



Devotional Thoughts :: In the Shadow of His Cross...Our Persecuted Brothers and Sisters

In the Shadow of His Cross...Our Persecuted Brothers and Sisters , on: 2016/5/29 13:41

Sunday, May 29, 2016

"Let us be on the side of those who sit in jails and are sentenced to death for their faith. Let us pray for them and help them."

--- Richard Wurmbrand ---

Re: Of Those Persecuted, on: 2016/5/30 6:04

Monday, May 30, 2016

"The message I bring from the underground church is don't abandon us! Don't forget us! Don't write us off! Give us the tools we need! We will pay the price for using them! This is the message I have been charged to deliver to the free church. I speak for the underground church, the silenced church, the "dumb" church which has no voice to speak."

--- Richard Wormbrandt ---

"Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.

--- Dietrich Bonhoeffer---

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
For the rights of those who are destitute.
Speak up and judge fairly;
Defend the rights of the poor and needy.

--- Proverbs 31:8-9 ---

Re: Tuesday, May 31, 2016, on: 2016/5/31 4:06

I remember something to the effect below in a VOM magazine. Unfortunately I do not have the magazine now. So what is below is only a rough approximation of what I remember reading. Thus the lack of quotation marks. But here is what I remember. It made a profound impact on me.

...The Nigerian believers can not articulate the finer points of the Calvinist Arminian debates. But when a jihadist comes waving a machete and demands that they recite the Islamic shahada, but the Nigerian believers respond and say "No. Jesus is Lord." Suddenly their theology becomes very deep...

...From a VOM Medical Missionary...

Re: Tuesday, June 2, 2016, on: 2016/6/2 7:10

Somalia is a nation with less than 300 Jesus followers.. This against a backdrop of several million Muslims and the jihadist group El-shabab. Precious saints have been martyred and spilled their blood in Somalia for following Christ.

Here is a prayer request from one dear sister from that nation. Please notice her prayer request is not to be delivered from the evil that is in Somalia.

"Please pray that we may bear the weight of living for the kingdom in Somalia."

Brothers and sisters let us remember the prayer request of this dear sister. Let us remember the persecuted in Somalia

and around the world in our prayers.

Remembering those slain for the Lamb.

Re: Friday, June 3, 2016, on: 2016/6/3 6:56

"For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ"
...2 Cor.1:5

...The Apostle Paul...

This morning I learned that a brother who is a Bible translator in the Middle East lost his dear wife and two of his five children in a grenade attack launched by jihadists. This brother thought that he had his wife and children in a safe house. But evidently the jihadists found the house. And three of his family members were ushered into the presence of Jesus. The brother had a heart passion to bring the New Testament into the vernacular all the people that were on his heart.

Please keep this brother in your prayers that just as he is sharing the abundant sufferings of Jesus. This brother will also share the abundant comfort that Jesus also brings.

I forgot to add the dear brother's name is Stephen. His name is in honor of the first martyr of Jesus.

In honor of those who are slain for Jesus.

Re: Saturday, June 4, 2016, on: 2016/6/4 7:32

When asked how to pray. Believers in persecution say,

"Pray for our persecutors. That they will come to know Jesus through our sufferings. Don't pray that we be safe. Don't pray that we be out of prison. But pray that we stay true to the name of Jesus. Even if it cost us our lives."

... And now, behold, bound by the Spirit I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the Gospel of the grace of God...Acts 20:22-24

Let us also pray that our brothers and sisters will finish well the race that is set before them. That race of testifying of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to even their persecutors.

Re: Monday, June 6, 2016, on: 2016/6/6 6:38

"It is easy to die for Jesus. But it is harder to live for Jesus every day. To live for Jesus every day means you die every day."

---Pastor J from Pakistan---

If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny Himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me...Luke 9:23

---The Lord Jesus Christ---

I die daily...1 Corithiabs 15:31

---The Apostle Paul---

Re: Tuesday, June 7, 2016, on: 2016/6/7 5:15

Why do we pray for the persecuted church?

We pray because their faithfulness inspires us.

We pray because we feel their pain.

We pray because Scripture tells us to.

We pray because it strengthens the persecuted church.

We pray because they are our family.

We pray because they are our brothers and sisters.

...Source unknown...

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

...Ephrsians 6:18...

Re: , on: 2016/6/7 14:50

Because we feel we are bound with them. We are one Body.

Heb 13:3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

Re: , on: 2016/6/7 15:01

Why do we pray for the persecuted Church?

Because we love them.

... Let love of the brethren continue...Hebrews 13:1

Re: Wednesday, June 8. 2016, on: 2016/6/8 4:59

" Our prayers can go where we cannot... there are no borders, no prison walls, no doors that are closed to us when we pray."

---Brother Andrew---

A dear sister who escaped from North Korea was asked how did she endure the prison. Hiw did she endure the death camps. Her simple response was, "I felt the prayers of the saints."

The heart cry of our persecuted brothers and sisters would be along with that of the Apostle Paul,

... Remember my imprisonment... Colossians 4:18

This day may we remember those in chains. May we remember those in the shadow of the cross. May they feel our prayers this day.

Re: Thursday, June 9, 2016, on: 2016/6/8 22:31

Duplicate post.

Re: Thursday, June 9, 2016, on: 2016/6/8 22:31

Our persecuted brothers and sisters have a different understanding of living in persecution. They understand what it is to lay all down for Jesus. The following story is true. This is transcribed from a video from Voice of the Martyrs.

What Does it Mean to be a Christian in Syria?

We were praying for revival believing God would do a big work in Syria. Then the war came. Now the terrorists started attacking Christian homes, churches, and even our children. Their goal is to empty Syria of its Christians. We hate the spirit of Islam that is destroying our country. But we love our Muslim Neighbors. They come to us and say in the name of our god, terrorists rape and kill. Where is God? We tell them about Jesus. And many are coming to know Him. Still others say we are like living in hell.

Liena's Prayer

One day while I was praying. I asked God. What He would have me do to be His witness. But He only asked me, will you give me your life? As I prayed, I understood he wanted all of me. And I said yes. If the time came. I was willing to die for Jesus.

The next day while I was praying I asked God again what he would have me do. This time he asked me. Are you willing to give me your husband's life? It is not easy to be ready to die. My husband and I prayed about this together. We said yes to God.

The third day was the most difficult. On this day God asked me if I was willing to give up my children's lives. The terrorists know who we are. That we share Jesus with Muslims. It is not safe for our family. My husband and I prayed and fasted. And together we agreed God gave us our precious children. He has the freedom to take them back.

When we agreed to put our children on the altar. I knew I had to tell them the truth. I told them that it was possible men with swords may come through our door. Men who don't know Jesus. They may say bad things to us and try to force us to convert to Islam. But no matter what they say. We should not answer them. We should only tell them that Jesus loves them. That we forgive them. I told them that we might see some blood and have some pain. But it would only be for a little while. That we should just close our eyes. And that when we open them we will be with Jesus.

Am I a good mother to have to tell my children such things? I also told them that as God wants us to be safe that we will be safe. That he is in control. Even during the bloodshed. During the killing. He is carrying our future.

This is what it means to be a Christian in Syria.

Or is this what it means to be a Christian?

It is my understanding this family refused offers for asylum in Europe. After fasting and praying they believed God had called them to stay and be a witness for Jesus in Syria. I do not know if the family is still alive. They may be with Jesus. The video was posted by Voice of the Martyrs two years ago.

The video can be viewed on YouTube under Leina's Prayer. The video contains graphic content in that there are reenactments of atrocities by Jihadists. Thus the video may not be suitable for younger minds. However the video is far more powerful than the text above.

This story has been resonating in my heart all afternoon. I am questioning whether I know what it means to be a Christian in my comfortable American lifestyle. God grant that I may lay it all down as this precious family did.

"No man is a fool to give up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

... Jim Elliot, Martyred Missionary, Attempting to Reach Others for Christ...

May we keep this family and others like them in our thoughts and prayers.

Re: , on: 2016/6/9 0:47

Blaine,

Yeah, I actually played that video (among others from VOM, Open Doors, etc.) for our fellowship about 6 months or so ago when I shared from the Word & testimonies on the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

God Bless,
Jeff

Re: Friday, June 10, 2016, on: 2016/6/10 5:45

"When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die."

--- Dietrich Bonhoeffer---

Our sister Liena asked God what He would have her do to be a witness for Him. In essence she was asking God what He would have her do to be a "martyr" for Him. I do not know if this was the original intent of her prayer. But both she and her dear husband had to work out laying everything down for the Lord Jesus Christ. Even their own lives. Even that of one another. And that of their precious children.

In the Greek the word "martyr" means witness. Both words can be used interchangeably in the New Testament.

In Acts 1:8 Jesus tells his disciples that they would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. Though the disciples did not realize it at the time. Jesus was giving them a prophetic declaration that they would be His martyrs in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. History has borne that all of the Apostles save one died a violent martyr's death. They did this testifying of the Lord Jesus Christ. They died being a witness of Him.

For the last two thousand years the believing Church of the Lord Jesus Christ has shed her blood. This blood has been the seed of many coming to faith in the Lord Jesus. Tertullian writes that the blood of the martyr is the seed of the church. Jesus taught that unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains alone. But if it dies it bears much fruit.

The year 2015 saw many martyrs enter into the presence of Christ. Some even on the shores of America. Last year in February we were gripped by 21 believers in the Lord Jesus Christ shedding their blood on the shores of Libya.

Last summer, 12 members of a ministry team were horribly martyred by ISIS. A father had to endure the pain and agony of watching his 12 year old son having his fingernail tips cut off. Then being horribly beaten and later martyred. All to get the father to renounce his faith in Christ. Two sisters were taken to another location and horribly violated. All the while the sisters were praying for their persecutors to know Jesus. All the while the sisters were telling the persecutors we forgive you. All of this made the persecuted even more angry. All the members of the ministry team were eventually martyred not having denied their faith in Jesus. All of them confessing His name in the end.

That day when 21 believers died. They died with the name of Jesus on their lips. That day the enemy was defeated and Jesus got the victory.

That day when 12 members of a ministry team were martyred. Satan was defeated. And Jesus got the victory.

This has been the testimony of the church down through the ages. The persecuted church is not a defeated church. But it is a victorious church. For it is a church that has overcome Satan because of the blood of the Lamb, because of the word of their testimony, and because they did not love their life even when faced with death.

At the end of Leina's prayer she says this is what it means to be a Christian in Syria. The video then asks a question of us. Is this what it means to be a Christian for us in other parts of the world? Are we called to take up our cross and to lay it down for Jesus? Are we called to be a martyr for Jesus?

Brother Blaine

Re: Saturday, June 11, 2016, on: 2016/6/11 6:41

.. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed, perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always caring about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you...2 Cor. 4: 7-11.

I heard a brother from a restricted nation say that it is easy to die for Christ in an instant. But the challenge for the persecuted church is to continually live for Christ. For the persecuted believer must die daily with the constant threat of persecution as a reality of his everyday life. Thus the persecuted believer must die to the expectations of saving his own life. Realizing that each day his life is in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. Each day could very well be his last day on earth.

This brother went on to remark that he must treat each day as if it were his last day on earth. Which given the nation he comes from could very well be the case. Thus he tries to live each day reaching as many people for the Lord Jesus Christ as he can.

... For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain...Phil. 1:21

... I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me...Gal. 2:20

My brothers and sisters are we living each day as if it were our last day on earth?

Brother Blaine

Re: - posted by billy1980 (), on: 2016/6/11 14:18

Brother Blain, thankyou for posting these truths.

Re: Bilky , on: 2016/6/11 19:17

Brother you are most welcome. I pray this thread continues to be a blessing to you and to others who read it. Initially it was meant to be a collection of quotations and scriptures to draw awareness to the persecuted church. But as I started sharing on the thread I realized the persecuted were speaking to my heart. Thus I have tried to convey what they were saying to me here on this thread.

So anyway my brother you are most welcome and pray the thread will continue to be a blessing to you and others. But I do pray that it will draw attention to our persecuted brothers and sisters. And also raise more awareness and prayer on their behalf. But I also pray this thread will be their voice to us. And what they would say to us in the midst of their sufferings.

Brother I have no pipeline to the persecuted. Thus what I hear is how they speak to my heart in the midst of their sufferings. And in a sense I think that they are speaking to all of our hearts.

My brother much grace and blessing be upon you from Jesus.

Re: Sunday, July 11, 2016, on: 2016/6/12 6:44

...So death works in us, but life on you...2 Corinthinians 4:10

A brother once remarked to me that one hour spent in the presence of someone who has undergone persecution will expose the shallowness of our Western Christian faith. Recently I had the blessing of meeting a pastor from the front lines of a restricted nation. Being in his presence I have found this to be true. This simple man's faith put my Western-style Christianity to shame.

As we read about the persecuted in times past and present. Indeed on those rare occasions when we meet them. We find that our western style Christian faith is indeed put to shame because we have is a head knowledge of Jesus. But somehow very little heart knowledge of Him.

But I have found that there is another side of meeting a persecuted brother or sister. Or reading about such. We see in them a life. Like that which manifests the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. There's something in their Christ centered lives that calls out to hungry hearts in the West. There is something in the lives of persecuted brothers and sisters that hungry hearts in the west long for. I believe what those hungry hearts are longing for is more of an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ.

As death works in the lives of our persecuted brothers and sisters. As they lay down their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ and their fragrant aroma calls out to our hearts. Their fragrant aroma is speaking life to us that long for more than just the mediocrity of western-style Christianity. For those remnants saints that are seeking a deeper walk With Jesus. The heart knowledge of Jesus, the persecuted brothers and sisters have, calls out for us to have that same relationship with Him.

And indeed we can have that same relationship with Him. But it requires the same cost that our brothers and sisters in restricted nations pay. And the cost is a cross. Paul, and our persecuted brothers and sisters, would echo Philippians 3:10-11,

... that I may know him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, in order that I made it to the resurrection from the dead...

Paul wrote the above verse as he was in one of the Nero's jails in Rome. Yet even in the fellowship of the sufferings of Jesus. Paul cried out for more of Him. Our brothers and sisters in the midst of their sufferings cry out for more of Jesus. And something of their cries echo in our hearts that we want more of Jesus. We want more of Jesus as they want more Jesus. But to have more of Jesus will require us to pay a price. And that price will be to lay it all down for Him. But is He

not worth counting all things as loss for the surpassing value to know Him.

The persecuted church thinks such. That in the midst of their sufferings they want more of Jesus. Indeed let that be the cry of our heart. To want more of Jesus. Even the price that we pay will be well worth it. For this is what our persecuted brothers and sisters are praying for us. This is what their sacrifice is speaking to us. Their prayers and sacrifice at the cross are speaking life into our hungry hearts.

Lord Jesus as our persecuted brothers and sisters cry out for more of You. Let that also be the cry of our hearts this day. Let us die to ourselves so that You may live in us. Let us die to the things of this world. So that Jesus will dwell in our hearts richly. For I ask this in your blessed name. Amen.

Re: A Further Reflection..., on: 2016/6/12 9:31

"The Lord does not call us to be masters of theology or doctrine but followers and disciples of Him."

...Brother Greg Gordon...

The above quote posted by brother Greg yesterday has really been resonating in my heart. It seems the more I camp in the fellowship of the persecuted brothers and sisters, the less important theology becomes.

Just a further thoughts for reflection.

Re: Sunday Evening, June 12, 2016, on: 2016/6/12 19:00

"The 20th century is to be pre-eminently a century of mission to the Muslims.

... Samuel Zwemher, Bahrain 1902...

An underground church planter in the Middle East was asked how he handled persecution. This was his response.

"Working for Jesus in the Middle East there are many great risk. Persecution is a part of the Christian life. So it is my honor if I can experience part of the Christian Life. Serving is my love, not my job. Serving is a grace for me. If God gives me his honor. But first God, and second the people who are going to hell, are worth it. Jesus told us that I will send you as lambs between the wolves"...

... Underground Kingdom worker in the Middle East...

The most favorite prayer to pray is the 23rd Psalm. The most popular prayer that is prayed is The Lord's Prayer. The least prayed prayer is the one found below,

... The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest..Matthew 9:37-39

My brothers and sisters why are we not praying this prayer above? For that matter why are we not going to the Harvest?

Re: Monday Morning, June 13, 2016, on: 2016/6/13 5:07

... I also say to you that you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it...Matthew 16:18

... Behold I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves... Matthew 10:16

A church worker in the Middle East comments that sheep are dumb animals. They do not know any better.

It just occurred to me this morning that Jesus is using us dumb sheep to build his church. When one thinks on this it is pretty scary. Yet in parts of the world this is known as the persecuted church. :-)

The other amazing scary thing is. It will be the sheep that will overcome the wolves. That should cause us a step back and wonder at the marvelous wisdom of God. At His marvelous wisdom of how He is building His church. This we call the persecuted church.

... Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!... Romans 11:33

To God be the glory!

Re: Tuesday Morning, June 14, 2016, on: 2016/6/14 5:07

Brothers and sisters in persecuted nations have to ask the hard questions. They deal with questions that we believers in America have yet to deal with. The following from a church leader in the Middle East illustrate what I'm talking about.

"There are people, that our brothers and sisters that I talk to all the time. And they are very close to me. They almost feel I and in some ways even closer to me, than my natural sisters and brothers and family and immediate family. And I have to think about this saying, what if we are all together one day, and radical Muslims break our door down and they start raping all the girls in there. What what I think, and even what was crazier I went and asked one of them. What do you think or what are you going to do if a guy, not just one guy, what if they come and gang rape you? What are you going to do at that moment?

And this ex radical Muslim said to me. That now a follower, a passionate follower of Christ, a fiery follower of Christ, said. I have given up my rights. I have given up my position. I have given up everything for Jesus. I have given up my desires. I have even given up my future.

And at that moment when they come and rape me I will close my eyes and say now I offer my body as a living sacrifice for you as it just says in Romans 12:1.

And when that girl said that to me, that blew my mind. How someone can go to the secret place of their heart and find Jesus at that moment when they are getting raped and say Lord on my knees I offer you my body as a Living sacrifice.

And that's what God is doing to radical female Muslims. He is transforming them into radical insane, crazy Christians, that I mean, you can't put into words what that girl said. And how perfectly deep what she said, and how strong, and what grace must be on her life that she could say that so strongly and so confidently to say at that moment. I will picture Jesus and say now I give you my body."...

... Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship... Romans 12-1

I have heard of those dear saints offering their bodies up as sacrifices and being martyred for Christ. I never thought about this in the context of a sister being raped by Muslims. But this did happen when two sisters from a ministry team where

e horribly abused by those of ISIS. Yet these sisters kept telling their attackers they forgave them. And were praying for them in the midst all of their being horribly violated. Somehow their sacrifice was a sweet aroma to Jesus.

Re: Tuesday Evening, June 14, 2016, on: 2016/6/14 19:30

... Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma...Ephesians 5:1-2

As I continue to reflect upon the sister who said that if she was raped she would offer her body willingly as a sacrifice to Jesus. I thought of Jesus Himself on the cross. Jesus was physically beaten. He was left half naked hanging on the cross. He was humiliated. He willingly offered himself as a sacrifice for us. He did this out of love. And yet God accepted His sacrifice as a fragrant aroma. So is it any wonder that this sister would be willing to offer her body to her Savior as a fragrant sacrifice to Him.

As the brother said. This should blow our minds. And hopefully enlarge our hearts.

Re: Wednesday Morning, June 15, 2016, on: 2016/6/15 7:11

... Now there was some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; and they came to Philip, who was from Bethesda of Galilee, and began to ask him saying, "Sir we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it does, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life, loses it, but he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, He must follow Me; and where I am, there and My servant will be also; if anyone serves me, the Father will honor Him...John 12:20-26

We hear much about the marvelous miracles that God is doing in restricted nations. Muslims, in particular, are having dreams and visions that are drawing them to the Lord Jesus Christ. In nations such as Pakistan the healing of one Muslim from an incurable disease can result in 50 more coming to Christ. A Pakistani pastor commented on our call, that believers in Pakistan have been told that Muslims have to be reached with miracles. And this is happening.

I heard a pastor from Pakistan comment several years ago that a Western trained doctor when faced with a Muslim who has an incurable disease will remark to that person I cannot do anything for you. But go to the Christians they can heal you. And this testimony has been borne out time and again. Often the healings resulting in them coming to Christ.

But against this backdrop of marvelous grace that God is showing in signs and wonders to draw Muslims to Him. There is also the cross. A Muslim one day may be healed of a disease to bring them to Christ. Or a Muslim may have a dream or a vision of Jesus to bring them to Christ. May very well the next day be called to give their life for him. They may be called to lay down their lives for Jesus in the ultimate act of sacrificial love for Him.

A church planter who works in the Middle East has seen both sides of the story. Or I should say both sides of the cross. This church planter commented that he has seen those healed of diseases. He has seen those having demons driven out. He has seen people set free from the darkness of Islam. He has seen people transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the light and love of Jesus.

But then this church leader has also seen those who suffer in the shadow of the cross for Jesus. Even those unto martyrdom.

This church leader commented,

..."God's love language to us is his grace. Our love language to God is obedience. Even obedience to death"...

..."Come to Jesus and expect to be a sacrifice"...Joseph Tsom

Of Those Persecuted

Re: Thursday Morning, June 16, 2016, on: 2016/6/16 6:28

... You are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts...2 Corinthians 2:2-3

An American pastor had been invited by the Chinese underground church to come and preach to the persecuted brethren. After he preached a series of messages in one house church the congregation started singing. His interpreter told this pastor that they were singing, "We do not listen to sermons. We do not listen to sermons. We do not listen to sermons."

Needless to say the pastor was quite offended wondering why did he leave his family and his church. Why did he travel several thousand miles to preach to the underground church. Only to have them sing, "We do not listen to sermons." As these thoughts were going through the pastor's mind, his interpreter then added the second part to the song they were singing, "We are the sermon. We are the sermon. We are the sermon.." I'm pretty sure the pastor repented of his thinking after hearing the second part of that song.

There is no denying that our persecuted brothers and sisters love the word of God. I daresay they love it far better than we do in the west. And they are willing to risk their lives to own a copy of the precious scriptures. They are even willing to die for owning such a copy of the scriptures in places such as North Korea.

Men such as William Tyndale died for bringing the scriptures into the vernacular of the people.

But the persecuted church take it one step further in that the scriptures aren't something that they merely read or memorize or study. They do not have the luxury of going to seminaries or engaging in online forums about esoteric theology. To the persecuted church the scriptures are the Word of Christ Himself.

To brothers and sisters in restricted nations the Word of God is Christ himself dwelling in them. They take the scriptures and incarnate the Word of God into their hearts. That's why the Chinese house church believers can sing "We do not listen to sermons. We are the sermon."

To the persecuted Church the Word of God is the Christ himself living in their hearts. They take the word of God and memorize and meditate on it to where it gets into their core being. And thus they become that living letter of Christ. They become those vessels of authentic Christianity.

There's been a lot of give-and-take in the Forum lately of the authority of scriptures. There have been debates over which translation is the most superior to use in one's walk with Christ. Our persecuted brothers and sisters would say to us in the West. Are you abiding in the Word of God? Are you abiding in Christ? Jesus is the Word of God.

Only by abiding in Christ and His word abiding in them do the persecuted endure. On then by us abiding in Christ and His word abiding in us will we endure what is yet to come.

I believe our persecuted brothers and sisters would pray this prayer out of Psalm 119:17,

Deal bountifully with your servant,
That I may live and keep your word (Jesus)

Brothers and sisters let that be our prayer today also.

...Of Those Persecuted...

Re: Friday Morning, June 17th, 2016, on: 2016/6/17 6:27

Job 23:12

I have not departed from the command of His lips,
I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.

Believers in Eritrea are imprisoned in shipping containers. These are basically metal coffins that are hot in the day and cold at night. They have very little ventilation. Some of our brothers and sisters have died in these metal coffins.

There's a brief time during the day when the doors of these containers are open so that those imprisoned may go to the toilet facilities. There's a welcome breath of fresh air. But there will be some saints who will quickly pull out scraps of paper and read them real quickly. These scraps of paper contain precious scriptures. These scraps of paper are circulated from believer to believer. These are the words of life that believers cling to to give them hope in the terrible conditions in which they endure.

These scraps of paper become more precious to the believers than even their physical food, what little they get. The scraps of paper contain the Living Word to sustain those in prison for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Let us remember those in prison for their faith in Jesus Christ. Let us pray that they have access to the Living Word. Let us pray for those believers that meditate on the verses on those scraps of paper lodge in their heart to strengthen and encourage them in the trials in which they endure. Let us remember those imprisoned in Eritrea in our prayers. And those in prison for their faith in Christ around over the world.

...Of Those Persecuted...

Re: Friday Evening, June 17th, 2016, on: 2016/6/17 20:49

... Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord...
1 Peter 2:1-2

I have seen in the VOM magazine pictures of North Korean believers who will be huddled under a cover reading the word of God. They may have a small candle or perhaps a penlight. They cover themselves so as to not attract the attention of the secret police. For to own a copy of scriptures in North Korea is punishable by imprisonment or even death. If a believer in North Korea is imprisoned. Two other generations of his family will also be imprisoned. That would be their parents, themselves, and their children. Yet North Korean believers are willing to risk even their lives to own a copy of the precious word of God.

Even in Eritrea. If a believer is caught in the shipping container possessing one of the scriptures on the slips of paper mentioned this morning. They could be beaten and tortured.

There are elderly saints in China who have never owned a copy of the word of God. When these dear saints receive their first Bible. Tears will fill their eyes and they will hug and caress that Bible as if it were gold itself. Indeed this is the precious word of God that is more precious than gold.

Persecuted brothers and sisters value of the word of God perhaps far more than we do in the West. We have Bible translations and Bible apps. But the question is how much time do we spend in the word of God. It seems that we spend far more time debating which translation of the word of God is to be used. Or spend far more time debating the contents of the word of God than in reading it.

I have read of fellowships in the Middle East. These precious Believers may have only the New Testament. Ywt their New Testaments will be well-worn. Almost falling apart. A testimony to the believer who has diligently read and hungered for that word.

Brothers and sisters let us pray that the persecuted will have access to the word in both the written and digital form. Let us pray that they will have access to the word in the oral form. Let us pray that the word of God will penetrate the darkness that the persecuted find themselves in. Let us pray that the persecuted will be strengthened by Him who is the word. Let us also pray that we will hunger for the word as they do.

..... Of Those Persecuted.....

Re: Saturday Morning, June 18, 2016, on: 2016/6/18 4:24

... He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of God... Revelation 19:13

John MacArthur shares about an experience in England. His host showed him a martyr's Bible. These were Bibles that were dipped in the blood of slain saints. Those who had been slain for the word of God and their faith in Jesus. Those who had been slain because of the testimony they had maintained. Even being faithful to death. Many of these saints probably were slain during the reign of her who was called Bloody Mary.

As John MacArthur picked up the Bible reverently. He saw that this Bible had been used. The pages were dog-eared and tear stained. And he saw that the blood of one precious saint covered this Bible. I cannot help but wonder if the fragrance of Christ still rested on that Bible.

We do not know if this saint was a brother or a sister. Only Jesus knows. But this precious one sealed their faith in Christ with their own blood. Their Bible bore witness to that.

Those who persecuted and martyred the English saints would often dip their Bibles in the blood of the slain as an insult. But later these Bibles became prized as Martyrs Bibles.

As I thought of the above account shared by our brother, I thought of the verse in Revelation 19:13. His name is called the Word of God and He has a robe dipped in blood. I realize the context is probably the blood of the enemies of Jesus.

But as I meditate upon the verse in the account shared by John MacArthur. I wonder too if the robe of Jesus that is dipped in blood would be in the blood of his precious martyrs. Those who have been slain down through the ages for the testimony they have born for Him.

Brothers and sisters let us remember the martyrs this day. Of those who were slain in times past. Of those who are slain even this day. Let us remember those witnesses of Jesus.

.....Of Those Persecuted.....

Re: - posted by brothagary, on: 2016/6/18 7:37

Probably not blain ...

2Why is Your apparel red,
And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press?

3And I have trodden the wine trough alone,
And from the peoples there was no man with Me.
I also trod them in My anger
And trampled them in My wrath;
And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments,
And I stained all My raiment.

Re: Continuing Today's Post, on: 2016/6/18 9:10

... Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus so that if he found any belonging to the way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem...Acts 9:1-2

... So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. So this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punish them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being seriously enraged at that, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities...Acts 27:9-12

... As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul Saul why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,"...Acts 9:4-5

There is a prophetic spiritual sense in which the robe of Jesus is dipped in the blood of His martyrs. When Saul was persecuting the believers in Christ. He thought he was persecuting a cult that was hostile to Judaism. But when Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. Saul realized he was persecuting Jesus Himself.

The persecuted church is the bride of Christ. Down through the centuries Jesus has been intimately and spiritually linked to His persecuted bride. Thus when saints are persecuted by Islamic extremists or those in North Korea or Eritrea, those who persecute the saints are persecuting Jesus.

This is why I believe that His robe dipped in blood can very well be the blood of His martyrs.

..... Of Those Persecuted.....

Re: Saturday Evening, June 18, 2016, on: 2016/6/18 18:07

Brother Andrew remarked that Foxes Book of Martyrs is not filled with accounts of people who sat in the church pew and died of a heart attack.

.....Of Those Persecuted.....

Re: Sunday Morning, June 19, 2016, on: 2016/6/19 9:30

... So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and SAT DOWN at the right hand of God...Mark 16:19

... When he had made purification of sins, He SAT DOWN at the right hand of the Majesty on high...Hebrews 1:3

... who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has SAT DOWN at the right hand of the throne of God...Hebrews 12:3

... but being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus STANDING at the right hand of God; and he said, "Behold I see the heavens opened up and the son of man STANDING at the right hand of God."...Acts 7:54-55

...CAPS are for emphasis and highlight only...

When we think of Jesus Christ and His kingly rule we think of him sitting at the right hand of the throne of God. Indeed in the passages out of Mark and Hebrews Jesus is declared to be sitting at the right hand of the throne of God. He did this

by virtue of the fact that not only is he the Son of God and God himself. But also that he had conquered death. He will continue to sit at the right hand of the throne of God until His enemies are made his footstool. And even when we behold Him in heaven he will still be sitting at the right hand of the throne of God. At least that is my insight.

