VOICE OF THE CHRISTIANS

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An Initiative of Persecution Relief

www.persecutionrelief.org
While imprisoned and awaiting execution, Paul wrote to Timothy, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”

2 Tim. 3:12
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FOUNDER’S NOTE

Kerala, pray that God will rebuild and give true meaning and purpose to their lives.

THE LORD MUST BUILD THE HOUSE

It has been an eventful 2 months. In July, God graciously opened a door for me to be invited by the U.S. State Department to the first-ever Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom.

It was indeed a privilege for me and Persecution Relief, to represent India internationally.

Sitting amidst people of every faith or no faith at all, everyone who cares about religious freedom, advocating for the persecuted people, discussing the challenges, identifying concrete means to address persecution of religious groups and campaigning tirelessly for justice and equality, was humbling. Many survivors of religious persecution, from Auschwitz to ISIS, shared their testimonies. Truly a valiant and earnest effort put forth by the US Government, to be inclusive, and making it a talking point in its foreign policy discourse moving forward.

“Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand in guard in vain.” – Ps.127:1

Religious freedom truly is for everyone - a right given by God and it’s a beautiful part of our human dignity. Nevertheless, as I left the US, I could not shake away the realization that unless God stands behind our work, we labor in vain – we are inadequate on our own to protect our Countries and families.

Kerala - starting August 08th, witnessed its worst floods since 1924. Hundreds of people have perished in the flooding and landslides caused by this year’s unusually heavy monsoon rains. Over 200 people have died, 300,000 people have been displaced and are living among 2,000 emergency relief camps. As many as thousands more remain completely stranded.
Odisha - August 2018 makes it a decade since the Kandhamal tragedy – a smoking gun. The travesty of innocent Christians devastated by our Country’s worst attack in the history of India, which claimed over 100 lives, forced 56,000 people to flee their homes and saw the destruction of 5,600 homes and 300 churches, is still fresh in our memory. Rechanneling and rebuilding their lives has been slow but steady. However, justice to the many who languish in prisons, still continues to drag its feet. Fear and insecurities exist due to the impunity of the culprits, who are either acquitted or out on bail. There are still many wounds and situations that need healing.

“But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.

As we grapple with suffering after suffering, calamity after calamity, let us seek God’s face, and ask for Him to pour out His mercy and grace upon the families who have lost their loved ones, their homes and all their earthly possessions. May their faith endure through this grief and hardship. Pray more, care more and share more with the homeless.

May they find comfort in God’s word:

As Persecution Relief stands in support, lending a hand to the victims of Kandhamal and the victims of floods in Kerala, pray that God will rebuild and give true meaning and purpose to their lives.

Shibu Thomas
Founder-PERSECUTION RELIEF
founder@persecutionrelief.org
Tension prevailed in Dalsing Sarai, a town in Samastipur District, in the Indian State of Bihar, where 100’s of religious fanatics stormed into a Prayer Hall, breaking the iron gate, indiscriminately attacking and abusing Christians as they worshipped.

Originally a resident of Begusarai District, Evangelist Jitendra Kumar moved to Dalsing Sarai, in Samastipur District, in 2010. Affiliated to Brethren Assembly since 2010, he built a Prayer Hall and a home with 1 room, kitchen and bathroom, in his own private property, where he lived with his family - wife and 3 school going children.

On Sunday, 05 August, a mob of 20 religious fanatics entered the Church, disrupting worship service, illegally trespassing and taking photographs of the assembly hall,
Speaking to Persecution Relief, Evg. Jitendra was very sad for his believers who had been beaten up. He wanted to take them to a better hospital for treatment and care. He was also deeply concerned about the scattered flock. He has asked the Church in India to pray for the congregation and the persecutors so that they may taste the love of Jesus. He said, “I have not filed any report against the persecutors as I have forgiven them. Jesus has asked me to forgive them.”

terrorizing and threatening the congregation, to recant faith in Jesus Christ or face dire consequences.

They threatened to come back the following Tuesday, to install a Hanuman Idol (Hanuman is one of the central characters in the ancient Hindu epic Ramayana), inside the Prayer Hall. In spite of such a volatile encounter, Evg. Jitendra, did not lodge a complaint with the Police but continued to trust the Lord, lifting up everything in prayer, while instructing the congregation to forgive the persecutors.

Nothing untoward occurred during the week.

On Sunday, 12 August, around 40 believers were gathered for Sunday Worship Service. 2 guest speakers Bro. Kedar & Elder Bro. Ramdas were delivering the word and the speakers were encouraging the congregation through the words of Paul, to be strong during the time of persecution.

Just before the worship service could start, Evg. Jitendra received a call from the neighbouring village alerting him that a young boy had overheard the conversation that a truck-load with 100’s of armed religious fanatics, were headed in the direction of the Church they added.

Evg. immediately called the nearest Police Station to inform them about the imminent attack. Surprisingly, the Police could not be reached on any of their telephone numbers except for the SP. Having exhausted every possible way of reaching the Police, the Evg. got one of the Brothers from Church to rush and alert the Police, at the nearest Police Station.

In the meantime, the menacing mob arrived in their trucks and demanded that the gate to the property be opened. Evg. tried to buy time by asking them to wait until the Police arrived to discuss the matter in their presence.

The aggressive and uncontrollable, belligerent fanatics, dressed in saffron sashes and head bands, paid scant regard to the evangelists’ pleas and broke down the iron gate with their sheer number and strength.

Once inside the Church cum prayer hall, the sanctity of the Church was desecrated, vandalizing the pulpit, tearing Bibles – hurting religious sentiments. They brutally beat all members congregated – they showed no
mercy to even the women and children. The congregants were shocked by their inhuman behavior.

Evg.’s daughter, Sneha Jitin, was on phone with Persecution Relief, giving minute by minute update on the invasion. Evg.’s 2 sons were neither spared but brutally beaten.

Parallelly, Persecution Relief communicated the happening to the SP and DSP, who swiftly send the Police to assist and evacuate the believers.

4 Policemen rescued the Evg. and his family, along with around 15 sisters and equal number of brothers to the police station. However, the believers who were left behind, faced the wrath of the mob, who beat up Bro. Ram Babu injuring his eyes, Bro. Sandeep and Bro. Rahul, who needed hospitalization and treatment for the injuries they sustained.

At around 2 pm, all of the believers including Evg. Jitendra and his family members were released after given an account of what had transpired during the mob attack, in writing. All 21 persons were asked the sign the declaration. However, a copy of the application was not given to the believers.

As they were advised not to go back to go back to Dalsing Sarai, in Samastipur District, Evangelist along with his family, with heaviness of heart, leftfor Begusarai District. Police have also asked them to stop worshipping in that location, in the future.

Speaking to Persecution Relief, Evg. Jitendra was very sad for his Belivers who had been beaten up. He wanted to take them to a better hospital for treatment and care. He was also deeply concerned about the scattered flock.

He has asked the Church in India to pray for the congregation and the Persecutors so that they may taste the love of Jesus. He said, “I have not filed any report against the Persecutors as I have forgiven them. Jesus has asked me to forgive them”.

