It means Jesus better not be too demanding. Comfort-first means my well-being is the first consideration and the Kingdom of God is second.

(To be continued in the next edition…)
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FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS CHRIST, "WE CAN FORGIVE PARIPORNANANDA SWAMIJI", SAYS ARCHBISHOP THUMMA BALA

Archbishop Thumma Bal is the current Archbishop of Hyderabad and Chairman of Andhra Pradesh Bishop’s council and also the Chairman of Communication Commission of the diocese.

ARCHBISHOP THUMMA BAL
Archbishop of Hyderabad
India (Andhra Pradesh): Swami Paripoornanda Saraswathi said that Mother Teresa undeservedly received the highest national honor, the Bharata Ratna. Archbishop Thumma Bala of Hyderabad condemned the false accusations and derogatory comments made by Hindu leader Swami Paripoornanda Saraswathi against Mother Teresa in a recent television debate.

A Telugu Channel based in Hyderabad on Sept 22 broadcast a debate between Swami Paripoornanda Saraswathi, Head of Sreepeetham at Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh, and Dalit rights activist Professor Kancha Illaiah regarding the caste controversy and protests around Illaiah’s new book.

Swamiji diverted the topic calling Professor Illaiah “a foreign agent” and dragged Christianity and Mother Teresa into the debate. He alleged that “Mother Teresa organized the illegal trafficking of 50,000 women, making them work as nuns after converting them to Christianity”.

The Archbishop said the comments of Paripoornanda Swamiji were totally uncalled for as “the subject of the discussion was something different. It was not necessary for Swamiji to speak of the Pope and Mother Teresa”.

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Archbishop Bala, the President of the Catholic Bishops Council of Andhra Pradesh, asked the government to ensure that such incidents are not repeated in the future.

Condemning the attempts of those “who try to bring division in society”, Archbishop Bala called on the State governments of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana not to remain indifferent to such offensive remarks against a person respected across religions and nations.

The Archbishop noted that Swamiji’s comments “not only deeply hurt the hearts and feelings of the Catholic Church and the Christian community, but also of people belonging to all regions and religions who respect Mother Teresa as saint and mother of the poor and the suffering”.

During the debate, Swamiji also said that Mother Teresa undeservedly received the highest national honor, the Bharata Ratna, in 1980 by the Government of India.

“Is this not an insult to the nation and to the President of India who recognized the services of the Mother to the poor, the needy, the terminally-ill, the elderly, the abandoned and the suffering,” Archbishop Bala asked.

“The work of Saint Mother Teresa is recognized all over the world and in 1979 was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Currently there are 5,161 Sisters of Mother Teresa in 758 Homes working in 139 countries,” he added.

Following the footsteps of Jesus Christ, “we can forgive Paripoornanda Swamiji”, the Archbishop said, recalling that “the primary duty of every religious leader is to foster harmony and peace in the community of our pluralist nation and safeguard the secularity and religious freedom guaranteed by our Constitution”. 
PAKISTAN POLICE BEAT 14-YEAR OLD BOY TO DEATH

Police in Pakistan beat a 14-year-old Christian boy to death on Monday (Oct. 9) because he had gotten into a fight with a Muslim classmate who tried to bully him into renouncing his faith, sources said.

Mushtaq Masih, father of Arsalan Masih, said that his son was a student at a private center in Jhabran Mandi village, Sheikhupura District in Punjab Province. Arsalan was at the center when seven policemen from the Bahu Chowk Police Post arrived at about 5 p.m. in their official vehicle and stormed the premises, Masih told Morning Star News.

“Arsalan was attending his tuition classes at the Ideal Science Academy when Head Constable Imtiaz, Driver Rashid, Constable Arshad and some other unidentified policemen kicked open the door and dragged him out of the classroom,” Masih said. “Sardar, alias Billu, a police constable, helped them to identify the boy. With this, they all started beating Arsalan with fists, kicks and rifle butts.”

Teacher Farhan Ali tried to stop the assault, but the officers shoved and slapped him and continued beating the boy, Masih said.