But we see one instance in the book of Acts where Stephen sees Jesus **STANDING** at the right hand of God. As far as I can tell this is the only instance in which Jesus is standing. And one cannot help but wonder why is Jesus standing as Stephen was about to be martyred?

To stand in the presence of someone is considered a sign of respect. For example, when the President of the United States walks into a room, people will stand in respect for the President. Though they may not like the guy himself. It is the office that they stand in respect of.

I grew up in the south where I was taught that when a woman came into the room I was to stand out of respect for her when meeting her. Also when I am on the bus and a lady came on the bus and the bus was crowded. I was taught to be polite and standing in respect of her and offer her my seat. Granted these old southern traits have now died out.

It was said when King George of England heard Handel's Messiah that he was so moved he stood during the Hallelujah Chorus. This was so unusual that the king never stood in the presence of anyone. But sat reflecting his royal authority. Yet he said that he recognised a greater sovereign above even Himself. This is where the tradition of standing during Handel's Messiah comes from. Or so tradition tells us.

In the Old Testament when the law was read the people stood out of respect for the reading of the word. Some churches are starting to return to this practice. Again standing is a sign of respect. A sign of respect for God and His word.

I share the above to offer this insight. Is it possible that Jesus was standing out of respect for the martyrdom that Stephen would undergo? Is it possible that Jesus was standing out of respect for the first martyr of the church?

Brothers and sisters simply my insight.

..... Of Those Persecuted.....

Re: Saturday Evening, June 19, 2016, on: 2016/6/19 19:02

... Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and yielded no crop...Mark 4:7

... And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful...Mark 4:18-19

Pastor Samuel Lamb, one of the early house church leaders in the Chinese church made a profound remark. He said, "We in China know who our enemy is. But do you in America know who your enemy is." By this the brother was referring to the fact that the Chinese church knew their enemy were the communist. For to follow Christ in China during the time of the Communist takeover certainly meant death. And to this day could mean torture and imprisonment.

But he speaks to the church in America. Do we in America know who our enemy is? No it is not Barack Obama or the liberal humanist. Our enemy is far more subtle. Our enemy is materialism. This is the enemy that has seeped into the American Church. This is the enemy that renders the word ineffective in our midst. I believe it was Joseph Tson who made this statement,

... Take 100 Christians and put them in a persecuted nation, 90 will stand. Take 100 Christians and put them in America, 10 will stand...

Earlier today I was speaking with a sister. We were talking about the persecuted church. She made this profound statement

ent,

... The persecuted have nothing but Jesus. We in America have everything but Jesus...

A few nights ago we had a brother from Pakistan on our call. This brother shared with us how they had very little in terms of the world's goods. But this brother shared that they had Jesus and had seen His power working in their midst.

I remember hearing a story about a humble monk. This monk had journeyed to Rome to see a friend who was a cardinal. The cardinal was pretty high up in the Vatican. He invited the monk to come visit the Vatican. As the monk met the cardinal. The cardinal showed him all the papal treasures of Rome. Then the Cardinal said to the monk, "My brother no longer will the church have to say silver and gold have I none." To which the monk humbly replied, "But my brother can the church say in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."

Saints the following story is not an endorsement of Roman Catholicism. But only serves to illustrate a truth. I hear stories and read reports about how God is working in signs and wonders among the persecuted brethren who have nothing but Jesus. We in America have everything but Jesus. The persecuted can say in the name of Jesus rise up and walk. Can the American church say the same thing?

..... Of Those Persecuted.....

Re: , on: 2016/6/19 19:16

I don't ever recall Richard Wurmbrand ever say the Communists were his enemy.

Pastor Lamb says communism is the enemy of the Chinese church? Because the Communists want to bring death to Christians?

Ask yourself who wants to bring death to Christians in the West.

Re: Monday Morning, June 20, 2016, on: 2016/6/20 7:24

... But whatever things were gain to me, these things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ... Philippians 3:7-8

..."The persecuted have nothing but Jesus, we have everything but Jesus."...A dear Christian sister in the forum.

The above statement made by our sister has been resonating in my heart. She has captured the spirit of our persecuted brothers and sisters. Much like the Apostle Paul the persecuted have lost everything. But in the process of losing everything they have gained Jesus. Much like the Apostle Paul the persecuted who have had a radical encounter with Jesus will lay down everything to follow Him. Much like the Apostle Paul the persecuted will follow Jesus even to death.

I think the following words in that beautiful worship song by Fernando Ortega captures the heart and soul of our persecuted brothers and sisters and their desire for Jesus. For sure this would be their prayer. May this be our prayer.

In the morning when I rise.
In the morning when I rise.
In the morning when I rise.

Give me Jesus.
Give me Jesus.
Give me Jesus.
You can have all this world. But give me Jesus.

As we think of our brothers and sisters in the darkness of a prison cell or a death camp. I believe these following words by our brother Fernando Ortega would reflect their heart.

And when I am alone.
And when I am alone.
And when I am alone.
Give me Jesus.
Give me Jesus.
Give me Jesus.
You can have all this world. But give me Jesus.

And then perhaps when faced with their martyrdom. Again these words by our brother Fernando Ortega would be the prayer of the persecuted.

And when I come to die.
Oh and when I come to die.
And when I come to die.
Give me Jesus.
Give me Jesus.
Give me Jesus.
You can have all this world.
You can have all this world.
You can have all this world. But give me Jesus.

I will be ever reminded that 21 followers of Jesus died on the shores of Lybia. All 21 of them died with one name on their lips. They died speaking the name of Jesus Christ. This has been the testimony of the persecuted church for the last two thousand years. Always they died with the name of Jesus Christ on their lips.

May the persecuted believers be our example and inspiration to have nothing but Jesus.

In the shadow of His cross.

..... Of Those Persecuted.....

Re: , on: 2016/6/20 9:41

I think our greatest enemy is exactly what the Word says:

Unbelief.

Because men of faith can do all things through Christ and overcome in all things, but not if they are faithless.

Note that Paul is speaking to the BRETHREN!

Heb 3:12 Take heed, BRETHREN, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

Re:Why I retitled this thread, on: 2016/6/20 10:44

This thread was initially meant to draw attention to the persecuted church. To act as their voice in this forum. Initially I had thought to just simply post quotations that would draw attention to our persecuted brothers and sisters. This is why it was placed in the devotional section. It really was not meant to be a discussion or a debate thread. But simply to share the truth of the reality of persecution in the lives of our persecuted brothers and sisters.

But as I have shared things in the last month about our persecuted brethren in this thread. Their life, their crucified life, is speaking to my heart. Also we all are in the shadow of His cross. We all are called to pick up a cross and follow Jesus. Not just the persecuted believers. But all of us are called to live crucified lives for the Lord Jesus Christ.

... Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple...Luke 14:23

...When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die... Dietrich Bonhoeffer

... In the Shadow of His Cross...

Re: Purpose of this thread , on: 2016/6/20 10:53

Lord willing, this thread will continue to be a voice of the persecuted in this forum. This thread will continue to reflect a devotional flavor. And this thread will continue to spread the fragrance of the crucified lives of the persecuted. To speak in to our hearts.

...In the Shadow of His Cross...

Re: , on: 2016/6/20 10:53

Blaine quotes.....

"Take 100 Christians and put them in a persecuted nation, 90 will stand. Take 100 Christians and put them in America, 10 will stand..."

Interesting quote, made me think. If the 100 Christians the author was referring to were from the West to the persecuted lands of the world, I am sure the number that would stand would be much lower than 90. I do agree that if you took 100 Christians from the persecuted lands and introduced them to the materialism of the West perhaps only 10 would stand. Maybe 10 is the number both ways, I think it higher but I am not confident it would be much higher.....bro Frank

Re: Frank , on: 2016/6/20 11:03

Agree with your thoughts my brother. Not sure who it was that made the statement. I was told it might have been Josef T son. But I think the author was attempting to illustrate a point. Namely those who follow Christ in persecution are more likely to stand. They have to stand. As the only alternative would be to fall away.

We know those in persecuted nations who follow Jesus have counted the cost. As Bonhoeffer would say there is no cheap grace. Those in persecuted lands have weighed their decision. And they are willing to follow Him even unto death.

Likewise we in America live in an age of easy believism. It is easy to follow a Jesus who does not require a cross to carry. But then these are the ones who will not stand when the cross requires them to lay down their lives.

Simply my thoughts brother from the shadow of his cross.

Re: Monday Evening, June 20, 2016, on: 2016/6/20 17:09

... But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world... Galatians 6:14

There's a true story about a man and his beloved wife and two children who converted to Christ in northern India. This man had been part of a headhunting tribe. And the gospel had reached him through Welsh missionaries. Touched by the Holy Spirit the man and his family embraced the Lord Jesus. Infectious in their newfound faith they begin sharing Jesus to their friends and neighbors. Soon opposition began to arise against the man. And eventually the man and his family were brought before the Village square. They appeared in front of the village chief.

The village chief angrily demanded that the man renounce his newfound faith in Christ. Or something bad would happen to his children. The man looked at the two sons that he loved dearly. But he knew in his heart that he could never renounce Jesus. Thus the man began to sing these words,

I have decided to follow Jesus.

I have decided to follow Jesus.

I have decided to follow Jesus.

No turning back.

No turning back.

The chief became angry and ordered the archers to kill the man's sons. The arrows flew. The children's bodies were filled with arrows. They had departed into the presence of Jesus.

The chief then demanded that the man renounce Christ. Or his wife would suffer the same fate. The man looked at his beloved wife. She looked at him. They both understood that Christ could not be renounced. Then the man began to sing these words,

Though none go with me still I will follow.

Though none go with me still I will follow.

Though none go with me still I will follow.

No turning back.

No turning back.

The chief became more enraged and ordered the archers to take the man's life down. Eventually the arrows flew and the man's beloved wife was ushered into the presence of Jesus.

The chief angrily told the man to renounce Christ or he would suffer the same fate. The man looked at his family riddled with arrows. But became more resolved in his heart that he could not renounce his Lord. He then sang these words,

The cross before me, the world Behind me.

The cross before me, the world Behind me.

The cross before me, the world Behind me.

No turning back.

No turning back.

At this point the village chief was utterly stunned. Here was a man who laid down everything and would not deny his God. He would not deny his Christ. Something pierced the chief's heart. Reports later indicated that the chief convened the whole village. Because of the sacrifice of this one man and his family. The whole village turned to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the history of one of our most beloved hymns. I did not realize that this hymn was born in the blood of the martyrs.

... Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit...John 6:24

... The blood of the martyr is the seed of the church... Tertullian, Early Church Father

In the greek the word "martyr" means "witness".

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Tuesday Morning, June 21, 2016, on: 2016/6/21 5:10

... There are no limits to where prayer can take us. We can go anywhere in the world. There are no borders to cross, no visas to get, no crowded airports, and no jet lag. No place is too remote or off-limits. We can go anywhere in the spirit our God leads us... Colin Scott, Prayer Coordinator for Global Recordings.

The one thing we hear from our persecuted brothers and sisters, the one request they make more than anything else, is please pray for us. And their prayer request is not that they escape their trials. But oftentimes their request is that they will remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of their trials.

The last few months I have been using a prayer card from Voice of the Martyrs which gives 10 ways to pray for persecuted family. Lord willing, in the next 10 days I pray to share one point each day.

1. Pray that persecuted believers will sense God's presence.

... Make sure that your character is free from the love of money. being content with what you have for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU," so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME...Hebrews 13:5-6

... I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE. BECAUSE HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN...Acts 2:25

There have been accounts where imprisoned brothers and sisters have shared visions of Jesus being with them in their prison cell. There have been accounts where brothers and sisters have shared an intimate presence with Jesus Himself. Richard Wurmbrand records having visions of heaven in his jail cell. With other imprisoned believers it is simply the quiet presence of Jesus Himself that sustains them.

Let us remember this day our brothers and sisters that are in prison. Let us remember this day our brothers and sisters that are undergoing sufferings. Let us pray that in the midst of their trials they will have that deep abiding presence of Jesus Himself.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Tuesday Evening, June 21, 2016, on: 2016/6/21 20:13

... but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth...Acts 1:8

... Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; but they cried out with a loud voice and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then falling on his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord do not hold this sin against them." having said that, he fell asleep...Acts 7:54-60

When one reads the testimonies of those who have been martyred for Christ there is something surreal about the accounts. It is almost as if the martyrs were some type of superhero. They were able to face their impending death with probably no fear on their part. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. Those who were martyred for their faith were very human. And they had to work through crucifying their flesh. They had to work through laying it all down for Jesus.

A few days ago I shared the story of Leina in Syria. She had to work through laying down her life. She had to work through laying down the life of her beloved husband. And the most difficult thing any mother would have to do is work through laying down the lives of her children.

Yesterday I shared how a man touched by the Gospel of Jesus had to witness his own children and wife being martyred before his own life was taken. One can only imagine the agony this husband and father felt seeing his own family martyred before he was.

There's nothing superhuman in the martyrs. But it is Who they have Who helps them walk through the martyrdom. That person is the Holy Spirit.

I have already shared in Acts 1:8 how Jesus told his disciples that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit and have power to be His Witnesses. In essence he was telling them that they would have power to be his martyrs. In the Greek the word martyr means witness. And all of the disciples save one did die martyrs deaths. They became a witness of Christ by becoming the ultimate sacrifice and laying down their life for Christ. But they could only do this by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I have mentioned about the 21 believers who were martyred in Libya a little over a year ago. These dear saints died with the name of Jesus on their lips. They did not try to run or plead for their lives. But the Holy Spirit enabled them to accept their death with dignity. They accepted their death with the name of Jesus on their lips. Knowing that they would pass from this life into eternity.

We all are familiar with the story of Corrie Ten Boom. How she told her father that she didn't think she would have the strength to be a martyr. But her father asked her when did he give her the money to buy the train ticket to go to Amsterdam. Corrie responded when we get on the train. Of course her father told her that God would then give her the strength to be a martyr. Corrie was never martyred. But she did receive strength to endure the German prison that she was in during World War II. All because she had the Holy Spirit in her.

Persecution ministries estimated every 5 minutes someone is martyred for the Lord Jesus Christ. I have heard of courageous teams that are working in Islamic nations in the Middle East. The reports indicate that they have lost dozens of ministry workers in 2015. Some of these reports are never reported so as to not jeopardize the work that goes on in these nations. But ministry leaders have said that many of their co-workers are martyred by Islamic jihadists. The only way they endure the martyrdom is the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us remember our brothers and sisters in our prayers in persecuted nations. Let us remember to pray that they be filled with the Holy Spirit to endure the persecutions and martyrdom that they face. But let us also pray that we be filled with the Holy Spirit on a daily basis. Where as our brothers and sisters need the Holy Spirit to face the trials that they are in. We for sure will need the Holy Spirit to face the storm that will soon come upon our nation.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: , on: 2016/6/21 21:38

Bear,

I have a book you should read when you get a chance. It's from Dr Erwin Lutzer (Moody) called, "The Cross in the Shadow of the Crescent". It's very informative about Islam & their self proclaimed war/jihad with Christianity & the west, but also very evangelistically focused on what a right Biblical response should be from us & how we should seize the opportunity to be witnesses for Jesus & not give way to fear or hate. I think you would probably like it.

God Bless,

Jeff

Re: Jeff , on: 2016/6/21 22:23

Thank you brother. Lord willing I will surely check it out.

Re: , on: 2016/6/21 23:50

Sorry, did not catch that this was a devotional thread. Have removed my question.

Re: Wednesday Morning, June 22, 2016, on: 2016/6/22 6:25

2. Pray that the persecuted brothers and sisters will feel connected to the greater body of Christ.

... But now there are many members, but one body... 1st Corinthians 12:20

... And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it and if one member is honored; all the members rejoice with it.

The second way we are encouraged to pray for the persecuted church is to pray that they feel connected to the greater body of Christ. Many times the plea of our persecuted brothers and sisters is please do not forget us. Please remember us in your prayers. Please pray that we will not deny Christ in the midst of our sufferings. Please pray that we remain faithful to Him. Notice these prayers are not for deliverance from their trials and tribulations. But that the persecuted remain faithful as they carry the cross in the midst of their sufferings for Jesus.

But I would like to add to the above request this also... Pray that WE IN AMERICA would feel connected to the persecuted church.

... Remember the prisoners, as the one in prison with them, and those who are ill treated, since you yourself also are in the body...Hebrews 13:3

There is a disconnect between the American church and the persecuted church. We in America live in this bubble as if we're insulated from the realities of those who are shedding their blood for Jesus Christ. We are insulated from the realities of those who are in a death camp in North Korea or a shipping container in Eritrea.

There's a deafening silence on the part of the North American Church regarding our persecuted brothers and sisters in the rest of the world. This is why this thread has been put in this forum to be their voice.

I expect the likes of the American government to be silent on the issue of Christian persecution. But we as believers in Christ can never be silent. And the American Church must never be silent when two-thirds of our family around the world are being persecuted. If nothing else we certainly must never be silent before God in our prayers.

... now will not God bring about justice for his elect, who cry to him day and night, and will He delay long over them?... Luke 18:7

... Silence in the face of evil is evil itself; God will not hold as Guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act... Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Brothers and sisters let us not be silent in our prayers for the persecuted church. Let us be the ones who cry out justice for our His elect. Let us pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Wednesday Afternoon. June 22, 2016, on: 2016/6/22 17:45

... At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you...Philemon 1:22

As I think of the above verse I began to wonder how did Paul know that Philemon was praying for him. This was before email or cell phones. Perhaps others may have told Paul that Philemon was praying for him. But I wonder if Paul felt this brother's prayers in his spirit. Do remember that Paul was imprisoned. He probably received few visitors. So is it possible that Paul felt or even heard the prayers of Philemon.

On one of our prayer calls a few years ago a sister shared a story about a North Korean sister. The North Korean sister was one of the blessed few who endured the prisons of North Korea and was able to make her way to South Korea. When she was asked how did she endure the years of imprisonment in the death camps. She said "I heard the prayers of the saints."

In my own personal experience I remember there was a time I was facing a decision. I felt that that a sister was praying for me. A day or two later she confirmed she had been praying right at the time that I was making this decision. I found this to be very encouraging.

The New Testament does teach a spiritual unity of believers. We saw this in the verses that were posted in this morning's devotion. I believe it is possible that the persecuted do hear our prayers. Or at least sense that they are being prayed for.

Let this be an encouragement to us that we keep praying for our persecuted brothers and sisters. Just as in the case of that North Korean sister may the persecuted saints hear our prayers as we intercede for them. As Paul would say remember my chains. May we remember the chains of our persecuted brothers and sisters who indeed are in the shadow of the cross. Dear saints let us keep our persecuted family in our prayers.

From the Shadow of his cross.

Re: Thursday Morning, June 23, 2016, on: 2016/6/23 6:23

3. Pray that our persecuted brothers and sisters will experience God's comfort when their family members are killed, injured, or imprisoned for their witness.

... Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all Comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance so also our comfort is abundant through Christ... 2nd Corinthians 1:3-5

Murdered Pastor and His North Korean Legacy

Pakistani Christians Shot, Family Attacked After He asks for Pay

Catholic Priest Kidnapped in Nigeria Found Dead

Ugandan Evangelistic Preacher who Publicly Debated Muslims killed

The above are just some of the headlines I found on a website that I check on current news regarding the persecuted church. The above headlines are current having occurred within the last 3 weeks or so.

But then there are these ongoing headlines.

50 to 70 thousand Christians Still Imprisoned in Death Camps in North Korea

Approximately 3000 Christians Imprisoned in Shipping Containers in Eritrea, Some for as many as 10 or more Years

Asia Bibi Still Imprisoned in Pakistan. Health is failing. Case Sees No Hope.

I share the above headlines not to be depressing. But to show that our brothers and sisters in restricted nations are sharing in the abundant sufferings of Christ. And this is just the tip of the iceberg above. Only God knows the true depth of the sufferings that our brothers and sisters experience as they carry the cross.

The third way we are encouraged to pray for the persecuted church who carry the cross is to pray that they and their families will know the abundant comfort of Christ.

Dear saints let us pray this day that the persecuted will know the abundant comfort of Jesus in the midst of their sufferings for Him.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re:Thursday Afternoon, June 23, 2016, on: 2016/6/23 18:55

... Therefore He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since he always lives to make intercession for them...Hebrews 7:25

The intercessory ministry of Jesus still continues even in heaven. He is still interceding even for those He saved. This should be encouraging for those of us who pray for the persecuted church. As Jesus is interceding on their behalf. We should be there a voice down here to intercede on their behalf.

The above verse certainly must have been encouraging to the readers of Hebrews as that book was written against the backdrop of persecution. Indeed, a lot of the New Testament, if not all of it was written against the backdrop of persecution.

Jesus has not forgotten his persecuted bride. We saw a few days ago in the conversion of Saul that Jesus is intimately linked to His persecuted church. The fact that He appeared on the road to Damascus asking Saul the question, "Why are you persecuting Me?" Let us pray that Jesus would appear to the jihadist and the communist and to any other persecutor of believers with that same question, "Why are you persecuting Me."

... now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will he delay long over them...Luke 18:7

Brothers and sisters let us be those who cry out to God for justice for His persecuted bride. In places like North Korea they cannot cry out aloud in their prayers lest they draw the attention of the secret police. But we can be their voice here in the West. We can cry out Justice on their behalf.

As Jesus intercedes for his persecuted bride and for us. Let us also be his voice interceding also on their behalf.

A Christian ministry has said that prayer is the least and yet the most that you can do for the persecuted church. James reminds us that the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

Let us remember our persecuted brothers and sisters in our prayers.

From the shadow of his cross.

Re: Friday Morning, June 24, 2016, on: 2016/6/24 10:53

4. Pray that our persecuted brothers and sisters will have more opportunities to share the gospel.

... So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch speaking the word to no one except the Jews alone. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus...Acts 11:19-20

... praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ for which I have been imprisoned, that I might make it clear in the way I want to speak...Colossians 4:3-4

There's a dynamic in persecution that drives the preaching of the Gospel. In areas where the church has been persecuted the gospel is preached much more fervently and faster. We see this in the persecutions that happened to Jerusalem after Stephen was martyred. When many of the saints in Jerusalem left for safety. They went about preaching the word of God. They went about preaching the gospel of Jesus.

In North Korea, the believers who are disciplined in the Lord Jesus Christ regard prison and even the death camps as their ultimate mission field. It has been reported that believers feel the greatest freedom to share Jesus Christ in the death camps then even before they were in prison. When one is in a North Korean death camp at that point they have nothing to lose. But everything to gain and terms of souls for Christ.

Today let us pray that our brothers and sisters will have opportunities to share Christ even in the midst of their imprisonments. And particularly let us pray that the persecuted will have opportunities to share Christ even with their persecutors. They had to rotate the guards every 4 hours because Watchman Nee would be preaching to them. And many of them would become saved under his preaching. This also must have happened with the Apostle Paul with those Romans that were chained to him. What wondrous truth they must have heard coming out of his mouth as he dictated his Epistles. Countless Roman guards must have been saved under Paul simply dictating the letters to the various churches. Of course Paul was never afraid to share Jesus with whomever he met.

Brothers and sisters let us keep our persecuted family in prayer that they will have opportunities to share the gospel in the midst of the sufferings they find themselves in.

Also since we have freedom let us also pray that God will give us opportunities to share Jesus with those that we come in contact with.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: , on: 2016/6/24 11:22

Bump

Re: Friday Evening, June 24th, 2016, on: 2016/6/24 20:39

... Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well-known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,... Philipians 1:12-13

In the above verses we see Paul looking at his circumstances in prison not from a woe is me attitude. But more rejoicing that his circumstances had put him in a strategic opportunity to share the gospel. Not only with the elite praetorian guard

rd. But also with Caesar's extended and probably immediate household. For we see at the end of Philippians that Paul says all the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

One wonders if even Nero himself may have heard the gospel. Though history certainly does not give us any indication that he ever embraced Christ.

I remember reading or hearing somewhere that the guards who guarded Watchman Nee had to be rotated every so often because under his preaching many would become believers in Christ.

Some of our persecuted brothers and sisters have a different mindset regarding their circumstances. Oftentimes they will look at their imprisonment as an opportunity to reach others for Christ that otherwise would not be reached. This would be other fellow prisoners who certainly needed the hope of Jesus. As well as the persecutors themselves.

I heard the story of Brother Yun who have walked out miraculously out of a maximum-security prison in China. Only later to find himself imprisoned in Burma. He recounts I saw men who were more desperate than I was. This resulted in him being able to share the gospel with them. To bring them the hope of Jesus Christ.

It is said those who are disciplined in North Korea go with the expectation that eventually they will wind up in one of the North Korean death camps. This is not morbidity. But the North Korean believers who regard the North Korean death camps as their mission field. Here they find a greatest freedom to preach Christ. At this point they have nothing to lose. But certainly everything to gain in terms of taking more souls captive for the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words what can be done to them that hasn't been done to them as they are under a sentence of death. And the North Korean believer it will have the hope of Heaven within him. Realizing that others are imprisoned in the camp that are not believers. The North Korean Believers will use this opportunity to share Jesus with them.

Again the persecuted see their circumstances as Paul did. As an opportunity to get the gospel out to those who need to hear about Jesus.

How do we see our circumstances. Do we fuss because we are in an undesirable job? Or we are in an undesirable family situation? Or perhaps we are just in an undesirable situation of illness or trials and tribulations? Let us ask God to give us his mind set on our circumstances that perhaps it may be an opportunity for the gospel to go forth to those who need to hear it.

Let us also pray that the persecuted would use their circumstances as an opportunity for the light of Christ to impact those who need to hear about Jesus.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Saturday Morning, June 25, 2016, on: 2016/6/25 6:07

5. Pray that our persecuted brothers and sisters will have boldness to make Christ known.

... and the most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear... Philippians 1:14

... and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains, that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak... Ephesians 6:19-20

Another way we are encouraged to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters is they will have boldness to make known the gospel of Jesus. There seems to be a dynamic that takes place in the suffering of others that inspire courage. This certainly took place in the imprisonment of Paul. The Holy Spirit inspired courage in those who heard about his imprisonment to go out and preach Christ. They did this trusting in the Lord.

There's something in the testimonies and the stories of the suffering church that do inspire courage in our heart. Again a courage that is only given by the Holy Spirit. A courage that cries out that we want to be used in the things of Christ.

I have seen this in my own life watching the video documentary "Sheep Among Wolves". After watching that documentary several times, seeing the testimony of my brothers and sisters giving their life to the harvest. My heart cries out to live a life of such faith as they unto Christ and not a life of mediocrity. To live a life to reach others for Christ in the global harvest.

Dear saints let us pray this day that the persecuted will have boldness to make Christ known. Let us also pray that they will be our example that we will make Christ known.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Sunday Morning, June 26, 2016, on: 2016/6/26 6:41

6. Pray that our persecuted brothers and sisters will forgive and love their persecutors.

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

... Lord do not hold this sin against them... Acts 7:60

... Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing... Luke 23:34

The church in Toronto Canada was packed out. For many had come to hear a man who had been persecuted by the Communists. The time was the 1970s and we were at the height of the Cold War. Many thought that they would hear a rousing anti-communist message. As the time drew near for the man to speak. The church grew quiet.

The man was escorted up to the front of the church. The podium had been moved and a chair or a stool had been placed there for his comfort. He was in his stocking feet. The man apologized. For he said the Communists had beat his feet and he had suffered damage as a result of the beatings. Thus he could not stand for long periods of time. The church was so quiet that you could hear a pin drop. Many who were in the presence of this man found themselves weeping. Not for the man himself. But the fragrance of Jesus was clearly seen in this man.

Then the man started weeping. Tears were streaming from his eyes. He kept repeating the words, "I did not love them enough. I did not love them enough." When someone gently asked him brother who are you talking about? Richard Wurmbbrand replied, "The communist, I did not love them enough."

Another way we are encouraged to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters is that they will forgive and love their persecutors. The story above shows a man had been horribly persecuted by the Communists. His body had suffered the bruises and marks of Jesus. And yet the Holy Spirit worked in this man's heart to have a love for his enemies. Clearly Richard Wurmbbrand, our brother in Christ, was following the steps of his Master. The One who said, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

If anyone lived out Matthew 5:44, Jesus did. The greatest injustice ever done in human history on the face of this planet was done to the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet as he hung half naked and humiliated on the cross for our sins, He said, "Father forgive them, but they do not know what they are doing."

Several days ago we saw how our sister Liena, instructed her children to forgive their persecutors, the Jihadists, who would surely take their lives. Far from being a fanciful reenactment in a YouTube video. This actually happened. Back in late summer of last year, a ministry team had been captured by ISIS. The sisters in the team were horribly violated by the jihadists. Yet they told their enemies I forgive you. Jesus forgives you. Only to enrage those to horribly violate and kill these precious saints. Yet in the end the enemy lost. Just as he lost at the cross.

It has been said that the most powerful words uttered at the cross were, "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." For these words broke the power of Satan at the cross.

Today let us pray that our persecuted brothers and sisters will forgive their persecutors. Let us pray that our persecuted brothers and sisters will even love their enemies. But let us also pray that we will forgive those who have wronged us. A

and we will forgive those who are our enemies.

Jesus left us the example to forgive and love, even our enemies. By His Holy Spirit living in us we can also do the same

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Sunday Evening, June 26, 2016, on: 2016/6/26 20:13

... But love your enemies and do good... Luke 6:35

... Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law... Romans 13:10

Dirk Willem was a leader among the early anabaptists. The anabaptists were followers of Jesus Christ in the 16th Century. They believed that only those who made a conscious decision to follow Jesus were to be baptized. Many of them were converted out of Catholic background. As such many adults were rebaptized as they confessed their faith in Jesus. Thus rejecting their infant baptism. Consequently they became known as rebaptizers or anabaptists. Because of their rejection of infant baptism the anabaptists were persecuted horribly by the Catholics and the Protestants.

Dirk Willem lived in the Netherlands. His evangelical activity and secret house church meetings brought him to the attention of the Catholic authorities. Consequently he was arrested and imprisoned. Realizing that he would face a certain death. He fashioned together an escape rope of old rags and was able to escape from his prison cell.

As he landed on the ground. A guard discovered his escape and started chasing him. Dirk ran across a frozen pond of thin ice. The heavier guard gave chase to him. As Dirk was making good his escape he heard the ice breaking. The guard fell through the ice. The guard began to cry for help. Thus Dirk had a decision to make. Run for his own safety. Or go back and help the guard. And be arrested again.