“THANKYOU, PERSECUTION RELIEF TEAM, FOR THE TIMELY HELP PROVIDED BY SPEAKING TO THE POLICE OFFICIALS WHEN THE FANATICS BARGED INTO THE SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE. MY FATHER EVG. JITENDRA IS ALSO THANKFUL FOR THE MUCH-NEEDED FINANCIAL HELP WHEN WE HAD TO LEAVE THE HOUSE AND THE VILLAGE”. - SNEHA JITIN (DAUGHTER OF EVG. JITENDRA KUMAR)
Adopt a persecuted family

Prayerline24.com
- Daily 6 to 6.45 pm (New York time)
- Dial +1-712-432-8273, access code 218618#

Oklahoma Prayer Line
Sunday 9 to 11 pm – Oklahoma time
Dial +1-605-562-3140, access code 217 648

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Attacked while praying at home, Uttar Pradesh

Evangelist Dileep was falsely accused of indulging in conversion activities by religious fundamentalists and detained by the Police in Saran District of Bihar State.

An Orphan, suffering with acute Tuberculosis (TB), Evangelist Dileep was miraculously healed by Jesus Christ, in a Prayer Meeting. Since that day, he had committed his life to serving the Lord. He counted it his privilege to be given the opportunity to serve and assist Pastor Sam George, Head of Prarthana Bhawan, in the Ministry. Living at the Ashram, Evg. Dileep travelled with Pastor Sam George to wherever he was ministering.

Evg. Dileep who had travelled with Pastor Sam George, stayed back for a few days, with a local Believer family, in Thenua Village, Chappra, Saran District, Bihar.

While they were having their morning prayers, few religious fanatics barged into the private residence, interrupted their prayers and falsely accused them of indulging in conversion activities. In spite of clarifying that they were only praying together as a family, the fanatics
summoned the Police, who took Evangelist Dileep to Marhaura Police Station for further questioning.

Pastor Sam George informed about the arrest to Persecution Relief, who contacted SHO Baleshwar Rao and explained the circumstances that led to the detention of Evg. Dileep. The SHO assured that he would ensure his release later in the evening, as the entire Police Station was surrounded by religious fanatics, who were putting pressure on the Police to lodge a FIR. Evg. Dileep was released late at night.

Hostilities towards Christians in the Bihar State has seen an unusual spike in the number of incidents recorded by Persecution Relief, in the last 2 months. Several false cases of conversion have been reported and Christians taken into custody.

Church, please pray for supernatural protection over the servants of God, who minister in these hostile locations.

“**I had heard of Persecution Relief that they help the Persecuted Church in India, but I had never interacted with them. When Evangelist Dileep was arrested, I called the Founder, Bro. Shibu. He was empathetic and immediately without wasting time, he contacted Marhaura Police Station and got in touch with SHO Mr. Baleshwar Rao, who helped Evg Dileep to be released. I am so obliged and thankful for the great work Persecution Relief is doing for the Christian community in India**”. - Pr Sam George Founder Prarthana Bhawan
Ambushed and brutally beaten by fanatics, Pastor faces extortion from Police

Pastor Ramesh Vasuniya and his son Rahul Vasuniya were ambushed by a mob of religious fanatics. They were brutally beaten and his son Rahul Vasuniya, beaten and dragged on the road for visiting a family who needed prayers.

Pastor Ramesh and his son were visiting Bro. Sukiya S/O Satharsingh Bariya and Sister Imallyben Bariya in Piplipada village, in Jhabua district in Madhya Pradesh.

This Sister was brought to Pastor Ramesh for prayer, seeking deliverance from the evil spirits. After much fasting and prayer, Sister was delivered of the tormenting, demonic spirits. Since her deliverance, both the husband and wife are regular visitors to the Church.

However, the neighbours and local villagers were opposed to this as they secretly plotted to attack Pastor who was instrumental for delivering Sister.

After prayer, as they were driving off, after around 1 km, a mob of around 40 persons ambushed and waylaid Pastor and his son, asking them to get off their vehicle.

Leading the pack, the local RSS Leader, began to falsely allege that they were converting people to Christianity, offering money, houses, jobs and free education as inducements to convert people to Christianity.

Pastor and his son openly and honestly stated that they had never given anything to anyone except pray for the healing and well-being of people. They clarified that Bro. Sukiya Bariya and Sister Imallyben Bariya had freely come to them for prayers. They were simply visiting to enquire about Sister’s health.

The militant mob were enflamed and refused to accept their reasoning. The began to beat both Pastor Ramesh and his son. They viciously kicked, punched and dragged Pastor’s son as he writhed on the ground, begging for mercy. Showing no mercy, they continued to drag and beat him, stopping only after he seemed semi-conscious. Leaving the father and son lying bleeding on the road, the fanatics fled the scene.

By the grace of God, passersby helped Pastor who suffered serious internal injuries and his son, to the hospital, where they were admitted in the Intensive Care Unit.
Pastor Ramesh S. Vasuniyawas admitted for 10 days while Rahul R. Vasuniya [Son] was admitted for 25 days.

A false FIR was registered by RSS Leaders and local Politicians against Pastor and his son.

To add insult to injury, Police, the guardians of the Law, further intimidated Pastor and demanded a bribe. They threatened to lodge false cases against the duo, if the money wasn’t paid, putting psychological pressure on them, despite being aware of their innocence.

Eventually, Police lodged a false complaint that Pastor and his son were injured because of a road accident and released them.

“I am Pastor Markas, the Coordinator for Madhya Pradesh & Gujarat with Emmanuel Faith Ministry. I would like to thank Persecution Relief family for providing Medical support to our Pastor Ramesh & his son Rahul, who were badly beaten up by religious fanatics”.- Pastor Markas
Good Samaritan Police rescue Pastors from blood-thirsty fanatics, Bihar

Pastor Hari Narayanan Mandal and Pastor Jayaprakash had gone to village Chandpitar, at Supaul District in Bihar, to the residence of Bro. Johar Mandal.

Around 40 persons had congregated there for the meeting. Suddenly, a group of unidentified religious fanatics, gatecrashed into the meeting. Shouting abuses, the men armed with sticks, beat up the congregation – slapping and beating them with sticks, slippers and punching them, while one of them with a video cam, kept recording the proceedings.

They demanded for the Pastors to step outside the prayer hall where an even larger mob of fanatics pounced on them, brutally beating and dragging them to the Panchayat’s Samadan Bhavan, where the Panchayat Head locked up both pastors inside the Bhavan from 12 noon to 1 pm.

In the meantime, the Sarpanch summoned the Police while the blood-thirsty mob, plotted on how to kill the Pastors and throw the bodies in the drain. However, the Police arrived in the nick of time and sensing the violent mood, rescued the Pastors and secured them at Kishenpur Police Station

Speaking to Persecution Relief from Police custody, Pastor Hari Narayan was in deep pain as he had internal injuries but was confident in the Lord and requested prayers.

Persecution Relief spoke to the Police Station In-Charge, Mr. Uday who understood the matter and agreed to release the Pastors, in spite of the pressure from religious fanatics.

The Pastors were released at 9.30 pm and Pastor Uttam, took them to the Government Hospital for first aid to treat the injuries received. He later drove them home to safety.
pressure from religious fanatics.

The Pastors were released at 9.30 pm and Pastor Uttam, took them to the Government Hospital for first aid to treat the injuries received. He later drove them home to safety.