“Rashid struck Arsalan’s head with a pistol, and he started bleeding,” he said. “When they bundled him into the police van, Arsalan collapsed and died. Later the police team threw Arsalan’s body on the roadside and fled.”

Numerous bystanders witnessed the assault, but the policemen threatened them if they intervened, he added.

Four months ago Arsalan had fought with a Muslim boy after the classmate tried to bully him into renouncing his Christian faith, said Masih, a member of the Presbyterian Church in Pakistan.

“I did not know about the fight until recently,” he said. “Arsalan had reportedly beaten up a boy whose uncle, Sardar alias Billu, is a constable in the Sheikhupura District police. Billu nurtured a grudge against Arsalan, and that’s why he brought his police friends with him to teach the poor boy a lesson.”

Masih said that he had registered a case (No. 653/17) with the Sheikhupura Saddar Police Station against seven officers, but that police had so far been unable to arrest them.

IMPRISONED PASTOR ANDREW BRUNSON WRITES MOVING SONG TO GOD

Pastor and missionary Andrew Brunson has been imprisoned in Turkey since last October (2016), but despite his captivity, Brunson’s faith remains strong.

“You are worthy, worthy of my all / My tears and pain I lift up as an offering / Teach me to share in the fellowship of your suffering / Lamb of God you are worthy of my all,” say the lyrics.

“I want to be found worthy to stand before you on that day / With no regrets from cowardice, things left undone / To hear you say, ‘Well done, my faithful friend, now enter your reward’ Jesus, my Joy, you are the prize I’m running for,” the lyrics continue.
AUTHORITIES IN CHINA DETAIN PASTOR, DAUGHTER AND 3-YEAR-OLD GRANDSON

While a government-hired thug in China threatened to kill a Christian family, officials in a neighboring province arrested a pastor, her daughter and her 3-year-old grandson, sources said.

In Xinning, Hubei Province in the central part of the country, police and religious affairs officials upset by a house church’s outreach arrested pastor Xu Shizhen, her daughter Xu Yuqing, and Xu Yuqing’s 3-year-old son, Xu Shouwang, on the night of Sept. 22, according to advocacy group China Aid Association.

The pastor and her daughter had taken part in an evangelistic effort by their unregistered congregation, Zion Church, to proclaim Christ in public parks and squares, according to China Aid. In the outreach, which included song, dance and music on bamboo instruments, the women shared the gospel even as local religious affairs, public security, and national security bureau authorities frequently interrupted them, China Aid reported.

Family members who inquired of police about the detainees on Sept. 24 discovered that officers had separated the women from the small child, keeping him at the station while transferring his mother and grandmother to other sites, according to China Aid. The organization reported that no one knew whether the women were under criminal or administrative detention.

KIM JONG-UN’S REGIME: A HORROR FOR CHRISTIANS

Choi Kwanghyuk, a North Korean defector, said despite being offered freedom from the prison camp, he and other believers said they would not deny Christianity.

Choi led an underground church in North Korea before being imprisoned. He said Christians at the prison camp would not accept an offer of freedom if it meant renouncing their beliefs.

“Even though they are offered release by signing a contract renouncing their religion, they do not accept this offer,” he told The Christian Post in an interview. “Some of them feel that living inside the political camp is better than going outside because they foresee that it will be difficult for them to adapt to the outside society.”

Christians in North Korea are largely persecuted in the country. Open Doors USA has ranked the country as the worst persecutor of Christians in the world.

Still, Choi started an underground church.

“Our meeting spot was literally underground. In North Korea, we dig holes on the ground to store Kimchee and potatoes over the winter. It’s very cold in North Korea and if we don’t bury it underground, then it will freeze up. We don’t have heating system in North Korea,” he said.