Remembering the teachings of Jesus about love for one's enemy. Dirk went back and helped the guard out of the water. The grateful guard was prepared to let Dirk go. But the Burgermaster who stood on the shore reminded the guard of the oath that he had sworn to root out the Heretics. Despite the guard's pleas Dirk was rearrested. Eventually he was tried and condemned to burn at the stake. The brother was martyred in 1569.

This story is touching because here we see a follower of Jesus who truly did love his enemy. I wondered if the guard ever came to Christ because of Dirk's action. Only eternity will tell.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Monday, June 27, 2016, on: 2016/6/27 6:51

7. Pray that the ministry activities of our brothers and sisters in persecution remain undetected by authorities and others who wish to silence them.

... but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket... Acts 9:25

...And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod the Magi left for their own country by another way... Matthew 2:12

Those of us who have read God's Smuggler remember the prayer that brother Andrew prayed as he took Bibles into what was then the Iron Curtain nations. His prayer was, "Lord thou who made blind eyes to see make seeing eyes blind."

Another way for us to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters is to pray that they remain hidden from the authorities . For sure for their own protection. But also that they may continue to be a witness for Christ and accomplish His kingdom purposes in the nation that God has placed them.

The prayer by Brother Andrew is certainly a good prayer to pray. Lord thou who made blind eyes to see make seeing eyes blind.

Let us pray this for our brothers and sisters in persecution today.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Tuesday, June 28, 2016, on: 2016/6/28 6:35

8. Pray that our persecuted brothers and sisters will rejoice in suffering.

... So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name... Acts 5:41

... who for the joy set before him endured the cross... Hebrews 12:2

I feel so shallow trying to keep this thread going. I do not feel worthy to speak of the persecuted in this forum since I myself have not experienced what they have. Indeed I do not even feel worthy to pray for these dear saints as they are laying down their lives for Jesus. So how on earth can I post something about joy in the midst of suffering. Yet I keep thinking somebody must say something about the persecuted Church. This is why this thread was birthed.

The early church considered it a joy to suffer for Jesus. This is something that only the Holy Spirit can birth in us as one of His fruit is joy. This is not some form of masochism where the believer finds perverse joy in suffering pain. But this is something that only the Holy Spirit can work in the believer's heart.

Jesus endured the cross. It was something that He could not work up on His own. But knowing that the Father was abiding in Him and that He was pleasing the Father, that Jesus endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him. And again I believe that was only through God the Father working through Him who was His Son.

Today there are many sons and daughters of Christ who are suffering in the restricted nations. There will be many who will die this day before the sun goes down. Ministries that work in persecution estimate every 5 minutes someone is martyred, lays down their life for the Lord Jesus Christ. But this day there are untold suffering in places such as North Korea and Eritrea, Somalia and China. Suffering in countless other nations. Let us pray this day that these precious saints will find joy in the Holy Spirit in the midst of their sufferings for Jesus.

But let us also pray that we too will find joy in the midst of our sufferings whatever they may be. We may not "yet" be shedding our blood for Jesus or suffering persecutions as brothers and sisters around the world are suffering. But some of us are suffering the loss of a job, rebellious children, a failed marriage, or perhaps an illness as one of my dear intercessors is suffering. Let us pray that even in the midst of these sufferings that the Holy Spirit will bring His fruit of joy.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Tuesday Evening, June 28, 2016, on: 2016/6/28 19:31

... Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers, used to treat the prophets... Luke 6:22-23

Richard Wurmbrandt read the above verses while he was in prison. Realizing he was not rejoicing in his sufferings. He began leaping for joy. One of the guards saw him and came into his cell to see if he was alright. Thinking Richard had

d lost his mind he told him to calm down. They gave him an extra loaf of bread and set him free the next day. At least I think that's how the story goes.

I cannot say that this will happen to all of our brothers and sisters who are in the midst of sufferings and particularly imprisonment. But there is the command of Jesus to be glad and leap for joy in the midst of persecution. To the world this would seem crazy. Even foolish. Yet Jesus says great in heaven is the reward of those who suffer persecution. Dear saints these are not the words of brother Blaine. But these are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Look at the text above.

But as we saw this morning. Joy in the midst of suffering can only come from the Holy Spirit. But for the saint who suffers and has the joy of the Spirit. He will truly overcome.

Brothers and sisters let us pray that our persecuted family have joy in the midst of their sufferings. Likewise let us pray that we will have joy in the midst of our sufferings. But the sufferings of this world will certainly bring great reward in heaven.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Wednesday Morning, June 28, 2016, on: 2016/6/29 5:28

9. Pray that our persecuted brothers and sisters will be refreshed through God's Word and grow in their faith.

... But whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope...Romans 15:4

... Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord... 1 Peter 2:1-3

In Eritrea believers in Christ are imprisoned in some of the most horrible conditions. They are kept in shipping containers which can reach over a hundred degrees during the day. And can get down to freezing at night. Some of our brothers and sisters have died in these metal coffins. Their crime. Simply being followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Eritrea is known as the North Korea of the Horn of Africa.

Bibles are not permitted in the shipping containers. The scraps of paper contain verses of Scripture are passed around from person to person. The light is dim almost dark so the verses cannot be read on the container. But when the doors are opened briefly for fresh air or toilet privileges. The believers will not rush out but will quickly pull out the paper scraps and read and quickly commit the verses to memory. And then exchange the pieces of paper. These pieces of paper become more precious than gold itself. Even more precious than food. As it contains the spiritual food to nourish one soul in the imprisonment.

Persecuted brothers and sisters will go to great lengths to own a copy of the scriptures. Or even a portion of the Scriptures. They will even risk death to own a copy of this precious book. We have heard accounts where in persecuted nations the Bible will gently be turned into sections. Not out of disrespect for the Word of God. But to make sure that all will have some portion of scripture to nourish their souls in a congregation that may have just a few copies of the Bible.

In some nations believers who have access to a Bible or New Testament may have to bury it so that it is not discovered. And then when possible go and pull the Bible out and read it for just a few minutes and then put it back into its hiding place. Knowing that in such a nation to be caught with this blessed book one could very well lose their life.

Just as Nicodemus came to Jesus at night to The Living Word Himself. Believers in North Korea will read the precious copy of the written word under blankets with maybe a penlight so as not to attract the authorities. For to own a copy of the scriptures in North Korea is either punishable in a death camp. Or more merciful a bullet through the head.

We in America do not know how good we have it. We have Bible apps on our phones. Access to the written word like never before. And yet we are told that we are living in a day and an age of biblical illiteracy.

It saddens me that even in this forum we debate which is the one most pure translation. Or we debate the doctrines of the Bible. And yes I have done my share to provoke the debates.

But how many of us actually immerse ourselves in the Scriptures as the persecuted do? How many of us actually read or listen to the word of God just for the pure enjoyment of listening to Jesus Himself?

Unlike Us in the West, the persecuted believers do not have access to commentaries, systematic theologies, sermons, etc. They feel blessed if they have access to some portion of the written Scriptures. I have read accounts of fellowships in the Middle East where precious brothers and sisters have maybe a battered copy of the New Testament in their possession. Seeing the worn out copies of Scripture one could see that these Jesus followers have relished the Word of God. More importantly their lives reflect what they have been reading.

Brothers and sisters let us pray that our persecuted family have access to the word of God to help them grow and be refreshed in their faith in Christ. And may their example speak to us that we value the Bible that God has given us. May we use what freedom we have to get the Word of God into our heart and mind. As the persecuted may we pray that we be more like Jesus in the reading and hearing of His word.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Friday Morning, July 1, 2016, on: 2016/7/1 7:09

10. Pray that our persecuted brothers and sisters will be strengthened through the prayers of fellow believers.

...With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints...Ephedians 6:18

... Remember my imprisonment...The Apostle Paul

...Prayer is the least that you can do but the most that you can do for them...Christians in Crisis.

The most common appeal of our brothers and sisters in restricted nations is please pray for us. But their prayer concerns are not please pray that we be delivered from our persecution. The most common prayer request is please pray that we will remain faithful in the midst of our trials and tribulations. Please pray that we will have access to at least a portion of scriptures. Please pray that we will not deny Jesus in the midst of our sufferings. Please pray that we will be able to reach out to our persecutors.

The persecuted brothers and sisters have such a different paradigm and a different way of looking at things than we here in the West. Is it because that they are indeed at the shadow, the foot of the cross.

Brothers and sisters can we at least take 5 minutes. Or at least one minute. And remember our persecuted family in prayer. That would probably be about the amount of time it would take and go post on Sermon Index. But I think the reward will be far greater. For only eternity will see the answer to our prayers.

Let me ask will it be our forum posts that will be remembered in heaven. Or will it be the prayers that we have prayed for our precious persecuted brothers and sisters.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Saturday Morning, July 2, 2016, on: 2016/7/2 6:33

...Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. And after the sun had risen, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away... Mark 4:5-6

...In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary, that, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away...Mark 4:16-17

West of Denver Colorado there are the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. These are called the Front Range. Many who have the money like to build houses on the side of the hills of the Front Range to get a marvelous view of the plains to the east (and the Denver pollution brown cloud:-)). It is not recommended to build a house on the side of a mountain. The soil is shallow and unstable. Despite the best efforts of construction engineers. Houses will be found with cracks because of the shallow shifting soil. And in a good rain storm many of these houses will wash away due to mudslides and floods. For the simple fact that these houses had no firm foundation.

At the end of The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew Jesus warned that those who did not have their foundation built on the Rock would wash away in the storm and the floods and the wind. The same thought as conveyed in the verses above.

In the parable of the sower Jesus says there will be those who will hear the word of salvation and receive it with joy. There will be those who will start out and run the race like a rabbit. In the persecuted church. But also in our nation. We have seen those who have received the word with the joy of Jesus. They start out running a good race. But in times of temptation and affliction and persecution they fall away.

Yesterday I was conversing with a dear sister and she was telling me how years ago there were young people who committed their life to Christ with the determination to follow him to the end. Only to hear years later that many of them had fallen away into homosexuality, drugs, broken marriages, sexual immorality, and so forth. Only to fall away from Jesus.

Jesus tells us it is because they have no firm root in themselves that they fall away. They have not been rooted and grounded in the Lord Jesus Christ. They have not been rooted and grounded in His word.

Jesus warns that in times of persecution if one is not rooted and grounded in Him. They will fall away. In persecuted nations, particularly those rooted in Islam, a person who comes to Christ will seriously count the cost. They realize to take upon them the cross of Christ they forfeit their lives. Literally they forfeit their lives knowing that they could very well be martyred the next day. Thus the verses above they take to heart. Praying that they will not deny Christ. Praying that they will be rooted in Him. For the persecuted believers the choice is clear. Either be rooted and grounded in Jesus or fall away.

The New Testament has been written by those who have been persecuted for those who will be persecuted. Thus Jesus speaks against the backdrop of persecution. For us and the West this paradigm is very unfamiliar as we do not have a history of persecution. Yet believing that times of darkness and persecution are soon to come up on us. We need to look at the verses above with the mindset of Christ as the persecuted do.

Thus are we seeking to ground ourselves in the Lord Jesus Christ? Are we seeking to sit at His feet and listen to His Word? Are we seeking to be doers of His word? Brothers and sisters right now we have the freedom to seek more of Him. But how long will that opportunity hold?

I cringe at the thought that when the roundup starts and we are carried away into death camps. There will be the wailing of those who say why were we not warned? Why did we not prepare? Why did someone not tell us that this was coming?

Brothers and sisters I say to you gently you have been warned. God has sent His prophets such as David Wilkerson, Art Katz, Denny Kenaston, and others whose teachings are in the SI archives to warn us of what is coming. God in his sweet grace is warning us. The question is are we listening to Him?

I have read accounts where the persecuted are actually praying for us in America. They are praying that we will wake up

to the reality of the same persecution that will come upon us. They are crying out to God on our behalf that we will stand as they are standing.

Brothers and sisters let us hear the prayers of our persecuted family. Let us root and ground ourselves in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let His word be to us are most necessary food. Let us be rooted and grounded in the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Saturday Evening, July 2, 2016, on: 2016/7/2 18:23

...Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house, and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell--and great was its fall...Matthew 7:24-27.

A few years ago central Colorado had experienced some of its worst flooding in decades. One man who lost everything in the flood said that it was an event of biblical proportion. Perhaps a very prophetic statement on his part.

People who had their houses built on unstable soil had homes washed away in torrential mountain floods that overflowed otherwise peaceful creeks. The mountains had experienced so much rain. And the creeks and rivers could not accommodate the excessive water that flowed into the watershed. As a result there was terrible flooding which resulted in many homes being lost. Many were lost because they were built on unstable soil.

Those homes that were built on bedrock home or on a solid rock foundation did withstand the flood. Though their insurance had to pay for significant water damage.

I think the above story illustrates the two foundations that Jesus concludes in what we call The Sermon on the Mount. He contrast a wise and the foolish man. The wise man will listen to his words and act on them. The foolish man will not listen to his words and not act on them. In other words, the solid foundation is one who hears Jesus and obeys Him.

This is very much seen in the life of the persecuted Church. They take to heart the words of Jesus and obey them. Consider below what Jesus says about those who are persecuted,

... Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you...Matthew 5:10-12

Here the persecuted believers find encouragement in the words of Jesus. Here they are told to count themselves blessed because they have a great reward in heaven. Indeed they are even to rejoice. Jesus reminds His listeners that they persecuted the prophets who were before them.

Thus in hearing and acting on the words above. The persecuted are laying the foundation of being on the rock of Jesus Himself. Jesus prophesied what would happen to those who would be hearing his words a few years after His death and Resurrection. He has also prophesied today in what His persecuted bride is going through. Just as 2000 years ago. His words still ring true for the persecuted church today in places like North Korea and Eritrea.

Often in nations like Eritrea those in prison for their faith in Christ will pass scripture around on slips of paper. Verses like the above are written to encourage those to keep their faith and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. So that these believers would continue to build their foundation on the rock of Jesus Christ so as to endure and withstand the persecutions that are coming up on them. To keep enduring their imprisonment until Jesus sets them free either by martyrdom, a miraculous release from prison, or His soon return.

As of yet we are not suffering the extent of persecution of those in North Korea are suffering. We still have an opportunity to go deeper and build a foundation on the Lord Jesus Christ. Are we availing ourselves to this opportunity? The persecuted are praying that we will wake up to the reality of the storm that will soon come upon us. Are we building our hope on the Lord Jesus Christ? Are we building our hope on the Rock of our salvation?

Dear saints let us pray that the persecuted will continue to build their home on the foundation of Jesus himself. Let us sit at the feet of the persecuted and pray that we will build our home on the foundation of Jesus Himself. We must do this if we are going to withstand the storm that will soon come up on the church in America.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Sunday Morning, July 3, 2016, on: 2016/7/3 7:58

... Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who did have endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin...Hebrews 12:1-4

Hebrews is a book set against the backdrop of persecution. Indeed it might be said that most of the New Testament, if not all of it, is set against the backdrop of persecution. I heard someone say that the New Testament was written by the persecuted for the persecuted. It would seem to understand the full weight of New Testament truth one must be experiencing the reality of persecution. At least we see this in our persecuted brothers and sisters today. Perhaps this is why the New Testament is so precious to those in the persecuted church.

The writer of Hebrews is encouraging his hearers that they are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. He would be referring to those in the roll-call of faith chapter of Hebrews 11. But perhaps too the writer would be thinking of those who had spilled their blood for the Lord Jesus Christ. No doubt, at this time, Stephen the first martyr, the first witness, would be remembered. He would be honored. I think the martyrs would be on the writer's mind as he says in verse 4, of chapter 12, in Hebrews, you have not yet resisted sin to the point of shedding your blood.

We tend to honor those who have excelled in sports. At least we did years ago. The athletes were looked upon with respect. Indeed as kids growing up we would eat Wheaties, The Breakfast of Champions, to be like our favorite sports hero. (Okay I'm a baby boomer so you Millennials don't know what I'm talking about :-)) However given the fact that many we considered as heroes in sports have fallen into sin. There is a cynicism about looking up the sports heroes today.

But the early church remembered the martyrs. They remembered the witnesses of Jesus. They remembered those who testified of Jesus even with their dying breath. They drew inspiration and encouragement from the witness of those who laid down their life for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Richard Wurmbrand has commented that it was never considered a service in the first century unless the martyrs were remembered. Unless those we would call the heroes of the faith were remembered with respect and honor.

This is not worshipping the martyrs are putting them on a pedestal. But this is remembering with respect those who have laid down their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ. This is remembering those that we will draw encouragement to do the same.

Tomorrow will be July 4th. For many it will be a day of hot dogs and fireworks. For many it will be a day to go to the lake and run the motor boat. For some there will be a sober attempt to remember those who signed what we call the Declaration of Independence. To start us on the path of freedom that this nation and enjoys.

As we remember those who signed the Declaration of Independence pledging their lives and fortunes to bring freedom to this nation. Let us also remember our persecuted brothers and sisters that have laid down their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ. Those in times past and those in times present. Let us remember those martyred for their faith in Christ. Let us keep our persecuted brothers and sisters who still live in Christ in our thoughts and prayers.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Sunday Evening, July 3, 2016 , on: 2016/7/3 21:03

... let us lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us...Hebrews 12:1

Back in ancient times marathon runners would wear long robes to the event in which they would compete in. When the command came to line up they would pull these robes off and proceed to the starting line. These marathon runners would literally be buck naked. They may have worn a breech or a loin cloth for modesty. But literally have very little clothing on. These marathon runners only had one thing in mind. To compete in their event and win. To compete in their long robes would have been unthinkable. They would have stumbled and fallen. Not to mention the long robes would have slowed them down.

The writer of Hebrews would have been thinking of these marathon runners when he said to lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us. His exhortation to his readers would have been just like the marathon runners of ancient times. Lay aside everything that would cause you to trip up here that would slow you down. Lay aside everything such as sin which would entangle you. Run your race that is set before you literally but naked.

Several years ago I used to do some preaching in a storefront church. The makeup of the church has mostly African-American sisters. I remember preaching on the text above Hebrews 12:1-4. The title of the sermon I was preaching on was called The Amazing Race. The take off of the TV show that was popular at the time.

Most of the women were my age so I made reference to the Lon Chaney mummy movies that I grew up with. The sisters understood when I spoke about the man who came out in Ace bandage always dragging his right foot. Barely able to make about 2 miles an hour as he moved around. Then you had the heroine of the movie who would scream when she saw this ace bandage guy coming toward her. The sisters really got into it when I said you wanted to say sister get your rear in gear and move. But instead she would scream and faint. One wonders. When one cannot outrun somebody who moves around in something which amounts to a bunch of Band-Aids covering him.

Thus I think we as Christians tend to be like Lazarus. We come out of the grave but have not had the grave clothes removed from us. Thus when we run the race are encumbered by the sin and other stuff that sticks to us. So we are barely able to make 2 miles an hour like the mummy.

The persecuted brothers and sisters are not in the situation as I described above. There's a purifying aspect of persecution that tends to burn away the encumbrances and the sin that would entangle them. These saints are running that race but naked. Fixing their eyes on Jesus.

Let us pray that our persecuted brothers and sisters will run their spiritual race in the radical simplicity and purity of devotion to Jesus Christ. Let us also pray that we will run that race with that same radical simplicity and purity of devotion to Jesus.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Monday Morning, July 4, 2016, on: 2016/7/4 8:25

... and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us... Hebrews 12:1

The great cloud of witnesses that has gone before us. Those we call the martyrs of the faith. And those today we call the persecuted Church. Have gone before us and many of them have passed into glory. Receiving their reward.

The martyrs have crossed the finish line. They are cheering us on. How will we run that race? The baton is in our hands in this final hour of redemptive history. We could very well be the ones in the last lap of the race before Jesus returns. A gain how will be running that race? Will we finish well? Will we finish strong?

I find it a bit disheartening in this forum the witness of one such man who ran the race is being called into question. For consider his words,

...Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim, I box in such a way as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified

... 1 Corinthians 9:26-27

... But I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing...2 Timothy 4:6-8

These are the words of the Apostle Paul. These are the words of the one who some in this forum are saying who missed the voice of the Holy Spirit and went to Jerusalem. Dare we in our arrogance call into question the witness of one who testified of the Lord Jesus Christ to his dying breath.

Then let us ask ourselves the question. How are we running the race? Can we declare with certainty as the Apostle Paul did that I buffet my body, I make it my slave, so that after I have run I will not be disqualified. Can we say that with a clear conscience. And then call into question the witness of the Apostle Paul.

Can we with a clear conscience say that I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished the course. And then call into question the witness of one who ran the race as the Apostle Paul did.

I think if we are truly honest with ourselves the question to the above answers would have to be "no". At least they would have to be "no: in my life.

Brothers and sisters let us judge ourselves rightly. Instead of questioning the witness of those that have gone before us as to how they have run the race. For they have crossed the finish line and received their reward. Let us look to ourselves and make sure that we are running the race. Let us look to ourselves with all diligence and pray that we may cross the finish line and receive a reward.

While the Apostle Paul is in the presence of Christ. For the persecuted church is in the presence of Christ. For the martyrs have testified of the reality of Jesus Christ and have received the Crown of Life. Let us endeavor to follow in their footsteps and run that race with all endurance fixing our eyes on Jesus. Let us pray that we will endure. Let us pray that we will persevere. Let us pray that we will be found faithful at His appearing.

To God be the glory!!!

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Monday Evening, July 4, 2016, on: 2016/7/4 18:43

... Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean, and you are clean, but not all of you."...John 13:10

We see from Hebrews 12:1 there is a race that we are to run. But sometimes in running that race we find ourselves getting out of the lane that is assigned to us. And we find ourselves getting entangled in sin. The solution is easy in that we confess and repent of our sin. And then get back in the race.

In John 13 Jesus likens the confession and repenting of our sin to washing our feet. We are already clean because of our faith in Jesus. But there is the tendency that our feet will lead us to sin. Thus getting us out of the race. But the conviction of the Holy Spirit will cause us to confess our sin. Then repent and turn away from our sin. And come back to faith in Jesus. And start running the race again.

Though the above post does not relate directly to the persecuted church. I thought the analogy of the foot-washing and their confessing and repenting of sin had connection to the analogy of running the race. Hope this makes sense.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Tuesday Morning, July 5, 2016, on: 2016/7/5 7:04

... fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart...Hebrews 12:2-3

A ministry leader was sharing with me his experiences in driving a motor boat when he was a child. Rennie, the ministry leader was out with a neighbor in the neighbor's boat on a lake. Rennie was about twelve at the time. The neighbor asked Rennie if he would like to drive the boat. Being excited Rennie said yes.

The neighbor put the boat in gear and gave Rennie the steering wheel. Being excited, Rennie was steering the boat pretty much all over the lake. The neighbor wisely came by Rennie's side and told him to focus on a point on the far shore. He said if you focus on that point your course will be more straighter. Doing that Rennie's driving became less erratic. And his course became more straighter.

There will be times when the faith of our persecuted brothers and sisters will waver. Their course will be a little less straighter. But the exhortation of the verses above is to fix their eyes on Jesus. As they look to Jesus their course will become straighter. As they fix their eyes on Jesus their faith will be more perfected in Him. For He will be the author of their faith which will flow out of Jesus.

The exhortation to the persecuted is to consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself. The encouragement that comes from Jesus is that the persecuted will not grow weary and lose heart.

This exhortation is also given to us. I do believe that there will be times of persecution coming up on this nation. Upon the church in this nation. As the persecuted draw encouragement from the above verses. We need to draw encouragement from these verses also. Not just in times of persecution. But also in our daily walk With Jesus.

For as we look to Jesus. Our faith will not waver. Our course will be more straighter.

From the shadow of his cross.

Re: Additional Insight, on: 2016/7/5 11:58

The more we stay focused on Jesus, the less our faith will waiver.

Breaux Blaine

Re: Tuesday Evening, July 5, 2016, on: 2016/7/5 20:00

... For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps,...1 Peter 2:21

"Suffering is not an interruption but a calling."

... Dietrich Bonhoeffer...

As our persecuted brothers and sisters look to Jesus in the midst of their trials and sufferings. They see that they too have been called to suffer. They too see that they have been called to lay down their lives for Him. For them suffering and martyrdom is not an option. But it is a reality that comes with following Jesus in a restricted nation. Suffering and martyrdom are reality to the persecuted in following Christ in a hostile environment.

In places such as North Korea or in Islamic nations to follow Christ is a death sentence. When one chooses to embrace Christ in a hostile nation. They do it with the expectation that they could die the next day.

Brothers and sisters this is not dramatization. This is not sensationalism. But this is the reality of the persecuted I pray for. When I read the profiles and see the videos. To follow Christ will involve suffering and martyrdom for those who are in restricted nations.

Yet Peter tells us in the verses above that Jesus expects this of us who follow him. Even we in America should expect suffering and persecution if we choose to follow Jesus. For the scriptures say those who desire to live Godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Given the hostile environment of America. We too should expect suffering and persecution. No one is exempt from this. To follow Christ is to suffer for Him. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said this is not an interruption. But it is the calling to follow our Master.

From the shadow of his Cross.

Re: Wednesday Morning, July 6, 2016, on: 2016/7/6 9:49

... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead...Phillipians 3:10-11

Our persecuted brothers and sisters understand that to know Christ is threefold. That is to know Him. To know the power of His resurrection. And to know the fellowship of His sufferings. They know to follow Christ will be to suffer for Him. Thus they embrace the cross as part of following Him in obedience in suffering and even unto death.

We in America have yet to embrace that reality. The idea of knowing Jesus and the power of his resurrection is quite appealing. But that third aspect of being in the fellowship of his sufferings strikes at the heart of our flesh. For to share in the fellowship of the sufferings of Jesus is to be at the foot of the cross.

This is a cross that we all are required to take up daily. Not just the persecuted. But also we in America.

May God give us the grace to take up the cross of Jesus and die to the things of this world.

From the shadow of His cross

Wednesday Evening, July 6, 2016, on: 2016/7/6 19:42

... Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their contact, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.. Hebrews 13:7-8

I have been to three Voice of Martyrs conferences in the last few years. In at least two of these conferences they were packed out with more than 500 or more people. For sure many of these people were coming to learn about the persecuted. But I believe too that they were hungry hearts that wanted to see how those truly lived out a crucified faith in a hostile environment. A hostile environment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

American Christianity is pretty shallow. American Christianity has been described as a mile wide and an inch deep. But I believe there are those in American Christianity that long for a deeper walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe this is why some are responding to the Lord in VOM conferences and wanting to know more about an authentic faith in Jesus. Wanting to know more how do the persecuted live out a deep authentic faith in the midst of the hostility of Satan. Yet wanting more of the reality of Jesus Himself in their hearts. That same reality of Jesus that are persecuted brothers and sisters have.

I believe the above verses are speaking to us in this day and age. We look to our persecuted brothers and sisters who speak the word to us and consider the results of their conduct. Our desire is to imitate their faith. For the same Jesus that is working in their lives. He is also working in our lives in the midst of our sufferings.

This is why it is so important that we learn the history of the martyrs in times past and times present. This is why we must keep our persecuted brothers and sisters in prayer and pray for them. But this is also why we must let their testimony speak to our hearts to encourage us to go deeper in Jesus.

Brothers and sisters let us pray for our persecuted family in the midst of their sufferings that their faith will not waver. That they will go deeper in Christ. But likewise let us pray that we draw from their testimony. That as they lead us and speak forth His word from their testimony. And as we see Jesus working in their lives. Jesus will also work in our lives as we go deeper in Him in the midst of our persecutions and sufferings that we will soon endure.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Thursday Morning, July 7, 2016, on: 2016/7/7 11:38

...Then he went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father if it is possible let this cup pass from me; yet not as I will, but as you will..." Matthew 26:39

... Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh; a messenger of Satan to torment me ---to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me...2 Corinthians 12:7-9.

There must be times that are persecuted brothers and sisters cry out to be released from their sufferings. And this is all right. Even Jesus cried out to be released from the suffering he would undergo at the cross. Yet He prayed not my will but yours be done. Paul cried out to be released from the thorn in his flesh whatever it was. Yet the Lord answered him and said my grace is sufficient for you. For my power is perfected in weakness.

Our persecuted brothers and sisters, no doubt cry out, to be released from their sufferings. Yet they hear God saying to them that my grace is sufficient for you. I will help you walk through the trials and tribulations. As they walk through the sufferings in the grace of Jesus. Truly His power is perfected in the weakness of the persecuted church.

Dear saints let us pray this day that the grace of Jesus will be upon the persecuted church. Likewise let us also pray that the grace of Jesus will be upon us in the midst of our sufferings as they come upon us.

Truly, this is from the Shadow of his cross.

Re: Friday Evening, July 8, 2016, on: 2016/7/8 18:23

... I saw the Lord always in my presence; for He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken... Acts 2:25

... At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom, to him be the glory forever and ever. Amen... 2nd Timothy 4:16-18

Paul shares much about his sufferings and persecutions for the Lord Jesus. One thing that comes out is that his intimacy with the Lord Jesus saw him through the trials of his sufferings for Christ. This is also seen in the lives of our persecuted brothers and sisters. Be they in times past or times present. It is their intimacy with Jesus that sustains them in the midst of their afflictions. In the depth of their sufferings for Christ there is a reality of Christ that is strange to us who do not suffer as the persecuted do.

A brother once shared with me that one hour spent in the presence of someone who has undergone the fires of persecution will expose the shallowness of our western-style faith. I have found this to be a profound comment.

It is intimacy with Christ. It is a deep abiding relationship in Him that will see us through the fires of persecution. But such intimacy must be cultivated with Him. It requires a sacrifice of time. It requires a sacrifice of shutting out distractions and clutter in our lives. It basically requires us sitting at the feet of his cross and dying to the things of this world. Dying to this world period. For Paul said may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ of which the world has been crucified to me to the world.

We cannot decide when persecution comes that we will cultivate intimacy with Jesus. Intimacy with Jesus must be cultivated now while we still have the freedom to pray and read or hear the word. Intimacy with Jesus involves that we are in

relationship with Him.

We must learn to hear His voice. Our hearts must be in tune with his heart. When He moves we move. When He stops we stop. Our relationship must be so close and intimate to Him that we can clearly hear His voice. And recognize the voice of the stranger and flee from it.

Our persecuted brothers and sisters are in close intimate relationship with Jesus. This is a necessary reality for them so that they can endure the persecutions that they are in. This has to be a necessary reality for us so that we can endure what will come up on this land.