Pastor Uttam Bharat, who had travelled many kilometers to stand in support with the Pastors, coordinated logistics on the ground.

Pastor Nandkumar was the first to inform Persecution Relief about the same incident.

“PASTOR HARI NARAYAN MANDAL & PASTOR JAIPRAKASH WERE BADLY BEATEN UP BY FANATICS AND THEY WERE LATER ARRESTED AND IN POLICE CUSTODY. I CALLED PERSECUTION RELIEF AND THEY IMMEDIATELY CONTACTED THE STATION IN-CHARGE MR. UDAY AND SECURED THE RELEASE OF THE PASTORS.

WHEN I TOLD PERSECUTION RELIEF ABOUT THE PAIN AND INTERNAL INJURIES SUFFERED BY THE PASTORS, THEY IMMEDIATELY SEND THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO TAKE THEM TO HOSPITAL. I TOOK THEM TO PARAS GLOBAL HOSPITAL AND GOT THE CT SCAN AND BLOOD TEST DONE. THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, GOD BLESS.

PR UTTAM BARAT,
LOCAL LEADER
Pastor Sanjay Masih has been ministering at Deep Jyothi Yesu Ashram at Birner, Kaushambi, Uttar Pradesh. Over 300 believers gather at this temporary make-shift shed, erected on Bro. Indresh’s private land, every Sunday, for the past 3 years, for Worship service.

Everything appeared be going well until 28 October 2017, when several Policemen accompanied religious fanatics and entered the Church, disrupting the worship service. Desecrating the sanctity of the Church, shouting abuses and threats, 5 Believers, including Pastor Sanjay, who were victims of this incursion, were falsely booked under the following IPC Sections: 107, 151, 116, and taken into Police custody.

Later in the evening, once bail was posted, they were released from custody. This was the beginning of their harassment and provocation.

- On the following Saturday, 04th Nov. ’17, SDM& Police visited the Church and demanded that Sunday worship be stopped. After a lot of to and fro, they left saying that they will not permit further gathering in the location.
- Later, on Wednesday, 08th Nov. ’17, again 12 belivers were booked under 107, 116 IPC sections.
- On Saturday, 11th Nov. ’17, a Notice to deposit Rs. 5 Lakhs as as personal bond @ 1 Lakh per person.
- Subsequently, a case was filed by Pastor against this order in the lower court.

Consequent Sundays, the Police continued to visit the church, so as to intimidate the members.

Special written permission was sought by Pastor from the authorities to celebrate Christmas, but permission was denied. Pastor then filed a PIL at the Court, which demanded that the Church be permitted to celebrate Christmas.

Most of January to March 2018 was peaceful, until the posting of a new SHO (Station

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Section 107: Abetment of a thing
Section 151: Knowingly joining or continuing in assembly of five or more persons after it has been commanded to disperse
Section 116: Liability of agent of owner or occupier for whose benefit riot is committed
House Officer) MM Mishra. After his arrival, the Church faced difficulties during Easter as the Police came back to disrupt Easter Worship service.

All small group meetings, house prayer by family members, everything was forcefully stopped by the SHO and the Police. Even sisters and children were not exempt. Pastor felt helpless as he was made to run from pillar to post to secure permission to gather together to worship.

A meeting with the District Magistrate (DM) and other higher officials was to no avail. With no option in sight and in order to stand for his Constitutional rights, Pastor filed a PIL in High Court.

In spite of this, to exacerbate the already volatile situation, the SDM, SHO and Senior Police Officials, continued to visit the Church every Sunday, to stop the worship service.

Last Sunday, 15th July, they disrupted the worship service with scant regard or respect for the religious place of worship. A group of Policemen pulled out their camera phones and began recording the proceedings. Some believers also started recording the Policemen’s actions which offended them. They snatched the believer’s phone and after unnecessary altercations, gave it back after they had deleted all the data.

It is alleged that a concerted ‘witch-hunt’ is being made by the Police and Administration to malign this Pastor and his Church.

Speaking to Persecution Relief, Pastor Sanjay Masih expressed disappointment at how confrontational and hostile the Administration Officials were. In an attempt to ‘scatter the sheep’, they were doing everything in their power, not to allow a single person to join the worship service.

Pastor is under severe mental, physical, financial strain and duress as he believes that it his personal spiritual responsibility to minister and care for the people, God has given under his care. The congregation are zealous and adamant that they will not stop worshipping Jesus Christ.

Church, please pray for Pastor Sanjay Masih and his congregation. Pray that God’s Shekinah glory will continue to abide in their lives in spite of the oppression.
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As Pastor Jain stepped out of a grocery shop, he was accosted by plainclothes Policemen, who took him away in Jeep for interrogation, on charges of indulging in conversion activities.

After a miraculous encounter with Jesus Christ, Pastor Jain had given up his lucrative career to follow and serve Jesus Christ. In 1995, he started an independent ministry, Bethesda Prayer Team and began ministering in the Lord’s vineyard.

On 2nd August, around lunch time, he was shopping for a few odd purchases at a grocery store at Dayapur Village, Bihar. As he stepped out of the shop, 2 men in civilian clothes, approached him with his photograph. Once they had positively identified him, as if on cue, a Jeep raced to the scene, filled with armed Police Men and Pastor was bundled into the vehicle.

No explanation was provided to the bewildered Pastor. There was no conversation or explanation for the detention. Shocked beyond his wildest dreams, he was taken to Maner Police Station, Patna, Bihar. There, a posse of Policemen encircled Pastor, using interrogation tactics in
an attempt to elicit a confession, for over 6 hours. The Police falsely accused him of indulging in conversion activities and providing inducements to people to convert to Christianity, which Pastor vehemently denied.

In spite of accusing Pastor of evidence against him and threatening prosecution for crimes he did not commit, Pastor continued to vehemently deny their allegations. By the grace of God, responding to the questions, honestly and transparently, Pastor Jain was finally released after copies of his ID’s, personal details and a letter undertaking not to indulge in conversion activities, was taken from him.

Speaking to Persecution Relief, Pastor Jain mentioned that he had come to Bihar 4 years ago after serving the Lord in Odisha, but had never experienced such animosity. Pastor has an independent ministry – Bethesda Prayer Team, where around 6 members serve alongside him. Over 60 believers gather every Sunday for Worship Service Church, pray for Pastor Jain and Bethesda Prayer Team. Pray for their protection and strength. Pray that they will continue to be steadfast and persevere to serve the Lord, in spite of the hardships

“I really appreciate Mr Shibu Thomas the Founder, Persecution Relief. When I was falsely arrested on conversion charges, I called Mr Thomas and he was so helpful and he guided me. In fact, I wanted to move out of my village because of problems. He told me not to worry and that he would support me in whichever way possible. That gave me great strength to go forward and now I have decided to stay back and work at the same place were the Lord has asked me to be”. -Pastor Y.M. Jain
“Be careful and go into hiding,” Mohindero, a gram Rakhi (village protector), cautioned Budhadeb after he got hint of a police plan to arrest some of the Christians for the Swami’s murder.

But Budhadeb told him nonchalantly: ‘I am not a robber’.

However, the Hindu leader’s caution soon came true. Police reached Budhadeb’s house looking for him. Lingaraj, his 20-year old elder son was at home and the police told him:

“Your father has killed Swami Laxmanananda.” Police even threatened to arrest him unless he informed the whereabouts of his father.