“We meet in this rectangular hole and use [a] lantern to study the Bible. Since we cannot sing out loud, we praise by humming the hymn.”
ASSIMILATION AGENDA

SANGH BARES FANGS IN JHARKHAND

THE SANGH CONTINUES ITS POLITICAL PROJECT FOR ASSIMILATING THE ORIGINAL INHABITANTS IN JHARKHAND WITH AN ANTI-CONVERSION BILL, AFTER ONCE LABELING THEM VANVASIS AND ROBBING THEM OF FREEDOMS OF FAITH, LAND AND LANGUAGES

The Anti Conversion Bill in Jharkhand, the last of the Tribal states which so far did not have such a law, could be both a stratagem and a smokescreen

Many, including I, think it is a smokescreen, a red herring, to divert attention while the Sangh Parivar and the BJP Government in Jharkhand, who lost face when they failed to break the tribal solidarity on issues of land, try to divide India’s oldest inhabitants on grounds of religion. The signs have been long a-coming. This Bill is the final one.

The Jesuits of India in a recent “Statement” succinctly described the political backdrop: “Powerful corporate and communal lobbies, for partisan and vested interests, polarize societies plagued by eroding identities, a sense of alienation and ridden by individual and collective fears. Such a situation breeds divisive hate politics, co-opting people into a consolidated majority that oppresses minorities and the marginalized. An underlying narrative filled with falsified myth and imagery sustains this process and is concretized in fabricated religion-political ideology, which is operationalized into an actionable agenda.”

On August 2, the Jharkhand government cleared the draft of the “Jharkhand Freedom of Religion Bill 2017” also known as “Jharkhand Dharma Swatantra Adhiniyam”. The Bill will be tabled in the upcoming Monsoon Session of the
Legislative Assembly which begins on August 8. The Bill is to come into force from its date of issuance. Its passage is of course a foregone conclusion, with the ruling party in a massive majority, and the governor a very willing partner. One can expect the rules to be framed forthwith for the law to become operational.

With this Bill, the anti-conversion mood also enters the upper reaches of India away from the central region. Jharkhand was once a part of Bihar, and much of its wealth and property is in the hands of non-Tribals, who also wield the most political power, if often through proxy. The Bill will be challenged in court. But the Supreme Court has earlier, in the notorious Stanislaus Judgement, upheld such laws as not violating the Constitution.

In the English version of the Draft Bill, released to the media by the Evangelical Fellowship of India, Section 3 says, “No person shall attempt to convert, either directly or otherwise, any person from one religion / religious faith to another by use of force or by allurement or by any fraudulent means, nor shall any person abet any such conversion.”

Violation of the terms of the above section shall invite imprisonment up to three years or Rupees 50,000 or both. In case the violation involves a minor, a woman or a person from the SC/ST community, the prison term would be up to four years and the penalty up to Rupees 1 lakh.

Section 5 of the draft also makes prior permission mandatory for conversion and demands that the person who converts any other person from one religion / religious faith to another, either by performing the ceremony himself for such conversion as a religious priest or takes part directly or indirectly in such ceremony shall take prior permission for such proposed conversion from the District Magistrate by applying in such form as may be prescribed by rules.

The draft also demands that the convert intimates the District Magistrate of the District in which the conversion ceremony has taken place of the fact of such conversion “within such period and such form as may be prescribed by the rule.”

Failure to comply with the provisions of Section 5 of the draft will invite imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to five thousand or both.

Similar laws already exist in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat. They were made in Rajasthan, and were made and withdrawn in Tamil Nadu, and the sections of the Jharkhand Bill borrow liberally from them.

Not that there is need of a bill of this nature in the times of a BJP regime. Even earlier, the police, the Sangh cadres and even some Congressmen seemed to presume that India had a nation-wide law against conversions to Christianity.

Many governments, and officials, had also interpreted the Presidential Order of 1950 as an anti-conversion bill as it made affirmative action into a privilege for Hindus, and conversion inviting punishment of such benefits being denied to the new Christian. The matter is now before a Constitution bench of the Supreme Court of India. In states such as Odisha, government servants recruited on the scheduled caste reserved quota are being hounded and investigated to see if they are converts to Christianity.