Brothers and sisters let us pray that our persecuted brother stay an intimate relationship with Jesus. Let us also pray that we will stay an intimate relationship with Jesus.

For this is truly from the shadow of His cross.

Re: Saturday Evening, July 9, 2016, on: 2016/7/9 20:55

Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Brother Frank just taught me how to cut and paste this quote above. Now I am really going to be dangerous on the forum. :-)

Re: Sunday Evening, July 10, 2016, on: 2016/7/10 20:18

There is remarkable freedom in having no expectations, no plans for tomorrow. The question I and many others start every day with is this: "Jesus, what do You have planned for me and my family?" Only today matters. Only how I live for Jesus counts. Everything else is superficial. When I hand over my life to my Lord, knowing each day may be my last one on this earth, I am more at peace than ever before.

Tom Doyle, Killing Christians: Living the Faith Where It's Not Safe to Believe

... Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will care of yourself. Each day has enough trouble of its own...Matthew 6: 34

Re: , on: 2016/7/10 22:21

Bonheiffer's quote was in respect to the Holocaust in his day. I believe it has wide application to many such things, but most specifically in our day to the New Holocaust, the Genocide/Infanticide of Abortion. Totally

Re: , on: 2016/7/10 22:26

Tom Doyle's book you referenced is a "MUST READ" in my book. It's hard to listen to at times, but a must read nonetheless. His book, "Dreams & Visions" about Muslims coming to Christ through Dreams & visions is a must read too. Amazing testimonies. Doyle was admittedly a skeptic of these stories until he went and interviewed them himself (he is a journalist). Really a God glorifying faith builder. I listened to the audiobook of Killing Christians with my family & my 2 oldest boys have both read "Dreams & Visions". Good stuff indeed

Re: , on: 2016/7/10 22:27

But dear brother what of the holocaust of today, the genocide of Christians who are being slaughtered by the likes of Isis , by the likes of Kim Jung Un, by the likes of Isaias Affwerki, and so on?

Who cries out for the persecuted? Does anyone have the courage to answer this question?

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Jeff , on: 2016/7/10 22:38

Indeed brother. I have read both books. Both have opened my eyes to the realities of the persecuted Church. Indeed both books are a must-read. Though the content may be disturbing to some. The stories are incredible and true.

Brother Blaine

Re: , on: 2016/7/10 22:50

Yeah, definitely Blaine, that too. Both issues on the heart of God for which not to speak is itself evil. Totally agreed brother

Re: Monday Morning, June 11, 2016, on: 2016/7/11 7:47

... For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day and not only for me, but also all who have loved His appearing.

Our brothers and sisters in persecuted nations would read the above verses in be encouraged. For they see in the Apostle Paul their own testimony. What persecuted believer in North Korea or Eritrea or Somalia would not say that they are being poured out as a drink offering? What persecuted believer in China or Iran would not say that they have run the race, they have kept the faith, they have finished the course? What persecuted believer in Somalia today would not say that there is waiting for them a crown of righteousness that they will receive when they are bathed in the blood of martyrdom?

My brother or sister in the west can we make such a statement as the Apostle Paul made in the above verses? Can we make such statements as our brothers and sisters would make in restricted nations? Can we say that we are being poured out as drink offerings as the time of our departure grows near? Can we say that there is waiting for us a crown of righteousness?

Sobering questions which call for sobering answers for us in the West.

Never did the church so much prosper and so truly thrive as when she was baptized in the blood. The ship of the church never sails so gloriously along as when the bloody spray of her martyrs falls on her deck. We must suffer and we must die, if we are ever to conquer this world for Christ."

- Charles Spurgeon

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Thursday Morning, July 14, 2016, on: 2016/7/14 6:10

... They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God...John 16:2

...Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered outside the gate. So let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach...Hebrews 13:12-13

The Anabaptists were a group of Jesus followers who came out of the Reformation. Traditional church history has not been fair to this precious group of saints. These believers suffered much for their faith in Jesus Christ. They suffered much for their belief in the truth.

The brothers and sisters of Anabaptist suasion saw that believers in Jesus Christ were to be baptized only and not infants. They saw that the church was a group of saints who voluntarily committed their lives to Jesus. They saw that this church was separate from the world and the state. This put them at odds with the Catholic and Protestant Church State institutions of their time. Thus they were persecuted horribly by both the Catholic and the Protestant church state structures.

Michael Sattler was one of the young leaders of the Anabaptists. He was converted out of the darkness of Catholicism being the assistant prior of an Abbey. Coming to evangelical convictions of the Anabaptists, he arose to become one of their leaders. Michael Sattler was captured by the Catholics and horribly tortured. Eventually he would be martyred.

There is an account where the Catholic cardinal who was Prosecuting Michael became so angry. He said "I would put you to death and sleep at night and think that I was doing God a service."

I do not know if these are the exact words as I am trying to remember them from the movie, The Radicals. But hopefully I have captured the gist of the scene of that movie.

We certainly see this where the religious leadership put Jesus to death. And many of them probably slept that night not knowing that they were crucifying the Son of God. During the Reformation how many Protestant and Catholic church leaders put evangelical brothers and sisters to death and went to their beds that night with a clear conscience believing they had done God a service?

Even in recent times we see the Orthodox church collaborating with the Communists to put Christians in prison and to death. In Central Asia the Orthodox Church will collaborate with an oppressive Soviet-style government to put the Evangelical Christians in prison, and no doubt put to death.

Jesus warned that a man's enemies will be the enemies of his own household. I realized he was speaking of physical families. But is it possible that the enemies of the persecuted will be those in their own ranks. Paul did warn that savage wolves would come in to the church not sparing the body. Even Jesus was betrayed by one of His own.

We look at the spread of Islam. Knowing what the Muslims believe we know that they are clearly enemies of the Gospel. The same can be said of the Communist or the Hindus or the Buddhist. Even the secular humanist. But the hardest enemy to discern will be those within our own ranks.

I believe as the church in America grows more apostate. The true remnant will be forced out of the existing evangelical structure. Those who truly cling to Christ and His cross will be betrayed by those they thought who are their brothers and sisters.

Dear saints let us be prepared to join our persecuted brothers and sisters in other parts of the world to go outside the camp and suffer with Jesus. Let us not be surprised when we are betrayed by those we thought who were our brothers and sisters. Let us not be surprised when we are put outside of the existing structured Church. For our true fellowship may be with those dear saints who are in the death camps. For these will be the ones who will truly suffer with Jesus and lay down their lives for him.

From the shadow of His cross.

Re: Friday Morning, July 15, 2016, on: 2016/7/15 6:31

... Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach... Hebrews 13:12-13

Hebrews is a book written against the backdrop of persecution. There were precious saints who were coming under persecution by those of the Jews. So the temptation for these believers would be to go back to Judaism to avoid the persecution.

This temptation is before our brothers and sisters today in restricted nations. For the Muslim or Hindu who has had an experience with the Lord Jesus Christ and chooses to follow Him. There will be the temptation from family members to return to the faith from which they left to follow Christ. Particularly as persecution comes up on the new believer in Jesus. There will be the temptation to return to his religion and family. There will be the temptation to return to avoid the persecution.

Yes Jesus suffered outside the camp. He is inviting those who follow him to come and suffer. He is inviting those who follow Him to take up His cross which is a sign of reproach. In the words of Bonhoeffer when Jesus bids a man to come to Him he bids him come and die.

Yet this is one aspect of following Jesus. That is following Him in the fellowship of His sufferings. This is very strange for us in the West. We would rather take the first two parts of Philippians 3:10 where Paul says I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. But to know Jesus in the fellowship of his sufferings being conformed to his death strikes at the heart of our flesh. It strikes at the heart of our flesh because we come face-to-face with a cross.

The persecuted understand this. They come face-to-face with the cross daily. A pastor may kiss his beloved wife in a restricted nation and say "My beloved wife I pray I see you by the end of this day. But if not, I will see you in heaven." This is not being morbid. But this pastor has accepted the fact that his life is forfeit for the Lord Jesus Christ. That this day could very well be his last day on this earth. A terrorist attack or a bomb blast could very well send him into the presence of Jesus. This is the reality of what our brothers and sisters live out in places like the Middle East.

Our persecuted brothers and sisters have accepted the invitation to go outside the camp the camp of their family the camp of their religion, and suffer the reproach of carrying the cross of Christ. They have chosen to camp in The fellowship of His sufferings at the foot of the cross. Brothers and sisters are we willing to do the same.

Truly from the shadow of His cross

Re: Further Food for Thought, on: 2016/7/15 8:42

Your soul was bought for a price far greater than the world on the cross; everything Satan offers you in exchange for your soul is from the world and absolutely worthless.

John 3:16

Felix Wantang, God's Blueprint of the Holy Bible

...But may it never be that I would boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world...Galatians 6:14

Truly from the foot of His cross

Re: Friday Afternoon, July 15, 2016, on: 2016/7/15 13:41

"Before we can begin to see the cross as something done for us, we have to see it as something done by us."â€ John R.W. Stott

The above quote by our departed brother in Christ is so true. All throughout the New Testament the emphasis is not so much on apprehending the benefits what has been done for us at the cross. But the emphasis is more to take up our cross and follow Jesus. All too often we want the benefits of the cross. But all too seldom we want to take up the demands of the cross. That is for us in America.

Again for a persecuted believer living in North Korea or Somalia, they willingly take up the cross to follow Jesus. For in their sufferings to follow Him they are in the school of suffering of Jesus Himself.

Again this is very strange for us in American Christendom. For we are so attached to the things of this world. A brother from a restricted nation remarked that it is far more challenging to be a Christian in America than in a persecuted nation. Mainly that Satan is far more clever to seduce the Christians by worldly attractions.

In the last few posts I have been meditating on Hebrews 13:12-13,

... Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing his reproach...

Jesus is inviting those who follow Him to come outside the camp and come to a cross. To come to a cross of reproach. To come to a cross of death.

But notice He is saying to come outside the camp. In a sense He's calling for for us to separate, from the camp of this world. He's inviting us to come to his cross and die to the things of this world.

1 John 2:15-17 says,

... Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts, but the one who does the will of God lives forever...

But then how do we not love the things of this world. Consider what our brother Paul wrote in Galatians 6:14,

... But may never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world...

If we truly want to see what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us at the cross. Then let us take up our cross to follow Him.

From the foot of His cross.

Re: Friday Evening. July 15, 2016, on: 2016/7/15 21:19

What encourages us to preach the gospel in captive nations is that, there, those who become Christians are full of love and zeal. I have never met one single lukewarm Russian Christian. Former young Communists and Muslims become exceptional disciples of Christ...

Whoever has known the spiritual beauty of the underground church cannot be satisfied anymore with the emptiness of some Western churches...

One out of every five people in the world live in Communist China, where thousands of lay Christians evangelize without "permission."

Persecution has always produced a better Christian--a witnessing Christian, a soul-winning Christian.

Communist persecution has backfired and produced serious, dedicated Christians such as are rarely seen in free lands.

These people cannot understand how anyone can be a Christian and not want to win every soul they meet...

These millions of dedicated, true and fervent believers in the lay church have been purified by the very fires of persecution which the Communists hoped would destroy them...

In a letter smuggled out secretly, the underground church said, "We don't pray to be better Christians, but that we may be the only kind of Christians God means us to be: Christlike Christians, that is, Christians who bear willingly the cross for God's glory."

...Richard Wormbrandt...

From the foot of His cross.

Re: Saturday Morning, July 16, 2016, on: 2016/7/16 6:26

... Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach...Hebrews 13:12-13

... But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ... 2 Corinthians 11:3

As I read about the persecuted church and those rare times I have met persecuted believers from the front lines, I'm struck by their simple and pure devotion to Jesus. These brothers and sisters do not have theological degrees from leading seminaries. They honestly could not tell you what a logical fallacy is. They could not expand to you Van Tillian presuppositionalism. These precious saints would be scoffed at by some in the forum here because of their theological ignorance.

But these precious brothers and sisters would be characterized by one thing. They would stand out as having been with Jesus. They would stand out because they carry within them the Living Word himself. They would stand out because they are in the shadow and at the foot of the cross. Indeed they would stand out because they carry the cross of Jesus for His glory.

There is a sweet preciousness in the saint that has gone through the fires of persecution and suffering. There is a brokenness in them that manifests the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Jesus in their lives. The scriptures tell us that as Mary broke the bottle or vial of perfume in preparation to anoint Jesus the fragrance filled the whole room. So as the persecuted are broken before the Lord as a sacrifice to Him, we too can smell their fragrance.

In Hebrews 13:12-13 the exhortation is to go out to Him. So simple, yet so profound. The exhortation to believers is to go to Jesus. Even in the midst of their persecutions and afflictions, the believers are to go out to Jesus. The exhortation is not to go to theology or sound doctrine or even go to the Bible. The exhortation is simply to go to Jesus.

Yet the enemy will seek to draw one away from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. The enemy will seek to draw one into fruitless discussions on logical fallacies, Van Tillian presuppositions, or men ruling over women. And these are considered good discussions?

The persecuted are not drawn into such discussions. For them their concern is staying at the foot of the cross. For them their concern is the simplicity and purity of devotion to Jesus in carrying that cross.

I wonder if our discussions in the forum would not be better served if we encouraged one another to stay at the foot of the

e cross. Indeed to encourage one another to carry the cross along with our persecuted brothers and sisters.

My thoughts this morning from the foot of the cross.

Re: , on: 2016/7/16 11:36

So, dwelling at the 'foot of the cross' includes judgementalism concerning those, like the apostle Paul, who are called to discern and call out error and misinterpretation of scripture, for not having the 'simple faith' that these so called paragons have? Blaine your halo is slipping. We do not have the same callings in our walk and have no right to criticise the work of others in their service.

I am not saying that I have this calling by the way.

Re: Saturday Midday, July 16, 2016, on: 2016/7/16 12:25

for not having the 'simple faith' that these so called paragons have?

Who might these "so-called paragons" be. Would that be the 21 Coptic believers who were martyred for their "simple faith" in Jesus over a year ago on the shores of Libya? Would that be the 2000 or so believers who are imprisoned in shipping containers for their "simple faith" in Jesus in the nation of Eritrea? Would that be the tens of thousands who are imprisoned in the death camps of North Korea for their "simple faith" in Jesus? Would that be those saints who spill their blood for Jesus every 5 minutes for their "simple faith" in Jesus?

I think we call these "paragons" who have that simple faith in Jesus our persecuted brothers and sisters.

I ask that those who post on this thread please show them the respect that they deserve. For these precious saints go through persecutions that we may yet have to go through. And it is at their feet we may have to sit to learn how to have that simple faith in Jesus in the midst of our trials and tribulations.

From the foot of His cross

Re: Saturday Afternoon, June 16, 2016, on: 2016/7/16 18:05

I posted this earlier on the Forum under General topics. This is my response to a question posed earlier in this devotional thread. I believe this question was posed in a sarcastic and cynical way. My spirit is grieved over those who lay down their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ. The following is my response.

.....

And who are the paragons...My response

On February 15th last year, 21 believers in Christ were marched out on the shores of Libya. Each one of these saints were martyred by ISIS for their faith in Jesus Christ by having their head sawed off. Each one of these saints died with one name on their lips. That is the name of Jesus Christ. These were the paragons.

In April last year, 150 students were slain at a Bible College in Kenya by Islamic extremists. They were targeted for their faith in Jesus Christ. These were the paragons.

There are tens of thousands of Christians who are in prison for their faith in Jesus Christ in the death camps of North Korea. Estimates vary. But there could be as many as over 50,000 Believers and their families of 3 generations imprisoned for their simple faith in Jesus Christ. Their sentence is death. For they will surely die in these death camps. These are the paragons.

There are approximately 2,000 to 3000 believers who are imprisoned for their faith in Jesus Christ in Eritrea. Most of them are kept in shipping containers that are hot in the day and cold at night. Their crime of imprisonment is faith in Jesus Christ. Many have been in the shipping containers for upwards of 10 years. Many died in the shipping containers of hunger and disease. Many of these precious saints could be let go if they would renounce their faith in Christ. Refusing to do this brings certain martyrdom upon them. To the best of my knowledge not one single saint has renounced their faith in Christ for freedom. These are the paragons.

It is estimated by persecution ministries that every 5 minutes a saint spills their blood for Jesus Christ. That comes out to about 300 people a day who are martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ. That works out to about one hundred thousand saints a year who go to be under that altar that we read about in Revelation. These are the paragons.

Members of the forum the paragons are our brothers and sisters in the persecuted Church persecuted church.

Earlier today the question was posed on my devotional thread, "who are these paragons who have this simple faith in Jesus"? I believe the question was posed in a cynical and sarcastic way. The way this question is asked is very grievous to my spirit for those who take up the cross of Jesus Christ and lay down their lives for Him.

Whatever we may think about the persecuted church. And I realize the persecuted church is not a popular topic on Sermon Index. I do not believe that we have the right to malign them and be sarcastic and cynical in our attitude toward those who are being martyred for their faith in Christ.

Brothers and sisters I ask each one of you including myself. How many of us would have the courage to endure what those in North Korea or Eritrea are enduring.

Whatever we may think about our persecuted brothers and sisters. Let us not malign them or be sarcastic at our attitude toward them. If anything let us pray for them. For they are surely praying for us. They are surely praying that we will have the grace to endure the hell that will soon break out on us as they are enduring.

Posted by Blaine Scogin

From the foot of His cross

Re: Sunday Morning, July 17, 2016 , on: 2016/7/17 10:56

On the Few Lovers of the Cross of Jesus

Jesus has many who love His Kingdom in Heaven, but few who bear His Cross (Luke 14:27). He has many who desire comfort, but few who desire suffering. He finds many to share His feast, but few His fasting. All desire to rejoice with Him, but few are willing to suffer for His sake. Many follow Jesus to the Breaking of Bread, but few to the drinking of the Cup of His Passion. Many admire His miracles, but few follow Him in the humiliation of His Cross. Many love Jesus as long as no hardship touches them. Many praise and bless Him, as long as they are receiving any comfort from Him. But if Jesus withdraw Himself, they fall to complaining and utter dejection

... Thomas a kempis ...

... And he who does not take His cross and follow after Me is not worthy of me... Matthew 10:38

In the last several months there have been reports coming out of China about the government tearing down crosses off of church buildings. All done under the name of beautification. And this is regrettable. This certainly shows a crackdown

of the Chinese government toward those who follow Christ.

But the underground church in China sees the cross as something different. They do not see the cross as something that has to be put on top of a building. The underground church sees the cross as something that is to be carried. The persecuted church in China sees the cross as something that they take up and carry in their suffering through Jesus. The Chinese Church see suffering for Jesus as taking up their cross for Him.

Indeed this is the reality of the persecuted church in all of the restricted nations. For to follow Christ is to take up His cross. For to follow Christ is to die to self in order to live for Him.

For us in the West the cross is something on top of a church building or at the front of the church in the worship center. Or the cross is something we wear around our neck. We do not see the cross as something that we are to take up. We do not see the cross as an instrument of death to our self and our desires. We see the cross as salvation for us. But we do not see the cross as something Jesus requires of us to take up to follow Him.

In communion or the Lord's table, we thank the Lord for His death on the cross for our sins. For sure Jesus certainly died for us. But are we dying for Him. Paul wrote in the verses below,

... For the Love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore for all died; and he died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and rose again on their behalf... 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Jesus died so that we would not live for ourselves but for Him. He died to save us from ourselves so that we would live for Him. Paul writes,

... Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price, do not become slaves of men... 1 Corinthians 7:23-24

Brothers and sisters if anything we are to be slaves to Christ. A slave has no rights. He is under authority to his master. If anything our Master has died for us to save us from the tyranny of sin. Our master died to save us from the tyranny of the devil himself. Because of this we serve him out of a heart of love and gratitude. As He died for us. We are willing to die for Him.

Our persecuted brothers and sisters understand this all too clearly. As they die to themselves daily on the cross they carry. They are prepared to face death tomorrow. As they lose their lives for Christ. They realize they cannot lose what they do not possess. The missionary Jim Elliot was quoted as saying,

"No man is a fool to give up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

We in the west will need to learn the way of the cross. We will need to learn to die to ourselves daily. We need to die to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the blasphemous pride of life. We need to die to ourselves. For this will surely be necessary to do if we are to endure the persecution that will soon fall upon us.

May God grant us the grace to die to ourselves so that we might live for Jesus.

From the foot of His cross.

Re: Tuesday Morning, July 19, 2016, on: 2016/7/19 6:48

... James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want for You to do for us whatever we ask of You." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am Baptized?" They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. But to sit at my right or on my left, this is not mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."...Mark 10:35-40

The persecuted brothers and sisters who read the passage above must wonder about the sons of Zebedee. They probably see James and John rushing into the presence of Jesus and wanting to sit in His glory with their crowns. Not realizing that before a crown there must come a cross.

Of course our persecuted brothers and sisters are looking at the New Testament from the other side of the cross. They realize that they are called to drink the cup of suffering that Jesus drinks and to be baptized with His death.

We too have that same understanding of the New Testament. We should be reading it from the other side of the cross. We should be looking at the above passage to realize that suffering will proceed glory. That before a crown there will be a cross that we must take up and carry.

But I fear all too often we in the West want to rush in and claim the glory of God. Almost as it were to get the crown. Without realizing that we run into the cross that stands in the way. Thus the choice is either we turn around and avoid the cross thus forfeiting the crown. Or we choose to take up our cross with the expectation that there will be a crown awaiting us as we die to ourselves. The one thing we cannot do is to go around the cross. But we can walk away from the cross or choose to take it up.

When Jesus asked John and James are you able to drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with. They said we are able. Honestly I do not think they realized what they were saying. Jesus told them that they would drink his cup and be baptized with His baptism. Not realizing, they were looking at martyrdom.

Our brothers and sisters in persecuted nations realize this. They realize that the cup of suffering and the baptism of death is the cross that they willingly take up to follow Jesus. The question to us in the west is are we willing to take up the cross. Are we willing to drink of his cup of suffering and receive His baptism of death to receive the crown that certainly awaits us in heaven? Are we realizing that we too are looking at martyrdom?

From The foot of His cross.

Re: , on: 2016/7/19 9:25

Blaine brother

Quote:
-----I ask that those who post on this thread please show them the respect that they deserve. For these precious saints go through persecutions that we may yet have to go through. And it is at their feet we may have to sit to learn how to have that simple faith in Jesus in the midst of our trials and tribulations.

I did not mean the persecuted, and you do not know the extent that those on the forum suffer for their faith personally but I do not speak about it and it is not on the news.

I meant that you are very quick to judge the brethren here and comparing them to the ones you pray for.

Re: Tuesday Evening. July 19. 2016, on: 2016/7/19 18:37

These are thoughts from a dear pastor who recently lost his wife a few days ago. She was brutally attacked by Muslims as she was sharing Jesus on the streets of a town in Nigeria.

My desire is that our persecutors get to know God – our desire is to see God arresting them one by one to confess Jesus Christ,” Pastor Elisha said. “You know when Jesus Christ saves their souls, Satan and hell will lose. If we desire that those who persecute us should die, then we are increasing the population of hell. The Bible says there is rejoicing in heaven when a sinner repents.”

"Our persecutors were also created in God's image," he said. "It is because we are weak that we think people that are doing evil are stronger. But if we are committed, God knows how to handle our persecutors and increase people coming to His kingdom."

Olawale is a martyr whose faith has challenged many people's lives, he said.

"This challenge is that we need to wake up to the task of sharing the gospel," he said. "My joy in this tragedy is that my wife is resting in the bosom of the Lord. That a woman with children, not a girl, could just sacrifice her life for Christ. I am telling you if we are going to the same heaven she is in now, then we need to wake up."

With Christians facing persecution throughout most of Nigeria, especially in the northeast, Pastor Elisha said the more persecution the church experiences, the more growth and glory to God.

"In John 16:1-2, Jesus told us that He would not leave us in ignorance – that a time is coming when people will drag us out of synagogues or churches to kill us and think that they are rendering service to God, because they don't know Him or the Father."

Persecution is not a punishment, but rather enduring persecution faithfully is a way of expressing Christ's love, he said, adding that there is a need to pray for Christians in northern Nigeria and assist those in need. They need to be encouraged in prayers to respond to persecution not with violence, but with Christ's message of peace, love and joy, he said.

"We are sheep, and He is the Shepherd," he said. "A sheep cannot fight for itself."

Brothers and sisters such profound insight from a man whose wife was recently martyred. Only by the grace of Jesus could this man endure the loss of his wife. And still want to see the murders of his wife come to Jesus.

This truly is from the foot of His cross.

Re: Wednesday, Morning, July 20, 2016, on: 2016/7/20 7:26

Brothers and sisters the martyrdom of precious brethren is not merely something that occurred 2000 years ago. Or something that occurred in Foxes Book of Martyrs or Martyrs Mirror. But the martyrdom of believers is an ongoing reality in this day and age. Below are the thoughts of brother Elisha as he shares about his dear wife who was recently martyred. This took place in Nigeria.

Mojisola Olawale, a deaconess The last words of an evangelist who was killed while she was street-preaching here on Saturday (July 9) were, "Blood of Jesus," her husband told Morning Star News.

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Eunices in the Redeemed Christian Church of God that her husband pastors in a suburb of Abuja, was stabbed and cut to death by a band of Islamists in the streets of Kubwa in the early morning. Born July 23, 1974, the mother of seven children was killed two weeks before her 42nd birthday. Â Â Â

â€œMy wife loved Jesus so very much,â€ pastor Olawale Elisha of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), in the Gbazango area of Kubwa, told Morning Star News. â€œSome of the people living close to the spot where she was killed told us that they heard her last words as she was being murdered. They said she was shouting, â€œBlood of Jesus! Blood of Jesus! Blood of Jesus!â€™ And that was the end.â€

His wife had a premonition about being in heaven a few weeks before her death, he told Morning Star News.

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â€œThere was a day three weeks back when she called out and said, â€œmy Husband.â€™ I responded thinking she had something to tell me, but then she told me she was not talking to me, but Jesus. I responded by telling her that she is right by saying she was a heavenly bride, but by still living here on earth, I was her husband. And she jokingly asked whether I was jealous of her becoming the bride of Christ. After laughing over things, she began to sing of Christ being the lover of her soul.â€

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The day before she was killed, he asked the family if they would pray together in the living room in advance of her going to Abuja for a womenâ€™s fellowship conference.

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â€œHowever, she asked me to kindly allow her have some quiet time with the Lord,â€ he said. â€œAnd when she went into our bedroom, she was there praying for three hours. She was in there praising and worshipping God. And when she finally came out of the bedroom, I could sense the peace and brightness of God on her face.â€

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Unspeakable pain accompanies the fond memories and martyr theology. When on Saturday (July 9) some of Pastor Elishaâ€™s children overheard neighborhood kids playing soccer say that a woman who preaches regularly had been killed, they rushed home to ask him if she had returned.

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â€œI tried calling her mobile phone but was unable to dial her phone number, as my hands were shaking and my mind unstable at the news,â€ he said. â€œWe then rushed out to the scene.â€

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People playing soccer at the scene of the attack could not tell the pastor, his son and daughter what had happened, he said â€œthey only looked at them. A police officer confirmed that a woman had been killed and told him to go to a police station to find out her identity. He and the two children drove to the police station, parking the car outside the station gate since they were barricaded for security reasons.

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â€œAs we were entering the premises of the police station, we saw a police pick-up van driving past us at the gate,â€ he said. â€œMy daughter turned around and looked inside the pick-up truck and saw the corpse of my wife; she screamed, and this attracted my attention to the back of the truck. I saw the corpse of my wife and could not bear what I saw. I collapsed and was on the ground while my children were crying.â€

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A police officer took his cell phone and called two of his associate pastors to come over to the police station. They also called Pastor Elishaâ€™s younger brother, since the pastor was too devastated to drive. Police later came to his home to get a statement from him.

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Olawale had been preaching Christ on the streets for six years, following in the footsteps of her evangelist mother, the pastor said.

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â€œI was told that my mother-in-law would go â€œround streets, ringing a bell and urging passersby to receive Jesus into their lives,â€ he said. â€œSharing the gospel with others on the street is a lifestyle to my wifeâ€™s family. Her younger sister also goes out to the streets to preach Christ. Love and compassion is the hallmark of the life of my wife.â€

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Olawale is a martyr whose faith has challenged many people's lives, he said.

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“This challenge is that we need to wake up to the task of sharing the gospel,” he said. “My joy in this tragedy is that my wife is resting in the bosom of the Lord. That a woman with children, not a girl, could just sacrifice her life for Christ. I am telling you if we are going to the same heaven she is in now, then we need to wake up.”

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“We are sheep, and He is the Shepherd,” he said. “A sheep cannot fight for itself.”

This truly is from the foot of His cross.

Re: Thursday Morning, July 21, 2016, on: 2016/7/21 7:04

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... And when He had taken a cup, and given thanks He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins."... Matthew 26:27-28

They said she was shouting, “Blood of Jesus! Blood of Jesus! Blood of Jesus!” And that was the end.”

Our dear sister Eunice gladly accepted the cup of her Beloved Husband. Her Beloved Bridegroom. And her last words were Blood of Jesus! Blood of Jesus! Blood of Jesus! The words poured from her mouth as she was being hacked to pieces by Islamic jihadists.

One really cannot know what was taking place as this dear sister was experiencing the martyrdom for her Bridegroom. One cannot really know why she was crying out blood of Jesus! Blood of Jesus! Blood of Jesus!

Some of our charismatic brethren might say she was calling on the blood of Jesus to protect her from the evil that was coming up on her.

But I believe there was something deeper here. Something far more powerful was taking place.

As another sister and I have reflected on the martyrdom of our dear sister Eunice, the Spirit has given us these Revelations.

First our dear sister Eunice had an intimate walk With Jesus. Her life was so crucified that one could see that Jesus was living in her. When one looks at her picture in the article you do not see Eunice. But you see the Living Bride Groom who is in her.

The article reflects of her heart love for her Bridegroom. Though she loved her dear earthly husband Elisha. She loved her Heavenly Bridegroom even more. Her heart and the Heart of Jesus were linked as one.

Thus something very special may have taken place during her martyrdom. As her blood was being shed. She was probably linked to her Bridegroom as one with Him and saying Blood of Jesus! Blood of Jesus! Blood of Jesus!