On the night of December 13, police came again and arrested Budhadeb while he was sleeping. “He was wearing only a lungi and baniyan. They tied his hands to take him away. He asked for clothes and I gave him a shawl,” recalled his wife Nilandri.

Three days later, the family met him in Balliguda jail. The police had the same concocted claim that he had been with Maoists in the jungle on December 12 as in the case of Bijay, Bhaskar and Gornath...
Remembering Kandhamal, Odisha- A Decade gone
Persecuted but not abandoned;
struck down but not destroyed – St. Paul

but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things." declares the LORD.
Jeremiah 9:24

On 22nd January 1999, India and the world woke up to the vicious and barbaric news of the murder of Australian missionary Graham Stuart Staines and his two minor sons, who were burnt to death, while sleeping in a station wagon, by a gang of Hindu Bajrang Dal fundamentalists, at Manoharpur village in Kendujhar district in Odisha (formerly Orissa), an eastern Indian state on the Bay of Bengal. Graham Staines had been working in Odisha among the tribal poor and lepers since 1965.

Infamous Odisha was once again in the limelight in August 2008, for the massacre and atrocities against Odisha Christians, which is still etched in our memories. Innocent Christians were beaten, killed, houses burned, Church’s burned, families scattered, children orphaned, and many who were rendered homeless.

August 2018 makes 10 years since the catastrophic outbreak of violence between the fundamentalist Hindus and Christian communities in Kandhamal, Odisha, instigated by the death of Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati, who had been running an anti-Christian campaign.

The toll of violations of human rights in Odisha included:

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<th>Justice in Kandhamal</th>
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<td>Villages affected</td>
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<td>Life Imprisonment</td>
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Odisha was the first province of independent India to enact legislation in regards to religious conversions. The Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, 1967, mentions that no person shall “convert or attempt to convert, either directly
Seven innocent Christians are still languishing in jail since they were arrested on August 23, 2008, on the charge of murdering Swami Laxmanananda and convicted to life imprisonment, despite the claim by Maoists that it was they who had carried out the killing.

Persecution Relief is an inter-denominational initiative, providing Comprehensive support (Prayerfully, Financially, Politically, Judicially) to the persecuted Church in India, also serves as the link filling this crucial gap, highlighting, influencing and bringing awareness about persecution that has increased exponentially, to India and to the world at large.

Since 2016, Persecution Relief has recorded and handled over 1200 Christian Persecution incidents. Odisha has seen an exponential rise in the number of attacks on Christians. We recorded 38 incidents over the last 2 years. 2018 has already recorded 13 incidents till 18th of August 2018. Out of 29 states in India, Odisha is placed as the 7th most hostile State in India against Christian minorities.

Persecution Relief family is privileged to provide monthly support for their livelihood, to all the 7 families of the 7 Christian men, who are stigmatized and abandoned by society. Please partner with us to support these families who have various needs, as the bread-winner is in jail. Write to us at persecutionrelief@gmail.com.

Join with us to pray for the 7 inmates and their families:

- Pray for the release of the innocent victims of hate crimes and their acquittal
- Pray that our Heavenly Father will comfort the victims’ families and provide for them spiritually, physically & materially
- Pray that God would surround the 7 families with His angels and bless them with abundant grace, to forgive and be free of bitterness or hate
- Pray for many such men and women of God who have been falsely implicated and imprisoned for their faith in Jesus Christ
- Pray that God will call the ‘murderers’ to Himself, to be His powerful witnesses, to open their eyes to see the salvation through Jesus Christ
- Pray for the acquittal from all false cases, booked against men and women of God across India.

Persecution Relief has covered their stories in the series “Ambassador of Christ” in our in-house magazine, Voice of the Christians.

Please copy and paste the link to sign the Petition to release the “Seven Innocents of Kandhamal”

FIR FILED AGAINST SOBO STUDENT FOR ‘BLACK MAGIC’

Bro. Ezekiel Baskar is an Evangelist who draws inspiration from the life of Christ. Born in a family that has devoted its life to social work, it was obvious that his ministry was truly guided by the principles from Holy Bible.

Son of a Christian Priest, who runs a trust named Faith Miracle Educational & Charitable Trust -they help the slum people, honour student achievers and also provide medical help to the needy.

Around a year ago, Bro. Ezekiel was preaching at K.C. College at Church Gate, Mumbai, Maharashtra. Amazed and impressed at his enthusiasm, devotion, confidence and the conviction with which he spoke, a young girl in the audience, Jinal Shah, was very impressed with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. She went back and forth to Bro. Ezekiel, with lot of questions, as she was facing lot of problems on the personal front.

Bro. Ezekiel encouraged her, through the Scriptures, that God can do all things, no matter how impossible the situation, through Philippians 4:13

“I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME” - PHILIPPIANS 4:31

Bro. Ezekiel counselled and prayed with Jinal, encouraging her that life was precious to God and that she could do all things through Christ. He impressed upon her to call out to Jesus Christ, who is a living God, a God who
Jinal was indignant at Bro. Ezekiel’s suggestion:

“No, I will not pray to Jesus. I will only pray to this unknown God and will not take the name of Jesus”.

The situation at Jinal Shah’s home continued to deteriorate and she began to lose all hope. At the point of considering ending her life, she remembered the words Bro. Ezekiel, and the stories he had shared from the Bible; she remembered the stories of God’s mercy, grace, goodness, and faithfulness displayed in the lives of His children. She remembered the words of Apostle Paul:

“I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME” - PHILIPPIANS 4:31

Walking blindly, solely by faith, Jinal Shah did something that was very hard for her. She prayed, for the first time, in the name of Jesus Christ.

 Supernaturally, Jinal claims that she had a divine visitation from Jesus Christ – seeing Him face to face! The experience changed her life dramatically and forever. She began to pray every day, initially for 2 hours and soon the times she spent, closeted with God in prayer, steadily increased. This was the turning point of her beautiful and incredible story of transformation in Jesus Christ. Every time she felt angry with her situation at home, she would sit with the Bible and find peace.

Jinal’s parents were shocked at her change! They vehemently objected to her new-found faith. It was not an easy situation as the Bible is also clear that we are honor our parents. She realized that she represented Jesus Christ to a family who did not know him. If they wanted to see what Jesus Christ was doing in the world, they were going to look at her.

The delicate task of balancing honor of her parents and honoring God, was a great witness to her parents. While she refused to give up her faith in Jesus Christ, she silently kept praying. However, the harassment steadily increased, until she was physically assaulted, and often confined to her locked room for several hours.

A personal journal, recording her journey with Jesus Christ, and the notes that she had recorded from the preaching of Bro. Ezekiel, was discovered by her parents. They used this journal, to track Bro. Ezekiel, and used local political leaders to threaten him.

In the increasing hostile environment, circumstances and unfair treatment, Jinal was thrown out of her home by her parents. A Christian family, gave her shelter, and soon she became involved in the local Church and also help Bro. Ezekiel in social work.

In the meantime, the parents of a Jinal from Grant Road, lodged a FIR based on false allegations, against Bro. Ezekiel, accusing him of trying to convert her.

Jinal has denied outright all charges and accusations against Bro. Ezekiel and the Church.
“The FIR against Ezekiel is false. I am not being converted. I began following Jesus of my own free will during prayer meetings in school. Mother Teresa is my idol.”