But though such laws existed in some Hindu principalities in colonial India in early 20th Century, since Independence, the Union or state government have not been able to define the terms inducement, coercion, force or fraud in the context of religion. The Government and in fact the Supreme Court – which considered the matter more than once – have not given a definitive definition of the term ‘religion’ specially when it relates to faiths other than Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, or Buddhism. They felt happy defining Hinduism as a “way of life”, without explaining if all other religions were also not ways of life, or adjudicating how does one covert from a way of life to a well-defined religion such as Islam or Christianity.

After 70 years of being a Republic, indigenous faith and belief systems of hundreds, if not thousands of small communities across the country, and especially in what are called tribal areas, are not listed in a separate Schedule of the Constitution, but are lumped together under the majority religion.

(To be continued in the next edition…)
22 JULY 2017

INDIAN CHRISTIAN MARTYRDOM DAY (ICMD)

“Persecution Relief is privileged and honored to commemorate 22nd July as Indian Christian Martyrdom day. A first in India, this day was a solemn tribute to the widows of Christian Martyrs in India. This will be an Annual Event”.
On 22nd July, at 9.00 am, 16-year old Esther (name changed), had left home to walk 3-km between her village and the government school. Three days before she was raped and killed, she had wheeled her cycle back home, its rear tyre punctured. The first two days after the puncture, her father had dropped her to school and brought her back. That day, he had left for the fields. The rains had arrived, there was work to do, and a family of eight to feed. The girl usually returned at four or five in the evening, but when she wasn't home even an hour later, the family grew worried. Around 6 pm, three meters from the road, they found her school bag.

Her body was found half naked in the forest under Bayanar Police Station jurisdiction, district Kondagaon, in the state of Chhattisgarh. She had been intercepted by a group of men who gang raped and murdered her. The cruel perpetrators even glued her eyes & lips together with Fevi Kwick!

Esther was one among six siblings. The family had been boycotted and ostracized by the villagers for their resolve to remain Christians. The community had distanced themselves from this family from a year ago.

In spite of this great loss, ‘Esther’s’ father, Bro. Maner Sori, declared courageously, “I will never recant Jesus Christ whatever may happen. I am not worried about my daughter because she is at the safest place in Heaven”.

Bharat Ki Beti

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ADOPT A MARTYRED FAMILY

Call +91 9993200020
Email: persecutionrelief@gmail.com
A Bill to provide for prohibition of conversion from one religion to another by the use of force or allurement or by fraudulent means and for matters incidental thereto.

Be it enacted by the Jharkhand Legislature in the Sixth Seventh year of the Republic of India as follows:

1. Short title, extent and commencement:
   a) This Bill may be called the Jharkhand Dharma Swatantra Adhiniyam (Jharkhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2017)
   b) It shall extent to the whole of the State of Jharkhand
   c) It shall come into force from the date of its issuance

2. Definitions:
   In this bill unless the context otherwise requires;
   (a) 'allurement' means offer of any temptation in the form of
      i. any gift or gratification either in cash or kind;
      ii. grant of any material benefit, either monetary or otherwise;
   (b) 'Conversion' means renouncing one religion and adopting another;
   (c) Convert means to make one person to renounce one religion and adopt another religion;
   (d) 'Force' shall include show of force or threat of injury of any kind including threat of divine displeasure or social ex-communication
   (e) 'Fraud' shall include misrepresentation or any other fraudulent contrivance
   (f) 'Indigenous faith' means such religions, belief and practices including rites, rituals, festivals. Observance, performances, abstinence, customs as have been found sanctioned, approved, performed by the Scheduled Tribes Communities of Jharkhand from the time these communities have been known
   (g) 'minor' means a person under eighteen years of age.
   (h) 'religious faith' means faith related to religion, which also includes indigenous faith

3. Prohibition of forcible conversion:
   No person shall convert or attempt to convert, either directly or otherwise, any person from one religion/religious faith to another by the use of force or by allurement or by any fraudulent means, nor shall any person abet any such conversion.