But I believe there is another reason that she said blood of Jesus 3 times. She may have been giving one final testimony to the cleansing blood of Jesus to her attackers. Saints realize this was a woman who always shared Jesus in life and word. Her dear husband testified that she would always go out in the village ringing a bell and encouraging people to come to faith in Christ. The devil certainly did not like this. All the devil could do was take her life.

I can't help but think that in the final words of this dear sister she was testifying also of the cleansing blood of Jesus that would forgive her attackers. And that would have removed the guilt of their sins. I believe this was Eunice's final cry of saying Father forgive them. For they know not what they do.

Again brothers and sister these are only my thoughts as given by the Spirit of my heart. But the martyrdom of this dear sister testifies deeply to my heart. It also testifies of my own shallow walk with Christ.

Let us all look to the example of this dear sister. Let us consider her deep and abiding faith in Jesus. And let us consider the result of her conduct and imitate her faith. For the Lord Jesus Christ is truly the same yesterday and today and forever.

For this truly is from the foot of His cross.

Re: Friday Morning, July 22, 2016, on: 2016/7/22 6:39

Psalm 72:14

14 He will rescue their life from oppression and violence,
And their blood will be precious in his sight;

The above passage is taken out of a Psalm of Solomon. It is entitled the Reign of the Righteous King. I believe the psalm foreshadows The Ultimate Reign of Jesus when He comes to establish His kingdom on this Earth.

The psalm tells us that He will rescue their life from oppression and violence, and their blood will be precious in His sight.

Brothers and sisters this depicts the persecuted church. This is the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. And those who are persecuted and ultimately martyred for their faith in Jesus are precious in the sight of the Lord.

If the persecuted are precious in the sight of the Lord. If their blood is precious in His sight. Should these saints not be precious to us. These are our brothers and sisters. Should something in the sufferings of the persecuted brothers and sisters not move our hearts to at least pray for them.

Let us be careful that we do not despise the persecuted. Let us be careful that we do not speak against them. For in so doing we are speaking against the bride of the Lord Jesus. In so doing we are speaking against our own brothers and sisters.

Saints let us remember the sufferings of those who carry the cross in places that we can't begin to comprehend. Let us remember the blood of the martyrs this day. Let us keep our precious brothers and sisters in our prayers.

For let us not despise those who carry the cross. For I truly believe if we despise our brothers and sisters. Then God will despise us.

Let us hold those up in our prayers this day those who suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ.

For this is from the foot of His cross.

Re: Friday Evening. July 22, 2016, on: 2016/7/22 19:40

Psalm 116:15

Precious in the sight of the Lord
Is the death of His godly ones.

Our Lord Jesus has a special place in His heart for those who are martyred for Him. Some time ago I posted about the martyrdom of Stephen. When Stephen gazed into heaven and saw the Lord Jesus, He saw Him standing (Acts 7:55). Any other time Jesus is mentioned as being at the right hand of God He is sitting. But in this case Jesus is standing.

As I have reflected on this. I cannot help but think that Jesus was standing out of respect for Stephen as he would be the first martyr, the first witness, of His Beloved Bride. But for sure Stephen would not be the last. From that time of 2000 years ago, millions of martyrs have come into the presence of Jesus. Millions of souls have been laid under that altar. Millions of lives have had their blood shed for the Lord Jesus Christ at the foot of the cross.

So yes God does have a special place in His heart for the martyrs. Saints make no mistake. The persecuted church is precious in the sight of God. The question is do we regard the persecuted church as precious to us as God does to Him?

This is our family. These are our brothers and sisters. Do we cry out for them in our prayers? Do we agonize for them in our souls? Or do we merely dismiss them as those poor unfortunates over there while we continue to pursue our American Christendom?

The persecuted Church ask very little of us in the West. But what they ask is the most important thing we can do for them. They ask us to pray for them. Their prayer request do not go something like please pray that I get out of my trial or tribulation. But the persecuted ask please pray that I may remain faithful to my Lord in the midst of this trial or tribulation. Please pray that I will not deny Jesus in the midst of my suffering. Please pray that I will be confirmed as under his image in the midst of my persecutions.

Saints is it too much to ask that we pray for the persecuted church. His persecuted bride is very special to Him. The martyrs are very special to Him. If the persecuted church occupies an important part in Jesus's heart as His bride. Should it not occupy an important place in our heart as this is our persecuted family?

From the foot of His cross.

Re: Cancek Cancel Cancel, on: 2016/7/25 8:03

Re: Monday Morning, July 25, 2016, on: 2016/7/25 8:20

... For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our lord... Romans 8:38-39

"Persecution is not a punishment, but rather enduring persecution faithfully is a way of expressing Christ's love, he said, adding that there is a need to pray for Christians in northern Nigeria and assist those in need. They need to be encouraged in prayers to respond to persecution not with violence, but with Christ's message of peace, love and joy, he said."

... Nigerian pastor who lost his beloved wife in a jihadist attack...

Paul reminds his hearers in the letter to Romans that nothing in heaven or on earth or in hell can separate them from the love of Christ. Not even persecution and death. The persecuted brothers and sisters do not ask the questions of "why". That is if God so loved them why does He put them through suffering and martyrdom? It is enough to know that in the midst of their suffering and martyrdom they are not separated from the love of God.

The brother pastor in Nigeria who recently lost his beloved wife in a jihadist attack understands that persecution is simply another expression of the love of Christ.

Let us pray that our persecuted brothers and sisters be aware of the love of Christ in the midst of their tribulations. Let us also pray that we be aware of Christ in the midst of our tribulations.

For this is from the foot of His cross.

Re: Monday Evening, August 1, 2016, on: 2016/8/1 22:37

The following is a story of one of the early English martyrs who died for their faith in Christ. This is from DC Talks put out by Voice of the Martyrs.

"Thomas I have to know. I must know. Tomorrow when they take you to the stake to be burned. And if you have presence of mind. Will you raise your hands if you do not feel the pain of the fire. Brother I must know." Thomas told his friend. "If I have presence of mind and do not feel the pain of the fire. I will raise my hands and let you know."

The next day Thomas was led to the stake to be burned for his faith in Christ. He was chained to the stake. The torches were set to ignite the wood that was under him. The fire started coming up toward him. Eventually the flames consumed his body and his skin was burning to a crisp. Everyone thought for sure that he had burned to death. Then suddenly, Thomas raised his arms toward heaven. His arms are covered in flames. Then 3 times he clapped his hands. By this time the crowd was breaking into cheers.

The dear brother had his answer.

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For our affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

From the foot of His cross.

Re: - posted by Theophila (), on: 2016/8/2 6:13

Dear Lord Jesus,
Please help us be sensible to You in our afflictions. Please help us be sensible to Your Body especially in nations where there is intense physical persecution.
Amen!

Re: Wednesday Morning, August 3, 2016, on: 2016/8/3 7:42

This entry has also been posted on the board as Two Rows by the Sea.

Two Rows by the Sea Reply To This Post | Edit |

A little over a year ago 21 followers of Jesus were martyred on the shores of Libya. The following is an account of these 21 precious saints who passed into glory into the presence of Jesus.

They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskin s and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated, the world was not worthy of them. (Hebrews 11:37-38)

I don't think I will ever read this passage again without seeing in my mind images of men dressed in orange jump suits with black-clad, masked executors behind each one of them. ISIS's brutal killing of 21 Christian Egyptians in Libya last month for being "people of the Cross" devastated their families and shocked Egypt and the world.

Very encouraged

When I arrived at the Bible Society office the morning after the video was released, feeling sad and depressed, a young coworker told me that as well as the horror and sorrow she felt at the young men's deaths, their faith had left her feeling "very encouraged."

"What has happened has shown me that there are Christians today who are brave enough to face death rather than deny their Lord," she told me. "It has shown me that the Gospel message can still help us to hold onto the promises of God, even when facing death."

Mourning nation

To bring comfort to a mourning nation, we at the Bible Society produced more than a million copies of a leaflet called "Two Rows by the Sea", which is being distributed throughout the country. It contains a collection of Scripture passages about faith in adversity and God's enduring love. It also includes a poem, from which the leaflet takes its name, written by medical doctor who has a gift for writing poetry. I'd like to share the poem here. May it bless you as it has blessed many people across the world over the past two weeks:

Two Rows By the Sea

Two rows of men walked the shore of the sea,
On a day when the world's tears would run free.
One a row of assassins, who thought they did right,

The other of innocents, true sons of the light.
One holding knives in hands held high,
The other with hands empty, defenseless and tied.
One row of slits to conceal glaring-dead eyes,
The other with living eyes raised to the skies.
One row stood steady, pall-bearers of death,
The other knelt ready, welcoming heaven's breath.
One row spewed wretched, contemptible threats,
The other spread God-given peace and rest.
A Question: Who fears the other?
The row in orange, watching paradise open?
Or the row in black, with minds evil and broken?

Revelation 12:11

And they overcame him because of the blood of the lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

Posted in respect of those martyrs that have passed out of this life into eternal life with Jesus.

But this truly is from the foot of His cross

Re: Tuesday Afternoon, August 9, 2016, on: 2016/8/9 17:03

...Remember my imprisonment...

Colossians 4:18

One simple verse of three words written by the Apostle Paul to the believers in Colossae. Remember my imprisonment. One simple phrase of three words that are persecuted brothers and sisters would ask of us in the West. Remember my imprisonment.

Can we remember the tens of thousands of believers who are imprisoned in North Korea? Can we remember the 2000 believers imprisoned in shipping containers or holes in the ground in Eritrea. Can we remember hundreds of brothers and sisters imprisoned in jails in Iran and China?

How do we remember them? We remember them in our prayers.

Ephesians 6:18

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

This truly is from the foot of His cross.

Re: Wednesday Morning, August 17, 2016, on: 2016/8/17 8:17

This article was sent to me yesterday. Here a brother describe seven ways to pray for the persecuted church as seen from the ministry of Paul. I had posted this under another thread heading on the board. I now put this at the foot of the cross, the persecuted Church.

May this article help you and give you direction as you faithfully pray for our brothers and sisters in the shadow of the cross.

Seven Ways To Pray for the Persecuted Church

When members of the body of Christ suffer, the whole body suffers together (1 Cor 12:26). Even if we are geographically removed from those being persecuted, we can still draw near to them spiritually:

“Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body”
(Hebrews 13:3).

The apostle Paul himself was well acquainted with suffering and persecution. In fact, many of his pastoral letters were written while he was behind prison bars. Since Paul was a man acquainted with grief and persecution, we can learn how to pray for the persecuted by looking at his life, ministry, and pastoral letters. Here are 7 ways we can pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters, taken from the ministry of Paul:

1. Pray that they would see the grace of Christ as all-sufficient, magnifying God’s power in their weakness.

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
(2 Corinthians 12:9)

2. Pray that they would treasure Jesus more than life itself.

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”
(Philippians 1:21)

“But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus”
(Acts 20:24)

3. Pray that their unshakable joy in Christ would be a witness to their persecutors.

“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them”
(Acts 16:25)

“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.”
(Philippians 1:27-28)

4. Pray that their future glory would overshadow their present afflictions.

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”
(Romans 8:18)

5. Pray that they would trust in God's wisdom, strength, and deliverance not their own.

Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

(2 Corinthians 1:7-9)

6. Pray that God would give them the right words to say as fearless ambassadors for Christ.

and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

(Ephesians 6:19-20)

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison, that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

(Colossians 4:2-4)

7. Pray that God would protect and deliver them to safety, according to His good and perfect will.

I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints.

(Romans 15:30-31)

At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.

(Philemon 1:22)

From the foot of His cross

Â Â Â

Re: , on: 2016/8/17 9:42

That's really good stuff Bear. Thanks for sharing it.

God Bless,
Jeff

Thursday Mornong, August 18, 2016, on: 2016/8/18 6:00

I thought for the next 7 days I would post each of the prayer points contained on the article Seven Ways to Pray for the Persecuted Church. If you are so led this will be a good way to take a minute or two and lift up our brothers and sisters in prayer in your personal time with the Lord.

1. Pray that they would see the grace of Christ as all-sufficient, magnifying God's power in their weakness.

My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

(2 Corinthians 12:9)

.....
From the foot of His cross

Re: Thursday Evening, August 18, 2016, on: 2016/8/18 20:22

Nik Ripken was asked what would the persecuted church say to us in the West. He responded they would say three things to us Western Christians.

1. Take joy in your suffering. It is an honor to suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. To share Jesus is obedience. You are free to share Jesus irregardless of politics. Because you are sharing Jesus out of an obedient heart.
3. Do not fear. Satan brings fear. Jesus remove fear.

Certainly profound things to take to heart from our persecuted brothers and sisters.

From the foot of His cross.

Re: From the Foot of His Cross...The Persecuted Church , on: 2016/8/18 22:35

This quote may not be word for word, but the message is true.....

"When I share the gospel of Jesus with others, I'm identifying with my persecuted family in Christ.....but.....When I keep Jesus to myself, from my neighbors, my co-workers, from the people down the street, from the people across the seas, essentially any non believer....not only am I NOT identifying with our family of God in persecution...but I'm identifying with their persecutors who put them in chains. The worst persecution is keeping Jesus from others--because their persecution will be for eternity. The hard truth....we care more for bricks and mortar than we do for lost souls." Nik Ripken

Re: Sheri, on: 2016/8/18 23:22

Quite right my sister. To that I say Amen.

Re: Friday Morning, August 19, 2016, on: 2016/8/19 7:53

2. Pray that they would treasure Jesus more than life itself.

â€œFor to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.â€œ
(Philippians 1:21)

â€œBut I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesusâ€œ
(Acts 20:24)

.....
I have recently began asking myself and the Lord the question why would our brothers and sisters suffer so much torture and heartache? Why would they endure so many years of imprisonment? Why would they even endure the heartache of martyrdom either to their family or themselves? In other words why would they undergo persecution?

For sure it may be out of fear that if they deny Jesus then He will deny them. Â But then that almost sounds like a legalistic reason for suffering persecution. It would almost make their sufferings altruistic in some sense. Such reasoning would make suffering and martyrdom a cult.

I would like to suggest that there is something far deeper here. That what our persecuted brothers and sisters find in Jesus

us is something far more valuable. Â To our persecuted brethren Jesus has become their pearl of great price. Jesus has become their treasure.

Paul writes in Philippians 3:7-9,

... But whatever things were gain to me, these things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Â More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in him not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.

Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians from a Roman prison. And even in that prison where he was suffering for the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul makes the declaration that he has counted all things as loss for the surpassing value of knowing Jesus alone.

In the midst of his sufferings Paul would say that Jesus is worth it. He is worth suffering for. For what Paul saw in Jesus was a treasure so great. So eternal. So far more encompassing. That like Moses. He would suffer the reproach of Christ so that he might gain Jesus. Counting as rubbish all the treasures of this world. Rubbish because there was great delight and value in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is why when I read about dear sisters such as Fatima of Saudi Arabi, Senait Habta of Eritrea. or Surta of Somalia, or countless others who are martyred for their faith in Jesus. I see in their testimony that they count Jesus as far more worthy to suffer and die for than the things of this world.

This has been the testimony of our brothers and sisters down through the ages. Â They were not dying for a theological abstract. They were not dying for some esoteric idea. They were dying for a Person. Â For these dear saints had had an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. Â They had a personal marvelous encounter With Jesus. That as such they were willing to consider Him is far more precious than even their own lives.Â Something their persecutors could never understand.

Brothers and sisters let this be our example. May we count Jesus as far more precious than even our own sufferings that we may endure. Because He is worth it.

"Eighty and six years have I served Him, and he never did me any injury; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior."

--Polycarp, disciple of the Apostle John, and Bishop of Smyrna.

For the Word did not become a philosophy, theology, or a concept to be discussed debated or pondered. But the Word became a Person to be followed, loved, and enjoyed.

... From a Christmas card I saw years ago.

This is from the foot of His cross.

Re: Friday Evening, August 19, 2016, on: 2016/8/19 21:43

John 6:67-69.

Jesus asked the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God."

Earlier today brother Frank and I were talking about why the persecuted would endure so much tribulation in following Je

sus. I shared with him the revelation the Spirit had given me regarding the persecuted finding an intrinsic value in following Jesus Himself. That there was a beauty in Jesus that the persecuted saw. That they were willing to follow him even to the gates of hell.

Frank shared with me about the testimony of his dear mother who came to Jesus. Prior to the time of her coming to Jesus. Frank's father had never laid a hand on her. But after Frank's mother came to Christ, Frank's father would mercilessly beat her for following Jesus. Yet Frank's dear mother would never deny Jesus. Despite the constant beatings and she held firm in her faith in following the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the testimony of our dear brother's mother that brought our brother Frank to the Lord Jesus.

Frank's mother would always respond regarding her situation, Where will I go? For I have discovered life?

This was the testimony of the disciples of Jesus. The twelve, later who would become eleven. They had discovered eternal life. For they knew that Jesus was the Holy One of Israel. Where else would they go to find words that would give them spirit and life. And all of the other disciples except one died martyr's death. Because they had discovered the one who would bring them words of eternal life.

This is also the testimony of our brothers and sisters in persecuted lands. Particularly when Muslims come to Jesus through a dream or a vision. They have discovered the One who would bring them meaning and purpose in life. They have discovered Jesus.

This is why our brothers and sisters will suffer persecutions in shipping containers and holes in the ground and death camps in North Korea. This is why believers are willing to be beheaded by Muslims. For they have discovered the One who would give them eternal life.

As I said in the morning post. Believers in Jesus Christ do not die for a theological abstract. They do not die for some type of esoteric force or idea. They die for a Person. They're willing to lay down their lives for the One who will give them eternal life and meaning. They die for the one who will give them purpose in this life and in the life to Come. They die for the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is why are brothers and sisters in persecuted nations endure so much for their Lord Jesus Christ. O that we would find Jesus to be so worthy to us. That we are willing to suffer for Him. Even the loss of our own life.

For this truly is from the foot of His cross.

... Frank gave me permission to share about his mother and her wonderful testimony...

Re: - posted by StirltUp (), on: 2016/8/20 5:19

Beautiful Blaine.

Thank you.

Re: Saturday Morning, August 20, 2016, on: 2016/8/20 9:17

3. Pray that their unshakable joy in Christ would be a witness to their persecutors.

“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:25)

“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.” (Philippians 1:27-28)

There is something very unnatural about the joy that the persecuted show when they are reviled or slandered or even beaten or tortured for the name of Christ. This is not some type of masochistic enduring of pain. But a fruit of the Spirit that is being worked out in their lives. That the persecuted brethren have joy that they consider themselves worthy to suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is certainly evidenced to the early church. We see in Acts 5:41,

... so they went on their way from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer a rebuke for His name...

A number of times Paul is always speaking of the joy of Christ in his imprisonment in that marvelous little book of Philippians.

The only way the persecuted believers in times past and in times present can have the joy of Jesus in the midst of persecution is through the power of the Holy Spirit. For one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is joy.

Let us pray that our brothers and sisters this day will have the joy of Jesus in the midst of their persecution. Let us pray that their joy will be a witness to their persecutors. And let us pray that we may have the joy of Jesus in the midst of our sufferings whatever we may go through.

For this post is from the foot of His cross.

Re:, on: 2016/8/21 8:17

... Cancel Post...

Re: Sunday Morning, August 21, 2016, on: 2016/8/21 8:41

Matthew 5:11-12

Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me, rejoice and be glad. For your reward in heaven is great, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

I wanted to continue thinking about joy in the midst of persecution. In the above verse Jesus is telling his disciples that they should rejoice and be glad when people insult them and persecute them and falsely say all kinds of evil against them because of Him. He says they are blessed. He also says they have a great reward in heaven. Luke goes as far as to say that they who are persecuted are to leap for joy in the midst of their tribulations (Lk.5:23).

If I may borrow a term for our brother, Nik Ripken, this seems almost insane. Why is Jesus saying that in the midst of our persecutions we are to rejoice, be glad, even leap for joy. Truly this is an insanity of God

Brothers and sisters I must share with you that I do not have a clear answer of why Jesus commands us to rejoice in the midst of our persecutions. Let alone have the experience to draw from. Though I suspect in times to come Jesus will teach me to rejoice in the midst of whatever sufferings I may go through.

Suffice to say though that our brothers and sisters are going through persecutions and to a degree rejoicing in them. And as I said in yesterday's post. This is something worked out by the Holy Spirit giving them that spiritual fruit of joy.

We are told in Matthew that those who are persecuted are to rejoice in that there is a great reward waiting for them in heaven. Again I do not think that this is some type of anesthetic suffering and that they suffer for reward sake. But I think that because their Lord has gone through suffering. They count it a joy to enter into His sufferings in that they, as their Lord

rd, do take up their cross to follow Jesus.

Hebrews 12:2 says that who for the joy set before Him Jesus endured the cross despising not it's shame.

I can only imagine that in the midst of those who suffer persecution that the ultimate reward will be Jesus Himself. That perhaps for those who go through the fires of affliction that Fourth Man will be all the more precious to the persecuted when they see Him in heaven. Perhaps the ultimate reward will be the smile on Jesus face when He says well done my faithful child.

Saints I have prayed for the persecuted for the last 6 years. But even in praying for them I still have not plummed the depths the mystery of persecution. I can only assume by God's grace that as I continue to pray for them. And as I continue to identify with the persecuted brethren that perhaps God will show me by revelation the mystery of persecution that they experience And perhaps this will only come through my being persecuted as our brothers and sisters endure in restricted nations. So that I may know His joy in the midst of persecution.

In the meantime let us continue to pray that our brothers and sisters will find joy in the midst of their persecutions. Let us pray that they realize there will be a reward waiting for them in heaven. May they realize that that reward will ultimately be Jesus himself.

And let us also pray that in the midst of our persecutions that we too will have a reward. And that reward ultimately will, no doubt, be Jesus himself.

For this post is from the foot of His cross.

Re: , on: 2016/8/21 8:41

Please refer to previous post for today's entry.

Re: Tuesday Morning, August 23, 2016, on: 2016/8/23 12:32

4. Pray that their future glory would overshadow their present afflictions.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
(Romans 8:18)

I wanted to pick up again on the seven ways to pray for the persecuted church. The fourth way that we are asked to pray for the persecuted church is that their future glory will overshadow their present circumstances. Some will probably dismiss this as pie in the sky by and by. Perhaps wishful thinking.

But for our persecuted brothers and sisters this is a present reality that gives them hope. Mainly because they are looking toward Christ who is the hope of glory. They see Jesus as their hope. Our persecuted brethren look to Jesus because He conquered death. And He is reigning at the right hand of His father. As such they too will reign in the millennial Kingdom with Jesus.

Our brother Paul had this confidence and expectation. For he writes in 2nd Corinthians 4:17-18,

---For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal---

For ultimately our brothers and sisters know that this world is not their eternal home. But their eternal home will be with Jesus. For in the midst of their sufferings they know that they will reign with him. And may we in our sufferings know that we will also reign with Him.

Let us pray that our brothers and sisters will have the hope of glory that is found in Jesus this day.

For this post is from the foot of His cross.

Re: Wednesday Morning, August 24, 2016, on: 2016/8/24 6:02

4. Pray that they would trust in God's wisdom, strength, and deliverance not their own.

Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. (2 Corinthians 1:7-9)

The 5th prayer request would be that the persecuted look to God alone for their support. Not look to themselves.

From the foot of His cross.

Re: Is He Worth It...Wed. 8/31/16, on: 2016/8/31 9:37

Philippians 3:7-11

But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ - the righteousness from God based on faith.

My brothers and sisters is Jesus worth it? This is the question that is posed in the movie the Insanity of God. No doubt that his question is reflected in the book by the same title written by our brother Nik Ripken.

There would have been no doubt in the Apostle Paul's mind that Jesus is indeed worth it. In the verses above we see that he suffers the loss of all things so that he might know Christ. And even to make him known to others period all throughout the letters of Paul we see how he has suffered shipwrecks and beatings and imprisonment and persecutions so that he might preach the gospel to others that they might come to know the same Lord that He knew.

As I reflect upon the sufferings of our brothers and sisters who suffer in shipping containers of Eritrea and the death camps of North Korea. Their answer to the question is Jesus worth it? Their answer would be a resounding YES! YES! YES! He indeed is worth all of the suffering and all of the pain and all of the torture.

Not only that. The persecuted brethren would say that He is worth suffering for so that they might make him known to others. They are willing to suffer the hardships of persecution for the Lord Jesus Christ so that they might share what they have encountered to those that are still in darkness. Because they have answered the question is Jesus worth it. They have answered that question with a resounding YES!!! They have answered that question with a resounding YES millions of times over. Our persecuted brothers and sisters would say that Jesus is worth it. He is worth it even if it means their own life.

Is Jesus more important to us than my right to carry a conceal and carry. Is Jesus more worth it than my right to pack a weapon and then say make my day? Is Jesus more worth it that I would be willing to lay my family and my life down before an enemy to see that they might come to Christ?

Our persecuted brothers and sisters have already answered the hard questions of laying down their families and their lives on the altar of Christ. I have shared in this forum the story of Leina and Samar. This was a husband and wife who ministered in the middle of Syria when the civil war started there. They had to work through laying down their lives. They had to work through laying down the lives of one another. They had to work through laying down the lives of your children. Perhaps the most difficult thing for any parent to do.

We in America have yet to work through those questions. Our Constitutional right to carry a conceal and carry is more important to us than perhaps coming to the cross of Jesus Christ and laying everything down at the feet of Jesus and trusting in Him and him alone to protect us.

The persecuted brothers and sisters do not have this option. They do not trust in carnal weapons of men to protect them. Rather they trust and those divine weapons that can truly deliver them from the hand of Satan.

In Revelation 12:11 we read,

They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not love their lives in the face of death.

The persecuted brothers and sisters overcome and conquer Satan because they do not love their own lives. They have surrendered their lives at the cross. They do this because they see that Jesus is worth it. Jesus is worth it even in the face of their enemies.

Brothers and sisters let us look to our persecuted brethren and learn from them. Let us look to them and learn to lay everything down at the foot of His cross. I believe in the days and weeks and months that lie ahead the persecution in North America will continue to increase. And we will need to sit at the feet of our persecuted brethren and learn from them how to endure and even overcome what will soon come upon us.

Let us walk in humility before Jesus and learn from him through what our persecuted brethren can teach us. For this truly is posted from the foot of His cross.

Re: 6th Way to Pray for Persecuted Church...Wed. PM, 8/31/16, on: 2016/8/31 16:50

6. Pray that God would give them the right words to say as fearless ambassadors for Christ.

and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (Ephesians 6:19-20)

Even in the midst of his imprisonment Paul would ask that prayer would be made for him so that he could communicate the Gospel of Jesus. Even make it clearly known to his persecutors. Paul always looked at his imprisonment as an opportunity for evangelism.

Paul writes in Phil.1:12-13,

... Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has actually resulted in the advance of the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is in the cause of Christ...

So Paul saw his imprisonment as another opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus. It appears that the gospel even went into the house of Caesar himself. Paul writes in Philippians 4:22,

... All the saints greet you, but especially those from Caesar's household...

Our brothers and sisters in North Korea actually see the death camps as a mission field. They look up on their persecutions as preparing them for their ultimate ministry which will be the death camp of North Korea. It is said that in the death camps the N. Korean believers have the most freedom to share the gospel. Not much can be done to them since these believers are already under a sentence of death. Thus they share Christ with reckless abandonment. But bringing the hope of Jesus to those who so desperately need to hear it.

There truly is insanity and all of this. We would call it the insanity of God. Therefore let us pray that our brothers and sisters and persecuted Nations will have the boldness to share Jesus. Even in their imprisonment.

For this is posted from the foot of His cross.

Re: Identifying With the Persecuted Brethren...Fri. a.m. 9/2/16, on: 2016/9/2 7:39

This quote may not be word for word, but the message is true.....

"When I share the gospel of Jesus with others, I'm identifying with my persecuted family in Christ.....but.....When I keep Jesus to myself, from my neighbors, my co-workers, from the people down the street, from the people across the seas, essentially any non believer....not only am I NOT identifying with our family of God in persecution...but I'm identifying with their persecutors who put them in chains. The worst persecution is keeping Jesus from others--because their persecution will be for eternity. The hard truth....we care more for bricks and mortar than we do for lost souls." Nik Ripken

The above quote was posted by sister Sherri a few days ago. I thought it was worth quoting again. Particularly since it follows the previous post. The post where the persecuted asked that we pray they have right words in sharing Jesus.

Brothers and sisters a thoughtful question... Are we identifying with the persecuted church by sharing Jesus?

From the foot of His cross.

Re: Friday Morning, 9/9/16, on: 2016/9/9 8:16

I use a prayer card from VOM to pray generally for the persecuted church. Today's prayer request was to ask the Lord to strengthen the persecuted church and refresh their faith through His word.

As I prayed this for my persecuted brothers and sisters. I thought of the dear saints in North Korea. I remembered seeing in videos how they would gather under blankets with small pen lights reading the word of God. Praying the word of God.

I can't begin to imagine what it is to live in a nation like North Korea where you have to look around you. And perhaps even in a spirit of fear try to grab something of the word of God. To read it quickly and hide it in your heart. And hope that you have not been discovered by other members of your family who will report you to the authorities.

As I write this time convicted by the fact that I have the freedom to read or listen to the word of God. I can listen to it in the privacy of the house I can take. I do not have to worry about the secret police busting in and Hauling me off to prison. Yet how much time do I waste in frivolous pursuits.

Lord Jesus I pray our brothers and sisters will have access to your word that they can get into their hearts and Minds. I pray that I will not waste time on frivolous Pursuits. But give more attention to your word and prayer. For I pray this in your blessed name.

From the foot of His cross.

-bbs-

Re: , on: 2016/9/9 13:05

"As I write this time convicted by the fact that I have the freedom to read or listen to the word of God. I can listen to it in the privacy of the house I can take. I do not have to worry about the secret police busting in and Hauling me off to prison. Yet how much time do I waste in frivolous pursuits."

My spirit is in agreement with you, bearmaster. And I thank our Amazing and Beautiful Lord Jesus Christ for giving us faith through grace and baptizing us with the Holy Spirit and His Word...the persecuted are also being baptized with fire...it seems...(or perhaps this will prove to be the same thing)...

...I am so grateful and have such thanksgiving for (which is also a gift from Him) the privilege of having (virtually unlimited) access to His Word AND His Spirit, and that he would convict the hearts of the saints about how they use their time "at this HOUR"...