“I imitate Christ who forgave all His accusers. He has asked me to do as He did and promised that I will also be seated at His right hand.”

Recently, Jinal has learnt that her Father encountered Jesus Christ in his dream. She believes that God will transform him and her mother, just as He did Saul to Paul. Praise God!.

Bro. Ezekiel, a student of South Mumbai College, confirmed that he received a call from Gamdevi Police station. Bro. Ezekiel has been booked under sections 417 (cheating), 419 (cheating by personation) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of IPC that carry a maximum jail term of three years. Police have also invoked sections of the Black Magic Act, 2013.

Police said they are yet to find a conversion link and still investigating.

“The allegation is that the girl was told to perform some rituals by the accused, which she had written in her diary. She was mentally disturbed,” said a senior officer.

A meeting with the Additional Commissioner of Mumbai Police, was promising as he gave them the assurance to stand by the truth and constitutional rights of both individuals concerned – Evg. Ezekiel and Jinal.

Speaking to Persecution Relief, Pastor Devdan Tribhuvan, Coordinator of Persecution Relief, Maharashtra, visited the Police Officials with Bro. Ezekiel and were informed about the false allegations, which are motivated to defame him and his ministry.

Never to be shaken by the adulation or accusation, Bro. Ezekiel has his eyes fixed on Jesus.

“I trust the goodness of God and the steadfast love of the Lord is better than life. Satan’s aim is to destroy my joy in God and belittle God. I bless those who persecute us and spitefully use us”.

“It is not I but Jesus Christ in me, who touches lives. I do not convert anybody; there is noword called conversion in my dictionary. I simply am a channel of God’s love. I love those who hate me and bless those who are for me.”

Activist Cyril Dara said, “The girl follows the teachings of Jesus Christ of her own volition. This is not a case of conversion.”

Church, pray for Bro. Ezekiel to stay strong and encouraged in spite of the situation, to remember God’s promises to walk with him through this trying time.

Pray for Jinal Shah. May she always remember to walk with the Lord and lead a life of integrity, bringing honor to her parents. May she never forget how God forgave her imperfectness, and be generous to forgive her own parents. Pray that she may be the key to their salvation.
God's people are a misunderstood minority and should expect to face hostility because they live under King Jesus' rule.
Word on the street was that Greg started a cult.

The rumor began with someone I thought was a friend. A big name on the university football team, a go-to on the field — a hater behind my back.

When I heard what he was saying, my first response was frustration. If the natural response is fight or flight, I found myself gravitating toward the former. But God was gracious, and soon I calmed down.

"HATERS ARE GONNA HATE US BECAUSE THEY HATED HIM FIRST."

The emotion that took its place next, however, caught me off guard: regret. Had I said something too extreme? Had I been a little too vocal? Should I have lingered a little more at their parties and laughed a little more at their jokes? I failed to win him. And now, how many others would stay away from our Bible study because of his slander?

When the World Hates You

From there, the descent was gradual. I started to be invited out less and less. I saw pictures of different parties and cabin getaways on
Facebook. Lines began to be drawn, and I was on the other side. Wallowing in self-pity and shame, wishing I had been a cooler Christian, Jesus confronted me one night through his word.

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” (John 15:18–20)

Maybe I was excluded and lied about, not because I failed as an evangelist, but instead because King Jesus had chosen me. Maybe Christ was the cause. Maybe I was not of this world. If I was of this world, Jesus had said, the world would love me as its own. But if I was his own, the world would persecute me.

That night in God’s word, my weaning from people pleasing began. One of the most liberating, expectation-changing, Jesus-endorsed truths that set me free was the tried and true statement, Haters gon’ hate.

**Haters Gon’ Hate**

Before that night, I had sinful expectations. Secretly, I was hoping to be loved by God and the world. Secretly, I wanted God to change my life but not my reputation. I didn’t want to be a Ned Flanders. I wanted to be liked — for Christ or otherwise. I, the servant, had expected to be treated more favorably than my Master — and the world chose a murderer over him. But I was not greater than my Master. I would not — and should not — be liked by everyone. Jesus wasn’t. I should be thought well of by outsiders (1 Timothy 3:7) — many should see a good lifestyle and approve of it — but Jesus’s word to every follower of his would come to pass: “you will be hated by all for my name’s sake” (Matthew 10:22).

Through my teammate’s slander, some at the university were defriending me. Instead of this being an embarrassment or a failure, it was the natural consequence of being Christ’s. I was a citizen of another realm, no longer who I used to be. And as E.T. illustrated way back in the 80s, people often dislike what they do not understand.

**How to Be Loved by All**

Do you expect to be liked by everyone?

Paul taught that everyone who desires to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12). He did not say, “Just the awkward, hyper-spiritual, loud-mouthed-and-lacking-love believer.” He said all. And to help us, God gave us a book full of godly, yet hated men and women pursuing righteousness.

Are you more well-liked than your Master?

No amount of winsomeness or political correctness will make us loveable to a world that crucified our Jesus, if he really is our Lord. And we shouldn’t seek to be the world’s friend: “Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). What will it take to make the world love us as its own? Compromise.
Proclaim Christ a little less; indulge a little more. Hide your light under a basket. Become less salty. Keep your faith to yourself. Warm yourself at the fires of this world, and keep it low-key. But Jesus offers a warning and a blessing to pierce the temptation to people please through compromise:

“Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.” (Luke 6:26)

“Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!” (Luke 6:22)

Beware when all speak well of you. Be surprised if no one despises your faith, your zeal, your singular devotion to Christ. Examine yourself if you never give offense to anyone. You may be seeking to receive your glory from men instead of God (John 5:44). You may be striving to please man in a way that disqualifies you from serving Christ (Galatians 1:10).

“Be surprised if no one despises your faith, your zeal, your singular devotion to Christ.”

But blessed are you when they hate and exclude you for his name’s sake. Blessed are you when haters hate, for it is evidence that you are his (John 15:19). “Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you” (1 John 3:13), but rejoice. For “it has been granted [literally, “graced”] to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” (Philippians 1:29). Endure, and you will be sons of the Most High, and your treasure will be great in heaven (Luke 6:23).

How to Respond to Haters

Expecting the antagonism of our neighbors, co-workers, and family members is one of the first steps to actually loving them. If we never expect enemies, we might spend our lives trying to make sure we don’t have enemies instead of accepting it and doing good to them anyways. But Jesus assumes the world’s hostility and commands,

“Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:35–36)

The world loves those who love them back. But when our enemies hate us — and some will — we return them good. As Charles Spurgeon quipped, kindness is our revenge. Goodness heaps hot coals on their heads (Romans 12:20), and finds a way to do it in love.

But it is hard to avenge ourselves with love when we are frantically trying to get everyone to like us. We can spend so much time trying to avoid being disliked that we never give much thought to how to respond when hate inevitably comes. We double down on our efforts to win them over, often by concealing our love for Jesus, instead of being who he has made us while doing good. God says that some will never be our friends, and he instructs us on how to respond to them: with love.
Happy to Be Hated

Carl Trueman observes, “A man without enemies is a man without honor.” Jesus says that a Christian without enemies is a servant unlike his Lord. And a man unlike Christ is not truly wise or happy.