4. Punishment for contravention of the provisions of section 3:
   Any person contravening the provisions contained in section 3 shall, without prejudice to any civil liability be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to three years or with fine which may extent to fifty thousand or with both;
   Provided that in case the offence is committed in respect of a minor, a
woman or a person belonging to the Schedules Castes or Schedule Tribes, the punishment shall be imprisonment to the extent of four years and fine up to one hundred thousand (One lakh rupees);

5. **Prior permission for conversion:**
   a) Whoever converts any person from one religion / religious faith to another, either by performing any ceremony by himself for such conversion as a religious priest or takes part directly or indirectly in such ceremony shall take prior permission for such proposed conversion from the District Magistrate concerned by applying in such form as may be prescribed by rules.
   b) The person who has converted shall send intimation to the District Magistrate of the District concerned in which the ceremony has taken place of the fact of such conversion within such period and in such form as may be prescribed by rules.
   c) Whoever fails without sufficient cause, to comply with the provisions of sub-section (1) and (2), shall be punished with the imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to rupees five thousand or with both.

6. **Offence to the cognizable:**
   An offence under this Act shall be cognizable and non bailable. Such cases shall not be investigated by an officer below the rank of an Inspector of Police.

7. **Prosecution Sanction:**
   No prosecution for an offence under this Act shall be instituted except by, or with the previous sanction of the District Magistrate or such other Authority, not below the rank of a Sub-Divisional Officer, as may be authorized by him in that behalf.

8. **Power to make rules:**
   The State Government may make rules for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this Act.

In mind let all Christians bear,
The saints of old whose faith had dare
To stand for truth with courage rare
Baring their lives with nothing to care.

The evil host will battle rage
Crusading foes with evil hate,
But Christ had crushed the adversary
All wrong will be righted in eternity.

And there they braved the bloody scene,
Right down to life's deep ravine.
For faith and truth how fierce the wood,
The Christian martyrs bravely stood.

When long the fire have fiercely burnt
The wind against the enemies turned,
The vanquished foes when martyrs they see,
Who breathed their last and was set free.

For those with valour did offend,
They did the truth of God defend
They gave their lives most valiantly
With Thee, O Lord, in heaven to be.

So let all ye faithful Christian men,
Each pilgrim, stranger and citizen,
Follow and hold your father's creed,
And show ye are their sons indeed.
The days when the Church was a place where the door was always open and visitors were welcome anytime of the day or night are long gone. It was a safe refuge for those who just needed some time in prayer and reflection. Church security was unheard of.

Over the course of the last couple of years, the trend has changed and most churches have scheduled times when their doors are open. The statistics are alarming and warrant a closer look at how churches safeguard their members, volunteers and employees.

There has been a rise of nearly 300% in the number of Persecution incidents recorded over just the last 2 years. The Holy Spirit’s gift of discernment of spirits has been given to the Church. This gift is a divine ability to see past the surface, discern well the spirit, motive and heart behind people and circumstances, and to be led by His peace – His Dove.

Based on the case studies of the incidents recorded by Persecution Relief, most of these attacks happened when Church worship was in progress as well as when the Church was not in service. However, we have identified some common trends of persecution. Please use our guidelines to develop your own security plan with your Church Leaders for the situations that are prevalent in your area.
1. Christian Institution, Orphanages Shut Down
All Christian Orphanages should follow the guidelines laid by the government. As per the Juvenile Justice Act, all Childcare Institutions should be registered with the Women and Child Welfare Department failing which, all unregistered organizations will be black listed and booked for illegal detention of children. If you need any further information, please write to us at christianpersecution@persecutionrelief.org

2. House Church attacked/closed down
Every household conducting ‘Church service’ at their homes must inform the Police of their schedule and frequency of meeting:

• Install CCTV’s (at least one) on the premises to monitor and be prepared of any imminent attacks
• Identify and educate a few members of your congregation not to panic if attacked but to step away and discreetly record the proceedings, both audio or video. This evidence will help identify the perpetrators and assist Police with their investigations
• Please keep your nearest Police Station numbers handy

3. “Know Your Believer” / False Allegation
New believers attending worship service or asking for baptism must be handled with discernment.