...This conviction is an a fortiori blessing when this conviction ignites us to ACTION...inspired by and within His very Body of Believers!!!

...For example, your 30 Day NT challenge, bearmaster, coupled with the wisdom of God's Word and the Love of His Spirit (which you share unsparingly), has inspired my own "active" accountability to take this challenge and meet it with His Victory...

...and my renewed motives underlying my desire for His Word have been intensified with a sincere sense of urgency, in light of the persecuted church...

So many more reasons to get His Word into you and inscribed upon your heart, mind, soul and strength and...

...Like Him...through Him was the Word made Flesh...I want to become His Chiastic eternal partner by becoming Flesh made Word...

Love-in-Christ,

kyp

Re:Friday Afternoon, 9/9/16, on: 2016/9/9 16:37

Katherine Walden

March 14, 2016

As I was falling asleep one night, I "heard" the wail and weeping of hundreds of souls in deep travail. I asked God. "Who are these who weep so?" And God answered. "These are the cries of the persecuted church, who intercede for those Christians who live in freedom of faith and take it for granted." My heart broke.

From the foot of His cross.

-bbs-

Re: Wed. Morn. 9/21/16, on: 2016/9/21 8:36

Romans 8:33-34

Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

It has been said that the New Testament is best understood through the eyes of the persecuted church. This is because the persecuted believers can identify with those of whom the New Testament was written to. The New Testament is a book written by the persecuted for the persecuted.

The persecuted believers today can understand the verses above set in the context of Jesus interceding for them in prayer. They can see the intercessory ministry of Jesus set against a wider backdrop of the passage of victory that Paul star

ts in Romans 8:26 and culminates in Romans 8:39.

Jesus is presently interceding for His beloved persecuted bride in the presence of his Father. This question I would put before us today. Those of us who are not experiencing the persecution as our brothers and sisters are in other parts of the world. Are we also taking up the intercessory ministry of Jesus and lifting up his beloved persecuted bride in our prayers? If not, why?

I can hear the cries of some who say I am not called to this ministry. I am not called to pray for the persecuted church. I grant that not all are called to an intercessory ministry of praying for the persecuted church in a full-time capacity.

But my brother or sister and may I put this question before you gently. Can you escape the injunction of Hebrews 13:3 that says,

... Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those are ill-treated, since you yourself also are in the body...?

Is there not some time during the day that you can at least lift up the persecuted brethren in your prayers. You may not know the particulars of how to pray for them. But certainly you can ask that God in His Spirit will intercede in their particular situations and will strengthen and encourage them.

The International Day of Prayer for the persecuted church is less than a few weeks away. Those of you who do have a heart for the persecuted church I would urge you to challenge your missions pastor or your pastor to get your church involved. You can go to the website of Open Doors or Voice of the Martyrs or other websites that give excellent material and how your church can participate in IDOP this coming November.

Persecution Watch, in conjunction with other ministries, will host two 12-hour calls on the first two IDOP Sundays this coming November. I pray Greg will let me post those calls on the Forum.

Also at the end of September we will have a 24-hour call for the persecuted church. Again I hope Greg will let me post information on that call next week.

For those of you who have a heart for the persecuted church and would like to join our prayer calls. Please email me at my email below this thread here. Also my email address is in my profile.

Brothers and sisters let us take up the intercessory ministry of Jesus. And let us remember our persecuted brothers and sisters in prayer. It has been said by one persecuted ministry that prayer is the least yet the most effective thing you can do to for our persecuted brothers and sisters. And James says that the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

Again let us remember our persecuted family in our prayers before the throne of grace.

Posted from the foot of His cross

-bbs-
pwprayercall@gmail.com

Re: Thursday a.m. 9/22/16, on: 2016/9/22 8:34

Matthew 26:22

Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death, remain here and keep watch with me."

The above verses are set in a wider context of Jesus praying In The Garden of Gethsemane. Here the agony of Jesus was so great that he invited three of his closest companions to come with Him and pray. A No less than the Son of God Himself needed prayer from those closest to him. He needed prayer as He agonized over the cross in which He would carry and suffer on. Yet when he returned from His heart-wrenching prayer. He found them sleeping. A How this must have grieved and broken the heart of Jesus.

One aspect of this invitation was that it would have been an honor to come and stand with Jesus in His hour of trial. Yet the disciples missed honor of standing with Jesus and fell asleep.

Brothers and sisters we too have been given an invite. That is an invite to stand with those that are carrying the cross as they follow Jesus. And that is the invite to pray for our brothers and sisters in the persecuted church. Yet I fear that many of us are asleep. Many of us do not hear the plea to pray for our brothers and sisters.

I remember visiting a house church a few years ago. I spoke to the house church leader about the persecuted church in other parts of the world. His glib response to me was we are not led in that direction. My heart was grieved over his response. No. Not all are called to pray for the persecuted church in a full-time capacity. Yet, I echo my question from yesterday. How can we escape the injunction of Hebrews 13:3? That is to remember those in prison as if we were their fellow prisoners and those who are ill treated because we ourselves are also in the body.

Yet much of the North American Church ignores the injunctive command to remember our persecuted brothers and sisters and keep them in our prayers. Many do not want to pray for the persecuted because they come face-to-face with the cross that the suffering church carries. Many do not want to pray for the persecuted because they see that they too must pick up the cross. That same cross that are persecuted brothers and sisters carry. The cross requires the sacrifice. It requires the sacrifice of even our own lives.

But for the few who listen. For the few who do listen to the plea how about brothers and sisters and persecuted lands to pray for them. There is honor and there is a blessing.

Persecution Watch is now going into its seventh year of lifting up our suffering brothers and sisters in prayer. I feel many times we are not worthy to wash their feet in prayer. But this is what God has birthed in our hearts. I consider it a blessed honor for us to stand with our brothers and sisters in their hour as they carry the cross.

For those who are so moved I invite you to join us on our calls. Or if you are so moved start your own prayer groups via conference call or cottage. The thing I would urge you to do is hear the cry of our persecuted brothers and sisters and pray for them. But please do not fall asleep in their hour of trial as they carry the cross.

Posted from the foot of his cross.

-bbs-
pwprayercall@gmail.com

Re: Tuesday PM...10/18/16, on: 2016/10/18 17:26

"There is no western church. There is no persecuted church. There is the church."

Nik Ripkin

-bbs-

Re: one body of Christ - posted by jujashan4 (), on: 2016/10/19 8:10

Thanks Blaine - that's a good quote.
We who are his are all his body in the world.

Re: Wed. AM...10/19/16, on: 2016/10/19 8:38

"Don't ever give up in freedom what we would never have given up in persecution! That is our witness to the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!"

Nik Ripken, The Insanity of God: A True Story of Faith Resurrected
like

-bbs-

Re: Thursday AM, 10/20/16, on: 2016/10/20 7:38

...Don't ever give up Jesus in freedom as you would never give Him up in persecution...

My thoughtful reflection of Nik Ripkin's quote posted yesterday.

-bbs-

Re: Saturday AM. 12/10/16, on: 2016/12/10 4:23

Matthew 5:11-12

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, but in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

This morning I woke up early thinking and troubled about our brother, Andrew Bronsun in Turkey. I struggled to understand the "why" of his imprisonment. Unusual I would ask that question since I lead a conference call that prays for the persecuted. Why would I even be reflecting on that question.

Yet Jesus cried out on the cross "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?" In His dark night of the soul Jesus cried out to His Father. In their dark night of the soul the persecuted cry out to their Father. Perhaps crying out that same question "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken us?"

Of course we know that God did not forsake His Son on the cross. And we know that God has not forsaken the persecuted brothers and sisters. And God has not forsaken Andrew Brunson. But it is understandable that in our humanity we would cry out Why God? Even Job posed this question to God. As I recall, God never gave an answer to Job. But God reminded him that He was sovereign.

A Chinese brother testified that in the midst of his persecutions and imprisonment he would ask Him "why". He said the Lord never gave him no answer. It was only when the brothers said Lord I accept what you give me. Then the brother said he had incredible peace.

It was only when I began to reflect upon the passages in Matthew quoted above that I had some degree of peace regarding our brother Andrew. Then I was able to enter into the mind of Christ and pray His heart for our dear brother. I prayed that in the midst of his trial our brother Andrew, would have incredible joy. That he would have crazy joy that can only come from Jesus.

Such a prayer can only be worked out by the Holy Spirit. Such joy can only come from the Holy Spirit. Thus I pray our brother will know the Holy Spirit of Jesus in a more intimate way than he has ever known Him. This is the path of the cross. We are reminded that Jesus endured the cross who for the joy set before him.

I pray our brother will rejoice. Knowing that he has a great reward waiting for him in heaven. Of course my heart is crying out for his release. But as a dear sister reminds me it is eternity that we look toward. I pray our brother does look toward eternity. And realize that ultimately he will rule and reign with Jesus.

I also pray for his dear wife Norine. I am sure that she is asking and crying out these same questions to God of "why". That is certainly understandable. And yes I pray that her husband will be returned to her. But I also pray that our sister will know peace by laying her husband on the altar.

Brothers and sisters please join me in praying for the Brunson's. Please pray that Andrew will know incredible joy in the midst of his trial. Please pray that Norine will know incredible piece by laying her husband on the altar.

For this is truly from the foot of his cross.

-bbs-

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Re: Sunday AM, 12/11/16, on: 2016/12/11 9:18

Matthew 26:38

...Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death, remain here and keep watch with Me."...

The above verse is taken out of the account of Jesus being in the Garden of Gethsemane. In a few hours Jesus would go and hang on the cross for our sins. This would be the greatest trial that our Lord would face.

Here we have no less than the Son of God asking 3 of his closest friends to come and keep watch with him. Keeping watch...To pray with Him... Not to pray "for" Him. But to pray "with" Him.

Why would the Son of God need people to pray with Him. After all this is Jesus. The Word incarnate. The One who can drive out demons. The One who could raise the dead. The One who could heal the blind. The One who could walk on water and calm storms. Why would Jesus need people to pray with Him?

As I ponder this question I must admit I do not come up with a ready answer. But some thoughts do come to mind. Jesus was also the Son of Man. Jesus also had a humanity. Jesus was also a man. Jesus was about to take up His cross and face His greatest trial. Thus Jesus needed people to pray with Him. The greatest tragedy is the disciples missed the high honor being invited to pray with Jesus. They fell asleep on their watch.

Last night we had a brother on our prayer call. He is a local pastor here who works with Open Doors as a volunteer. I asked him what are the prayer requests of the persecuted from the field. This brother's answer will surprise you. He said the persecuted ask that we not pray "for" them. But that we pray "with" them.

The brother went on to share about a pastor from Pakistan he knows. He asked the Pakistani Pastor how can we "for" you. The Pakistani Pastor replied in three words...MORE SOULS SAVED...

This is one way that we can pray "with" our persecuted brothers and sisters. Their heart cry should be our heart cry. That in the midst of their trials and tribulations. More souls will be saved.

Brothers and sisters will we pray "with" our persecuted brothers and sisters? Will we cry out for the lost as they do? Will we cry out even for those who persecute the saints? Or will our legacy be that we fell asleep on our watch?

From the foot of His cross.

-bbs-

CAPS are for emphasis only.

Re: Monday AM, 12/12/16, on: 2016/12/12 11:03

Matthew 26:39

..... And he went a little beyond them, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will but as you will.".....

One cannot really begin to plummet the depth of the above statement by Jesus in his agonizing prayer. We read another scripture that Jesus said it is written in your book that I delight to do your will. But in the verse above He is pleading that if it is possible the cup that God would have Him drink would pass from Him. But yet He surrendered completely to His Father to do His will which was to go to the cross for our sins.

Ultimately as Jesus surrendered to the will of God regarding the cross. It would be that He would be lifted up and would draw all men to Himself for salvation. For God's heart is ultimately for the salvation of men and women. Even if it be the death of His Son or those who follow him. The blood of the martyrs is truly the seed of the church. It was through the shed blood of Christ that men and women are saved. It is through the shed blood of the martyrs that they bear witness of the death of Christ and their death.

The early Anabaptists coined a term called "gellassenheit". This word meant total surrender to the will of God. These brothers and sisters accepted the will of God as seen in their persecution and martyrdom. Ultimately they saw the will of God as advancing the kingdom of God through their sufferings.

We see the same thing borne out by the persecuted church today in restricted nations. Brothers and sisters readily accept the cross of Jesus Christ. They accept the fact that they are sentenced to death. And in so doing. They are effective in reaching others for the Lord Jesus Christ. A ministry that is embedded deep in the persecuted church in restricted nations have this mindset. Their leaders have said that we desire to see others reached for the Lord Jesus even if it means our death.

Paul writes in 2nd Corinthians 4 11-12,

..... For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus sake, so that the life of Jesus Also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death Works in us but life in you.....

Brothers and sisters the persecuted are ready to lay down their lives for others so that they may come to Jesus. Can we at least sacrifice a few minutes and keep them in our prayers period for surely those who are willing to risk death for Jesus are worthy of our prayers.

From the foot of his cross.

-Bro Blaine-

Re: Thursday AM, 12/15/16, on: 2016/12/15 7:46

John 12:24-26

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it does, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there my servant will be also, if anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Ephesians 3:13

Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.

There is a ministry in the Middle East that has this vision. Their desire is to reach souls for the Lord Jesus Christ among Islamic nations. Even if it means the death of their field workers. To our modern, worldly, self-centered, western ministry, fleshly mentality; such a statement would be considered foolish. Indeed the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But to those who are being saved it is the power of God.

When we look at those in restricted nations who are at the foot of the cross. The vision to die so that others may be saved is New Testament reality. For they see this vision as reflected in the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ so that fruit would be born. That being the salvation of souls. Indeed the word "martyr" means witness in the Greek.

But again I can hear those crying say this is so foolish. So foolish to die. So foolish to give your life so that others may come to saving faith and life in the Lord Jesus. But then I would have to ask of the nay sayers. Was it foolish for the Son of God to die for us? And is it foolish that others would lay down their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ that others might come to salvation in Him?

.....For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.....

1Corinthians 1:18

From the foot of the cross.

-bro blaine-

Re: Sunday PM, 12/18/16, on: 2016/12/18 15:41

The 12 Faces of Persecution are real accounts of persecuted Christians who are standing strong as they suffer for their faith.

It was 5 a.m. and Sattar's family was fast asleep.

Suddenly, seven heavily armed Muslim militants broke down the front door, rushed inside and began looting the house. When Sattar tried to stop them, they overpowered him, knocked him to the ground and beat him.

One of the assailants stood on his neck, grabbed his dagger and was about to slit Sattar's throat when other family members began screaming, alerting the neighbors. His attackers fled.

This was the most violent encounter, but certainly not the first time that Muslims in Sattar's tiny village in Bangladesh had targeted this family and other Christ-followers in his neighborhood.

Renounce your faith...or else!

Two months earlier, Sattar and a group of persecuted Christians in the area filed a complaint with police that they were being targeted because of their faith. They were harassed at work, cut off from having business with others in the village and watched helplessly as their children were mistreated in school.

After the police stepped in, the hostile acts stopped for a while. Then they picked up again, with Muslims insisting that Sattar and his fellow believers renounce their faith and seek forgiveness in the Mosque.

They refused.

They continue to stand firm in their faith in Jesus Christ, one witness told us. Persecuted believers around the world often face harassment, torture and even threats of death simply for attending a church meeting or carrying a Bible anything that would indicate they're Christ followers.

Let us continue to keep our persecuted family in our prayers.

From the foot of His cross

Bro Blaine

Re: Monday AM, 12/19/16, on: 2016/12/19 7:44

The 12 Faces of Persecution series tells the real story of believers suffering for their faith. Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â

She wouldnâ€™t let tragedy define her Â Â

â€œFor if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.â€

â€™ Matthew 6:14

Little Sofia jumped when she heard the bullets explode in the air around her. And she ran as fast as she could.

Entering the house, she spotted her mother and father on the floor, both shot multiple times, lying in a pool of their own blood. Overwhelmed with fear and grief, she turned away.

How could this happen? the innocent 9-year-old wondered. After all, hadnâ€™t her parents been pastors, working with poor people living along Colombiaâ€™s Arauca River?

True, but they were also formerly leaders in the National Liberation Army, a guerilla insurgency group. And insurgents are well-known for harshly punishing deserters, especially those who now publically acknowledge their allegiance to Christ .

Praying for a miracle

Shocked and heartbroken, she accompanied members of her parentsâ€™ church to the hospital praying for a miracle. It never came. Both her parents died.

Isnâ€™t God supposed to listen to our prayers? she remembers thinking. Why didnâ€™t He answer our prayers?

After their parentsâ€™ funeral, Sofia and her two brothers went to live with their grandparents. A short time later, she came to the Open Doors Childrenâ€™s Center, a haven that provides protection, housing and education to children of persecuted Christians in Colombia.

Being surrounded 24-hours-a-day by loving Christians helped her to understand that despite evil all around her, the Lord still had a distinct purpose for her life: to share with other people about Godâ€™s love, despite the terrible things that sometimes happen.

Forgiving murderers

â€œGod taught me to have more trust in Him,â€ she says. â€œNow I understand that many things can happen to me and God is always with me.â€

Since forgiving the men who murdered her parents, Sofia has gone on to become an assistant counselor among the girls living at the Center. With evangelism training from the Open Doors staff, she has also started sharing her story, something that has proved to be remarkably healing.

â€œSharing my testimony of suffering and forgiveness opens the door to introducing Christâ€™s love to those around me,â€ she says. â€œI try to make people understand that we do not have to turn away from God because of difficult circumstances.â€ Â Â

After her parentsâ€™ murder, Sofia could have let bitterness and unforgiveness take root in her heart. But she didnâ€™t. Now, God has been able to use her to tell other children about his unconditional love. And itâ€™s bringing many to faith in Christ, despite the difficult circumstances theyâ€™re growing up in.

Let us pray that Sofia's example will encourage other believers like her to forgive their enemies. Let us also pray that the example of Sofia will inspire us to forgive those who have wronged us. For in the end we all we all wronged Christ. An

d He forgave us.

Blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ who was slain for us and forgive us our sins.

From the foot of his cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Tuesday AM, 12/20/16, on: 2016/12/20 5:59

#3...The 12 Faces of Persecution series tells the real story of believers suffering for their faith.

Even her own family is against her.

“But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.”

” 1 Peter 2:20

Azni doesn’t know who she can trust any more.

Her father? He kept her locked up for three months after finding an old, worn copy of the Old Testament in her bedroom.

Her mother? After telling Azni she wished she had never been born, her mother gave Azni’s brothers permission to do whatever was needed in order to remove this Christian influence from the family.

Azni’s own husband? He regularly beats her, calling her a curse.

Yet, somehow Azni has managed to keep her focus on God and continues sharing her Christian faith and passing out copies of the New Testament. This, despite the fact that she has been terribly mistreated by both family members and religious zealots in her hometown.

Accused of being filled with "evil spirits"

In Chechnya, where she lives, it is an unwritten law that people should not read the Bible. City officials recently took her copy of the New Testament, burned it and sent her to an Islamic medical center, where mullahs read the Quran to her over and over in a futile attempt to exorcise the “evil spirits.”

What was Azni doing all this time? Fasting and praying. A friend later said Azni told him that she felt God protecting her and experienced peace in her heart.

But how much can one woman be expected to endure?

Desperate to escape

Once, she escaped Chechnya with her children. But her family found them, kidnapped the children and brought them back home. Fearing she might never see her children again, she returned home and was promptly locked up “again!”

Another time, she called her friends in another region to tell them of the threats against her life. What she didn’t know was that her phone had been tapped! Later, her brother called these believers back, furious with the Christian influence they had on his sister.

In a fit of rage, he threatened to ruin their lives if they did not leave Azni alone, complaining that “having a Christian in our family causes us many problems.”

Azni’s friends wouldn’t back down. But they haven’t been able to reach her “and fear the worst.....

Please keep this dear sister in your prayers. Please remember our persecuted family in your prayers as they follow Jesus on the shadow of His cross.

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Wednesday AM, 12/21/16, on: 2016/12/21 9:32

#4...The 12 Faces of Persecution are real accounts of persecuted Christians who are standing strong as they suffer for their faith.

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Deuteronomy 31:6

The pungent smell of smoke woke Pastor Wasihun out of a dead sleep.

Seeing the flames leaping toward his bedroom, he wrestled his wife awake, grabbed their two sons and somehow managed to get out of the house before the structure collapsed into a pile of smoke and ashes.

Who could have done such a horrible thing, locking the house from the outside and then setting it on fire?

Pastor Wasihun had a pretty good idea.

Homeless and vulnerable

Ever since he and his wife had begun ministering to unbelievers in the Wallega region in Western Ethiopia, they had been getting threatening phone calls at all hours of the day and night.

Because of the fire, they were now homeless, living in a makeshift shelter made of straw and some plastic sheeting. Not nearly enough to ward off the elements or the enemies that once tried to kill him.

But though his heart was saddened that his children have to face such hardship, his soul is now at peace. I pray for those who want to kill me and who burned down my house. It is my prayer that they will be able to repent and come to the knowledge of Christ.

Although unable to help him physically, new believers in the region marveled at his fearlessness and began praying for help.

Answered prayers

Now those prayers have been answered.

Because of the sacrificial giving of Open Doors supporters around the world, Pastor Wasihun and his family have received household utensils, clothing, mattresses and linens. Some building materials have also been donated, along with enough grain to feed the family for at least three months.

Much to his family's delight, God has once again proved Himself to be faithful. Now Pastor Wasihun has gone back to fulfilling his calling: bringing Jesus to those who hunger to know this Jesus that he talks about.

Let us remember this brother in our prayers. Let us remember others like him who share Jesus in places where it is dangerous to believe.

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Thursday, 12/22/16, on: 2016/12/22 8:36

#5...The 12 Faces of Persecution are real accounts of persecuted Christians who are standing strong as they suffer for their faith.

“He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in His sight.”

’ Psalm 72:14

The Nigerian pastor wasn’t talking.

And nothing was going to get him to change his mind and reveal the secret whereabouts of the three frightened young girls he was hiding...

“They flogged me with sticks,” he says of his Muslim captors. “They treated me like a criminal and threatened to kill me.”

Through it all, the pastor remained tight-lipped. And for good reason.

A greater calling

This gentle man of God had a greater calling ’ protecting the innocent. And he feared for the lives of these young girls ’ ages 15, 12 and 10 ’ if authorities discovered their location.

Just weeks earlier, the girls’ father converted to Islam, and insisted his daughters do the same. When they refused, he gave them a week to change their minds ’ or else!

The girls fled to the pastor’s house, but a neighbor saw them and got the police involved. But not before the young sisters were whisked off to a safe house.

The pastor is grateful Open Doors field staff took an interest in his case, attended the court proceedings and provided him access to legal advice.

“You made me see more of Christ and His love when you gave your time,” the pastor said. “Your presence and encouragement strengthened me greatly.” Although these three girls were rescued, thousands more remain at risk. In fact, some regions where Sharia law is practiced have organized squads whose sole purpose is to abduct and convert Christian girls to Islam.

Please remember those believers in Nigeria in your prayers. Please remember many other Christian young women that have been abducted by the Boko Haram. Please keep them in your prayers that God will give them grace to endure their trial. Please pray that God will bring freedom to these young women if it be His will. Please pray that God will convert more jihadists in Nigeria through dreams and visions and other means to draw them to Jesus. Please keep pastors like the one described above who protect Christian young women and others from harm's way. Please keep those in Nigeria in your prayers.

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Thursday PM, 12/22/16, on: 2016/12/22 22:49

#6...I do not follow my pastor. I follow Christ, my Lord.â€• Â Â

â€•The 12 Faces of Persecutionâ€• are real accounts of persecuted Christians who are standing strong as they suffer for their faith.

â€•So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.â€•

â€• 2 Corinthians 4:16

It appears Muslim extremists will do just about anything to get strong-minded believers to renounce their faith in Christ.

Such was the case with Gabriella, a young woman from the East African country of Eritrea. When she was arrested during a secret Bible study, security officials were sure they could â€•break herâ€• into giving up information about the underground church she belonged to.

But they underestimated Gabriellaâ€™s convictions.

Willing to die for Christ

Solitary confinement didnâ€™t get her to divulge information about the underground church or its members. Neither did brutal interrogation, or even torture.

In fact, she made sure her interrogators knew that she considered it â€•an honor to encounter all the consequences for her faith in Jesus.â€•

She even said she was willing to die for Christ â€• which infuriated them even more.

A web of lies

Exasperated, they made one last-ditch effort to get Gabriella to talk, by telling her that her pastor had been arrested. Lying about the details, they saidâ€•

â€•Even before enduring â€•unnecessaryâ€• physical punishment, he admitted that he had been deceived by others concerning Christ. He also admitted that he deceived you and the others in your group. He denied Christ and expressed great regret over following Him in the past.

â€•If he then, as your pastor, realized his great mistake about Jesus and agreed to leave Him, what are you waiting for?â€•

But they werenâ€™t finished yet, and their web of lies continued.

â€•First, you followed this man as part of an extreme Christian movement in our country. And now, we want you to follow him in denying Christ. Follow your leader. This is what he wants you to do. He told us that. What do you say?â€•

Gabriella knew EXACTLY what she was going to say.

â€•I do not believe that my pastor would deny his Savior. But even if I did, I will not deny my Lord and Redeemer. I do not follow my pastor. I follow Christ, my Lord.â€•

Set free and victorious

One year later, Gabriella was released from prison â€• without her captors ever getting the answer they wanted.

Later, a group of pastors visited Gabriella and said â€•she looked like a soldier who had returned from war victorious.â€•



Her joy was very visible and quite overwhelming, they continued. Instead of talking about her woes, anger or fear, Gabriella described her incarceration as a honeymoon with Jesus. Eritrean authorities have ordered the immediate shut down of all unregistered churches, and hundreds of Christians have been arrested and tortured for nothing more than worshipping in their homes.

Eritrea has been described as and North Korea of Africa. At least two or three thousand believers are imprisoned in Eritrea. Many in shipping containers or holes in the ground. Yet the church in Eritrea continues to be vibrant and strong despite the persecutions.

Let us continue to remember her brothers and sisters such as Gabriella and others who are standing firm for their faith in Christ in the nation of Eritrea.

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Saturday,, 12/24/16, on: 2016/12/24 7:12

#7...The 12 Faces of Persecution

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No cost is too great to follow Christ Â

The 12 Faces of Persecution are real accounts of persecuted Christians who are standing strong as they suffer for their faith.

In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

â€' Luke 14:33

Mamuni was deeply saddened.

When violent anti-Christian forces overran her village in the eastern part of India, her family was forced to flee into the forest, where they spent weeks scrounging around for food and water.

But for Mamuni, being homeless wasn't the worst part of living in exile. She said it was the fact that she couldn't go to school that she found most troubling.

This little girl loved school. She loved her friends. And now she didn't have either.

Eventually, Mamuni's family moved into a government-run relief camp for victims of violence. But it wasn't much better. Living in a plastic tent, there was a constant threat of being attacked again. And because of the hardship, her parents could no longer afford to give their daughter a good education.

Losing hope

The young girl filled her days with taking care of the family's goats and making leaf plates to help with the family income.

Still, Mamuni's heart yearned to go back to school.

So you can understand the family's excitement when Open Doors adopted her village and started a school as one of their first projects. Because the school actually had teachers who came and taught, non-Christians in the village soon began sending their children to the school as well.

Suddenly, Mamuni was playing with children she hadn't spoken to in years!

The school was just one of many Open Doors projects in the region. With the help of villagers, Open Doors also built a children's park, where Mamuni's parents could be found sitting and chatting with their Hindu neighbors. The lives of Christian families in the region have been transformed. That's only possible because of your prayers and generous support.

Let us remember those in India in our prayers. Let us pray that God will strengthen His persecuted bride in that nation. Let us pray that the gospel goes forth into India.

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Sunday, 12/25/16, on: 2016/12/25 8:09

Posted from Voice of the Persecuted

Please Remember the Persecuted this Christmas

Brothers and Sisters many of you will be sitting down with family and friends enjoying their fellowship. Perhaps you will be opening gifts and enjoying Christmas dinner. With no doubt, we will reflect upon the birth of Jesus. For sure there is much to be thankful for. God has given unto us a Savior. One who has saved us from our sins. For Jesus is the greatest gift.

However, many of our brothers and sisters will not be enjoying the fellowship of their families and loved ones. Many of them will not even have a Christmas dinner. These will be our persecuted brothers and sisters in restricted nations.

Dear saints, let us remember our dear sister, Asia Bibi who has spent over 8 years in a Pakistani prison because of her testimony. Many other persecuted Pakistani asylum seekers stuck in the limbo of the asylum process seen as prey or possible terrorists. Believers in Eritrea held captive in shipping containers barely surviving the extreme conditions. Remember those in China arrested because they share the Good News of our Lord and Savior. Our Nigerian brothers and sisters who fled the Boko Haram, but now languishing for years in an IDP refugee camp as it's still too dangerous to return home. Let us remember Rev. Andrew Bronson recently separated from his family and put in a Turkish prison under false charges.

Lord willing, let us focus on Ephesians 3:14-21.

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (KJV)

Please do remember our persecuted family in your prayers. I feel constrained that we pray these verses as encouragement over our brothers and sisters suffering for their faith in Christ.

As you gather together for Christmas dinner tomorrow, join us as we add a place setting in honor of our persecuted brothers and sisters. A reminder to pray for those not able to join their families and loved ones.

Have a very blessed and merry Christmas.

Your brother in Christ,

Blaine Scogin

Serving Jesus as Prayer Director for Voice of the Persecuted and Persecution Watch.

Persecution Watch

Re: Sunday PM, 12/25/16, on: 2016/12/25 15:27

Posted from Voice of the Persecuted

At Voice of the Persecuted, we share with you all the joy that is felt as we recall and honor the birth of our dear Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Matthew 1:23

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Even angels appeared to announce the great event and joy to the world.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Luke 2:8-14

A promise of peace among men with whom He is pleased!

It's a special time of gratitude, giving, hope, anticipation of a new year and time spent with those we love. But for many, it can be a time of isolation and loneliness, longing for those we have lost and the place we called home. As we hear of war, terror attacks and fallen economies, many fear for what may come. When Christ was born, people also lived in oppression and walked in dark times. But through amazing love, we were given the greatest gift, a Savior, Jesus who is the Light of the World!