Yet Jesus says,

“Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.” (Luke 6:22–23)

What the world excludes, God calls blessed. The one spurned, reviled, rejected, for Christ’s name, is called child. Haters are gonna hate us because they hated him first (John 15:18). But when they do, our response is not fear, sorrow, anger, or regret. It is a joy that leaps at being associated with Christ and a love that avenges their hate with kindness.

Greg Morse is a staff writer for desiringGod.org and graduate of Bethlehem College & Seminary. He and his wife, Abigail, live in St. Paul.
My name is Uttam Barat and I was born in a respectable Brahmin family, to my Father Ashok Barat, a medical Doctor and my mother Sandhya Barat. I am the oldest of 3 siblings – I have 2 younger sisters. We have been residents of Jhanjharpur Bazar, Madhubani District, Bihar. I come from an affluent and upper middle-class family, yet I chose to become a follower of Jesus Christ.

Before my encounter with Jesus Christ, in 2008, I was the Student President of Janata College. Eventually I got involved in politics, as part of the Student’s Union Organisation, affiliated with the ruling party. I was fiercely proud of my national identity as an Indian and a Hindu. In my patriotic fervor, I was involved in gang fighting, political rivalries, land mafias etc. I hated Christians and I was a feared name in my circles.

During one of our inter-group political rivalry, returning home late one night, I was ambushed and brutally attacked by group of men.

A group of men from the locality, pounced on me, brutally attacking and beating me with iron rods and sticks. I was pierced and stabbed in my stomach with an iron rod. As a last act of revenge, they held a burning fire cracker, a Rocket called ‘Seven Stars’ which exploded seven times, on to my face causing grievous burn injuries on his face. Both my eyes were completely damaged and literally came out of the sockets. My entire nervous system around my eye was severely affected. My respiratory system was full of gun powder besides the explosions affected my ears, my nose and his sight.

I lay there unconscious on the roadside, for several hours. A good Samaritan, a “Compounder”, named Shiv Kumar, who worked in my Father’s clinic, found me and took me to my home. After first aid, my father rushed me to the local Darbhanga Government Hospital. Seeing the severity of the injuries, they referred me to the reputed Apollo Hospital in Calcutta. After my parents deposited Rs. 50,000/-, I was rushed to the
Operation Theatre for surgery. However, after removing the bandages and estimating the extent of my injuries, the Hospital Authorities shifted me to Rabindranath Tagore Hospital in Calcutta, a 24-hour journey by train.

I was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit for over several months, after restorative surgery, with no major improvements. With the rising costs, my parents had to spend all their earnings and savings for my upkeep and hospitalization. Confronted with ongoing expenses, they also began selling their assets.

One day, my mother overheard a team of emotionally detached Doctors who had just examined me, indifferently discuss my case. Unaware that my mother was overhearing their conversation, they shared the pessimistic views that I was a hopeless case as my condition was deteriorating steadily. Everything that could be medically done for me, was exhausted. The negativity was barely repressed.

On hearing the prognosis, my demoralized mother, started visiting all the major temples and holy places, praying for my complete recovery. Parallely, my brother in law, Simantu Dutta, a believer in Jesus Christ, began telling me to have faith in Jesus Christ, as nothing was impossible with Him.

Simantu shared how Jesus was the Son of God and a miracle healer, who was raised up from being dead, after 4 days. Joining Simantu was Pastor Nandkumar Majhe, who had heard the about my situation and began to fast and pray for my total recovery. Pastor Majhe also shared the good news about Jesus Christ with my family members too.

Clutching at straws, my mother, out of desperation, cried out to this unknown God saying:

This deep, human cry of broken spirit, made from a sincere seeking, desperate heart - the merciful and compassionate God, Jesus Christ, responded to her prayers.

The very same night, I was moved out from the ICU. However, other complications developed and I become totally blind. Though I was physically healed, the Doctors told my parents that I will never see again.

But my mother was unshakeable. She had seen the miraculous hand of God heal me. Full of faith, she told the Doctors:

“The Lord who took my son out of ICU will heal the eyes also”.

I had many volunteers from my village, willing to donate their eyes for me. Such was my popularity and charisma. After examination, it was diagnosed that my body could not accept a transplant because of the badly damaged
nervous system.

Totally blind, the second state was worse than the first. I had to depend on everything, including answering ‘nature’s call’, on my mother. As much as I love my mother, it was extremely embarrassing and humiliating. To imagine that a man of my stature could be reduced to being blind and dependent on others, was disgraceful to me. I began to contemplate taking my own life to end this nightmare.

I was aware that my father used to discard expired medicines in a particular place. I decided to find them and eat them to kill myself. I plotted and planned for many days, on how I would do this. Finally, when the opportunity permitted and I was on the verge of swallowing the pills, I heard an audible divine voice:

“Don’t take your life. I have died for you; I will heal you”

It was a simple faith encounter with the living God. I did not attempt to understand, rationalize or explain what I heard. I simply believed, accepted it and wanted to follow this Jesus. That evening, I did not change my religion. God changed my heart.

The next Saturday, I decided to go the Church of Pastor Nandkumar Majhe. During Worship Service, prayers were offered up for sick people. Pastor, while praying, asked that we place our hands on the place where we need healing. Confidently, I placed my hands over both my eyes. Instantly, miraculously, I was healed! Hallelujah! Praise God for His faithfulness! He is a promise keeping God.

My parents were delighted yet shocked at the healing that they rushed me back to Rabindranath Tagore Hospital, which had certified that my sight could never be restored during my life time. I went back, armed with the same certificate and showed them that God had miraculous healed me. The bewildered Doctors had no scientific explanation for my healing but I know that nothing is impossible with my God.

It is now over 10 years since I gave my life to Jesus. I have developed an intimate and deep relationship with Him and believe that He is the pure and sinless Son of a Holy God. I pray to Him every day, I talk to Him about my dreams, my ministry, my family, my life and I know He leads me on.

How can I not tell my friends about Him? If they want to listen and wish to follow this Jesus, let them come. I will never force or induce or pay anyone to become a Christian. But I have a right to practice my faith and speak about it without deception.

Today, I am married to my wife Nikkee Kumari, who has completed ‘Bachelor of Divinity’ from Senate Serampore College, West Bengal. I have 2 children, a son Joy who is 2 ½ years old and a daughter Aradhana who is 9 months old. I am serving my Lord as Pastor’s Coordinator, with a Bible College. It is my passion and mission to help my co-workers in the field, as and when they face persecution of any kind.

I am so grateful for this wonderful, abundant life, of knowing Jesus. I thank God every day, for calling me out from the darkness into His marvelous light.
IN MEXICO, PASTOR BRACES FOR DEATH BUT GOD DOES THE MIRACULOUS AUGUST 17, 2018 BY LINDY LOWRY

In Mexico (#39 on the World Watch List), persecution against church leaders and their churches is on the rise. The ongoing struggle against organized crime affects all Mexicans, but especially the most vulnerable groups in rural areas, including minority Christian denominations.

A church pastor (name withheld) from the Mexican border city of Juarez thought they might be the last words he would hear, staring point blank into a gun barrel.

The hitman had entered the home of the church leader intent on carrying out his assignment. As the pastor knelt on the floor, he heard the man pull the trigger. Miraculously, the gun failed to fire.