• If a new comer asks for baptism, analyze the seriousness and commitment. Get an affidavit signed by him that he wishes to be baptized of his own will
• You may write to us christianpersecution@persecutionrelief.org for a format of the ‘affidavit’
• Train volunteers in your Church on how to identify and interview new comers – to establish their intent of visit and collect their personal details

• From our case studies, we have seen unidentified people gain entry into the Church discreetly, call other miscreants and attack the members.

4. Social Media (Uploading photographs of Church activities)

• With immediate effect, stop posting pictures of baptisms, conventions, worship services, conferences in Social media (for example; Twitter; Facebook and Blogs)
• Please do not post images of posters of meetings, giving dates, timings, names etc.
• There are agencies employed exclusively to monitor social medias/websites and once they get any incriminating information, they shut down the site.
• Exercise caution when accepting friend requests or sending invitations to interact over social media with anyone you have not met face-to-face. This is especially important if you have a ministry working with Tribals and villages.

5. WhatsApp forwards

• Avoid forwarding videos and posters without knowing the authenticity of the contents
• There is a possibility that these forwards may instigate local fanatics to perpetuate the same thing in other areas
• Do not send your WhatsApp link inviting people to join your Group
• Many non-Christians use this opportunity to join Christian Groups to monitor contents, as has been our experience in the past
• Filter and remove suspicious and unknown names. If unbelievers are part of your group and if the group is being monitored, you could be implicated if you are the Administrator
• If you are unsure of the authenticity of the video or the poster, write to us at christianpersecution@persecutionrelief.org
State and Trends - Uttar Pradesh

PRAY FOR PEACE AND UNITY IN UTTAR PRADESH

In this series, we will be focusing on Persecution in different States of India. Uttar Pradesh tops with the highest number of Persecution incidents.

Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mr. Yogi Adityanath claimed that “Not a single riot in 6 months of my government: Yogi”

A review of the incidents recorded by Persecution Relief, from January to September 2017, however, paints a very different picture

- Pray that the communal mindset to be crushed in Jesus’ name
- Pray that the partisan and discriminatory attitude will be erased in Jesus’ name
- Pray that Christian Persecutors will be transformed from “Murderer into a missionary” in Jesus’ name
- Pray for the safety and protection of all Christians in the State of Uttar Pradesh who are facing intense harassment, in Jesus’ name
- Pray for Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mr. Yogi Adityanath, his cabinet, the bureaucrats and the persecutors

Theme: Pray for Christian NGO’s, Christian missionaries, Pastors and their families working in the remote places of India

Nov. 1  Father, we pray that all Your Missionaries, Evangelists & Pastors, will always see the You and Your holiness, be struck down to the dust first, before they go forth and serve you

Nov. 2  Heavenly Father, we pray that the source of all inspiration for Missions will be the Lord Jesus Himself; may Your people always be true to You— to carry out Your plans.

Nov. 3  Father God, just as You called Saul and Barnabas personally to Your service, may Your priests go forth because You have sent them; for if they go without You sending them, then they will labour in vain.

Nov. 3  Heavenly Father, we pray that Your Missions & NGO’s will not imitate the ways of the world and run the way business enterprises are run, but where Christian work will the number one factor.

Nov. 4  Heavenly Father, we pray that Your servants will recognize that the true work of God may use money but will never be dependent on money, but only on the Holy Spirit.

Nov. 5  Master, we pray that your servants will preach the Word of God in the power of the Spirit, like Jesus preached; like Peter and Paul preached.

Nov. 6  Heavenly Father, we pray that all Your servants, serving in the remotest parts of India, will first and foremost, seek precious fellowship with you and be filled with the Holy Spirit before they venture out to serve you.

Nov. 7  Father God, we pray for the missionaries engaged in Your ministry and laboring in the heat and dust of North India. We pray that the ‘Joy of the Lord will be their strength and their service to You, joyful and fruitful.

Nov. 8  Father, may the goal of Your Missionaries and NGO’s be to reach as many people as possible with the gospel; to make no distinction between men and women, slave and free, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, majority or minority; for all to hear of Christ and eager to go where Christ had not been named (Rom. 15:17-23).