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." John 8:12

In the darkness of night, Christ was born to bring hope and light into the world. He did what no other could accomplish; He brought salvation to all who believe, love and follow Him. As followers of Christ, we will never walk in darkness.

This Christmas, let us reflect not on the trials, but on all God's blessings in our lives. Let us thank the Lord for His faithfulness to bring hope to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted and liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners. We thank God for comforting all who mourn, giving them strength and peace instead of mourning. For the ability to praise instead of a spirit of fainting, for being with us in the storm.

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. Titus 2:11-14

To all our persecuted brothers and sisters, our advocates and workers in the field, missions who partnered in emergency situationsâ€™to all friends of Voice of the Persecutedâ€™and to you who have supported our ministry and make it possible for us to care for our persecuted familyâ€™THANK YOU! We pray for the Lordâ€™s guidance and the ability to do so much more in 2017.

Rejoice! In the name of the Lord, Rejoice! Christ is King and Savior of the world.

May Peace be your gift at Christmas and your blessing all through the year. We thank you for standing with us in the mission!

God bless you,

From all of us at the Voice of the Persecuted

Bro Blaine

Re: Monday AM, 12/26/16, on: 2016/12/26 8:50

#8...The 12 Faces of Persecution

The 12 Faces of Persecutionâ€™ are real accounts of persecuted Christians who are standing strong as they suffer for their faith.

â€™We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair.â€™

â€™ 2 Corinthians 4:8

Ever since Manju became a Christian, she has been treated like an untouchable pariah â€™ sometimes by her in-laws, other times by her village neighbors but mostly by her own husband!

In fact, several times he has tried to kill her â€™ and each time, God intervened in a miraculous way to spare her life â€™ and added to the power of her testimony.

Through it all, this Indian woman has remained steadfast in her faith.

Poisoned by an unbelieving husband

Once, in the middle of a severe lashing, she bravely told her husband, â€™You will get tired of hitting me. But I will not leave Jesus.â€™ The beatings then continued until she fell unconscious on the ground.

But over the years, things got worse. A lot worse.

When Manjuâ€™s husband found out that she was praying for him, he made her drink poison.

â€™Youâ€™re a disgrace to this family!â€™ he told her. â€™Now weâ€™ll see whether this God you claim can bring a change in me is able to save you from my hands!â€™

All through the night she lay on the floor, vomiting blood while her husband waited for Manju to die. In the morning, Manjuâ€™s husband gave up and took his wife to the hospital â€™ where doctors examined her and said there was no poison in her body.

â€™It was this miracle that actually strengthened my faith in Christ and affirmed my resolution to follow Christ,â€™ she remembers.

Hope in her darkest moment

At the urging of Manjuâ€™s in-laws, she returned home, hoping that her husband had changed. But the only thing that changed was his resolve to get rid of his wife.

After one particular beating, she was thrown on the railroad tracks, unconscious, in hopes that she would be run over by a passing train.

Once again God intervened when a group of Christian women going to a believers'™ conference found her and put her on their train. But when Manju regained consciousness, she was so distraught that she tried to kill herself by jumping from the moving train.

At that moment, a "force" that she now says must have been God, pushed her back into the train and she heard a mysterious voice say,

"Why are you trying to take your life? You are a daughter of the Almighty God!"

Immediately, the pain left her body and she felt an unusual strength coursing through her veins.

Thankful for you

Since then, Open Doors field staff has been in constant contact with her, praying and offering encouragement on a daily basis. We've also offered her a sewing machine so she can earn some extra money to pay for legal fees since her husband has filed for divorce.

Manju knows her struggles are far from over. But she insists, "I will not leave Christ, even if I have to lay down my life for Him. Now I encourage other women who are facing similar trials in their lives."

Please keep this dear sister and others like her in your prayers. Please pray that God will strengthen his persecuted bride in India. Please pray that the gospel will go forth into the darkness of that nation bringing the light of Christ into dark hearts.

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Monday PM, 12/26/16, on: 2016/12/26 17:53

Richard Wurmbrand has said the first century church never considered their service complete until the martyrs were remembered. Below is the story of Stephen, the first recorded martyr of those who follow Jesus.

From Voice of the Persecuted

The story of Stephen: In the New Testament, in the book of Acts, you will learn how the members of the church in Jerusalem gave their money freely to help the poor. This free giving led to trouble, as the church grew so fast; for some of the widows who were poor were passed by, and their friends made complaints to the apostles. The twelve apostles called the whole church together, and said:

"It is not well that we should turn aside from preaching and teaching the word of God to sit at tables and give out money. But, brethren, choose from among yourselves seven good men; men who have the Spirit of God and are wise, and we will give this work to them; so that we can spend our time in prayer and in preaching the gospel."

This plan was pleasing to all the church, and they chose seven men to take charge of the gifts of the people, and to see that they were sent to those who were in need. The first man chosen was Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Spirit of God; and with him was Philip and five other good men. These seven men they brought before the apostles; and the apostles laid their hands on their heads, setting them apart for their work of caring for the poor.

But Stephen did more than to look after the needy ones. He began to preach the gospel of Christ, and to preach with such power as made every one who heard him feel the truth. Stephen saw before any other man in the church saw, that th

The gospel of Christ was not for Jews only, but was for all men; that all men might be saved if they would believe in Jesus; and this great truth Stephen began to preach with all his power. Such preaching as this, that men who were not Jews might be saved by believing in Christ, made many of the Jews very angry. They called all the people who were not Jews "Gentiles," and they looked upon them with hate and scorn; but they could not answer the words that Stephen spoke. They roused up the people and the rulers, and set them against Stephen, and at last they seized Stephen, and brought him before the great council of the rulers. They said to the rulers:

"This man is always speaking evil words against the Temple and against the law of Moses. We have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the laws that Moses gave to us!"

This was partly true and partly false; but no lie is so harmful as that which has a little truth with it. Then the high-priest said to Stephen:

"Are these things so?"

And as Stephen stood up to answer the high-priest, all fixed their eyes upon him; and they saw that his face was shining, as though it was the face of an angel. Then Stephen began to speak of the great things that God had done for his people Israel in the past; how he had called Abraham, their father, to go forth into a new land; how he had given them great men, as Joseph, and Moses, and the prophets. He showed them how the Israelites had not been faithful to God, who had given them such wonderful blessings.

Then Stephen said:

"You are a people with hard hearts and stiff necks, who will not obey the words of God and his Spirit. As your fathers did, so you do, also. Your fathers killed the prophets whom God sent to them; and you have slain Jesus, the Righteous One!"

As they heard these things, they became so angry against Stephen, that they gnashed on him with their teeth, like wild beasts. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up toward heaven with his shining face; and he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on God's right hand, and he said:

"I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God!"

But they cried out with angry voices, and rushed upon him, and dragged him out of the council-room, and outside the wall of the city. And there they threw stones upon him to kill him, while Stephen was kneeling down among the falling stones, and praying:

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! Lord, lay not this sin upon them!"

And when he had said this, he fell asleep in death, the first to be slain for the gospel of Christ. (Bible Hub)

St. Stephen's Day, or the Feast of Saint Stephen, is a Christian saint's day to commemorate Saint Stephen, the first Christian martyr or protomartyr, celebrated on 26 December in the Western Church and 27 December in the Eastern Church. Many Eastern Orthodox churches adhere to the Julian calendar and mark St. Stephen's Day on 27 December according to that calendar, which places it on 9 January of the Gregorian calendar used in secular contexts. In the denominations of Western Christianity, Saint Stephen's Day marks the second day of Christmas or Christmastide.

Hebrews 12:2-2

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses (martyrs) surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 13:7-8

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you, and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and

Brothers and sisters let us look to the example of Stephen. Let us look at his faithful witness of Jesus Christ. Let us look to those who have laid down their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ in times past and times present.

For even today we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses. The word witness in the Greek means martyr. Thus we could say that we are surrounded by such a great cloud of martyrs who are reigning in heaven. Because they surround us it is as if they are cheering us on. They are cheering us to be faithful Witnesses of Jesus Christ. Even if it means laying down our physical life for him.

Let us remember the martyrs. And let us imitate their faith. And let us pray for the persecuted church today. Let us remember the families of the martyrs of today.

It is estimated every 5 to 8 minutes somebody is martyred for the Lord Jesus Christ someplace around the world. It is estimated that three to four hundred souls will lie under the altar in the presence of Christ before the day ends.

So again, please, let us remember those who have given their witness for Jesus Christ as they have laid down their lives for him in that ultimate testimony of martyrdom.

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Tuesday AM, 12/27/16, on: 2016/12/27 8:34

#9...The 12 Faces of Persecution series tells the real story of believers suffering for their faith.

Remember what I told you: A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours, too.

John 15:20

Iro stared into the flames shooting high into the sky, felt the heat both in front and behind him, and saw big plumes of black smoke billowing upwards.

Looking to his right, then to his left, he quickly glanced at his two friends, Mati and Nuhu, looking for even the slightest sign of fear. But there was none.

Through the roaring fire, he could hear their tormentors, a group of young Muslim thugs, cheering and shouting gleefully no doubt believing these evangelists would soon die from the ring of fire they had set.

Â Â

Would God spare the lives of these three friends?

They joined hands to pray, not just for themselves but for the huge crowds who had come to see the JESUS film.

We could not curse the town because of their attitude toward the gospel, he remembers sharing afterwards. We felt a special love for the people who attacked us and for the entire town.

After about 30 minutes, the flames died down with no harm to Iro, Mati or Nuhu. Infuriated, their tormentors demanded they leave town. The three friends did as they were told, picked up their projector and headed out.

Counted worthy to suffer for Christ

But as they left, their attackers followed them, flogging them and ordering them never to return.

So it must have been quite a shock to them to see the smile on Iro's face as he told his two friends, 'I felt encouraged to be beaten because of Christ. Even while they were beating me, I was praying, "Thank you, Lord, for counting me worthy to suffer for Your Name's sake."

Iro refused to be discouraged.

Sharing Christ with a dying world is necessary. It doesn't matter the price to be paid," he said afterwards. "We receive beatings from the angry Muslims, but our joy is that the people who do not know Christ have heard His story."

We praise God that these three brothers were delivered out of the fire and that was meant for them. Yet our hearts must grieve and break over the fact that those who came to see the Jesus video did not have the opportunity to hear about faith in Jesus. This is the work of the enemy.

Let us pray that those in this village and the persecutors as well as others will have the opportunity to hear about faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us pray for these teams who go out into harm's way to share Jesus. Let us pray for their protection and that much fruit will come out of their ministry.

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Tuesday PM, 12/27/16, on: 2016/12/27 17:52

Posted from Voice of the Persecuted

Robert Jermain Thomas

Many in Wales never heard of the Welsh missionary Robert Jermain Thomas but in South Korea he is recognized as a hero and the man who brought Christianity to the country. The young missionary left the shores of Britain to minister God's Word in China and Korea. His martyrdom would be the seed that would grow and contribute to the Korean revivals in 1903 and 1907. Be encouraged by his testimony and the growth of Christianity in Korea.

The BBC recently shared an article titled, "Remembering North Korea's Christian martyrs" describing the efforts and sacrifice of this young Christian missionary.

Christmas is a time of great celebration for the world's two billion or so Christians. In one part of the planet, though, the lights are out. There is not even a flicker of recognition of the festival in North Korea - or not in public. It may be celebrated secretly, particularly as 2016 is the anniversary of a great Christian martyrdom on the banks of the Taedong river in Pyongyang.

Nobody knows how many North Koreans celebrate the birth of Christ just over two millennia ago. For them, displays of faith can lead to prison or worse.

And nobody knows either who will remember the death 150 years ago of a missionary on the banks of the Taedong river.

The Welshman, Robert Jermain Thomas, was one of the big figures who brought Christianity to the Korean peninsula. Befitting his contribution, his death, around the end of August in 1866, has been marked with loud and joyous celebrations in churches in Cardiff and Seoul.

But from Pyongyang, where Thomas was martyred, there has not even been a peep of the smallest trumpet. Read more

To learn more visit www.robertjermainthomas.com

Please remember our brothers and sisters living in North Korea, the most dangerous place to be a Christian.

What you would do if you were living in North Korea under it's oppressive rule? Imagine living in extremely harsh conditions without a freedom of speech, little hope for the future and the possibility of extreme punishment, even death for being a Christian? Imagine what it means to risk not only your own life but that of your spouse, children and even extended family members because you believe in Jesus. What would you do?

Pray for North Korea

Pray that God will break Communism in North Korea like He did

Pray for North Korea

Pray that God will break Communism in North Korea.

Pray for the secret believers who face torture and execution if discovered.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will move upon people's hearts and reveal Jesus to them.

Pray that God will call more to pray for North Korea.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will move upon North Korea and reveal Jesus to them.

Re: Supplemental , on: 2016/12/27 18:26

This is a 15 minute video about Robert Jerome Thomas. This dear brother was martyred in Korea for taking the gospel there. In North Korea the blood of the martyrs is still shed.

https://youtu.be/II7TZIsb_AM

John 12:24

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone, but if it does, it bears much fruit.

The early church father Tertullian tells us that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. Much martyrs blood has been shed in the nation of North Korea. Let us remember those dear saints in our prayers. Let us pray that the gospel of Jesus Christ will bring His light into dark hearts in that nation.

From the foot of the cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Supplemental , on: 2016/12/27 18:47

Picture of North Korea taken from the International Space Station. Very prophetic. Notice the physical darkness in N. Korea. Indicative of the spiritual darkness that lies in that nation. Let us pray that the light of Jesus to shine in North Korean hearts.

<http://www.nasa.gov/content/korean-peninsula-seen-from-space-station#.WGL8EjgCYiA>.mailto:

Bro Blaine

Re: Thursday AM, 12/29/16, on: 2016/12/29 8:20

#10...The 12 Faces of Persecution series tells the real story of believers suffering for their faith

The ultimate betrayal: when your own family wants you dead.

By joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

’ Romans 12:12

Nazeera was cooking breakfast for her family one morning when the unthinkable happened.

As she poured cooking oil into a hot pan, the liquid flashed ’ and the bottle exploded all over this mother of three, completely engulfing her in flames.

The minute he heard screams coming from the kitchen, Saeed, Nazeera’s husband, ran downstairs, but in the confusion didn’t know what to do to save her. Meanwhile, their 16-year-old son did the only thing he could think of: he hugged his mother, hoping that would put out the flames.

The teenager ended up badly burned. Nazeera eventually died from her injuries.

What appeared to be an accident...was murder

Only later did Saeed find out that one of his brothers and one of Nazeera’s brothers had devised a deadly plan to take the vegetable oil out of the bottle and replace it with gasoline. The reason: Saeed and Nazeera refused to return to Islam.

This was by far the worst, but not the first time the family had been caught in this holy war between Christianity and Islam.

Even after Nazeera passed away, the family could not find anyone willing to testify to who was behind this senseless murder.

’No one will be a witness for us,’ Saeed said dejectedly. As an example of how deep their hatred was for his decision to follow Christ, he admitted, ’My own family told me that if I was killed and cut into pieces, they wouldn’t do anything to help or be a witness on my side.’

Counting the cost

A lesser man might have given up at that point, figuring that the cost of being a believer in the Arabian peninsula was just too high.

But not Saeed.

’We ask people to pray for us, as we are all alone,’ he said. ’Pray for my children as now I am their mother and father, and their only friend. We need prayers for God’s strength and to give us strong faith.’

Then he added, ’I want people outside to know that even if we get cut into pieces, we won’t leave Jesus Christ.’

In places like Yemen, it’s not unusual to hear about Christians being killed for putting their faith in Christ. Please pray for persecuted believers everywhere.

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Friday AM, 12/30/2016, on: 2016/12/30 8:15

#11...The 12 Faces of Persecution are real accounts of persecuted Christians who are standing strong as they suffer for their faith.

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?”

’ Luke 14:28

Pastor Odon knows there’s a cost to being a Christian leader, particularly in a country like the Central African Republic that is hostile to those who preach the gospel.

But despite the inherent danger, he continues to share Christ with his neighbors whose lives have been turned upside down by the violence.

“Please pray for the liberation of my country, and for believers who are discouraged,” he says unselfishly. And we might add “please remember to pray for Pastor Odon as well.

Hunted by rebels

From the very moment they invaded the region, the rebels have had Pastor Odon in their crosshairs.

Several close calls were reported, including the time his family barely escaped before the radicals plundered his house and then occupied it. Only after an imam warned them that “this is the house of a servant of God and you will be cursed if you don’t leave” did they vacate the premises.

Until security has been restored, Pastor Odon does not dare bring his family back into the home. Instead, they’ve secretly gone to live with other believers throughout the region.

“Our life has been totally disrupted,” he says. “My wife and I live at another pastor’s house with our youngest son. Our other children have been scattered amongst other pastors.”

Planting churches in the midst of danger

But Pastor Odon is not budging.

Instead, he’s fighting back in the only way he knows how – by planting a group of churches right in the middle of the rebels’ stronghold.

“Risking everything is worth it,” he says. Christ is worth it. And his neighbors are worth it. That’s why he’ll never slow down, until every last person in his village has heard about this person called Jesus who died for them.

The persecuted believers know that Jesus is worth it. Along with the Apostle Paul, these believers are willing to suffer the loss of all things, even their lives, to know Jesus. And to make Jesus known.

Let us remember our brothers and sisters in prayer today. And also let their example be our hearts desire. Our hearts desire being that we will suffer the loss of all things to know Jesus and to make Him known.

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: , on: 2017/1/6 9:10

The 12 Faces of Persecution are real accounts of persecuted Christians who are standing strong as they suffer for their faith.

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Deuteronomy 31:6

Peyman has one of the most important jobs in the world. It's also one of the most dangerous jobs in the world.

He is a Bible delivery worker and partner of Open Doors, working in the Persian-speaking world. Every day, Peyman is responsible for bringing large numbers of Bibles and Christian literature to believers who are desperately waiting for them.

He's caught carrying Bibles which are forbidden in his region he could be thrown into prison or even tortured for violating existing laws.

Yet, he does it anyway, believing that God is directing him every step of the way.

Some groups have delivered Bibles to had already begun copying them by hand because they were eager to have their own copy, Peyman recalls.

Every story he shares tells of God's divine providence.

A close encounter

Once, an entire congregation professed faith in Christ but had no Bibles or Christian literature to deepen their faith. So members of the church, including a woman named Ava, began praying for a miracle.

A few weeks later, Ava and Peyman bumped into each other while shopping in the same market. Not knowing who he was, she carefully began telling him about Jesus. But Peyman stopped her mid-sentence, revealing to her that he, too, was a believer.

That's when Ava shared about their church's need for Bibles.

He was astonished to find out this group of believers had no biblical material at all, Peyman says. The next day, he met with Ava's pastor and within a week, the church had dozens of Farsi Bibles and copies of the New Testament.

For the isolated, underground church, the work of Peyman and others who deliver Bibles is of utmost importance. Sometimes, these Bibles are the only thing keeping new believers from giving up when times get hard.

That's what happened to Dareios, a former drug addict who came to know Christ and was fighting to stay sober when he got his first Bible. "When I was healing from my addiction, I was isolated from everyone. The only friend I had was my Bible." Dareios's and Ava's churches received Bibles because of your generosity. But for every believer who has received one, a hundred more are praying that someone like Peyman would visit their church.

Let us pray that those who cry for the word of God in restricted Nations will have the Bible provided for them.

From the foot of his cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Saturday AM, 2/11/17, on: 2017/2/11 11:35

<https://youtu.be/Sw-Y35kcolc>

The above is a link to a short VOM video. In the video two North Koreans are listening to the message about Jesus. One is holding a forbidden New Testament or Bible. If these two precious people are caught. They can be very well martyred in a death camp or mercifully executed on the spot. This video is not a dramatization.

Please do keep these young men in your prayers. Please keep the believers in North Korea in your prayers. Please keep the persecuted in your prayers.

From the foot of his cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Saturday PM, 2/11/17, on: 2017/2/11 19:25

North Korea is ranked #1 on the Open Doors World Watch List. It has held this position since 2002. The World Watch List consists of 50 countries where persecution is considered the most extreme. So for North Korea to be ranked number one on this list it has the distinction of having the most extreme persecution of believers in the world.

If one is caught possessing a Bible or attending an underground church meeting in North Korea. A bullet through the head would be merciful. But if this dear saint is sent to a North Korea death camp. Then their family and two generations of their extended family are imprisoned.

Yet despite the horrendous persecution the church continues to grow in North Korea. Jesus made the promise that upon Him, The Rock, He would build His church. And the Gates of Hell will not Prevail against it.

The open doors video below tells of the church in North Korea and what God is doing in the midst of the persecutions in the nation. The videos only about 6 minutes long period after watching a video please remember persecuted brothers and sisters in the nation of North Korea and your prayers.

<https://youtu.be/4nOQq5xHSc0>

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Sunday AM...2/12/17 , on: 2017/2/12 7:46

This is a story of a dear sister in North Korea. This is her story where she found hope even in the midst of a North Korean death camp.

Saints this story is real. This is not made up. What is taking place in North Korea is an ongoing reality of brothers and sisters around the world today who carry the cross and suffer for our Lord Jesus Christ.

<https://youtu.be/nbUoqzyVa1M>

Please do remember the persecuted brothers and sisters in your prayers.

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Sunday PM, 2/12/17, on: 2017/2/12 19:30

A few years ago a sister shared on our call about a dear saint who got out of one of the North Korean death camps. I do not know if she had escaped or if she was released. But eventually I believe she made her way to South Korea. This dear sister was asked how did she endure the imprisonment in North Korea. Her response was, "I heard the prayers of the saints."

I do not know if Hea Woo was that sister. But a brother from Open Doors continues to tell her story in the link below. Again let us continue to remember persecuted brothers and sisters in North Korea and elsewhere in our prayers. May they also hear the prayers of the saints.

<https://youtu.be/OXDzUr1XtDU>

The brother narrating the video ask some pointed questions to us in the West. What will we sacrifice or would cost will we pay for a relationship with Jesus.

Again dear Saints these are not made up stories. But these are actual people who have suffered and our suffering for their relationship with Jesus.

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Monday AM, 2/13/17, on: 2017/2/13 7:01

Romans 12:1

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God which is your spiritual service of worship.

I reflected on this verse this morning. I thought of those dear saints who offered their bodies unto martyrdom. They gave themselves up in that final witness for Jesus.

All too often we in the west think that the martyrdom of believers was something that took place in first-century Rome. Or that took place during the time of the Reformation. We can read about the martyrdom of believers in books such as Foxe's Book of Martyrs or Martyrs Mirror. And for sure these are actual accounts of believers who laid down their lives for Jesus in times past.

But, brothers and sisters, we need to realize that the martyrdom of believers continues in this day and age. The stories and the videos I share with you are not made up. These are not coming from the imaginations of Tim LaHaye when we have been taken away in a mythical pre-trib rapture. But followers of Jesus, in this day and age are actually laying down their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ and their blood is being shed. It has been estimated that every 5 to 10 minutes a precious saint gives their life for the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the link below is the story of a modern-day martyr for Jesus. Her name is Fatima. She came to Christ in the nation of Saudi Arabia. The video below tells her story. It tells of the risk she took to follow Jesus.

Again dear saints this story is true. It is not made up. It is not fictional. But just like our sister, Hae Woo, of North Korea. Fatima was a real person. She is now in the presence of Jesus.

Before her early death. Fatima blogged the statement,

"And by God I am unto death a Christian."

Before she was horribly martyred by her brother Fatima wrote these last words in her blog.

"Jesus Christ is my light and salvation. Whom Shall I Fear?"

In honor of this dear sister who is now in the presence of Jesus. Fatima who lived from 1982 to 2008.

Below is her story.

<https://youtu.be/-C23vII0dKw>

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Tuesday AM, 2/14/17, on: 2017/2/14 7:50

Brothers and sisters, our dear sister Fatima, martyred back in 2008. She lived in the nation of Saudi Arabia. I do not know how many others have been martyred for their faith in Jesus on the Saudi peninsula. But I do know that God is building a church in that nation. It is estimated there over 100,000 secret believers who meet in secret in the Saudi Kingdom. And that God is opening up hearts for those seeking Him to respond to the gospel call of Jesus.

Below is a prayer cast video of a believer who is praying over her nation. And below the video is a summary of Saudi Arabia and prayer points.

As you listen to the short video. Please pray with this dear sister. Please remember our brothers and sisters who accept Jesus as their savior in that nation. For they will pay a price.

Tonight some of us will meet and pray for the nation of Saudi Arabia via a conference call. For any would like to join us please send me an email. My email address follows my signature at the bottom of this post.

But even if you pray in your own prayer closets or war rooms. Please remember the nation of Saudi Arabia and the believers who are at the foot of his cross. Please pray for the harvest to come out of that nation.

The paracast link is below.

<http://www.prayercast.com/phone/saudi-arabia.html>

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

pwprayercall@gmail.com

Re: Tuesday PM, 2/14/17, on: 2017/2/14 18:34

One of the most difficult Persecution Watch calls I moderated was 2 years ago. It was on the day two years ago when 21 Coptic believers were martyred for their faith in Jesus. This took place on the shores of Libya. They were martyred by ISIS. Below is a poem put out by the Egyptian Bible Society. Tomorrow will be the second anniversary when these precious saints shed their blood for Jesus.

I do remember on the night of our call it was heavy spirit of sorrow. But one thing I told my intercessors was that on that day Satan did not get the victory. It was the Lord Jesus Christ. For the saints died with the name of Jesus on their lips and with Him in their heart. The poem is below.

Two Rows By the Sea: a poem about faith in the face of adversity

They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskin and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated, the world was not worthy of them. (Hebrews 11:37-38)

I don't think I will ever read this passage again without seeing in my mind images of men dressed in orange jump suits with black-clad, masked executors behind each one of them. ISIS's brutal killing of 21 Christian Egyptians in Libya last month for being 'people of the Cross' devastated their families and shocked Egypt and the world.

Very encouraged

When I arrived at the Bible Society office the morning after the video was released, feeling sad and depressed, a young coworker told me that as well as the horror and sorrow she felt at the young men's deaths, their faith had left her feeling 'very encouraged.'

'What has happened has shown me that there are Christians today who are brave enough to face death rather than deny their Lord,' she told me. 'It has shown me that the Gospel message can still help us to hold onto the promises of God, even when facing death.'

Mourning nation

To bring comfort to a mourning nation, we at the Bible Society produced more than a million copies of a leaflet called 'Two Rows by the Sea', which is being distributed throughout the country. It contains a collection of Scripture passages about faith in adversity and God's enduring love. It also includes a poem, from which the leaflet takes its name, written by medical doctor who has a gift for writing poetry. I'd like to share the poem here. May it bless you as it has blessed many people across the world over the past two weeks:

Two Rows By the Sea

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

And they overcame him because of the blood of the lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death....Revelation 12:11

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Wednesday AM, 2/15/17, on: 2017/2/15 5:51

On This Day Remembering the Martyrs of Jesus

I remember reading in a VOM magazine that it was never considered a service in the early church unless the martyrs were remembered. Thus a list of the witnesses of Jesus would be red. Those who were slain for the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.

Two years ago on this day 21 Coptic believers in Christ were marched out by the sea of the Mediterranean on the shores of Libya. Each one of these precious brothers died with one name on their lips. That was the name of Jesus. Each one of these precious brothers would pray things like. "Help me Lord Jesus." "Let me be faithful to you." "Into your hands I commend my spirit."

On this day 2 years ago it made no difference that these brothers came out of a Coptic liturgical background. All of their Coptic upbringing meant nothing on February 15th, 2015. The only name that was precious to these dear saints was the name of Jesus. Each one of those saints died with that name on their lips. This is why that day 2 years ago Satan did not get the victory. But the victory belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ. These precious brothers did not deny Jesus even in the face of death. For they loved not their lives even unto death.

But brothers and sisters what does the testimony of these 21 martyrs tell us today. Consider the verses in Hebrews 12:1-3,

...Therefore since we have so great a cloud of witnesses (martyrs) surrounding us, let us lay aside every encumbrance in the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart...

In the New Testament Greek the word martyr is translated witness. The example of these 21 believers who laid down their lives for Jesus should speak to our hearts. Their example should speak into our hearts to take up our cross and follow Jesus.

I find it interesting that a discussion is taking place in the forum over Galatians 2:20,

... I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me...

The discussion is focusing on is this promise or experience. Our persecuted brothers and sisters would say this is reality. For they would understand the command of Jesus in Luke 9:23,

... If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me...

Our persecuted brothers and sisters would articulate with the Apostle Paul, "I die daily." For some this day it will mean the literal laying down their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ.

But then the question must be, is He worth it? Is He worth it? Is He worth dying for? Evidently 21 Believers in Christ felt he was worth laying down their lives two years ago. What does that say our hearts?

Below is a short video link remembering our dear brothers in Jesus who laid down their lives for Him. Let us remember and honor our martyred brethren this day.

<https://youtu.be/a7KzxMBxHVU>

This is posted in honor of our martyred brothers who laid down their lives for Jesus. This is posted in honor of those who will continue to lay down their lives for Jesus until He returns.

This is from the foot of His cross.

Brother Blaine

---Edited for grammatical correction and clarity---

Re: Wednesdy PM, 2/15/17, on: 2017/2/15 20:41

Who would dare to love ISIS? Â Who would dare to love the jihadist? Â Could it be that Jesus would dare to love them? Could it be that we are called to love them? Â Were it not for the blood of Jesus would we be any different from the jihadist?

The video below is a response from the people of the cross to the Islamic jihadist. Very encouraging. But will we apply it to our hearts?

<https://youtu.be/uSv4vBcFyvo>

.....But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven, for He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.....Matthew 5:44-45

Very radical what Jesus teaches above. But then were we not all His enemies of until we came to Faith in Him?

From the foot of his cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Thurs. AM, 2/16/17, on: 2017/2/16 8:00

Brothers and Sisters,

James writes that our lives are as a vapor before the Lord and then vanish away. But just because our lives are brief in God's eyes does not mean that our lives have to be empty.

The video below is the story of Nurta. This was a dear sister in the nation of Somalia. Â She gave her life to Jesus at 17 years of age. In the nation of Somalia when one comes to Christ there is a death sentence put upon them. This dear sister suffered much for her faith in Jesus. But she saw that Jesus was worth living and dying for.