PAKISTAN: WHAT DOES ELECTION RESULT MEAN FOR CHRISTIANS?

Imran Khan’s election victory has caused concern among Pakistani Christians because of his support for Sharia and the blasphemy laws.

Former cricket star Khan (65) is poised to become prime minister after his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party won 116 out of 272 seats contested in the National Assembly elections (he is pictured speaking to media after casting his vote at a polling station in Islamabad). As his party did not win an outright majority, Khan will lead a coalition government, with the oath-taking ceremony scheduled for 11 August.

Following his career as a celebrity cricket captain and socialite, Khan has become increasingly devout and conservative, favouring Sharia and backing the blasphemy laws.

Before the election, a Pakistani Christian leader told Open Doors: “Many Christians fear Imran Khan as the country’s leader as he has said he wants to return to jirga, a traditional assembly of leaders that make decisions by consensus and according to the teachings of Pashtunwali – a series of non-written ethical codes which predate modern laws and which prove a dangerous mix in combination with Sharia, the strict Islamic law.”
ERITREA: FIVE CHRISTIANS ARRESTED, OTHERS IN HIDING

The signing of a peace agreement in July by Ethiopia’s new Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki raised hopes that human rights in Eritrea would begin to improve. Since then, however, at least five Pentecostal Christians have been arrested in the capital, Asmara, and several other Christians have gone into hiding. They had gone to the airport to welcome a visiting Ethiopian preacher.

Ethiopian Airlines resumed flights to Eritrea on 18 July, with well-known Ethiopian Pentecostal evangelist Pastor Surafiel Demissie on the first flight. He was travelling to visit a group of evangelicals, and is pictured preaching an informal sermon on a street in Asmara.

A church leader in Eritrea told World Watch Monitor: “Don’t think the government is changing. Yes, there are a few improvements. We are able at least to know where believers are being jailed. Their families and parents can send food to prisons. But, that doesn’t mean everything has changed. We continue to meet secretly, and the surveillance is still in place.”

IRAN: NASER NAVARD GOL-TAPEH WRITES LETTER TO THE AUTHORITIES FROM PRISON

Christian prisoner Naser Navard Gol-Tapeh has written an open letter to the Iranian authorities asking how his house church activities could be seen as anti-state.

Naser was admitted to Evin Prison in January 2018 to begin serving a ten-year sentence for “acting against national security through the formation and establishment of an illegal church organisation in his home”. He had been arrested in June 2016 at an engagement party held by Christians near the capital, Tehran, and was sentenced in May 2017, losing his appeal in November 2017.

In his letter, which is reproduced in full below, Naser asks, “Would it be even possible for a committed Christian – who was born and raised in Iran and whose forefathers lived in this land for thousands of years, and who is a servant to the God who has called him to a ministry of reconciliation – to act against the national security of his own country?”
Abigail is an interesting woman who we meet in 1 Samuel chapter 25. Like several women in the Old Testament, Abigail is described as beautiful. Unlike most other women in the Old Testament, Abigail is also described as “intelligent” (NAB, NIV, TEV), or “clever” (NRSV), or “of good understanding” (KJV, ASV), etc. Beautiful and clever Abigail was married to a wealthy man, and she may have enjoyed the benefits of an affluent lifestyle, but her rich husband Nabal was foolish, intemperate, and mean.

Abigail’s name is derived from two Hebrew words, “father” and “happiness”, and means “my father’s happiness”. She may have been the cause of happiness in her father’s house, but Abigail’s marriage cannot have been a happy one. Nabal’s name is a Hebrew word that means “foolish” or “senseless”. As an adjective, nabal is sometimes used of people who have no perception of ethical or religious claims. It’s an apt name for Abigail’s husband who typifies such behaviour.

Nabal had not taken due notice of David and his men who had been protecting his shepherds. When his camp started to run out of food, David sent ten messengers to Nabal. The messengers told Nabal about how they had been protecting his shepherds and they asked for provisions, but Nabal refused them. He even screamed at them (1 Sam. 25:14 NLT). Nabal’s actions deeply insulted David, and David responded by preparing for a slaughter (1 Sam. 25:13, 22).
ABIGAIL’S ACTIONS

Abigail was the able mistress of an extensive household. A servant told her how Nabal has insulted and dishonored David, and he informed her of the danger they now faced. Her servants, both male and female, promptly helped Abigail in her decisive plan to placate David.

Abigail was not just intelligent and beautiful, she was also brave. It would have been no mean feat to confront David and four hundred of his men who had been dishonored and were intent on revenge with their swords at the ready. Yet Abigail approached David and, with great diplomacy, humbly offered him a “peace offering”. She gave David and his men plenty of food. Her quick actions saved her household from disaster and kept David and his men from unnecessary bloodshed.

Abigail was a smart, strong, young woman who helped her husband by going against his wishes.

Abigail was also brave considering that her actions would be found out by her husband, and then she would have to face his violent temper. The next day, Abigail told Nabal everything that she had done. Thankfully, God spared her from Nabal’s wrath. Nabal immediately has some kind of heart attack and died ten days later from heart failure. Because of his mean, stubborn and perverse character, Nabal had failed to have a true appreciation of who David was. But Abigail knew who David was. She knew that he was an outlaw on the run from King Saul, and she spoke eloquently and prophetically about David and his future reign as king of Israel. Her speech is one of the longest speeches of a woman recorded in the Old Testament. Here is an excerpt:

“The Lord your God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord, because you fight the Lord’s battles, and no wrongdoing will be found in you as long as you live. Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my lord will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord your God, but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling. When the Lord has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him ruler over Israel my lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the Lord your God has brought my lord success, remember your servant.” 1 Samuel 25:28-31 (NIV)

David did remember Abigail. After Nabal’s death, he seems to have lost no time in asking her to become his wife. It is not clear whether David sought this marriage because of his attraction to Abigail or if it was for political reasons, but he certainly admired her. Abigail became David’s third wife and she bore David’s second son Chileab (2 Sam. 3:3). (Her son is called Daniel in 1 Chronicles 3:1.)
ABIGAIL’S SUBMISSION

I remember being confused about the story of Abigail when I was younger. I had been taught that wives are to submit to their husbands in everything—after all, that’s what Paul says in Ephesians 5:24. Moreover, women were supposed to revere and respect their husbands as leaders, and certainly not say anything bad about them. But here was a Bible woman who went behind her husband’s back and did something she knew he wouldn’t approve of. And she even announces her husband’s faults to David:

“My lord should not pay attention to this wicked man Nabal. He simply lives up to his name! His name means ‘fool,’ and he is indeed foolish!” 1 Samuel 25:25 (NIV)

Despite defying her husband and saying negative things about him, Abigail is commended for her actions. Furthermore, David recognizes that Abigail was sent by God.

David said to Abigail, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day . . .” 1 Samuel 25:32-33 (NIV)

In fact, Abigail is an ideal wife. She didn’t submit to her husband’s stupidity; rather she protected her husband and his interests. She took the initiative when he was unable or unwilling to act, and she even apologized for his rude behaviour.

I think much of the church has a faulty idea of submission in marriage. Biblical submission is not about blind obedience or subservience. Healthy submission is characterized by loyalty, humility, and consideration, and it seeks the greater good. Ideally, it should be mutual and reciprocal, rather than one-sided, with both husband and wife helping and serving each other.