Nov. 9  Heavenly Father, may your servants never forget that in spite of the enormous needs of the people & difficult conditions, that the first and foremost command of Jesus Christ— “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations…”

Nov. 10 Heavenly Father, “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Luke 16:13) Lord, we pray that you would cause your servants to have an undivided heart and mind towards you.

Nov. 11 Heavenly Father, we pray that as You send Your missionaries - whether to a local village or an unreached area – may they be like them in all things, “to sit where they sit”, as Ezekiel said (Ezekiel 3:15). Just as You communicated with us by sending Your son who became like us, we pray You will empower Your servants to descend to the level of the people they serve, to be made like them in everything, and not to think too big of themselves.
Nov. 12 Father God, we pray that You will cause Your servants to remember that it is the duty of a faithful missionary to concentrate on keeping his soul completely and continually open to the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, not matter the circumstances but by their devotion to You.

Nov. 13 Father God, we acknowledge that most times, we are selfish and carnal is our ways. We pray that there will be no competition between Christian missions or NGO’s to build their own kingdoms but work together as one ‘Body of Christ’.

Nov. 14 Heavenly Father, we pray that all Your people called to the front lines of Your battle, may be filled with the Spirit, love You with all their hearts, be Holy and be genuine, as they go out and bring lost souls to Christ.

Nov. 15 Father, as Your people serve in the Missions and become known as mission-leaders and get honor, we pray that they will remember Your words that “many who are first now will be last when Jesus comes back”. May they not be proud of their titles and degrees which impress men but does not impress You God. We pray that they will remain humble and have low thoughts about themselves.

Nov. 16 Father, as Your servants serve Your people, may they never forget that “the most important thing about a servant is that he does what his master tells him to”; that they will wait to hear from You before they go into this needy world perishing in sin.

Nov. 17 Heavenly Father, may Your missionaries remember that all their service depends on their personal walk with You God; and say just like Jesus Christ said, “Father, I have finished the work which You gave Me to do”, may they also be able to say the same at the end of their lives.

Nov. 18 Heavenly Father, just as You selected Your disciples who were simple, uneducated men and made them Your apostles, may Your servants not be diplomatic speakers but true prophets of God, who speak what they hear from You.

Nov. 19 Heavenly Father, just as you prayed for Simon when satan tempted him that his faith in God’s perfect love will not fail – we pray the same for Your missionaries too, so that even when they reach the bottom of the pit of failure, they would confess that “God still loves me”.

Nov. 20 Dear Lord, no matter how low Your soldiers may sink or fall, may their faith never fail and may this confession always be on their lips and on their hearts – that You still love them, JUST AS THEY ARE.

Nov. 21 Lord, we pray for all the servants of God and for their families. Put a hedge around their families from any satanic attack and bless their ministry we pray.

Nov. 22 Heavenly Father, may Your servants never forget that they have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is always interceding and praying for them.

Nov. 23 “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord” (Psa. 37:23). Heavenly Father, You are a God of Providence. Control the circumstances and guide Your servants, through the witness of the Holy Spirit; so that they may not take a wrong step.

Nov. 24 Father, we pray that You would preserve Your servants and make all things work together for their good; that they would be sincere before You and live according to Your commandments (Prov. 2:8; Rom. 8:28) and that all Your purposes will all be fulfilled.

Nov. 25 Father, we pray that the missionary’s devotion will be to no one except to our Lord Jesus Christ, with no attachment to anything else. May he always recognize “the love of God that has been poured out in his heart by the Holy Spirit...” (Romans 5:5).

Nov. 26 Heavenly Father, may Your people remember that You are the One who has the key to every door – that when You open a door, no one can shut it, and when You shut a door, no one can open it (Rev. 3:7).

Nov. 27 Father, we pray that when Your servants face disappointments, help them to see them as Your appointments for them, and may they continue to live under Your Lordship and not give up.