The nation of Somalia ranks # 2 on the Open Doors World Watch List. Â The jihadist group Al-Shabaab has said that they will rid Somalia of all Christians. Needless to say the ground of Somalia runs red with the blood of the martyrs. But let us also pray that out of their blood much seed will come as Jesus continues to build His church in that country.

As you watch this video please remember the nation of Somalia in your prayers. It is estimated that there are less than 300 Believers in a nation that is filled with millions of Muslims. Yet these precious saints continue to be burning lights against a crooked and perverse generation. Â For they shine like stars in the universe.

Also as you watch his video let it speak to your heart. Let us pray that our lives will not be empty. But however long we live before Jesus. Let us pray that our lives on earth will be full of the things of eternity. Let us pray that our life will be full of Jesus.

<https://youtu.be/NaHF5wN-kHw>

Some of us will meet tonight over a conference call and pray for the nation of Somalia. For any who would like to join our call please send me an email. My email address will follow my signature at the end of this post.

From the foot of his cross.

Bro Blaine
pwprayercall@gmail.com

Re: Thurs. PM, 2/16/17, on: 2017/2/16 19:11

Below is the story of a brother in Somalia who is persevering on his faith in Jesus.

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.â€ John 16:33

â€You are a kaffir (infidel)! You will die!â€

The words rolled easily off the Somaliâ€™s tongue. Ahmed was very offended. When he lost his job and could no longer pay his rent, Mohammed had taken him in. Despite Mohammedâ€™s kindness to him, Ahmed could not let his suspicions go.

One day, he went through Mohammedâ€™s things and found an audio Bible in Mohammedâ€™s room. He realized that Mohammed had become a follower of Isa (Jesus).

To Ahmed, this was a decision that deserved death.

Three nights after the initial discovery, Ahmed attacked Mohammed with a knife. â€I saw nothing, just felt the sudden sharp pain to my head and felt the blood streaming down my neck.â€

By the grace of God, neighbors came to his aid. Ahmed ran away and Mohammed was taken to hospital.

â€Ahmed was my friend, someone Iâ€™ve known for a long time. I housed him when he had nowhere to go, and in return, I got this. It is very painful.â€

When he met with Open Doors, Mohammed looked gaunt. His hair showed strands of grey and his brown eyes constantly scanned the surroundings for those with evil intent against him.

But as hard as this has been, Mohammed has not given up his faith. â€It is the only place where I have ever had inner peace. Despite the isolation and persecution, I am at peace. This is why I hold on to Christ. Going back to Islam is not an option.â€

Please remember this dear brother and other precious saints in the nation of Somalia in your prayers. For the Saints in Durham much the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the foot of His cross

Bro Blaine

Re: Fri. AM, 2/17/16, on: 2017/2/17 8:00

Hebrews 2:4

.....God also testifying with them both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his own will.....

Hebrews 13:8

..... Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.....

Acts 13:41

..... For I am accomplishing a work in your days, I work that you will never believe, though someone should describe it to you.....

Brothers and Sisters,

The stories I post in this thread from the persecuted church are true and are not made up. This is not fiction. Though it is hard for us in America to believe that God is actually performing miracles among our persecuted brethren. God is still doing signs and wonders. Evidently He did not get the memo that miracles ceased after the first century. And praise God He is still working.

The video below is a story of a dear sister in Iran. Before Padina came by Christ she was about to commit suicide along with your sick mother. It was through a message of salvation that she and her mother found hope. As you watch the video below please remember those in Iran such as Padina and her mother who are now laboring in the underground church. Also please continue to remember our persecuted brothers and sisters in your prayers.

<https://youtu.be/1nXz6OhFTqo>

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Sat. AM, 2/18/17, on: 2017/2/18 8:28

Our brother Joel Richardson continues with the story of Padina. I posted the video of her testimony yesterday. In the interview with Padina Joel plays the video again. And then gives a further explanation of some of the things that took place in the video.

Also Joel continues to interview our dear sister as she describes what working in the underground church in the Middle East is like. Both Padina and her mother are serving Christ by working with the secret church in Persia.

The ministry that Padina is associated with is not an expensive ministry. They have no executive who receives a million-dollar salary. Nor do the ministry leaders live in million dollar homes. Those associated with Padina's live on about \$1,200 a month. And they take public transportation in their ministry and their discipling activities.

God put it on my heart to support this ministry. When I called a US Representative. I asked him. "Please tell me your CEO does not have a gleaming office and live in a million dollar home."

The brother responded to me with a smile I can imagine on the other end of the line. He said, "Brother our CEO lives in a city in a restricted nation in the Middle East. Each day he steps out his life is forfeit." I know this was a ministry that

God let me to support.

Saints I only share this to let you know that there are legitimate ministries who are serving our persecuted brethren. Their ministry headquarters are in a small apartment in a city in a restricted nation. Those involved with such cutting edge ministries will daily lay down their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ. If discovered, these dear saints will either imprisoned or tortured or possibly even martyred.

As Paul Harvey would say. Now for the rest of the story. The video is about 23 minutes long. As you watch the video please do remember our persecuted brothers and sisters who are serving Jesus from the foot of the cross. Many of them are serving Him realizing that their lives are forfeit. But these dear brothers and sisters serve Christ realizing that He is worth it. They are serving Jesus realizing that He died for them. These precious saints are willing to die for Jesus so that others might know him.

<https://youtu.be/xDeV6D5oNXY>

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Sat. PM, 2/18/17, on: 2017/2/18 19:02

Chris Mitchell is a respected reporter. He lives in Jerusalem and works for CBN. I have found his reports to be factual and devoid of sensationalism.

It was our blessing to have this brother on our call a few years ago. He provided much valuable insight as to what is taking place in the Middle East. Below is a YouTube report of what God is doing among the refugees in the Kurdistan Autonomous Region otherwise known as northern Iraq.

As you watch this short report do praise God for the harvest he is bringing among the refugees. And do pray that those who embrace Christ will grow in the grace and knowledge of Him. For sure Jesus is building his church in the Middle East. And the Gates of hell itself will not prevail against the church that He is building.

Thanks be to God for the victory he gives in Jesus.

<https://youtu.be/JtoBKILsoz0>

From the foot of this cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Sun. AM, 2/19/17, on: 2017/2/19 9:49

Hebrews 11:32-40 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

32 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. 35 Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; 36 and others **experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38 (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.**

39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

Hebrews 12:1-3

..... Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him who has endured such hostility by sinners against him so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.....

Hebrews 13:7-8

.....Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you, and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Hebrews is considered one of the most Jewish books in the New Testament. As its name implies the book was probably written to a group of Hebrew believers under persecution. The temptation was to go back to the old ways of Judaism. Yet the author pleads with them to consider Jesus and what He has done and what He is doing. The exhortation is the same to run the race that is set before them after they've laid aside the encumbrances and the sin in their life.

This book also speaks to us today in that we see our persecuted brothers and sisters who live out the reality of Jesus Christ in this day and age. This book is so relevant in that it continues to give the witness of those who are living in the shadow of the cross. In the passage above the writer reminds us that we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses. In a post a few days ago I shared that the New Testament word "witness" also means "martyr".

I'm sure the forum wonders why I keep posting reports about our persecuted brethren around the world. Few people read this thread. Let alone few people comment on it. Some in the forum probably would wonder. What does the persecuted church have to do with promoting Christ centered revival?

First of all I continue to post about our persecuted brothers and sisters because God has put it on my heart. Their story must be heard. Since I do not do Facebook Sermonindex is the closest venue I can come to sharing those about those saints who suffer in the shadow of the cross. I appreciate Greg for allowing me grace to continue this thread.

But another reason I post about our persecuted brothers and sister is is there example to us. We in America are living in a disconnect to the persecuted church. Two out of every three Christians in the world suffer some form of persecution. That would imply that we in America are in the 30% that do not know the degree of Affliction and hardship our persecuted brethren go through.

I am not trying to bring guilt on anyone in the forum or myself. But brothers and sisters let's face it. Our persecuted family have a far greater reality of the cross of Jesus Christ in their lives and we do. While the discussion is going on about Galatians 2:20 has to being promised or experience. Our brothers and sisters would say this is reality. At least to a saint in Eritrea or North Korea they would see that being dead to Christ is a death sentence. For them it is real. They would say with deep conviction that they are crucified with Christ. They would say their life is forfeit to Him. They would say that truly they are crucified and dead to themselves.

But our persecuted family would also articulate that Christ is living in them. But being dead to themselves. Christ lives in them. And His fragrances is manifested through their broken lives.

The verses above would be the message of the persecuted Church to us. And more so in America. They would say to us that we Americas should lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us. They would say to embrace the cross of Jesus. And to run that race that is set before us fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith in Him.

When I was involved with Calvinism, many of my reformed brethren would say that they had been instructed by the Puritan divine's. Sometimes I think it was said with a degree of pride. Personally I would rather say it all humility that I have been instructed by my brothers and sisters at the foot of the cross. This would be the persecuted Church. I pray for these dear saints daily. But I also feel like that I am not worthy to wash their feet in my prayers. Yet their plea is always to pray for them. And God has called me to this ministry. As unworthy as I am it is only by His grace that I can pray for my brothers and sisters.

But there example to me is that I may obey Jesus as they do. At this point I may not be facing death as they are on a daily basis. But their message to me would be to die daily to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life that comes from the world. In other words my persecuted brothers and sisters would say to me to die to American evangelicalism. Deny yourself and take up your cross daily and follow Jesus. For my persecuted brothers and sisters would say this is what we do on a daily basis when our lives are forfeit.

What does the persecuted church have to do with revival. The fastest growing churches are found in nations that are hostile to the things of Christ. Operation World tells us that two of the fastest-growing churches are in China and Iran. These nations are anything but friendly to Christ. The greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit since Pentecost is occurring among Muslims who are coming to Jesus in dreams and visions. And they are willing to follow Him even at the risk of their own lives.

The question to us is do we want such a faith here in America. Do we want an authentic faith of Jesus in our lives that will reflect what our persecuted brothers and sisters are going through. President Trump wants to keep out those in foreign nations that are of Islamic background. Muslim background believers who have come to Christ would say they would prefer to remain there in the harvest. MBB's want very little to do with American Christianity. Not in its present form.

Brothers and sisters I do not know what lies in the future. I believe the persecution of the American church may be the best thing that could happen to us. But some are praying that persecution will not come. And that God would spare us. Certainly that is what the devil wants. And the American Church continues to hit the snooze alarm.

But God be Praised. I say again but God be Praised. Jesus is raising up a remnant in this nation who will embrace the cross and not be afraid to die for Jesus so that they may live.

Our persecuted brothers and sister would say to us come and join us in the race which we are running. Those who have crossed the finish line into the Heavenly Jerusalem would be cheering us on. The persecuted brothers and sisters would say to us live victoriously in Jesus as we did. Come join us in the Heavenly assembly from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues that no one can count. Our persecuted brothers and sisters would say to us Let us all gather around the Throne of God and Jesus and say salvation to God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!!!

Oh my Lord Jesus!!! How we wait and long for that day!!! But in the meantime may we be faithful in running our race before You even this day. Amen!

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

---edited for grammatical corrections---

Re: - posted by Ruach34 (), on: 2017/2/20 4:05

Amen. By Life or by death may Christ Be Magnified in my body.

Love you brother and miss you.

Rich

Re: Brother Rich, on: 2017/2/20 6:12

My brother so good to see your post. Likewise love and miss you and your family. For I remember our sweet times of fellowship in your home in southwest LR.

Know you and your family are in my thoughts and prayers.

Bro Blaine

Re: Mon. AM, 2/20/17, on: 2017/2/20 8:07

My Brothers and Sisters,Â

Imagine you are about to join a church. You go to the new members class. Two questions are asked of you. Â They are as follows.

1. Â Will you suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Â Will you die for the Lord Jesus Christ.

These are questions that are brothers and sisters in the Middle East face daily. These brothers and sisters are Muslims who had dreams and visions of Jesus. They are willing to follow Him and be faithful to Him even unto death. Â This is the reality of Jesus in the suffering church.

Below is a fascinating interview with Tom Doyle who wrote Dreams and Visions and Killing Christians. Â This brother has worked many years in the Middle East. This brother shares what God is doing among the Muslims in the Middle East today. This brother shares how God is building His church. This is Acts 29 being written even now.

I emphasize again these stories are not made up. But this is the actual Holy Spirit working in the hearts of His people today.

May your hearts be blessed and encouraged as you listen to the interview. May we all praise God for what He is doing in bringing in the harvest of souls, from among the Muslims.

<https://youtu.be/Db5ZRdql3QY>

From the foot of his cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: - posted by StirltUp (), on: 2017/2/20 8:30

Thank you brother Blaine,

The Lord is building His church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!

Re: William , on: 2017/2/20 9:53

Indeed, my brother, indeed. Praise God for what He is building.

Bro Blaine

Re: Monday PM, 2/20/18, on: 2017/2/20 20:21

Below is an incredible story from Tom Doyle's book, Dreams and visions. Again this is not fiction. But the story is true. This is an account of how God is working among the Muslims in the Middle East.

God be praised for what He is doing in bringing forth His Harvest.

<https://youtu.be/NqESElkoZlo>

Bro Blaine

Re: Tuesday AM, 2/21/17, on: 2017/2/21 7:44

Yesterday I came across this book entitled, "I Am N". It is put out by Voice of the Martyrs. When ISIS would invade towns in Iraq and Syria. They would mark those homes and churches that were Christian with the letter N in Arabic. This designated that those homes and churches were Nazarene. That they were followers of the Lord Jesus. As such many of these dear brothers and sisters paid the price of being slaughtered at the hands of ISIS.

I went to my local Christian bookstore looking for books on the persecuted church. As I wandered down the bookshelves my eyes fell on this book. I take this being the Lord wants me to read this book.

Below is a short video from VOM that tells why this book was written. I would encourage all that have an interest in the persecuted church to buy this book. May God open up our eyes to what our brothers and sisters are enduring at the hands of Islamic extremist.

May I point out that this book is not to encourage hatred of Muslims. But if anything to encourage prayer for their salvation. For this is what our persecuted brothers and sisters do. They cry out for the salvation of their persecutors. Even those that are in ISIS and other extremist groups.

<https://youtu.be/gEaR6BPSV2c>

May we pray for those who are truly at the foot of the cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Tuesday PM, 2/21/17, on: 2017/2/21 20:36

Why does the persecuted church matter to us believers in the West? Why do we need to hear the stories of our persecuted brothers and sisters? What does it matter to us as American Christians?

The passage below from the book, I am N, by Voice of the Martyrs can best answer these questions.

.....Their stories matter is because they are our brothers and sisters in the global family of Jesus Christ and they need us to stand with him. We, in turn, need their example of faithfulness in the face of persecution to encourage us in our walk with the Lord (Hebrews 12:1-2). Their sacrifices are a powerful testimony to our loving God, who's grace reaches us to save every sinner and empower those who receive Jesus as Savior and Lord to live in faithful service to him.....

This is why I keep posting on this thread the stories of our brothers and sisters who are truly in the shadow and at the foot of the cross. Their stories must be told. I cannot be silent regarding our persecuted brothers and sisters.

Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless.
Not to speak is to speak.
Not to act is to act.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

From the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Wed. AM, 2/22/17, on: 2017/2/22 7:11

What does it imply to have "N" spray painted on your door or wall? The word "N" means Nazarene in Arabic. It signifies one is a follower of Jesus. So what does it mean to say "I am N"? To put it another way what does it mean to say I am a Christian? What does it mean to say I am a Christ follower? What does it mean to say I follow Jesus Christ?

To say one follows Jesus Christ in a restricted or hostile nation invites persecution and ultimately martyrdom. Yet to a Christ follower in such a nation Jesus is worth it. Those who follow Jesus are willing to suffer the loss of all things so that they might know Him. In other words our persecuted brothers and sisters understand what it means to suffer the loss of all things that they might gain Christ. They understand what it means to say, "I am N". They understand what it means to say I follow Jesus. They understand what it means to say I will be faithful to Him even unto death.

Do we in America, as followers of Jesus, understand what it means to say, "I am N"?

Hebrews 13:13

..... So let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.....

Below is an interview by Gary Lane of CBN. He interviews Jason Peters of Voice of the Martyrs. Though the interview is over a year old. It is very relevant today. In the interview Jason Peters tells what it means to say "I am N" in persecuted nations.

<https://youtu.be/2qLYIGqoDfM>

May we, as believers in America, say with our persecuted brothers and sisters...I am N. May we also say with our persecuted brethren, I follow Jesus even unto death.

In the shadow of His cross.

Bro Blaine

Re: Wed. PM, 2/22/17, on: 2017/2/22 18:36

"Who is this Jesus you speak of?" Â Nadia ask.

"He is God - become - man, the maker of all."

"Even me."

"Yes, Nadia, even you." Â said Rachel. Â "And me. And everyone. He loves us and desires a relationship with us."

"What does he expect of us?" Â asked Nadia. Â "What must we do to be in his kingdom? What rules must we keep? What rituals must we perform?"

Rachel touched her friend's hand lightly shaking her head. "It is not like that he doesn't want your rituals or your rules. He wants your heart. Your trust. With that you will want to obey."

What kind of God is this? Nadia wondered.

From i am n by VOM

The following dialogue took place between Rachel, a Pakistani Christian and Nadia, a Pakistani Muslim seeker. Nadia's background reveals much what those in Islam must do to please their God. So a Muslim seeker is overwhelmed when they come face-to-face with the love and grace of Jesus. They are so overwhelmed that all Jesus ask of them is their heart to believe and trust in Him.

As I read the above dialogue I thought of these verses out of John 6:28-29,

... Therefore they said to him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" Â Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."...

Coming out of a legalistic background it was natural that Nadia would ask the questions she did about how to be accepted by Jesus. All Jesus required of her was that she believe in Him with all of her heart. Out of that obedience we come.

But then what does that say to us coming out of our legalistic backgrounds. Can it really be that simple just to simply trust and believe in Jesus with all of our hearts.

If it be true of the Muslim who seeks Christ. Can it not also be true for those that are seeking Jesus out of various forms of legalism or even sin. Â All Jesus ask of us is to believe and trust in him?

This appears to be what our persecuted brothers and sisters do. To believe and trust in Jesus.

In the shadow of His cross.

Bro BlaineÂ

Re: Fri., PM. 2/24/17, on: 2017/2/24 21:44

But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ...2 Cor.11:3

For me the above verse speaks volumes. Our persecuted brethren and do not have the luxury of debating theology. To them Galatians 2:20 is a reality of being crucified with Christ. They also have the reality of Jesus living within them. To them Galatians 2:20 it's not a promise. But it is reality to these brothers and sisters who are in the shadow of the cross.

To those who are under persecution. Jesus is real. Jesus is a person. Jesus is not a theological construct. Jesus is not a theological system. But to our persecuted brothers and sisters. Jesus is real. Jesus is the One they cling to.

A VOM medical missionary in writing about the dear saints in Nigeria had this to say. He remarked these precious saints cannot articulate the finer points of the Calvinist/Arminian debate. But when a jihadist comes at them swinging a machete and says recite the shahada. These precious saints reply "NO! Jesus is Lord!" The VOM brother remarked their theology suddenly becomes very deep.

A few days ago I posted how 21 Jesus followers were marched out to their execution on the Mediterranean shores of Libya. They were slain by ISIS. Each one of these brothers died with one name on their lips. And that name was Jesus.

I doubt these precious brothers could have elaborated on the theology of the atonement. They probably could not have given you the doctrine of how one becomes a living sacrifice for Christ. But their lives and witness demonstrated that they were willing to be crucified with Christ. Their testimony and witness illustrated that they were willing to be crucified with Christ. All in that so that Christ would live in them even in their martyrdom.

The persecuted have a very simple theology. Simply that is to walk out the purity and devotion to Jesus. May this speak volumes to our hearts. May we continue to remember brothers and sisters in prayer. May we continue to remember those who are in the shadow of the cross.

Simply my thoughts.

Bro Blaine

Re: dying for christ, on: 2017/2/25 1:51

i remember reading something out of Corrie Ten Boom's book The Hiding Place when she was five years old she asked her papa. Papa I don't think I could die for Jesus..and her Papa said to her Cory don't worry about that now if the time comes he will give you the grace to do it.so right now i know if God put me in a situation to have to suffer for His Name he would give me the fullest of his grace and strength to endure. i have read the book of martyrs

Re: Carolyn , on: 2017/2/25 7:42

My sister I think Corey also said you do not know how much you need Jesus. Until Jesus is all you have. I'm not sure if that's the exact quote. But it is certainly true. It is true of our brothers and sisters under persecution. And it should certainly be true of us today. May Jesus be all that we have.

Bro Blaine

Re: Sat. AM, 2/25/17, on: 2017/2/25 7:43

Eritrea ranks number 10 on the Open Doors World Watch List. This country has been described as the North Korea of Africa. Approximately 1000 of our brothers and sisters are imprisoned in horrific conditions in Eritrea. Some have been in prison for as long as 10 years. Some have been martyred for their faith in Jesus.

The government of Eritrea is influenced by Marxism. The president of Eritrea, Isaias Afewerki, studied Marxism in China. Consequently this country sees the followers of Jesus as a threat to state control of people. In other words as in most countries that are influenced by Marxism, the state is god.

Below is a radio interview by Tom Nettleton from Voice of the Martyrs. He interviews Dr. Berhane from Eritrea. Dr. Berhane suffered for his faith in Christ by being imprisoned for 11 months. The interview is very insightful about how our brothers and sister endure prison for the sake of Christ. The interview also provides insight on how our brothers and sister are enduring persecution in the church in Eritrea.

One thing this brother tells us. There are more Believers in Eritrea today than they were in 1993 when the government started

started closing down churches. Again this tells us that in the midst of persecution the followers of Jesus do grow. Truly the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

<http://www.stitcher.com/podcast/the-voice-of-the-martyrs/vom-radio/e/eritrea-how-do-we-understand-the-cross-43916778>

Please do pray for our brothers and sisters in Eritrea. ^ Please do pray for brothers and sisters in the shadow of the cross.

For Him who was slain.

Bro Blaine^

Re: Sat. PM, 2/25/17, on: 2017/2/25 18:29

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This is a story of a dear sister who was imprisoned in Eritrea for her faith in Christ a few years ago. Her name is Helen Berhane. ^ She is not related to Dr. Berhane whom I posted about this morning.

Helen describes how prayer sustained her in prison. She describes how she and other believers prayed and made an impact on the non-believers around them.

<https://youtu.be/uJcG1vEDbJs>

Please do remember our brothers and sisters in Eritrea in your prayers. ^ For they are truly in the shadow of the cross.

Bro Blaine^

Re: Sun. AM, 2/26/17 , on: 2017/2/26 7:46

.
...Remember my imprisonment...

Three simple words out of Colossians 4:18 from our brother Paul,

... Remember my imprisonmen...

These would be three simple words from our brothers and sisters in the shadow of the cross,

... Remember my imprisonment...

Their heartfelt plea would also be,

... Please pray for me. Please do not forget about me...

And how do the persecuted ask us to pray for them.

...Please pray for my freedom, Please pray that I can come to America? Please pray that I can escape the persecutions?
? Please pray that I can have a comfortable life?...

Dear saints you may be surprised to know that our persecuted brethren have far different prayer requests than what we in the west would imagine. ^

Their prayer request would go something like this.,

... Please pray that I will be faithful to the Lord Jesus in the midst of my trials...

... Please pray that I will not deny my Lord Jesus in the midst of my trials...

... Please pray that I will be able to endure the sufferings of the cross...

... Please pray that I will love and forgive my persecutors...

...Please pray that my persecutors will come to the Lord Jesus Christ...

... Please pray that my nation will know the light of Jesus Christ shining in the darkness...

Â Please pray that I will stand firm and remain in my nation to be a light for the Lord Jesus Christ...

...Please pray that I will keep my eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ and have his eternal perspective...

...And so on...

My brothers and sisters as you can see the persecuted church has more of a kingdom orientation in their prayer requests. Â They are not looking to sail to heaven on flowery beds of ease. Â But rather are looking to carry their cross through the bloody stormy seas.

Let us to remember the prisoners as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourself also are in the body...Hebrews 13:3.

Please do keep those in the shadow of the cross in your thoughts and prayers this day. Remember our brothers and sisters are not wanting to come to the safety and security of America. But are wanting to stand firm in the fires of affliction. They are wanting to remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of their persecutions.

For Him who was slain.

Bro BlaineÂ

Re: Monday AM, 2/27/17, on: 2017/2/27 8:26

Hebrews 10:24-25

...Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near....

When I began my walk with Christ the above verses would be used to compel us to go to church. Â Perhaps a better phrasing of the above verses would be, "Thou shalt go to church on Sunday".Â

And of course to us newbies in Jesus the church was that building down the street with the steeple and the cross on top.

Of course at the time I did not realize that I was looking at the verses of Hebrews 10:24- 25 in the context of a Western Christian. Â I was reading into the text the Western mindset of a church being the building with the steeple and a cross on top. And the pastor at the front preaching and teaching the Bible.

But as I posted earlier in this thread the New Testament is best understood through the eyes of persecuted believers. Initially the New Testament letters and the gospels were written in a context of persecution. So to best understand the New Testament letters one has to realize that the readers of these letters were in the context of persecution. Â And also to add that the writers of these letters, many of them being Paul himself, were in the context of persecution themselves. That is why I say the New Testament is a book written by the persecuted to the persecuted.

This is certainly true of the book of Hebrews in which the above verses are taken out of. The recipients of the book of Hebrews were believers who came out of Judaism. They were under persecution. Â These believers were in danger of drifting

ng back into Judaism to escape the harsh realities of persecution. The writer is encouraging them to stay true to Jesus with all of their heart.

Thus when the writer is encouraging them to not forsake the assembling of themselves together but to encourage one another. To meet together and stimulate one another to love and good deeds period he is not telling them to go to church on Sunday. But in the context of persecution to meet together when they possibly can. Probably in secret. To come together and encourage one another they run the race in the shadow of the cross. The book of Hebrews conveys this message.

In Hebrews 3:13 we read,

...But encourage one another, day after day, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin...

So on a daily basis these believers were to get together and encourage one another in their journey with Jesus. But in the context of persecution how do you do this? Large groups of people can attract the attention of religious or the political authorities that persecute the followers of Jesus.

In Matthew 18:20 Jesus gives us the model of the church in the context of persecution,

...For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst...

The church in the midst of persecution will be small. It will be hidden. It will be in the context of a small underground gathering of believers.

The first century Church and in the centuries that followed met this way when persecution was evident. Today in places like Eritrea and North Korea and Somalia the church meets in small groups. They meet in venues that will not attract the persecuting authorities.

As David Platt says in his book *Radical*, Jesus was a small church leader. I am sure this would disappoint many of our mega-church pastors today. But the concept of a mega church in the midst of persecution is dangerous.

Let us remember our persecuted brothers and sisters who meet in small groups in the shadow of the cross. Let us keep them in our prayers.

For Him who was slain.

Bro Blaine

Re: Tues. AM, 2/28/17, on: 2017/2/28 8:53

Matthew 18:20

... for where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst...

A brother once commented to me that our theology is best forged in the fires of persecution. Understanding the New Testament was written against the backdrop of persecution. Then we can understand what church looks like to our brothers and sisters under the shadow of the cross.

From the first century onward the believing remnant church under persecution has met in small groups. Jesus knew that His little flock would be persecuted. This is why He gave us the vision of 2 or 3 saints gathering together around His name. And His presence would be in their midst.

This paradigm flies squarely in the face of our American megachurch mentality. We think that bigger is better. But in persecuted nations smaller is far better. Because believers must meet in secret. Sometimes by 2 or 3 coming together. Larger groups would invite the persecuting authorities to come in and imprison and torture these dear saints.

Smaller groups are simple in their structure. Often their time is spent reading the word and praying. I have already shared in an earlier post what their prayer requests would look like. Often they are praying that they would remain faithful in the midst of their persecutions. Their meetings would be the encouragement to stand firm in Jesus.

Persecuted believers in places like N. Korea cannot sing the hymns loudly. Nor can they pray out loud. To do so would invite the attention of the persecuting authorities.

In the prisons and even in the death camps when believers are imprisoned. They find one another and church is started. Again a simple meeting of saints that gather together to pray and encourage one another in the word.

I have seen pictures and videos, either actual or dramatized, of two or three saints hidden under a blanket or in a cave. They would be hunkered down over a Bible under a penlight reading and praying. This is church in the simplicity and purity of devotion to Jesus.

The above is a little bit of what church looks like in nations hostile to the Lord Jesus Christ. We would call this secret church. We would call this the underground church. Or we would call this the persecuted church. Or we would call this the church in the shadow of the cross. By whatever name this goes by. This is a context in which brothers and sisters under persecution meet in.

Denominations are strangely absent in places like North Korea or Somalia. There are no persecuted Baptists. There are no persecuted Calvinists. There are no persecuted charismatics. There are no persecuted denominations. There are only persecuted believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the question of a denominational home is irrelevant in the shadow of the cross.

Nik Ripken has rightly observed that there is not the church. There is not the persecuted church. But there is just simply the church.

I would agree with this. But I would take it one step further. There is the church that is under persecution. There is the church that is in the shadow of the cross.

Please remember our persecuted brothers and sisters as they gather together in secret and seek encouragement from Jesus and from one another. Please do keep them in your prayers.

For Him who was slain.

Bro Blaine

Re: Wed, 3/1/17, on: 2017/3/1 8:13

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the father but through Me."

Acts 4:17-20

"But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name." And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge, for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Acts 4:27-29

When they had brought them, they stood them before the council. The high priests questioned them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men..."

To say that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation in Islamic lands can certainly invite persecution and even martyrdom. Â In places like North Korea to quote the Bible can certainly land one in a death camp. Â To declare allegiance to Jesus Christ in a nation like Eritrea may very well put one in a shipping container.

But what happens when one preaches the Bible in a supposed democratic nation like Great Britain. Â What happens when one reaches the Bible in a Public Square in the nation of England. The link to the article below gives you the answer.

http://christianconcern.com/our-concerns/freedom-of-speech/street-preachers-convicted-for-quoting-bible-in-modern-day-heresy-tri?utm_content=buffer23335&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

Remember this is Great Britain. A supposedly democratic nation with Christian values. Â This is not Pakistan. And remember America derived its values from Britain.

Dear saints you still think it can't happen here. Â You still think that we are going to be immune from persecution. Take a look across the ocean and see what is happening in Great Britain and prepare to be in the shadow of the cross.

Bro Blaine