Abigail was a smart, strong, young woman who helped her husband by going against his wishes. She initiates a potentially dangerous meeting with David and speaks with great diplomacy and insight. God used Abigail to help David and encourage him with her prophetic words. Abigail was a remarkable woman with beauty and brains.

“DAVID SAID TO ABIGAIL, “PRAISE BE TO THE LORD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL, WHO HAS SENT YOU TODAY TO MEET ME. MAY YOU BE BLESSED FOR YOUR GOOD JUDGMENT AND FOR KEEPING ME FROM BLOODSHED THIS DAY . . .” 1 SAMUEL 25:32-33 (NIV)
ADOPT A MARTYRED FAMILY

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PRAY FOR PEACE AND UNITY IN UTTAR PRADESH

Persecution Incidents recorded in Uttar Pradesh JAN - JUN'18

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SUMMARY

• In the last 7 months, Uttar Pradesh continues to rank number one among the most hostile state towards Christians

• Uttar Pradesh experienced the highest number of violent attacks against Christians in any state – 40 cases - in the first half, up to July of 2018.

• In most cases, Police are allegedly derelict in their duties, setting aside the complaints filed by actual victims, instead registering complaints filed by the Hindu militants

• Innocent Christians, in addition to beatings and trauma, also undergo imprisonment for days to weeks until the prosecution finds some solid evidence against them

• Law enforcement agencies are increasingly being used by the state to stop and disrupt worship in Churches

PRAYER POINTS

• Pray that the communal mindset will be crushed in Jesus’ name

• Pray that the partisan and discriminatory attitude against minorities will be erased in Jesus’ name

• Pray that Christian Persecutors will be transformed 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 Yogi Adityanath, his cabinet, and the bureaucrats
In the Beatitudes, Jesus tells His disciples, in Matthew 5, what kind of people God wants us to be. Jesus’ statement is a call to go beyond what is expected.

Going the extra mile” is a popular phrase from the Beatitudes teachings of Jesus: “If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles” (Matthew 5:41).

Jesus’ statement is often understood as a call to go beyond what’s expected. But originally there was much more to it. It was a challenge to show love instead of taking personal vengeance.

Back in Jesus’ day, Roman soldiers could lawfully force able-bodied civilians to carry their gear (which could weigh upwards of 100 pounds) for one mile. It was unfair, inconvenient, and often backbreaking. Jesus encouraged His followers to respond in a new and unexpected way, one that would reflect the generous love of God’s kingdom instead of unlawful resistance (Matthew 5:39) or revenge.

Carrying a soldier’s pack, a second mile might seem outrageous, but that’s often what it takes to turn the tables lovingly on our enemies. It’s a powerful and hopeful way to respond, one that reflects the new life of God’s coming kingdom. And it’s one of countless ways to emulate the gracious love of our “Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:45,48)

No one, really, expects you to go the extra mile. Except for Jesus. No one expects you to go beyond what is expected or required. No one expects you to do more than what you have to do, with complete selflessness, with no regard for yourself. No one really expects you to love enemies, and to pray for those who persecute you.

Except Jesus. Because Jesus knew that going the extra mile is incredibly powerful, that there is a great spiritual power at work there.

Martin Luther King, Jr., when he was in jail, he often befriended his jailers. He never showed anger toward them, but treated them as fellow humans, caught up in a society of injustice; humans who, no matter their race, needed freedom from oppression.

Apostle Paul, when he was in jail, likewise befriended jailers. Once, when God caused an earthquake that damaged a prison to the extent that Paul and the other prisoners could easily escape, they instead remained there with the guard, knowing that their escape would mean death for the guard. Awed by their willingness to go the extra mile for him, the guard who was keeping them prisoner, the guard fell one his knees, and, trembling,
asked them how he could find salvation and wholeness in his life. Paul shared with him the news about Jesus, and brought joy into that jailer’s heart.

Jesus always overcame evil with good. Evil had no power over Him, because He was always rooted in doing good. Jesus is our role model. We cannot do it on our own strength, we will surely fail. We need to emulate Jesus and the way He reacted to His enemies. This has been the secret of every great man of God in the history of the church - THEY WERE TAKEN UP WITH THE PERSON OF CHRIST HIMSELF, AND NOT WITH HIS BLESSINGS OR HIS GIFTS. Thus, they entered into a life of rest in the midst of a world full of turmoil and strife.

I want to challenge you – if Jesus expected us to go the extra-mile for an unbeliever, how much more would his expectation from you and me be, towards a member of the family of Christ?

In our present context, Jesus expects us to go that extra mile –to help the Persecuted Church in India. Even today, disciples of Jesus are being tortured and persecuted for His Name in many lands.

To whom much is given, much is required. We have a Christian duty to serve each other, to encourage one another, carry burdens for others, and pray for each other. It is not a choice, but the Bible mandates it. Nobody should have to walk alone in the valley of being burdened. We need to walk with others and share in and lighten the heavy load many carry on their shoulders. God’s grace can be seen in action as we demonstrate our faith. Service is the embodiment of Christian love toward others.

**THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS YOU CAN WALK THAT EXTRA MILE**

- Make a phone call to the persecuted brethren; counsel, encourage and pray with them
- Visit the persecuted family in your neighbourhood; break bread with them, pray for them
- Encourage your congregation to speak about Christian Persecution and encourage them to pray for them, for courage and boldness that they stand faithful in the battle grounds.
- Share stories of Christian Persecution on Social Media to spread awareness of the atrocities against the Church – to propel the Church to fast and pray.
- Find out the needs of the Persecuted brethren and help them according to their requirements
- Pray for the Persecutors.

What a different place India would be if we all as Christians would rise up and perform our duty as diligently as the Bible commands. Be encouraged that it is not too late to serve God and others to the fullness of your duty. For if you do not take do your duty, who will?
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US STATE DEPARTMENT HOSTS A FIRST-EVER MINISTERIAL ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

STATE DEPARTMENT JOINED WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES FOR THE FIRST-EVER MINISTERIAL TO ADVANCE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM. THE THREE-DAY EVENT WAS CONVENEED TO DISCUSS CHALLENGES AND IDENTIFY CONCRETE MEANS TO “PUSH BACK AGAINST PERSECUTION AND DISCRIMINATION, AND ENSURE GREATER RESPECT FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR ALL.” THE CONFERENCE INCLUDED 350 PARTICIPANTS FROM 80 COUNTRIES.
MINISTERIAL TO ADVANCE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, WASHINGTON DC, USA, JULY 24-26, 2018

MINISTERIAL TO ADVANCE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, WASHINGTON DC, USA, JULY 24-26, 2018

Mike Pence, VP of United States & Mike Pompeo, US Secretary of State

Founder speaking to the students at Southern Asia Bible College, (SABC), Bangalore, July 09, 2018

Pastor Sultan Masih

Shot Dead

First Christian Martyrdom Day of Pastor Sultan Masih, Martyred for Jesus on 15 July, 2017, Punjab

Founder meeting the persecuted Pastors

Pastor’s Conference, Uttar Pradesh, July 22, 2018

Body of Christ, Bangalore, July 10, 2018
TOLL FREE HELPLINE NUMBER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS IN INDIA

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