Nov. 28 Master, we pray that these missionaries and evangelists that you have called to serve in the mission fields, will stand before Your face and hear Your voice daily; that they will be men and women of God who have no desire in their heart for anyone or anything other than God Himself.

Nov. 29 Heavenly Father, we pray that the Christian leadership will be men who have the discernment of the Spirit, to distinguish between the soulish and the spiritual authority; men who will stand alone for God in the world, totally uncompromising men, like the apostles and prophets of old.

Nov. 30 Father, we pray that “rivers of living water” will flow out through Your servant’s lives - that they will never be dry. May their inner life – their thought life and attitudes, always be Christ like, corresponding with what they are preaching.
In this series ‘Saul to Paul’ we chronicle real lives transformed by the miraculous power of our God, Jesus Christ.

In this edition, we take a look at the life and journey of the “murderer Saul” to “missionary Paul”.

**Early Years:** Saul of Tarsus was born in approximately AD 5 in the city of Tarsus in Cilicia (in modern-day Turkey). He was born to Jewish parents who possessed Roman citizenship, a coveted privilege that their son would also possess. In about AD 10, Saul’s family moved to Jerusalem. Sometime between AD 15—20 Saul began his studies of the Hebrew Scriptures in the city of Jerusalem under Rabbi Gamaliel. It was under Gamaliel that Saul would begin an in-depth study of the Law with the famous rabbi.

**Persecution of Christians:** Saul of Tarsus hated Christians. He made it his goal to capture, then bring Christians to public trial and execution. Saul was present when the first Christian martyr Stephen, was killed by an angry mob.

God allowed Stephen to be killed for many reasons - one of which was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Would Paul have been converted if he had not seen Stephen’s attitude when he was being killed?

After Stephen was martyred, Saul went door to door in Jerusalem finding people who believed that Jesus is the Messiah. After putting these people in prison, Saul learned about their Christian friends in Damascus by somehow getting letters from the prisoners.

Saul of Tarsus believed that he was serving God by finding Christians, throwing them into prison, and even executing them when possible. But Saul was wrong. Perhaps even more intriguing, Saul was highly educated for his era in Jewish beliefs about God.

How could such a highly educated man be completely wrong?

Most Jewish people did not accept Jesus as Messiah due to the fact that he was crucified as a common criminal. Few Jewish people could understand that the Messiah would be crucified for the sins of the world.

But something happened to Saul as he traveled to Damascus in search of Christians. According to Saul of Tarsus, God appeared to him in an unexpected way. On the Damascus road, the Lord told him, "It is hard for you to keep on kicking against the pricks of your conscience" (Acts 26:14) - and he was converted.

After the Apostle Paul became a Christian, he had to rethink his views of God and discard his religious education. This did not take long due to the blinding light experience with the resurrected Jesus. The hardened heart of Saul instantly softened as he realized he was wrong. He accepted that Jesus, who died as a common criminal, was actually the Messiah that offers eternal salvation to all humans.

In many ways, Saul of Tarsus as a persecutor of Christians can be compared directly to the methods used by the religious fundamentalists in India, who do not accept the Christian view of God. As Saul of Tarsus took up the sword to convince people that they were wrong for not holding to the religious views of the Jewish authorities.

Paul’s life story is a testimony of the reality of Jesus the Messiah. It took a supernatural experience to change a Saul from a persecutor of Christians to the Apostle Paul, a fellow Christian believer. By the time the Apostle Paul was martyred for his faith in Jesus as Messiah about 32 years later, he had written about 25% of the New Testament. Paul's written words are the testimony of a man that violently persecuted the early Christians, then became a Christian due to a supernatural spiritual experience.

Paul was just the first of many thousands who have been converted in the past 2000 years by seeing the godly reaction of Christians to persecution. The way you react to people who do evil to you could trigger a reaction in someone watching you that could result in his salvation. But to react like that, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Saul the murderer turned Paul the missionary; destroyer of the church became one of its greatest architects and builders; a persecutor of the church transformed into a fearless proclaimer of the gospel by that earth-shattering encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus.
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